

**'LITTLE FRIENDS OF ALL THE WORLD?' THE EXPERIENCES OF BRITISH
DIPLOMATIC SERVICE CHILDREN 1945 – 1990.**

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a historical reconstruction of the experiences of children born in to the British Diplomatic Service between 1945 and 1990. The first academic investigation of its kind, in a greatly under-documented area, it uses oral history testimony as its primary method of investigation. Source material was gathered by the author through interviews and correspondence with a sample of 23 former Diplomatic Service children born between 1942 and 1992. This evidence was compared with existing material which referred to Diplomatic Service children. This included the contents of Newsletters produced by the Foreign Service Wives Association, later the Diplomatic Service Wives' Association, and twentieth-century memoirs by diplomats.

The dominant themes suggested by interviewees and respondents formed the basis of the thesis' four thematic chapters. These take as their subjects Separation, Transience, Identity and Home. A preceding Chapter which outlines internal Foreign Office policy towards children and families during the period under consideration provides background. The main questions considered were whether the findings shed light on existing stereotyped understandings of Foreign Office children, whether the participants' experiences challenged historical narratives of childhood during the period and examined whether experiences differed according to gender. The richness and diversity of experiences recorded have made a multi-disciplinary approach necessary in order to provide a sufficiently structured framework for their interpretation.

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CONTENTS	PAGE
TITLE	1
DECLARATION	2
ABSTRACT	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
CONTENTS	5
ABBREVIATIONS	6
LIST OF FIGURES	7
INTRODUCTION	8
CHAPTER 1. THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND THE FAMILY	39
CHAPTER 2: SEPARATION	72
CHAPTER 3: TRANSIENCE	107
CHAPTER 4: IDENTITY	144
CHAPTER 5: HOME	183
CONCLUSION	222
APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEWEES AND RESPONDENTS BASIC BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS	232
APPENDIX 2: PRO-FORMA INFORMATION SHEET WITH SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	240
APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS AND SPOUSES	242
BIBLIOGRAPHY	244

ABBREVIATIONS

CEA	Continuing Education Allowance
CORB	Children's Overseas
DSA	Diplomatic Service Association
DSFA	Diplomatic Service Families Association
DSWA	Diplomatic Service Wives' Association
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FSA	Foreign Service Association
FSWA	Foreign Service Wives' Association
PUS	Permanent Under Secretary (eg. of the Foreign Office)
PNEU	Parents National Educational Union
QBP	Queen's Birthday Party
RAF	Royal Air Force
TCK	Third Culture Kid
TNA	The National Archives, Kew

UAF Unaccompanied Air Freight

LIST OF FIGURES

All images prepared by the author unless otherwise stated.

1. 'Parenthood': Poem, Autumn 1990.

Source: DSWA Newsletter, British Library.

2. FSWA Reaction to the Plowden Report, July 1964.

Source: FSWA Newsletter, with thanks to the DSFA.

3. Advert for Country Cousins and Emergency Mothers Agency, Spring 1977

Source: DSWA Newsletter, British Library.

4. Original advert for Universal Aunts Agency, 1920s.

Source: Universal Aunts, www.universalaunts.co.uk

5. Cover Diplomatic Service Wives Association Newsletter, Spring 1976.

Source: DSWA Newsletter, British Library.

6. Housing on the British Consulate compound in Jeddah, classified by grade, circa 1980s.

Source: FCO Historians, FCO Estates Inventory Albums.

7. Lady Fretwell organising a formal lunch at HM Ambassador's residence in Paris, 1987.

Source: Beryl Smedley, *Partners in Diplomacy*, (Ferring: West Sussex, 1990)

8. Glencairn, residence of HM Ambassador to the Republic of Ireland, circa. 1980s.

Source: FCO Historians, FCO Estates Inventory Albums.

9. FSWA Newsletter piece on Family Allowances, 4 January 1962.

Source: FSWA Newsletter, with thanks to the DSFA.

INTRODUCTION

In October 2013, a magazine article about British punk band, The Clash, had this to say about the band's lead singer, Joe Strummer:

Punk fundamentalists were... outraged when they discovered that Joe had gone to some minor private school... suddenly, he was inauthentic, a poseur playing at being a punk, not the real thing.¹

These elements in Strummer's family background, at odds with the iconoclastic, aggressive nature of the punk movement, have been widely reported. During his lifetime Strummer was at great pains to neutralise the assumption that he had been raised as member of the establishment. In interviews he gave poignant accounts of a boarding school career, and spoke about his father's job – which paid the boarding school fees – with derision.² Joe Strummer – or John Grahame Mellor as he was born in 1952 – attended a private boarding school because his father Ronald worked for the British Diplomatic Service, the branch of the civil service that represents British interests overseas. The two-dimensional and dismissive criticism that he faced was not an unusual reaction to the assumed circumstances of diplomatic children from their contemporaries. As this thesis will argue, this prevailing view of their lives as elite and privileged was a misleading veneer for a set of experiences which was altogether more thought-provoking and complex.

¹ Alan Jones, 'The Clash Live On!', *UNCUT Magazine*, October 2013.

² Chris Salewicz, *Redemption Song: The Definitive Biography of Joe Strummer*, (London: Harper Collins, 2007), pp. 47 – 48.

More apposite is a comment about Strummer ‘trying on aliases for size’ because he struggled to find a personal identity.³ Another article stated that ‘beyond... a worldly background ... he didn’t have a lot to give.’⁴ The influence of world music that became a familiar part of The Clash’s sound has been ascribed to a receptiveness to other cultures that was the result of Strummer’s peripatetic early years.⁵ A former partner commented on the contradictions in his personality in terms that will become familiar over the course of this thesis: ‘Joe was charming. He was brought up as an embassy child – he knew how to fix you a drink. But he was not all charm: he was a chameleon - he was exactly what you wanted him to be.’⁶ Strummer’s relationship with his parents was ambivalent. They got on, despite talk of neglect and heartlessness when he spoke about boarding school. Yet one subject he remained reticent about was the suicide of his brother David – another Diplomatic Service child - in 1970. Joe Strummer achieved worldwide fame as a musician, and the ways in which his formative experiences shaped his personality and his subsequent engagement with British society at a time of rapid change have been foregrounded in interviews and biographies. However, these basic themes of family separation, transient lifestyle, the pursuit of a stable identity and a sense of belonging are as evident in accounts of his life as they are in the accounts of all the diplomats’ children who grew up during the second half of the 20th century and whose lives are explored and documented in this thesis. An initial chapter on internal FCO policy, followed by four chapters which explore the themes summarized above in detail, will seek to answer three main questions. First, the thesis asks how far the complexity of Diplomatic Service children’s experiences defied popular stereotypes. Second, it questions whether the historical narratives of diplomatic children seen

³ Clinton Heylin, *Babylon Burning: From Punk to Grunge*, (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 61.

⁴ JH Tompkins, ‘Joe Strummer’s Complex Legacy: 10 Years After the Clash Leader’s Death’, *Spin Magazine*, December 2012.

⁵ Barry J Faulk and Brady Harrison (eds), *Punk Rock War Lord: The Life and Work of Joe Strummer* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.5.

⁶ Salewicz, *Redemption Song*, p. 245.

here complicate existing post-war narratives of childhood. The third line of analysis focuses on the subtle differences of experience according to gender.

This project is a historical reconstruction of the lives of British Diplomatic Service children between 1945 and 1990, which uses oral history as its primary method of investigation. The history of childhood is a burgeoning area and while the last decade has seen the publication of several notable works on the children of Empire, the children of diplomats remain largely unstudied by historians.⁷ Using interview evidence from former Diplomatic Service children, this thesis represents the first such enquiry. Its objective is to shine a light on the distinctive diplomatic communities - which were often at odds with the contemporary society they were meant to represent - in which these children grew up. The thesis situates this study within the rapidly growing historical literature on childhood, as well as wider historiographies of later twentieth-century British society and culture. To make sense of the many complex components of life experienced by diplomatic children in the past, however, it has been necessary to work across disciplines. The study of children, childhood, the family and intergenerational relationships has been advanced by social and cultural historians, alongside studies that have considered the family within a global or 'transnational' framework, or examined the relationships integral to the family from the perspective of social anthropology and sociology. Part 1 of this introductory chapter offers a critical overview of the literature that supports, develops or challenges the arguments contained in the central thesis. Part 2 discusses the methodological challenges of reconstructing diplomatic children's lives and the research strategies adopted in this

⁷ Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); David M Pomfret, *Youth and Empire: Trans-Colonial Childhoods in British and French Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016); Ellen Boucher, *Empire's Children: child emigration, welfare and the decline of the British world 1869 – 1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

theses. The introduction closes with a brief summary of the structure of the thesis and the key arguments advanced in each chapter.

1

Concepts of what it means to be a child and the meaning of childhood have differed markedly over time.⁸ Yet despite the presence in every society of a group of people in the early stages of the life course, the study of children's history was late to develop. 'As late as the 1950s,' Colin Heywood has noted, 'their territory could be described as "an almost virgin field".'⁹ *Centuries of Childhood*, published by Philippe Aries, in 1962 is widely acknowledged as the first study in this field. While Aries' claim that 'in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist' drew criticism from historians who questioned the (in their view) insubstantial and idiosyncratic quality of his evidence, others embraced his thesis, showing specific interest in identifying the moments in history (the 'turning points' as they have become known) when attitudes towards children changed.¹⁰ The lively exchanges provoked by his work perhaps explain the exponential growth of this area, although the 'reformation' of the family from the mid-century onwards which gave children a central place and role in family life in western societies could very plausibly also be responsible. Since the publication of *Centuries of Childhood*, the history of childhood has diversified to the extent that Peter Stearns has recently been able to contextualize it in global

⁸ An in depth discussion of what defines a child and childhood will be reserved for the second section of this chapter, on method, where the definition fixed for the purposes of this thesis will be detailed.

⁹ Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p.5.

¹⁰ Phillippe Aries (trans. Robert Baldick), *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962), p.128. For detailed discussion of Aries, his critics and supporters see Heywood, *History of Childhood*, pp. 9 - 13.

terms.¹¹ Since historians began to conceptualise childhood as a social ‘construct’, new avenues of research have opened up exploring the intersections of childhood with gender, race, class and other categories of difference.¹²

It is possible to analyse the stories of Diplomatic Service children, who were well travelled, culturally-aware and whose parents – or fathers at least – were engaged in international careers, in terms of a global history of childhood. However, the lives of Diplomatic Service children during the timeframe under consideration (1945 – 1990) speak to many different contexts, including, for instance, the vast body of work on colonial children.¹³ However, the Diplomatic Service was distinct from the Colonial Service in important ways. The diplomatic mission, or Embassy, existed to represent the British government and monarch overseas, while colonial administrators directly oversaw the colony’s government.¹⁴ It was rare that colonial administrators served in more than one country, unlike diplomats who changed jobs every two to three years. Social practices, however, such as the tendency to educate children at boarding schools in Britain, were shared amongst diplomats, colonial administrators and the wider British expatriate community. Family history and sociological studies of the family are useful for gaining an understanding of the changing lives of children and the interrelationship of family members, but these very rarely (if at all) encompass the additional strains placed on a family required to move regularly and to adapt to life in different countries and cultures.¹⁵ Gittins’

¹¹ See Peter N Stearns, *Childhood in World History: Themes in world history* (Oxford: Routledge, 2011).

¹² See Paula S Fass, ‘Is there a story in the history of childhood?’ in *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*, Paula S Fass ed. (London: Routledge 2013), pp. 1 – 15, and Stearns *Childhood in World History*. A discussion of the new paradigm of childhood appears in Allison James and Alan Prout eds. *Constructing and Re-constructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1-7.

¹³ For example Buettner, *Empire Families*; Karen Vallgarda, *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission: education and emotions in South India and Denmark* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Pomfret, *Youth and Empire*; Vyvyan Brendon, *Children of the Raj* (London: Phoenix, 2006).

¹⁴ A ‘mission’ could be an embassy, legation or high commission, depending of the perceived importance of the post.

¹⁵ For example Diana Gittins, *The Family in Question: Changing Households and Familiar Ideologies*, (London: MacMillan, 1985); Bill Osgerby, *Youth in Britain since 1945* (London: Blackwell, 1998); Jon Bernardes, *Family Studies, an Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1997).

description of childhood history as a ‘mass of tangled strands’ is particularly suitable here.¹⁶ For, in addition to finding a context within ‘global history’, the experiences of Diplomatic Service children might as easily be situated within ‘transnational’ family studies or the study of migration and diaspora.

‘Transnationalism’, a social phenomenon describing movement of people, goods and ideas across national borders that gained currency among anthropologists in the 1990s, has provided a useful framework for the more complex and abstract concepts explored in this thesis, especially those surrounding identities and ideas of home.¹⁷ The work of Geographer Alison Blunt, which explores the multiple layers of home, migration and diaspora has been key to the development of thinking about home in a transnational context.¹⁸ Chapters in Rapport and Dawson’s *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* discuss the tensions caused by abiding perceptions of home as a static point in a world increasingly characterised by movement.¹⁹ Chambers’ *Migrancy Culture Identity* written in 1994, which explores the implications for the construction of a self-image amidst temporal and spatial flux, offers a plausible framework for analysing the conflicting expressions of identity explored by Diplomatic Service children. Crucially, it should be noted that although these conceptual tools were developed by scholars seeking to capture the complex processes of globalisation in the 1990s, the phenomena they describe and analyse were present earlier in the lives of transitory diplomatic children. They are therefore deployed in this thesis as useful conceptual and analytical tools.²⁰

¹⁶ Diana Gittins, ‘Disentangling the History of Childhood’, *Gender and History*, 1:3 (1989), 342-349.

¹⁷ A well-known example is James Clifford, ‘Travelling Cultures’, in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg et al, (Oxford: Routledge, 1992), 96-117.

¹⁸ Alison Blunt, *Domicile and Diaspora: Anglo-Indian women and the spatial politics of home* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) and Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home*, (London: Routledge 2006).

¹⁹ Especially Allison James ‘Imaging children “At home”, “In the family” and “At school”’: Movement Between the Spatial and Temporal Markers of Childhood Identity in Britain’ in *Migrants of Identity Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* eds. Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson, (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 139 – 152.

²⁰ Iain Chambers, *Migrancy Culture Identity* (London: Routledge, 1994).

That said, an inherent difficulty with placing the history of Diplomatic Service children within the transnational context of global movement is the marked differences in status between the migrants featured in the global studies literature and those studied in this thesis. With the exception of specific works on British colonial children, like that of Buettner and Pomfret, the groups discussed in the literature are mostly non-Western economic migrants or groups who have been compelled into becoming migrants: refugees, for example, or those who were literally forced into movement by the transatlantic slave trade. The identification and use, then, of the term ‘transnational professionals,’ whose family lives provide the topics for the papers collected by Anne Coles and Anne-Meike Fechter in *Gender and Family among Transnational Professionals*, is far more appropriate.²¹ Based on a series of seminars on ‘temporary professional migration’, the chapters collected by the editors are defined as part of an emerging multidisciplinary field with roots in anthropology.²² Coles’ own chapter, ‘Making Multiple Migrations: The Life of British Diplomatic Families Overseas,’ is valuable because it recognises, in line with the approach adopted in this thesis, the importance of exploring the complexities of subjective experience when studying the lives of diplomatic children, rather than evaluating the quality – whether ‘good’ or ‘bad’ - of their childhoods on the move.²³ Coles takes the findings of a survey of

²¹ Anne Coles and Anne-Meike Fechter, *Gender and Family among Transnational Professionals*, (London: Routledge, 2008). Coles and Fechter discuss their decision to use the term ‘transnational professional’ in their introduction (pp.1 –20). They find ‘migrant’ problematic owing to its generic qualities but also dismiss ‘sojourner’ because it suggests an anticipated return to the country of origin and does not indicate the high level of mobility experienced by transnational families. ‘Expatriate’ was not used because it is applied generally to Westerners and possibly, more narrowly, to commercial sector employees. ‘Elite migrants’ and ‘global capitalists’ were rejected as too emotive and not in common use by the families who were the subjects of the book. Interestingly ‘cosmopolitan’ was treated with caution because many of the individuals studied in detail were judged to have retained their own culture while living overseas.

²² The book was produced by the International Gender Studies Centre at the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford. Its Foreword was written by anthropologists Hilary Callan and Shirley Ardener.

²³ The situation of diplomats’ wives during the changes of the late twentieth century has been most commonly under the spotlight in studies of Diplomatic Service family life and Coles’ (she was a diplomatic wife herself) piece does subject the position of wives to further discussion. However, in their foreword, Callan and Ardener, whose pioneering work during the 1980s did much to shape this field of study, acknowledge that ‘the voice of children, which was routinely muted in management thinking in the past, receives valuable coverage’ in the papers contained in this volume.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office [FCO] family life conducted in 2004 as her subject. This significantly postdates this thesis' time frame but illustrates the changes and continuities in diplomatic culture discussed in the preceding chapters. Gordon's discussion of the 'Shell Ladies Project' and Walsh on expatriate married couples in Dubai shed light on the role of marriage within the lives and careers of transnational professionals and the ways in which expatriates work to create a semblance of 'home'.²⁴ Rosalind Eyben gives a detailed description of gender relations and expectations among the professionals who populate what she terms "Aidland" – the overseas world of Westerners employed by international not-for-profit organisations.²⁵ Most pertinent to this thesis is Moore's exploration of the pupils and parents of the German school in London, which considers not only the way in which children at school overseas relate to their host environment and to one another but the ways in which parents work to construct and thus take pride in their children's sophisticated international personas.²⁶

This satisfaction exhibited by transnational parents in the cosmopolitan sophistication of their children is a theme that emerges in two other works by social anthropologists which have great resonance for the study of British Diplomatic Service children. Roger Goodman's study of *Japan's International Youth* deals with the experiences of Japanese children (known in Japanese as *kikokushijo*) removed from their native culture to travel with their parents whose employment (usually by the well-known Japanese multinational companies who enjoyed significant growth during the late 20th century) took the whole family overseas.²⁷ Goodman reminds the reader that

²⁴See for instance: Leonie Gordon 'The Shell Ladies Project: Making and Remaking the Home' and Katie Walsh 'Travelling Together? Work, Intimacy, and Home amongst British expatriate couples in Dubai' in Coles and Fechter *Gender and Family* pp. 21-41; pp. 63-85.

²⁵ Rosalind Eyben, 'Becoming a Feminist in Aidland', in Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family*, pp. 149-171.

²⁶ Fiona Moore, 'The German School in London, UK: Fostering the Next Generation of National Cosmopolitans', in Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family*, pp. 85-103.

²⁷ Roger Goodman, *Japan's 'International Youth' The Emergence of a New Class of Schoolchildren*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). It is interesting to note that Goodman's study was published in 1990, at the beginning of the decade in which a number of the works on migrancy and identity discussed above were written. This perhaps illustrates a growing consciousness of and interest in the effects of constant travel on the people who experience it.

some sections of Japanese society carefully observe *nibonjiron* (which Goodman translates as ‘theories of Japanese-ness’), maintaining that the Japanese and Japanese society are ‘unique in the world – topographically, linguistically, structurally, culturally, even anatomically.’²⁸ Nonetheless, the status of the *kikokushijo*, which has attracted intense public interest in Japan since their identification in the 1960s, is similar to other groups of migrants, including Diplomatic Service children. For instance they experience problems with re-integration into their ‘home’ society on return from overseas and their parents are very conscious of their international status, something that they wish to preserve.²⁹ The *kikokushijo* can be linked to another area of social anthropology that has gained immense popularity with international families, especially those in the US: that of the ‘third culture’ which gave rise to the phenomenon of ‘Third Culture Kids’.

The term ‘third culture’ was conceived by US anthropologists Ruth Hill Useem and John Useem in 1958 to depict the phenomenon they had observed amongst Americans living and working in India, whose behaviour they had been commissioned to document. The Useems observed that the American and the Indian nationals maintained their own cultures when interacting within those groups, but that different methods of interaction and behaviour were exhibited when the two groups were brought together, thus creating a ‘third culture’. Ruth Hill Useem began to observe the behaviour among the women and children of American families in India, her own children included, and defined the children as ‘third culture kids’. Since the definition of ‘the third culture’ in 1963, awareness of the ‘Third Culture Kid’ (or TCK) discourse has gathered pace and has been a subject of lively discussion: a ‘handbook’ for ‘TCKs’ was published in 1999 and a well-maintained website echoes the views and circumstances of its community.³⁰ As will be

²⁸ Goodman, *Japan’s International Youth* p. 60.

²⁹ Goodman wrote that the *kikokushijo* experienced difficulties with bullying on reintegration into Japanese society. Goodman, *Japan’s International Youth*, pp. 56-57.

³⁰ The article that contained the now regularly quoted definition of ‘the third Culture’ was John Useem et al, ‘Men in the Middle of the third Culture: the Roles of American and Non-Western People in Cross-Cultural Administration’, *Human Organisation*, Fall 22:3, (1963), pp. 169 – 179. David C Pollock and R E Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids Growing*

seen, many aspects of the experience of children in the British Diplomatic Service resonated with the TCK phenomenon, yet the terminology of Third Culture Kids itself was not embraced by those interviewed for this thesis, nor by FCO authorities. The reasons for this are very complex and will be discussed at length in Chapter 4. In short, the ‘TCK’ is more frequently associated with International Schools, which were not widely used by British diplomats during this period, and with various aspects of US culture.

Examining the British Diplomatic Service family through a transnational lens and making use of an interdisciplinary approach offers a useful set of conceptual tools with which to make broader sense of the experiences of children in the British Diplomatic Service. The focus of this thesis is, however, historical and it is necessary to contextualise the position of the British diplomatic family within the historical scholarship concerning the period immediately succeeding World War Two. The subject of this thesis lies at the intersection of two key literatures, one exploring change and continuity in family life in post-war Britain, and the other analysing the shifting nature of Britain’s global role and the place of the Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service within it. The literature on childhood and the family in the post-war decades explores a number of tensions: for example, the way in which the family inhabited the public and private spheres and the roles fulfilled by individual family members and the relationships between them. Again, Gittins’ ‘tangled mass’ analogy is germane here.³¹ To gain an understanding of the challenges facing any family in this period we first need to understand the changes taking place in post-war society. Study of the *diplomatic* family, however, must also be conducted in terms of its deep-seated connection to an exclusive group within British society, the Diplomatic Service. In contrast to British families in general, the history of the Diplomatic Service family has not been

Up Among Worlds, (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2009), reads as part history, part theory and part self-help guide.

³¹ Gittins, ‘Disentangling the History of Childhood’, p. 342.

widely researched. Diplomatic wives have received some attention, but children have not been treated in the same way.³²

As will become clear, diplomatic families cannot be easily located in existing narratives of affluence and ‘home-centredness’ which dominate accounts of family life in post-war Britain.³³

The finer points of daily life in the UK were something of which members of diplomatic families were often largely ignorant. Some diplomatic wives reported that they had no idea where to make a claim for family allowances (later child benefit) on their return to the UK and children were ostracised at school because they were unfamiliar with the most recent television programmes. However, there can be no doubt that the wider social shifts that changed the lives of Britons from 1945 onwards also influenced those of the Diplomatic Service family, although in complex ways. Changes in the nature of Britain’s social structure after the upheaval of the Second World War, combined with the new system of education introduced by the 1944 Education Act, gave young men from the working and lower middle classes the opportunity and confidence to apply and gain acceptance into the Diplomatic Service. ‘Chairmen of the largest industrial companies, top civil servants, and churchmen between 1880 and 1970 were increasingly drawn from lower part of the middle class...’ writes Brian Harrison.³⁴ Whether these ‘meritocratic’ recruits remained true to the characteristics of their own ‘class’, however that category was understood at the time, or were pleased to move upwards into a world of greater

³² On wives, see, for example, Katie Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia: The Life and Times of Diplomatic Wives* (London: Flamingo, 1999); Beryl Smedley, *Partners in Diplomacy*, (Ferring: Harley Press, 1990). Hilary Callan, ‘The Premiss of Dedication: Notes towards an ethnography of diplomatic wives’ in Shirley Ardener (ed) *Perceiving Women* (London: Malaby Press, 1975) and Helen McCarthy, *Women of the World: The Rise of the Female Diplomat*, (London : Bloomsbury, 2014).

³³ For accounts of post-war family life in Britain see Claire Langhamer, ‘Meanings of Home in Post-war Britain’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40:2 (2005,) pp. 342 – 361; Mathew Thomson, *Lost Freedom The Landscape of the Child and the Post-war Settlement* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2013) and Laura King, *Family Men* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

³⁴ Brian Harrison, *Seeking a Role: British Society 1951 – 1970* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), p.195.

privilege – especially within the traditionally elite Foreign Office - is a question to which this thesis will return and attempt to answer.

By 1975, the mid-point of the period covered in the thesis, significant trends that were re-shaping the lives of women in Britain also affected the Diplomatic Service family. Denise Riley has shown how differences between conceptions of *women* as workers and as *mothers* were inscribed in the post-war welfare state, contending that post-war anxieties about children's war experiences (of evacuation and blitzkrieg) combined with a rise in popular psychology (especially the theories of Donald Winnicott and John Bowlby) led to women with young children being discouraged from seeking employment.³⁵ Nonetheless, increasing numbers of married women sought paid work and by the mid-1970s 'more British women were returning to paid work after having children than in any other EEC country'.³⁶ These conflicting dynamics are evident from a survey of the magazine produced by the Diplomatic Services Wives' Association which revealed that diplomatic wives were beginning to question their life of voluntary good works and official entertaining and to agitate for acknowledgement (and remuneration) from the Foreign Office and for opportunities elsewhere.³⁷

But how did developments affecting families in British society during the twentieth century - 'the century of the child' – affect British children, and diplomats' children more specifically?³⁸ The tension between child-centred methods of child-rearing (which had rapidly entered the public

³⁵ See Denise Riley, *War in the Nursery* (London: Virago Books, 1983) p. 8; Thomson, *Lost Freedom*; Michal Shapira, *The War Inside: psychoanalysis, total war and the making of the democratic self in post-war Britain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

³⁶ Brian Harrison, *Finding a Role: The United Kingdom 1970 – 1990* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2011), p.227.

³⁷ See Helen McCarthy, 'Women, Marriage and Work in the British Diplomatic Service', *Women's History Review*, 23:6 (2014), pp. 853-873.

³⁸ 'The century of the child' is often used to refer to developments in thinking about the situation of children during the twentieth century and was taken from title of a book by Swedish educationalist Ellen Key, translated into English as *The Century of the Child* and published in 1909.

consciousness as the ‘correct’ way) and the long-established patterns of separation which British colonials claimed were necessary to raise their children is one of the key themes of this thesis. Cunningham and Hendrick provide good general introductions to changes in the lives of British children during the period 1945 to 1990. Cunningham describes the high hopes invested in children in the late 1940s during the founding of the Welfare State, the relaxation in parental discipline and, linked to this, the way in which the child became central to the family, stating that parents’ hopes ‘became inseparable from the happiness of and success of their children.’³⁹ Hendrick’s short work sets the experiences of children within the framework of economic and social policies from which they benefitted between 1880 and 1990.⁴⁰

Cunningham and Hendrick touch on two further ways of thinking about childhood that have taken shape particularly since the 1970s: those of a loss of childhood freedom and the rise in children’s rights. Mathew Thomson explores both themes in his major 2013 study, *Lost Freedom*. Thomson seeks to explain the change in attitudes that led to children’s lives becoming more constrained; he considers the ‘landscapes’ of childhood, how they became centred on home and how this was made possible within the structure of the ‘postwar settlement’.⁴¹ Thomson’s work is congruous with major themes in this thesis – of children’s landscapes, for instance, and of home and belonging, although, as will become clear, for diplomats’ children home and belonging could be a complicated concept.

Historians have studied the global movement of children during the twentieth century. For example, Boucher’s *Children of Empire*, cited above, explores the sponsored migration schemes

³⁹ See Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (London: BBC Books, 2006): p.178; pp.198 – 201; p. 215.

⁴⁰ Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society 1880-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁴¹ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*.

that took British children to remoter parts of the empire and later to commonwealth countries from the late nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth.⁴² The period directly preceding the Second World War and the war years themselves were also characterised by children on the move and British children – especially city children - were introduced to children from outside the UK for the first time. Among these, for example, were the 4000 Basque children who were allowed entry to the UK seeking sanctuary from the Civil War in Spain in 1937. They acted as forerunners to the far better known *kindertransports* which brought Jewish and other children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia whose cultural or religious beliefs put them in danger of Nazi persecution.⁴³ During the war years British children themselves experienced profound changes of circumstance when government evacuation schemes removed city children into the countryside to escape the effects of aerial bombardment. Some children went further afield – to the Commonwealth - as a result of the government sponsored Children’s Overseas Reception Board (CORB) scheme.⁴⁴ B S Johnson, who collected the memories of a group of former evacuees in 1968, revealed the feelings of bitterness and sorrow maintained by many. Many of those recollections find an echo in the interviews conducted with former diplomatic children for this thesis. It was not so much the family separation experienced by the evacuated children that resulted in anger as the expectation that everything would return to normal on their return to their families and the collective sensation that a gulf of understanding had formed between adults and children that could not be breached. The separation experienced

⁴² Boucher, *Child Migrants*, see also Philip Bean and Joy Melville, *Lost Children of the Empire* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

⁴³ The Basque children were granted entry into the UK for a limited time, on the condition that they returned to Spain once the war was over. For their history see the website of the Basque Children of ’37 Association www.basquechildren.org. (accessed 01/08/2016). On the *kindertransports* see Mark Harris and Deborah Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2001); for oral history accounts of the children’s experiences; for a more in depth analysis of British government policy towards refugee children, the *kindertransports* and the relationship between government and Jewish aid organisations, see Judith Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back: The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain 1938 – 1945* (Purdue IN: Purdue University Press, 2012).

⁴⁴ John MacNicol in ‘The effect of the evacuation of school children on official attitudes to state intervention’ in Harold L. Smith (ed), *War and Social Change: British society and the second world war*, (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1986), outlines the short and long term effects of civilian evacuation on British children, often from working class families.

by these families bears similarities to the experiences of Diplomatic Service children: for instance, in the ways evacuees struggled to adjust to ‘normal’ life when the war was over.⁴⁵

Children of UK diplomats were familiar with global movement from an early age, usually travelling overseas with their parents until they returned to UK boarding schools to complete what roughly corresponds to today’s secondary education. Diplomatic children and family structures are, as has been already suggested, only sparsely covered in an area of scholarship which centres on the political and administrative development of the Diplomatic Service rather than its cultural or social aspects. In 2010 Jennifer Mori devoted a chapter of her study of British diplomatic culture in the earlier period of the late 18th and 19th centuries to ‘Family, Sex and Marriage’.⁴⁶ Otte’s *The Foreign Office Mind* explores a later period in an attempt to discover ‘the collective mindset’ of British diplomats (and their social similarities to European counterparts) in the Victorian and Edwardian periods.⁴⁷ There are, however, as yet no studies devoted primarily to the children of the Diplomatic Service, although an important chapter that introduces many of the issues they face, as well as a wider consideration of Foreign Office culture, can be found in *Daughters of Britannia* written in 1999 by Katie Hickman on the history of diplomatic wives.⁴⁸ The historical literature on women in diplomacy, including Helen McCarthy’s 2014 monograph, *Women of the World* and the important collection edited by Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James, whilst not dealing directly with the experiences of children, offers useful insights into how a

⁴⁵ BS Johnson ed., *The Evacuees*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1968). This is also discussed in Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, pp.56 – 59.

⁴⁶ Jennifer Mori, *The Culture of Diplomacy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010) makes the case for the study of a number of areas of diplomatic culture which have only received partial coverage from historians and other observers. Alongside family, sex and marriage, Mori also discusses entry into the service, favouritism, gossip and early ‘networking’.

⁴⁷ Thomas Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy 1865 – 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. ix.

⁴⁸ Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, pp. 220 – 247. Diplomatic wives’ own accounts of their travels with the Diplomatic Service during this time and the ways in which it affected their children will be covered in Section 2, on method.

history of the ‘unofficial’, ‘informal’ and intimate aspects of diplomatic life can be integrated into the mainstream narratives of the FCO and Diplomatic Service.⁴⁹

Both Elizabeth Buettner and Vyvyan Brendon have written extensively on the children of Anglo Indians (ie. those Britons who administered, traded and proselytised in Imperial India). Their work reveals many parallels between diplomatic and colonial children. This is perhaps why the two groups remain synonymous in the popular British imagination.⁵⁰ Buettner’s discussions of family separation and ‘acceptable’ schooling for Raj children in the UK are particularly informative because they introduce the reasoning behind parental justification of family separation.⁵¹ While less substantial than Buettner, Brendon nonetheless brings the discussion up to date in a number of areas. She touches for example, on the often poignant and sometimes tragic continuities of informal international fostering and covers the growing awareness amongst ‘international children’ of their own rarefied lifestyle.⁵² David Pomfret’s *Youth and Empire: Trans-Colonial Childhoods in British and French Asia*, published in 2015, supports much of Buettner and Brendon’s analyses, whilst offering insights into regional variations on some themes and including native children in his discussion.⁵³

For diplomats’ children boarding school was often the most significant aspect of family separation. Brendon, writing about Prep Schools in 2009, points out that they ‘are an area of childhood hardly mentioned in recent histories...’⁵⁴ Boarding schools appear in this thesis both as a part of children’s experience and a societal phenomenon within British life. Although

⁴⁹ Kenneth Weisbrode, ‘Vangie Bruce’s diplomatic salon: a mid- twentieth century portrait’ in *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics Since 1500*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 240 – 254.

⁵⁰ Buettner, *Empire Families* and Brendon, *Children of the Raj*.

⁵¹ Buettner, *Empire Families*, pp. 110 – 187.

⁵² Brendon, *Children of the Raj*, pp.185 – 212; pp. 241 – 273.

⁵³ Pomfret, *Youth and Empire*.

⁵⁴ Vyvyan Brendon, *Prep School Children, A class apart over two centuries*, (London: Continuum, 2009), p.7.

boarding schools existed within the state education system, they are often viewed as interchangeable with public schools; as Millham and Lambert put it: “To most people “boarding education” is simply equated with public-school education.⁵⁵ They were frequently linked, during the period under consideration, to ideas of nation, empire and class, very much in the same way the Diplomatic Service was linked to imperial values and traditions. Research on boarding and public schools between the wars emphasises their strong sense of ritual and the demands of unquestioning devotion from pupils, who often retained lifelong ties with the school and established a generational identity, thus, again, comparable to the Diplomatic Service.⁵⁶ Writing in 1967, the historian of education TW Bamford observed that Old Boys’ societies produced ‘an immense literature, almost wholly devoid of objectivity and analyses.’⁵⁷

Lambert and Millham’s *The Hothouse Society* (1968) gives a voice to the many children at that time in boarding schools of differing kinds (state, progressive and public), often with poignant results which complement those of former diplomats’ children interviewed for this thesis.⁵⁸ The Boarding School Survivors network, founded in 1990, aimed to provide ‘therapeutic help for those affected by boarding’ and called attention to the number of men in prominent positions in British public who had attended public boarding schools.⁵⁹ Its founder, Nick Duffell, published *The Making of Them*, an anti-boarding school polemic, in 2000.⁶⁰ The main criticism of the boarding school in twentieth and twenty-first century British society was its incompatibility with modern notions of good parenting, the most obvious being attachment theory. Recent books on

⁵⁵ Royston Lambert and Spencer Millham, *The Hothouse Society. An exploration of boarding school through the boys’ and girls’ own writing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p.11.

⁵⁶ PJ Rich, *Chains of Empire: English Public Schools, Masonic Children, Historical Causality and Imperial Clubdom* (London: Regency Press, 1991), deals with what Rich sees as the interconnected rituals between public schools, gentlemen’s clubs and imperial rule, albeit in an extremely eccentric and eclectic way.

⁵⁷ TW Bamford, *The Rise of the Public Schools: a study of boys’ public boarding schools in England and Wales from 1837 to the present day* (London: Nelson, 1967), p. 84.

⁵⁸ Millham and Lambert, *The Hothouse Society*.

⁵⁹ www.boardingschoolsurvivors.co.uk, (accessed 01/08/2016).

⁶⁰ Nick Duffell, *The Making of Them: the British Attitude to Children and the Boarding School System* (London: Lone Arrow Press, 2000).

public schools have been divided in their perspective. Schaverien's *Boarding School Syndrome* identifies the lasting psychological effects of a boarding school education, especially on boys. In *The Old Boys the Decline and Rise of the Public School*, however, Turner affirmed its resurgence in popularity among internationally mobile children entering the UK from overseas.⁶¹

The aim of this thesis is to reconstruct the lives of children born into the British Diplomatic Service at a time of rapid and significant social change in the UK. As can be seen from the interdisciplinary discussions presented above, their experiences have never been thoroughly documented and have never been subjected to detailed and systematic academic scrutiny. As the following chapters will show, the story of British Diplomatic Service children between 1945 and 1990 intersects with many narratives within the history of children, those of colonial service or 'Raj' children, those of public school children or even refugees, but it is, at the same time, distinct. The remainder of this introduction is devoted to a discussion of the methodological approach and the sources used to develop this analysis.

II

The decision to focus this study on the years 1945 to 1990 was made for a number of reasons. In the first place, there was a great urgency to record recollections from diplomatic children who were still living and who could recall their experiences from the early post-war period.⁶² Second, the additional amount of training and administration required to interview children and young people under the age of sixteen was considerable. The interviewer would have had to have

⁶¹ Joy Schaverien, *Boarding School Syndrome: the psychological trauma of the 'privileged' child* (London: Routledge, 2015); David Turner, *The Old Boys. The Decline and Rise of the Public School* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 2015).

⁶² This anxiety was borne out in December 2013 when the elderly 'child' of a celebrated diplomatic family agreed, with enthusiasm, to be interviewed in the New Year. However, over the Christmas period he fell ill and his family wrote to apologise that he was unable to take part in the project.

undergone a Criminal Records Bureau [CRB] check and become familiar with interview techniques developed for children, which while all perfectly possible would have been time-consuming. Also, parents would have been a required presence at the interviews, a practical difficulty and additional time concern when dealing with busy civil servants. Given that this study was conceptualised as a historical enquiry rather than an exploration of contemporary children's lives, the decision was taken to focus on adults whose diplomatic childhoods formed part of their pasts. The risk would have been that this extra level of preparation might not have yielded results of sufficient quality or quantity.⁶³ Once a substantial amount of preliminary research had been carried out it was clear that 1990 was a suitable end date. Changes in the circumstances of diplomatic children in the last two decades are touched on in the Conclusion, but it is hoped that this more recent period will become the topic of another thesis.

The historian must be willing to maintain a critical distance from his/her subject. However, the circumstances behind this thesis are slightly unusual because I was employed from 2004 until 2016 by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the institution which my research explores. It is important, therefore, to acknowledge what social anthropologists would call my 'insider-outsider' status.⁶⁴ This is not to say that, through personal involvement with the institution, I hold superior knowledge or understanding, but rather that my perspective as a researcher contains a tension between what Kirsten Hastrup has described as the insider's 'implicit' knowledge of a situation and the 'explicit' knowledge of the outsider.⁶⁵ I have striven, at all times, to question my assumptions and guard against allowing my own subjective experiences of working in the Office to shape the analysis of the historical evidence, although I am aware

⁶³ An added danger of over-investing time in younger participants is that a clear picture of the later period could be formed without the historical background from older contributors to provide a framework.

⁶⁴ Gordon, in 'Shell Ladies Project', discusses her own 'insider-outsider' status as a 'Shell child', 24-25; also Coles, 'Making Multiple Migrations', p.127.

⁶⁵ Kirsten Hastrup, 'The native voice – and the anthropological vision', *Social Anthropology*, 1: 173 – 186 (1993).

that total objectivity is impossible to achieve, particularly on the emotive topic of family. An ability to, in Leonie Gordon's words, 'figuratively step outside' the area of study is essential if patterns of behaviour are not going to be taken for granted or simply go unnoticed.⁶⁶ However, as Ann Coles has observed, the FCO is a secretive organisation and 'insider' status can be very helpful in putting FCO participants at their ease, for instance during interview.⁶⁷ In practical terms, a knowledge of the FCO's somewhat arcane staff structure and use of language saved a great deal of time in the project's initial stages.

A question central to a thesis which aims to reconstruct the lives of diplomats' children in the past is that of how a 'child' is defined. Age seems the most obvious marker: as Cunningham writes, certain 'biological imperatives' are difficult to ignore.⁶⁸ However disparate, many societies maintain 'coming of age rituals' as young people enter adulthood. PJ Rich describes the convention of young English boys graduating from prep to public school as 'a *rite de passage* as marked as a ritual of aboriginals or a calamity of the wild.'⁶⁹ The experience of secondary education is one distinguishing feature of western childhood. Aries proposed that childhood maintained as a distinct state from other age groups in society was a defining condition of modernity, and many of the qualities we would name as characterizing childhood and youth in early twenty-first century Britain - those of adulthood long deferred and extended periods of education, as well as the expectation of happiness and assumption of innocence and need for protection – are constructs of the culture within which we live.⁷⁰ An interesting view on the sometimes impenetrable nature of childhood is expressed by Stearns, who reminds his reader:

⁶⁶ Gordon, 'The Shell Ladies Project', pp. 21 – 41.

⁶⁷ Coles, 'Making Multiple Migrations', pp. 127 – 147.

⁶⁸ Cunningham, *Invention of Childhood*, p.12.

⁶⁹ Rich, *Chains of Empire*, p.84; see also Judith Okley, *Own or Other Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 133 – 161.

⁷⁰ Further exploration of the ways in which children and childhood are defined, as well as their 'meaning' in contemporary Britain and the West can be found in Cunningham, *Invention of Childhood*, pp. 12 – 16; Fass, *Childhood in the Western World*, pp. 9 – 12 and pp. 158 – 171; also Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, p.3.

‘we have all been children so we know the topics involved at least to some extent ...’ and we should not forget that the definition of a child is relative: even as adults with children of our own, we remain the children of our parents.⁷¹ It is important to keep in mind that the ‘diplomatic children’ who actively engaged in this project, either through taking part in interviews or responding to questionnaires, were adults recalling their childhoods. Perhaps, then, ‘diplomatic children’ are best described for the purpose of this thesis as individuals who were at varying stages of the lifecycle but whose parents were employed by the British Diplomatic Service and who spent time as children within the structure and conventions of the British Diplomatic Service between 1945 and 1990.⁷²

Having to rely on imperfect memories, which can be obscured by hindsight or sentiment, illustrates the difficulties regularly experienced by historians of childhood in their search for primary sources. Addressing the analytical challenges of writing children’s history, Stearns admits that children simply do not produce the same number of sources as adults.⁷³ Hendrick emphasises that evidence relating to British children is heavily dependent on social class. For example, during the modern period, social investigators tended to concentrate on working-class children to gather evidence for projects concerned with poverty, juvenile labour, criminality and other social problems. Very little documentary evidence came directly from the working-class participants themselves, however.⁷⁴ In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, middle and upper-class children might have produced their own documents, such as diaries and manuscript magazines, but these give only a very narrow impression of the lives of a small group of

⁷¹ Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, p.7.

⁷² I have allowed myself some latitude with these dates and have certainly not dismissed useful evidence as long as it fell within 5 years of the lower or upper limits.

⁷³ Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, p.5. In his inquiry into the challenges facing the historian of childhood, Stearns identifies two interconnected tensions as the uneven nature of sources and cultural differences in the experience of childhood. The experiences of two children of the same age cannot necessarily be treated as in any way similar.

⁷⁴ Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society*, p. 3. Hendrick stresses that ‘shrewd remarks’ made by middle class investigators are open to interpretation across a range of views and variables.

children.⁷⁵ One such manuscript source forms part of this thesis: *The Double J*, a magazine that was authored by John and Jennifer, the children of well-known diplomat, Pierson Dixon, between 1941 and 1948. *The Double J* gives a very particular view of the life of a tight-knit, upper middle-class intellectual family and the dominance of the Foreign Service – as it was at that time – is evident from its presentation and articles.⁷⁶

The reader cannot ever be sure of the extent to which written evidence that has apparently been produced by children has been subject to adult intervention. Some examples of children's writing are undoubtedly initiated by adults to 'showcase' the talents of their children. During the 1980s an acknowledgement of children as members of the FCO community (or perhaps due to a scarcity of articles written by adults) led to requests for children to submit written pieces for the Diplomatic Service Wives Association (DSWA) newsletter. The first spate of children's articles, encouraged to coincide with the UN's International Year of the Child in 1979/80, were published under the heading 'Views of parents and children' and offered a broad range of opinion on the children's lives, some by parents.⁷⁷ A request for further writing from children was published in the Autumn 1982 edition, urging FCO youngsters to 'write about any aspect of FCO life that interests you.'⁷⁸ The magazine continued to publish occasional batches of children's writing and as the 1980s progressed, the DSWA magazine could also be said to have become a space where the different generations of FCO families expressed their opinions about

⁷⁵ AOJ Cockshut, 'Children's Diaries' and Olivia and Alan Bell 'Children's Manuscript Magazines in the Bodleian Library' in *Children and Their Books A Celebration of the Work of Iona and Peter Opie*, eds. Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), pp. 381 – 398 and pp. 399 – 412.

⁷⁶ *The Double J* is kept by the Dixon family and it is with their kind permission that it forms part of the background of this project. Pierson Dixon (1904-1965) was a career diplomat whose career spanned the periods before and after the Second World War. Dixon's post war career saw him as UK representative to the Union Nations between 1954 - 57 (during the Suez crisis) and his final role before retirement was as British Ambassador in Paris (1960 – 65).

⁷⁷ 'Views of Children and Parents', *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1980, pp. 29 – 32; N. J. Morley, 'The International Child' *DSWA Newsletter*, Spring 1981, pp. 37 – 38.

⁷⁸ 'Calling All Under 16s' *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1982, p.23.

one another, as the apologetic 1990 poem *Parenthood*, reproduced below (Figure 1), ‘a plea to teenagers all’ suggests.⁷⁹

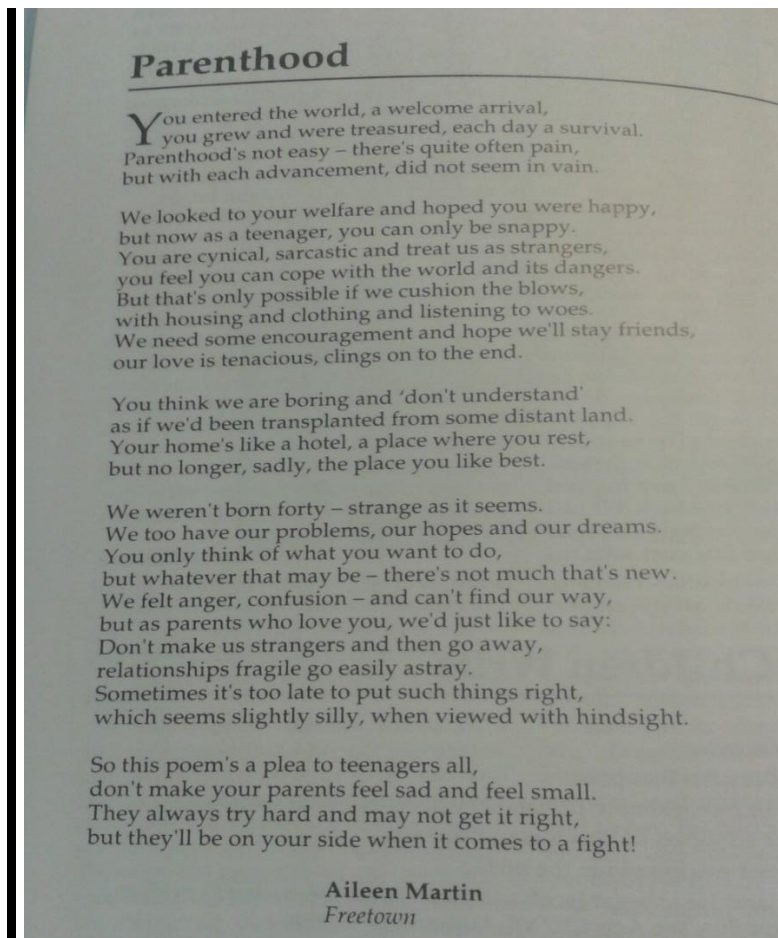


Figure 1: Parenthood DSWA Newsletter Autumn 1990

Heywood has cautioned the historian of childhood, to whom so little direct source material is available, to remember that all discourses must be subject to interpretation and not taken at face value.⁸⁰ While Stearns accepts caution is necessary he writes of the pleasures of ‘analytical agility’ open to the childhood historian working across disciplines and variables.⁸¹ Historians of

⁷⁹ Aileen Martin, ‘Parenthood’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1990, p. 100

⁸⁰ Heywood, *Childhood in the West*, p. 6 - 7.

⁸¹ Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, p. 6 - 7.

childhood recognise a need to interpret sources and to consider the preoccupations of those who produced or commissioned them. We need, therefore, to acknowledge that the many articles about diplomatic children that appear in the DSWA magazine – predominately with regard to education at all levels and travel, although health and disability are also touched on – are valuable sources but that they were no doubt ‘mediated’ through a selective editorial process.

This study has been difficult to situate within established historical narratives of the Diplomatic Service. This is because, despite the fact that the FCO has a team of historians working in Whitehall, their primary function is to maintain fields of scholarship which centre on the political and administrative work of the Foreign Office. Thus within the FCO itself very little scope exists to promote investigation into the social and cultural aspects of diplomatic life. The diplomatic family, although closely involved in diplomatic work during the period covered by this thesis, has never been considered appropriate as a subject for research. This institutional focus on questions of policy and administration has led to the many rich sources stored by the FCO Historians being under-used and to uneven availability of material at the National Archives. It is clear that many papers were not deposited there because they were not considered of sufficient importance. A further split within the FCO regarding the ownership of its family history can lead to social history projects being referred to the Diplomatic Service Families Association (DSFA). The DSFA keeps copies of the newsletter they have been producing since 1960 and these have undoubtedly been useful to this project. However, as the DSFA traditionally represented parents (it originated as the association for wives) its view of the history of Diplomatic Service children, especially during the time frame under consideration in this thesis, can be very defensive and can lead to a conflict of interests with an investigation into the children’s point of view. For example conference papers resulting from research for this thesis have been vigorously challenged as a misleading record of FCO family dynamics and children’s experience.

That the bulk of concerns for children were expressed by mothers rather than fathers during this period points to highly gendered and traditional roles upheld within the structures of diplomatic marriage and family.⁸² It is clear from the papers kept by the FCO Historians in Whitehall relating to Beryl Smedley's 1990 book *Partners in Diplomacy*, that care of diplomatic children was understood as 'women's work'.⁸³ These papers include the original questionnaires completed by wives which formed the basis of Smedley's book, alongside a collection of newspaper cuttings on diplomats and diplomatic life as well as issues confronting women during the 1980s. Other memoirs by wives concentrate on the domestic travails of the diplomatic family and usually contain a chapter or section devoted to diplomatic children. Some wives' memoirs are very obviously aimed at the popular market and self-consciously set out to provide a light-hearted and entertaining account of diplomatic life, although Coles observes that writing about their unusual lifestyle, and writing generally, is a convenient and portable career for a woman married to a husband with an international career.⁸⁴ A much greater number of memoirs were written by male diplomats, but they contain far less information about their children and it is necessary to read more of them to piece together a picture of FCO family life from a male – or father's - point of view. The existence of what Walsh refers to as the 'persistent gendering of expatriate lives' is detectable in the apparent emotional distance between male diplomats and their children and in the gendered roles of diplomatic parents.⁸⁵ If the 'overt' public sphere of diplomatic and

⁸² The formation of the Diplomatic Service Wives Association and a discussion of its many incarnations takes place in Chapter 2 'The Foreign Office and the Family'.

⁸³ *Partners in Diplomacy* acts as part history of diplomatic wives and part memoir of Smedley's travels with her husband Harold. Smedley's papers contain the responses to her printed questionnaires, with many lengthy addenda from wives, some of whom were married as early as the 1920s. For the purposes of this thesis, Smedley's collected material will be identified as originating from Box A (containing questionnaire responses) and Box B (newspaper cuttings).

⁸⁴ Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family*, p.4. Coles considers why journalism and writing are 'advocated as ideal pursuits' for diplomatic and transnational wives. The work of fashion journalist turned memoirist Brigid Keenan is singled out for mention.

⁸⁵ Walsh, 'Travelling together?', p.64.

political work is masculine, then children – whose place was in the ‘covert’ feminine sphere - existed only on its margins.

Official FCO documentation relating to families is uneven, which could be because its preservation was not considered as high priority. However, several files kept at the National Archives enable the researcher to reconstruct official attitudes towards families and the development of institutional policies which affected them. Most useful for the early section of the period are Conditions of Service documents which summarize the financial allowances that were extended to diplomatic families and most regularly detail children’s travel costs and boarding school fees, the two areas most diplomatic families commonly cited as problems.⁸⁶ FCO files also review nationality issues concerning Foreign Office children born overseas, healthcare provision for children at post and a large amount of correspondence exists (dated 1971 – 1972) concerning a third ‘concessionary’ (or subsidised) journey for children to visit parents overseas.⁸⁷ Another rich official source is the 1964 Report on Representational Services Overseas, known as the ‘Plowden Report’ after its chair, Lord Plowden.⁸⁸ The Plowden Committee papers contain direct evidence from diplomatic staff and their wives on the subject of family, and have been crucial to this study.⁸⁹

The recognition of oral history as a legitimate and valuable research methodology has grown concurrent with the time-frame covered in this project, described by Perks as enjoying a ‘post-

⁸⁶ The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA) FCO 366/3103.

⁸⁷ TNA, FCO 53/244; TNA, FO 366/3511; TNA, FCO 77/204 and TNA, FCO 77/205.

⁸⁸ Report of the Committee on Representational Services Overseas appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Plowden, 1962-63’ (Representational Services Overseas), 1963-64 Cmnd. 2276 (hereafter *Plowden Report*).

⁸⁹ These volumes are comprised of the minutes of Plowden’s Main and Sub Committees and are dated between 1962 and 1963.

Second World War renaissance'.⁹⁰ Oral history has been useful, as Thompson suggests, 'by bringing recognition to substantial groups of people who had been ignored.'⁹¹ Oral history greatly shaped the development of women's history and that of other groups outside the mainstream and has had a 'transforming impact' on the history of the family.⁹² From the outset, it was envisaged that oral history would add an essential dimension to the sources already named and the initial aim was to interview between 30 and 40 former diplomatic children, which seemed an appropriate number given the constraints of working as a single researcher on a PhD project. Adverts were placed in a weekly online bulletin, internal to the FCO, and on websites maintained by the Diplomatic Service Families Association and the FCO Association for retired members of the Diplomatic Service. An initial surge of interest gave a misleading impression of willingness and availability, however, and ultimately only 18 interviews took place (see Appendix 1 for brief biographical details of interviewees and correspondents). These were semi-structured life interviews that took place at a location of the participant's choice – usually in their own home. Ahead of the interviews participants were sent a pro-forma information sheet which included a suggested schedule of the kinds of questions that would shape the conversation (see Appendix 2).

Volunteers who were too busy, too far away or who made the choice not to undergo the interview process completed questionnaires, 14 in total. The questionnaire was structured around the same set of questions as the interview with some variation for respondents who were writing as parents rather than children (see Appendix 3). Some questionnaire writers indicated that they had approached the task in one sitting, trying not to deliberate over their responses while another group revealed that they had worked on them over a period of days. The questionnaires

⁹⁰ Rob Perks and Alistair Thompson (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.2.

⁹¹ Alistair Thompson, 'The Voice of the Past: Oral History', in *Oral History Reader*, pp. 25 – 31.

⁹² Thompson, 'The Voice of the Past', p.29.

are slightly more weighted towards anecdotes which have clearly been often told and polished. Some of the questionnaire responses were almost terse in their brevity and it is possible that the questionnaire format was chosen in preference to the interview in these cases so that the correspondent could maintain control of the information they were offering. Other questionnaires were notable owing to their highly emotional response, which could suggest a wish on the part of the writer divulge information without the pressures inherent in being face to face with the investigator.

It became apparent a suspicion was held by many of the interviewees that the intention of this project was to reveal memories of traumatic or difficult childhoods and to present these as a direct result of a childhood spent in the Diplomatic Service. Contributors sometimes anticipated this by making a joke about 'skeletons in the closet' as the interview began: one member of a large family immediately took the subject of the project to be 'damaged diplobrats' and communicated this to her siblings who wrote to me severally quoting the term more than once, although it had never been mentioned anywhere else. When it came to writing up the thesis I offered all correspondents the opportunity for their contribution to be anonymised. In the light of the foregoing sentences, a surprising number were happy to be named and their real names appear in the text. Those who preferred to remain anonymous have been given a pseudonym which is clearly indicated with an asterisk. I decided to do this because I felt that names, rather than initials or symbols, keep the text flowing.

The sense of unease and suspiciousness indicated by many contributors is difficult to unravel, and may have roots in loyalty to the Foreign Office as an institution, or loyalty to parents who belonged to that institution. In contrast to the work of the British Diplomatic Oral History Programme, which provides a research resource focussed on the formal careers of British

diplomats and their contribution to foreign policy, the complex and demanding nature of talking to an investigator about emotional, personal and family circumstances should not be underestimated.⁹³ This lack of certainty and feeling of exposure became evident when the idea of a witness seminar involving interviewees and academics at the Foreign Office in London was proposed. The suggestion received a reaction which amounted to a sense of grievance or breach of trust among interviewees and had to be abandoned. The formal academic process of the proposed seminar, held in the imposing surroundings of Whitehall, sat uneasily with the highly individual expressions of childhood emotions, a tension foregrounded by Linda Shopes in her writing about community oral history.⁹⁴ The level of sentiment expressed *within* the interviews, however, is a different matter and can be interpreted, like the work of Stoler and Strassler on Dutch colonial children, as a narrative on the self: a version constructed from ‘scripted, storied narratives.’⁹⁵ Placed alongside the other sources outlined above, however, a reconstruction of the diplomatic child’s experiences is possible using oral testimonies. These are available, as Hendrick has written, ‘via whispers and muted articulations, albeit ... in the form of adult recollections.’⁹⁶

II

In conclusion, this thesis is the first detailed study of the British Diplomatic Service family in the late twentieth century with special reference to its children, and is based on a wide range of sources and approaches. Although primarily historical, it has been necessary to read across

⁹³ The British Diplomatic Oral History Project (BDOHP) <https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/archives/collections/bdohp/> contains around 150 interviews with retired diplomats who had achieved high rank.

⁹⁴ Linda Shopes, ‘Oral History and the study of communities’ in *Oral History Reader*, Perks and Thompson, pp. 261 – 271.

⁹⁵ Ann-Laura Stoler and Karen Strassler ‘Memory Work in Java A cautionary tale’ in *Oral History Reader*, Perks and Thompson, pp. 283 – 309. Stoler and Strassler caution the oral history practitioner to guard against familiar stories related by former colonials that were perhaps suggested by nostalgia or literary representations of colonial life. Of particular interest to this project is what Stoler and Strassler term the ‘popular romance of the beloved and nurturing servant’.

⁹⁶ Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society*, p.5.

disciplines in order to make sense of the often singular lives of diplomatic families which are highly influenced by the institution that employs one or more parents. This thesis makes an important contribution to the history of childhood, and especially to our understanding of children's relationship with employing institutions, as well as to the lives of 'transnational' children who experienced global mobility.

The thesis shows that while Foreign Office children seemed to be, in common with the institution itself, 'behind the times,' they were in many ways at the forefront of a lifestyle which has stimulated related writing from handbooks on 'Third Culture Kids' to the work of postmodern anthropologists and scholars of transnational migration. A study of diplomatic children also provides a new focus for students of diplomatic history and the social history of the structure and function of the Diplomatic Service. Despite the fact that their early lives were dictated by the Conditions of Service set down by an organisation perhaps over-fond of regulations, very little about children can be found within existing literature on the Foreign Office. Looking, then, at the FCO through the lens of children and families allows us to rethink familiar narratives in its institutional history.

Chapter Overview

Chapter One provides a basic introduction to the Diplomatic Service and outlines how, from its courtly inception, a contribution to its work was demanded from the entire family. The origins of this attitude and the development of its customs are outlined by Jennifer Mori. Through work on colonial children and families, including that of Elizabeth Buettner, we are able to build a picture of diplomatic children during the nineteenth century and trace the foundations of the

conventions to which they were subject during the period under consideration. The chapter goes on to inspect formal developments in pastoral care and family policy internal to the Foreign Office. These were greatly accelerated after 1945 following the FCO's attempts to recruit staff from wider social backgrounds and a corresponding influx of staff who were neither in possession of personal wealth nor schooled in the sacrifices taken for granted by colonial administrators.

The remaining chapters adopt a thematic structure, the themes having emerged as the most significant aspects of the experiences of diplomats' children in the source material, and especially the interviews. The aspect of diplomatic family life named as the most difficult by all family members, Separation, provides the topic for Chapter Two. It describes how Diplomatic Service families maintained a tradition of sending their children away to school into the late twentieth century, long after societal changes in the UK made this an unfashionable and undesirable choice. It argues that these separated families were not representative of UK values in the way that their parents' role within the FCO understood them to be. This chapter also introduces the theme of emotional resilience, which was seen as an essential part of service life and recurs as part of each theme.

The third chapter, on Transience, examines the impressions of children who did not go to boarding school but travelled with their parents, either before they went to schools or because they remained with their family and attended international schools. Again the emphasis is on the way that FCO families diverged from the patterns of family life becoming increasingly common in post-war Britain and the way in which their continued migrations set them apart. Chapter Three also explores the suspicions expressed by FCO officials towards International Schools. It shows that although some FCO families rejected boarding school because they saw it as a sign of

privilege, international schools were already becoming symbolic of an international elite, manifested in the phenomenon of the ‘third culture kid.’

Chapter Four discusses how the experiences of separation and multiple migrations contributed to identity formation amongst diplomats’ children. It shows that an expression of confidence and sophistication was often a veneer for a more complex sense of self. The chapter also considers whether diplomatic parents wished their children to conform to a certain social ‘type’ which corresponded to popular perceptions of the Diplomatic Service. The way that children were linked to the Foreign Office through their parents’ representative work might lead the researcher to expect to discover a strong sense of national identity – that is ‘Britishness’ - within this group, but often the opposite was true.

The fifth chapter on Home and Belonging further develops some of the topics considered in the preceding chapter, notably those of the significance of a national ‘homeland’ and the children’s confused notions of this concept. It explores the meaning of home defined by anthropologists as lying at the centre of family life, and questions how diplomatic children were able to make sense of the concept of home when their physical homes were impermanent, unfamiliar and sometimes shared with high profile guests, blurring the public and private domain. Finally, the conclusion summarises the key findings and claims of the thesis and considers how future research might further develop.

1. THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND THE FAMILY

When Marcus Cheke offered ‘*Advice... for a member of His Majesty’s Foreign Service on his first appointment to a post abroad*’ in 1949, he unintentionally highlighted the rigid patriarchal hierarchy of a British overseas mission. ‘The whole Embassy forms a sort of family,’ he wrote, ‘... of which His Majesty’s Ambassador is *pater familias*...’⁹⁷ Sixteen years later, in 1965, a successive volume published by the Diplomatic Administration Office offered further advice for diplomats working overseas, keen to emphasise the centrality of the family to British life. It stated: ‘we pride ourselves in this country that our national life is based on family life and it is therefore only right that our representatives should be seen to be leading full and obviously happy lives in their own homes.’⁹⁸ It is evident from these statements that the family, during the period covered by this thesis, was never far from the forefront of the FCO’s official self-image. It could either be imagined as a structural model, or as an exemplar of a way of life which could double as a kind of British export. This chapter provides an exploration of the Foreign Office’s complex attitudes to its families through an examination of official documentation.

Following a brief introduction to the administrative structures of the Foreign Office, the chapter provides a historical overview of the origins of the ‘Embassy Family’. The preceding chapter noted that Foreign Office sources regarding families is patchy. However, sufficient material

⁹⁷ Marcus Cheke, *Guidance on foreign usages and ceremony, and other matters, for a member of His Majesty’s Foreign Service on his first appointment to a Post Abroad*, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1949. Anne Coles ‘Making Multiple Migrations’ in Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family*, pp. 128-129, devotes a section to the ‘Mission as family’ and speculates that this ‘patriarchal and hierarchical’ notion has endured and been useful into the twenty first century in small posts.

⁹⁸ Barbara Salt, Diplomatic Administration Office *Guidance to Diplomatic Service and other Officers, and Wives, posted to Diplomatic Service missions overseas Or “Some “do’s” and “don’ts” of Diplomatic Etiquette and other relevant matters* 1965.

exists to enable an analysis of the issues that shaped official attitudes and policies and the ways in which these most affected diplomatic children. Two attempts to ‘democratise’ the civil service, which led to the eventual admission of recruits from the middle and lower-middle classes, form part of the backdrop to this story. The first was the Royal Commission on the Civil Service that pre-dated the First World War, and the second a White Paper produced in 1943.⁹⁹ Newcomers who came from a lower social class than former generations of Diplomatic Service recruits often struggled to maintain the high standards of living characteristic of diplomats, and reacted with disquiet to traditional modes of diplomatic family life (for instance the apparent acceptance of long periods of family separation). These class and cultural differences are revealed in the evidence submitted to the Plowden Committee between 1962 and 1963 by employees and their wives which shaped the report’s findings (published in 1964).¹⁰⁰ The Foreign Service Wives Association (FSWA), was formed in 1960, and its confidence was immediately enhanced by the fact that the Plowden Committee sought its opinions on family and other aspects of FCO life two years later. The FSWA saw the financial allowances granted by Plowden, in particular the second concessional holiday journey for children, as a major success. The chapter moves on to explore the impact of Plowden in bringing about further changes to FCO policy and thinking regarding its families. As the 1960s and 1970s progressed, the pace at which the conditions of diplomatic family life improved gathered speed. Following a survey of documents relating to a third subsidised journey for children from boarding school to overseas posts which were circulated worldwide during 1971 and 1972, the chapter ends with a brief discussion of more

⁹⁹See McCarthy, *Women of the World*, pp. 91-92. Women were admitted to the Foreign Service as diplomats from 1946, although male recruits almost totally outnumbered females. Thus when we examine the diplomatic families who either took part in this project or provided evidence via memoirs and other published works, the father is the most likely family member to be directly employed by the Foreign Office. The marriage bar, that required women to resign on marriage, was lifted only in 1973.

¹⁰⁰ The evidence submitted by FCO employees, was collected by the Foreign Service Association, a forerunner of the Diplomatic Service Association trade union which represents ‘policy entrants’, an intake group formerly known as the ‘fast stream’ can be found at *RSO (62) 47 Foreign Service Evidence to the Sub Committee on Terms of Service*. Representatives of the Foreign Service Wives’ Association gave evidence separately. This evidence can be found at *RSO (62) 54 SWA Evidence to the Sub Committee on Terms of Service* both in *Committee on Representational Services Overseas Evidence RSO (62) 31 – 59*. This evidence is kept by the FCO Historians in Whitehall. It has not been sent to TNA.

recent concerns. Around the time of the debate surrounding the third journey, accelerating social change in the UK and the emergence of ‘teenagers’ as a social group sparked concerns among diplomatic parents for their older children. Younger children also came under the spotlight in campaigns for nursery education at post. For the first time in the late 1980s, articles on children with special needs appeared in the DSWA newsletter, alongside other arguably more sensitive topics, such as adoption and divorce.

The Embassy Family

The elite social origins of the Diplomatic Service, with their connections to courtly practice, have been extensively researched by historians. Jennifer Mori notes that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, ‘embassies lay within the personal gift of the crown, and diplomacy was one of several routes to royal favour.’¹⁰¹ Valerie Cromwell describes the nineteenth-century Diplomatic Service as ‘a world apart’ – as much from other departments within the British civil service as from British society more generally. By 1815, Cromwell states, the ‘peculiar nature of the Embassy...had become established.’¹⁰² This peculiarity manifested itself in the exclusive climate of the embassy, to which members of the aristocracy were ideally suited. It included as its *modus operandi* the apparently informal exchange of ideas in social settings which led ultimately to the blurring of public and private boundaries so that that diplomats appeared to be enjoying a distinct way of life as well as doing a job.¹⁰³ This prestigious atmosphere continued into the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, with Sir David Kelly declaring that when he joined the Diplomatic Service in 1919

¹⁰¹ Mori, *The Culture of Diplomacy*, p.21.

¹⁰² Valerie Cromwell, ‘A world apart: gentleman amateurs to professional generalists’ in *Diplomacy and World Power Studies in British Foreign Policy 1890 – 1950*, (eds) Michael Dockrill and Brian McKercher,, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.2.

¹⁰³ Valerie Cromwell, ‘A world apart: gentleman amateurs to professional generalists’ in Michael Dockrill and Brian McKercher,, *Diplomacy and World Power Studies in British Foreign Policy 1890 – 1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.8.

following military service it ‘was regarded as part of the King’s household and not really part of the Civil Service at all.’¹⁰⁴

Alongside the formation of a ‘*corps d’elite*’, the early embassy was structured, as Kelly, quoted above, indicated, along household lines. ‘Surrogate fatherhood was conferred’ on envoys who were expected to establish and equip their own embassies.¹⁰⁵ Family relationships did often exist, with male secretaries related by marriage or known through friendship. The concept of the embassy staff as a family ‘and a particular type of family at that’ persisted well into the twentieth century, according to Cromwell.¹⁰⁶ It was nonetheless unusual for diplomats to marry early. The expense of maintaining a diplomatic mission together with a wife and family was often prohibitive. In addition, the material disadvantage that was to dog diplomacy as a profession into the future, that of being notoriously poorly paid, was already well known. It was not unusual, then, for the eighteenth-century diplomats described by Mori to remain single or, if they were married, to live apart from their wives. The demands of early diplomacy included many aspects of basic housekeeping which were unappealing to the potential spouse. Mori offers a full discussion of this obligation at the outset of her chapter on the family and marriage. It is notable from Mori’s research that facets of the ‘feminine’ or ‘covert’ side of diplomacy, such as preparing the home for receiving guests, managing servants and overseeing interior decoration were once the responsibility of male employees. In later years these tasks would pass to diplomatic wives leaving male diplomats to manage the ‘overt’ or ‘masculine’ side of diplomacy which included representing the UK overseas and planning and implementing foreign policy. In addition, as Mori comments, ‘few women wished... to live in social and linguistic isolation abroad’.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Sir David Kelly (1891-1959) joined the Diplomatic Service in 1919 and served in a number of overseas posts before and during World War Two. He ended his career in 1951 as Ambassador to Soviet Moscow, where he found he was unable to exercise the traditional arts of diplomacy. His autobiography *The Ruling Few, or The Human Background to Diplomacy*, contains a great deal of compelling detail about the Diplomatic Service during the early twentieth century. For instance Kelly describes the recruitment process in fascinating detail.

¹⁰⁵ Mori, *The Culture of Diplomacy*, 17 – 18.

¹⁰⁶ Cromwell, ‘A world apart: gentleman amateurs to professional generalists’, p.2.

¹⁰⁷ Mori, *The Culture of Diplomacy*. p.62.

On the eve of the nineteenth century the united diplomatic couple was beginning to be seen as desirable and, as that century wore on, the prototype of the diplomatic couple working in tandem, like those colonial couples described in the work of Procida, was established.¹⁰⁸ As both members of the partnership became more involved in diplomatic life at post, the practice of sending children to school or suitable foster care in Britain began to develop as standard procedure. The reasons that early diplomatic parents gave for these often long-range and lengthy separations (among them the fear of racial and social ‘contamination’ and concerns for physical health) show striking continuities with the experiences of the nineteenth-century colonial children who form the subject of Buettner’s *Empire Families*.¹⁰⁹ The pattern of small children travelling to post with their parents before being sent ‘home’ to boarding school for secondary education has been described as the dominant practice right up until the late 1980s by contributors to this project. Thus it is a striking continuity, reinforced by the comparable family traditions that grew up around British colonial administrators.

Buettner claims that ‘demonstrating sufficient affluence’ in keeping with an elite colonial lifestyle was a matter of unease for colonial families in India during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹⁰ It was also a problem for diplomatic families. According to Mori, official assistance was provided for the maintenance of accommodation, household expenses and domestic staff from 1815. However, the combined expense of travel and school fees, as well as occasional recourse to paid ‘guardians’ in Britain must have been the cause of some apprehension and,

¹⁰⁸ Mori notes that by 1780 ‘a suitable wife was starting to be seen as a necessary partner’ *The Culture of Diplomacy* p.70 and 35 years later in 1815 ‘marriage had become pre-requisite for senior posts.’ (p.71) Mary A Procida, *Married to the Empire, gender politics and imperialism in India, 1883 – 1947* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 13.

¹⁰⁹ Mori, *The Culture of Diplomacy*, p.69, discusses the different ages at which children were sent to Britain (for education or more suitable living conditions) according to gender. See also, Buettner’s *Empire Families*, pp. 74-90.

¹¹⁰ Buettner, *Empire Families*, p.110.

according to Buettner, ‘was ultimately achieved only with great financial difficulty.’¹¹¹ Buettner notes that the government began to meet the cost of journeys to and from the sub-continent for parents and children only during the interwar period.

It is difficult to conclude from Buettner’s account of the financial demands made on colonial administrators whether their school fees were partially or wholly covered by government allowances, but it seems that they were not.¹¹² At the Foreign Office, criticisms arising from the 1914 Royal Commission on the Civil Service (the MacDonnell Commission) resulted in the discontinuation of the qualification of ‘a minimum net income of £400 a year’ mentioned by David Kelly in favour of a salary paid to new recruits.¹¹³ In light of this, the Foreign Office could widen its field of recruitment to include men from more diverse social backgrounds.¹¹⁴ A White Paper, *Proposals for the Reform of the Foreign Service*, published in January 1943, reflected continuing concerns at the Foreign Office that its recruitment pool was too socially narrow. The potential for stagnation caused by older diplomats who remained in post while the recruitment of younger applicants was frozen owing to wartime conscription also remained of concern. The White Paper aimed to ‘re-equip the Foreign Service to meet modern conditions’. Essential for encouraging a more egalitarian workforce was the introduction of a new selection process which eliminated the necessity for ‘special study’. These preparatory lessons (which often required overseas travel and language tuition) for the Foreign Office entrance exam had in the past

¹¹¹ Ibid, p.111.

¹¹² Ibid, pp. 173 – 176, Buettner conveys the agonising choices families made in order to provide their sons with a useful education, often preparing them for an imperial career, and her analysis suggests that no government allowances were available (although children of families who represented other organisations, such as missionary societies, often attended schools which were aided by donations from the societies themselves).

¹¹³ Kelly, *The Ruling Fem*, pp. 75 – 77, offers a useful account of the Foreign Service selection process in 1913. Kelly began his career in 1919 around the time that the MacDonnell Commission’s recommendations were put into place. See also McCarthy, *Women of the World*, pp. 91-92, and Cromwell, ‘A world apart’, pp. 3-4, for the effects of the Commission’s findings on Foreign Office culture.

¹¹⁴ McCarthy offers an informative account of attitudes to the Foreign Office in the wake of the MacDonnell Commission and WWI in *Women of the World*, pp. 91-92.

required private means.¹¹⁵ The 1943 Paper also observed that, owing to a recruitment freeze during the war, the first cohort of post war recruits would be selected according to a ‘scheme of special entry.’¹¹⁶ It was anticipated that these applicants would be judged on ‘their record of service during the war and on ... showing before an interviewing board.’ This measure gave rise to the enlistment of young men who had, for example, excelled at languages during their military career or worked for military intelligence; although from far less illustrious backgrounds than pre-war entrants, some of them nonetheless enjoyed distinguished careers. Another area in which the White Paper was keen to make social advances was in opening the Service to women, and this step was finally taken by the post-war Labour government in 1946.¹¹⁷

Although Cromwell mentions that by 1933 the costs incurred by embassies overseas had been transferred from the jurisdiction of the Foreign Office to that of the Board of Works, it is hard to discern, from the evidence available, whether allowances existed within the Foreign Office to support families and what these were. For example, a surviving circular dated July of the same year provided an addendum to a ‘Terms of Service’ document and stated that ‘the most economical route must be taken’ by sons under the age of 18 who were being educated at post, but that cabin accommodation would not be paid for out of state funds.¹¹⁸ It is hard to interpret this document without adequate supporting papers; however, the fact that the cost of a cabin would not be met suggests that the journey itself was in fact paid for. More can be deduced from a set of revised Foreign Service Regulations from 1946 which confirm that an annual Education Allowance of £150 was available to assist with boarding school costs for the first two

¹¹⁵ Proposals for the Reform of the Foreign Service, White Paper of January 1943, *Cmd 6420*. (Hereafter, 1943 White Paper). SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED REFORMS II: 14 – 15.

¹¹⁶ 1943 White Paper. INTRODUCTION, 7.

¹¹⁷ A particularly apt example is Sir Michael Weir (1925 – 2006), the son of Scottish schoolmaster, whose facility for languages enabled him to study Persian at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London before joining the RAF. When he joined the Foreign Service after the war he studied Arabic at the Middle East Centre for Arabic Studies (MECAS) in Lebanon and became one of the foremost Arabists of his generation, ending his career as Ambassador to Cairo.

¹¹⁸ TNA, FO 366/ 3103.

children, although this would not appear to be adequate to cover the full cost.¹¹⁹ The 1946 Foreign Service Regulations also note that, unless a family travelled together, the ‘officer will be responsible for the travelling expenses of his wife and family.’¹²⁰

‘My son aged ten flew to England from India and we did not see him again for a year – and then we had to pay his fare!’¹²¹ This woman’s experience, recalled in the 1980s, illustrated that the FCO worked on the assumption that families were able to meet the cost of travel from private means, while also suggesting that the financial and emotional imposition on families was high. Children’s return journeys to and from post were first subsidised in 1955, although the circular that contained this news regretted that boarding school allowances would not be increased.¹²² So, despite their existence, allowances were often insufficient for an officer who was unable to make up the shortfall from private means. David Kelly commented that his ‘official pay covered only about three quarters of my total expenses – and still less if I was in the Foreign Office [rather than overseas].’¹²³ But how did this insufficiency in pay and allowances affect the cohorts who joined the Diplomatic Service in the decades after the Second World War?

The Plowden Report

‘The recent Plowden report, which is a review headed by Lord Plowden, on the workings of the Foreign Office, is very good. At last someone seems to understand the problems of having to

¹¹⁹ TNA, FO 366/1644. Buettner, (*Empire Families*, p.166) discusses the cost of boarding school fees, quoting the fees charged at a ‘mid-range’ school, Cheltenham College, which were between £84 and £103 for boarders in 1912. Eton and Harrow – schools at the top of the range, the former often favoured by Foreign Office – charged £166 or £153 respectively in the same year. It seems reasonable to suppose that fees had risen considerably 34 years later and that the Foreign Office allowance did not cover the annual boarding school fee for a ‘mid-range’ school in its entirety.

¹²⁰ TNA, FO 366/1644.

¹²¹ Anonymous questionnaire, 1980s. Smedley Box A.

¹²² TNA, FO 366/3103.

¹²³ Kelly, *The Ruling Few*, p.134.

move from post to post while trying to give children a settled education,' wrote Sally James, young wife of a diplomat, in March 1964.¹²⁴ This section will explore the impact of the 1964 *Report of the Committee into Representational Services Overseas* which was seen as so beneficial to diplomatic families that it was referred to simply as 'Plowden'. This report enabled 'post 1943' newcomers to demand larger and better targeted allowances and to voice their dissatisfaction with existing practices regarding family separation. Additionally, the Plowden Report was the first investigation into Foreign Office practices to which diplomatic wives were able to contribute directly. This they did through the newly formed Foreign Service Wives Association which, since it was established in 1960, had been working to improve the lives of diplomatic wives at home and abroad. There can be little doubt that the Plowden Report was a landmark in the fortunes of the Foreign Office family; its status as a milestone is such that the researcher will sometimes find references to Pre- and Post Plowden in the sources.¹²⁵

The report was commissioned by Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in 1962, when Britain's global role was undergoing rapid and major change. Throughout the 1960s, the UK faced the dismantling of its African colonies. Financial obligations to the US following the Second World War had led to British involvement in Cold War politics, while relations with Europe were strained, with a second British application to join the European Economic Community (EEC) vetoed by France in 1963. On the national stage, traditional social hierarchies were being broken down. In 1958, for example, the last cohort of debutantes was presented at court. These cultural shifts were also being recognised at the theatre in 'kitchen sink dramas' such as *Look Back In Anger* (1956) and in the novels of Alan Sillitoe and Stan Barstow which dealt with working-class lives. To a great extent, however, the Foreign Office, always 'a world apart', managed to resist

¹²⁴ Sally James, *Diplomatic Moves: Life in the Foreign Service* (London: Radcliffe, 1995), p.13.

¹²⁵ Smedley, *Partners in Diplomacy*, p.156., quotes an anonymous diplomatic wife: 'In 1955 when our eldest daughter had to be left behind at boarding school it was pre-Plowden...'

these changes and maintained allegiance to an archaic, courtly system. Cromwell comments upon ‘the considerable assumption that established traditions and practices would continue...’¹²⁶ The implication of this was that new staff would have to adjust their behaviour to suit Foreign Office practice.

By the time the Plowden committee began to gather evidence, the Diplomatic Service entrants who had benefitted two decades earlier from the 1943 White Paper’s scheme of ‘special entry’ based on distinguished military service, and from the subsequent ‘meritocratic and democratic’ education policy of the post war Labour government, were establishing themselves as diplomats, marrying and starting families.¹²⁷ Brian Harrison describes ‘the hard-working grammar school boy who did well at Oxford or Cambridge, took the civil service examination, thereafter progressing steadily into the elite.’¹²⁸ However, just as it became necessary for Marcus Cheke’s book of etiquette, which was quoted at the beginning of this chapter, to be updated to enlighten post war recruits, the system and value of diplomatic allowances also appeared to need restructuring.

It was the intention of the Plowden Committee:

To review the purpose, structure and operation of the services responsible for representing the interests of the United Kingdom government overseas and to make recommendations having regard to changes in political, social and economic circumstances in this country and overseas.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Cromwell, ‘A world apart’, p .8.

¹²⁷ Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, p.50. provides a useful introduction to the post war Labour government’s education policy and the ‘educational landscape’ of the UK.

¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 194.

¹²⁹ *Plowden Report*, p.iv.

Its scope encompassed the Foreign Service, the Board of Trade and the Commonwealth Relations Office, and its lasting legacy in Whitehall was the recommended amalgamation of the three to be known as HM Diplomatic Service. The initial meeting of the Sub Committee on Conditions of Service in November 1962 identified a number of topics for investigation, among them 'Children'. The Sub Committee recognised that, despite the fundamental principle of the 1943 White Paper, members of staff without private means were still experiencing financial hardship. During this early discussion it was noted that 'Allowances for children's education are still badly out of line with what is needed.'¹³⁰ The need to re-examine the number and cost of concessionary journeys was also mentioned, although the Treasury's representative, Mr Hunt, constantly urged caution, reminding those present that the distribution of allowances was 'an area of great political sensitivity.'¹³¹ Presumably this was to prevent envious comparisons being made by members of the Home Civil Service and staff of other government departments whose circumstances did not qualify them for the same allowances as their diplomatic colleagues. There was also a perceived need to manage public opinion.

The formation of the Foreign Service Wives Association (FSWA) was the outcome of a small group of diplomatic wives' growing impatience with the dearth of pastoral care and other provision for 'camp followers' provided by the Service. They described their aims thus: 'Our first concern is to provide a centre to which our wives may bring their problems.'¹³² A founder member, Masha Williams, felt 'that the strain on us all was intolerable' and the introduction to the wives' written evidence to the Plowden Committee stated that 'it had been felt for some time that too little had been done in the past to help the wives and families of Foreign Service

¹³⁰ Committee on Representational Services Overseas [hereafter RSO] (C) (62) 1st meeting 12.11.62 Part 2 (c).

¹³¹ RSO (C) (62) 1st meeting 12.11.62 Part 2 (c).

¹³² 'Minutes of the Annual General Meeting', *FSWA Newsletter*, 3 July 1961, p.1.

Officers with the particular problems that confront them due to the nomadic lives they lead.¹³³ Initially they had felt, as they compiled a memorandum of problems and suggested solutions, 'like conspirators' and worried that they might be 'labelled bolshie'.¹³⁴ The high profile case of Diana Bromley, however, the wife of a diplomat who killed her two young sons and attempted to kill herself after suffering a breakdown, that made British newspaper headlines in December 1958, helped to facilitate a more sympathetic attitude towards wives and no doubt contributed to the creation of the Association a year later. In an account of their first AGM in July 1961, President Lady Rundall mentioned a circular signed by John Henniker-Major, then Head of Personnel, which 'spoke of a need for special study of the problems which confront Foreign Service wives, and of the increasing need for thinking in terms of family welfare.'¹³⁵ This last quote reinforces what Katie Walsh has termed 'the persistent gendering of expatriate lives' in the way that it automatically links wives' problems with those of family.¹³⁶ However, the evidence given to the Plowden Committee by the Foreign Service Association (FSA), a trade union that represented Diplomatic Service Officers in Branch A, demonstrates, in a striking way, that children were as much a source of concern for husbands as for their wives.¹³⁷

A more detailed look into the FSWA's evidence to the Plowden Committee gives a clearer picture of the strains on Foreign Service family life that were particularly felt by wives by the early 1960s. This was predominately the result of enforced periods of separation from children, but the financial hardship resulting from inadequate boarding school and travel allowances were regarded as adding insult to injury (as the wife quoted earlier suggested), especially among

¹³³ Masha Williams, 'Foreign Service Wives' Association: How it started' *DSWA Newsletter* Autumn 1985, pp. 52 – 54; RSO (62) 54.

¹³⁴ Williams, 'How it started', pp. 52 – 54.

¹³⁵ 'Minutes of the Annual General Meeting', *FSWA Newsletter*, 3 July 1961 p.1.

¹³⁶ Walsh, 'Travelling together?' p.64.

¹³⁷ The Foreign Service Association was the forerunner of the Diplomatic Service Association trade union which represents 'policy entrants' or 'fast-streamers', it was formed in 1960 at around the same time as the Foreign Service Wives Association. The evidence submitted to the Plowden Committee by the FSA can be found at RSO (62) 47.

officers from less privileged social backgrounds, who lacked a private income. A further reason why the ‘post-1943’ group struggled with accepted family practices within the Foreign Office could be because they did not belong to or share the tradition of colonial families who were resigned to long periods of family separation. Colonial families, whose links to imperial service often went back generations, endured its emotional trials via a rhetoric of duty and sacrifice.¹³⁸ This is covered in more detail in Chapter Two but should be mentioned in the context of recruits who were totally unfamiliar with the established rituals of colonial service (and by association ‘foreign service’) and who may have found their acceptance of separation disconcerting. Indeed, the section of FSWA evidence that dealt with the family contained the heading ‘The Problem of Children’, suggesting that the existence of children created for married couples a further area of stress in an already difficult situation. Certainly, the level of devotion demanded by the Foreign Service could be said to have created a tension which saw a mother forced to place her duty to her husband and his chosen career above her children. A talk entitled ‘Serving Abroad’ given to diplomatic wives in November 1960 by Lady Kirkpatrick, wife of the Permanent Under Secretary, echoing this sentiment, included this advice:

I have chosen the title *Serving Abroad* because *service* is the key note: and if we realise that the service is more important than we are, we shall do our work abroad properly.¹³⁹

When it came to give evidence to the Plowden Committee, the FSWA asserted that ‘All responsible parents are deeply disturbed by the enforced separation from their children.’¹⁴⁰ They understood, they said, the practical reasons why boarding school was often more suitable for older Diplomatic Service children:

¹³⁸ Buettner, *Empire Families*, pp. 111 – 114.

¹³⁹ Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, p. 64.

¹⁴⁰ RSO (62) 54.

...firstly to keep up with the demands of an increasingly higher educational standard at home, secondly, to provide some continuity and stability, thirdly, as an insurance in case they are sent to a post where there are no educational facilities.¹⁴¹

Yet the FSWA rejected the impositions that were understood, in Lady Kirkpatrick's address, to be an integral part of diplomatic life. They knew that they, as wives, would not be entirely exempt but were not prepared to accept them on behalf of their children.

It could be argued that, as the parents chose the Foreign Service life, they must make the sacrifice involved ... but in this case it is the children who, through no fault of their own, have to pay the penalty.¹⁴²

The views expressed by the FSWA members reflected neither the English middle-class tradition of sending children to boarding school (which is fully explored in Chapter Two), nor the colonial family's sense of 'parental sacrifice', which was said by the Commonwealth Relations Office representative to Plowden to have 'permeated the whole system.'¹⁴³ It would also be an oversimplification to assume that this point of view belonged to an entirely 'new' and 'younger' diplomatic generation. With the Foreign Office's enthusiasm for hierarchy in mind, it can reasonably be assumed that many FSWA members, especially those occupying higher positions, would be older wives of more established diplomats who had had greater experience of separation and were likely to hold less liberal attitudes to family life. The relaxation of attitudes towards parental discipline and growing disapproval of family separation following wartime experiments in evacuation against the background of childcare advice from 'experts' like John Bowlby may also have informed the wives' position, or created a more sympathetic attitude for

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ RSO (62) Sub Committee on Terms of Service 12/11/1962

their expression.¹⁴⁴ In the light of this ‘enforced’ separation, the FSWA drew the Committee’s attention to the importance of school holidays for Foreign Service children, and the following request was made:

The only satisfactory solution is for the children to rejoin their parents for each holiday. Yet without financial help this is virtually impossible for all those whose fathers are serving some distance from the United Kingdom.’ For Her Majesty’s Government to pay the air fares of children rejoining their parents three times a year instead of once would be a most valuable reform.¹⁴⁵

There can be no doubt that Foreign Service Association testimony, submitted in the autumn of 1962 was far more direct in its criticisms and demands. An outspoken document, it listed a number of grievances which had ostensibly been taken from letters (anonymised for the report) sent to the Association over a period of time. Possibly, FSA members felt (in common with the wives when they formed their Association) that a low level of subterfuge was needed in case their negative comments led to them being perceived as ‘bolshy’ and became detrimental to success in their diplomatic careers. Many of the comments recorded in the FSA document pointed towards financial hardship. Its section on children began by noting that ‘the problems of raising and educating a family under the conditions of life in the Service is the one which worries more members than any other.’ It continued: ‘the problem threatens to become intolerable when this is coupled with inadequate financial provision.’¹⁴⁶ Zara Steiner’s observation that ‘... Plowden in 1963 ... still found differences and distinctions between types of post and the kinds of people who filled them...’ is striking in the context of the FSA’s frequent referral to

¹⁴⁴Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society*, p. 33.

¹⁴⁵ RSO (62) 54.

¹⁴⁶ RSO (62) 47.

colleagues with private means.¹⁴⁷ It could indicate a tension between diplomats who were privately wealthy and those from less affluent backgrounds. Some of these comments are heavy with sarcasm, like the following footnote about the word ‘concessionary’ that described children’s ‘concessionary’ holiday journeys:

The word ‘concessionary’ is indicative. The impartial observer might think it to imply that Foreign Service Officers had no business, unless they had private means, to expect to see their children of school age at any time in the course of a tour of duty abroad, and that the allowance was provided with some reluctance.¹⁴⁸

Elsewhere FSA members expressed the view that the insufficiency of travel, boarding school and accommodation allowances might ultimately lead to them to consider a change of career. Thus the inability to fund a family on a diplomatic salary and allowances could prove a significant barrier to career mobility. It is possible that the financial concerns faced by the diplomats who submitted evidence to the Plowden Committee via the FSA may also have added to the emotional burden experienced by diplomatic parents. The perceived inability by the male diplomats to provide for their own families is potentially very wounding in terms of their self-image as parents.¹⁴⁹ As the work of Laura King on fatherhood has shown, a growing emphasis on fathers taking pleasure and pride in their role as family provider began to develop from the 1930s and was strengthened by the emotional intensity of family separations during the war years.¹⁵⁰ King’s claim that fathers’ emotional involvement with their children also increased during this period presents difficulties in terms of the demands of separation.¹⁵¹ As the parent who was

¹⁴⁷ Zara Steiner, ‘The Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Resistance and Adaptation to Changing Times’, in *The Foreign Office and British Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Gaynor Johnson, (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 25.

¹⁴⁸ FSO (62) 47 FSA Evidence to Committee

¹⁴⁹ Nonetheless, a sense of outrage was often eventually overcome. The ‘process of acculturation’ that Steiner describes in ‘Resistance and Adaptation to Changing Times’ (p.23) clearly influenced many diplomats to re-think their divided loyalty between FO and family.

¹⁵⁰ King, *Family Men*, pp. 16 – 49.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 89 – 122.

always the official employee of the FCO in this period, fathers did not have as much opportunity to provide emotional support to their children (for instance they were not able accompany them to the UK to settle them at boarding school) as their wives did. This often intensified the feeling of distance diplomatic children felt between themselves and their fathers.

The FSA paper exposes a set of highly emotional reactions towards the inevitable separations of diplomatic family life and the notion of parental sacrifice. The all-encompassing character of the Foreign Office is criticised: 'The Senior Branch of the Foreign Service requires that the officer and his wife should virtually devote their lives to the Service... The arrangements for their children's upbringing must be such as the service permits.'¹⁵² An arresting footnote to the FSA paper pointed to 'the number of "problem children" of Foreign Service officers who would not have been problem children if the father's vocation had kept him permanently in the United Kingdom is... not susceptible of ... arithmetical assessment but it is ... nonetheless disturbing.'

¹⁵³ This use of the label 'problem children' demonstrates the growing place of psychology in the understanding of family welfare and an awareness that Diplomatic Service life was not always good for children.¹⁵⁴ This sense that diplomats' children could be adversely affected by their unsettled lives resurfaces in other writing about the Foreign Office. Hickman, for instance, reported that in the 1950s and 60s 'Counsellors at the Family Welfare Department at the Foreign Office had seen increasing numbers of diplomatic children coming to them for help.' Later accounts of life at the Foreign Office also made this connection between the diplomatic lifestyle and mental health problems in children. Whilst the evidence for this is inconclusive later

¹⁵² RSO (62) 47.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ In the years before the Second World War psychologists of child development effected a shift from the belief that juvenile delinquency was a result of environment – especially industrial urban environments – and was instead attributed to individual psychology. For a good discussion of 'the problem child' its pan European significance, and proposed solutions see Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society*, p.178; John Stewart in *Child Guidance in Britain 1918 – 1955* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013) the 'problem family' also became a cause for concern in the 1940s.

chapters of the thesis will show that Diplomatic Service children did experience periods of unhappiness.¹⁵⁵

Considering the evidence collected, the Sub Committee was no doubt well aware of the effect of family matters – especially boarding school allowances and concessionary journeys - on Foreign Office staff. After discussing the paper submitted by the FSA, the Sub Committee ‘considered that these matters were crucial from the point of view of the efficiency and morale of overseas services’.¹⁵⁶ Morale was mentioned regularly throughout the minutes, that of both adults and children. The disheartening effects separation was felt to have on children was of great concern to the FCO officer and his wife and, as the Sub-committee saw it, hindered them in carrying out their duties. During the first Sub Committee meeting of 1963, HM Treasury’s representative Mr JLB Hunt, ‘said that the Treasury was sympathetic and hoped that they may be able to do something on local school fees.’¹⁵⁷ However, the fear of repercussions at both a professional (that is, among other civil servants and related occupations) and national level meant that they were forced to perform a delicate balancing act. A Treasury note from April 1963 mentions that ‘any change to the Boarding School Allowance would almost inevitably have to be followed by a similar increase in the allowances of the Home Civil Service abroad and the Armed Forces.’¹⁵⁸ Whether the FCO was concerned about its reputation as a consequence of the Diana Bromley case is not entirely clear, although the inference seemed to be that the existence of the FSWA would prevent further cases of this kind.

¹⁵⁵ Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, p.224. As the adult ‘children’ described by Hickman’s ‘Spokesperson’ were in their thirties and forties they would have been children in the 1950s and 1960s, some possibly coinciding with Plowden. In *True Brits* Dudley Edwards’ *True Brits* took the ‘problem child’ appellation still further (p.219) when she wrote that Diplomatic Service children have a high incidence of suicide. Participants did report incidents of unhappiness but there is not sufficient evidence to support Dudley Edwards’ claim.

¹⁵⁶ RSO (C) (62) 2nd meeting 22 November 1962.

¹⁵⁷ RSO (C)(63) 1st Meeting 14 January 1963.

¹⁵⁸ RSO (C) (63) 3rd Meeting 19 April 1963.

Although it was not made explicit, the Plowden Committee must have also been concerned about public opinion. The wives prefaced their evidence with this observation: ‘the impression which still manages to persist [is] that life in the Foreign Service is one of glamorous ease.’¹⁵⁹ This chapter has demonstrated the considerable financial hardship suffered by the post-1943 recruits, yet some aspirational newcomers were keen to give the impression that they had joined and were representing an elite and leisured class. This was perhaps due to the process of ‘social acculturation’ involved in entry to the Foreign Office that was identified by Cromwell.¹⁶⁰ Despite protestations to the contrary, members of the Diplomatic Service could not always help talking with a flourish about their social connections, grand accommodation or domestic help and this must have influenced the way they were seen by outsiders. It was vital, then, that the Committee was not seen to be providing benefits to an institution already perceived to be privileged.

Ultimately the Treasury took the view that an overhaul of concessionary journeys should be the ‘main feature of the settlement of problems relating to children’.¹⁶¹ The considerations discussed above were carefully outlined in the final Plowden Report, published in February 1964. It recommended a high level of practical help for Foreign Service Families. The summary of principal conclusions set out in the report’s Conclusion observed succinctly: ‘A new system of boarding school allowances is required. The levels of these allowances should be raised substantially...’¹⁶² Difficulties posed by the cost of long distance travel were also reviewed and a second annual ‘concessionary’ journey for children at school was granted.¹⁶³ These two recommendations, read the Report, ‘are designed as an integral whole... We believe that their

¹⁵⁹ RSO (62) 54.

¹⁶⁰ Cromwell, ‘A world apart’, p. 9.

¹⁶¹ RSO 63 (C) 3rd Meeting 19/04/1963

¹⁶² *Plowden Report* p.148.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

acceptance and implementation should be regarded as matters of importance and urgency.¹⁶⁴

The Committee struck a balance between a display of sympathy with diplomatic parents and the need to defend its decisions to critics within the civil service and the wider public domain. ‘The Foreign Service career,’ it explained, ‘is governed by a number of factors which collectively and cumulatively warrant special treatment.’¹⁶⁵ The question of how far the FCO was concerned with retaining the staff it recruited is demonstrated in the Plowden Report. It was to show the government’s dedication towards creating a more equitable Foreign Service, of the kind outlined in the 1943 White Paper: ‘there will be a danger that men without private means will be deterred for financial reasons, as they were before 1943, from seeking to join the overseas representational services.’¹⁶⁶ The language used is emphatic: ‘We would deplore anything tending to narrow the field of recruitment to the Foreign Service.’¹⁶⁷

No documentary evidence exists to illustrate what the FSA thought of the Committee decision but the FSWA was jubilant, as a digest from the British press from February 1964 reproduced in

¹⁶⁴ *Plowden Report*, p.122.

¹⁶⁵ *Plowden Report*, p.120.

¹⁶⁶ *Plowden Report*, p.119.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

their newsletter and illustrated by an FSWA member testifies.¹⁶⁸

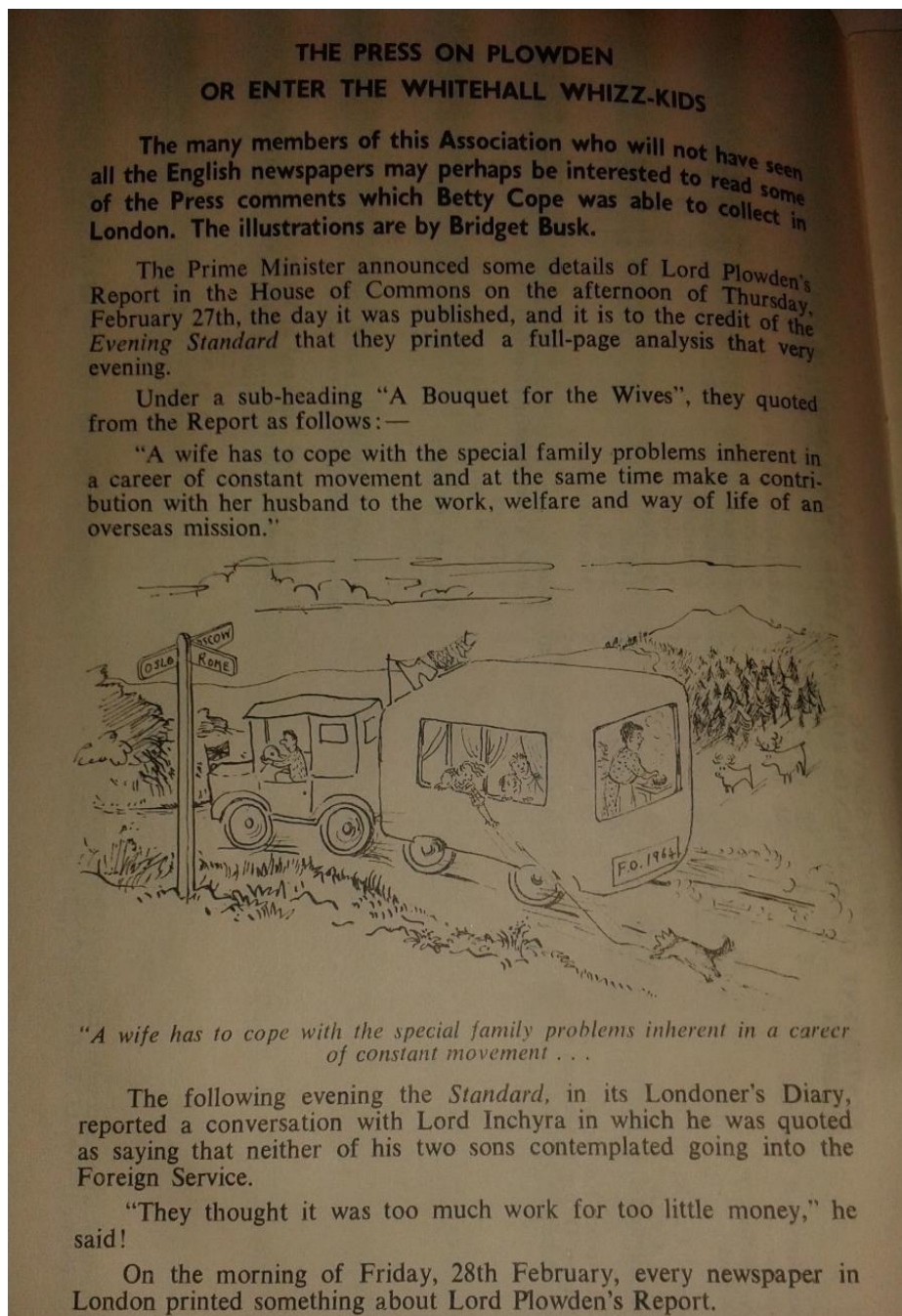


Figure 2 FSWA Reaction to the Plowden Report July 1964 Newsletter.

¹⁶⁸ 'The Press on Plowden or Enter the Whitehall Whizz-Kids' FSWA newsletter, July 1964. Interestingly the 'schizophrenic' attitude shown by diplomatic families towards privilege and hardship is illustrated in this piece by a short, guilty sentence: 'Dare we admit, after all that, that *some* of them can be fun.' This is in response to an article from the *Sunday Times* that stresses the onerous qualities of 'a fearful round of diplomatic cocktail parties.'

This euphoria had much to do with the report's recognition of the wives as an emerging force - it praised their 'excellent work in many fields' - but more simply the wives were happy not to have to wait so long to see their children.¹⁶⁹ At their AGM in May 1964 the chair, Mrs Wilson, said that 'families have had the thrill of an Easter holiday spent together and the happy feeling that there are only three months to go till the children come out again for a second time...'¹⁷⁰ However, one diplomatic wife's retrospective comments support Cromwell's assertion that the Diplomatic Service was more likely to demand conformity from its new recruits than effect any significant change.¹⁷¹ In a letter a decade after the Plowden Report was published she wrote:

Loyalty, in the form of responsibility with no power appears to be demanded of wives; the Service should begin to consider the loyalty due to a wife from her husband, to children by their father, to the united family by the husband's employer and should seriously try to place all these relationships within a modern framework.

So much that the DSWA has done has accepted this framework... I forgot to tell you that after the Plowden report I was dining with the Plowdens and Edwin [Lord Plowden] told me that he had been surprised at the modesty of the wives' demands: he thought in fact that they would have demanded far more.¹⁷²

The importance of the Plowden Report and its timing for the Foreign Office cannot be underestimated. The intimate tone of the evidence given by individual FSWA and FSA members points to an understanding and receptiveness towards their children's experiences. This highlights an awareness of the family restructuring that had gathered pace after 1945, when,

¹⁶⁹ *Plowden Report*, p129.

¹⁷⁰ FSWA Newsletter, January 1964, p. 3.

¹⁷¹ Cromwell, in 'A world apart', (pp. 8 – 9) criticises the Foreign Office decision to produce the guidance/etiquette booklet written by Marcus Cheke, implying that, given the opportunity to refresh out of date practices the FCO assumed instead that these would continue and new recruits would conform to them.

¹⁷² Diana Richmond to Mrs Wilford (on the DSWA Committee), 31 October 1971. Smedley Box B.

Thomson has written, 'idealised home and family was at the centre of the postwar landscape settlement'. At the emotional centre of the idealised family were its children.¹⁷³ The FSWA and FSA's frank articulation of grievances to the Plowden Committee provoked the Foreign Office into giving greater thought to its families and to the financial difficulties experienced by the post 1943 recruits. The Diplomatic Service family, although necessarily bound by the demands of a diplomat's job (at this point, this role was exclusively filled by the father), saw attitudes change following Plowden. In conventional narratives of the Foreign Office, Plowden's significance is the merger and creation of the Diplomatic Service, but by looking at the report through a different lens a new story about its impact on families emerges. The perceived success of the report among Foreign Office wives gave them confidence to go on to mount further campaigns and address other issues as the remainder of the chapter will demonstrate.

The Third 'Concessionary' Journey

The Plowden Committee did not feel able to grant a third concessionary return journey for Diplomatic Service children, due, in part, to financial constraints and to an awareness of external opinion: from within the civil service departments and outside government. However, the Foreign Service Association, renamed as the Diplomatic Service Association (DSA), in line with the Report's recommendations for an amalgamated service, which had advocated so strongly on behalf of family life to the Plowden Committee, did not lose sight of this goal. Throughout the early 1970s, discussions on the third concessionary journey were held at the very highest level of the Foreign Office and in Whitehall. The third journey was eventually granted at the end of 1971.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p. 142.

¹⁷⁴ TNA files FCO 77/204 and FCO 77/205 contain a useful and comprehensive set of papers that describe the process by which the Diplomatic Service Association lobbied for the third concessionary journey and on which this section is largely based. However, the DSA did work in tandem with the Foreign Service Wives Association which had become the Diplomatic Service Association or DSWA and with Medical and Welfare departments within the

Backers of the campaign for the third fare built on the reasons that had been submitted to the Plowden Committee to justify requests for subsidised journeys every school holiday. They stressed again the trials of family separation, damage to morale and the dilemmas of providing accommodation for children's holidays, either through private holiday homes or with extended family. In March 1971 the DSA submitted a paper to its managing committee, recommending a further concessionary journey. The DSA recalled that it 'represented strongly to the Plowden Committee that children at boarding school in the United Kingdom should be able to join their parents at public expense three times a year.'¹⁷⁵ This paper stated that diplomats and their wives were not able to concentrate efficiently on their work while they were worried about their children (notice that wives were supposed to 'work' too) and these concerns were exacerbated by 'further radical social changes' since the publication of Plowden in 1964. The report's author wrote: "The "generation gap" has grown wider as young people have been increasingly exposed to problems quite different in degree and kind from those experienced by their parents.' Although interviews for this project suggest that teenage rebellion among diplomats' children was not widespread, diplomatic parents voiced increasing anxieties about older children and young adults during the late 1960s and 1970s. A confidential paper produced by the DSWA in 1976 refers euphemistically to the 'influences and stimuli to which their children are subject...' and worries that 'These influences and stimuli are particularly relevant in the case of young adults.'¹⁷⁶ There can be no doubt that parents were particularly concerned about drug use, which by the late 1960s was a recognised part of boarding school life, in line with developments in national youth culture. But drug use in boarding schools was not nearly as widespread as absent

Foreign Office. Again, this is a good example of the 'patchy' nature of surviving evidence surrounding family matters; and the 'patchy' approach to them within the FCO itself.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, FCO 77/205.

¹⁷⁶ Confidential paper by the DSWA, 'The DSWA's view of various aspects of diplomatic life', 13 May 1976. Smedley Box B.

parents suspected. This was often linked to boarding schools' physical isolation and their very structured schedules.¹⁷⁷ Nonetheless Diplomatic Service parents felt that more contact with their older children would enable them to exert greater levels of supervision and control.

The DSA paper goes on to propose that many FCO employees were still experiencing financial hardship, despite the Plowden report's best efforts to provide a remedy. The disparity between officers serving at distant posts and those who spent large parts of their career in Europe, from which fares were not financially prohibitive, were pointed out. Junior grade members of staff, as well, were at a disadvantage as their lower salaries made it difficult for them to afford air fares. The contrasts between benefits provided to diplomatic staff and those received by the employees of private companies overseas also gave cause for disquiet and invited comparisons. 'The great majority of firms give terms at least as good as does the Diplomatic Service,' the paper stated, 'and a growing number of firms, particularly banks, ensure that parents and children are united every holiday.'¹⁷⁸ It is possible that the Plowden report's decision to unite the Foreign Service, Commonwealth Service and Trade Commission Service in order to better address 'the problem of earning our [ie. Britain's] living in the world' led to greater familiarity between diplomats and private sector workers in expatriate communities, resulting in inevitable comparisons of lifestyle and benefits.¹⁷⁹ However, as many of the essays compiled by Coles and Fechter make clear, expatriate Britons had always formed tight-knit communities overseas and conditions of service were no doubt regularly discussed.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Lambert and Millham, *Hotbouse Society*, pp. 279 – 281.

¹⁷⁸ TNA, FCO 77/205.

¹⁷⁹ *Plowden Report*, p.5.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p 3.

The DSA set out this careful case in response to a short background brief for the April 1971 meeting of the Diplomatic Service Whitley Council.¹⁸¹ When the DSA had announced at a prior meeting of the Council that it intended to push for a third journey, ‘It was emphasised... that the case would need to be a good one and that moral indignation was not enough.’¹⁸² In the event, however, the Council’s fear that moral outrage would be used in argument rather than hard facts was not justified. Support for the third journey came from many quarters, in response to a circular sent out to all posts canvassing opinions.¹⁸³ Derek Tonkin, Head of Chancery in Wellington, New Zealand, made a case based on the inequality between staff based in Europe and those far further afield. In a letter entitled “The Loneliness of the Long Distance Officer,” Tonkin set out the views of his own staff and which suggested that the Civil Service Department should establish a touring group with the sole responsibility of investigating the problems of distant posts. Tonkin wrote:

Apart from making arrangements for the ‘third’ holiday, there are the usual run of teenage, house purchase and ageing relatives and other problems where in the last resort an appeal on compassionate grounds would possibly produce financial authority for a special journey; the point being, however, that matters ought never to reach such proportions, and indeed do not for those fortunate officers living within 3000 miles of London.¹⁸⁴

An impassioned letter from an anonymous wife in Accra (unkindly described by an FCO official in London as ‘a bleat’) adopted a decidedly emotional tone, although not without expressing a valid argument. Her letter acted as a reminder that British society and attitudes towards the

¹⁸¹ A Whitley Council is a body made up of officials and trade unions which exists to negotiate conditions of service within government employment. See David Summerhayes, ‘The staff side – what’s that?’ *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1972, pp. 51-52.

¹⁸² TNA, FCO 77 / 205.

¹⁸³ TNA files do not appear to contain a copy of this circular but reference is made to it in much of the correspondence held on files FCO 77/204 and FCO 77/205. It appears to have been prompted by the DSWA.

¹⁸⁴ TNA, FCO 77/205.

family were changing. It directly referred to local government policy towards children in the UK and to their cultural representation:

It is vital to stress the rights and interests of the child. Since the war there has been a revolution in thinking about the child's need for his parents and a secure home. I believe that current practice in Local Authority Children's departments is to reunite mother and child, child and family as often and as quickly as possible... The documentary 'Cathy Come Home' made its impact by showing Cathy's children torn from her by the authorities. This is what FCO mothers have to put up with and I am sure that if a Local Authority treated families in this way there would be a public outcry.¹⁸⁵

In the case of the third journey, it transpired that the comparisons that had been made with private companies had not been as influential as FCO campaigners originally thought they might be. Ultimately, the FCO's Administration were moved by the need to 'administer the service equitably and consistently all over the world, it was impossible to send a man with a family to the other side of the world without putting him at a disadvantage with those serving nearer home. The desire to remove this inequality was the main argument in the exercise.'¹⁸⁶ Despite these justifications, there is evidence that very senior civil servants were willing to act in what they perceived to be the children's interests. Permanent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs (PUS), Denis Greenhill, had already noted at the bottom of an official memo:

I had an opportunity of talking to the PM and Lord Jellicoe about this recently. They both seemed well disposed to the idea. The minute should also go to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The strongest justification is the welfare of the children.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ TNA, FCO 77/205.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

The third journey was eventually granted late in 1971. Described as a 'long and tough slog,' the successful addition of this much sought-after allowance was not reported with the same unbridled enthusiasm by the DSWA newsletter as Plowden had been seven years earlier.¹⁸⁸ It is possible that this long and involved process detracted from the joy of final success. However, it is noticeable, as the DSWA newsletters progress, that attitudes towards allowances underwent a subtle transformation. Civil servants and their wives gave evidence to the Plowden Committee in the hope of being able to counteract the threat of real financial hardship; however, by the time the third fare was granted, allowances were viewed by FCO employees with far more of a sense of general entitlement, with the FCO itself seen as the great provider, to be blamed if circumstances were not ideal. As Coles has put it, the system of allowances could lead to '“a tender trap” in which families could find themselves bureaucratically enmeshed.' The allowances gave Diplomatic Service personnel access to things like good education for their children and long distance travel that would have been unaffordable if they were in other jobs.¹⁸⁹

A new concern was added when the age of majority was lowered from 21 to 18 as part of the Family Law Reform Act of 1969, thus depriving diplomats' children of 3 years' access to allowances. A letter published in the first DSWA newsletter of 1971 expresses dissatisfaction that FCO no longer provided allowances for children over 18 and suggests that it is to some extent the cause of a young woman's 'abandonment': 'In my own case I have an 18 year old daughter who, at the end of her last school term was, so far as the office was concerned, simply abandoned on the school doorstep to fend for herself...'¹⁹⁰ As the 1970s moved into the 1980s civil service salaries began to lose value in comparison to those received by other professionals.

¹⁸⁸ 'Report of DSWA AGM 17/05/1972', *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1972, p.7.

¹⁸⁹ Coles, 'Making Multiple Migrations', p. 129.

¹⁹⁰ Letters to the Editor from Mrs Norah Reid, Accra', *DSWA Newsletter*, Spring 1970, p. 12.

The system of allowances, that had originally enabled young recruits from less affluent social backgrounds to become diplomats, became seen as an entitlement and, later, as we shall see in the next chapter, a ‘perk’ of the job which acted as an incentive to the next generation of Diplomatic Service officers.

Very little information on the way official attitudes towards the FCO family developed exists for the period following the debate over the third concessionary journey. However, the DSWA magazine does provide clues to the preoccupations of its members in relation to family matters in the last decade covered by this study. Children of secondary school age had profited from the campaigns for the second and third concessional journeys. When these were established, the focus turned to the later and earlier stages of family life. As we saw above, diplomatic parents’ anxious feelings turned their attention towards their older children, partly as a reflection of wider social and cultural changes in Britain. This is reflected in the DSWA Autumn newsletter for 1982 which discussed the problems of older children looking for work in the UK.¹⁹¹ The following year an education report addressed the problems faced by diplomatic families in finding suitable education for under-fives. This was specifically a problem overseas and DSWA members realised ‘we must do something constructive ourselves about educating our under 5s abroad.’¹⁹² In 1989 a ‘Conditions of Service update’ revealed that the cost of nursery education was partly being met through official funds and the provision was being raised from three days to 15 hours per week.¹⁹³ Also in 1989 plans for the provision of an FCO crèche in the Whitehall building were mentioned in a Q&A session with FCO administration. The official reply was that premises were being sought, possibly to be shared with the Overseas Development Agency.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹‘Q&A session with FCO Administration’ *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1982, p. 22.

¹⁹² Helen Breeze, ‘Education Report’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1983, pp. 36 – 38.

¹⁹³ ‘Conditions of Service Update’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1989, p.32.

¹⁹⁴ ‘Questions to Admin’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1989 p.31. The FCO crèche opened in the FCO’s Whitehall building in 2001. Its fees are calculated on a sliding scale according to grade.

Also at the end of the 1980s, the Newsletters, alongside the traditional preoccupations of FCO parents (primarily those of boarding school, holidays and the journeys in between), began to turn their attention to new issues that families were having to face, or that had become more acceptable to discuss openly. A report on education circulated in 1970 contained the succinct observation that ‘All mothers of abnormal children should stay in England.’¹⁹⁵ During the 1980s, however, Diplomatic Service families whose children had special needs began to receive recognition and a number of articles about the particular challenges of combining FCO life and coping with a disabled child were published.¹⁹⁶ ‘My darling daughter’ dealt with international adoption.¹⁹⁷ The implications for the FCO family of divorce was covered in an article in 1989 which ended with the author writing: ‘Might I state that I have been there, have even provided Christmas for two young sons on social security, and have survived!’¹⁹⁸

The ‘extempore’ address from the Chief Clerk at the DSWA AGM in 1990 expressed sentiments about the FCO family very similar to those quoted at the beginning of this chapter:

If an army marches on its stomach, the DS survives on its families... We are still, I hope, a family oriented service. We need people who will travel as families; families must be reasonably mobile; and it follows that for such families conditions must be right. I hope that we never share the plight of some OECD Diplomatic Services in which officers simply refuse to take their families with them, or families simply refuse to travel.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Nancy Larmour, ‘Report to the DSWA Committee on replies to the education questionnaire’, 20 May 1970.

¹⁹⁶ Christine Lavery, ‘After Simon’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1989, pp. 73-74; Roma Crowhurst, ‘God’s special child’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1988, p.68.

¹⁹⁷ Prunella Briance, ‘My darling daughter’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1990, pp. 97- 99.

¹⁹⁸ Joyce Bentley, ‘Divorce and children’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Spring 1990.

¹⁹⁹ ‘Chief Clerk’s Address to the DSWA AGM: 24 May 1990’, *DSWA Newsletter* Autumn 1990, p.13.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined early Diplomatic Service attitudes towards the family and has outlined internal policies which benefitted diplomatic families after 1945. The families at the centre of Buettner's *Empire Families*, who served in various roles in imperial India, demonstrated marked similarities with those of the Diplomatic Service, including prolonged separations and financial hardship, thus contributing to a paradigm of 'service' families (that is, families in military, missionary and government employment) whose sense of 'sacrifice' was central to their family values. Commentators such as Gillis have observed that the values displayed by these families clashed with those cherished by other members of the middle class at a time when families were beginning to lay greater emphasis on domestic privacy and intimacy.²⁰⁰ The social upheavals of the twentieth century, including the two world wars, led to the Diplomatic Service seeking to democratise its recruitment policies, but with only partial success. The recommendations made by the MacDonnell Commission in 1914 were never successfully implemented and the 1943 White Paper which Eden intended to address post-war recruitment resulted in cohorts of young men who found themselves financially and socially out of their depths. It was not until the Plowden Report, published in 1964, that issues specific to the diplomatic family - of long periods of separation and the expense of boarding schools - were directly addressed. Plowden's recommendations began a new era for the Diplomatic Service family, which, though it retained its traditional shape through long-held practice in a habitually conservative organisation, began to grow in confidence under the influence of social changes both inside and outside the Foreign Office. Through evidence submitted to the Plowden Report by the Diplomatic Service Wives' Association and the Diplomatic Service Association, both of which were formed in the early

²⁰⁰ John Gillis, *A World of their own making: myth, ritual and the quest for family values* (New York: Basic Books, 1996); Thomson, *Lost Freedom*; Langhamer, 'Meanings of Home in Post-war Britain'.

1960s, the Foreign Office Administration was forced to face the reality that wives and children would not passively accept the many privations imposed by Diplomatic Service life. The campaign for the third 'concessionary' journey, conducted less than a decade later, demonstrated a new-found confidence and solidarity among groups like the DSWA and ever greater anxieties about rapidly changing social standards. None of these anxieties were greater than those caused by the protracted periods of family separation that were a principal feature of diplomatic family life and which the next chapter will examine in detail.

2. SEPARATION

Even nowadays whenever I have to travel anywhere and have to say goodbye to my own children I identify with that small boy. I remember the label and the gasmask and feel anxiety gripping my bowels. I write my name on the luggage labels and hope I do not return to find my home bombed to ruins and my identity lost somewhere beneath the rubble.²⁰¹

In common with ‘a million or so’ other British children, cartoonist Mel Calman was evacuated from his London home during the Second World War. The emotional trauma to which Calman testified was shared by many other contributors to Brian Johnson’s 1968 book, *The Evacuees*, where his account appeared.²⁰² According to Denise Riley, the wartime policy of evacuation - which saw British children removed from cities into the country as protection against enemy action - offered ‘British psychoanalysts... golden material for research.’²⁰³ Of these, John Bowlby, whose theories of mother and child separation (formed in part from his work with evacuee children) would be hugely influential, was best known. Another, Anna Freud, was able to observe the effects of social disturbance on the refugee children who came to her Hampstead War Nursery. While Bowlby and Freud publicised concern for the emotional development of children subjected to upheaval and deprived of parents and families, enforced interaction between social classes through the evacuation scheme revealed the effects of long-term poverty experienced by city children to the provincial middle classes. As Britain recovered from war, the concerns highlighted by displaced children contributed to many of the welfare reforms accompanying the British post-war settlement: ‘the war, in particular the lessons learned from the trauma of evacuees being separated from their families, provided the opportunity for a range of

²⁰¹ B.S. Johnson, ed., *The Evacuees* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1968), p. 36.

²⁰² Abrams, *Songs of Innocence*, p.129 estimates ‘a million or so’. Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society*, p. 53, offers the following figures ‘826,959 unaccompanied English and Welsh children, 523,670 mothers with pre-school children, and 7000 handicapped children.’

²⁰³ Denise Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (London: Virago, 1983), p. 95.

new social policies.²⁰⁴ The Curtis Committee, which reported to the government in 1946, was established to examine ‘the care of children deprived of normal home life’ following the death, in 1945, of Dennis O’Neill who had been killed by violent, negligent foster carers.²⁰⁵ The Committee’s central recommendation, that children in foster care should be assigned a sympathetic case worker and their individual situations taken into account, were developed further by the 1948 Children Act. The Act established Local Authority children’s departments and, in the case of foster children, shifted the emphasis from reliance on residential institutions to a return to the family wherever possible. This legislation was accompanied by a social shift which made children, as representatives of the nation’s future, the heart of the family. ‘Home’ writes Thomson, ‘was idealised as all that children needed.’²⁰⁶

The Diplomatic Service community, however, continued the practice of family separation until the end of the period covered by this thesis. As will become clear, separation was viewed as inevitable, an occupational hazard, even when viable alternatives existed. This chapter examines the causes and practice of family separation within diplomatic life, from its origins in early British diplomatic and colonial traditions to its notable survival into the late twentieth century. Family separation was, for participants who contributed to this project by interview or questionnaire, the dominant theme in their experiences, often with boarding school as its most forbidding manifestation.

²⁰⁴ Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society*, p.55.

²⁰⁵ The Curtis Committee was led by Myra Curtis, a former principal of Newnham College Cambridge, who had previously been commissioned by the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, to report on remand homes in the UK.

²⁰⁶ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p. 225.

‘The Dreaded Business.’

Of the twenty-seven contributors to this project (this figure discounts the five parents who took part) twenty-three attended boarding school.²⁰⁷ Their impressions were largely negative and these reactions do not appear to have changed significantly over time. An increase in allowances in 1964 following the Plowden Report, followed by the Third Concessionary Journey in 1971, eased financial pressure on parents and advances in travel and technology made a slight difference to younger members of the sample. However, the impact of arriving at school for the first time and the feelings generated by long periods of separation remained strikingly similar for informants over the time period.

Primary evidence suggested that children travelled with their parents until secondary school age or, for boys, the age where they might enter a prep school which would equip them for a public school scholarship. On average, boys were separated from their families between the ages of seven and nine, whereas it was slightly later for girls, between ten and fourteen.²⁰⁸ A survey of oral testimonies and questionnaire data reveals that similarities in the way boarding school experiences were articulated did not correspond so much to age, as expected at the outset of this study, as to gender. In common with other themes discussed in this thesis, a complex ambivalence towards separation and its causes is often expressed. Thus one interviewee born in 1986 recalled: ‘every night for about the first year I cried... every single night...’ before going on unexpectedly to add: ‘I loved it... I would go as far as saying ‘I loved it... and I do miss it...’²⁰⁹ Antonia Mochan, who submitted questionnaire evidence, asked whether boarding school might

²⁰⁷ Only one family who took part opted against separation and travelled together, using International Schools.

²⁰⁸ Former Diplomatic Service children have approached the author at conferences to tell her how struck they were to hear the ages at which contributors had been sent to boarding school. It had also been their experience.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Vicky Tarry (nee Bowden). 3 November 2014. Elsewhere in her interview Tarry expressed sadness that she would not be able to send her own (future) children to boarding school. This was for financial rather than ideological reasons, although she did observe that she might be ‘looking through rose-tinted spectacles’.

be an easier environment for diplomatic service children who otherwise faced the demands of a peripatetic lifestyle (the subject of our next chapter): ‘I wonder if that element of boarding is sometimes underestimated - the importance of having an in-group, and not always feeling like the weird one?’²¹⁰

Such was the close identification of boarding schools with diplomatic childhood that the two often became (unintentionally) synonymous with each other. One contributor confused them during his interview, saying: ‘my son is also a boarding school, I mean a Foreign Office child, of a later generation.’²¹¹ On the character of this close relationship, one interviewee reflected: ‘I feel that the Foreign Office made the boarding school happen and the boarding school had some negative consequences.’²¹² The experience of attending boarding school was a complicated one for numerous middle and upper-class British children but the fact that diplomatic service parents were overseas, sometimes thousands of miles away, meant that separation was all the more keenly felt. The evidence of personal testimonies supports the work of psychoanalyst Joy Schaverien who specialises in working with adults traumatised by childhood experiences of boarding school. Describing the children whose parents were overseas, or who had come from overseas to a British boarding school, Schaverien wrote:

For children who continued to reside in their home country, the sense of abandonment was often overwhelming. Consider then the losses suffered by those from other parts of the world. Children whose parents lived in the UK usually maintained a link with their home; most were visited at half term and returned home in the holidays; those from abroad often had neither of these experiences.²¹³

²¹⁰ Antonia Mochan. Questionnaire. 8 August 2014.

²¹¹ Interview with Peter Boon. 11 April 2014.

²¹² Interview with Catherine Webb*. 19 August 2015.

²¹³ Schaverien, *Boarding School Syndrome*, p. 152.

The attitude of acceptance of family separation within the Diplomatic Service is linked to the habits of diplomatic and colonial families and the English tradition of sending young children to boarding school dating back centuries. As previously noted, historians have observed that children from both diplomatic and colonial families returned to England to avoid social and racial ‘contamination’. As early as 1784, Isabella, the small daughter of diplomat Hugh Eliot was sent to live with an English couple during his service in Copenhagen. ‘I cannot shut my Eyes to the danger she Runs,’ Eliot had written about Isabella’s habit of playing with merchant children, considered to be from a lower social group than her own.²¹⁴

The fear of ‘contamination’ further developed with Britain’s imperial expansion. As the nineteenth century progressed, men holding administrative posts in British colonies were more likely to be accompanied by their wives. This brought to an end the practice of these men marrying or - more often - cohabiting with local women and producing mixed-race children.²¹⁵ By the mid nineteenth century, especially after the 1857 Indian Rebellion, British colonials were careful to preserve their racial status and became wary of diluting their power and influence. They preferred their children to be educated in Britain.²¹⁶ Buettner noted that families in the 1940s were unwilling to send their children to school in India, despite the threat of war Europe: ‘Long standing objections to these institutions and their mainly “country born” pupils were so deeply ensconced that many families did not consider them plausible options even when international conditions otherwise made them logical temporary choices.’²¹⁷ Buettner is frank about the material rewards and enhanced social standing available to the British in late imperial India. She also recognizes that these families were characterised by ‘a discourse of family

²¹⁴ Mori, *The Culture of Diplomacy*, p. 69.

²¹⁵ See Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets: Living with Shame from the Victorians to the Present Day* (London: Viking, 2013) pp. 3-37.

²¹⁶ Buettner, *Empire Families*, pp. 72 – 180, passim.

²¹⁷ Buettner, *Empire Families* p. 107.

sacrifice.²¹⁸ This sense of sacrifice became a crucial ideal of ‘service life’ and later sections of this chapter will explore the high levels of emotional resilience and control this ideal demanded from both children and parents.

A further factor, according to contemporary medical orthodoxy, that rendered a tropical climate unsuitable for European children, was the supposed early onset of puberty and sexual interest. Buettner’s discussion of this concern among Indian expatriates tallies with that of David Pomfret’s analysis of similar lifestyles in South East Asia at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.²¹⁹ British MP Richard Crossman, serving on an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in Palestine (then under British Mandate) in 1946 recalled the comments of a wife of a British official, who summed up the complex mixture of racial and social pre-conceptions along with received wisdom on health and welfare when she told him that, although schools in Jerusalem were ‘quite good...’ children who stayed in Palestine to attend them would ‘mix with strange people, mature too rapidly and get the wrong ideas...’²²⁰

Sexual precocity was one aspect of the tropical climate which was considered injurious to the development of British children. Another, often referred to, is cited by both Pomfret and Buettner. This is the view of nineteenth-century medical authorities that the tropics would render the child ‘slight, weedy and delicate’ or ‘weak and weedy, deficient in energy and lacking in strength.’²²¹ The conviction that some climates were more suitable than others for the children of distinct racial groups was long lasting. As late as 1984, Jane Ewart-Biggs felt confident in

²¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 110 – 145.

²¹⁹ Buettner, *Empire Families*, pp. 41 – 42; Pomfret, *Youth and Empire* p. 29.

²²⁰ Richard Crossman, *Palestine Mission* (New York: Harper, 1947), p. 131.

²²¹ Buettner, *Empire Families*, p.29; Pomfret, *Youth and Empire*, p. 24.

describing Bahrain as ‘one of the worst climates in the world...where English children who arrive with pink cheeks rapidly take on that yellowish tinge common in the tropics.’²²²

Tropical diseases, of course, were a very real threat to young children, especially in far-flung posts where medical care was limited. In addition, unfamiliar environments could be hostile. Poor infrastructure, especially sanitation, was treacherous and gardens a habitat for toxic plants and venomous insects. A 1962 edition of the FSWA newsletter outlined life in the new African posts that had been hastily established as British and French colonies won independence, by publishing a talk given by one of its members, a Mrs I D Scott. Mrs Scott began her address by observing that inoculations were ‘an unpleasant preliminary to going to Africa’ and exhorting her listeners to consider her words as a ‘sort of psychological inoculation against your first African posting.’ Another danger that could affect families, she said, was that of civil disturbance, and she went on to recount the story of two missionaries murdered in the Congo, although adding that ‘families would certainly not be sent’ to the worst affected areas.²²³

With this set of caveats already specified and the idea of service transcending the needs of individuals, the post-war reconstruction of British life with the home and family at its centre - ‘idealized to a new degree as space essential for well-being’ - was not an ideal that diplomats’ children were able to experience.²²⁴ Home, as will be discussed in later chapters, was a tenuous concept at best. But this entrenched culture of separation did not mean that families adapted to it without apprehension. The first journey to school and the night of arrival was a terrific wrench which could have a lifelong influence on children themselves or those close to them. Kate

²²² Ewart-Biggs, *Pay Pack and Follow*, p. 99.

²²³ Hon Mrs ID Scott, ‘Life in the New African Posts’, *FSWA Newsletter*, No 4 January 1962.

²²⁴ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p. 6.

Howells (born 1962), who provided happy descriptions of her school in Hong Kong remembered being shocked when the time came for her brother to leave for boarding school in the UK: 'I remember him screaming and hanging onto the furniture and this was my big brother ... it was absolutely appalling [in tears] God, it makes me cry now ... Just terrible...' ²²⁵ Kate Morris*(born 1964) remembered her reaction to arriving late at boarding school, aged 14. 'I think... just going from a kind of very cosy homebody life to sharing a room with twenty girls and not seeing my parents for three months it seemed really ... I dunno ... quite brutal, it was quite, it was quite... it was just one world to another, really really quickly.' ²²⁶ Retta Bowen remembered that 'my Mum didn't ... want us to go to boarding school at all and she cried all the way there and all the way back...' When Bowen arrived, 'I made a pact with myself on the first day that I wouldn't cry for the first term.' ²²⁷ This reflection demonstrates the level of emotional control required from children who found themselves in these circumstances. Interviewed in May 2015, she went on: 'I was ten! What ten year-old says "I shan't cry for three months!"?' ²²⁸

All participants quoted above are female and it should be noted that women were better able to articulate their emotional response to the shock of arrival at boarding school and their feelings about separation more generally. Male contributors were more difficult to recruit to the project from the outset, and the small number who did participate were far less willing to discuss their emotional reactions to shock of separation directly. ²²⁹ Lupton observed of the male interviewees who took part in her study of emotions within a socio-cultural context, *The Emotional Self*, that 'they felt emotions keenly,[but] they did not necessarily reveal them to others easily.' ²³⁰ This tendency towards emotional reticence was, in part, what the sons of diplomatic families were

²²⁵ Interview with Kate Howells. 22 July 2014.

²²⁶ Interview with Kate Morris*. 12 March 2015.

²²⁷ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Of the 27 participants who recalled their childhood experiences, 19 were women and 8 were men.

²³⁰ Deborah Lupton, *The Emotional Self: A Sociocultural Exploration*, (London: Sage Publications, 1998), p. 59.

going overseas to school to learn. ‘The English gentleman was ... a model of self-control... “trained in self-repression, reticence and restraint.”’ wrote Marcus Collins (although notably describing his downfall). Public schools where, Collins states, the gentleman was educated, had a long history of inculcating boys with the specific emotional responses required from them.²³¹ When sociologists Lambert and Millham investigated boarding schools during the late 1960s they remarked in detail on this phenomenon:

In public schools and prep schools, for example, it is often the done thing towards the pupils not to display too much of one’s feelings, never to be over-enthusiastic or behave like a spontaneous child. This norm arises partly from the school’s ideal of educating a governing elite in which emotional reactions might be out of place, partly from early training in “adult” attributes and partly from the hurt which the pupil might suffer by exposing his inner self to the gaze and criticism of his contemporaries.²³²

Thus, alongside a marked change of environment and often culture and climate, diplomatic children arriving at boarding school were required to quickly learn a complicated emotional lesson. This required them to suppress or contain their reactions to an unfamiliar and forbidding situation: what Hamlett has described as ‘powerful forces that fundamentally altered their emotional states, creating new forms of character and behaviour.’²³³ This appears to have presented greater difficulties for boys who, as evidenced above, were discouraged to express themselves at all (a fact reinforced by the far smaller number of male contributors to this

²³¹ Marcus Collins, ‘The fall of the English gentleman’, *Historical Research*, 75:187 (2005), pp. 90 – 111.

²³² Lambert and Millham, *The Hothouse Society*, pp. 224-225.

²³³ Jane Hamlett, ‘Space and Emotional Experience in ed. Stephanie Olsen, Victorian and Edwardian English Public School Dormitories’, in *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: national, colonial and global perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), pp. 119 – 139.

project). The few male interviewees often stated either that they had liked boarding school or expressed a cheerful equanimity towards it, being very quick to articulate, perhaps rather defensively, that they had enjoyed the experience.

Andrew Graham (born 1956), for example, stressed the necessity of boarding school for children of a 'service' background and demonstrated great awareness and understanding concerning his parents' decision. Graham drew attention to the title of the 'Continuing Education Allowance' (CEA) and its aim of providing stability in education to the children of families who move frequently:

...if you were going to move about it was the best thing to give us some sort of continuity of education.... That's in service life, it's actually a *continuity of education allowance* not a boarding school allowance and we never really discussed... I don't think it was ever a ... you just got on with it... that's it. If that's what you're gonna do, that's what you're gonna do. So we did. Quite enjoyed it really.²³⁴

Paul Tylor (born 1964) felt similarly. He was able to rationalise his parents' decision, recalling that they 'considered boarding school mixed in with their lifestyle was probably the best that we would get rather than chop and change education. Which, you know, never bothered me, I enjoyed it.'²³⁵

By contrast another male participant, Ed Mullen* (born 1965), was more reflective. Significantly, he had initially mentioned contributing a childhood diary to the project but had later decided not to. When asked at interview about this he confided: 'It was when I was at boarding school and...

²³⁴ Interview with Andrew Graham. 21 May 2015.

²³⁵ Interview with Paul Tylor. 23 October 2016.

it would say how miserable I was every time... but I'm sure that's not an unusual state...²³⁶ In common with other male interviewees, Mullen expressed a sense of resignation, or inevitability, stating: 'you just get used to having to look after yourself... If you feel that you're becoming a little bit dependent on someone or that you need their help to do things then you step back again...'²³⁷ In common with all children sent to boarding schools, Diplomatic Service children were required, early on, to develop strategies to help them to deal with the sudden and drastic change of environment. In choosing to accept the circumstances in which they found themselves, or by adopting a self-imposed system of emotional restraint they had, as Mathew Thomson has observed of evacuees, 'to act, effectively, as their own strict mothers and fathers.'²³⁸ Thomson's quote shows that although, superficially, the children of diplomats had little in common with groups of children usually associated with the upheaval of the Second World War, evacuee and refugee children, there were similarities. The next section will examine the ways in which children lived with separation both at school and during the school holidays.

'So much of a premium put on independence'

The preceding section examined the ways in which male and female participants communicated their emotional reactions to the experience of family separation, represented by boarding school. Differences in the way that the two groups managed their day-to-day lives at school and interacted with friendship groups was also noteworthy. More often female participants provided evidence of the sustaining factors of school life, many stating that that their initial thoughts and expectations about boarding school were positive. Schoolgirl literature was mentioned more than once and its motivating power spanned the project's time frame:

²³⁶ Interview with Ed Mullen*. 6 October 2014.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, pp. 65 -66.

I thought it was going to be like *The Four Marys*... (Eleanor King*, born 1954)

I used to read all the Enid Blyton books and all Malory Towers and all that sort of stuff.'

(Vicky Tarry, born 1986)²³⁹

When they arrived at school they found the reality somewhat different, yet there were some elements comparable to the books on which they had based their expectations. As with schoolgirl fiction, where 'Loyalty to one's friends and love and concern for them are unquestioned values,' friendships became valuable and long lasting.²⁴⁰ When Retta Bowen and Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone (born 1977 and 1976 respectively) met on their first night at boarding school in 1987, Lattin-Rawstrone recalled:

I remember the first night I didn't know if I was allowed to go to the toilet or not and there was nobody to ask if I was allowed to leave my room to go to the loo - this friend of mine whose Dad was also in the Foreign Office, we wee'd out the window!²⁴¹

For girls, friendship was an essential source of comfort and support. In 1980, nine year-old Rosalind Miller wrote to the DSWA magazine about her experiences: 'Sometimes I feel homesick but I am always comforted by the other girls and they make me feel happy again.'²⁴²

When Vicky Tarry was interviewed in November 2014 she had recently returned from the wedding of a boarding school friend in Thailand:

She started when she was eight, I started when I was ten. So we've known each other seventeen years. And we still see each other quite often...she lives in Thailand. ... I think

²³⁹ Eleanor King*. Personal Interview. 11 July 2014. *The Four Marys* was the longest running story in *Bunty*, the comic for girls, appearing between 1958 and 2001. It featured four friends called Mary who attended St Elmo's boarding school; Vicky Tarry. Personal Interview 3 November 2014. Children's author Enid Blyton (1897 – 1968) wrote a number of boarding school stories, including the *Malory Towers* series written between 1946 and 1951, which have enjoyed enduring popularity.

²⁴⁰ Rosemary Auchmuty, *A World of Girls* (London: The Women's Press, 1992), p. 107.

²⁴¹ Interview with Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone. 21 March 2014.

²⁴² Rosalind Miller, 'Views of Children and Parents', *DSWA Newsletter*, Spring 1980, p. 28.

that's partly why I enjoyed school so much as well because, although you're away from your parents, you're with sisters all the time.²⁴³

Interviews with male participants indicated that boys found solace in ready-made groups, often via team games and organised activities, rather than enjoying individual friendships, which they rarely mentioned. During his interview, Andrew Graham emphasised that at his prep school team spirit transcended individual friendships. He gave the example of a parent who had made the mistake of inviting a small group of boys to tea: 'you ask the whole team you don't ask five... *it's divisive* and that's a *bad* lesson to learn when you're nine, or ten.'²⁴⁴ This predominance of the 'team spirit' was due to a different structuring of boys' school lives, with a greater emphasis on sport and a collective ethos. The stress on team spirit recalls the characteristics of the English Gentleman quoted above, with his notions of sportsmanship and self-effacement. Belonging to 'the team' required the individual to conform to a corporate philosophy, or a 'unity [that] was effected out of diversity', as JA Mangan has written.²⁴⁵ Paul Tylor, interviewed in 2014, described the process of becoming part of the wider group in this way: 'you either know how to fit in or you don't and you don't want to be the one that doesn't fit in.'²⁴⁶

For young people at boarding school the lack of a parental presence may have been disconcerting and emotionally demanding but it sometimes allowed students to flourish in other ways. Games and activities could provide an outlet for independent creativity. Catherine Webb* (born 1958) remembered a long running game at prep school in the West Country:

²⁴³ Interview with Vicky Tarry. 3 November 2014.

²⁴⁴ Interview with Andrew Graham. 21 May 2015.

²⁴⁵ J.A. Mangan *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edward Public Schools the emergence and consolidation of an educational ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) p. 153.

²⁴⁶ Interview with Paul Tylor. 23 October 2014.

...we were allowed to play in the quite extensive grounds... we had an imaginary village called "Forget Me Not Wood" and we all had a role in the place... I was the Postman ... we were all girls, you know, dressing up and elaborate make believe. The sort of thing you can't do at home because you haven't got enough people around.

Later, at co-ed boarding school in the 1970s, Webb* and her peer group 'had their own world'.

They took a self-conscious stance on politics, literature and music:

[One student] was... the grandson of a prime minister and he was very influential... he had high status... he was obviously very left wing and we'd be quite nervous of saying anything you know [he] might not agree with... the cool guys were the ones who had lots of black-covered Penguins, not just the blue-covered ones, the twentieth century classics, anyone could read them... And obviously music... all this intense listening to Bob Dylan ... and all sorts of other musicians who then really disappeared but we used to take very seriously.²⁴⁷

In the 1980s at another co-ed school, Oakham in Rutland, Retta Bowen recalled:

...there definitely was that element of kids going wild or developing their own systems. I look back and I think we were actually very creative. When we had birthdays we would organise parties where we would do sketches and they would be judged. There wasn't an adult arbitrating any of this...²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ Interview with Catherine Webb*. 19 August 2015; the 'black-covered Penguins' that she refers to were Penguin Books' translations of the Greek, Roman and European classics.

²⁴⁸ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

Kate Morris*, however, who found her late introduction to a girls' boarding school very distressing, and whose recollections of the time were extremely raw, recognized a less positive angle to the lack of adult input:

I actually had anorexia before I went to boarding school and when I got there ... I would go days without eating and no one knew... To be honest at boarding school you could [do] anything... I used to leave at fifteen from [Surrey], get the train, come into London Bridge, have some drinks with my boyfriend at the time, spend the whole afternoon out ... and then go back about eight o'clock and no one had noticed...²⁴⁹

Morris* also emphasised the long and complicated journeys made alone by Diplomatic Service children to visit their parents during the school holidays. One particularly difficult holiday was at half term, a break which had until the early 1970s been made up of only a day or an afternoon.

Peter Boon said:

In the fifties there weren't things like half term breaks... and there weren't many occasions when parents came to the school... Nevertheless there were opportunities to go out with parents for the day, and because the parents weren't in the country the opportunities to go out with the family for the day was very limited ... One was sometimes invited by friends to go with them but it wasn't the same as having your own parents being with you and doing things with you.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Interview with Kate Morris*. 12 March 2015. Morris* gave an extremely heartfelt interview. David W Jones' work on interviewing seems appropriate here, especially Jones' question: 'What are people's motivations for taking part? What might the interview represent to them?' Morris* approached the author after hearing her speak a conference and said that her paper had 'struck a chord'. The interview was emotional, with Morris* in tears and the recorder switched off more than once. Returning to Jones, it would appear that she had 'a grievance [she] wanted to get across...' and 'that she was seeking validation' for experiences she felt were fundamental. Jones, David W. "Distressing Histories and Unhappy Interviewing." *Oral History*, 26: 2 (1998), pp. 49–56.

²⁵⁰ Interview with Peter Boon. 11 April. 2014

As boarding schools became more aware of pastoral issues, however, half term holidays were extended and weekend exeat granted more freely. This was welcomed by students like Kate Morris* who used the holiday to travel home to see her parents:

I remember once my sister and I ... we were so desperate to go home at a half term ... we went on trains and buses and God knows what across Paris and got to Switzerland to see them for a week.²⁵¹

But parents faced further difficulties in finding accommodation – and were presumably required to meet its cost - for their children for a week or ten day long period:

I must soon face up to the problem of where to send a 12-year-old for a 10-day half term in the Autumn. I think I am going to throw it back at the school first, and ask if they can't run a camp for those parents are overseas.²⁵²

This letter was written to the DSWA Newsletter by a member in 1972, and in 'throwing' the problem back at the school it highlights one among a number of possible solutions to finding holiday accommodation for diplomatic service children. Securing holiday accommodation and care was far more of a problem during the early years of this thesis' time period, when no travel allowances existed and children generally remained in Britain in the care of holiday homes or extended family. Holiday homes had a particularly bad reputation, crystallized by Rudyard Kipling in his story *Baa-Baa Black Sheep*, which recounts the sorrowful experiences of an Anglo-Indian brother and sister, Punch and Judy, who remain as paying guests in the house of 'Uncle'

²⁵¹ Interview with Kate Morris. 12 March 2015.

²⁵² 'Points from your letters: BERYL SMEDLEY Colombo' *DSWA Magazine*. Autumn 1972, p.32.

Harry and ‘Aunty’ Rosa when their parents return to India.²⁵³ Referred to by Buettner as ‘The Kipling Paradigm,’ stories like *Baa Baa Black Sheep* have provided a model for successive childhood memories of colonial life (memoirs and accounts refer to the story or make a direct comparison with it).²⁵⁴ Peter Boon, the interviewee most representative of the early years of this project, echoed this popular belief when he observed that ‘many children of Empire were sent home to be educated and had to be farmed out during the holidays. Some of them ended up in sort of awful families and places,’ Peter Boon had, thankfully, however, no direct evidence of either.

When the FSWA formed in 1960 their early newsletters contained recommendations for holiday homes, sourced by their ‘expert in this field,’ Mrs Henniker-Major, who was married to the Foreign Service Head of Personnel. Holiday home proprietors, like Mrs Dismore in the example below, often had links to the Foreign or Colonial Services, which, it could be argued, maintained the exclusive world of Foreign Service family culture and its standards:

Mrs W. Dismore, 41 Sinah Lane, Hayling Island, Hants, the widow of a former Foreign Service Officer, living by the sea at Hayling Island, is prepared to take children in the holidays, or whilst their parents are on holiday or househunting. She will also take Foreign Service families as paying guests all the year round at very reasonable charges.²⁵⁵

Peter Boon appeared to be personally unfamiliar with holiday homes but the FSWA evidence to the Plowden Committee in 1962 suggested that one in four families had made use of them.

Another institutional option was to remain at school for the holidays, although it appeared to

²⁵³ Rudyard Kipling, ‘Baa-Baa Black Sheep’, in *The Man Who Would be King and other stories*, (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 1999), pp. 170-197.

²⁵⁴ Buettner, *Empire Families*, pp. 121 – 129.

²⁵⁵ Holiday home recommendation, *FSWA Newsletter*, 1 July 1960.

have become less viable as the twentieth century progressed. Only one correspondent had this experience, which she greatly enjoyed: ‘once spent half the Easter holidays at school alone in Tunbridge wells, rather fun cos the nuns spoilt me rotten.’²⁵⁶

For the majority, however, extended family members in Britain remained the principal network of support. Deborah Cohen has noted the ‘intimacy empire demanded of families,’ and while Cohen refers initially to the aid families in England could provide in terms of business transactions, their role soon came to encompass providing family members, especially children born overseas, with a home from home. ‘Those who remained in the empire called upon relatives to raise their children...’ Cohen writes.²⁵⁷ Both Peter Boon and Olivia Tate*, born in 1942 and 1946 respectively (and thus ineligible for the financial assistance provided by the Plowden reforms), were cared for by grandparents during the long summer holidays. They enjoyed themselves but expressed doubts as to whether their relatives felt the same. Boon, whose father had been in the Indian Police until independence in 1947 when he joined the Foreign Service, spent holidays with his grandmother:

I think perhaps I was very lucky that the relatives were always there, including grandmother, she went back to Guernsey so there would be a little excitement there of flying over to Guernsey for the holidays ... I think my grandmother must have found it a bit difficult... how to keep a ten, eleven, twelve year old occupied for, you know, four weeks!²⁵⁸

Olivia Tate* also spent the holidays with her grandmother who had a sure way of keeping her occupied: ‘She used to take me to the office with her. She worked for an engineering company

²⁵⁶ Libby Purves. Questionnaire. 10 April 2014.

²⁵⁷ Cohen, *Family Secrets* p.7.

²⁵⁸ Interview with Peter Boon. 11 April 2014.

that made compressors... but she managed to keep me busy. I was paid a salary and I used to deliver notes and deliver all sorts of things all around the offices...²⁵⁹

Other interviewees who talked about staying with aunts and uncles or godparents sometimes sensed that their presence was an imposition. Catherine Webb* commented dryly on the system of care that awaited her in Britain during her holidays: 'I think a network is putting it too positively. I think I actually had a sense it was a bit of a cobweb.'²⁶⁰ Ed Mullen* was regularly looked after by friends, both from prep school and friends of his family. During his interview he conveyed that he now has mixed feelings about the amount of time he spent with friends outside school time:

I'd spend weekends with friends of mine, who sometimes... were in my friendship group but I wouldn't normally have chosen to spend a weekend with... and half terms I used to come back to London to friends from my previous school who'd put me up for a week. And you know thinking back I feel kind of awkward about it, at the time it just seemed normal, adults look after you. But I was always in someone else's house.²⁶¹

Paul Tylor, whose parents had originally been in the RAF before his father joined the FCO's Security Officer Cadre, also spoke about friends, but felt that 'service' families shared what he described as a 'sort of bond strange recognition you know "That could be my boy at school with parents abroad so..."²⁶² When asked to expand on this, Tylor explained that he felt diplomatic and military families shared similar characteristics and faced similar demands which were the responsibility of the service community.

²⁵⁹ Interview with Olivia Tate*. 10 March 2014.

²⁶⁰ Interview with Catherine Webb*. 19 August 2015.

²⁶¹ Interview with Ed Mullen*. 3 October 2014. It is interesting to note that the chapter that deals with family separation in Brendon's *Children of the Raj* is titled 'Other people's houses' which recalls what Mullen* has to say.

²⁶² Interview with Paul Tylor. 23 October 2014.

I suppose it comes down to, you know, we're all in the same boat. Doesn't matter whether - you know - diplomats - it doesn't matter whether you're the ambassador or the security officer or in between and the end of the day families are all in the same boat. You all look after each other and military's very much the same, regardless of regiment and service the community is as important as the people doing the jobs so everybody looks after everybody.²⁶³

Evidence of the supportive community that existed within the FCO can be found in the FSWA magazines as well as in interview testimonies. A number of schemes to assist families with their unaccompanied children were trialled by the Wives' Association. In 1962, early in its existence, an article appeared in the January newsletter stating that a number of travel emergencies had been dealt with by FSWA volunteers, although the piece did make clear that the service was for emergencies only and few wives were able to find time away from their own schedules.²⁶⁴ In the same issue an article appeared asking parents overseas whether they felt their children would benefit from a 'Proxy Parents' service. The idea behind this was to provide children with someone to 'attend school functions, and occasionally take them [the children] out...'. The article acknowledged that 'these are times when some children can feel the absence of their parents acutely' and sought to canvas support from wives of both serving and retired diplomats.²⁶⁵ Unfortunately there is no further evidence to indicate whether or not the scheme was ever realised or successful. A questionnaire received from a diplomatic child of a later generation, Antonia Mochan (born 1971) provided confirmation that similar schemes continued to be put into practice:

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ 'Children's emergency travel', *FSWA Newsletter*, January 1962, p.16.

²⁶⁵ 'Proxy parents', *FSWA Newsletter*, January 1962, pp. 15-16.

I was an older teenager and perfectly comfortable flying on my own. They did use an FCO spouses' scheme once when there was a whole day gap between my flight arriving and the school starting, and so I spent a day with David Hannay's wife and kids. Always made me laugh when I saw him at the UN and thought, 'I've sat in your kitchen.'²⁶⁶

In the quote Mochan mentioned flying on her own. Unaccompanied travel was another area which demanded high levels of resilience from diplomatic service children and a crucial part of the journey was often that from air- or sea-port to or from boarding school. Olivia Tate* remembered the journey she took to see her parents in Poland in 1959:

...going to Poland was interesting because most of the time we went by boat because Dad was not in Warsaw.... We used to go by boat so one of the nuns would take me to Mark Brown's wharf and put me on this cargo ship and two days later I arrived in [Poland].²⁶⁷

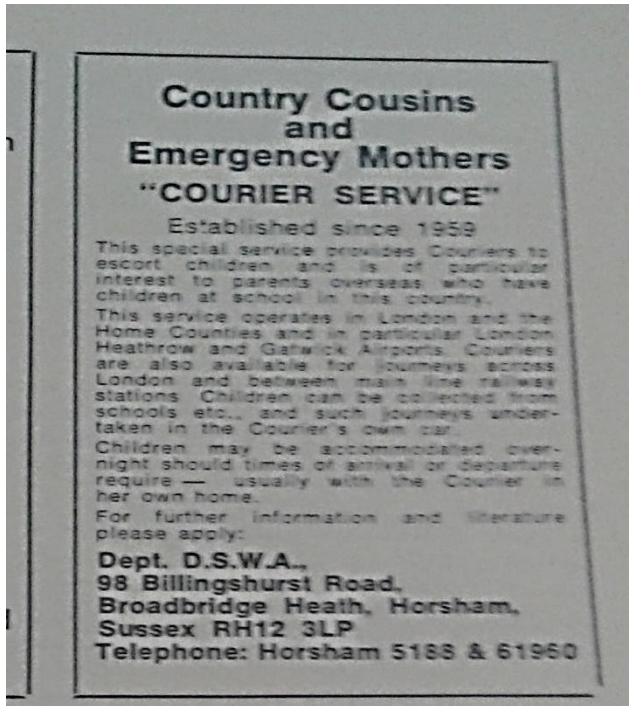
As children grew older they often found themselves in a position of responsibility towards their siblings, reminding us of Thomson's remark that evacuees had had to take on a parental role.²⁶⁸ Olivia Tate* felt that she was 'generally sort of somewhere between big sister and mum' when she acted as guardian for her sister who was eleven years younger.²⁶⁹ As the eldest of four boys, Paul Tylor's brother could be said to have abused his power: 'initially our guardians would meet us but then when... my brother became old enough he could act as the escort although he used

²⁶⁶ Antonia Mochan. Questionnaire. 8 August 2014. David Hannay (born 1935), Baron Hannay of Chiswick, is a former British diplomat. He was UK Representative to the United Nations between 1990 and 1994.

²⁶⁷ Interview with Olivia Tate*. 10 March 2014. Tate's* father was Consul in regional Poland. When the author attended a conference on unaccompanied children in June 2014 she discovered that a Jewish refugee child (the subject of another paper) had made Tate's* exact journey in reverse shortly before the Second World War.

²⁶⁸ See footnote 29 above.

²⁶⁹ Interview with Olivia Tate*. 10 March 2014.



to take great delight in getting us to the airport, dropping us off at British airways unaccompanied minors while he disappeared off somewhere.²⁷⁰

Just like the 'Proxy Parents' service suggested by the FSWA, the agencies that existed to assist unaccompanied children through the initial stages of travel gave themselves names associated with family, perhaps to suggest reliability or an intimate,

personal quality of care, although the reality might have been very different. The original claim of the 'Country Cousins' agency, established in 1959, advertised in the FSWA/DSWA newsletters throughout the period covered by this thesis (see Figure 3) was to provide 'Country cousins and emergency mothers' and, in common with many diplomatic families, it remained socially rooted in the 'home counties' of South East England.

Better known were the Universal Aunts, a company established in 1921, whose founder Gertrude Maclean had cared for young members of her own family while their parents were out of the country on empire business. The Universal Aunts offered a wide range of services and, in the aftermath of the First World War, attracted unmarried women and widows in need of respectable employment. Their promotional literature contained the suggestion that boarding school and its specific demands were a recognisable part of an average family's life and the tone

²⁷⁰ Interview with Paul Tylor. 23 October 2014.

of their adverts implied that they shared upper middle class background with the people they set out to help.

Many well-to-do young women worked as ‘Aunts’ and the FSWA and DSWA newsletters referred to their services as though they were an integral part of the FCO community.²⁷¹ Despite their reputation for professionalism, however, they were not always dependable. Fiona Taylor* (born 1956) remembered being escorted by an Aunt during the first stages of a journey to Beirut:

One year my parents paid for my brother and I to fly to Beirut for the 3rd holiday. I was



Figure 4 Original advert for Universal Aunts Agency, 1920s.

11 or 12 and my brother 12/13. We flew via Paris where we had to change planes. The ‘Aunt’ who was in charge of us left us at a gate and disappeared. We knew it was the wrong gate and by the time she came back we had missed our flight... We always flew with the Aunts in charge of us at the airport. We didn't like that at all.²⁷²

Contributors confirmed that they had been experienced travellers and had looked forward to the time when, usually in their early teens, they could travel alone and not under the auspices of the travel company as

an unaccompanied minor. Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone recalled:

²⁷¹ See Kate Herbert-Hunting, *The Universal Aunts* (London: Constable, 1986).

²⁷² Fiona Taylor*. Questionnaire. 11 September 2014.

... certainly the older we got the more we did it all ourselves so we would be you know navigating trains, journeys through London, out to Heathrow, navigating Heathrow, you know things that some adults find difficult it was just expected that we should do. Get ourselves to places on time, we did loads of that by ourselves.²⁷³

If anything went wrong, however, confident children soon panicked under the weight of the responsibility, especially when, earlier in the thesis' period, international communications were unreliable or, in some regions, non-existent. In the late 1960s, Andrew Graham and his brother (aged ten and eight) were stranded in Beirut when there was a problem with a follow on flight to Kuwait City.

... we went on Middle East Airlines... and arrived in Beirut and there was no follow on flight back to Kuwait... we had fifty pence in our pockets so we were told we were going to a hotel and it was all paid for. But we were in a fever whether all paid for meant that suddenly ... the hotel would present us with a bill for a coke sort of thing... and we only had fifty pence and we decided against having the coke and we couldn't get any clarity and then we were picked up... and you know hooray for the diplomatic net. Mum eventually found the message, it got through that we were at least you know in hand...²⁷⁴

Catherine Webb* had a similar experience around the same time when her Christmas holiday flight to Moscow had to be diverted to Copenhagen:

...on the plane they announced that there was ice on the runway and that we couldn't land and so we were going to be diverted to Copenhagen and I was really worried you

²⁷³ Interview with Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone. 21 March 2014.

²⁷⁴ Interview with Andrew Graham. 21 May 2015. The family who picked up Andrew and his brother were the 'duty family' who are on call at post to deal with emergencies.

know: “What’s gonna happen? My parents are not gonna know!” And not realising that they’d be told and no phones of course in those days, and really worried about it...²⁷⁵

But Webb’s* experience turned out to be enjoyable and she continued:

there were actually quite a few of us unaccompanied minors and we had a night in this hotel and it was wonderful. Playing on the lifts the whole time. They finally had to announce no children were allowed to play on the lifts any more... playing chase with each other on the lifts... that was the biggest adventure of our journeys ever.²⁷⁶

Like Webb*, many diplomatic children who were travelling alone found themselves in the company of other unaccompanied children who seemed to invent the same systems of games and entertainments as they did at boarding school. On one aircraft from Thailand, Peter Boon remembered a ‘pillow fight and the senior steward came along and read the riot act...’ while Viv James* (born 1968) wrote that she ‘felt sorry for the aircrew, having to deal with a bunch of rowdy teenagers!’²⁷⁷ Separation and its consequences was certainly one of the greatest difficulties of Diplomatic Service life for children, who name it as a negative aspect at interview, but the experiences outlined above, which few other children would have had, are more likely to be given as an illustration of the more positive aspects of a Diplomatic Service childhood. Certainly unaccompanied travel was formative in promoting confidence and self-reliance and it gave the children a vital lesson in how to navigate complex transport networks. The next section will look at the responses and opinions of parents and examine – as far as possible – their reactions to family separation and how far these were similar or different from those of their children.

²⁷⁵ Interview with Catherine Webb*. 19 August 2015. She was aged around 9 when this happened.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Interview with Peter Boon. 11 April 2014; Viv James*. Questionnaire. 15 October 2014.

‘Have they suffered? On the contrary.’

This chapter began with a discussion of the profound effects of family separation suffered by evacuees and other children affected by the disruption of the Second World War. At such times, according to Anna Freud, ‘fate stages something of an experiment’ by giving professionals an opportunity to observe children in situations that would not normally affect them.²⁷⁸ Conclusions drawn by Freud and others following the war formed the basis of a new approach to children that contributed greatly to Britain’s post-war settlement and placed the child and its well-being at the centre of the idealised family. A question central to this chapter, and to the thesis in its entirety, is why Diplomatic Service families continued to opt for family separation given that social trends and well-publicised guidance, particularly from Freud’s colleague the prominent psychoanalyst John Bowlby, brought practices such as boarding school into question.²⁷⁹ This section will examine interview and written evidence from Diplomatic Service parents to demonstrate that family separation endured – and was endured – for entrenched reasons of tradition and loyalty. As Coles has written ‘It was a loyalty that began with the mission, but which willingly tapped into deeper, morally-invincible, loyalty to the country and the Crown.’²⁸⁰ Coles’ subsequent observation that only military families would find themselves in a comparable position, recalls the notion of ‘service families’ expressed by interviewee Paul Tylor in the previous section.

The justification given by transnational families for long periods of separation (including continuity of education and the fear of social and racial ‘contamination’) were set out in earlier

²⁷⁸ Anna Freud ‘Social experiences of young children especially in times of social disturbance’ in Kenneth Soddy ed. *Mental Health and Infant Development Proceedings of the International Seminar held by the World Federation for Mental Health at Chichester England Volume One Papers and Discussions* (Routledge, 1999). This volume also contains John Bowlby’s piece ‘Mother-Child Separation’.

²⁷⁹ In addition, far more numerous options to educate children at post began to emerge during the later twentieth century; these will be discussed in the following chapter.

²⁸⁰ Coles, ‘Making Multiple Migrations’, p.126.

sections of this chapter. The perceived inevitability of boarding school, and the negative emotions that surrounded the ready-made decision to send children there are made clear in a number of memoirs written by male diplomats whose families were young in the middle of the twentieth century. Bernard Burrows (1910 -2002) recalled the moment his son was sent to prep school: 'We sent him there and he too duly got an Eton scholarship, but I am not sure that he enjoyed the preparatory school any more than I did.'²⁸¹ William Hayter (1906 – 1995) recalled that when his daughter Teresa was due to go to boarding school in 1949, his Parisienne cook asked: 'Pauvre mademoiselle. Qu'est-ce qu'elle a fait?' because 'French children are not normally sent to a boarding school unless they are delinquent.'²⁸² These diplomatic fathers express a sense of regretful duty, implying that parents felt powerless to do anything other than send their children away. The implication is that the families felt themselves to be powerless, especially in the case of Burrows. He did not enjoy his prep school, yet, he sent his son there to undergo a similar experience.²⁸³

Interview observations often focused on the undesirable but ultimately unavoidable essence of the decision that diplomatic children should attend boarding school. Peter Boon called it a 'dreaded business,' whilst Olivia Tate* wanted to stress that 'they [her parents] tried to avoid it for as long as possible'²⁸⁴. Both these interviewees thus conveyed that they knew the decision had been a difficult one but that their parents felt they had no choice but to make it. Others were clear that they recognised their parents had not been faced with an easy choice. AM wrote:

²⁸¹ Bernard Burrows, *Diplomat in a Changing World* (Spennymoor County Durham: The Memoir Club, 2001), p .6.

²⁸² William Hayter, *A Double Life* (London: Hamilton, 1974) p. 95.

²⁸³ It could be argued that the end justified the means. Burrows Jnr 'duly got his scholarship to Eton'.

²⁸⁴ Interview with Olivia Tate*. Personal Interview. 10 March 2014.

I wasn't very happy, at least for the first 5 years, sixth form was better. But I never really told my parents that, as I didn't want to make it all worse. I guess I felt that it wasn't really their decision, in a way, so I didn't want to make them feel bad about it.²⁸⁵

In the following testimony, Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone seems at first to be more judgemental, but her comments could also suggest a refreshing unwillingness to collude with the prevailing system. At interview she recalled leaving Cairo, where her parents were at post, for boarding school in the UK:

My Mum used to cry every single time at the airport, she'd be in floods of tears and it just used to annoy me, you know: if you really don't want to send us away don't send us away. Particularly in Cairo...I knew there was an International school there and I felt quite annoyed that they hadn't decided to send me there.²⁸⁶

The way in which Rebekah rationalised her situation, her independent thinking about it and her anger are significant when examining why boarding school as a practice was so widely accepted by parents. The Foreign Service Association paper submitted to the Plowden Committee in 1962 (discussed in the previous chapter) contained the observation that:

The senior branch of the Foreign Service requires that the Officer and his wife should virtually devote their lives to the Service. The whole pattern of their lives when serving abroad must be such as ill promote the interests of the Service. The arrangements for their children's upbringing must be such as the Service permits.²⁸⁷

But despite the FSA's indignant tone, a willingness to conform to these demands could facilitate a successful career in the Diplomatic Service. Male diplomats in particular were bound to traditions which shaped their choices from early on and which could contain both an expectation

²⁸⁵ Antonia Mochan. Questionnaire. 8 August 2014.

²⁸⁶ Interview with Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone. 21 March 2014.

²⁸⁷ RSO (62) 47.

of loyalty to a family tradition and to the organisation they went on to serve (the two were regularly connected): what Coles and Fechter have called ‘a strong moral imperative to acknowledge loyalty to the institution’²⁸⁸. As evident in the excerpt from Bernard Burrows’ memoir, he remained loyal to the schools he had attended, even if he had not wholly enjoyed them. Peter Boon, interviewed for this project for his childhood recollections, belonged to a family who had worked within colonial administration or the Diplomatic Service for generations and this appeared fundamental to his sense of self. Oliver Miles (born 1936), a diplomat between 1960 and 1996, came from family whose men were employed by the Ceylon Civil Service and went to boarding school. He chose a similar career in the Foreign Service but recalled (using notably violent imagery): ‘I remember being shocked at myself how awful I felt when my eldest son first went to boarding school, I felt like a murderer.’²⁸⁹ Although Oliver Miles’s reaction to separation was very strong and unsettling, he chose the traditional pattern that had characterised his own experience over individual sentiment.

Catherine Webb*, also from an established Foreign Office family, saw how her father felt justified in transcending family difficulties through loyalty to the Foreign Office and in pursuit of his own very successful career:

Yes, family was supposed to fit in to, I mean, my ... brother... was a bit unhappy and my mother suggested to my father that he should try and get a posting back in England so that you know, so that they could be nearer him... And... basically my father said he wasn’t prepared to have a demotion in his career for that and didn’t see really that that was a good thing to do... She resented that. She told me that story quite often.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family*, p.9.

²⁸⁹ Interview with Oliver and Julia Miles. 29 September 2014.

²⁹⁰ Interview with Catherine Webb*. 19 August 2015.

In contrast, Danielle Kelly* (born 1988) from one of the few contributing families who did not send their children to boarding school, remembered that her parents' choice of post was governed by available schools and understood that this might have affected her father's standing within the Foreign Office:

...when he was choosing postings they would be looking at what education facilities were out there because they never wanted to send us to boarding school so I think maybe my Dad's career could have gone differently if he had chosen other postings.²⁹¹

What Catherine Webb* had to say – referring to the early 1970s – indicated that the position of diplomats' wives during this period was very difficult. Coles notes that the 'patriarchal and hierarchical' structure of the Foreign Office has been criticised by feminist commentators, both for its treatment of female diplomats and its female dependents.²⁹² The position of wives during the period covered by this thesis was dictated by highly gendered roles within FCO marriages, what Walsh has called the 'persistent gendering of expatriate lives'.²⁹³ Wives faced a sequence of demands on their loyalty: their instinctive attachment to their children (alongside the role of mother prescribed by a traditional marriage partnership) was tested by the pressure to be at their husband's side and to offer support for his career in an institution which sanctioned family separation. In 1962 the FSWA outlined their members' unenviable predicament to the Plowden Committee:

Posts abroad mean the dreaded separations from the children. But a wife may also have long periods of enforced separation from her husband: having to return to the United Kingdom to cope with holidays or sick children or parents; or she may have to return because either she or small children are unable to stand a difficult climate – a more

²⁹¹ Interview with Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb*. 8 May 2014.

²⁹² Coles, 'Making Multiple Migrations', pp. 125 – 149.

²⁹³ Walsh, 'Travelling Together?' pp. 63 – 85.

frequent contingency with the increasing number of African posts... These are not easy conditions in which to build a stable marriage.²⁹⁴

Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone's mother – who had cried at the airport when she saw her daughters off to boarding school – chose not to live with her husband when they were later posted to Malawi with their younger son.

...after Cairo my parents went to Malawi and I think for part of Malawi my Mum was in France [where the family had a house] because of schools... I think my Mum was finding it difficult to know what to do so they lived apart for about a year or so.

'Opting out' of the system in this way was unusual, however, and was understood to have consequences. Hilary Callan, an anthropologist married to a diplomat, wrote in 1975 that 'Every [FCO] officer is subject to an annual report by his superiors. This report includes provision for comment on his wife's performance. A belief exists (denied by others but in my opinion quite well-founded) that their non-conformity to what is expected can lead to negative sanctions...'²⁹⁵

Katie Hickman identified another group of women whose 'strong sense of her role within the diplomatic partnership' enabled her to make 'clear-sighted' choices, including the choice to send children to school in England so that unpaid diplomatic work could be given precedence.²⁹⁶

Hickman cites Jane Ewart-Biggs, who took this course, acting as a well-known diplomatic hostess in Brussels and Paris alongside her husband Christopher, despite making the admission that parting from her son feeling 'like a physical and mental amputation.'²⁹⁷ Although Hickman's analysis might be over-simplified, and she picked a well-known example in Ewart-Biggs, the

²⁹⁴ RSO (62) 54.

²⁹⁵ Hilary Callan, 'The Premiss of Dedication' in *Perceiving Women*, ed. Shirley Ardener, (New York: Wiley, 1975), pp. 87-105.

²⁹⁶ Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, p.229.

²⁹⁷ Ewart-Biggs, *Pay, Pack and Follow*, p.164.

majority of wives whose evidence contributed to this thesis did make the same choice. Many women struggled to make sense of what amounted to a conflicting set of circumstances and divisions of allegiance. Anne Foster* (born 1945), who worked for the Diplomatic Service before she had to resign when she married a fellow diplomat shortly before the marriage bar was lifted in 1973, eloquently deliberated many of the issues involved during her interview. For instance, she recalled with feeling the moment her children (born in the early 1970s) left a British Embassy compound in a South Asian city to return to school in England:

I can remember very vividly the absolute agony... waving goodbye to them on the bus and they left the compound and went on to the airport...even though you have other mothers and parents there with you...It was ... there was... there was a gloom over the compound for at least three days afterwards, as you kind of got used to not being with them.²⁹⁸

Foster* said during her interview that sending her children away to school had not been an ideal choice, especially in the light of the damaging effects of separation that had, by that time, firmly taken root in the public consciousness. She said: 'I think, probably, thinking back, now if I had my time again I might think a lot harder about it.' But the reasons she gave in support of the decision she had made during the 1980s provided a compelling picture of the difficult decisions that faced the wives of diplomats at the time. When her children were younger, Foster* said, international qualifications were not so easily transferable in the way they are today; for example the international baccalaureate not so widely taught or recognised. Foster* also had concerns that moving her children every couple of years could be as damaging as separation. The prep school they attended was recommended by friends and housed a number of Diplomatic Service children, so, in a sense, it came with Foreign Office approval and was part of that shared community. Another very influential aspect, Foster* said, was her children's father. He had been

²⁹⁸ Interview with Anne Foster*. 11 February 2015.

a diplomatic child himself; he was used to the life of boarding school and separation and had not expected anything different for his own children.

Anne Foster* was very honest about the difficult decisions she had had to make and the complicated set of deliberations that prompted them. Other evidence suggests that her contemporaries were wrestling with similar personal circumstances, together with the painful pressure that came from an understanding of societal change in attitudes to children.

Confirmation that diplomatic wives were troubled by their position in the face of these changes is seen in the anonymous letter (undated but contained in a batch dated 1971) cited in the preceding chapter which referred to a post-Second World War ‘revolution in thinking about the child’s need for his parents’ and compared the situation of diplomatic mothers to that of the homeless mother who loses her children in the pivotal 1966 film ‘Cathy Come Home’.²⁹⁹ Like Anne Foster*’s interview, these misgivings were articulated privately (in this case through an anonymous letter). But opinions that were expressed – if not publicly, then within the FCO community - were quite different. DSWA newsletters maintained a sharp focus on children’s issues and gave the impression that FCO wives/mothers knew their children intimately, understanding how they felt and what they wanted. But there is a marked sense from the newsletters and questionnaire evidence collected by Smedley that mothers felt it imperative to maintain a favourable narrative of their children’s experiences of separation. Thus we read comments such as: ‘Have they suffered? On the contrary.’; ‘Our children do not appear to have suffered’; and ‘My own three children would all say that they loved it.’³⁰⁰ There could be two reasons for this. First, that the wives, unsure about the decisions they had made, were seeking public reassurance that the diplomatic lifestyle did not harm their children. Second, that they wanted to be seen to conform to the wider group in the way detected by Callan in her analysis of

²⁹⁹ TNA, FCO 77/205.

³⁰⁰ Frances Wooller, Questionnaire completed for *Partners in Diplomacy*, undated, late 1980s, Smedley Box A; Jean Reddaway, ‘Open Letter to Margaret Ibbotson,’ *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1976, 52 - 53; Anne Rothnie, ‘View of Children and Parents’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Spring 1980, p. 27.

the 'incorporated wife', and felt more comfortable when expressing views that adhered to internal community norms. It is possible, also, that their defensive tone was adopted to mask a sense of guilt. Diplomatic wives, anxious about their children, concerned for their standing within traditional FCO culture and conscious of their loyalty towards their husband and his role within the organisation, were in an impossible position.

Conclusion

Now when I look back at it and possibly it's something I wouldn't have really thought about until you mentioned the emotion demands and stuff. Now I kind of almost feel a little bit indignant that they dare ask me to do that [*awkward* laughter] at the time I sort of got on and did it. Didn't really - apart from being upset - it didn't bother me but now I look back and I think well actually that's quite a lot to expect of someone...³⁰¹

This first thematic chapter has analysed the Foreign Office's long tradition of family separation, named by many interviewees and questionnaire respondents, both parents and children, as the main negative aspect of family life within the Diplomatic Service. The practice of separation must be placed within the broader picture of British family history during the second half of the twentieth century. The spectacle of mass separation caused by evacuation and displacement during World War Two led to radical changes in the way that children were treated and strategies to place them at the heart of the reconstituted family were at the centre of post-war reconstruction. It could be seen immediately, then, that Foreign Office practice diverged from this ideal of the family. This, in turn, raises questions about the position of diplomats tasked with representing the UK overseas whose own family practices did not reflect the updated social norm in Britain. Following a description of boarding school experiences, the origins of separation as a way of life - its 'history' - were explored. Children of the Diplomatic Service

³⁰¹ Interview with Vicky Tarry. 3 November 2014.

might have received little scholarly attention, but illuminating comparisons exist between them and the children of colonial administrators, whose history has been more adequately covered, by Buettner and Pomfret. For both these groups of children boarding school was the most potent manifestation of separation. A further section examined the ways in which families dealt with the school holidays and described childcare schemes piloted by the FCO (specifically the DSWA) to involve the FCO community. This section looked at the agencies, named to imply family and shared social background, such as the Country Cousins and Universal Aunts, who were sometimes used by diplomatic families to escort their unaccompanied children. A final section offered an overview of parents' attitudes towards separation, arguing that separation endured as a part of Diplomatic Service life for far longer than it lasted within UK society as a whole due to male diplomats' observance of tradition and loyalty to institutions. Their wives, moreover, were placed in a far more difficult position, finding their loyalty to husbands and, less directly, the FCO in opposition to their loyalty to children. As a practice that continued until the very last years of 'the century of the child,' the FCO's culture of separation was far from ideal and had far-reaching effects which will be explored in later chapters. It appeared to have been maintained owing to a powerful requirement for diplomats and their wives to conform and was often presented as 'inevitable'. The following chapter will explore alternatives to the separation caused by reliance on boarding school and the different set of challenges inherent in this. It will examine the development, through international school education, of a different species of elite and ask why the FCO was so resistant to its children becoming part of this.

3. TRANSIENCE

They are perpetual outsiders, millions of children around the world, born in one nation, raised in others, flung into the global jet stream by their parents' career choices and consequent mobility. Some move often, from place to place, country to country. Others establish semi-permanent lodgings on foreign soil, returning to the place their parents call home for vacations or family events. Their parents are educators, international business people, foreign service attaches, missionaries, military personnel. The children shuttle back and forth between nations, languages, cultures, and loyalties. They live unrooted childhoods.³⁰²

Emphasised as the second most difficult aspect of diplomatic family life, transience was an inevitable by-product of the traditional pattern of diplomatic behaviour discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter will examine the ways in which the demands of a peripatetic, nomadic lifestyle shaped the experiences of diplomatic service children. Transience, defined here as a perceived or actual state of constant movement and upheaval, was significant not as an alternative to the trials of separation but as an additional challenge and most commonly characterised early experiences prior to boarding school. During their early years FCO children, in the words of Coles, underwent 'multiple migrations'. They faced frequent changes in education, housing, cultures and climates. Not only did they know what it was like to regularly leave places and people but they were also used to introducing themselves, or, in the case of the UK, supposedly their home country, *reintroducing* themselves to others. When families ultimately resorted to boarding school, as the previous chapter demonstrated they did in large numbers, parents often cited 'continuity' as a reason for their decision.

³⁰² Faith Eidse and Nina Sichel eds., *Unrooted Childhoods, Memoirs of Growing Up Global*, (London: Nicholas Brealey, 2004), p.1.

The first section of this chapter reveals that the lives of FCO families were extremely diverse and illustrates the resourcefulness with which their members dealt with a multiplicity of situations. Wives and mothers were responsible for anticipating the practical demands of forthcoming postings, for running households overseas and for responding to their children's initial reactions. These were very varied and the impressions children formed from these constant moves lasted into adulthood. Pre-boarding school or, in one case, as an alternative to boarding school, families used a huge variety of educational facilities and these form the subject of the second section. Local schools, military schools and foreign national schools as well as home education systems all featured. One group of interviewees illustrated an increase in the use of international schools prior to children's departure for boarding school, which was still the preference for older children. This greater willingness to use international schools could relate to their development and credibility among the British as the twentieth century progressed. Roger Goodman's work on Japan's 'International Youth' and Fiona Moore's on the German School in London suggests that even though the diplomatic service parents who chose international schools might have considered them to possess a more democratic and modern culture than boarding schools, international school culture was just as active in seeking to create an elite.³⁰³ This culture exhibited different characteristics from those typically found in British public schools and was more firmly rooted in internationalism and transnationalism. A striking contrast between this elite group of children and the boarding school children discussed in chapter 3 was the way in which emotional reactions to the features, both positive and negative, of a transient lifestyle were more readily encouraged and displayed. Thus poignant narratives like the one quoted above are a feature of the literature on Third Culture Kids and Global Nomads, two discourses unfamiliar to many of the contributors to this project other than the very youngest. The third and last section engages with the ways in which FCO children who experienced transience related to others

³⁰³ Goodman, *Japan's International Youth*; Moore, 'The German School in London'.

within their extended families. It explores how diplomatic children viewed friendship and the self-imposed limits they placed on it, as well as the difficulties encountered on entering and re-entering different social groups.

‘Short-lived pets’

‘I remember my father (a devout Catholic) once telling me he always took a deep breath and said a ‘Hail Mary’ before heading into his first day at any new mission.’ This comment, taken from a participant’s questionnaire, demonstrated the speed of change in the lives of diplomatic families, and the trials that it imposed.³⁰⁴ An analysis of a random sample of 10 of the families that contributed to this project showed that, on average, in a 35-year diplomatic career, families were posted overseas eight times – approximately two-thirds of the father’s career.³⁰⁵ It should also be borne in mind that when FCO families returned to the UK and fathers were based at the Foreign Office in Whitehall, it was unusual for those families to live in the same house that they had inhabited before posting. Often this home was too far from London, or had been rented out to tenants. Thus, potentially, every aspect of children’s lives could undergo profound and immediate change.

The stress of constant moves was named by a high percentage of participants as a negative aspect of growing up within the diplomatic service, coming second only to separation. Very young children were able to take their nomadic lifestyle in their stride, enjoying the opportunities

³⁰⁴ Nancy Grant*. Questionnaire.1 October 2014.

³⁰⁵ 10 families about whom detailed information regarding fathers’ career and number of postings was available were analysed. The longest careers were of 39 years, the shortest, 20. The highest number of postings was 10 and the lowest, 6.

to play outside in warm and exotic locations, often within the confines of housing compounds. As children grew older, however, and later on reflection as adults, they identified a range of practical difficulties associated with the problems caused by transience. Nancy Grant* (born 1964) remembered ‘there never being enough space on university and job application forms to list all the schools I had attended.’³⁰⁶ The implications for these children’s friendships and relationships will be examined more closely in the third section of this chapter, but a related area in which they felt they had lost out was that of keeping pets. Grant* regretted ‘Leaving pets behind – or initially only being able to own short-lived pets like hamsters which could be relied on to die within the term of a posting and not require quarantine...’³⁰⁷ As a child in Mozambique, Vicky Tarry spotted her opportunity to realise her dream of owning a dog when her family were subject to strict security precautions:

In Mozambique we had guard dogs... I remember because I always wanted a pet, I always wanted a dog, but obviously because we moved around so much we couldn't have one. And when we went there I remember begging for a guard dog because that was a way I could get a dog. And my Dad was like: ‘Well a guard dog's not like a puppy. It's not going to sit in your lap!’³⁰⁸

Circumstances like these, in which children were able to see that they were unlike other families, often reinforced the sense that diplomats’ children had of being ‘outsiders’: always, as one contributor put it, ‘with the distance of the embassy around us’.³⁰⁹ As a young child in the 1940s and 50s, Peter Boon was aware that, ‘because of the mobility obligation... we knew that wherever we were wasn’t going to be, as it were, forever. There was always that in the back of our minds that we were a different kind of family.’³¹⁰ Children would sometimes

³⁰⁶ Nancy Grant*. Questionnaire. 1 October 2014.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Vicky Tarry. 3 November 2016.

³⁰⁹ Ruth Harris*. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

³¹⁰ Interview with Peter Boon. 11 April 2014.

feel conspicuous due to an inescapable characteristic they had acquired while travelling and the majority of contributors commented that this was more of a difficulty if they were at school in the UK, where children could be curious without being especially kind. At school in London Arabella Weir (born 1957) was asked: “Why are you so brown?” and I remember saying “Because I go to visit my Dad in Bahrain.” I remember someone saying “You're making that up...”³¹¹ Other participants mentioned accents, acquired at International or local schools. A brother and sister (born in the early 1960s) whose mother was from New Zealand, wrote about their ‘accent usually being wildly different to that of schoolmates’ and ‘Always having the “wrong” accent thanks to attending a local school in a previous posting.’³¹² Two decades later, sisters Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb* ‘(born 1985) rapidly lost’ the American accents they had acquired at a South Asian International School when they entered a primary school in Wimbledon, South London.³¹³

In addition to these outward signs of difference, participants often found that insufficient knowledge of contemporary and popular culture on arrival somewhere new could cause them to stand out. Kate Morris* recalled returning to the UK in 1975, aged 11: ‘just the whole culture, watching telly when we hadn't watched telly for four years... I felt a bit like an alien at that time.’³¹⁴ Danielle Kelly echoed this feeling of estrangement. She described her mother’s views on returning to the UK from overseas in the 1990s by using comparable language:

³¹¹ Interview with Arabella Weir. 6 May 2014.

³¹² Nancy Grant*. Questionnaire. 1 October 2014; Mike Ingalls*. Questionnaire. 6 October 2014.

³¹³ Interview with Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb*. 8 May 2014. Robb also made the point during her interview that the emergence of cable channels like MTV (launched in 1981 but gaining in popularity throughout the 80s and 90s) which made music videos accessible to a wider audience standardised knowledge of popular culture.

³¹⁴ Interview with Kate Morris*. 12 March 2015.

My Mum... she kind of almost compares it to being in prison because you come back to the UK ...you know you've been away for four years and everything's so familiar yet so different, even the shops have changed...You don't know the pop music you don't... you don't know the TV programmes, you don't understand the same cultural references I don't think. So you're kind of like an alien.³¹⁵

Children could also be influenced by overseas cultures in other ways. Ruth Harris* was taken to a British supermarket by her sister after living in Soviet Moscow during the early and found herself amazed by the quantity and choice.

I couldn't process there being so many types of tinned tomatoes on the shelf when in Moscow there would be one option of something in the diplomatic gastronom [a food emporium in Soviet Russia open to foreigners to Senior Communist Party officials] if you were lucky. I remember I kept asking 'Why do you need more than one type of tinned tomato?' to a bemused older sister.³¹⁶

It could be difficult for a child to leave a country where they had been posted, especially if their stay had been a long one and their experiences had been positive. One participant wrote: 'I recall standing on the stern of a ship, crying as I watched Table Mountain recede as we left Cape Town.'³¹⁷ It is also notable that the locations children most enjoyed are not those that might, superficially, seem most congenial. Sisters Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb* spoke highly of their three years in the compound of a British consulate in the Arabian Gulf. The fact that the sisters were unaware of the many cultural and social restrictions illustrates the limitations inherent in a child's point of view. However, life in the embassy compound could provide a ready-made social circle and the proximity of workplace to home facilitated family relationships. Moreover, as the Gulf climate called for working and school hours that began and ended early

³¹⁵ Interview with Danielle Kelly and Emma Robb*. 08 May 2014.

³¹⁶ Ruth Harris*. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

³¹⁷ Mike Ingalls*. Questionnaire. 6 October 2014.

(roughly between seven in the morning and three in the afternoon) the family had more opportunity to spend time together.

One of the most enduring legacies of transience as part of a diplomatic childhood was described in interviews in terms of an in-built restlessness. All participants expressed similar feelings in various ways. Eleanor King* talked about a sense of rootlessness and impermanence: ‘you’re always brought up with a sense... you don’t belong here this is other people’s country it’s not your country you’re just passing through.’³¹⁸ Retta Bowen thought that the same feeling led to lack of attention to her surroundings:

...when I look at people down the towpath and I see how they've built up the space around and planted the garden and done various things and I think ‘Oh you must think that you're really, you 're really staying. You don't have plans to move on.’³¹⁹

Vicky Tarry described the impression she gives other people: ‘[my fiance] would probably say I’ve got itchy feet and I’ll probably always have itchy feet.’³²⁰ Some participants have responded to these characteristics by choosing an international career for themselves. Making this choice has enabled them to become “a bit of a butterfly, moving around, always looking for new stimuli and interest”³²¹ Others, however, feel it very important to give their families the stability and continuity they did not have. Fiona Taylor* stated: “I have been careful to ensure that my children went to the local school and we have lived in the same house for 26 years.”³²² Kate Morris* felt similarly:

³¹⁸ Interview with Eleanor King*. 11 July 2014.

³¹⁹ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

³²⁰ Interview with Vicky Tarry. 3 November 2014.

³²¹ Antonia Mochan. Questionnaire. 8 August 2014.

³²² Fiona Taylor*. Questionnaire. 11 September 2014

I get very attached to my homes now and even now I've had children I've... well I've moved three times in ten years which is nothing compared to what I normally used to do but when I left my last flat we were there for seven years I was inconsolable, to me it felt like the most terrible thing in the world...you know I want the boys to feel really settled...³²³

Paul Tylor, who joined the FCO after a career in the RAF, is now based permanently in London but reflected, 'I haven't got to the point where I've moved into a house and thought "That's the one I can happily retire to."' ³²⁴ Kate Morris's* admission that she still moves house with relative frequency represented an inherent tension in her stated desire to create a sense of security for her children. The influence of a diplomatic childhood can be profound. Ruth Harris* wrote: 'Every three/ four years there is a feeling of end of post coming up and I have a few difficult months but it has been a useful experience. Learning to stay in one place has been very difficult though.' 'I always have plans to move on,' said Retta Bowen, who became a psychotherapist working with children, 'and I think that probably is from a childhood of having to curb your instinct to cling onto it or to believe it's gonna be eternal in some way.'³²⁵

A compensation for the challenging effects of transience on diplomats' children came via a recognition of the world's diversity that was demonstrated to them on their travels. Participants who felt their cosmopolitan upbringing had given them a broader perspective on the world, often made the point strongly, like Denise Holt:

On balance, my childhood gave me a brilliant sense of the world in all its diversity. My earliest friends were Japanese, Lebanese, Dutch, Irish, Australian, American as well as

³²³ Interview with Kate Morris*. 12 March 2015.

³²⁴ Interview with Paul Tylor*. 23 October 2015.

³²⁵ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

British. We travelled on boats, trains and planes - we felt like different kinds of being to the people we knew in UK.³²⁶

Another contributor went as far as to express each new experience as a kind of renaissance, describing in detail the joy of arrival at a new post:

I never tired of the excitement of driving from the docks/airport for the first time to what would become our new city and home. Exploring the house and grounds. Bagging bedrooms. Meeting the servants (if we had them)... effectively gifting you a new life every 2-4 years³²⁷

Male diplomats could feel disquiet on arrival at a new post and the range of sensations experienced by their children have been outlined above. Hilary Callan observed that ‘Diplomatic society is importantly different from a “total culture” in that one joins it – in the capacity of a wife – late in life.’³²⁸ It was diplomats’ wives, who had neither chosen to work for the diplomatic service first-hand or grown up within it (although both of these groups are represented among this project’s participants), on whom the responsibility of making the home and supervising the family fell most onerously. Alongside the many tasks involved, wives were forced to manage their own expectations of professional and personal fulfilment.

For wives, the demands of a transient lifestyle began with journeys to and from post, or even before: Julia Miles, who married diplomat Oliver Miles in 1968 recalled ‘Even the dog used to go behind the sofa when the suitcases came out.’³²⁹ As Chapter 3 indicated, the gendered roles

³²⁶ Denise Holt. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

³²⁷ Nancy Grant. Questionnaire. 1 October 2014.

³²⁸ Callan, ‘Premiss of Dedication’, p.87.

³²⁹ Interview with Julia and Oliver Miles. 29 September 2014.

fulfilled by diplomatic couples meant that children were primarily the responsibility of their mother. One wife wrote succinctly (and not publicly): ‘Crossing the Atlantic in 1944 in a convoy of 50 ships taking my two children, age 3 and age 3 months, to join their father in England was an experience I would rather not have had.’³³⁰ In later years, air travel meant that journeys passed more quickly, but travelling with small children never became any easier. A contributor to the DSWA newsletter in 1974 described having to travel alone on a full plane with a child under 2 as ‘a harrowing experience.’³³¹ A year later, another DSWA member, Rosamund Hoyle, a former children’s nurse, wrote a long piece about travelling with small children for the newsletter. Her advice included ways in which to prepare children for a new posting, the journey itself and methods to reassure children once the family had arrived. In the article, Hoyle made a revealing comment when she wrote about a very difficult journey by plane to Kabul with children aged three and two: ‘At the time I was five months pregnant, and my husband, having had no sleep at all in the previous forty eight hours, was in no fit state to deal with them kindly.’³³² This statement inferred that the children were not ultimately their father’s responsibility; that he had little experience of dealing with them and that, if he did in these circumstances, he would lose his temper. The prospective loss of temper seemed to be seen as permissible, and any difficulties arising from Hoyle’s pregnancy were secondary in importance to her husband’s fatigue, ill humour and the possible articulation of it. The article went on to suggest the problems wives encountered when the family arrived post: ‘Your child will probably be very cross, bewildered and tired for the first couple of weeks, and will demand far more of your attention than normally. Pander to him as much as possible...’³³³

³³⁰ Anonymous questionnaire, 1980s. Smedley, Box A.

³³¹ ‘Air Travel with Children Under Two’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1974, p. 29.

³³² Rosamund Hoyle, ‘Travelling with Small children’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Spring 1975, p. 24.

³³³ *Ibid.*

However, diplomats' wives faced many demands themselves, for which they, as generally responsible for every aspect of life that was not covered by their husband's role at the embassy, had to find solutions. Managing the shocks and disruptions to their children's lives was only one aspect among many. With remarkable foresight, when the family was posted to Lusaka, Retta Bowen's mother bought sets of clothes to equip her two daughters for the following two years. She also took with her to Africa a supply of basic cooking equipment that she knew would be unavailable there. This attention to detail was essential if greater upheaval than necessary was to be avoided. Julia Miles remembered arriving in Jeddah in 1975 '... we were in a totally empty house. I just had a float of four pyrex cups and four pyrex bowls and a potato masher for four months and I mean the kids had no toys, there were no books and of course you couldn't go anywhere...' ³³⁴ Diplomatic wives who had experienced several postings might have devised a way to deal with the requirements of constant moves and this was a crucial part of the way they created a home for the family (which will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 6). If these plans suffered a setback, however, the emotional impact could be devastating. Emma Robb* remembered her mother's despair when the family arrived at a hardship post in the early 1990s:

I remember ... when we arrived there our heavy baggage arrived first which is really unusual and there was a problem with the UAF [Unaccompanied Air Freight] and I can remember my Mum being, I thought at the time, disproportionately upset about this... she was like pretty upset about it... But looking back on it now I think that was because that wasn't how things were supposed to be and that was all part of the routine of making a home and she had to do it all in the wrong order ... ³³⁵

³³⁴ Interview with Julia and Oliver Miles. 29 September 2014.

³³⁵ Interview with Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb*. 8 May 2014.

Existing FCO culture was not sympathetic to the many obligations wives were expected to meet and the way it was structured often caused or exacerbated them. For example, wives could not use sick or disoriented children as an excuse not to attend the social functions they were expected to go to with their husbands, especially when they were at senior grades and representative roles. The clash between ‘cocktail and baby feeding time’ was noted by a number of wives who wrote their own memoirs of diplomatic service life. Guidance produced in 1965 to assist diplomats in their role warned that ‘Except in emergencies and at the beginning of an appointment, your wife will not be able to make the children a reason for not going to parties with you.’³³⁶ Retta Bowen, however, suggested that even the small amount of leniency implied above was not always allowed. She recalled with anger some aspects of her mother’s role as a diplomat’s wife in the 1970s and 1980s:

I think it's remarkable now, it's sort of unacknowledged really... arriving in a place, no furniture none of your possessions, and having to cook a big dinner party on Friday when you've just arrived and you've got your hand luggage and your luggage invariably got lost somewhere and won't arrive for another six months... that sort of scenario... Yeh! Mad! Really mad! And there being no allowances made at all for settling in or adjusting...³³⁷

Throughout the time frame covered in this thesis, much emphasis was placed on the sense of duty expected from FCO wives; what Coles has called ‘a strong moral imperative to acknowledge loyalty to the institution...’³³⁸ For all families who took part in the study,

³³⁶ Smedley, *Partners in Diplomacy*, p.70. The clash between children’s dinner and bed time and the cocktail hour is also noted in Sally James, *Diplomatic Moves: Life in the Foreign Service*, (London: Radcliffe, 1995). James comments on ‘getting the children to bed and out of the way’ p .6; see also Ewart-Biggs, *Pay Pack and Follow*, p. 90; Barbara Salt, Diplomatic Administration Office ‘*Guidance to Diplomatic Service and other Officers, and Wives, posted to Diplomatic Service missions overseas “Some “do’s” and “don’ts” of Diplomatic Etiquette and other relevant matters written*’, HMSO 1965, p. 7

³³⁷ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015

³³⁸ Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family* p. 9

however, moving on became more – rather than less – difficult as life went on. For women, who as young wives had found the life exciting, the demands of family and finding themselves unable to pursue their own career became more pressing as time passed. One diplomat's wife, interviewed for a *Sunday Correspondent* article in the summer of 1990 said: “When he [her husband] took his first posting in Lagos I was only 27. I thought it was a big adventure, everything stretched ahead of me. But the sacrifice is greater the older you get.”³³⁹ Davalini Pocock, the wife in the article, a qualified maths teacher, was unable to pursue her own career as she moved to and from postings. This was a problem faced by many diplomats' wives as the twentieth century progressed and particularly as male graduates who intended to enter the diplomatic service began to marry their female counterparts.³⁴⁰ ‘Early on,’ writes Coles, ‘many graduates did not reveal their status, fearing that academic achievement would be regarded as undesirable in a diplomatic wife.’³⁴¹ At interview Catherine Webb* told a story to illustrate her mother's (who married in 1954) own complicated position. One day when a friend of Webb's*, a fellow student at Oxford, came to lunch:

She put them on the spot saying “You know you had a degree from Oxford and then what did you do? You didn't do anything with it you just sort of settled into being wife of your husband, you should have done something more.” And my mother basically said ... I felt very lucky. I wouldn't have had such an interesting life if I hadn't got married into... what would I have done with a degree? Been a teacher or something boring like that.”³⁴²

³³⁹ Kate Muir, ‘Diplomatic Baggage’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1990, 40 – 42; Coles corroborates this point of view in ‘Making Multiple Migrations’, p. 143.

³⁴⁰ See McCarthy *Women of the World*, 311 – 333.

³⁴¹ Coles, ‘Making Multiple Migrations’, p.133.

³⁴² Interview with Catherine Webb*.19 August 2015

Julia Miles, however, married in 1968, thought differently: ‘... the frustration of being an educated woman abroad and not being able to do anything is absolutely ghastly...’³⁴³

Opportunities at post were often few and, if they did exist, could be hindered by an unsupportive hierarchy, although Hilary Callan observed in 1975 that ‘Heads of Mission are encouraged to – and do – look favourably on a wife’s request for permission to work, provided this does not conflict with immunity, with local practice, or with her or her husband’s representational duties.’³⁴⁴ Finally, Julia Miles realised that she would have to be determined to establish for herself the kind of career she wanted to have: ‘Eventually when we were in Luxembourg [Oliver Miles was Ambassador there from 1985 – 1988] I commuted between Oxford and Luxembourg and I did my training and then after that by hop, skip and jump I worked as a social worker... But... abroad I couldn't work because I didn't speak any language well enough.’³⁴⁵ This is an eloquent illustration of the ‘yo-yo like existence between countries’ that Coles describes as a familiar experience of spouses wishing to fulfil their own careers.³⁴⁶

Children felt very strongly about the conflicting impositions their mothers dealt with and how these had often gone unacknowledged. Some interviewees made a point of ‘putting on record’ how well they felt their mothers had managed and how much they had achieved. Retta Bowen recalled ‘in those days she might spend three days preparing for a big dinner. I just look back now and I think what a waste of your amazing talents.’³⁴⁷ Brother and sister, Mike Ingalls* and Nancy Grant*, both remarked that their parents’ peripatetic FCO lifestyle had ultimately resulted in tension because their mother had been unable to pursue a career.

³⁴³ Interview with Julia and Oliver Miles. 29 September 2014.

³⁴⁴ Callan, ‘The Premiss of Dedication’, p. 97.

³⁴⁵ Interview with Julia and Oliver Miles. 29 September 2014

³⁴⁶; Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family*, p.2.

³⁴⁷ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

NG*: As time passed, my mother also became less happy about the constant moving the diplomatic lifestyle involved and to some extent blamed the FCO lifestyle (and indirectly my father) for preventing her from pursuing a career.³⁴⁸

MI*: My mother became increasingly unhappy with the constant moves; she wanted to put down roots and maybe start a career (she did a law degree and would have liked to practise, I think). There was a degree of marital tension around this.³⁴⁹

Another correspondent recalled her mother experiencing mental health problems, although she went on to qualify her statement by questioning how far these could actually be ascribed to a diplomatic lifestyle.

I do feel that my mother might, possibly, have had a career of her own, had she not been married to a diplomat, which she would have enjoyed. She did have a period, I think, when she suffered depression and feelings of worthlessness, though who is to say whether she would have suffered that anyway, whatever the life she led.³⁵⁰

Diplomatic wives were closely involved with investigating educational opportunities and selecting and school places for their children as they travelled. Often this led to what one interviewee has described as a 'chop and change education'.³⁵¹ In the following section the different approaches to education experienced by diplomats' children and their reactions to them will be looked at more closely.

³⁴⁸ Nancy Grant*. Questionnaire. 1 October 2014

³⁴⁹ Mike Ingalls*. Questionnaire. 5 October 2014

³⁵⁰ Fiona Taylor*. Questionnaire. 11 September 2014

³⁵¹ Interview with Paul Tylor. 23 October 2014.

‘Almost a revolving door.’

The previous chapter made clear FCO parents’ preference for giving their children a boarding school education even after changes in attitudes to family dynamics made separation less acceptable. However, before diplomats’ children went to boarding school they often travelled with their parents and received education at post. This was of varying kinds and standards and the practice demonstrates a further call on diplomatic service children to adapt to demanding circumstances. Olivia Tate* spoke of having ‘a very mixed early education... it went up and down a bit ... it was very good in parts and awful in others.’³⁵² During the 1950s, Tate* experienced an English primary school in London; the Anglo-American School in Moscow; and a governess and home-school system in Yugoslavia. This was provided by the widely-used Parents National Education Union (PNEU) system which was founded in 1887 by British educationalist Charlotte Mason and provided a broad education package based on correspondence, continuous from the age of five to sixth form level. When the information arrived, a short diagnostic test determined the level at which children should begin. For nervous parents, the PNEU system was very easy to use: ‘A kit is provided for the do-it-yourselfer’ proclaimed a 1961 article in the FSWA newsletter entitled ‘PNEU and the Home School Room,’ which elsewhere makes the connection between the transient lifestyle lived by diplomatic families and the consequent difficulties in finding suitable education. The FSWA member who wrote the article admitted that she often found comfort in the PNEU routine, ‘while the scene changed intoxicatingly and sometimes uncomfortably fast.’³⁵³ Olivia Tate* remembered using the PNEU system in Sarajevo in 1954: “I remember it as being excellent. I was learning things with the PNEU system that you didn’t do until you went to senior school. I was doing French. I was doing Latin. I was doing

³⁵² Interview with Olivia Tate*.10 March 2014.

³⁵³ Hon Mrs Henry Hankey, ‘PNEU and the home schoolroom’, *FSWA Newsletter*, 3 July 1961, pp.15 – 18.

Art appreciation... It was a very good broad spectrum.”³⁵⁴ She did recall that its shortcomings came in the shape and skill of the individual teacher:

‘...most of it which my mother gave me was fine. My father tried to teach me maths and that was a DISASTER because he had no patience and he was very good but he was not good at teaching.’³⁵⁵

Others, however, found the PNEU system far less useful. Libby Purves remembered that ‘We did a bit of PNEU when we were very small, it was dead boring.’³⁵⁶

Where a sufficient number of parents found themselves in comparable circumstances they could work together to start a school, like the mothers who wrote to the FSWA newsletter in 1964 about the school they had established in Algiers. The quote below demonstrates that not only did children’s lives change regularly, but their immediate surroundings could also be transitory, as in the case of the physical space used to house the school.

The teacher is Miss Moffet who gave up her job in England to start the school... Miss Moffet takes children between 5 and 10. The main difficulty at the moment is accommodation. The Ambassador has kindly leant a room in the building which will eventually be the new Residence, but once the renovations start another place will have to be found.³⁵⁷

Local schools and foreign national schools were another option for young children. It should be noted that local schools were often a popular choice in Commonwealth countries because, as former colonies, they had strong links with UK educational traditions and there was no language

³⁵⁴ Interview with Olivia Tate*. 10 March 2014.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Libby Purves. Questionnaire. 10 April 2015.

³⁵⁷ Thea Elliot, ‘Letter from Algiers’, FSWA Newsletter, 9 July 1964, p.21.

barrier. Members of FCO staff who had served in the colonies might also have felt more familiar with local cultures. Thus the children of Harry Brind, who joined the Colonial Service in 1951 and became one of the ‘re-treads’ (Colonial Service Officers who joined the FCO after independence was granted to the country in which they had served) attended a local school between 1972 – 3 in Kampala about which Brind wrote: ‘It was too a revealing experience, after a cosy middle class London girls’ school, to see that not all children came from comfortable homes.’³⁵⁸ Mike Ingalls* and Nancy Grant*’s father had joined the ‘Commonwealth Stream’ when he entered the FCO in 1953 and thus the family was always posted to Commonwealth countries. Their mother was a New Zealander whose son, Ingalls*, described the idea of boarding school as ‘a practice she loathed’ so both children attended local schools. Although they were arguably the best way for children to gain knowledge of the host country and to achieve a degree of assimilation, local schools could cause confusion when it was time to move on. Bill Cordiner – another diplomat who began his career with colonial work – described in his memoirs the problems his son had settling in to school in the US in the early 1980s after three years’ schooling in Antigua. In the Caribbean his son had had black friends, something that was not encouraged in Washington.³⁵⁹

Some children were sent to foreign national schools, often because they were the only European school available. Peter Boon’s parents were posted to the Belgian Congo in 1948 where he attended the Belgian primary school and learned French to equip him for a relatively short stay: ‘I already had some knowledge of French but I had to learn French in order to be a pupil at the school because everything was in French. So that was about eighteen months there...’³⁶⁰

³⁵⁸ Harry Brind, *Lying Abroad: Diplomatic Memoirs*, (London: Radcliffe, 1999), p. 91.

³⁵⁹ Bill Cordiner, *Diplomatic Wanderings, from Saigon to the South Seas*, (London: Radcliffe, 2003), pp. 185 – 186.

³⁶⁰ Interview with Peter Boon. 11 April 2014.

Children whose mothers were ‘foreign born’, a term that has accounted for a high percentage of diplomatic spouses, who were bilingual, also attended foreign national schools overseas. Eleanor King* attended the Lycee in a South American capital city from 1962 until 1966. She remembered:

‘...it was very authoritarian, it was a very strict place. But it was great because it was an academic education which you don’t get in primary school in England... And I learned French and Spanish, you know, really quickly, without even noticing because half the lessons were in French and half in Spanish. At that age you just absorb it.’³⁶¹

The highly-structured nature of French national schools made them an unpopular choice with British diplomatic families, although the uniform, centralised system on which they were run made it easy for students to switch between schools in different countries.³⁶² A report comprising the findings of an education survey which was submitted to the DSWA committee in 1970 commented:

Several envy the French for their extremely centralised, coordinated, perhaps rigid, system which enables children to move from one lycee to another in another country, without educational disruption...The French system is more authoritarian...while English education, at least since Arnold, claims to care more for the development of thought, character and judgement.³⁶³

³⁶¹ Interview with Eleanor King*. 11 July 2016.

³⁶² See Michel Debeauvais, ‘Education in former French Africa’, in *Education and Political Development*, ed. James Coleman, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 75 – 92 for a very comprehensive discussion of the way in which the French education system developed its overseas schools.

³⁶³ Nancy Larmour, ‘Report to the DSWA Committee on replies to the education questionnaire’, May 1970, Smedley Box B, p.12. [hereafter, Larmour Report]. Unfortunately there is no indication of when the questionnaire was sent out, but it was probably during the preceding year (ie May 1969-May 1970).

Although this is an area that has seen little in the way of formal documentation or study, the schools described so far can fit into the broad category of ‘international schools’. Writing in 1995, Hayden and Thompson noted that ‘the concept of the “international school” is one that has developed rapidly over the past 40 years and is still relatively thinly researched.’³⁶⁴ They estimated this rapid growth was estimated as an increase from 50 international schools identified worldwide in 1964 to approximately 1000 at the time they were writing.³⁶⁵ A 1969 study of international schools written by Robert Leach, a teacher at the International School of Geneva, suggested four categories of international school. The first was the simplest: international schools could be schools that accepted students from a range of national backgrounds; the second was formed of national schools overseas, such as the French school attended by Eleanor King* in South America. Schools that had been founded to represent the interests of more than one nation, like the Anglo-American school attended by Olivia Tate* in Moscow, made up the third category while the fourth group were established to promote international understanding and ‘worldmindedness’, to use the remarkable term originated by Sampson and Smith in their 1957 article. According to Sampson and Smith the ‘worldminded’

favours a world-view of the problems of humanity, whose primary reference group is mankind rather than Americans, British, Chinese etc.³⁶⁶

Hayden and Thompson point out that ideologies such as ‘worldmindedness’ and others were expressed in guiding principles published by UNESCO and had their basis in the idea of international cooperation as a means of preventing further worldwide conflict in the aftermath of the Second World War. Although this point of view has been challenged by Sylvester, who

³⁶⁴ Mary Hayden and Jeff Thompson, ‘International Schools and International Education a Relationship Reviewed’ *Oxford Review of Education*, 21:3 (September 1995), pp. 327 – 345.

³⁶⁵ Hayden and Thompson, ‘International Schools’, p. 332.

³⁶⁶ Donald L Sampson and Howard P Smith, ‘A Scale to Measure World-Minded Attitudes’, *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 45:1 (1957), pp. 99-106.

argues that this is an over-simplification and attempts to illustrate the subtleties in its development between 1893 and 1944.³⁶⁷

The British Diplomatic Service, however, was never enthusiastic about international schools and the ideal of international education. In very much the same way as it remained aloof from post-war suggestions that separation was detrimental to family life, the FCO rejected the international ethos in terms of its children's education. 'Few parents seem to have considered the new international schools,' wrote Brendon about the expatriates who stayed on in India in the decade after independence, 'which educated the offspring of ambassadors, businessmen and missionaries from other countries – they were thought to be too American.'³⁶⁸ The origin of the belief that International Schools were 'too American' is difficult to pin down. However, evidence that this was a prevalent view among British diplomatic families can be found in the DSWA education report mentioned above. Its author, Nancy Larmour, wrote: "I have almost no experience of American (often called International) schools."³⁶⁹ Although this is inaccurate it shows that the two appear to have been perceived at least as interchangeable. Larmour noted that responses to the questionnaire showed British diplomats and their families 'deploring... their [the American's] money-weighted influence in English schools...' and demonstrating a 'stern disapproval of their methods and discipline, or lack of it.'³⁷⁰ Catherine Webb*, recalled her parents' reluctance to send her to the American school when the family was posted to Moscow: "The only school that was English speaking in Moscow was American and of course it was out of the question for me to go to an American school..."³⁷¹

³⁶⁷ Robert Sylvester, 'Mapping International Education: A Historical Survey 1893 – 1944', *Journal of Research in International Education*, 1:1 (2016), pp. 90-125.

³⁶⁸ Brendon, *Children of the Raj*, p.266.

³⁶⁹ Larmour Report p. 12.

³⁷⁰ Larmour Report p. 12.

³⁷¹ Interview with Catherine Webb*. 19 August 2015.

The expressions of suspicion shown in the education report towards French and American schools appear to demonstrate an implicit belief in the superiority of the British system, despite the emotional complications of separation. Diplomatic families' rejection of international school during this thesis' period – its seeming anti-internationalist and anti-American stance – had more to do with upholding outmoded traditions than taking a reactionary position towards former allies. It was, it could be argued, a secondary product of the boarding school tradition discussed in Chapter 3. The unyielding nature of this tradition was demonstrated by Buettner's comment that in-country schools in India would not be used by the British even during wartime; its ascendancy endured both in practice and ideology. The dominance of the separation as an ideal is illustrated in a contradictory way by the choice made by the only family interviewed to send their children to International School – sisters Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb* and father, Carl Everett.* The family's choice of international school was a definite move to avoid separation and break out of the FCO habit, rather than base their decision on the merits of the two comparative styles of education. Lack of trust in international schools is also related to the FCO compulsion to maintain a distance, what Coles and Fechter have called 'a built-in "apartness" from the rest of the British community.'³⁷²

The few children interviewed for this project who attended International Schools spoke positively of the experience. 'Really great, really really great. Yeh, I loved it. I loved it,'³⁷³ was one recollection. Another said: 'I always say if I had children I'd want to move abroad so that they could go to an international school.'³⁷⁴ Although Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb* agreed that

³⁷² Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family*, p.10.

³⁷³ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

³⁷⁴ Interview with Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb*. 8 May 2014.

no two International Schools were the same, common characteristics appear to have been a sense of safety and community that verged on the over-protected. Kelly* remembered:

my year group in Holland was only about fifty people, so you know everyone *intimately* you know, you probably sit next to half the year across your classes or whatever, so you do really get to know everybody, even though not all International Schools are small.³⁷⁵

Retta Bowen's memory of Vienna's International School was that 'It was a big school, it was huge.'³⁷⁶ Students, she recalled, were picked up and dropped off by a fleet of buses:

...it was a very much kind of whole culture of the bus journey... You know, was kind of another subset of what went on at school... So you were with older children and ...yeh what went on on the bus was really important, you know, and that was where you'd do your sticker trading when you were into stickers and you'd be doing your kind of flirting when you were into boys - whatever, it would all be happening on the bus.³⁷⁷

This is perhaps unusual in a European city with a comprehensive transport system, and possibly reinforced an exclusive atmosphere among the students who on these bus journeys mixed only with one another. Like boarding schools, international schools could be said to reflect the insular world of the embassy and the FCO. Outside school, children who had spent the school day interacting with others in exactly the same position as themselves had the experience extended on the bus journey home. Those parents who felt that the choice of international school for their children would avoid the elite and privileged world of the boarding school were mistaken. Carl Everett* (born 1953) observed: 'I like to think myself still as a socialist and I don't believe in private education but that really goes out the window when you go overseas and you put your

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015. Vienna's International School was established after the Second World War to provide education for the children of military personnel. During the 1960s it divided to form an International School and an American School.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

child into an international school as opposed to a local school...³⁷⁸ International schools, as Coles and Fechter speculate, ‘aim at creating what amounts to a new cosmopolitan elite.’³⁷⁹ Another similarity with boarding school was the shared experience of international school children. Unlike local or national schools that retained a core of students based in the locale, international school pupils were all familiar with a transient lifestyle. Danielle Kelly* said:

I think it was very normal for people to come and go. Every year, every term, someone would leave your class but someone new would come in and they were always welcomed with open arms and very quickly they would have a friendship group around them. In the same way if someone went, everyone would be sad but it would be ok because someone new would come along, so it was that transient culture where it someone coming in going, almost a revolving door... you wouldn’t be sad for that long... as I say, making new friends so it wasn’t that big a deal really...³⁸⁰

The negative aspect of this transient world came in the form of an ambiguous sense of national identity, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 4. Both Danielle Kelly* and Retta Bowen expressed difficulties in recognising their own national identities. “I think my identity was quite confused because I didn’t know what it was... I didn’t know what it meant to be white British...” said Danielle Kelly*, who also remembered searching for another identity that seemed more solid. ‘I remember having a conversation with my friend who said “Well you can be Palestinian, because some Palestinians are quite fair so you just tell them you’re Palestinian and they’ll believe you.”

³⁷⁸ Interview with Carl Everett*. 19 March 2014.

³⁷⁹ Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family*, p.17.

³⁸⁰ Interview with Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb*. 8 May 2014.

Academic standards resulting from this ‘chop and change education’³⁸¹ were – if we keep in mind the concerns of respondents to the DSWA questionnaire – surprisingly high. Danielle Kelly* remembered being assessed for Special Educational Needs while attending a London primary school because her standards were so low and she had difficulties settling down. However: “When we moved [overseas] I remember being in year four and having to have extra everything lessons because I couldn’t do anything virtually ... and then when I got to year five I won the award for the most improved spelling and handwriting.”³⁸² Kelly* felt that

... if I hadn’t had that opportunity to go abroad where would my life have been within a state school? Because I probably would have got lost and it was an anxiety issue that I was experiencing – I’ve always been a very sensitive person and big classrooms, very noisy, all that sort of stuff, and just struggling to engage in education so for me if I hadn’t gone to international school I’m frightened for what my life would have been.³⁸³

Many international schools’ beneficial qualities can be ascribed to small class sizes and impressive resources. Retta Bowen commented on Vienna’s international school: ‘It was really well resourced, it had its own athletics tracks, enormous gyms...’³⁸⁴ Nonetheless, international Schools do seem to have retained a supportive environment, so much so that when Bowen began boarding school in England in 1980s she was shocked to find it was not acceptable among her classmates to appear to be keen to learn. It was ‘such a huge departure from a school where it had been good to do well and people wanted to do well and people you know strove quite evidently to suddenly coming to an environment where you were called a suck if you put your hand up and everyone made drain noises.’³⁸⁵

³⁸¹ Interview with Paul Tylor. 23 October 2015.

³⁸² Interview with Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb*. 8 May 2014.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

The international school experience and its culture has been very closely related to the discourses of ‘Third Culture Kids’ (TCKs) and ‘Global Nomads’. The current definition of the TCK goes as follows:

The TCK is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCKs life experience the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background.”³⁸⁶

The term ‘global nomad’ (its origin is attributed by Hayden and Thomson to an article in *The Guardian* newspaper in May 1993) has a more romantic sound but essentially describes the same group of young people whose parents’ work takes the family around the world and causes frequent arrivals and departures. Hayden and Thomson interpret the discussion surrounding ‘third culture kids’ as more positive than that which characterises ‘global nomads’. Both TCKs and Global Nomads, the literature suggests, take the lessons of an international background with them into adulthood and profit from their experiences but the discussion surrounding Global Nomads contains a greater expression of the disadvantages of their transient lifestyle, many of which will be discussed in this chapter’s third section on friendships and relationships.

The discourses surrounding Third Culture Kids and Global Nomads are relevant and compelling to a study of diplomats’ children. However, neither were familiar within the FCO community during our timeframe. The terms were rarely used by participants, although I made a point of asking interviewees whether they were aware of them. The early pages of Pollock and Van

³⁸⁶ Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids*, pp. 20 – 23.

Reken's TCK 'handbook' list the reasons why TCKs have only recently entered the public consciousness. The first quotes Carolyn Smith's 1991 *The Absentee American*: 'Since 1946... when it was unusual for Americans to live overseas unless they were missionaries or diplomats it has become commonplace for American military and civilian employees and businesspeople to be stationed abroad, if only for a year.' This passage mentions missionaries and diplomats, two main groups that travel overseas to work and it is important to note that it only later became 'commonplace' for Americans to form an expatriate culture. By 1946 the concept of living overseas for work and of children moving between cultures had been a long established part of British life among imperial and colonial and diplomatic employees. It could then be argued that British diplomatic children had long been TCKs and Global Nomads.

However, both terms and their accompanying discourses are so intrinsically linked to international school culture that they would not have been identified or seen as particularly significant if they had. The growth and development of TCKs and Global Nomads as concepts nonetheless has close ties to two areas that are central to this thesis. First, they grew out of an ideology that came about as a result of the Second World War: we have seen that the promotion of an international culture in international schools was one way of attempting to avoid further conflict. Further to this, the new concepts of childhood which made children central to family life offered greater encouragement for self-expression in the form and identity of groups such as TCKs and global nomads. We saw in the previous chapter the FCO's dogged adherence to its traditional modes of behaviour and the associated demands for emotional resilience and restraint. In many ways the processes of identification and characterisation that typify the TCK and Global Nomads represent an act of self-examination that is largely absent from FCO culture. The only contributor to this project who used the term regularly was the youngest, born slightly outside the time parameters in 1992, who attended international schools. With his

questionnaire he attached a link to a light-hearted website ‘22 signs you were an International School Kid’, where – significantly - TCKs and international school were used interchangeably.

‘Likely to dissolve in the future.’

The Guardian article that Hayden and Thompson credit with the dissemination of the term Global Nomad lists among its limitations ‘the trauma of constantly leaving behind people and places and a common distrust of emotional intimacy and long-term relationships...’³⁸⁷ Many of the former diplomatic service children who took part in this project reported difficulties with making and sustaining friendships, for the obvious reason that friendships were often broken when they moved on. One correspondent wrote of ‘perpetual tearing losses of friends’³⁸⁸.

Another indicated that this was a concern and a problem for children from a very young age:

The worst thing was leaving my friends when we moved, particularly when I was about seven. That was when we went to live in Hong Kong and I left two very close friends in London and you kind of know that you won’t really keep in touch...³⁸⁹

In the early stages of the period under consideration this emphasis on friendship does not appear to have been so strong. Neither of the two interviewees born in the 1940s mention friendship and its loss in any depth, although they do refer to having friends at school. This may be a feature of the stoicism and lack of self-examination typical of families involved in colonial and international work that was examined in Chapter 3. It could also be related to a more ‘traditional strict approach to child rearing’ that, according to Hendrick, remained in the middle of the

³⁸⁷Peter Kingston, ‘Cosmopolitan but rootless’, *The Guardian*, May 18 1993. Kingston writes that the term Global Nomad was invented by Norma McCaig ‘A Fellow global nomad... who founded Global Nomads International, a non-profit-making organisation based in Washington DC.’

³⁸⁹ Ruth Harris*. Questionnaire 26 July 2015; Interview with Kate Howells. 22 July 2014.

twentieth century³⁹⁰. In this scenario, parents would be unlikely to consider their children's opinions and this attitude would not have gone unnoticed by the children themselves. This is supported by Eleanor King* (born 1954) who said:

... when I meet parents these days saying 'Should we go abroad? But what about the children and school and dragging them away at this age and that age and something?' They agonise over it. Well we were never... I don't think my parents gave a moment's thought to our psychological development, our friendships, our sense of self, anything at all, so you know, we were just told where we were going next and it was something that was taken for granted.³⁹¹

Eleanor King* stressed, however, that she 'totally took for granted this idea that one was going to move.'³⁹² The consistent notion that upheaval was imminent had a profound effect on the way that diplomatic service children conducted and understood their own friendships. Ed Mullen* felt that the friendships he made were shallow: 'a lot of the relationships are very superficial because you know that they're gonna end so you don't ever really think "This is for the long term."³⁹³ He went on to describe the difficulties he has experienced in adulthood in enjoying profound levels of friendship.

I find it harder to feel... a solid friendship with someone... I get through the first couple of superficial things, and then it's hard to make the commitment at the next step. It seems to take me longer than it takes other people. Now there could be all sorts of other reasons for that but I think a part of it is... diplomatic childhood.³⁹⁴

³⁹⁰ Hendrick, *Children Childhood and English Society*, p.28.

³⁹¹ Interview with Eleanor King*. 11 July 2014.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Interview with Kate Morris*. 6 October 2014.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

In the spring of 1980, 18 year old John Donald wrote a short piece for the DSWA magazine which expressed comparable feelings.

In relation to others, the diplomatic child has one blind spot. He can deal with both the moments of deep self-revelation to a close friend and the shallowness of too much social intercourse and the need for a social mask – these are natural parts of his upbringing. However, between these two poles is the chink in his armour. Coping with mid-distance relationships, “relaxed, informal company” can be traumatic and awkward. There is a gap here.³⁹⁵

Notably, Emma Robb*, one of the sisters who spoke so favourably about international school, thought that ‘the worse bit or the least positive... for me is a lasting inability to maintain solid friendships.’³⁹⁶ Her sister Danielle Kelly* reinforced this view:

...it’s a sort of common joke with my friends, you know, it’s three years and then we’re done. I find it very difficult to maintain long term friendships, I get close to people very quickly... and have wonderful friendships but longer than three years, very rare.³⁹⁷

The extent to which diplomatic service children engaged with host cultures has been difficult to gauge, although many made the point at interview or through correspondence that this was one of the positive elements of growing up as a diplomatic service child. Olivia Tate* remembered playing with local children in 1950s Moscow but mentioned that this freedom to play had been part of her earlier childhood in London. The following quotation suggests that playing outside was characteristic of the early part of this thesis’ time frame but also something personal to individual families:

³⁹⁵ John Donald, ‘Views of children and parents’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Spring 1980, p. 30.

³⁹⁶ Interview with Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb*. 8 May 2014.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

we had this wonderful slope outside the flats [in Moscow] and all the kids used to climb the steps and slide down on their bums on the ice... it was something I did before I went to Russia. We lived... in Kew ... and we all used to meet downstairs my mother probably looked out of the window once in a while to see where I was but the gang of us you know little five and six year olds used to play around the flats and it's just something I went on to do with Russian children and you know you pick up a language at that age.³⁹⁸

Libby Purves (born 1950) wrote:

the best thing was getting a practical, day to day acquaintance with different countries and cultures - just knowing, unfussedly, that you take your shoes off in temples, and say Guten Tag politely in German shops and eat croque monsieur in the street on the way back from doing eurythmics at school in Lille: knowing the formality of French bourgeois playdate invitations and the utter upfront ridiculousness and cruelty of apartheid and so forth.³⁹⁹

Vicky Tarry made friends with some local girls on a posting to Turkey in the early 1990s. Her recollection illustrated the potential barriers to friendship, mainly language, but, like Olivia Tate* in Moscow she and her Turkish friends were able to overcome the language barriers:

In Turkey I learned quite a bit of Turkish I would say, I've forgotten all of it now. I made friends with... there was a girl across the road and a girl sort of two roads back, well two sisters actually. There was a massive age difference, I was probably seven or eight. One was twelve, one was nine or whatever, we were all quite different ages. We used to spend

³⁹⁸ Interview with Olivia Tate*. 10 March 2014.

³⁹⁹ Libby Purves. Questionnaire 13 April 2015.

days... they couldn't speak English, so I must have picked up Turkish. Or just, I dunno, gesticulated or something...⁴⁰⁰

Libby Purves mentioned South Africa's Apartheid regime and other participants pointed out that political and cultural differences could make it difficult for friendships outside the expatriate community to take root. For example, Ruth Harris* wrote:

On quite a few posts it would be dangerous to the locals if we tried to interact with them, in Soviet Russia and Iraq for instance. We always had to keep that in mind. It wouldn't be fair to talk to someone if it meant they would be hauled in by the KGB and questioned.⁴⁰¹

The apparent uneasiness towards maintaining friendships demonstrated above existed somewhat paradoxically alongside superficial social abilities, including a fluent capacity for 'small-talk' acquired as part of embassy life. Both the interviewee Kate Morris* and John Donald, quoted above, felt that the corollary of the reservations they felt towards deep and lasting friendships was the superficial nature of social interactions at parties and functions and it is possible that this contributed to their complex feelings surrounding friendship. As Morris* put it: 'I would hand around and serve stuff and my Mum would always say "Thank you very much it's great that you are so helpful and friendly."' Ed Mullen* went on: 'I think you learn to chat but I think you also learn not to commit.'⁴⁰² Mike Ingalls* echoed these sentiments: 'I can still walk into a room of total strangers... and start making conversation; my diplomatic childhood gave me that skill.'⁴⁰³ Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone made the important distinction between personal parties her parents would hold for their friends and FCO parties that were part of the diplomatic process overseas.

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with Vicky Tarry. 3 November 2014.

⁴⁰¹ Ruth Harris*. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

⁴⁰² Interview with Ed Mullen*. 6 October 2014.

⁴⁰³ Mike Ingalls*. Questionnaire. 6 October 2014.

My parents are quite sort of entertain-y sort of people. But ... they'd be meeting with friends, you see, it wasn't the same thing, it wasn't like having these big sort of parties full of people... well you probably did know because you'd met them hundreds of times at the other hundreds of parties that you've been to that the same people all go to but they weren't necessarily all friends so I think it was very different.⁴⁰⁴

Participants reported that – while always present – the difficulties they developed with making friendships tended to begin when they were teenagers. This is perhaps because greater self-awareness made them more self-conscious or gave them a greater need for stability. It should be remembered that diplomatic service parents cited the need for stability and consistency to justify sending their children to boarding school. Friendship and the importance of boarding school friends, especially for girls, was discussed in the preceding chapter. Paul Tylor thought:

...you'd see somebody on the school holiday and you didn't see them the next because their parents moved and that was always kind of hard especially as you got older. That was the hardest part.⁴⁰⁵

Participants widely reported an inability to maintain long-term friendships, but demonstrated that the problem did not extend to forming relationships with long-term partners. Of the 19 interviewees, three were not in a relationship, four had divorced while twelve were part of a long term stable marriage or partnership. This could be due to the example of the strong diplomatic service marriage during our period. In a constantly changing atmosphere, their parents' marriage was, for many contributors, a strong continuous element. Although articles and advice on

⁴⁰⁴ Interview with Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone. 21 March 2014.

⁴⁰⁵ Interview with Paul Tylor. 23 October 2014.

divorce began to appear more frequently in the DSWA magazines from the 1970s onwards, only two contributors to this project experienced divorce. Retta Bowen commented on the singular set of circumstances that constituted diplomatic service family life: “I think it did force together a family that actually was not together. If they'd had their choice. If everyone had sort of said ‘Where do you want to go?’ The whole family would have disappeared off in different directions probably.”⁴⁰⁶ This sense of enforced interdependence appears to have been influential, but at the expense of extended family. Nancy Grant* observed:

...my “family” was very much the nuclear parent/child unit in which we travelled together for large periods of time, with years passing between seeing extended family. This led to very strong relationships within the immediate family, as we all relied on one another for support and continuity in times of change – but our relationships with wider family may have been weaker than many of my peers.⁴⁰⁷

We saw in the previous chapter that grandparents and other family members could be enlisted to provide care over the holidays for children at boarding school and that this involvement of the whole family was something common to empire and international work. However, children who travelled with their parents and attended international schools were far less likely to get to know grandparents or aunts and uncles. This is what Anne Coles calls ‘the tyranny of distance’ and she notes elsewhere that ‘Little ones forget: as one mother put it, each year she has to say “Children, here are granny and grandpa”, as she pushes them forward.’⁴⁰⁸

Issues which surrounded forming and maintaining friendships were also a problem for the family as a whole, and could lead to some becoming isolated. For families who struggled with problems

⁴⁰⁶ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

⁴⁰⁷ Nancy Grant*. Questionnaire. 1 October 2014.

⁴⁰⁸ Coles, ‘Making multiple migrations’, 130- 131.

such as alcohol abuse and domestic violence the lack of longstanding friends and neighbours could be detrimental. One contributor, whose family had problems, wrote that there were ‘no constant friends through childhood. With a difficult home life this left us potentially isolated....’⁴⁰⁹ Both in the UK and overseas their transient lives meant that diplomatic service families were often unable to join local communities. Libby Purves made the point that there was ‘no continuity of friends **and** neighbours’⁴¹⁰ Wives often complained of beginning to feel settled in local communities in the UK just as it was time to move on. Julia Miles spoke wistfully of a settled period that her family enjoyed:

The best time we had was the four years between nineteen seventy nine and eighty four... at that time we lived in Hampshire ... and we really settled back and a couple of the kids went to local schools and others went to playgroups and it was fantastic we made friends and we joined in village activities and we were completely settled and then the dreaded day came when Oliver came home and said, you know, we're off.⁴¹¹

The role of friends at post, and the possibilities for social life, was not something that interviews for this project covered in any great detail at all. Friends overseas seem to have been drawn from other expatriate groups. Danielle King* and Emma Robb* recalled sharing a beach hut with friends in the Middle East, which, allowing for the constraints of local culture, was probably for the exclusive use of foreign diplomats. Paul Tylor remembered organised activities – often based on sports - for families during the school holidays. These were often very competitive and were selective in their composition, involving groups that Tylor described as the ‘Friendlies...the English speakers... Self made community.’⁴¹² Although the lack of information makes it difficult to comment, it appears that diplomats and their families felt that the FCO was sufficient to

⁴⁰⁹ Denise Holt. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

⁴¹⁰ Libby Purves. Questionnaire. 13 April 2015.

⁴¹¹ Interview with Julia and Oliver Miles. 29 September 2014.

⁴¹² Interview with Paul Tylor. 23 October 2014 : by self-made community Tylor meant a community that forms itself according to shared characteristics rather than ‘self-made men’ or the business community.

provide them with a social life. They appeared inclined to maintain the ‘built-in “apartness” from the rest of the British community’ which has been noted by Coles.⁴¹³

Conclusion

This, the second thematic chapter, dealt with another aspect of British diplomatic service life judged in mostly negative terms by interviewees and other participants: transience. Examination of the oral evidence suggests that the peripatetic life, especially the choice of international schools for children, should not be seen as an alternative to the culture of separation but as a difficult characteristic of the FCO system as a whole. Diplomatic families were seen by Anne Coles as ‘making multiple migrations’ into the early twenty first century, and an analysis of diplomatic tradition suggests that this pattern will continue unless diplomatic roles within the Foreign Office are completely revised.⁴¹⁴ The first section of the chapter looked in detail at the practical demands of a peripatetic lifestyle. Nearly all participants reported a feeling of restlessness which sometimes peaked at a three-year mark, around the same time that a change of post was inevitable. Diplomatic wives’ resourcefulness and stoicism was praised by their children, who made a point of mentioning their mother’s achievements in the face of many obstacles (including lack of acknowledgement). When wives were unable to find a suitable school they actively sought alternatives, sometimes working with other wives to start one themselves or teaching children at home. A further section explored approaches to education taken by diplomatic families. The local schools, national schools and more ‘worldminded’ schools that children attended overseas can all be grouped under the term ‘international school’. Those children who attended international school, either throughout their education or before going to

⁴¹³ Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family*, p. 10.

⁴¹⁴ For an organisation as resistant to change as the FCO this would be very difficult but options sometimes suggested are the withdrawal of diplomats from overseas so that they could visit their specialist regions and communicate by electronic means and greater responsibility given to locally engaged staff in individual posts.

boarding school gave very positive accounts of the experience. Finally, the effects of transience on the friendships formed by diplomats' children and the way that they understood them came under the spotlight. Interviewees often reported that they had difficulty maintaining friendships beyond a certain level and for longer than a short time, but that the superficial social skills they had learned as part of their involvement in official embassy entertaining had benefitted them in adulthood. The central section suggested that children at international schools experienced a fluid relationship in terms of interaction with fellow students, leading in one case to one participant assuming an alternative national identity - 'being Palestinian'. This was in order to fit in with her peer group and because she felt that she lacked a strong national identity. The uncertainty experienced by diplomatic service children in terms of their relation to others which they express through their reservations about friendship is perhaps a signal that their sense of personal identity is not strong. The chapter that follows will discuss the complex issues of personal and national identity.

4. IDENTITY

He had married a Scotswoman but she had been born in Peking. She was dumpy and tweedy with broad Lanarkshire shoulders and square hands but she spoke Mandarin perfectly and was much more at home with Chinese ways and idiom than she ever felt on her very rare visits to Scotland. Her passion for jewellery was Chinese and her strong Scottish fingers rattled the trays of jade in the street markets of Kowloon, stirring the stones like pebbles on a beach.⁴¹⁵

This image is taken from *Old Filth* by Jane Gardam, a novel dedicated ‘To Raj Orphans and their parents’. *Old Filth* recounts the life of a retired colonial lawyer who has spent his career in Hong Kong and who was himself the child of colonial administrators, born in Malaya. His wife Betty, the Scotswoman described in the quotation above, was herself a colonial child. The way in which she is shown to possess contrasting national identities – Chinese, Scottish - while looking at jewellery at the market skilfully suggests the feelings of belonging and not belonging typical of an individual who has grown up between cultures.

This perception of fractured identity was a defining feature of colonial children. As Buettner makes clear, the Anglo-Indian families who provided her with her subject ‘owed their identity to travels to and from the metropole.’⁴¹⁶ In other words, India, and the roles their parents fulfilled there, together with ‘Home’, the land of their parents’ birth with which they were largely unfamiliar, connected by a lengthy sea journey, were key to the formation of selfhood. Children,

⁴¹⁵ Jane Gardam, *Old Filth*, (London: Abacus, 2005), p.6.

⁴¹⁶ Buettner, *Empire Families*, p.4.

however, often experienced identity as something imposed upon them, according to the standards and expectations of individual cultures. Often, as we have seen, in the secondary literature, their role is not really considered at all. Arnold, writing about European orphans in Imperial India, began by reflecting on the way that the Raj ‘chose to see itself.’⁴¹⁷ His enumeration of the ‘civil servants, army officers, planters and businessmen’ representative of British rule in India reminds us of the absence of children from official and historical accounts.⁴¹⁸

In these circumstances, then, the expectation existed that children’s identity was informed by the adults surrounding them and the roles that they fulfilled. In the post war period, as we have seen, wives of diplomats as well as the diplomats themselves were defined with reference to their role within the FCO. As Callan put it they ‘overwhelmingly see themselves as anchored to life, work and the social order through the medium of their husbands and the latter’s work-generated network of relationships.’⁴¹⁹ As so little attention has been paid to Diplomatic Service children, there is generally an assumption that the children’s relationship to the Foreign Office was much the same: that they too possessed comparable loyalties to the organisation and – by extension – to Britain. However, during this thesis’ time span, a number of contributory factors were influential in the formation of identity in diplomats’ children. The characteristics of ‘belonging’ to the FCO as an institution and to Britain as a nation were one possible way in which these children could choose to see themselves and be seen. But other influences were beginning to emerge, for example modernist theories of selfhood and academic investigation into issues of migration both provided a useful framework where none had existed before. Chapter 3 discussed the ways in which the experiences recorded by Diplomatic Service children pre-dated the

⁴¹⁷ David Arnold, ‘European orphans and vagrants in India in the Nineteenth century’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 7:2 (1979), pp. 104 – 127.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid. p.104.

⁴¹⁹ Callan, ‘The Premiss of Dedication’, p.102.

discourses surrounding ‘Third Culture Kids’ and ‘Global Nomads’. In very much the same way social scientific theories on selfhood and identity and contemporary research on global migration postdate much of the period covered in the thesis, yet can be usefully deployed to aid understanding of how diplomatic children negotiated problems of identity. Commentators have argued that identities which form and re-form in response to constant flux are a phenomenon of the modern condition.⁴²⁰ Ogborn writes that ‘the “modern self” is never finally *made*, it is always undergoing the volatility of transformation. Part of this transformation is the realisation that selves that are made can also be unmade...’⁴²¹ Meanwhile, social anthropologists Rapport and Dawson have suggested that travel added a further layer to these fluctuating ideas of selfhood.⁴²² They quote John Berger’s familiar statement that ‘Emigration... is the quintessential experience of our time.’⁴²³

The transnational families who, according to Coles, ‘make multiple migrations’ typify this experience. Bryceson and Vuorela, bringing together a collection of papers on transnational families, comment on the infinite number of possibilities available to them:

Their ability to reconstitute and redefine themselves over time contingent on spatial practicality and emotional and material needs challenges even the most multi-disciplinary social scientists’ analytical efforts!⁴²⁴

This chapter will engage with the very complex issues of personal, institutional and national identity that confront diplomats’ children and attempt to ascertain what forms of selfhood they understood to be or constructed as authentic and which they felt had been imposed upon them.

⁴²⁰ Informative to this discussion have been Marshall Berman, *All that is solid melts into air: the experience of modernity*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity: self and society in the late modern age*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991).

⁴²¹ Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity*, (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), p. 40.

⁴²² Rapport and Dawson, *Migrants of Identity*, p. 5.

⁴²³ John Berger, *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief As Photos* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. 55.

⁴²⁴ Bryceson and Vuorela, *The Transnational Family*, p. 3.

It will begin by examining the implications for children of their parents' membership of the Diplomatic Service and will move on to explore the related area of national identity and whether they experienced feelings of loyalty to Britain. The final section will address interviewees' impressions of their own identity in the context of current studies in international migration.

'I love it to bits. Though not uncritically.'

The concept of the 'incorporated wife' was developed in the early 1980s by a group of feminist academics in Oxford and resulted, via the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research on Women, in a volume of papers edited by social anthropologists Shirley Ardener and Hilary Callan. Ardener and Callan defined their subject as 'the condition of *wifehood* in a range of settings where the social character ascribed to a woman is an intimate function of her husband's occupational identity and culture.'⁴²⁵ Professions understood to 'incorporate' wives covered in the book included academia, the police force and the military, expatriate wives and those married to colonial administrators. In the light of previous discussions of the demands made by transience in Chapter 4, it is worth noting that just over half the careers examined in individual chapters were based overseas, or involved significant amounts of international movement.

'Incorporation' was behind the acrimonious exchange that took place between two diplomatic wives – Margaret Ibbot and Jean Reddaway - between the pages of the DSWA newsletter during 1976.⁴²⁶ In response to Ibbot's suggestion that 'The blunt truth is wives owe the post and the office nothing at all' Reddaway countered 'Can you really mean that, Margaret? I find it amazing and very sad if it is so.' For Reddaway the FCO was 'a family affair' and she went on to describe its influence on her children:

⁴²⁵ Hilary Callan and Shirley Ardener, *The Incorporated Wife*, (London: Croom Helm, 1984) p.1.

⁴²⁶ Margaret Ibbot, 'The Role of the Foreign Service Wife: A Personal View', *DSWA Newsletter*, Spring 1976, pp. 43 – 45; Jean Reddaway, 'Open letter to Margaret Ibbot', *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1976, pp. 52-53.

Our children do not appear to have suffered. Perhaps a proof of this is that two of them have chosen to follow the same career, one as the wife of an FCO man and the other as a new recruit to the Office. The other cannot wait to leave school and try her luck in some form of overseas service.

Reddaway, as is clear from her response, embraced the supporting role of FCO wife and appeared to have willingly been ‘incorporated’ by the system. She was also confident in writing on behalf of her children and ascribed to them a great enthusiasm for and sense of belonging to the FCO. The question of whether diplomats’ children were in fact ‘incorporated’ into the Foreign Office, has been key to this investigation.

Among the interview questions, participants were asked ‘Did you feel that you had a role? Did you feel, as a diplomat’s child, that you had a special “duty” which other children of parents with international careers didn’t have, to represent your country?’ This question was designed to discover how far children had felt part of the representative function of the Diplomatic Service, rather than simply British. Only one contributor remembered being told (rather dramatically) at five years old: “Remember you represent your country in everything you say and do.”⁴²⁷ Others, even Denise Holt, who called herself ‘A child of the FCO’ and admitted that she ‘used to think that I would ask for my ashes to be scattered in the [FCO] courtyard’ and Peter Boon (born 1942) who talked proudly of his family’s ‘Government, public service, military service...’ were quite certain that they did not have a role to play in FCO life as children.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁷ Ruth Harris*. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

⁴²⁸ Denise Holt. Questionnaire 26 July 2015.

Participants related many anecdotes that saw them involved with entertaining at official functions but whether they felt they had a representative role or function is open to question. Peter Boon recalled arriving in New York for Christmas holidays in the late 1950s:

I was only just arrived and with jet lag and so on and my parents said to me ‘Look there’s the daughter of the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in New York and ... her partner can’t take her to the Christmas end of term ball. Would you accompany her?’ So I did. And that was quite, quite an experience, I don’t remember much of it but I was half asleep poor girl I think... you could be thrown into it ... it’s interesting about the question of Britishness and identity; I perhaps saw myself as you know, representing Britain at this American High School event. You could say, you could put it that way if you want. In a very minor modest way.⁴²⁹

Kate Morris* remembered ‘having to do the schmoozing ... “Come on, come on, out of your jeans, get a dress on... go and talk to...” you know had to entertain the whole time...’⁴³⁰ Libby Purves wrote: ‘We had to behave. And hand out bridge rolls. And not try out Judo holds on Sir Keith Joseph during an official visit, tho’ I did...’⁴³¹ For many, their involvement implied a standard of good behaviour that would be expected of any child; they were conscious of the need for basic good manners but no more than that; Paul Tylor saw his involvement as ‘just help’. ‘On business entertaining, if they wanted to come in and say hello to our guests then that was fine but we wouldn’t involve them in that,’ Carl Everett* reflected on his children.⁴³² Viv James* felt that her family should ‘behave well as guests in the [host] country.’⁴³³ Dan Hardwick*, the youngest participant, was notable in stating that he ‘represented Britain in a

⁴²⁹ Interview with Peter Boon. 11 April 2014.

⁴³⁰ Interview with Kate Morris*. 12 March 2015.

⁴³¹ Libby Purves. Questionnaire. 10 April 2015.

⁴³² Interview with Carl Everett*. 19 March 2014.

⁴³³ Viv James*. Questionnaire. 15 October 2014.

multicultural situation [at International School]’ rather than identifying with the British Embassy and his role within it.

Sometimes a whole family would be given a more direct representative role than simply helping out at social occasions. Olivia Tate* recalled:

Sometimes you get dragged into things perhaps that you wouldn’t otherwise do. I mean my brother and sister in Germany were both dragged into a fashion show for...one of the British children’s labels. And my mother’s still got a picture of them both sort of done up I think in tartan and my brother’s got a very unfortunate Germanic hair cut ... very shaved...⁴³⁴

Similarly Retta Bowen took part in an event arranged to welcome the Prince and Princess of Wales to Vienna for ‘British Week’ in 1986. She recalled that it made her feel uncomfortable:

Princess Diana came out with Charles to Vienna. They wanted a British family to be representative and we were the family that was picked out of the hat and that was strange... I suppose you know there was a privilege to it and we got to do something special but there was an acute awareness of our difference again, of sort of being... in a more positive sense... of being the British family that had to welcome Princess Diana.’⁴³⁵

An exploration of the children’s testimony made evident that they had a far more relaxed attitude to the Foreign Office than their parents. According to Ed Mullen*, ‘it all seemed very normal and I think that’s a general thing...’ When her family was posted to Moscow between 1982 and 1985, Ruth Harris* was aware that the family house was bugged because it belonged to the

⁴³⁴ Interview with Olivia Tate*. 10 March 2014.

⁴³⁵ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

British Embassy. She wrote: "Please remember, this was my normality."⁴³⁶ Peter Andrews* felt the same: "As the youngest of four my childhood just seemed normal as I had seen all my siblings have the same experiences."⁴³⁷ In their approach to the FCO, children appeared to lack the self-conscious stance of their mothers, whose 'dedication to diplomatic aims' was, as Callan commented, 'the most prominent single feature of their collective self-image'.⁴³⁸ A significant feature of wives' perception of their role - that wives seemed to be more in awe of the FCO because they had joined it later in life - was noted in the previous chapter. It might be expected then that children born into Foreign Office families would have an even greater sense of belonging and identification with the Diplomatic Service than their mothers, but this is not the case. Diplomatic Service children expressed comparable awareness of diplomatic prestige and tradition as their parents but they hardly ever conveyed the same respect for it.⁴³⁹

Indeed, without exception, interviewees were notably reflective and critical in their commentary on the FCO. Ed Mullen* remembered an experience that he found particularly embarrassing when his father held a senior diplomatic position in North Africa:

I know in [North Africa] I found it desperately embarrassing ever having to set foot or sit in the official car. It was an old Daimler limousine and I do remember once hiding in the footwell of this thing because I just found it so awful having ordinary people outside staring at this symbol of, you know, well diplomatic prestige. Fair enough, I know that diplomats need to live and behave in a certain way, but on a Saturday morning because it was the only car available to have to jump in and go to the market in this thing it was just

⁴³⁶ Interview with Ed Mullen*. 6 October 2014; Ruth Harris*. Questionnaire 26 July 2015.

⁴³⁷ Peter Andrews*. Questionnaire. 17 April 2015.

⁴³⁸ Callan, 'Premiss of Dedication', p.100.

⁴³⁹ This is possibly a form of rebellion, although disobedience directed at parents among the diplomatic service children interviewed was very rare. In answer to a specific interview question 'Did you rebel as a teenager?', they all stated that they had been very well behaved. Some expressed the opinion that their background was not sufficiently settled to engender feelings of rebellion.

humiliating. It was actually, it sounds stupid, but quite a formative experience for me. In terms of thinking about quality of ... not opportunity... but quality of life.⁴⁴⁰

It goes without saying that male diplomats identified strongly with the Foreign Office because it employed them and rewarded them financially for this. There was also a sense among some interviewees, that membership of the Diplomatic Service was more complex than simply 'doing a job'. One interviewee felt that 'It's a genuine calling or vocation, not just a profession...' and drew a comparison between serving as a diplomat and joining the church or the armed forces.⁴⁴¹ This is suggestive of the 'strong moral imperative', noted by Coles, which exerted a sense of belonging to the Diplomatic Service and led to a prominent sense of loyalty to the institution, often seen as definitive in terms of self-image. A striking feature of the evidence collected for this project, then, is the absence of detailed knowledge amongst children about what diplomatic 'work' actually entailed. We have seen participants provide a number of anecdotes which described official entertaining and formal events such as the Queen's Birthday Party and embassy Christmas parties, but what they understood about their father's day to day work was very limited. Fiona Taylor* reflected:

I knew my father worked for the Foreign Office but did not know quite what that meant. I knew he met a lot of people and had to go to lots of parties and entertain a lot but certainly even when I was older I really had no idea as to what my father did every day. I have a memory of being taken to his office once in the Sudan. It was a small room, barely space for a desk which was covered in papers. And he never spoke about what he did to us. Only now years after retirement occasionally he might mention some incident. But even now I don't know a lot about what he did.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴⁰ Interview with Ed Mullen*.6 October 2014.

⁴⁴¹ Interview with Andrew Graham. 21 May 2015.

⁴⁴² Fiona Taylor*. Questionnaire 11 January 2014.

Vicky Tarry felt similarly: 'I could only ever say "My Dad is a diplomat." People ask me "Well what does that actually involve?" and ... I don't know... I think my cousins and friends and everything are convinced that he's a spy because there's so many things that we don't know'⁴⁴³

The impression of mystery – perhaps self-consciously maintained by some diplomats - reinforces the popular idea of the FCO as a secretive organisation.⁴⁴⁴ A number of interviewees made reference to the fact that their friends had assumed or mentioned their father's possible involvement in espionage. While this is a common occupational hazard for all diplomats, it is conceivable that this assumption and the atmosphere of secrecy in which it is created might lead to problems of distance between individual family members and could place an onus on children to be selective in their interactions with others. This sense of dislocation is of great significance. If, as Coles has contended, 'the FCO defined, characterised, and regulated the diplomatic family,' then it surely was the cause of the most negative aspects of their lives as reported at interview; separation and transience.⁴⁴⁵ Despite its pervasive influence, however, diplomatic children were denied thorough knowledge of 'the only constant' that dominated every aspect of their life.⁴⁴⁶

Only one family that contributed appeared to have made a conscious effort to demystify the diplomat's position and introduce their children to the way the Diplomatic Service worked. In the 1980s Oliver Miles invited two of his four children as teenagers into the Foreign Office in Whitehall to help out:

⁴⁴³ Interview with Vicky Tarry. 3 November 2014.

⁴⁴⁴ Popular books that take the FCO as their subject often imply the reader will gain an opportunity to be let into a secret world. Matthew Parris and Andrew Bryson, *Parting Shots* (London: Penguin, 2011) Parris' collection of valedictory notices carries a strapline on the front cover '– the ambassadors' letters you were never meant to see'. Dudley Edwards, *True Brits* offers a look into 'the secret world of international diplomacy'. Sherard Cowper Coles *Ever the diplomat: Confessions of a Foreign Office Mandarin* (London: Harper Collins, 2012) 'lifts the lid' on 'behind-the-scenes of Whitehall'.

⁴⁴⁵ Coles, 'Making Multiple Migrations', p. 129.

⁴⁴⁶ Denise Holt. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015. Holt described the FCO as 'the only constant' in her life.

I mentioned running conferences in London and I employed in various ways two of my kids, you know, to help out in various ways, moving stuff around, moving furniture, dishing out tickets all that sort of stuff. They got a little bit of exposure to what the hell is Dad actually up to when he's at the Office, you know. Doesn't remain a secret.⁴⁴⁷

Working for the Foreign Office, both informally and on a more official basis was one way of gaining familiarity with its processes. After leaving boarding school early, Kate Morris* accompanied her parents on a posting to Cairo where she worked for her father. Her recollection was that it was:

Very strange... very strange... I remember doing the salaries for the locally engaged staff and having this disgusting you know this filthy... filthy money it was almost rotten and having to read out and do packages and so my Dad was I suppose my overall boss which was a bit weird... But I mean I loved, I really enjoyed working there because the life was fun at eighteen... there was the club and swimming pool and tennis courts...⁴⁴⁸

Similarly Dan Hardwick*, the youngest participant, born in 1992, took part in work experience in the British Embassy in Bucharest but he did not feel it brought him any greater understanding:

I wasn't really aware of what my dad did until I did some work experience in the embassy with him in Romania in 2010. I learnt a lot of what happened inside the embassy then but I don't think I fully understand the significance of what he and his colleagues do.⁴⁴⁹

Julia Miles, married to Oliver Miles who was quoted above, was convinced that much of the construction of FCO 'mythology' – its emphasis on the secrecy and superiority of its work – was

⁴⁴⁷ Interview with Julia and Oliver Miles. 29 September 2014.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with Kate Morris*. 12 March 2015.

⁴⁴⁹ Dan Hardwick*. Questionnaire. 16 June 2015.

perpetuated as part of its own self-image. She observed: ‘I must say there are a hell of a lot of diplomatic employees who've got *folie de grandeur* and I imagine they carry it out at home.’⁴⁵⁰ It is possible that Dan Hardwick* did not fully understand the significance of FCO work because it was less significant than he believed.

Out of 28 former FCO children who took part in the project, 7 went on to choose the Diplomatic Service as a career. Peter Boon felt that the colonial and diplomatic connections that existed on both sides of his family were central to its identity and his own.⁴⁵¹ After a childhood separated from his parents, who were employed by the Indian Civil Service and later the Diplomatic Service, he joined the Commonwealth Relations Office in 1963, moving over to the Diplomatic Service shortly after. Boon felt that he ‘found the whole business of the services and the Foreign Office as being very very interesting and fun and it struck me as being a fun thing to do...’⁴⁵² He also recalled advice given to him by his father, who had recommended to him ‘the value of government service in terms of security.’⁴⁵³ For Paul Tylor and Ed Mullen*, the motivation to join the Diplomatic Service was different. Tylor, who had worked as a ‘Locally Engaged’ Staff member in Washington when his parents were on a posting there, was equally taken with the social life of the mission as with the work involved: ‘I was fully aware of the both the work of the mission and, more importantly, the travel and lifestyle that went with a career in the Diplomatic Service.’⁴⁵⁴ Tylor’s desire to join the FCO was straightforward: ‘having grown up in it... For me it was what I was gonna do.’⁴⁵⁵ He followed his father first into the RAF and later

⁴⁵⁰ Interview with Julia and Oliver Miles. 29 September 2014.

⁴⁵¹ In fact his mother was interviewed by Buettner for *Empire Families* and Peter Boon was keen to add his own contribution to a similar project.

⁴⁵² Interview with Peter Boon. 11 April 2014.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Email Paul Tylor to Sara Hiorns. 15 April 2015. ‘Locally engaged’ staff members are employed by embassies and missions overseas to assist with their running. They are either taken from the local or expatriate community and often include the spouses or children of diplomats at post. They are usually engaged in clerical or visa work and their salary is considerably lower than that of a UK engaged member of the Diplomatic Service.

⁴⁵⁵ Interview with Paul Tylor. 23 October 2014.

the FCO, and although he did not recall any specific advice or encouragement from his father to do so he stated that ‘As a former RAF and FCO man, my father was extremely pleased when I joined RAF and then joined the FCO. He is still incredibly proud of my achievements.’⁴⁵⁶

Ed Mullen*’s reasons for joining the FCO, which he did after successfully gaining entry via ‘fast stream’ application in 1987, were far more confused.⁴⁵⁷ As with Paul Tylor, there was a sense that Ed Mullen*, even if not directly seeking his father’s approval, had had his father and *his* diplomatic career in mind when he made his application. Tylor expressed pleasure in his father’s evident pride in his achievements, but Mullen*’s feelings and the way they were articulated were complex. At interview, he spoke as if he wanted to downplay the significance of his decision and when asked directly whether his father had been pleased with his choice he replied: ‘I think he probably was, yes. He's quite old school and was pleased I did the degree I did at the university I did. Yeh.’⁴⁵⁸ However, Mullen*’s further reflections on his entry into the FCO and his subsequent relationship with his work there were far from straightforward:

I did the civil service exams: just to enter the Foreign Office, because it seemed like something worth doing and I got in... I remember getting my letter from the final selection board and thinking ‘Well, I've got in. That was a difficult competition. Do I really want to do this?’ and I've always doubted it ever since... I've never felt hugely emotionally or professionally committed. I do my job as well as I can... This goes for my life. I've always got this urge to just step back from any big institutions and establish my independence and peace of mind by feeling that I'm not... that I'm slightly apart from it. I think that with any big organisation you've got to absolutely throw heart and mind and

⁴⁵⁶ Email Paul Tylor to Sara Hiorns 15 April 2015.

⁴⁵⁷ FCO fast stream application is open to graduates who will specialise in policy issues. The competition for entry at this level is extremely fierce and successful candidates are expected to reach senior roles rapidly.

⁴⁵⁸ Interview with Ed Mullen*. 6 October 2014

soul into it: and I can't do that ... And having grown up as well... Other people have grown up with diplomatic parents may have the opposite reaction but with me it was the need to step back...⁴⁵⁹

The ambivalence of Ed Mullen*'s feelings about the FCO were striking and could be said to replicate that of a child towards its parents, or perhaps an adolescent who needed to 'test their independence, to rebel against parental values, to live a separate life from them.'⁴⁶⁰ He appeared to wish to be part of the institution, or felt dependent on it as an ultimate authority that had been present throughout his childhood whilst simultaneously wishing to exist beyond its parameters.

Emma Robb*, who also later joined the Diplomatic Service, was equally ambivalent about what she termed 'not a well-considered decision.' She said 'I don't think I was being very imaginative about what I wanted to do ... when I left university at that point I was confident that I wanted to move abroad again.'⁴⁶¹ In common with the testimonies seen above from Paul Tylor and Kate Morris* (both twenty years her senior), Robb*'s desire to move and live abroad emphasised the lifestyle enjoyed by Diplomatic Service staff. When interviewed, Robb* also stressed the prestigious nature of the FCO among public sector institutions and the sense of kudos gained from working there and being associated with it. Emma Robb*'s background at international school, coupled with her awareness of status and prestige illustrated that in terms of identity, she has links to what Moore, after Goodman, has termed 'transnational actors', young people 'with an international upbringing who may become the international managers of the future.'⁴⁶² At an interview in 2014, Vicky Tarry felt 'I don't think I'm in a career at the moment. I'm just doing

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Diana Gittins, *The Family In Question: changing households and familiar ideologies*, (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 163.

⁴⁶¹ Interview with Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb*. 8 May 2014.

⁴⁶² Fiona Moore, 'The German School in London', p. 84; Goodman, *Japan's International Youth*.

a job...’ She talked about having recently been tempted to apply for a job she had seen on the FCO website:

It was something like admin assistant or something and I thought ‘That’s a way in... I could do that...’ And I was reading a book about this family that moved to Nigeria in the fifties and everything was kind of all perfect and I thought: ‘I want to do it. I want to do it again...’⁴⁶³

Although she expressed some doubts whether an FCO role would fit in with her current life, Tarry later submitted an application and was successful. She felt that talking about her childhood within the Diplomatic Service had prompted an urge to return to the life: ‘My interview must have had an impact... as shortly afterwards I applied to the Office and started in May.’⁴⁶⁴

There were clearly many influences that caused diplomats’ children to seek work at the FCO. The three male interviewees Peter Boon, Paul Tylor and Ed Mullen* - whose viewpoints were examined above - all mentioned their fathers in conjunction with their choice of career. While none of their fathers were directly influential, all the male participants revealed a sense of wanting to uphold family tradition and of living up to an individual example (their father in all cases). When asked directly whether they had wanted to please their fathers or demand their attention they were vague in their responses but felt that this was a possibility. All the participants who chose a diplomatic career mentioned the international, elite lifestyle as a motivating factor. However, none of them seemed to have considered whether they were attracted to the work involved (none of them mentioned it at all or seemed to have a clear idea what it entailed) or if they were personally suited to it. The opportunity to serve their country did not seem to be a priority either. We saw above some contributors refer to the FCO as ‘their

⁴⁶³ Interview with Vicky Tarry. 3 November 2014.

⁴⁶⁴ Vicky Tarry. Email to Sara Hiorns. 14 July 2015.

normality' and those who returned to work there appeared to view it as their natural habitat or in the way that a child views its parents or extended family.

The idea of the FCO as a family was further developed with great honesty by Ruth Harris*, who stated very clearly that the Diplomatic Service fulfilled a quasi-parental role in her life and described her desolation when an application to work for the FCO was rejected:

Being rejected by the FCO when I applied felt like being rejected by a parent. I knew the FCO 'tribe' – their habits, ways, language – which certainly wasn't the way of the outside world. If I didn't belong in Foreign Office land and didn't fit into the 'normal' world – where did I belong?⁴⁶⁵

Following this rejection, Harris*'s feelings towards the FCO changed. She found herself focusing on the weight of social obligation (habits, ways, language) which had constantly stressed the necessity for her to remain pleasant and outgoing. Harris* indicated how much she felt that the social status of the Foreign Office was a veneer put in place to mask the shortcomings of an inconsequential and dissembling institution:

I have a lot of anger towards the organisation. My childhood was a grand looking building on a poorly put together foundation, where you papered over the holes, the things you didn't know... all had to be covered over by a smile... I wouldn't want anything to do with the FCO now – to give your life to such a beast you have to believe in what it does and I no longer have that belief, sadly.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁵ Ruth Harris*. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

Although the shock of rejection must have given rise to Ruth Harris*'s harsh opinions, two other female participants, Eleanor King* and Retta Bowen, expressed comparable points of view. Eleanor King* described her distant older father and much younger, riding-obsessed mother: 'I suppose that was home. This strange atmosphere with these strange people...' For King*, her objections to the FCO way of life revealed early on a social and political conscience that was perhaps at odds with the views of her parents and their privileged milieu:

I was really upset when one of the maids was sacked.... I was very much sort of you know 'What right have we to have servants anyway?' kind of thing in a sense... You know I reacted very badly to the superiority as far as I could see it as a child... I evolved the politics while knowing nothing about politics, I evolved the politics out of, out of just not liking what I was seeing and hearing.⁴⁶⁷

Eleanor King* also expressed suspicion of the representative role of the diplomat:

I can't remember how old I was when just like one thing percolated through, which was that... that my father would have to sort of say different things according to who was the government in England. He wasn't actually... you know, he didn't represent anything of his own. He was just the mouthpiece...⁴⁶⁸

Much later when King* worked overseas she was invited to events at the British embassy:

I remember feeling a certain sort of contempt and jolly glad I wasn't in because it all seemed really ropey and shabby and not even as glamorous as it used to be back in the day. Like I say, I got the feeling ... there was no actual diplomacy going on so the whole thing seemed like a stage set and all the silverware and all the butlers and all the splendid

⁴⁶⁷ Interview with Eleanor King*, 11 July 2014.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

houses just kind of just looked, you know. So it was just an amusing thing but I have no respect for it really, I don't think they have any real authority now...⁴⁶⁹

Retta Bowen saw the FCO's representative elements as a manifestation of resilience and stoicism demanded by a career in 'service' and stated that her desire for authenticity had shaped her adult life: 'I think my whole journey as an adult has been a - is about "realness" and trying to respond and be real.' We saw that in Chapter 3 she spoke angrily and with disbelief about the demands Foreign Office culture placed on families, and especially wives, for instance when they arrived at a new post and were immediately expected to entertain skilfully. Bowen was very sceptical about what she saw as the 'façade' or 'vener' of a life which demanded that appearances were constantly maintained to ward off 'a loss of face' and presumably to maintain a notion of British superiority overseas. Bowen again referred to her mother, a talented actress, who had been committed to maintaining appearances in challenging circumstances:

I remember having really agonizing period pains when I was a teenager and I remember my Mum saying 'Well, you just get on with it. You know, you don't show people that.'

My Mum was *drilled* in that.⁴⁷⁰

Bowen also expressed sadness that the FCO's culture of entertaining, which placed great emphasis on the diplomatic couple as a team colluded in upholding a situation which was essentially meant putting on a performance:

My Mum would say 'I'm just gonna go and put on a face...' Put on make- up. And it was about... maintaining an appearance and my parents had a terrible... marriage, but it was always... They were always on show and I think everyone else would have looked at them

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with Eleanor King*. 11 July 2014.

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

and regarded them as being, you know, “What a wonderful couple. Beautiful. ‘Aren't they a handsome couple?’⁴⁷¹

In cases like this, the personal was sacrificed for the sake of duty to the service, and, by association, to the crown. Diplomats represented Britain overseas, but how much of their identity was defined by their ‘Britishness’? The next section explores the relationship between diplomatic families and national identity.

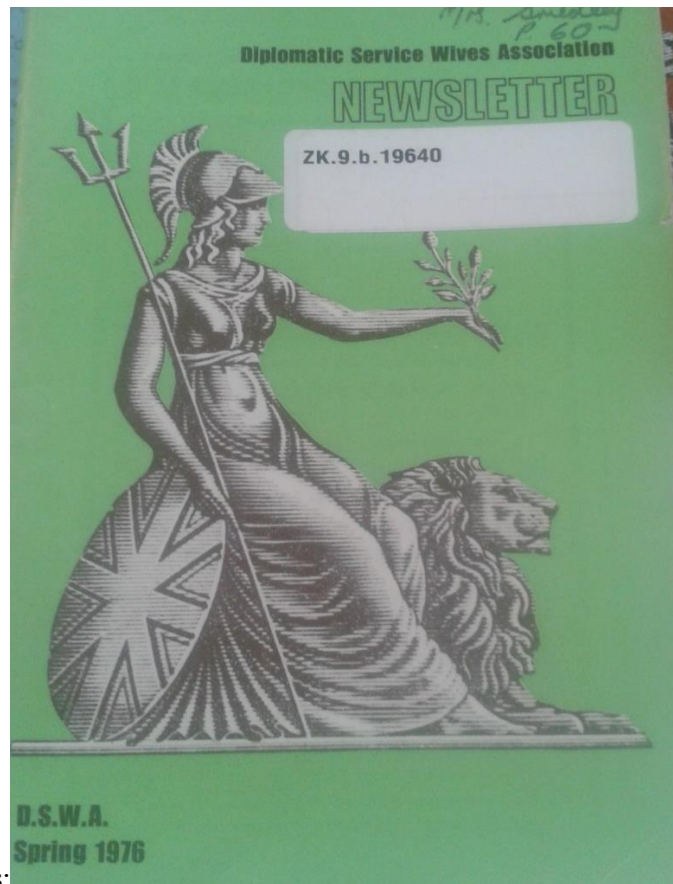
'A Union Jack hanging over my head'.

The previous section touched on one popular public representation of the Foreign Office as secretive and mysterious. Another common assumption is that diplomats epitomise ‘Britishness’, demonstrated in popular non-fiction titles such as *True Brits* (1994) and *Daughters of Britannia* (1999). On inspection, neither of these books are in fact especially concerned with issues of British identity and both illustrate specific aspects of the Foreign Office’s workforce. *True Brits* was cunningly titled: its author, Ruth Dudley Edwards, did in fact aim to expose the diversity of FCO staff during the 1990s, when the organisation was hoping to move its image away from the upper class public school gentleman.⁴⁷² *Daughters of Britannia* meanwhile wished to reinforce a resilient and resourceful image of diplomatic wives, a theme evidenced in the previous chapter. This association of diplomatic wives with the figure of Britannia was shared by the wives

⁴⁷¹ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

⁴⁷² As previous chapters have demonstrated proving the egalitarian nature of the FCO was something of a concern throughout the later 20th century.

themselves and pre-dated Hickman's book as the cover of the DSWA Newsletter from Spring



1976 reproduced below indicates:

Figure 5: Cover Diplomatic Service Wives Association Newsletter, Spring 1976.

A variety of perspectives on national identity were expressed by diplomats' children:

We were never in any doubt of our Britishness: quite the opposite. We lived in a British bubble. For example we sailed to Japan on board a military family ship, with most of the mothers and children heading for Singapore or Hong Kong. At post, most of our friends and social life derived from the British Embassy. My father was a news junky and at least twice a day we would gather round the radio to listen to the BBC World Service. I would march around the coffee table to Lilibulero - it still holds a special place in my heart. Among my earliest memories are the Coronation, and the annual QBPs [Queen's Birthday Parties]. Photos of the Queen were everywhere. We were very proud

of being British in the post-war world (although Suez was a blow), and very conscious of the global reach of the UK - the Empire was however shrinking, and we were also aware of that. I still feel British to the core, and have never been tempted to live anywhere else.⁴⁷³

This analysis of her British identity came from Denise Holt. The feelings she expressed about her 'Britishness' might appear typical of a child from a diplomatic family, whose role was to represent Britain overseas. However, Holt's view is not typical of the sample of participants gathered for this thesis. This could be linked to a specific sense of identity among diplomats' children which involved belonging to 'a distinct caste...' as one contributor wrote, who felt he had 'more in common with other Diplomatic Service children (even those from other countries) than I did with British people generally.'⁴⁷⁴ This point of view recalls the 'Third Culture Kids' framework, described in the previous chapter, and invites comparison with EM Collingham's observation that among expatriate groups 'many of the symbols they used to indicate their Britishness were peculiar to themselves.'⁴⁷⁵ Participants felt that their 'Britishness' was not emphasised to them directly or that it simply did not seem to be significant. 'I just don't feel British...' was one response.⁴⁷⁶ 'There were pictures of the Queen up in the Embassy...' was another, '...but it was so familiar it was like wallpaper.'⁴⁷⁷ This observation about the interior of an embassy building is worthy of attention. More than one participant attributed their sense of national identity to institutions that represented Britain overseas, or to organisations frequented by the British expatriate community. Libby Purves explored 'The British Council Library ... I read a lot and got a bit of a romantic notion of Britain.'⁴⁷⁸ Viv James* noted that 'Britishness

⁴⁷³ Denise Holt. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

⁴⁷⁴ Mike Ingalls*. Questionnaire. 6 October 2014.

⁴⁷⁵ E Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj c.1800 – 1947*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001) p.164.

⁴⁷⁶ Interview with Kate Morris*. 12 March 2015.

⁴⁷⁷ Ruth Harris*. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

⁴⁷⁸ Libby Purves. Questionnaire. 10 April 2015.

[was] emphasised through events at the Embassy (QBP etc)...⁴⁷⁹ Fiona Taylor* admitted 'I don't remember feeling particularly British...' but that the British Club, central to British communities overseas 'was very British... we went to swim mostly as children and ... we played with other British children.'⁴⁸⁰ Paul Tylor also recalled expatriate life at the club and recognised the reinforcing of nationalities through organised activities. His testimony supports Coles' comment that 'diplomatic spouses spent much of their time socialising with their own kind, with other British, English-speaking, or Western expatriate families...'⁴⁸¹

Whenever you went to the Australians or the Americans or the Canadian club. It would always be you know we're from the British and they're from the Americans so there was always a clear defining, even though you were mucking around playing together there would always be that you know "We're the British side, or the British team." And then the sports days you know, you'd have the mini competitions between the various embassies. So there was very much a sense of being British and belonging to the mission.⁴⁸²

Another notable aspect of Tylor's description of expatriate socialising is that the children who we can assume to have been English speaking and of similar ages defined themselves as much as what they were *not* as what they were: 'We're the British, and they're the Americans.' Their Britishness was a vital element that established them as separate from their companions. Catherine Webb* echoed this sentiment when she said: 'when you're abroad you feel your national identity more because you're reminded of the other – of the contrast – of these other people.'⁴⁸³

⁴⁷⁹ Viv James*. Questionnaire. 15 October 2014. QBP, the Queen's Birthday Party is held in June every year and is the biggest event of the Embassy social calendar – local expatriates and dignitaries are invited.

⁴⁸⁰ Fiona Taylor*. Questionnaire 11 January 2014. It is worth noting that the British Club, to some expatriates a seemingly indispensable part of life overseas has been mentioned only infrequently by participants to this project.

⁴⁸¹ Coles, 'Making Multiple Migrations', p.133.

⁴⁸² Interview with Paul Tylor. 23 October 2014.

⁴⁸³ Interview with Catherine Webb*. 19 August 2015.

Some contributors struggled to invest their Britishness with meaning: especially children who were unfamiliar with Britain. For Retta Bowen, who lived in Lusaka from the ages of three until five and moved to Vienna in 1984 aged seven, relating to Britain, identifying as British and finding means to express this was very difficult. For instance, among children of many nationalities at international school in Vienna Bowen felt that the

‘...over-arching feeling from that was that I didn't have a cultural identity... I was part of an international choir and ... we'd all wear our national costume... and I hated it because when it came to that I just never knew what to wear and it felt like I didn't have ... I remember I wore a sailor's dress, for no reason... they would have an event that would be everybody singing a national song from their country and I'd just be like 'I don't have..' I remember singing a song from *Oliver!*⁴⁸⁴

Bowen felt that being English was almost a non-identity. She recalled that everyone at the International School she attended in Vienna was able to speak English and German so ‘to speak English was almost like default... Being English felt like there was a deficit. Definitely.’⁴⁸⁵ Similarly Danielle Kelly*, at International School in the 1990s, expressed difficulties in recognising her own national identity and sought a nationality that she felt was more solid:

I think my identity was quite confused because I didn't know what it was... I didn't know what it meant to be white British... I remember having a conversation with my friend who said “Well you can be Palestinian, because some Palestinians are quite fair so you just tell them you're Palestinian and they'll believe you.”⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb*. 8 May 2014.

The youngest contributor, Dan Hardwick*, however, indicated a duality within his recognition of Britishness. He clearly felt he could retain a sense of individuality as well as representing Britain within a multicultural environment. Hardwick*'s reflections echoed the initial basis of international school ethos, which stressed humanity above nationality: 'I think that I feel very "British" because it's what made us different in the international schools abroad. Everyone was different in this sense but it didn't affect the way we interacted.'⁴⁸⁷

The different perspective expressed by Dan Hardwick* suggests that the existence of organisations like the exclusive 'British Club' with its colonial associations and emphasis on white Western culture had become less of a phenomenon as the twentieth century gave way to the twenty-first. Recent work by historians on cultural diplomacy and soft power emphasise the importance of ideas, values and traditions in strengthening international relationships.⁴⁸⁸ These views are well-established, but a stubborn – almost colonial - belief in the superiority of British culture was reported by some interviewees and led to feelings of discomfort, because they did not share these beliefs themselves. Catherine Webb* recalled that Britons felt socially and culturally superior to many host countries:

There was... especially somewhere like Dubai, there was a sense that we were teaching them how to do it. You know, we were going to set up libraries, we were going to set up schools and tennis clubs and whatever these things were they wouldn't know how to do without us there to show them how to do it. And we'll sort of be the civilising influence.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁷ Dan Hardwick*. Questionnaire. 16 June 2015.

⁴⁸⁸ Useful in gaining an understanding of concepts of cultural diplomacy and soft power have been Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Mark Donfried (eds), *Searching for a cultural diplomacy*, (Oxford: Berghahn, 2010); Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: the means to success in world politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); I Ang, R Yudhishthir, P Mar, P (eds), *Cultural Diplomacy Beyond the National Interest?* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁸⁹ Interview with Catherine Webb*. 19 August 2015.

Evidence suggests that at some posts attitudes remained much the same into the late 1980s.

Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone remarked on people she had spoken to in Cairo where her parents were at post, and questioned whether this type of attitude was common to FCO staff:

I met people and they behaved as if British culture was the best culture... How do you have a conversation with someone from a different culture if that's your understanding? I mean, if you're not curious or interested or aware that you just grow up in a different culture and have different expectations. I mean you would have thought that that would be something that would be ingrained in someone in the Foreign Office. But in my experience of meeting people when we've been abroad that has not necessarily been the case.⁴⁹⁰

The interpretation of international history for children attending local schools overseas was often the cause of some confusion and sometimes dispute. At school in Cape Town Mike Ingalls* felt he should defend 'Britain's record in the Boer War against accusations of "genocide" levelled by some South African boys sympathetic to the Afrikaner cause.⁴⁹¹ Ruth Harris* remembered her reaction to a book on the American Wars of Independence that she read in class at the American school in Mogadishu:

The story had children hiding in a mill trying to escape the baddies who wore red coats and would do terrible things to them if caught. At one point the children made clear these terrifying men were English – at which point I was outraged, furious and remember telling the book not to be so stupid, how could English people be the baddies?⁴⁹²

⁴⁹⁰ Interview with Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone. 21 March 2014.

⁴⁹¹ Mike Ingalls*. Questionnaire. 6 October 2014.

⁴⁹² Ruth Harris*. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

Nancy Larmour, who produced the education report that was discussed in the preceding chapter, produced a piece for the 1976 DSWA Autumn newsletter to illustrate the ‘pitfalls’ of educating children at post: in this case at a local school in Kingston, illustrating the way in which national differences can be uncovered through the teaching and learning of history.

‘Larmour III came from school one day in Jamaica and said she had to do a project on a privateer and what was that please? Discussion, dictionary, definition offered by me.

“Any particular privateer?” I asked.

“Oh yes,” she said, “Somebody called Drake.”

Shame, horror, explanations, history, had she never heard? Etc

“Don’t you understand he’s a National Hero!” I protested.

“Oh is he? Like Gordon and Bogle?” (Jamaican National Heroes hanged as traitors in 1865).⁴⁹³

Both of these stories suggest a low-level, deeply engrained and learned form of patriotism.

Naturally it is difficult to quantify how many participants shared these feelings, or whether this was a common attitude within the Diplomatic Service more generally, unless they are exposed to similar situations.

Elsewhere an emphasis on practical customs or material objects helped to create if not a British identity, then a notion of Britishness that was familiar to fellow expatriates. Nancy Grant* remarked that her family always drove a British-made car (albeit with diplomatic number plates).

Carmen Davies, a Mexican who married a British diplomat in 1968, ‘always felt that I needed to

⁴⁹³ Nancy Larmour, ‘Educating children at post’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1976, pp. 51 -52.

have more “British” items around.⁴⁹⁴ Dave Thomas, who spent part of his childhood on the British Embassy compound in Tehran, remembered: ‘In Tehran I recall British food was very hard to get and I recall fetes/fairs (by what was probably the Spouse Association or similar) holding raffles for boxes of Weetabix or cream crackers which were like gold dust!’⁴⁹⁵ Thomas also commented on the strength of assumptions about ‘Britishness’ that were shared by host country locals. He wrote that because the British were assumed to be a nation of animal lovers ‘Iranians would throw dogs/cats over Embassy walls and many got adopted as Embassy pets.’⁴⁹⁶ This type of assumption presents an arresting contrast with the uncertainty that we saw expressed above by Retta Bowen about her own national identity and role within an international setting. Carl Everett*, a diplomat for over twenty years, had gained the impression that the most successful ambassadors were those who fulfilled an outsiders’ view the idea of the ideal British gentleman:

Going back to the assimilation, I’ve worked with a number of ambassadors at post in Europe and other places and the ones that are the most popular are the ones that the locals perceive as a British eccentric. The big tall gangly guy who, even if he hasn’t been to Eton, gives the impression that he has been to Eton and a lot of those guys are the ones that are more successful because you know the locals like them and they’re a bit different. And you know although a lot of them are good at languages they’re not necessarily the friend of the Arabs, they’d rather have someone a bit more one step removed because that’s their perception of the UK.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁴ Carmen Davies. Questionnaire. 10 August 2015.

⁴⁹⁵ Dave Thomas. Questionnaire. 20 September 2015.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Interview with Carl Everett*. 19 March 2014.

The various quotations above which outline the way in which former members of the Diplomatic Service feel Britishness can be conveyed and understood demonstrate a great deal more conviction than the fluid understanding of nationality recorded by many contributors.

The fluid approach to national identity is further confused by the number of ‘mixed marriages’ within the Diplomatic Service. According to the DSFA, the number of Foreign Born spouses currently stands at 56%.⁴⁹⁸ Carmen Davies, mentioned above, who was born in Mexico and married a British diplomat in the late 1960s, felt that marrying outside the UK helped diplomats to gain respect among other nationalities. ‘In many cases having a foreign-born spouse helped my husband. People felt more at ease as if my husband was more open to other cultures...’⁴⁹⁹ As a consequence, a number of Diplomatic Service children grow up with one non-British parent. During this thesis’ period, when most diplomats were married men, the ‘foreign born’ parent was the mother. Three children from the current sample have foreign-born mothers and one questionnaire was provided by a foreign-born mother and wife. These contributors indicated further areas of complexity as far as national identity was concerned. Eleanor King* had a French mother:

I didn’t really understand Britishness whereas perhaps I understood a bit more about Frenchness... because my mother was a more humane part of the family then one wanted to be French because it wasn’t an institutional obligation. I felt the whole British thing to me was this slightly odd place, this unknown place that one visits sometimes in which I knew very few people and was rather cold and horrid and *school* later...⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁸ Thanks to Pamela Gordon, Chair of the DSFA, for confirming this figure.

⁴⁹⁹ Carmen Davies. Questionnaire. 5 August 2015.

⁵⁰⁰ Interview with Eleanor King*. 11 July 2014; Education has been named by more than one participant as contributing to their British identity, although not perhaps in particularly enjoyable ways as chapter 4 demonstrates. The desirable and elite quality of an English boarding school education was also a facet of British identity.

Eleanor King* had French relatives and access to a second country which offered an alternative to the often idealised view of the UK that could develop among Britons overseas. Her comment that identifying as French was ‘not an institutional obligation’ mixed Foreign Office and national identity and suggested that the identity learned via the FCO’s dominance of the family’s life was not attractive to her. Mike Ingalls* and Nancy Grant*’s mother was a New Zealander. The children became familiar with life in both countries, especially when their father ended his career at the British High Commission in Wellington. Both have dual nationality, and both now live in New Zealand. Mike Ingalls* felt that his British identity was moderated by his mother’s nationality. In addition, as his father had initially joined the Commonwealth Office in 1953, identification with Commonwealth countries was a significant part of the family’s culture: “As my mother was a New Zealander, I never felt entirely or simply British ... – there was always the other, NZ side of the equation to consider. Now, I feel equally British and New Zealander – I keep up both passports and have friends in both countries.”⁵⁰¹ Like Eleanor King* who owed her Britishness to an ‘institutional obligation,’ Nancy Grant* viewed the UK as ‘officially’ her national home because – in her case – it was her passport nationality. She wrote: ‘in that sense I still think of the UK as “home” today.’ She felt, however, that her mother’s nationality was a ‘complicating factor’ and went on: ‘from 1976 NZ allowed matrilineal inheritance of citizenship so I became a NZ citizen too. In later life, I have chosen to live in NZ and made that my home – although I still refer to the UK as ‘home’. I would now consider both countries my homes.’ The fragile association of nationality and home is another complex element of the formation of Diplomatic Service children’s identity that will be addressed at length in the last thematic chapter.

⁵⁰¹ Mike Ingalls*. Questionnaire. 6 October 2014.

Introducing the complexities involved in an attempt to isolate and examine English national identity, Krishnan Kumar points to numerous regional differences identified by commentators and their individual validity: ‘They are of course perfectly well aware that there are Welsh, Scots and Irish. Even that there are Manxmen and Jersey Islanders.’⁵⁰² Within the FCO there is a long tradition of Scottish involvement: ‘the veneer is English with a strong Scottish input,’ as Ruth Dudley Edwards has written.⁵⁰³ Among interviewees for this project a number made a point of announcing their Scottish heritage, or wanted to discuss the centrality of a Scottish identity to their family.⁵⁰⁴ A recent FCO blog entry prepared for St Andrews’ Day celebrated the career of Fitzroy Maclean ‘who combined the careers of diplomat, soldier, partisan, politician and writer.’ While he clung ferociously to his Scottish identity, Maclean’s early life as the child of a military family was not dissimilar to those of the diplomatic children discussed here. He was born in Cairo and spent parts of his childhood in India and Italy. Like Maclean and other Scots who participated in maintaining the interests of the United Kingdom overseas, Andrew Graham manifested what Buettner referred to as ‘a multi-layered identity... [which] informed these individuals understandings of themselves.’⁵⁰⁵

My father was an expatriate Scotsman, you know, Granny came from Fife. Grandpa was definitely a Scotsman, notwithstanding being... born in Bombay. Served in a Scottish regiment you know so that was sort of in the family... his younger brother was colonel of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders *a Scottish regiment*. My Aunt - Lesley - married a ... Steele and the Steeles came from the borders so they lived in Scotland. My grandparents lived in Edinburgh all my life...⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰² Krishnan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 2.

⁵⁰³ Dudley-Edwards, *True Brits*, p. 131.

⁵⁰⁴ There is little available concerning the current or late twentieth century role of Scots in the Diplomatic Service. However, see Mori, *The culture of diplomacy*, p. 4; pp. 28-29 and Buettner, ‘Haggis in the Raj Private and Public Celebrations of Scottishness in Late Imperial India’, *The Scottish Historical Review*, 81:2 (2008), pp. 212-239.

⁵⁰⁵ Buettner, ‘Haggis in the Raj’, p.215.

⁵⁰⁶ Interview with Andrew Graham. 21 May 2015.

At school in the South of England, Graham's brother was determined to maintain his Scottish heritage: 'my brother used to get in a frightful bate about being teased. You know, about, people said "Oh you're just an Englishman." He'd absolutely explode, it was the way of ragging him and getting him going.' Andrew Graham, like the commentators on nationality mentioned by Kumar, was acutely aware of regional differences within the UK itself and wondered whether he had undervalued his mother's Englishness: 'I don't think we really ever gave Mum the credit that actually I'm half Scots half English. We definitely felt we were Scottish, within the British mould, so Scoto-Brit. And, you know, we supported Scotland and all that sort of thing...'⁵⁰⁷

Arabella Weir, also demonstrated a tangled view of her own national identity when she spoke of her Scottish parents. She felt that their Scottishness led to them adopting a more liberal attitude towards the privileged aspects of Diplomatic Service life:

... our Nanny in New York was a black woman from the south who talked about civil rights... we would go riding with local Cairo horseowners... We were not protected... and I think this may have been because both my parents were Scottish. So they didn't feel English, they weren't trying to be posh English people when we were abroad. They also felt like foreigners...⁵⁰⁸

However, later in her interview Weir returned to the issue of her father's Scottish heritage and his class consciousness and recalled the efforts he made to 'fit in' with Diplomatic Service culture. 'I don't think he ever once in his life felt that he belonged with the toffs... like any lower middle class boy from Dunfermline who had had an accent until he joined the Foreign Office... my father's accent was like bloody cut glass.'⁵⁰⁹ Here Weir raises the question – unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis – of how far individual diplomats, especially those recruited after

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Interview with Arabella Weir. 6 May 2014.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

1945 had felt it necessary to adjust their own image in order to conform to appropriate standards of professional and national identity.

‘Quite confusing when I sit and think about it.’

The foregoing sections have clarified the changeable and intricate nature of Foreign Office children’s understanding of their own identity with reference to the FCO and to Britain, the country whose interests it represents overseas. Although their family life is defined by the Diplomatic Service in terms of both culture and practicalities such as housing and subsidised school fees, they do not exhibit a pronounced feeling of belonging to the FCO and, in some cases, present a marked antipathy towards it. Their attitude towards national identity is just as complex, despite sometimes representing Britain at the highest level, for instance, being chosen to greet members of the British royal family. This section will examine the multiplicity of ways in which the diplomats’ children who contributed to this project interpreted their individual identities.

Chapter 3 argued that Diplomatic Service children in the period 1945 to 1990 revealed interchangeable traits with internationally experienced children now known as ‘Third Culture Kids’. The diversity of expressions of and approaches to individual identity, influenced by movement and travel, shown in this section are reminiscent of modern and postmodern interpretations of identity formation among transnational migrants. Again, the organisation which, on the admission of one DSWA chair, was ‘always about 15 years behind’ mainstream British society can be said – in the experiences of its children – to pre-date literature that typifies the modern condition.⁵¹⁰ Statements like the one shown below illustrate Rapport and Dawson’s

⁵¹⁰Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas Beaches and Bases Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, (London: Pandora, 1989), p. 100.

assertion that 'processes of globalization... have made traditional conceptions of individuals as members of fixed and separate societies redundant.'⁵¹¹

Sometimes I refer to the UK as home, but I think that is more a hangover from the idea of 'home postings' than a feeling of belonging there. The problem is, that if I don't belong in the UK, where else do I belong? I'm so British in my mannerisms and speech that nowhere else is a good fit. I prefer living in France to living in the UK, but by no stretch of the imagination could you call me French! It's quite confusing when I sit and think about it. So I try not to!⁵¹²

As the contributor musing on her personal and national identities above illustrates, many participants have a complex sense of identity. The preceding chapter demonstrated that for the Diplomatic Service child everything from surrounding adults to accommodation and climate could change swiftly and irrevocably, demanding that any notion of belonging developed without strong foundations. As anthropologists have recently argued, however, issues surrounding the formation of identity are in keeping with what they refer to as a 'reflexive turn'. This is to say that, as globalisation gathers pace and children grow up in ever more multi-cultural environments the necessity of a 'fixed point', often previously understood as the settled home, is no longer felt to be essential to identity formation. Rapport and Dawson have noted that 'there are no traditionally fixed, spatially and temporally bounded cultural worlds from which to depart and to which to return: all is situated and all is moving.'⁵¹³ Three unrelated participants, born in three separate decades, returned questionnaires that captured this indecision:

Fiona Taylor*: (born 1956) The question "where do you come from" is hard to answer.

⁵¹¹ Rapport and Dawson, *Migrants of Identity*, p. 3.

⁵¹² Antonia Mochan. Questionnaire. 8 August 2014.

⁵¹³ Rapport and Dawson, *Migrants of identity*, 21 – 24.

Viv James*: (born 1968) I always find it difficult to answer when people ask “where are you from”?

Antonia Mochan: (born 1971) The worst bit is probably not having a sense of coming from somewhere - I always dread that question!⁵¹⁴

In her interview Eleanor King* expanded on this confused state. Her attempts to define her childhood identity were cultural rather than national. It is notable that she chose to call attention to ‘imperial confidence’ as an identity which she felt had contributed to diplomats’ behaviour and, perhaps more importantly, had become obsolescent:

...you know you understand other people sort of so well and other ways of doing things and... you don’t have a culture of your own, you’ve always been a sort of satellite of another culture and... So you don’t really belong anywhere I mean I think in the past people used to say that cosmopolitans were citizens of the whole world. I think there was a certain kind of imperial confidence to that and that these days one is actually much more like sort of a refugee, you actually belong nowhere, as opposed to belonging everywhere.⁵¹⁵

Here King* made a significant point when she compared diplomats and their families to refugees. Literature on transnational movement has largely failed to draw attention to the similarities between privileged migrants who travel overseas on business or government service and less privileged migrants who are forced to travel in pursuit of greater financial security or political refuge, although obviously the comparison is largely superficial. The original edition of

⁵¹⁴ Fiona Taylor*. Questionnaire. 11 September 2014; Viv James*. Questionnaire. 15 October 2014; Antonia Mochan. Questionnaire. 8 August 2014.

⁵¹⁵ Interview Eleanor King*. 11 July 2014.

Pollock and Van Reken's *Third Culture Kids* (published in 1999) did not include the children of refugees or economic migrants, although similarities between privileged and less privileged child migrants are evident. A revised edition in 2009 modified the definition of 'third culture kids' placing it as a sub group within a wider paradigm: 'cross-cultural kids'. The principal difference between these two groups, according to Pollock and Van Reken, relates to the degree and expectation of movement:

'As the cultural mixing of today's world increases, these questions regarding who can or cannot be regarded as an "official TCK" are important ones to address. Historically we assumed the difference between the TCK experience and that of immigrant children was simple: immigrants moved to a land to stay and many never took even one trip back to the homeland after arriving in the new country. TCKs moved with the expectation of one day returning to their original country.'⁵¹⁶

However, as Kunz has skilfully highlighted, divisions between transnational families are often interpreted in terms of social identity. Scholarly investigation into less-privileged migrant groups of non-Western origins far outstrips examination of migration experienced by professionals such as business and government employees and aid workers (more often known as 'expatriates') and their families.⁵¹⁷

An awareness of 'privileged migration' was articulated via the feelings of being 'different' that interviewees often described. For Peter Boon 'it was always in the back of our minds that we were a different kind of family'; this he felt particularly keenly when he and his brother were at a public school where none of the other pupils came from similar backgrounds. Denise Holt,

⁵¹⁶ Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids*, p.30.

⁵¹⁷ Sarah Kunz, 'Privileged Mobilities: Locating the Expatriate in Migration Scholarship', *Geography Compass*, 10:3 (2016), pp. 89–101.

another of the older participants born in 1949, was a child when rationing was still in effect in Britain and felt she and her family ‘were different kinds of being to the people we met in the UK.’⁵¹⁸ Olivia Tate* emphasised this when she talked about greater access to luxuries in Moscow than London during early 1950s: ‘there were certain things that were unrestricted while you were away... I always remember [my mother] telling me... in Moscow they’d been to the ballet, they’d come back... and my father said he could do with a snack and my mother opened the fridge and said ‘Well I’m sorry darling there’s only cold pheasant or caviar!’”⁵¹⁹ These feelings of material superiority were an area where children could enjoy building an identity in contrast to less fortunate children in the metropole. But an expression of superiority was not confined to interviewees young at the beginning of the time period. Lisa Finch*, born twenty years later, wrote that her family ‘Felt “superior” towards other nationalities – but not the locals, for some strange reason.’⁵²⁰ Carl Everett*, initially committed to his socialist principals, commented that the fees necessary to keep his daughters at international schools in the 1980s were ‘the same as Eton and Harrow’ and conceded that the social networks to which they now belong are very exclusive because of this.⁵²¹

The first section of this chapter introduced male interviewees whose decision to join the Diplomatic Service may have been based on the example of their fathers’ careers. A group of female interviewees reported what they felt was an attempt by their fathers to impose an idealised image of the perfect ‘diplomat’s daughter’ on them. Kate Howells noted that her father was impressed by the girls at Sherbourne School in Dorset when he was looking for a suitable secondary school:

⁵¹⁸ Denise Holt. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

⁵¹⁹ Interview with Olivia Tate*. 10 March 2014.

⁵²⁰ Lisa Finch*. Questionnaire. 18 August 2014.

⁵²¹ Interview with Carl Everett*. 19 March 2014.

...my parents went to look at lots of different schools and, at Sherborne, the girl who sat next to my father chatted him up so adroitly. I think he thought, 'Oh I want my daughter to be one of those.' So they sent me there...⁵²²

Arabella Weir also commented on the way her father wanted her to fulfil the role of Diplomatic Service daughter, laying great stress on her appearance:

I wasn't a gorgeous sort of blonde thing. I think he felt that I was going to the world 'I am not fitting in, and that's my Dad.' I think that he wanted the confidence that it would give you to have a pretty, lithe daughter, sort of just saying 'Oh Yah...' So ... almost to his dying day he'd go on about me being fat.⁵²³

Just as Retta Bowen, in her interview, noted her mother's attention to her appearance, to 'putting on a face', these two women were expected by their fathers to behave and to look a certain way and both women implied that their fathers had pre-conceived ideas of what a diplomat's daughter should be like. The physical appearance of diplomatic women is not an area that has received a great amount of coverage but Enloe, writing in 1989, commented that the appearance of ambassadors' wives becomes more 'significant as her government's efforts to export designer clothes become more aggressive'. She added the story of a British Ambassadors' wife who kept photographs of women in the public eye that she considered slovenly as a warning to maintain her own appearance.⁵²⁴ A presentable – both pretty and well-mannered - daughter would be a diplomatic asset and a well-groomed persona would be a desirable one to adopt.

⁵²² Interview with Kate Howells. 22 July 2014.

⁵²³ Interview with Arabella Weir. 6 May 2014.

⁵²⁴ Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, (California: University of California Press, 2000), p.100.

Some participants were convinced that the experience of separation and the absence of a settled family life had played a significant part in the formation of their personalities. Catherine Webb* felt that:

I didn't really have a proper parenting... because I was at boarding school from when I was eight... I think I didn't really have the experience of getting my parents to see me as an individual. It's as though I was always, always a little bit having to adapt to how they wanted me to be, rather than how I was.⁵²⁵

The dominant culture of separation and the emotional demands it imposed left many correspondents with feelings of sadness and disillusion that they believed were integral to their sense of self: these were often strongly expressed with reference to a distant relationship with their parents. Rachel Donald* wrote:

There are times when I wish we were closer, but I have come to accept that they are too set in their perceptions of me, and there is little I can do to change that. It's sad, but I don't think they realise it, and discussions have been fruitless.⁵²⁶

Others made sense of this sadness by linking it to their boarding school experiences, one of the chief manifestations of separation culture:

I think the whole boarding school thing was so excruciating it's almost made me kind of... it's shaped so many things really in terms of how I look at people and home and family... I think I mentioned about the other interviewees, I never know what to say when people

⁵²⁵ Interview with Catherine Webb*. 19 August 2015.

⁵²⁶ Rachel Donald*. Questionnaire. 30 March 2015.

say "Where are you from?" Just no idea, no idea and that kind of sense of ... yeh, it's a kind of like a poignancy.⁵²⁷

Despite writing positively about the qualities of resilience and confidence he gained as the child of a diplomat, Mike Ingalls* felt that ultimately his had been 'an interesting but sometimes stressful childhood, especially later on.'⁵²⁸

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the complex issue of identity formation as it was articulated by diplomats' children during oral history interviews for this project. From the vast literature available on identity it has been necessary to concentrate on three key issues: first, the modern assertion that personal identity is something necessarily fluid and typified by the migrant experience; second, work on national identity and especially the confused sense of national identity shown by inhabitants of the British Isles; and last, the sense of belonging to an institution or select group, exemplified by the Foreign Office. With this sense of confusion and lack of definite identity, national and cultural, what were the children's feelings about "home"? Where did they feel at home? What did home mean to them and how was it possible for a family to create a home while constantly on the move? The final thematic chapter on notions within the diplomatic family will further explore related issues.

⁵²⁷ Interview with Kate Morris*. 12 March 2015.

⁵²⁸ Mike Ingalls*. Questionnaire. 6 October 2014.

5. HOME

“... Mater’s grate school friend mabel entwhistle (prothero that was) pay a visit with her tiny dorter... On that morning all boys cats dogs parots sparos and owls are turned into the garden while house is polished and mabel entwhistle’s foto is brought out of the boxroom. Boys glue their noses against windows and are finaly admitted.

‘Do not the house look luvly, nigel,’ sa yore mater.

‘But it never look like this reely it is just an empty façade.’

‘O.K.,’ say your mater. ‘But let’s keep it that way, see? Otherwise there is liable to be trubble...’⁵²⁹

This description of his harassed ‘mater’s’ attempts to create an ideal home to which she can welcome an old school friend is related in the persona of prep school boy and ‘New Elizabethan’ Nigel Molesworth. Molesworth was the eccentric and cynical narrator of four books published between 1953 and 1959 which commented widely on the world in which he lived.⁵³⁰ His creators Geoffrey Willans and Ronald Searle, both experienced satirists, expertly caricatured postwar trends in the four books which the schoolboy was supposed to have narrated. For instance the excerpt above lampoons the lengths to which Nigel’s mother will go to conform to the ideal image of the house-proud wife and mother of the 1950s and the trouble she takes to present a dream home without domestic help (something that is notably missing from the decidedly middle class Molesworth home). With characteristic false naivety Molesworth determines that the ideal home his mother’s work has produced and over which she jealously mounts guard, is a ‘façade’. The house does not usually appear this way, his ‘mater’ has worked hard on it to create an impression. Previous chapters have already introduced the status of home as central to the ideal of postwar reconstruction in Britain. In Chapter 5 on Identity, the assumption made by

⁵²⁹ Geoffrey Willans and Ronald Searle, *Molesworth*, (London: Penguin 1999) p.190.

⁵³⁰ They were *Down with Skool* (1953), *How to be Topp* (1954), *Whizz for Atoms* (1956) and *Back in the Jog Agane* (1959).

anthropologists that home was a fixed point ‘from which to order one’s moving, perceiving, ordering and constructing’ was seen to have necessarily given way to a conceptual shift based on patterns of movement expedited by the globalization process.⁵³¹ This shift acknowledges that ‘home’ does not need a fixed point, but that ‘movement can be one’s very home.’⁵³² Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling support the mutable quality of this concept, claiming that ‘home is a complicated term and its myriad definitions can be confusing.’⁵³³

Blunt and Dowling begin their discussion of the nature of home by recognising its dual roles ‘Home... is a *place*, a site in which we live. But more than this, home is also an idea and an imaginary that is imbued with feeling.’ This chapter picks up on these two ideas of home by looking at the way it was perceived by diplomatic children in both a material and conceptual sense. Once again we will be able to see that patterns of behaviour within diplomatic families diverged significantly from existing historical narratives of postwar Britain and that they conformed far more persuasively to studies of transnationalism and migration undertaken by anthropologists and others. The first part will look at the ways in which the grand spaces provided for diplomats overseas were recalled by the children, often confusing in the way that the public and private spheres were blended and often becoming facades designed to host diplomatic parties. The children’s reactions to ‘coming home’ to Britain, the subject of the second section, were touched on in Chapter 4. Similarities with the narratives of returning colonial children such as those recounted by Buettner, Pomfret and Brendon can provide some background, although the more recent discourses surrounding Third Culture Kids and the Japanese International Children (or *kekokushijo*) are also relevant. Blunt and Dowling’s assertion of home as ‘an imaginary that is imbued with feelings’ (see above) is particularly apposite for the

⁵³¹ Rapport and Dawson, *Migrants of Identity*, p. 22.

⁵³² Ibid. p. 27.

⁵³³ Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 22.

final part. This considers the ways in which participants imagined or created ideals of home in an atmosphere of constant movement. This recalls Buettner's descriptions of the Talbot family's shared visions of the future, expressed through their correspondence, and called by the family 'castles in the air'.⁵³⁴ The final thematic chapter ends on a discussion of rituals and material culture, two areas that diplomatic families relied on to orient themselves.

'Feeling the cool tiles under my feet.'

The accommodation provided for diplomatic families during this thesis' period varied greatly according to the post in which it was situated and the grade of the officer to be housed. Jean Reddaway, posted to Beirut with her husband Norman, in 1961 was later able to boast in the DSWA magazine of being 'actually *paid* to live in a luxury apartment overlooking the Mediterranean!'⁵³⁵ Three years later in 1964 Ann and Reg Hibbert were posted to Mongolia to establish a British mission.

Instead of a home of her own she [Ann] was to have only a small hotel suite in which to live... Her 'kitchen was a two-ring electric cooker with a tiny oven in the cloakroom next to their 'front door'. The washing-up was done in the handbasin and the slops went down the WC. The Hibberts' routine was to eat lunch in the hotel restaurant, but to prepare their own breakfast and supper, using tins and packets sent out from England.⁵³⁶

Jane Ewart-Biggs description of the process by which diplomatic families were allotted accommodation seems to have changed little during the time frame, however. Families either moved into a property owned by the British mission, usually occupied by their predecessor; or

⁵³⁴ Elizabeth Buettner 'Parent-child separations and colonial careers: the Talbot family correspondence in the 1880s and 1890s' in *Childhood in Question Children, Parents and the State* (eds) A Fletcher and S Hussey, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p125.

⁵³⁵ Jean Reddaway, 'Open Letter to Margaret Ibbot', *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1976, pp. 52-53.

⁵³⁶ Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, p. 195.

like the Hibberts, were found rooms in a hotel until they chose suitable local accommodation for themselves.⁵³⁷ As with many rituals associated with the domestic sphere, the hunt for accommodation was the responsibility of the diplomat's wife. At some posts diplomats were housed in Embassy compounds, which existed primarily for reasons of finance and security. Drawing British government workers together in one place could prove to be an effective cost-cutting exercise.⁵³⁸ Elsewhere compounds could be valuable in regions described as 'hardship' areas, defined by the FCO as requiring compensation for factors that reduce quality of life to a level below that expected in the UK including 'climatic conditions... availability of goods and services... isolation... cultural impact and restrictions caused by socio-political and personal security considerations.'⁵³⁹

Despite experiences like those of the Hibberts, described above, the majority of diplomats at every level of seniority found themselves living in overseas accommodation overseas that would be largely unattainable to them on their FCO salaries in the UK. It was often very spacious and, if in a capital city, in a very prestigious area. Some accommodation was so huge that, other than for the purposes of entertaining it appeared impractical. Vicky Tarry, whose parents were posted to Turkmenistan in the 1990s, recalled:

I remember in Turkmenistan we had this massive house which was ridiculous... We had a sort of formal living room which was so big it had something like four sofas and four sets of armchairs in it but they were all so far apart that you couldn't have a conversation

⁵³⁷ Ewart-Biggs, J *Pay Pack and Follow* p. 34.

⁵³⁸ A National Audit Office report published in 2015 emphasised the cost-cutting benefit of compound living. <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/One-HMG-Overseas>.

⁵³⁹ The current definition of 'hardship' is taken from a response to an FO1 Request dated 4 February 2016. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/517892/Final_FOI_0010-16.

with anybody... then there was the dining room with like a twelve seater dining table.

There was only three of us.⁵⁴⁰

Such imposing accommodation was presumably meant to add to the impression made by the British government overseas but some families found it personally unrepresentative and even embarrassing.

One of the problems was I used to invite people to our house ... and one of them said to me 'I can't invite you back.' and I said 'Why not?' and she said 'Because my house is so small...' and I said 'Well this doesn't belong to me...'... this honking great house we were living in... I said 'What do you think I live in in England? What's more I don't have any help at home, I scrub my own floors.' She just looked at me, she didn't believe me and that was the trouble that *abroad* people would give us the cold shoulder because they were too scared and when we invited them round the kids would come round in party dresses, you know, ridiculous really.⁵⁴¹

In line with the FCO's obsession with hierarchy, accommodation and furnishings were allotted according to grade and many apocryphal stories existed (and are still told) which demonstrated the problems encountered by FCO staff members living in homes of the 'wrong grade'. Writing in 1984, Jane Ewart-Biggs related this familiar story which concerns a (lower-grade) third secretary who had been housed in second secretary's accommodation.

All went well until the arrival of the Inspector ... he discovered to his infinite discomfort that a mere Third Secretary who had the right to a carpet ending ten inches from the walls, was in fact benefiting from one which extended to six inches from the walls... The story recounts that the grey-faced civil servant resolved the dilemma by solemnly

⁵⁴⁰Interview with Vicky Tarry. 3 November 2014.

⁵⁴¹ Interview with Julia and Oliver Miles. 29 September 2014.

producing his scissors and cutting off the four offending inches around the edge of the carpet.⁵⁴²

Figure 6: Housing on the British Consulate compound in Jeddah, classified by grade.



In his autobiography *Ever the Diplomat* Sherard Cowper-Coles confirmed that this preoccupation with material entitlements was not merely apocryphal. On his first posting to Cairo as a third secretary he was housed in a small flat.

⁵⁴² Ewart-Biggs, *Pay, Pack and Follow*, p.35.

There were ceiling fans in the main room, plus loud and noisy wall-mounted air conditioners there and in every bedroom – this soon became the subject of comment among the embassy wives, as at that time third secretaries were supposed to have only one air conditioner, in the main bedroom, and another in the guest room, and no others.⁵⁴³

One reason that the diplomatic home was so commodious overseas was due to the diplomatic ritual of entertaining guests at parties and dinners, which has been covered in preceding chapters. Journalist Simon Jenkins spent some time observing diplomats in Whitehall and overseas for a book about the Diplomatic Service *With Respect, Ambassador* which was published in 1985. Interviewed for the DSWA newsletter in the Autumn of 1984, Jenkins expressed the view that ‘it seemed to me an odd way of conducting business that the whole thing is done through a sort of prism of classical bourgeois entertaining.’⁵⁴⁴ Diplomatic wives’ memoirs often include an account of what Hamlett has described as the ‘elaborate codes and rituals’ that comprised such entertaining.⁵⁴⁵ Dinner parties were governed by *placement*, or rigidly structured place-settings which had been decided in advance according to many considerations including personality, status and political usefulness. Beryl Smedley’s book on diplomatic wives, *Partners in Diplomacy*, has on its cover a photograph of the wife of the ambassador, Lady Fretwell, discussing place settings with a footman on her staff at the British Embassy in Paris.

⁵⁴³ Sherard Cowper-Coles, *Ever the Diplomat Confessions of a Foreign Office Mandarin*, (London: Harper Press 2013), p. 42

⁵⁴⁴ Clare Cary, ‘With Respect Ambassador. A conversation with Simon Jenkins’, *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1984, pp. 48 – 53. Jenkins made a radio programme *With Respect Ambassador An inquiry into the Foreign Office* for the BBC, featuring interviews with Diplomatic Service staff. It became a book of the same name.

⁵⁴⁵ Jane Hamlett, *At Home in the Institution: Material Life in Asylums, Lodging Houses and Schools in Victorian and Edwardian England*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), p. 5.

Figure 7: Lady Fretwell organising a formal lunch at HM Ambassador's residence in Paris, 1987.



Contributors to this project, however, did not indicate an awareness of these sorts of rituals in the evidence they gave.

Hosting parties was facilitated – especially in the case of higher-ranking diplomats – by the presence of domestic staff. Domestic servants were an important part of diplomatic home life and the relationship between employer and employee outlasted the length of a posting. So much so that Peter Boon, the oldest contributor, remembered meeting his father's former servant at Karachi airport in 1953 on the way to visit his parents at post in Singapore.

...an old retainer of my father's from India, a servant who had at partition – he was a Muslim – had emigrated with his family to Karachi he came to the airport and we talked at the airport hotel.⁵⁴⁶

In 1970s Khartoum, Fiona Taylor* recalled that a high level of domestic service was still maintained:

I have this memory of the person who did the ironing in Sudan, ironing my extremely patched jeans with a ham to make sure he got all the creases out.

The kitchen was a separate building to the rest of the house and was very much the cook's domain. We were not allowed in the kitchen. If you wanted a glass of cold water, it had to be brought on a tray. The Sudan was very formal - even if it was just the family for supper, it would be served by a servant in a long white robe, cummerbund and turban.⁵⁴⁷

During her interview, one of the youngest interviewees, Vicky Tarry, listed the number of servants who worked with her family of three in Calcutta in the early 1990s.

I had an ayah, we had a cook, we had a driver, we had someone who I'm not sure what his role was, he used to serve drinks, we had someone who would come and sort of do the tailoring and make me dresses and stuff. Someone who did the washing... And they had sort of ... servants' quarters or something - which sounds awful! But you know where they kind of lived ... an extension of the house.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ Interview with Peter Boon. 11 April 2014.

⁵⁴⁷ Fiona Taylor*. Questionnaire. 11 January 2014.

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with Vicky Tarry. 3 November 2014

Interviewees' were very keen to emphasise that labour was cheap in the non-Western posts described above and that servants were glad of the work; however, all these quotes are representative of a system of living familiar to and expected by all diplomats between 1945 and 1990. Buettner brings attention to Hutchins' phrase 'A Middle Class Aristocracy' and while Hutchins was describing British Indian society; his designation is just as appropriate for FCO officials.⁵⁴⁹ During the early part of the study, living conditions in Britain, where rationing endured and the reduced availability of domestic servants affected the running of middle-class homes, could be unfavourably compared with life at post. Interviewees born before 1950 – Olivia Tate* (born 1946) and Denise Holt (born 1949) – both commented on the privations experienced by their British counterparts.⁵⁵⁰ The presence of domestic staff may have compensated overseas for the absence of labour saving devices, which had been steadily replacing servants (or doing the work they once did) in Britain throughout the 1950s.⁵⁵¹ Although it is difficult to assess the presence of labour-saving devices provided as part of government owned accommodation sufficient stories of poorly equipped and dilapidated housing were told by wives to suppose that such provision was patchy. During our time frame diplomatic wives were also assisted by local servants with shopping and obtaining basic foods. This was particularly useful in countries with difficult political regimes. Marie-Noele Kelly accompanied her husband David to Moscow in 1949, where he had been appointed Ambassador. She wrote 'The milk must be collected by a Russian servant who queued for hours every morning and sometimes came back with none...'⁵⁵² Jennifer Duncan, whose husband was Ambassador in Bolivia from 1981 until 1985 relied on her cook:

⁵⁴⁹ Buettner, *Empire Families*, p. 13; Francis Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence British Imperialism in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 101 – 119.

⁵⁵⁰ As discussed in Chapter 5, SP remembered a fridge filled with cold pheasant in Moscow, while Denise Holt felt that she and her family were 'different' from other families who faced rationing in the UK.

⁵⁵¹ Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, p. 404.

⁵⁵² Marie- Noele Kelly, *Dawn to Dusk* (Hutchinson, 1960), p. 209.

‘Meat was often impossible to get hold of. When I went shopping I often used to take my cook with me because it was important to be able to identify what little was on sale. I learned from her that you had to ask to see the head of the animal. If it was a sheep, that was all right, but people who didn’t know the ropes would often be sold dog instead.’⁵⁵³

For diplomatic wives, who, as we have seen, laboured under the burden of high expectations where their skills as a hostess were concerned, this type of cooperation was essential if they were to fulfil their social commitments. However, domestic help could have a different side. A number of examples exist of diplomatic families living with spies who reported to communist state regimes during the Cold War era. Olivia Tate* in Moscow between 1952 and 1954, talked about the family’s servant Luba:

We had a lovely lady called Luba who cooked, ‘did’ for us and also spied [sic] for us but she and my mother worked it all out so that my mother kept a good cook and Luba had something to report but nothing too drastic.⁵⁵⁴

Hickman noted that ‘Most diplomatic families, accepting this to be the case, took it in their stride...’⁵⁵⁵ Additionally, in *Women of the World* McCarthy reported that Mary Galbraith, a young female diplomat who joined the FCO in 1951 and who was posted to Budapest around the same time as SP was with her family in Moscow was subject to the attentions of her maid, Ada, also a spy. ‘I didn’t mind at all...’ Galbraith was quoted as saying, ‘This was very much the way it worked.’⁵⁵⁶

One of the many areas in which the diplomatic family home diverged from middle class practice in Britain was the terrific intrusion on home life caused by the requirement to host parties and

⁵⁵³ Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, p.76.

⁵⁵⁴ Interview with Olivia Tate*. 10 March 2014.

⁵⁵⁵ Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, p. 73.

⁵⁵⁶ McCarthy, *Women of the World*, p. 256.

entertain guests at very little notice and when, as sometimes happened, living quarters were also used for professional purposes. Writing of the eighteenth century Mori has observed ‘Diplomacy has always been a lifestyle requiring its disciples to abandon customary distinctions between public and private life...’⁵⁵⁷ Meanwhile McCarthy noted that ideology of ‘separate spheres’ of private and public influence which gained ground during the nineteenth century ‘seems especially unhelpful in the case of women of rank and wealth who ... were the most likely to be moving in diplomatic circles...’⁵⁵⁸ The home life of diplomats overseas continued to diverge from common middle and upper class practice in Britain well into the twentieth century. The ‘advancing home-centredness’ described by Harrison as characterising postwar Britain, accompanied by the respectable notions of ‘keeping yourself to yourself’ were not possible for diplomatic families serving overseas during the same period, even if they had been the inclination of the individual family.⁵⁵⁹ Indeed existing Diplomatic Service Regulations bring attention to the concept of ‘all hours liability’ which requires staff to work ‘additional hours as needed.’⁵⁶⁰

Occasionally events overseas that had an impact on diplomats’ home life were beyond the family’s control and contained a level of threat. When Korean President Park Chung-hee was assassinated in October 1979, Antonia Mochan and her family were living on the British Embassy Compound in Seoul:

I was actually at brownie camp and we had to get a US Army escort back to Seoul, all these diplomatic and international business daughters, singing He’s Got the Whole World in his Hands on a bus with big men carrying guns in armed personnel carriers on either side! The compound in Seoul was just off the main square, so when clashes started

⁵⁵⁷ Mori, *The culture of diplomacy*, p. 17.

⁵⁵⁸ See, for example, McCarthy, *Women of the World*, pp. 31-32, for the development of this phenomenon.

⁵⁵⁹ Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, p. 190; p. 213.

⁵⁶⁰ Diplomatic Service Regulations (Internal FCO document), DSR 17, Hours of Attendance, Overseas.

after martial law was imposed, we did get affected. I remember my mother moving us to the back bathroom and putting towels round the doors as the tear gas blew through the house.⁵⁶¹

For Retta Bowen and her sister, posted to Lusaka in the late 1970s when the Rhodesian War of Independence was being fought on the Rhodesia-Zambia borders there was a real threat of sexual violence and the family were subject to heightened security.

When my parents went out, we would be locked behind the rape gate. I was three, four and we would say ‘Oh please don't lock the rape gate!’ It's weird isn't it? But when you said about private and public this sense of threat and insecurity... there was a lot of political turbulence. We were aware in the house of there being curfews and violence and lorries going past with drunk soldiers on them...⁵⁶²

While admitting that she had not understood the full implications of the ‘rape gate’ as a child, Bowen said that she had been aware of a palpable sense of ‘threat and insecurity’. She said that she had felt safe when the gate was locked but that ‘anything might happen’ when the family was outside. The ambivalent relationship with servants expressed elsewhere is also present here, although the family’s house was provided with a guard, Bowen recalled that he was always afraid and often hiding. At times her own father had had to go out to investigate ‘trying to do the job that [the guard] was meant to be doing.’

The later twentieth century saw a greater threat of violence towards the Diplomatic Service family than that recorded in earlier decades. In his memoirs, diplomat Bill Cordiner, who served

⁵⁶¹ Antonia Mochan. Questionnaire. 8 August 2014.

⁵⁶² Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

as Consul in Seattle between 1983 and 1987 recollected the times that the IRA would telephone his family home and, if one of his children answered, said, "Tell your Dad we are going to get him."⁵⁶³ Participants whose parents were working as diplomats in the 1970s and early 80s reported threats by the IRA and precautions taken to evade them. In Athens between 1993 and 1996 Julia and Oliver Miles recalled having to take down signage that identified their residence as British, because British diplomats were an IRA target. A well-known example of the IRA threat to the individual diplomatic family was the murder of Christopher Ewart-Biggs in 1976. Ewart-Biggs was newly appointed British Ambassador to the Republic of Ireland, and was killed by a roadside bomb planted outside his home, Glencairn, the Ambassador's Residence outside Dublin. Hickman's *Daughters of Britannia* contains a detailed account of the aftermath of the murder written by her mother, Jennifer, who, as wife of Ewart-Biggs' deputy had the task of telling the Ewart-Biggs children that their father was dead (their mother had travelled to London the previous evening). Although the Ewart-Biggs children were protected from the sound and impact of the explosives, their home was immediately surrounded by police, soldiers and senior civil servants. It was Katie Hickman, aged fifteen and home from boarding school for the school holidays, as were the Ewart-Biggs children, who was instructed to man the phone in her own home and to comfort the Ewart-Biggs' eldest daughter who was similar in age.⁵⁶⁴ This is a cogent illustration of the high expectations of Diplomatic Service children and the demand that they be able to maintain their composure during traumatic situations. Her mother wrote in the account that began as a diary entry and became a letter to relatives: 'I tell my Katie to hold the fort and get the lunch. She says the phone hasn't stopped ringing.'⁵⁶⁵ The Ewart-Biggs children later appeared on a televised memorial service for their father, the sort of experience that other

⁵⁶³ Bill Cordiner, *Diplomatic Wanderings From Saigon to the South Seas*, (London: Radcliffe Press, 2003), p.194.

⁵⁶⁴ Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, p. 256.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

children would have, with the exception, perhaps, of the royal family.



Figure 8: Glencairn, residence of HM Ambassador to the Republic of Ireland.

Living under threat and anxiety for family safety overseas was not the sole experience of Diplomatic Service children living at post, however. A far more positive strand of discussion came from their enjoyment of the natural world, experienced via access to the large gardens attached to some official accommodation or through compound living. In the case of compounds, Coles commented ‘For children the traffic free environment and recreational facilities are paradise.’⁵⁶⁶ Many interviewees and writers commented on spending time outside as among their most positive experiences and as something they believed to characterise an ideal childhood. This notion of the countryside as a child’s ‘natural habitat’ grew out of a Romantic ideal of children which was further borne out by the corruption seen to be contained in the

⁵⁶⁶ Coles, ‘Making Multiple Migrations’, p. 135.

nineteenth century industrial city.⁵⁶⁷ Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries debate had centred on the unsuitability of cities for raising healthy children and future citizens of the Empire. However, as Abrams points out, many evacuees' bitter experiences outside the city during the Second World War directly contradicted this view and 'laid bare the depths of rural poverty and dysfunction.'⁵⁶⁸

The privileged lifestyle of the diplomat overseas and the pleasure of being outside in warm climates was positively reported by many diplomatic children. Hickman wrote

In Singapore, when I was eight, my brothers and I ran wild in a tropical garden filled with bougainvilleas and frangipane trees. We swam in jellyfish infested seas and went barefoot for two years.⁵⁶⁹

Kate Howells similarly recalled her arrival in Hong Kong in 1969:

... it was just a sort of sensory, delightful assault: noise, heat. It was absolutely fantastic, a much more physical life, you know, swimming in enormous seas without anybody seeming to be worried about it...that was really an amazing sort of opening up in my childhood.⁵⁷⁰

Like Hickman, Retta Bowen also picked up on the delight of going barefoot, in Lusaka. In contrast to the fear and uncertainty she had felt at other times in Zambia, quoted above, she said: 'It was just a real sense of freedom, I think, and we never wore shoes and ... we would just spend our time climbing up trees... climbing poles, sort of wandering around farms and gardens.'⁵⁷¹ A point about the reliability of Retta Bowen's memories should perhaps be made

⁵⁶⁷ For a further discussion on the emphasis of the natural world and the countryside as an ideal environment for children see Abrams, *Songs of Innocence*, p.95 and Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, 185 – 186.

⁵⁶⁸ Abrams, *Songs of Innocence* p.146

⁵⁶⁹ Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, p.221.

⁵⁷⁰ Interview with Kate Howells. 22 July 2014.

⁵⁷¹ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

here: as they seem to point both to an idealisation of childhood and the hindsight of adult knowledge when she talked about the ‘rape gate’. In common with Lusaka, the city in the Arabian Gulf where Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb* were based in the mid-1990s, was a hardship post but this did not detract from their enjoyment of the natural world. They particularly enjoyed: ‘that outdoorsy lifestyle and having the opportunity just to be free, wild, sort of feral children almost...’⁵⁷² Both they and Retta Bowen touched on the lack of material goods available at these favourite posts, and commented that they felt this period of their childhood afforded them a safer, less complicated lifestyle that they would have had in the UK. Certainly, by this time British children’s freedom to enjoy the ‘outside world’ and the kinds of activities so lovingly described here had become increasingly constrained. Cunningham comments that ‘In 1971 eight out of ten seven or eight year olds were allowed to go to school on their own, twenty years later few than one in ten... The world the children inhabited was drawing in on itself...’⁵⁷³ Thomson, moreover, opens his conclusion with the observation that ‘the history of modern British childhood has been one, despite all its positive dimensions, of lost freedom...’⁵⁷⁴

‘From somebodies to nobodies.’

Chapter 1 introduced the financial issues that concerned meritocratic newcomers to diplomatic life following the Second World War. As the twentieth century progressed diplomatic salaries failed to keep pace with those of comparable professionals, especially employees in the commercial sector. McCarthy notes the ‘climate of austerity’ that accompanied the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 with its ‘job cuts, salary controls and early retirement schemes...’⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷² Interview with Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb*. 8 May 2014.

⁵⁷³ Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, p. 229.

⁵⁷⁴ Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p. 223.

⁵⁷⁵ McCarthy, *Women of the World*, p. 328.

In this atmosphere the disparity between the accommodation diplomatic families could afford on a 'home' posting and the government accommodation allotted to it overseas' became increasingly evident. When accommodation in the UK did not 'live up' to expectations it could be damaging to the family's self-image as a 'middle-class aristocracy'.

A combination of genteel expectations and financial limitation made London an unpopular place for FCO staff to live, even though living there made the Foreign Office building in Whitehall far easier to reach. If diplomats did live in London and possessed the means, they tended to favour the traditional middle and upper class areas with a South West post code. Marie- Noele Kelly, wife of Sir David Kelly, enthused about 'the fun of living in London in one of its "villages", be it Belgravia or Chelsea...' and described her family's residences in Lowndes Street and Sloane Square. Nonetheless even Kelly was forced to complain about the contrast between overseas and 'home': 'From the staff-studded glories of the ambassadorial purple, I turned in a day to the temperamental hisses of my gas cooker.'⁵⁷⁶ 'The Ewart-Biggs', also both from well-established middle-class families owned properties both in Chelsea and Essex, but other recruits, new to diplomacy, did not have these advantages and, for many, their ideas of propriety in terms of a London address prohibited them from taking advantage of the fashion for 'gentrification' which saw young middle class couples buying old properties in areas that were central but often considered undesirable. Kate Howells illustrated the dilemma this practice presented to housebuyers in her interview when she talked about her parents return to London from Warsaw in 1975:

Well we certainly had much more... spacious accommodation in um abroad than we did here... we didn't actually own any property to live in to work from until my mother

⁵⁷⁶ Kelly, *Dawn to Dusk* p. 116; p. 234.

inherited a bit more money and they bought a tiny flat in Pimlico... My father wanted to be in walking distance of the Foreign Office. They could have got, you know, a huge house in Notting Hill or a tiny flat in Pimlico and at that stage Notting Hill was very louche... so they went for Pimlico which was quite disappointing because I'd be sitting on a kind of gold mine if they'd done that!⁵⁷⁷

Working diplomats, like Anne Foster*, who was on a home posting in the mid 1980s, simply found London a less congenial working environment than an overseas' post. Each day she commuted from South London to the Foreign Office:

Somehow the money seemed to be tighter and the hours longer, getting into London... takes an hour out of your day really, at both ends, so it certainly was ... became increasingly difficult.⁵⁷⁸

Diplomats who did not want to live in London, or could not afford to, were often forced to find homes in less desirable areas within commuting distance. Kate Morris* remembered 'packing up and leaving all our friends and coming back to this little house in Bracknell'⁵⁷⁹ Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone exhibited some of the feelings of social superiority inherent in Diplomatic Service life when she talked about the home her parents rented in the commuter town of Wallingford on their return from Cairo:

You know the places that my parents could afford to live in here were completely different to the places they could afford to live in when it was being subsidised and you know they were I suppose a representative of the nation and so on. I mean nobody would have lived in a house like this abroad. I mean there was nothing wrong with it, it

⁵⁷⁷ Interview with Kate Howells. 22 July 2014.

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with Anne Foster*. 11 February 2015.

⁵⁷⁹ Interview with Kate Morris*. 12 March 2015.

was just kind of like a small council house with not particularly well made doors... I felt uncomfortable there like, you know, I felt we were out of place there.⁵⁸⁰

Diplomatic wives also found that they encountered greater difficulties during a home posting. The protected, 'staff-studded' life of the Embassy or compound meant that they were often ill-prepared for a return to the UK. As the discussion in Chapter 2 illustrated, this was one of the reasons that Masha Williams began the process that resulted in the foundation of the FSWA. Wives 'felt that they had grown out of touch with Britain and didn't know how to find accommodation, doctors, dentists, schools.'⁵⁸¹ Jane Ewart-Biggs wrote: 'Diplomats tend to become enclosed within the esoteric contours of their own life's circumstances, which in turn insulate them from the reality of British life and its changing social trends.'⁵⁸² Early editions of the FSWA newsletter (dated between 1960 and 1964) contained a great amount of advice on family re-integration into British society, in particular to the many innovations of the Welfare State. The piece reproduced below – from January 1962 - outlines entitlements to family allowances and the ways in which government employees could make a claim for it.

⁵⁸⁰ Interview with Rebekah Lattin- Rawstrone. 21 March 2014.

⁵⁸¹ Masha Williams, 'Foreign Service Wives Association: How it all started', *DSWA Newsletter Anniversary Edition*, Autumn 1985, p. 52.

⁵⁸² Ewart-Biggs, *Pay Pack and Follow*, p.94.

FAMILY ALLOWANCES

On return to duty in Britain after service abroad, an officer with more than one child of appropriate school age, or under, is entitled to claim Family Allowances under the Family Allowances Acts, 1945 and 1956. These allowances are paid by the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance, but cannot be claimed from that Ministry for the first six months of residence in Britain. During these first six months, however, payment in lieu is made by the Foreign Office (the *overseas* section of E. & O. Dept.), upon application in the appropriate form.

After the initial six months, further payments are the responsibility of the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance, and application should be made (birth certificates will be required) to the officer's local M.O.P.N.I. office. It is important to do this early, as payment of the allowance may not be backdated more than six months.

The present rate is 8/- a week for the second child and 10/- a week for the third and subsequent child below the age limits.

This information is given for eligible officers being posted to Britain.

Figure 9: FSWA Newsletter piece on Family Allowances, 4 January 1962.

Similar pieces discussed the method of applying for university student grants (a system introduced in 1962) and even introduced the idea of the new Secondary Modern schools as an alternative source of schooling to an organisation devoted to private education.⁵⁸³ Lack of familiarity with basic British social systems was a phenomenon of diplomatic life that appeared to change very little over the period studied. Later newsletters dealt with the introduction and wider spread use of pre-school nurseries, and contain a great deal of advice for families returning from post.⁵⁸⁴ If pre-school nursery facilities did exist overseas they were often inadequate or expensive, leading to pressure from the wives for an additional allowance to cover the cost of fees or the finances to start up their own nurseries.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸³ 'Family Allowances', *FSWA Newsletter*, 4 January 1962; 'Education in England', *FSWA Newsletter*, 6 January 1963; 'Teaching at Kidbrooke', *FSWA Newsletter*, 5 July 1962.

⁵⁸⁴ 'Pre-school education... our members' UK experience', *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1976, pp. 42-45.

⁵⁸⁵ "A fair deal for the under fives?" *DSWA newsletter* Spring 1981 pp. 80-81

However, it was not only small dwellings in less salubrious areas that caused diplomatic families, especially their children, to feel uncomfortable and ‘not at home’ when they arrived in Britain after time overseas. Buettner’s description of late imperial children is just as applicable to those of diplomats from the late twentieth century: ‘Home meant their national homeland, Britain... somewhere ‘of which they simultaneously claimed to be a part yet of which they had limited or no direct knowledge.’⁵⁸⁶ If, as Stuart Hall wrote, ‘Migration is a one way trip. There is no “home” to go back to...’ how are individuals who make ‘multiple migrations’ able to make sense of ‘home’, in this sense a ‘homeland’ as a concept?⁵⁸⁷ When Denise Holt and her family were overseas they ‘talked endlessly of going home, although [when I was] a child we didn’t actually have a home in the UK.’⁵⁸⁸ Antonia Mochan reflected that she used the term for institutional reasons: ‘Sometimes I refer to the UK as home, but I think that is more a hangover from the idea of “home postings” than a feeling of belonging there.’⁵⁸⁹ Ruth Harris* succinctly wrote that her worst experience as a diplomatic child was ‘Coming back to the UK, to “home”. Which wasn’t.’⁵⁹⁰ Carl Everett* whose daughters Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb* also contributed to this project, observed:

So change for the kids is quite hard... because we’d taken them all round the world they were more comfortable moving into an International scene than they were back to the UK ... [one] has joined the Foreign Office and feels I think very British and pro-British but she doesn’t feel at home here in the UK...⁵⁹¹

Many contributors reported that they found integration into British society far harder than into schools overseas or boarding schools both of which were presumably accustomed to high levels

⁵⁸⁶ Buettner, E *Empire Families* p.189

⁵⁸⁷ Stuart Hall, ‘Minimal Selves’ in *The Real Me: Post Modernism and the Question of Identity*, Lisa Appignanesi, (ed), ICA documents 6. London : The Institute of Contemporary Arts 1987, 44 – 46.

⁵⁸⁸ Denise Holt. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

⁵⁸⁹ Antonia Mochan. Questionnaire. 8 August 2014.

⁵⁹⁰ Ruth Harris*. Questionnaire 26 July 2015.

⁵⁹¹ Interview with Carl Everett*. 19 March 2014.

of student movement and welcomed students from a wide range of backgrounds. As we saw in Chapter 4, children who returned to the UK often felt alienated from British society and described themselves as exactly that: 'like aliens'. The origin of this sensation among participants has been difficult to determine. It is possible, however, that children learned from the negative feelings of adults – like Anne Foster* who was quoted above saying that working in the UK was less convenient and enjoyable. What Denise Holt has to say suggests an idealised picture of 'home' rather like the one shared by colonial administrators and early immigrants, and one that could quickly turn to disenchantment. Antonia Mochan and Ruth Harris* expressed themselves in very different ways, but their reactions both, rather like the wives who needed guidance on developments in social welfare and education, demonstrate a basic lack of familiarity with Britain. It could also be argued that they exemplify the 'third culture kid' who is only at home with others who have shared similar experiences, something suggested by Carl Everett*'s quote. What Dave Thomas wrote indicated that integration was largely down to personality. He recalled that students at the school where he was sent after returning from Germany in the mid 1980s thought he was 'posh', so he made necessary adjustments to his behaviour:

I remember kids at comprehensive thinking I was posh because I had a brief-case and called the teachers sir/ma'am (which was the norm in my overseas schools). I soon switched to an Adidas bag and 'hey miss'⁵⁹²

A particularly sorrowful example of this sense of disaffection from Britain and British culture appears in a short piece which was published in the DSWA newsletter for Autumn 1988. *The Rose Garden* was written in response to an advertisement for entries for a short story competition organised by the DSWA. The competition does not appear to be specifically for children but all

⁵⁹² Dave Thomas. Questionnaire. 20/09/2015.

Diplomatic Service staff and their families. The story is a collection of memories of the author's house on the British Embassy compound in Kabul where her father had been posted when she was a little girl. Although there are no specific descriptions of the house the family occupy, the reader gains an impression that it is as commodious as other homes overseas described in this initial section of this chapter, with its large separate kitchens, its verandas and French windows. The garden lies adjacent to the Ambassador's rose garden where the child appears to have spent much of her time (there is no fence). In the Rose Garden the child searches for hedgehogs, listens to the servants' gossip and signals to her older brothers that it is time to come home from the tennis court by blowing a small bugle kept hanging on a nail. It is notable that the garden is the story's focus, in keeping with the children's exuberant memories of outdoor life overseas which were discussed above. The rose garden afforded the child in the story – who appeared to be very young and not yet attending school – a great sense of freedom and became her paradise lost. The profound nature of *The Rose Garden* and its relevance to this section in which children's perceptions of home, especially of a British home, makes it worth quoting at length. The story begins:

I remember how I looked down through the clouds and promised to return. Then I turned my head and never looked again because it hurt. From that moment Afghanistan became my legend.

Afghanistan. My Afghanistan. It was not a place. It was a time. It was me. I carried its dust on my feet, its tears in my heart and its fears in my heart. And how do I return, to a place which is gone and as a person who died long ago?⁵⁹³

Clearly the author felt a great connection to Afghanistan, both materially and personally. She wrote that

⁵⁹³ Melanie Birch, 'The Rose Garden', *DSWA Newsletter*, Autumn 1988, p.66.

Within those walls I learned something precious, fragile and dying which I could not learn again from this world if I were live twice my given time.⁵⁹⁴

When she went to England the writer was shocked by the sense of the unknown it gave her. Indeed, although she was presumably with her parents in the UK (an English primary school is mentioned) the cumulative effect of the loss of home, garden and familiar faces in Kabul change of country suggest that the experience had been extremely traumatic for her:

This child died in an English primary school aged seven-and-a-half. Her bleached hair darkened and the sun seeped from her skin leaving her pale and empty. Her face grew fatter and younger and then one day she looked in the mirror and realised she was someone new, someone English.⁵⁹⁵

The above passage demonstrates that the child's sense of rupture on leaving Afghanistan was very great. Psychotherapist Joy Schaverien who has written about the trauma suffered through family separation by children perceived to be 'privileged' has commented on children who returned 'home' to England from exotic locations: 'The children looked Western but they acculturated to their foreign homeland.'⁵⁹⁶ In describing British children who returned 'home' from overseas in this way, Schaverien brings to mind the Japanese international children (or *kikokushijo*), who were the subject of a detailed analysis by Roger Goodman in 1990. Unlike Diplomatic Service children, who are rarely given specific attention in the British press or among social commentators, the children of Japanese transnationals, mostly businessmen with the large Japanese electronic and car companies, but including military and diplomatic children, are a subject of great discussion in their home country. Theories of 'Japaneseness' (*nihonjinron*) suggest 'that the Japanese and Japanese society are unique in the world' and so those who travel outside it and become familiar with other cultures dilute its purity. One of the great 'problems' perceived

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 67.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 66.

⁵⁹⁶ Schaverien, *Boarding School Syndrome*, p. 152.

to be presented to Japanese society by *kikokushijo*, is ‘that they are not physically distinguishable from other Japanese children’ and so their influence is seen as insidious.⁵⁹⁷ The way in which both British and Japanese children relate to the concept of home could be associated with what is seen as a misleading physical appearance. The child protagonist of *The Rose Garden* identified very strongly with Afghanistan as a homeland and it is significant that, as part of the story, she commented on the way her looks were changing. The shock of discovering her putative homeland as somewhere completely foreign (and, we should remember, somewhere that contrasted bleakly with exotic climates) gives the final sentence of the passage quoted above (‘someone new, someone English’) a distinctly pejorative feel.

‘A complex contested issue for me...’

The previous section demonstrated that the country diplomatic children called ‘home’ and that was understood to be their ‘homeland’, the country of which they were officially a part, according to their documents, was one that was largely unknown to them. One interviewee quoted a family member on international children: ‘they’re like pot plants, they transplant easily but they don’t make deep roots.’⁵⁹⁸ The enduring imperial notion that exiled Britons would instinctively recognise that they had arrived ‘home’ was a cherished construct rather than a reality, sustained by conversation or letter. Buettner, writing about the correspondence of an Anglo-Indian family, the Talbots, observed that ‘their dream of home – with its double connotation of familial domestic sphere and national homeland – had to remain no more than a fantasy, a “castle in the air.”’⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁷ Goodman, *Japan’s International Youth*, p.59; p.11.

⁵⁹⁸ Interview with Catherine Webb*. 19 August 2015.

⁵⁹⁹ Buettner ‘Parent-child separations’, p125.

Writing in 1998, Rapport and Dawson pointed out that traditional family ideology assumes that ‘home’ is as a fixed point, necessary for the ‘immobile’ child. ‘To be a child in Britain,’ they stated, ‘is to be dependent and non-mobile, and it is through a continued construction of this stasis that the British “family home” survives.’⁶⁰⁰ This has, of course, never been true of Diplomatic Service children, whose mobility has been a defining feature of their lives. In Rapport and Dawson, Chapter 5, Allison James stresses the almost interchangeable meaning of ‘home’ and ‘family’ and indicates that ‘home’ can be a solid material structure ‘literally cast in stone’ or a more fluid concept.⁶⁰¹ For transnational families, such as those who work for the British Diplomatic Service or for Shell International, both groups that are investigated in Coles and Fechter’s *Gender and Family among Transnational Professionals*, a fluid concept of ‘home’ is essential. Leonie Gordon, writing about the Shell Ladies Project subtitled her piece ‘Making and Remaking Home’ while Coles observes that ‘diplomatic families form and re-form over time and across distance.’⁶⁰² This fluidity is based primarily on emotional ties, ritual behaviour and on portable items of material culture, in which the diplomats’ children who took part invested a great amount of emotional dependence. In a striking number of cases, across the thesis’ time frame, contributors did not view ‘home’ as a specific place, rather more where their families were. In response to the question ‘Where do you consider home to be?’ the answers were notable in their similarity. The sample shown below lists just a few:

Peter Boon (born 1942) ‘... home was wherever the family was and where we physically were didn’t really matter too much. It was that the family was there together.’⁶⁰³

Libby Purves (born 1950) ‘Home was where the family was...’⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰⁰ Rapport and Dawson, *Migrants of Identity*, p.15.

⁶⁰¹ Allison James, ‘Imaging children “At home”, “In the family”, and “At school”’: Movement between the spatial and temporal markers of childhood identity in Britain.’ in Rapport and Dawson, *Migrants of Identity*. pp. 139 – 153.

⁶⁰² Leonie Gordon ‘The Shell Ladies Project’ ; Anne Coles ‘Making Multiple Migrations’, in Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family*.

⁶⁰³ Interview with Peter Boon. 11 April 2014.

⁶⁰⁴ Libby Purves. Questionnaire. 10 April 2015.

Kate Howells (born 1962) ‘Home was where my family were...’⁶⁰⁵

Paul Tylor (born 1964) ‘Wherever my parents, my brothers and our stuff was...’⁶⁰⁶

Kate Morris* (born 1964) ‘Home is where your loved ones are.’⁶⁰⁷

Antonia Mochan (born 1971) ‘Home is about them, not a place.’⁶⁰⁸

Dave Thomas (born 1971) ‘Where the ones I love are... where close family are...’⁶⁰⁹

Dan Hardwick* (born 1992) ‘Where certain people are rather than what I have or a fixed location...’⁶¹⁰

This sense that home was where family could be all together was complicated by the demands of a transient lifestyle. Sometimes the idea of a material space and an imagined one could clash. Fiona Taylor* felt that she needed to form a mental picture of the place where her family were living before she felt it was home. She reflected on her parents’ move from a house in England’s Lake District to Devon, which developed into a wider articulation of her feelings about home:

I remember being very apprehensive about visiting their new house in Devon and bursting into tears as I walked through the door because it was still home, despite not being the house in the Lakes. I also needed to go to the place that was home in order for it to be properly home. So, for example, Panama was never home even though my parents lived there, because I did not go there, having left school already when they went

⁶⁰⁵ Interview with Kate Howells. 22 July 2014.

⁶⁰⁶ Interview with Paul Tylor. 23 October 2014.

⁶⁰⁷ Interview with Kate Morris*. 12 March 2015.

⁶⁰⁸ Antonia Mochan. Questionnaire. 8 August 2014.

⁶⁰⁹ Dave Thomas. Questionnaire. 20 September 2015.

⁶¹⁰ Dan Hardwick*. Questionnaire. 16 June 2015.

there. Even now when any of my family move to a new house, I am always much happier when I have been there and can picture them in the place.⁶¹¹

Taylor*'s need to retain a mental picture of the spaces occupied by her family is recalled by a comment made in the Introduction of a volume edited by Eidse and Sichel which brings together individuals' impressions of their 'unrooted childhoods': 'Often they find that the only permanence is in memory and in the stories they tell...'⁶¹² Research divulged another aspect of the need – described by SG – to retain a mental picture of where her family were. As technology advanced diplomatic and transnational families were able to communicate more efficiently by email and Skype. When Vicky Tarry (born 1986), an only child, was interviewed for this project in November 2014 her parents were both living in the Falkland Islands where her father was working. Tarry lived in South East England with her fiancé. In answer to the question about her impressions of the word home, she said: 'until I became an adult, I suppose home was wherever they were. Even now partly where they are...'⁶¹³ Tarry said that the cost of visiting her parents in the Falklands was prohibitive and she had decided not to visit them there. She did, however, reveal that:

even though I'm probably never gonna go, when they moved into the house... I've got my own room... we did like a little Skype thing and they took me round the house and they showed me - you know - this is the dining room, this is the living room and all that sort of stuff and this is Vicky's room and [here she conveyed speechlessness] which is really quite sweet. But I'm never gonna go, so I suppose that's quite interesting...?

Maybe... That I've still got a room there even though I'm probably never gonna see it.⁶¹³

⁶¹¹ Fiona Taylor*. Questionnaire. 11 January 2014.

⁶¹² Faith Eidse, and Nina Sichel, (eds) *Unrooted Childhoods: Memoirs of Growing Up Global* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 2004), p.4.

⁶¹³ Interview with Vicky Tarry. 3 November 2014.

In guessing that this situation was ‘interesting’ Vicky Tarry recognised a number of issues. Unlike children born a decade earlier, she had been able to see her parents’ home overseas and this although she was no longer a child who expected to live with them, gave her a sense of ‘home’, of belonging. Unlike participants born at the beginning of this project’s time span she was able to see clearly where her parents were, thus there was no need to create an imaginary idea of a home, a ‘castle in the air’. Lastly, from the eagerness with which Tarry’s parents ‘gave her a tour’ and the fact that they have assigned a room to her it seems as essential for them to believe that she was a part of the make-up of their home as it did for her to believe that it her was parents who constituted it. Although she would not be coming home, her parents were still maintaining the ritual for their own benefit.

The Shell Ladies Project was formed by a group of women whose husbands were employed by Shell International during a time frame comparable to the one covered by this thesis. During the 1990s they produced two anthologies based on their experiences, one that gave a historical viewpoint - *Life on the Move* - and another that dealt with their contemporary situation - *Life Now*. Rather like the DSWA newsletters these are a vital record of the less documented sphere of Shell life: that lived by its wives and children. Leonie Gordon, herself a ‘Shell child’ interviewed some of the ‘Shell Ladies’ as part of a research project conducted within the Shell expatriate community in 2004. Their responses about the concept of ‘home’ as members of a group of transnational professionals were almost identical to those articulated by the contributors to this project who were quoted above. “I always said that home was where we all were...” one of Gordon’s interviewees is quoted as saying. Another area of home-making where the Shell Ladies exhibited similar conventions as diplomatic families was in their reliance on ritual and material objects. Like diplomats, Shell employees ‘lived in company housing or rented accommodation. In more remote areas they lived in the Shell camps...’ thus they were never able to make the

homes more than superficially theirs.⁶¹⁴ For diplomatic families, many of the items that helped them to orient themselves arrived via the weekly diplomatic bag from London. As Dudley Edwards reports, ‘Bags are meant to contain documents or items for diplomatic use only. In practice they also include such comforting features as private mail and presents from home or valued commodities (like bacon in Islamic countries) which exiles can no longer bear to be without.’⁶¹⁵ As the quote above indicates the bag helps to uphold an image of ‘home’ through the transportation of British products and cultural items. Denise Holt commented ‘The diplomatic bag brought ‘home’ to us, and was hugely important in the early years.’ But it would probably be more accurate to say that this was an image of home more familiar to parents than children.⁶¹⁶ For Nancy Grant* the bag combined the rituals of contact and the distribution of material goods:

The weekly diplomatic bag. All my childhood was pre-Internet and email – so letters, telegrams and (rare) phone calls were the only form of contact with home and family. One looked forward to the bag’s arrival and hoped there would be letters or parcels from home (UK), and new magazines to read. There was always a rush to finish off letters so they could catch the bag out.⁶¹⁷

There were other elements that signified a ritual creation of home for the diplomatic family. More than one participant mentioned the sound of *Lillibulero*, the well-known theme music to the BBC World Service. Andrew Graham recalled ‘doing steps to *Lillibulero* over the world service’ and Kate Howells remembered it playing when she went into her parents’ bedroom in

⁶¹⁴ Leonie Gordon, ‘The Shell Ladies Project’ in Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family*, p.31.

⁶¹⁵ Dudley-Edwards, *True Brits*, p.59.

⁶¹⁶ Denise Holt. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

⁶¹⁷ Nancy Grant*. Questionnaire. 1 October 2014.

Hong Kong each morning.⁶¹⁸ Ruth Harris* observed that: ‘By default the sound of BBC World Service always grounded me, when it played *Lillibulero*, because that accompanied us around the world... Everything else was subject to change.’⁶¹⁹

Other rituals were specifically developed and implemented in response to the individual needs of each family and once again interviewees were eager to bring attention to the fact that this role was always taken by their mother. It is worthy of note that this area of a diplomatic wife’s ‘responsibilities’ is rarely mentioned in the DSWA newsletters or in memoirs, other than via an overt mention of the wife being managing the renting and decorating of property if either were needed. The more subtle actions that contributed towards the creation of a home overseas seem not to have been considered interesting or worthy of note. One early example, however, of such a strategy appeared in the FSWA newsletter from July 1961. The author, the Hon Mrs Henry Hankey, stated that she used the previously-mentioned home education PNEU [Parents National Education Union] system as a means of orienting her children overseas as well as a means of educating them.

‘I have found the routine of morning lessons a settling occupation. The children and I have had our familiar carpet to sit on while the scene changed intoxicatingly and sometimes uncomfortably fast.’⁶²⁰

Many details concerning the rituals that made or perhaps even ‘enforced’ a sense of home were recalled by contributors. Ruth Harris* wrote that

⁶¹⁸ Interview with Andrew Graham. 21 May 2015; Interview with Kate Howells. 21 July 2014.

⁶¹⁹ Ruth Harris*. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

⁶²⁰ The Honourable Mrs Henry Hankey, ‘PNEU and the home school room’, *FSWA Newsletter*, 3 July 1961, pp. 13-17.

‘My mother would take down the pictures I had on my bedroom wall in the UK before we caught the aeroplane to the next post and made sure they were the first things put up when she arrived in our new place.’⁶²¹

Another area of ritual through which notions of home were created and reinforced was were in the ritual celebration of holidays such as Christmas and Easter and family birthdays, as Gillis has stated ‘the less time families had together, the more certain times came to matter to them... as real time grew scarce, symbolic time loomed ever larger.’⁶²² When she was interviewed Catherine Webb* speculated that the re-enactment of Christmas celebrations overseas had as much to do with recreating and English homeland as a family home. She recounted a memory of a Christmas that she had spent visiting anthropologist friends in Thailand:

I was getting quite into this recreating an English Christmas and my husband thought it was very odd. He said ‘We’re in Thailand...’ And of course these people were anthropologists, they weren’t really interested in recreating Englishness as much as I was. I noticed that: I realised that actually I was probably playing a little bit the Foreign Office role. ‘Look here we are, it’s Christmas and we’re gonna make it as close to England, even though we’re not in England!’⁶²³

For Diplomatic Service families bringing together family members was often achieved with great expense and effort over great distances. Coles reminds us that ‘Visits from parents... once a rarity outside Europe, have become commonplace.’⁶²⁴ Thus Anne Foster*, posted to a South Asian capital in 1988, still managed to host a family Christmas:

...no matter where we were we would celebrate Christmas the same way... my family were always very good at coming out, so we would have my mother or my brother

⁶²¹ Ruth Harris*. Questionnaire. 26 July 2015.

⁶²² Gillis, *A world of their own making*, p. 87.

⁶²³ Interview with Catherine Webb*. 19 August 2015.

⁶²⁴ Coles, ‘Making Multiple Migrations’, p. 137.

wherever we were. My younger brother too, so holiday rituals around Easter and Christmas tended to have the people [the children] loved and recognised around them and we did things the same way. So even if you're in [South Asia] you still have the turkey - it may be difficult to find the sprouts but you manage it somehow!⁶²⁵

Emma Robb* confirmed the view that holidays were occasions which brought her family together, even after her parents retirement from the Diplomatic Service:

There are things that we do that are not really negotiable like decorating the Christmas tree. There's certain stuff my Mum gets down at Easter that comes out of the loft every year... You know, we didn't this year but almost every year we go home and everyone makes chocolate truffles together. There's just stuff that I associate very strongly with my family and get really upset about if I miss out on...⁶²⁶

For transnational families who were affected by long periods of separation, the long summer holiday, for which families in the early part of this thesis used their single 'concessionary journey' became a celebratory ritual, carefully planned and enjoyed. As a teenager Peter Boon visited New York where his father had been posted. He remembered that 'there were events and gettings together amongst the staff and particularly school holidays for the children who'd come out for the holidays... .. two or three families got together and did some things together.'⁶²⁷ Paul Tylor was reticent about discussing any sadness that he or his parents might have felt when they dropped him at boarding school but he felt 'his parents made up for it when we were on school holidays' which he referred to as 'adventures'.⁶²⁸ Anne Foster*, who admitted to missing her children greatly when they were away at boarding school consoled herself by organising holidays for them when they came out:

⁶²⁵ Interview with Anne Foster*. 11 February 2015

⁶²⁶ Interview with Danielle Kelly* and Emma Robb*. 8 May 2014.

⁶²⁷ Interview with Peter Boon. 11 April 2014.

⁶²⁸ Interview with Paul Tylor. 23 October 2014.

I spent my time in the term times planning the next holiday so that every holiday we went somewhere different... they still remember those holidays. And then later on we had some great trips which I spent a lot of time always organising, trips to difficult and interesting parts of the [posting] where we were.⁶²⁹

However holidays were not easy for every family. Rachel Donald* wrote that

School holidays were sometimes awkward. I got the feeling that we were a bit in the way. Weekends were mostly spent doing things my parents thought we would find interesting, but as a teenager I hated doing museums and stately homes! Weekdays were mainly spent in our bedrooms, reading, playing games.⁶³⁰

This is suggestive of Coles' observation that the Diplomatic Service family re-forms as a nuclear family every three months. However Coles warned that holidays too had their own rhythm which had to include 'the regaining of normal family life.'⁶³¹ This was not always a smooth transition, as a teenager at home on holiday from boarding school Ed Mullen* was quick to notice that his parents did not chastise him as much as they might have done had the family not been separated for long periods:

They were very forgiving when I was at home and let me just do what I wanted. There weren't... there didn't seem to be any barriers... my Dad didn't like listening to my loud music. I know he didn't, it must have driven him mad but he never asked me to turn it down. And if I was fed up or bored and wandering around moaning they'd be very tolerant of it. I didn't have the normal relationship with my parents that I would have had if I'd been with them the whole year.⁶³²

⁶²⁹ Interview with Anne Foster*. 11 February 2015.

⁶³⁰ Rachel Donald*. Questionnaire. 30 March 2015.

⁶³¹ Coles, 'Making Multiple Migrations', p. 130.

⁶³² Interview with Ed Mullen*. 6 October 2014.

In her work on the Shell Ladies Project, Leonie Gordon identifies the significance of material culture in rituals that contribute towards creating a sense of home. The quotes she used from *Life on the Move*, first published in 1993, suggested: ‘The housewife and her oil company house are “just like home” when decorated with her own belongings.’ The piece goes on to list the domestic objects that had particular and recognisable meaning in the creation of a family home, these included:

‘applique wallhanging above the cot, birthday calendar in the bathroom, children’s birthday parties with lanterns, Easter with Easter eggs, iodine on grazes, Mother’s day with flowers and an untidy kitchen.’⁶³³

She also commented that ‘Some [wives] created familiar environments which they carried around with them in the form of their decorations and possessions, like a snail with a shell...’⁶³⁴ The rituals developed by FCO families also demonstrated a reliance on material objects. Antonia Mochan observed:

My mother is a very clever woman and had the system for creating “home” down pat. There were certain items that we took from place to place to help create that, and she had one or two items that went in her hand baggage that signified home.

Mochan, now employed by the EU Commission uses her mother’s method to deal efficiently with her own peripatetic life. She added:

I do that too now - I have a Hand of Fatima from Morocco and a soapstone cicada from France and wherever they hang, that is my home for that time.⁶³⁵

⁶³³ Leonie Gordon, ‘The Shell Ladies Project’, Coles and Fechter, *Gender and Family*, 21-39.

⁶³⁴ Leonie Gordon, ‘The Shell Ladies Project’, p.33.

⁶³⁵ Antonia Mochan. Questionnaire. 8 August 2014.

Retta Bowen testified that her mother carried one forbidding object with her, so that she could open up boxes when the family arrived:

Like, you wouldn't be able to do it now, but she would always have a sharp knife. You know, the sort of best kitchen knife. She'd always have that in her handbag when we travelled!⁶³⁶

In the words of Blunt and Dowling 'Home does not simply exist, but is made.'⁶³⁷ The processes of 'home-making' described by Carl Everett*, a parent during the 1980s, clearly highlight the ways in which his family made an 'unhomely' space 'homely':

You could take those things with you from the UK, Saudi, on to Holland, back again and you'd set your room up the same, the pictures around the room would be the same ones and that again gave the children a sense of home. They would look forward to unpacking the boxes... because not only would they get all their personal things but it was building a – turning a building into your home.⁶³⁸

Some children identified so strongly with certain domestic objects and invested them with such significance that they became, in the words of Janet Hoskins, 'used as a vehicle for a sense of selfhood.'⁶³⁹ This significance was not always clear, however, and the objects are not what might be expected, as Ed Mullen*, who recognised his own attachment to material objects, observed:

I've always got very attached. I think I'm less bad at this now ... um objects, reminding me of my childhood they were quite important because those I suppose were constants they would move around when we were leaving place so it's quite important. I remember a bread board that my parents had and getting - not seriously upset, not totally upset,

⁶³⁶ Interview with Retta Bowen. 22 May 2015.

⁶³⁷ Blunt and Dowling, *Home*, p.23.

⁶³⁸ Interview with Carl Everett*. 19 March 2014.

⁶³⁹ Janet Hoskins, *Biographical Objects: How things tell the story of people's lives* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 2. See also Daniel Miller, *Stuff*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

when I was in my twenties and my Mum finally got rid of this thing. Every child's attached to things from childhood. Maybe they had a particular importance.'

When Kate Morris* reflected on this subject, she compared her experiences, emphasising her acute sense of separation and transience, with those of a colleague to whom she had spoken about the meaning of home. At first she referred to her own life as characterised by 'at boarding school you have your little box at the end of the bed and that's where your possessions are... as long as I could get everything in a few bags then I'd feel happy' then she went on to talk about her friend:

...interestingly enough... she came from a very established home in the States... and she was born in this great lovely house and lived there throughout her whole life up to twenty when she came to England, still had a room there like a shrine when she went home, all her friends were from there, everything was so so different, in terms the friendships and your things and your room and things around you. I suppose just working with her and just seeing just our different our lives were, I suppose I hadn't really thought about it.'⁶⁴⁰

Conclusion

This, the final thematic chapter, on the understanding of 'Home' among British diplomats' children between 1945 and 1990, should perhaps be grouped with the preceding chapter on 'Identity'. Both deal with a far less concrete set of impressions which are linked to feelings of 'belonging' and 'not belonging', at domestic and national levels. As chapter 4 made clear, contributors' experiences of a return to the UK were largely negative. The final section of this chapter dealt with the imagined aspects of home communicated by participants. Among these

⁶⁴⁰ Interview with Kate Morris*. 12 March 2015.

were the imagined versions of home that they had not seen and how these were understood. The constant changes suffered by diplomats' children during this time greatly influenced the ways in which they made sense of their surroundings and the final part of the last section dealt with the way diplomatic families developed rituals and identified with material objects to create a sense of familiarity.

6. CONCLUSION

The introduction to this thesis set out three main lines of inquiry into the lives of children born into the British Diplomatic Service between 1945 and 1990. Reflecting on the evidence discussed in each of the five preceding chapters, this conclusion will consider how far it has been possible to answer these three key questions, what the limitations have been and where further investigation might be fruitful. The first aim was to discover whether the complex experiences of British Diplomatic Service children who grew up in the second half of the twentieth century defied a popular stereotype. This stereotype might be best captured in the commonly-held assumption that diplomats' children were privileged, archetypally 'British' and endowed with staunch feelings of patriotism. It was felt that this commonly held view should be challenged because it applied a misleading veneer over a set of experiences which was altogether more complicated. Evidence showed that participants' experiences of a diplomatic childhood were extremely rich and diverse and their reactions to these experiences even more so.

The belief that Diplomatic Service families were financially privileged during this period must be revised following a reading of Chapter One, which offered an in-depth discussion of official documentation relating to the FCO family. Evidence submitted to the Plowden Report by the FSWA and the FSA proves beyond doubt that the families, headed by men who chose diplomacy as a career at a time of 'meritocratic' entry, experienced financial hardship owing to the demands of FCO life. During the early part of the thesis' timeframe, children's journeys to post were not covered by financial allowances; thus children often spent long summer holidays with extended family in very similar situations to their English peers. For example, Olivia Tate*, on her summer holidays in 1950s England, accompanied her grandmother to work and helped her there. When allowances that covered holiday travel did become available after 1955, Diplomatic Service children were faced with the necessity of travelling unaccompanied.

Superficially at least, this put them in a comparable situation with two distinctly underprivileged groups who greatly influenced post-war attitudes to children: refugees and evacuees. While, ultimately, these groups experienced very different outcomes in terms of their reasons for travel and their destinations, the often unaccompanied status of diplomatic children during this period illustrates the high levels of maturity and self-containment expected of them.

The third chapter, with its theme of family separation, introduced the phenomenon of boarding school education, the most common choice for diplomat parents and one which could arguably contribute to the conservative image outlined above, and to an idea of privilege which is disseminated through popular children's literature and comics. School literature was quoted by correspondents who confirmed that it influenced their images of boarding school and often made them keen to attend one. However, the sometimes traumatic impressions given by interviewees of their boarding school experiences, notably their arrival and first night there, revealed that while diplomats' children experienced privilege through the opportunities afforded to them by boarding school education, they often felt emotionally deprived. Some of the contributors expressed confusion and anger at the demands for emotional stoicism and resilience. As well as building on existing historical narratives of children's emotions, these findings contribute to ongoing debates about emotional life within British boarding schools during the period. The inter-familial tensions which participants believed had been caused by this culture of separation helps to build a clearer picture of family dynamics within similar professional and social groups. Correspondents expressed the feeling that boarding school had had lasting effects on their family relations and the ways in which their parents viewed them in adulthood.

Chapter 3's treatment of 'Transience' demonstrated that, far from the image of FCO personnel and their families as rigid establishment figures, their experience was one of remarkable variety, requiring great adaptability. Transience, taken as a subsidiary to the dominant culture of separation rather than its polar opposite, enabled the discussion to move beyond boarding school to look at the diverse approaches to education – among them international schools and correspondence packages - adopted by Foreign Office families who were constantly on the move. One finding which might support a more general stereotype - that of the insular British abroad - was that few participants reported sustained friendships or interaction with local people at post. However, there was also little evidence that they spent time with fellow nationals; many stated that they felt comfortable in the company of others who, like themselves, were used to travelling. One of the most significant challenges to the popular assumption outlined above must be that children of the British Diplomatic Service, whose parents worked so hard (officially and unofficially) to represent Britain overseas, did not share their parents' sense of absolute loyalty to the Foreign Office. The way that children related to the FCO differed greatly, for example, from the relationship that their mothers had with it. Callan's observation that, from the wives' point of view, Diplomatic Service society did not constitute a 'total culture' because they joined in adulthood is interesting when applied to diplomats' children. Despite having lived in the shadow of the FCO from birth, they were largely immune to its influence, rather than totally 'incorporated' as might reasonably be expected. Indeed, contributors' responses to the key research question of whether children felt in any way 'incorporated' into the Diplomatic Service (in the way that some wives have been said to be incorporated into their husbands' professions) revealed that they did not. A markedly small number of participants felt that the Foreign Office defined them and their families and it is notable that these individuals came from the older section of the sample group.

Other than the correspondents whose parents deliberately exposed them to working life in the FCO, or who had worked temporarily at post, most children had little idea about the detail of Foreign Office work. A small group from the interview sample had taken up a career in the FCO but their reasons as to why they had chosen to do this were confused. They appeared to be based on family tradition or lifestyle choices rather than specific aspects of diplomatic work. Another group of participants said that they felt the FCO was a ‘sham’ and that the Diplomatic Service’s emphasis on maintaining a presentable public face was dishonest.

In direct opposition to a conventional understanding of them as exhibiting a quintessentially British identity, contributors’ attitudes towards their national identity were confused. This was expressed more acutely through the testimonies of diplomats’ children who had spent greater amounts of time at International Schools and travelling with their parents. These participants reported that they were unaware what it was to be British and that they had found the performance of national identity (ie. as part of International School celebrations or British Embassy business) difficult. One participant even sought and assumed an alternative national identity. This sense of confusion was exacerbated by ‘foreign born’ mothers – a phenomenon not uncommon in diplomatic life – who provided their children with a second (sometimes preferred) ‘homeland’ and often a second language, with which they could identify. Some evidence proved that this feeling of duality could place stress on existing divisions within families.

The dismay expressed by participants at what they felt to be an inferior standard of family housing when they arrived in the UK after an overseas posting is one indication of a sense of entitlement that persists within the Diplomatic Service. More significant than this reaction to their material surroundings, however, was the lack of connection that they felt with the homeland to which they supposedly belonged. Again, this points to the paradoxical nature of

their situation: their lives were dictated by their parents' devotion to an organisation that represented Britain overseas and yet their association with the UK was weak and confused. British Diplomatic Service children were neither representative of the widely held popular opinion of them as conforming to a British archetype, nor did they conform to the FCO's superior communal ideal of remaining 'a world apart'.

The second line of inquiry set out to explore whether the oral testimonies and other evidence collected for the thesis complicated existing historical narratives of childhood and the family in the post-war period. As the Introduction stated, there is little interest in such questions in the current field of British diplomatic history as it is practiced by the in-house FCO Historians, among others, who concentrate solely on political and administrative narratives. The social and family history of Britain's Diplomatic Service is almost totally neglected, despite ongoing rhetoric within the FCO that the Service is 'a family affair'. Certainly, this thesis has demonstrated that the existing literature on the Diplomatic Service's social history is limited. Alongside Mori's *Culture of Diplomacy* and McCarthy's *Women of the World*, two popular works which engage with the twentieth century exist, Hickman's *Daughters of Britannia* and Dudley Edwards' *True Brits*. However, there have been no academic studies of this depth which cover this timeframe. The narrative of Diplomatic Service families has been taken into the twenty-first century by Coles' edited volume *Gender and Family among Transnational Professionals*, and in their Foreword to this volume Callan and Ardener stress the need for greater concentration on children in future research. Additionally, the first chapter which examines official FCO documentation regarding the family, for example, uncovered a number of papers which were rarely viewed with the family in mind. The coverage of the Foreign Office wives' jubilant reception of the Plowden Report in their Association newsletter as highly beneficial to families, casts the report's recommendation in a new light, lending it an alternative significance in histories of British diplomacy.

Separation, singled out in this study as perhaps the most pervasive influence across every theme, which continued as standard FCO practice into 1980s and 1990s, directly contradicted the cherished post-war ideal of the nuclear family living in a comfortable and stable home environment. The few parents that took part in this study admitted that they were unhappy with the practice of separation, as did many published memoirs of diplomatic life which formed an essential part of the secondary evidence. Nonetheless, all families but one chose to follow the traditions and the demands of Diplomatic Service life, although some boarding school careers were far shorter than others. Coles has rightly pointed out that parents often find themselves caught in the Foreign Office's 'tender trap,' which ensured their loyalty via the provision of financial allowances to assist with travel and boarding school costs. The one family that decided not to send its children to boarding school admitted that this resulted in far less choice in terms of the father's career.

In a period where, Thomson has established, British children were losing the freedom to make sense of the world independently, the children of diplomats seemed to occupy an alternative situation where independence was prized, demanded and enforced. Although many participants expressed the feeling that this early expectation of independence leant them an air of confidence and sophistication, this is perhaps the revised opinion of adult hindsight: the testimonies which recalled the children's panic and awkwardness when travel plans went wrong contradict this view. However, the experience of boarding school can be said to challenge the narrative of children's 'lost freedom'; although superficially an enclosed environment, interviewees demonstrated that they were able to develop highly creative games and productions, crucially free from adult supervision. Participants reported that their boarding school experiences allowed them to exercise a great amount of intellectual and artistic freedom and expression.

The lack of parallels between ideals of home life in the UK and overseas were demonstrated by the accommodation Diplomatic Service families inhabited overseas, often completely impractical for family occupation. The constant demands of diplomatic entertaining, alongside sometimes untrustworthy domestic staff meant that FCO families maintained an awkward balance between the public and private spheres. The higher standards of prosperity and status typified by life at post created tension when families returned to Britain. This was exacerbated when, from the 1970s onward, Civil Service salaries began to lose value against those of other professionals. Additionally, the ways in which separated families relied on the imaginary when conjuring up ideas of home (for example, the way in which diplomats' children did not count as 'home' a house they had never seen their parents occupy), is also inconsistent with many contemporary historical narratives of comparable social groups, although Blunt and Dowling suggest they are familiar in migrant and refugee culture. While Diplomatic Service families shared very few practices with families in the UK during the given period, the rituals that they created around public holidays and birthdays, for example, was a practice shared by many modern families, as Gillis reminds us. The significance of material objects for these highly transient children is a pervasive theme which would benefit from further study. An area which remains unexplored is that of the material culture of FCO buildings overseas, both Embassies and residences, conceptualised as domestic spaces as well as public workplaces. An investigation of the photographic records of the FCO's overseas estates, kept by the FCO Historians would cast light into another neglected area.

Some evidence showed that correspondents held and expressed popular beliefs or assumptions about 'ideal' childhoods. For example, they spoke with enthusiasm and conviction about the simpler, 'outdoor life' that they had often felt was a benefit of life overseas. This point of view

conforms to the nineteenth-century conviction that the city was a degraded environment and the countryside was an ideal 'natural habitat' for children (although some parents and medics expressed the view that the tropics were injurious to children's health). However, it also suggests that correspondents were aware of a sense of lost freedom among British children which could only be regained elsewhere. This confident expression of a widely-held popular belief could also be detected when participants spoke about the way in which boarding school had denied them a 'proper parenting'. Here, in contrast to the pleasures of an outdoor lifestyle, correspondents felt that an ideal situation existed but that their experience had fallen short of it.

The third major line of questioning involved the impact of gender on FCO children's individual experiences. In the first and most obvious case, it was women who most readily offered to participate in research for this thesis, with the number of female correspondents significantly outnumbering males. Another very general point to make is that, throughout the period, girls were far more protected than their brothers. On average, boys were more likely to be sent to boarding school between the ages of seven and nine, whereas girls left home between the ages of ten and fourteen. Evidence suggested that this was partly to do with home and family being seen as the most suitable place for girls but also that girls' education was viewed as less of an investment. Indeed, more than one female interviewee noted that their fathers were seduced by the notion of a school which could mould them into the image of a perfect 'diplomat's daughter'; this ideal daughter was stylish and charming, rather than necessarily well-educated - in other words, an asset to his own career. The difficulties faced by educated women within the FCO's social structure was emphasised by both parents and children. Life as a diplomatic wife during the period was extremely difficult for educated women who travelled with their husbands. Evidence showed that this could become a source of unhappiness and resentment, even resulting in mental illness.

Although this thesis takes as its primary topic the children of Diplomatic Service officers between 1945 and 1990, it would be negligent not to mention in the conclusion the gender relations that existed between parents. These were observed by interviewees and highlighted in many other sources. Katie Walsh's comment about the 'persistent gendering of expatriate lives' was used many times and this is because it is so germane. During the period under discussion Diplomatic Service couples conformed to highly traditional gender relationships and roles. An indicator of the general climate where gender relations are concerned is that the FCO only discontinued its 'marriage bar' in 1973. Diplomatic wives were primarily responsible for home and family and many correspondents paid tribute to their mothers, making the point of emphasising how much unacknowledged work they had done for the Foreign Office, much of it representing what has become known as 'emotional work' or 'affective labour.'⁶⁴¹

This thesis has endeavoured to effect a historical reconstruction of the lives of British Diplomatic Service between 1945 and 1990. It has been innovative in its use of oral history to gather evidence. If this method had not been deployed, the resulting account would have been far less rich, as existing evidence on diplomats' children is inadequate and biased towards parental perspectives. One of the limiting factors of this method, however, is that the interview sample did not contain a larger number of male candidates. Interviewing individuals about their personal and sometimes private lives, emotions and choices can present a challenge. Scholars seeking to explore this area further would be well-advised to consider how to develop recruitment and publicity strategies which guard against the myth of the 'damaged diplomat.' In light of the highly emotional atmosphere of some interviews, adequate preparation for both the

⁶⁴¹ See Jean Duncombe and Dennis Marsden, D. 'Love and Intimacy: The Gender Division of Emotion and 'Emotion Work. A Neglected Aspect of Sociological Discussion of Heterosexual Relationships.' *Sociology* 27:2 (1993).

interviewee and interviewer are essential. At the very least this should include basic training for the interviewer, such as that undertaken for this thesis prior to the interviews taking place, and an advance look at the questions for the interviewee.

The fact that during the period considered families played such a large (and yet often unacknowledged) part in Diplomatic Service life and that so many families upheld a tradition of continuous service to the FCO should mean that the social and cultural history of British diplomacy is given equal status among the work of its own Historians and among students of British diplomatic history more generally. It is a sincere wish that this study will contribute to a widening of outlook among diplomatic historians, and that this thesis might, in addition, stimulate research into family cultures among other organisations whose employees live and work overseas. The study of this ‘sometimes stressful childhood’, as one contributor put it, currently stands alone as the first reconstruction of the family life of the British Diplomatic Service at a time of significant social change. However, the richness of its subject matter is reflected in the wide range of interdisciplinary literatures –from history, sociology, anthropology and geography – on which this thesis has drawn. It is hoped that those working in these and other fields will continue to produce scholarship illuminating the important subject of childhood and family lives on the move.

**APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEWEES AND RESPONDENTS, BASIC BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS
(*DENOTES PSEUDONYM)**

Interviews

Olivia Tate*

Born: 1946, West Midlands.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, housewife.

Siblings: One brother, one sister.

Occupation: Interior Designer.

Interview Location: Tate* home, London.

Carl Everett*

Born: 1953, London.

Parents: Occupations unknown.

Siblings: Unknown.

Occupation: Former HM Diplomatic Service.

Interview Location: Everett* home, South East England.

Rebekah Lattin-Rawstrone

Born: 1976, Kenya.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, housewife, former Civil Servant.

Siblings: One sister, one brother.

Occupation: Writer.

Interview Location: Author's home, London.

Peter Boon

Born: 1942, India.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife.

Siblings: One brother.

Occupation: HM Diplomatic Service (retired).

Interview Location: Boon home, Oxfordshire.

Arabella Weir

Born: 1957, USA.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife, later Teacher.

Siblings: Two brothers, one sister.

Occupation: Comedian, Writer.

Interview Location: Coffee Shop, London.

Emma Robb*

Born: 1985, Vienna.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife.

Siblings: Two sisters, one brother.

Occupation: HM Diplomatic Service.

Interview Location: Robb* home, London.

Danielle Kelly*

Born: 1988, UK.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife.

Siblings: Two sisters, one brother.

Occupation: Social Worker.

Interview Location: Robb* home, London.

Eleanor King*

Born: 1954, Istanbul.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife.

Siblings: Two sisters.

Occupation: Writer, Editor, Translator.

Interview Location: King* home, London.

Kate Howells

Born: 1962, Sussex.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife.

Siblings: One brother.

Occupation: Journalist, BBC World Service.

Interview Location: Howells home, London.

Julia Miles

Born: 1945, Oxford.

Parents: Father, Academic; Mother, profession unknown.

Siblings: Unknown.

Occupation: Counsellor and Psychotherapist.

Interview Location: Miles home, Oxford.

Oliver Miles

Born: 1936, London.

Parents: Father, formerly Ceylon Civil Service; Mother, unknown.

Siblings: Unknown.

Occupation: HM Diplomatic Service (retired).

Interview Location: Miles Home, Oxford.

Ed Mullen*

Born: 1965, London.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, housewife.

Siblings: Two sisters.

Occupation: HM Diplomatic Service.

Interview Location: Coffee shop, London.

Paul Tylor

Born: 1964, Hertfordshire.

Parents: Father, FCO Security Officer Cadre; Mother, housewife.

Siblings: Two brothers.

Occupation: HM Diplomatic Service.

Interview Location: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London.

Vicky Tarry

Born: 1986, Paris.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife.

Siblings: none.

Occupation: Home Civil Service, FCO.

Interview Location: Tarry home, Hertfordshire.

Anne Foster*

Born: 1945, Wiltshire.

Parents: Unknown.

Siblings: Two brothers.

Occupation: HM Diplomatic Service (retired)

Interview Location: Foster* home, London.

Kate Morris*

Born: 1964, Hampshire.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife.

Siblings: Two sisters.

Occupation: Arts administration.

Interview Location: Morris* Office, London.

Andrew Graham

Born: 1956, London.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife.

Siblings: One brother, one sister.

Occupation: Former soldier.

Interview Location: Royal Geographic Society, London.

Retta Bowen

Born: 1977, Oxford.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife, Actor.

Siblings: One sister.

Occupation: Psychotherapist.

Interview Location: Bowen home, London.

Catherine Webb*

Born: 1958, Jordan.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife, Teacher.

Siblings: One brother, one sister.

Occupation: Teacher.

Interview Location: Webb* home, Oxford.

Questionnaires (the option of a Questionnaire was offered to participants who were sometimes reticent about being interviewed; that contain fewer personal details is reflected in the summary below).

Antonia Mochan

Born: 1971.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife, formerly Diplomatic Service

Siblings: One brother.

Occupation: EU Official.

Lisa Finch*

Born: 1967.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, unknown.

Siblings: Unknown.

Occupation: Unknown.

Fiona Taylor*

Born: 1956, Bahrain.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife.

Siblings: One brother, one sister.

Occupation: Unknown.

Mike Ingalls*

Born: 1960.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife, later Counsellor.

Siblings: Twin brother, one sister.

Occupation: Writer/researcher.

Nancy Grant*

Born: 1964.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife, later Counsellor.

Siblings: Two brothers.

Occupation: Unknown.

Viv James*

Born: 1968

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, unknown.

Siblings: One brother.

Occupation: Unknown.

Rachel Donald*

Born: 1976, Pretoria.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, unknown.

Siblings: One sister, one brother.

Occupation: Unknown.

Libby Purves

Born: 1950.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife.

Siblings: Three brothers.

Occupation: Journalist, Broadcaster.

Peter Andrews*

Born: Unknown.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, Housewife.

Siblings: Two brothers, one sister.

Occupation: Unknown.

Dan Hardwick*

Born: 1992, Devon.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service; Mother, various roles.

Siblings: Two sisters.

Occupation: Student teacher.

Denise Holt

Born: 1949, Vienna.

Parents: Father, HM Diplomatic Service Technical Maintenance Service; Mother, former Diplomatic Service Cypher Clerk.

Siblings: One sister.

Occupation: HM Diplomatic Service (retired).

Carmen Davies

Born: Unknown.

Parents: Unknown.

Siblings: Unknown.

Occupation: Various roles as wife of diplomat.

Ruth Harris*

Born: Unknown.

Parents: Father, FCO Technical Branch; Mother, unknown.

Siblings: Unknown.

Occupation: Unknown.

Dave Thomas

Born: 1970

Parents: Father, RAF Assistant to Defence Attache; Mother, various roles

Siblings: One sister.

Occupation: HM Diplomatic Service.

APPENDIX 2:

Pro forma information sheet



Information sheet

Little friends of all the world? Diplomatic service children at home and abroad 1945 - 1990

Information for potential participants

This sheet contains basic information on the purpose of the study. Please think carefully about whether you would like to be interviewed as the process can sometimes be challenging. I also intend to produce a questionnaire for those who would prefer this or for whom it is more practical.

Details of the Study

The study aims to explore the experiences of children born into British diplomatic families since 1945. It is a Collaborative Doctoral Award studentship funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and supervised jointly between Queen Mary University of London and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Although some accounts of family life within the Diplomatic Service exist (largely memoirs of Diplomatic wives) there is very little primary evidence available concerning the childhood experiences of individuals born into the Diplomatic Service. I would be delighted, therefore, if you would consider being interviewed about your childhood within the Service. I hope that these initial interviews will form the basis of a much-needed resource to be consulted and expanded by future researchers. I would naturally provide a full briefing, but the sort of issues I would be interested in discussing are as follows:

1. What 'overall' impressions did your childhood leave you with? Which elements of it were the most enjoyable?
2. As the child of parents working for the Diplomatic Service what were the ways in which your 'Britishness' was emphasised to you? How 'British' did you feel. How 'British' do you feel now?
3. How aware were you of what your parents did for a living and its significance?
4. What are your feelings about the word 'home'? Where do you consider 'home' to be?
5. What were your experiences of school and the school holidays?
6. Did you rebel as a teenager?
7. How aware were you of rank within the service?
8. What are your feelings about the FCO now?
9. How far do you feel you experienced life in each host country? Did you learn languages? Did you form lasting friendships with people native to that country? How far did the culture influence you?
10. Did you feel that you had a role? Did you feel, as a diplomat's child, that you had a special 'duty' which other children didn't have to represent your country?

This project is being carried out with the full support of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Researchers:

I, Sara Hiorns, am the Principal Investigator and will be conducting the interviews/devising a questionnaire. I am happy to answer any questions you may have. I am a Doctoral Student at Queen Mary, University of London and can be contacted by post at FCO Historians, Room WH1.231, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, London SW1A 2PA or email sahiorns@live.co.uk.

APPENDIX 3:

Little friends of all the world? The experiences of children in the UK diplomatic service 1945 – 1990. Questionnaire.

1. To begin, a very general question. What, in your opinion, were the best and worst things about British diplomatic family life? What 'overall' impressions did it leave you with?
2. Could you briefly describe your/ your spouses's career, their roles and the postings you/they went on?
3. What were the ways in which your 'Britishness' as a family was emphasised to you? How 'British' did you feel. How 'British' do you feel now?
4. How significant was the Foreign Office in your family life, did you feel that it influenced every family member?
5. What are your feelings about the word 'home'? Where do you consider 'home' to be? How did you create/maintain an atmosphere of home in each overseas post? Were there familiar objects that travelled with you and helped to 'orient' the family?
6. Could you describe your child's education? What were your feelings about boarding school and the traditions that uphold it? What did your child/children do during the school holidays?
7. Did your child/children ever rebel? Were they involved in any youth subcultures? Did the 1960s counterculture influence you?
8. How aware were you of rank within the service?
9. How far do you feel you experienced life in each host country? Did you learn languages? Did you form lasting friendships with people native to that country? How far did the culture influence you?
10. What are your feelings about the FCO now? Are you still in touch with FCO life?
11. **For diplomats' spouses:** Did you feel that you had a role? Did you feel, as a diplomat's spouse, that you had a special 'duty' which spouses of other people with international careers didn't have, to represent your country?
12. Were you or your family ever in danger?

13. Have you ever felt that the FCO had a very specific influence on your family life which may have led to patterns of behaviour ie alcoholism, marital disputes etc.?

14. If you have any stories or observations you'd particularly like to tell please add them!
Also – if you have any documents or photographs you could scan and send to me I would be very pleased to have them.

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Eleanor King*, 11 July 2014.

Kate Howells, 22 July 2014.

Julia and Oliver Miles, 29 September 2014.

Ed Mullen*, 6 October 2014.

Paul Tylor, 23 October 2014.

Vicky Tarry, 3 November 2014.

Anne Foster*, 11 February 2015.

Kate Morris*, 12 March 2015.

Andrew Graham, 21 May 2015.

Retta Bowen, 22 May 2015.

Catherine Webb*, 19 August 2015.

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Fiona Taylor*, 11 September 2014.

Mike Ingalls*, 5 October 2014.

Nancy Grant*, 7 October 2014.

Viv James*, 15 October 2014.

Rachel Donald*, 30 March 2015.

Peter Andrews*, 13 April 2015.

Libby Purves, 17 April 2015.

Dan Hardwick*, 16 June 2015.

Denise Holt, 26 July 2015.

Carmen Davies, 5 August 2015.

Ruth Harris*, 10 August 2015.

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