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**Later-in-Life Mobility and Migration to
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:**

**Family, Life Course
and Linked Lives**

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ABSTRACT

Scholars of Gulf migration have come to pay increasing attention to the intersections of migration, mobility, and family lives in the context of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, there remains a marked absence of dedicated analysis focusing on the family lives of those who move for the purposes of work later in their professional lives. This thesis contributes to existing Gulf migration literature – and family migration studies more broadly – through a dedicated examination of transnational family lives and professional mobility at a later stage of the life course, in this thesis referred to as ‘later-in-life’. Theoretically, this study is informed by a life-course perspective, in which the principle of linked lives and the embedded concepts of relationality, time, and human agency provide the analytical thread through the empirical discussion. My study draws on data gathered over 18 months of fieldwork in which 84 ‘mapping-interviews’ were carried out with 40 respondents aged 50 and above. The sample is made up of couples and those who moved to Abu Dhabi without a partner. The mapping-interview method, for which I combined respondent-generated mobility maps with semi-longitudinal interviews, makes a methodological contribution to existing scholarship in that it brings the complex interplay of life course, family lives, emotion, distance and proximity into sharper focus. The findings of my study draw attention to: the multifaceted mobility of later-in-life mobility flows and the existence of both privilege and precarity within those flows; the innovative ways in which older mobile professionals build family practices to maintain togetherness across distance and time; and the continued significance of mobility to individuals’ sense of self and to family lives beyond the migrant emplacement. I contend that in the ‘post-Abu Dhabi’ time of the life course, ongoing mobility practices offer possibilities for negotiation of the self later-in-life, although within a set of constraints that highlights a tension between enforced stasis and desired continued mobility.

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WORK NOT SUBMITTED ELSEWHERE FOR EXAMINATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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CONTENTS PAGE

Abstract	
Acknowledgments	
Declaration	
Figures and tables	
Appendices	

Chapter 1. Later-in-life Gulf migration, mobility, and family lives: Introduction

Introduction	09
1.1. Abu Dhabi: a place of mobilities	12
1.2. Contributions to the field and research questions.....	13
1.3. Thesis outline	17

Chapter 2. Theorising mobility and family later-in-life: Life course and linked lives

Introduction	22
2.1 : Gulf migration and relative privilege.....	24
2.1.1. Non-citizen hierarchies of privilege	24
2.1.2. Precarity and relative privilege	29
2.2. Transnational family lives.....	32
2.3. Migration, mobility, and self later-in-life	35
2.4. Life course and linked lives.....	37
2.4.1. Relationality	40
2.4.2. Space-time	41
2.4.3. Human agency.....	42
2.5. Conclusion.....	44

Chapter 3. Is this what you are wanting? Mapping and verbalising mobility late- in-life

Introduction.	47
3.1. Building the knowledge: selection and recruitment of respondents	49

3.1.1. Selection of respondents	50
3.1.2. Recruitment of respondents.....	60
3.2. Is this what you are wanting? Mapping and verbalising mobility later-in-life	61
3.2.1. The mapping-interview: process and practice	62
3.2.2. The mapping-interview: embodied, reflexive, relational	73
3.3. A foot in each camp: researching later-in-life mobility in Abu Dhabi	81
3.4. Conclusion.....	83

Chapter 4. To Abu Dhabi and back (and back again): Complicated mobilities later-in-life

Introduction	85
4.1. 'Why would you go <u>there</u> ?': Motivations for mobility later-in-life.....	87
4.1.1. 'They offered me a job with a lot of money. And I took it': moving to achieve financial and personal security.	87
4.1.2. 'I remember it being fun because, you know, we were kids': childhood memories as a motivation for mobility	96
4.1.3. 'We felt that God was leading us': theological explanations for mobility	98
4.1.4. 'We came here literally not knowing anything!': an opportunity for adventure.....	99
4.2. Repeated Migrations: second (and third and fourth) time around.....	102
4.3. Conclusion.....	110

Chapter 5. Less together now? Distance, separation, and mobility later-in-life

Introduction	113
5.1. Permanent separation: marriage dissolution at the point of migration ...	114
5.1.1. 'I'm not moving here. The dogs would hate it': resistance to place.....	115
5.2. Intermittent Separation: the ebb and flow of family ties over time	117
5.2.1. 'I mean, you're just not there': distance and weakening of family ties.....	119
5.2.2. 'They're getting on with their lives': moving away, staying home, and moving on.....	124

5.3. Strategic separation: concurrent mobility	127
5.3.1. 'I went to Tunisia – it happened just like that!': concurrent global mobility	129
5.3.2. 'The Doha thing had already kicked in': concurrent regional mobility	131
5.4. Conclusion.....	133

Chapter 6. Keeping it together: Mobility, togetherness, and family practices later-in-life

Introduction	136
6.1. Family visiting.	138
6.1.1. Visits home: going 'there'	140
6.1.2. Family visiting: coming here'	150
6.1.3. Family visiting: meeting up 'somewhere'	153
6.2. 'And we can Skype!': ICTs and sustaining family togetherness	157
6.2.1. 'It allows us to be more mobile': ICTs as a facilitator of mobility	159
6.2.2. 'I don't text my parents because they can't work it out': limits to ICT-mediated family togetherness	162
6.3. Conclusion.....	165

Chapter 7. Into the future: Reorientation of self later-in-life and anticipated family lives

Introduction	168
7.1. Making a mobility-oriented self later-in-life	169
7.1.1. 'Travelling really does root out those last horrible bits inside you': travel mobility and ongoing reflexivity	170
7.1.2. 'Abu Dhabi is a great jumping-off point': extending the mobility-oriented self	174
7.1.3. 'I'm contemplating Japan in April': anticipation of travel	175
7.2. Sustaining the mobility-oriented self	177
7.2.1. 'That's a deep question!': hopes for the post-Abu Dhabi future	177
7.2.2. 'You know, there's a big world out there': possibilities for ongoing mobility	179

7.2.3. 'Like all the grey nomads are doing!': limitations to ongoing mobility	185
7.3. Anticipated, future family lives.....	189
7.3.1. 'I'm not overly excited to go back. But I'm excited to see the kids': co-present and geographically distant future family lives	189
7.3.2. 'We don't have children yet. We're working on it!': anticipated new forms of family life.....	192
7.4. Conclusion.....	194

Chapter 8. Conclusion

Introduction	196
8.1. Freedom to roam (?) later-in-life	196
8.2. Migrant privilege, precarious lives.....	201
8.3. Far away but emotionally near to family, later-in-life	204
8.4. Mobilities on hold.....	208

REFERENCE LIST.....	211
----------------------------	------------

FIGURE 1: Proportion of international migrants to the UAE aged 50 and over.....	14
FIGURE 2: Map illustrating global mobility (Cheryl).....	66
FIGURE 3: Map illustrating global mobility (Ken).....	67
FIGURE 4: Map illustrating mobility within the US (Ken).....	69
FIGURE 5: Map illustrating mobility within the UAE (Cheryl).....	70
FIGURE 6: Map illustrating mobility within the UAE (Ken).....	71
FIGURE 7: Map illustrating global mobility (Mura).....	73
FIGURE 8: Map illustrating global mobility (Fred).....	74
FIGURE 9: Map illustrating mobility within Germany (Fred).....	75
FIGURE 10: Map illustrating global mobility (Pam).....	76

TABLE 1: Key characteristics of research respondents	51
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TABLE 2: Repeat migrations to the UAE and Gulf region.....	104
---	------------

APPENDIX 1: Key characteristics of respondents in alphabetical order.....	226
--	------------

APPENDIX 2: Project Information Sheet.....	229
---	------------

APPENDIX 3: Project Consent Form	232
---	------------

APPENDIX 4: Interview Guide	234
APPENDIX 5: Spreadsheet documenting mobility over time (Jeff).....	236
APPENDIX 6: Map illustrating limited global mobility (Emily).....	237

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CHAPTER 1

Later-in-life migration, mobility, and family lives:

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

As a place of mobilities (Ali, 2011; Walsh, 2009; Junemo, 2004), the rhythm of arrivals and departures and the intermittent coming and going of its vast foreign workforce¹ is embedded in the fabric of everyday life across the UAE. This thesis focuses on Abu Dhabi, the capital city and most politically powerful of the seven emirates that collectively make up the UAE (Worrall and Saleh, 2020). Historically, Gulf migration scholars have paid closer attention to Dubai (Elsheshtawy, 2008), with the work of authors such as (Walsh, 2018 and other publications; Vora, 2013; Ali, 2011; Coles and Walsh, 2010) having significantly developed academic understanding of migrant populations and patterns of mobility within this particular migration setting. Described by Elsheshtawy (2008:261) as a “relatively obscure and for many foreigners an exotic place”, Abu Dhabi has only more recently attracted dedicated attention within migration and allied disciplines (for example, Worrall and Saleh, 2020; Ewers, 2013; Bristol-Rhys, 2012; Mohammed and Sidaway, 2012). The relative dearth of dedicated academic research; the emirate’s economic and political strength; and the numerical significance of its skilled foreign workforce, makes Abu Dhabi a highly relevant setting in which to explore migration, mobility, and transnational family lives.

Later-in-life mobile professionals work in a range of sectors in Abu Dhabi, from oil and technology to education and finance. In this thesis I have adopted the term ‘later-in-life’ as a descriptive category so as to emphasise the economically active status of my research respondents. In so doing, I distinguish my social and demographic focus from the terminology used by scholars whose work is concerned with a similar age category, but not typically with those who remain economically active. For example, in the case of ageing migrants, scholars such as Green (2015) and Percival (2013) categorise this group (which they refer to as ‘older people’) as ‘later life migrants’. In her study of retirees between the age of 50 and 65, Bures (2009) adopts the term ‘mid-life’ migrants. Although her focus of that enquiry mirrors the age band of my study, her

respondents were no longer engaged in paid employment. Conversely, in her study of Latvian female migrants in the UK, Lulle (2021) is concerned with migrants who are still economically active. However, this study covers a broad age range: those in their 40s and 50s are classified as 'mid-life' and those in their 60s and 70s as 'older migrants'. Therefore, although this study is concerned with economically active migrants, the demographic breadth includes those who are younger and also older than my respondents. Yet another classification is offered by Stockdale and Macleod (2013) in relation to the rural migration of early retirees (aged 50-64). In this context, the term 'pre-retirement' is used to refer to those who moved out of the labour market before their formal retirement age.

This discussion above shows that the choice of terminology, in relation to research on migration and mobility 'later-in-life', in large part is driven by the specifics of any particular research project: the research questions, age boundaries, and composition of the research sample. In my thesis, I have chosen to use the term 'later-in-life' because my respondents are not younger than 50. Nor are they retired, or economically inactive, or very old. And, as the discussion chapters go on to make clear, for many of my respondents their remaining life course is perceived as a negotiable, open-ended process - a perspective effectively conveyed by the term 'later-in-life.'

Some later-in-life mobile professionals move on their own, others move as couples and some move with dependent children. Although to varying extents, for all of this migrant group, everyday lives are shaped by proximity, distance, and efforts to sustain ties with significant others. Writing in 2011, Kofman et al. argued that academics had largely ignored the reality that migration and mobility – as widescale global processes – profoundly shape the ways in which transnational families across the world now live out their daily lives. However, the new nexus of literatures on transnational families (Acedera and Yeoh, 2019; Baldassar, 2014; Bryceson and Vourela, 2002), Gulf migration and family lives (Walsh, 2018b and 2007; Mahdavi, 2016; Gardner, 2011),

¹ Foreign residents on temporary work permits in the UAE make up 87.9% of the total population (UN, 2019)

Family togetherness and family practices (Long, 2014; Smart 2011; Gabb, 2011; Morgan, 2011), and linked lives (Bailey et al., 2020; Bailey and Mulder, 2017; Coulter et al., 2016; Elder, 1994) converge to provide a robust area of academic enquiry within which to situate the overarching research question at the centre of my study:

- How are the lives of later-in-life mobile professionals in Abu Dhabi linked to family and significant others across distance and time?

To this end, this thesis draws on life course theory to frame the research focus. The essence of the linked lives approach, as conceptualised by life-course theorists, contends that the lives of individuals are interrelated in a system of frequently complicated linkages across the life course (Allen et al., 2000). For Bailey et al. (2020:3), the approach highlights “The purposeful and regulated intersection of life course trajectories, transitions, events, and biographies in everyday life”. The lives of many migrants across the world are characterised by such linkages and intersections, whether that be through practices such as repeated visits home or the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) to sustain connectedness across distance and over time.

However, in this thesis I contend that later-in-life professional mobility embodies a particular reality for individuals and the people to whom they are linked, and calls for specific analytical deliberations in this regard. In this way, my study brings into focus the intersection of professional mobility, family lives and later-in-life as a particular stage of the life course. In so doing, it highlights significant turning points such as impending retirement, ultimate (final) return, and new possibilities for rethinking self and family lives later-in-life. It also draws attention to the constraints that age, and impending ageing, places on future directions at this stage of the life course.

The introductory chapter is organised into three parts. First, to contextualise the thesis, I provide an overview of Abu Dhabi as the research site, which I explore in more detail in chapter two. Second, I set out the research questions that have guided the direction of my study and I point to the corresponding contributions this thesis makes to existing scholarship on family migration, and global migration more broadly. Finally, I provide a summary of each chapter and, in so doing, offer an outline of the thesis as a whole.

1.1. Abu Dhabi: a place of mobilities

The UAE's first period of economic growth, driven by oil production from the early 1970s onwards, represents the first stage of modernity characteristic of the Arab Gulf States (Abdulla, 2012:107). During this historical time the UAE became: "one of the major players in the international oil export industry" (Butt, 2001:231). Although economic growth pivoted around oil revenue, other factors also contributed to this period of growth. First, politically, the formation of the UAE "transformed the seven emirates politically, economically, socially and culturally, from a collection of subsistence desert sheikhdoms into a federated group of modern city-states" (Ghanem, 2001: 260), enabling the country to position itself as a more powerful entity within the Arab world. Second, after 150 years of involvement in the Gulf region as a colonial power, Britain withdrew its presence in 1971; an event that had considerable impact upon the immediate future of the oil-producing Gulf countries. This was largely because up until this time, the colonial authorities held the right to approve or reject the awarding of concessions to oil companies operating in the region, and hence controlled the industry's pace of development (Butt, 2001). Held and Ulrichsen (2012:107) refer to this period, characterised by heightened oil revenues and political and economic independence from Britain, as the "Gulf moment". Abdulla (2012:117) goes further, arguing that the UAE now sits at the "epicentre of the Global moment in the Gulf", pointing to the important position the country has come to hold in the region.

This first period of economic growth is of relevance to my study because it was followed by a high demand for skilled and unskilled foreign labour, an outcome of both the rapid pace of growth and the relatively small size of the UAE's national population, which is a characteristic shared by oil-rich countries across the Gulf (Birks and Sinclair, 1979). As Walsh (2014:5) states: "Skilled and unskilled migrant labour, from all over

the world, has been central to the transformation of all the GCC states, supporting the significant socio-economic early development of the region predominantly, but not exclusively, associated with oil and gas, as well as the post-oil phase of development.”

Since the period of global economic downturn in the late 1980s, the uncertain future of oil production as a primary source of income for the UAE has resulted in greater emphasis being placed on the development of a diverse economy, and has increased the urgency to develop Abu Dhabi and Dubai into global cities. As argued by Sassen (2012:202), building a global city requires “specific complex capabilities”, such as an embedded skilled and highly skilled workforce. With reference to the region, she argues that not only do the oil-rich Gulf countries operate within a system of global circuits built on finance, trade, and transport, but Gulf cities have also begun to invest in other sectors, such as education, culture and renewable energy so as to further strengthen their global significance. In Abu Dhabi for example, the building of Masdar City is hailed as a beacon of research and development for the renewable energy sector. Similarly, the development of a cultural district on Saadiyat Island, a geographical area located within the boundaries of the emirate of Abu Dhabi, has the potential to create a cultural tourism strand (Davidson, 2009) and further decrease the importance of oil as a key revenue source. As was characteristic of the UAE’s initial oil-centred period of economic growth, the recruitment of foreign labourers and mobile professionals for the purpose of building a more diverse economy is also evident in the current period of growth. In my study, this is demonstrated by the range of occupational sectors set out in Table 1 in chapter three, which shows that my sample includes 15 occupational sectors.

1.2. Contributions to the field and research questions

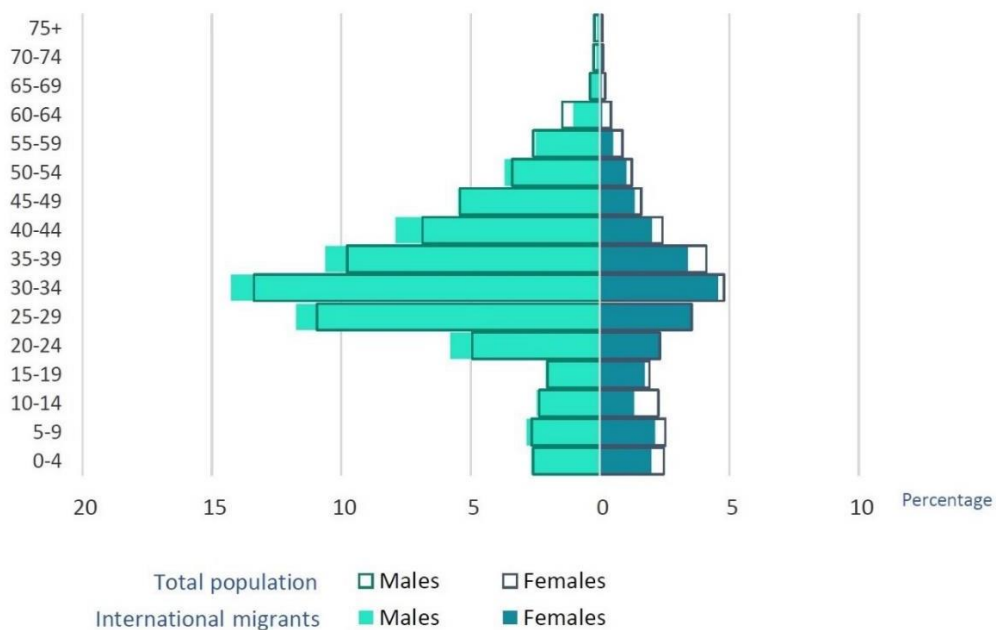
In this thesis, I focus on a segment of Abu Dhabi’s foreign population that is not numerically the most significant age group within this wider population, as illustrated by Figure 1 below. However, although mobile professionals over the age of 50 do not exist as a critical mass, the human capital they possess (in the form of knowledge and expertise accrued over time), means that this segment of the foreign workforce is of value to an economic system contingent on economic diversity.

From Figure 1, it is not possible to ascertain the proportion of the foreign population who are mobile professionals over the age of 50, but the overall picture of the

proportion of those aged 50+ within the total foreign population is clearly apparent. The graph also shows that foreign workers between the ages of 50 and 64 represent approximately 8.6% of the migrant population, with males making up 7%, and females 1.6%, of this age group.

Figure 1: Proportion of international migrants to the UAE aged 50 and over

Age and sex distribution of international migrants and of the total population in the United Arab Emirates, 2019 (percentage)



Source: UN DESA (2019a, 2019b)

Source: International Migrant Stock 2019: United Arab Emirates, UN, 2019

The life-course principle of linked lives (Elder et al., 2003) is highly relevant to the expansive mobility context set out above. The view that the lives of individuals are interrelated in a system of often complicated linkages across the life course (Allen et al., 2000), means that a life-course approach provides a valuable perspective within which to frame the research questions this study seeks to address. The small but significant body of scholarship on mobility and migration to the UAE, referred to in the introduction to this chapter, also offers valuable intellectual direction and insight.

Although in some instances older mobile subjects have been included in that body of scholarship, it has not specifically addressed questions relating to mobility and family lives later-in-life; hence my wish to single out this social and demographic category for

detailed consideration. In two key studies of citizenship and belonging, such questions are considered in relation to both younger and older South Asian residents in Dubai (Vora, 2013; Ali, 2011). Certainly, critical points in the process of foreign work visa renewal, such as the three-year renewal application cycle, are a shared experience across the foreign-born population. However, the requirement for public sector foreign employees to renew every year after the age of 60, and for those employed in the private sector to renew every three years (but at the discretion of the employer), is an experience that is quite specific to older foreign residents. This visa renewal policy arguably calls for a more focused analysis of how mobility, and the later-in-life stage of the life course, come together to create a particular experience of that process in relation to family lives in particular.

Similarly, my study shows that the phenomenon of repeated migrations to the Gulf region is a pattern of mobility evident in the trajectories of later-in-life mobile professionals. And yet, to date, it has been examined largely in relation to low-income foreign workers and in relation to a younger demographic. Parreñas et al. (2018) examine this pattern of mobility within low-income migration flows from Indonesia to the UAE, and Gardner (2010) has done so in relation to young, low-income workers within the South Asian-Gulf migration corridor. Hence, both studies lead to conclusions relevant to a particular demographic and to particular migration routes. Scholarship situated within the field of management and human resources (e.g. Biemann and Andresen, 2010; Richardson and Mallon, 2005) offers a broader age scope in relation to the experiences of older, autonomous mobile professionals (a term I go on to explain in chapter two). But it is still apparent that the concern of such scholarship lies with a broad demographic, with experiences of later-in-life mobile professionals not being of immediate interest. Hence this thesis seeks to address the gap in the existing literature through a focus on later-in-life mobile professionals, as highlighted by the following sub-research question:

- How does the policy context of the UAE shape the migration and mobility experience of mobile professionals later-in-life?

Within this focus on later-in-life mobility, I place the spotlight on how family lives are experienced and negotiated at this point of the life course, contending that geographical mobility at this stage embodies a specific reality and a set of negotiating factors, both for mobile subjects and for the significant others to whom they are linked.

This thesis therefore aims to offer insight into how the lives of later-in-life mobile professionals are shaped by relations with family members and significant others at a particular time of the life course, and within a particular environment of migration and mobility.

The overarching and supporting research questions that have guided the direction of my study, with their reference to how family members and significant others are connected across distance and time, brings to the fore the concept of relationality (Findlay et al., 2015; Bailey, 2009); a life course concept that supports the notion of linked lives highlighted earlier. The concept of relationality allows for a wide sphere of family relations to be incorporated within the analysis. Hence, regardless of whether mobile family lives are lived within an environment of co-presence in the migration destination or sparingly from a distance, the lives of mobile individuals and families are characterised by ongoing relationality. Such relationality may be sustained through practices such as visits home or the use of ICTs. Significantly, those practices may be imbued with emotion such as guilt or longing (Baldassar, 2015; Vermot, 2015) in a way that connects emotion, people, and places across distance and time. It is also the case that ties may weaken over time. Hence my study is informed by the following sub-research questions:

- How do everyday family practices maintain transnational family links in the context of later-in-life mobility and migration to Abu Dhabi?
- To what extent do family members become de-linked in the context of mobility and migration?

Methodologically, this thesis seeks to contribute to the growing field of mobile methodologies through the use of a mobile method (a mapping-interview) in a research context concerned specifically with later-in-life mobility and family lives. Through the use of respondent-created maps, my respondents visually depicted their movement across geographical space and over time. Although examples of studies utilising mobile methodologies abound (Hein et al., 2008), they are less apparent in the context of later-in-life migration and mobility. This thesis contributes to this methodological field through the use of a research method that facilitates a particularly rich understanding of the lived experience of mobility, an aspect usually invisible in other forms of cartography (Campos-Delgado, 2018). Furthermore, as Dodge and Perkins

(2008:1274) write, mapping practice enables “uniquely spatial stories” to be creatively brought to the fore.

1.3. Thesis outline

In chapter two, I engage with three sets of literatures of particular relevance to the focus of my study. First, I examine the debates around Gulf migration and privilege, pointing to how later-in-life migration and mobility in the context of the UAE gives rise to a migrant existence that is characterised by both privilege and a state of precarity. I then move the discussion on to identify the main debates within the literatures on transnational family lives, togetherness, separation, and distance, and two forms of family practices deployed as strategies to sustain family ties: visiting and use of ICTs. To extend this discussion into the future time of the life course, I engage with the literatures concerned with global mobility and reshaping of self over time. I set out an argument that draws attention to how, for later-in-life mobile professionals, professional and travel mobility gives rise to a mobility-oriented self that closely shapes their present and future family lives. Finally, I demonstrate how the life-course perspective and the concept of linked lives specifically, which Bailey et al. (2020:3) define as “the purposeful and regulated intersection of life course trajectories, transitions, events, and biographies in everyday life”, provides the requisite analytical scope to adequately address the questions around which my thesis is centred. I examine three key components embedded in the concept of linked lives: relationality, space-time, and human agency. In doing so, I argue that later-in-life transnational family lives are shaped and reshaped through relations with significant others, the interaction of space and time across the life course, and the ability of individuals and families to respond to, and develop strategies to manage, their family lives across geographical distance.

Chapter three provides an account of the methodological approach of my study. First, I document the key characteristics of my respondents and provide a detailed discussion of the mapping-interview, the method of data collection I used in this study. Second, I explain the basis and implementation of the method, which involved the use of visual (respondent-generated maps representing their mobility patterns) and oral (face-to-face, semi-longitudinal interviews) in an interconnected, mutually dependent way. Finally, I draw attention to the ethical considerations associated with my study,

and I set out a rationale for the adoption of a biographical connection approach (Coles and Fechter, 2007) to data collection. In so doing, I show how my reflexivity as a researcher impacted positively on the methodological decisions that I made in the early stages of data collection.

In chapter four, first I examine the factors that motivated my respondents to move to Abu Dhabi. I show that although their motivation is driven by financial gain in the first instance, other factors, namely positive childhood memories of living in the Gulf region, personal faith, and the prospect of adventure, variously influenced my respondents' ultimate decision to move. Second, I explore the complicated nature of their mobility trajectories, highlighting the practice of repeated phases of migration from their home countries to the Gulf region. In so doing, I argue that this practice points to how my respondents exist in a state of precarity within their particular migrant emplacement (they engage with repeated migrations in response to precarious work and the specificity of Abu Dhabi's mobility regime). However, I also show that they engage with their migrant emplacement as social actors with the capacity to draw on their human agency and negotiate their way through that precarious work environment. By drawing attention to the practice of repeated migrations, I critically engage with debates on skilled migration and privilege, drawing on the concept of relative privilege, as put forward by Benson (2018), Kunz (2016) and others.

Chapter five centres around what I have termed the 'distance-separation connection'. The essence of the argument I present is that, despite the implementation of strategies to mediate separation caused by geographical distance (through ICTs and family visiting), the "recalcitrance of distance" (Burrell, 2016:13) endures. Drawing on my respondents' narratives, I show that separation and distance is manifested in three modes of separation: marital dissolution prior to and as a direct result of the prospect of migration; continued but intermittent separation over the course of time; and strategic separation, when one partner continues to live and work in Abu Dhabi and the other moves temporarily, or on an ongoing basis, to a third migration destination. In so doing, I argue that although the physicality of distance profoundly influences the everydayness of transnational family lives, it is also true that strategic separation is used as a strategy to secure the success of the family migration project in the long term. Hence, in this chapter I show that distance as a spatial, physical entity, is

complicated by the fact that family members are bound together relationally, and family lives exist within their own temporal environments.

In chapter six, I build on the previous chapter by exploring the ways in which mobile families later-in-life develop practices to sustain family ties, framing the discussion around what I refer to as the proximity-togetherness connection. In the first part of the chapter I focus on three forms of family visiting identified across the interviews: visits home, visits from family members to Abu Dhabi, and visits that take the form of meeting up in a third geographical location. I argue that the later-in-life stage of the life course gives rise to particular complexities in relation to the meaning those visits embody, their frequency, and the motivations that drive each form of family visiting. The arrival of grandchildren or the deteriorating health of elderly parents for instance, imbues visits with profound meaning, and highlights how emotion is embedded within this particular practice. In the second part of the chapter I explore the family practice of 'calling home'. That is, the use of ICTs to sustain connection and togetherness across distance and time. Here I draw attention to two competing scholarly perspectives: ICTs create a form of togetherness that blurs the boundaries between physical and virtual forms of co-presence (e.g. Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016); and virtual togetherness cannot replace the continued need for physical co-presence (e.g. Ryan et al, 2015). In addition, I show that a range factors (such as older age) impede the use of ICTs to effectively sustain family togetherness over time.

In chapter seven, the final empirical analysis chapter, I broaden out the discussion beyond the geographical boundaries of Abu Dhabi so as to draw the 'post Abu Dhabi' stage of the life course into the analysis. I explore the ways in which migration and mobility, and the physical act of travel those processes gives rise to, constructs what I have termed a 'mobility-oriented self' over time. In this way, mobility has the potential to continue to exist both as physical, spatial movement and as a mental construct following ultimate return; and as a basis of family life and selfhood later-in-life. I argue therefore that a more extended, expansive approach to thinking about later-in-life mobility and family lives is called for, even when mobility has the potential to become more limited as the life course progresses. In post-Abu Dhabi life, seemingly critical life events cannot be perceived in finite terms. Rather, individuals move into and plan significant turning points along the life course, such as ultimate return and retirement, in an environment of relationality; in relation to the geographical location of family

members and significant others, and in relation to the opportunities or the limitations they encounter within the macro context of their family lives.

Finally, chapter eight concludes the thesis. In this chapter the greater part of discussion is focused around three overarching themes that have emerged from my empirical findings. The first theme, 'Freedom (?) to roam later-in-life' pivots around the processes and notions of migration, mobility, movement, agency, and constraints later-in-life. Here I draw together my findings relating to motivations for migration and mobility, repeated migrations, travel mobility (that comes to be possible as a result of the specific geographical location of the migrant destination), and anticipated ultimate return.

The second theme, 'Privileged migration, precarious lives', speaks to the dual existence of privilege and precarity, and also agency and constraint in the later-in-life stage of the life course. Here I argue that the findings point to a complicated set of connections that arise out of my respondents' particular later-in-life positionality. They are no longer young, but nor are they yet elderly. They are no longer building their professional lives, but they still remain economically active. I draw together my findings to show that the complex positionality of this migrant group highlights the merit of a nuanced analysis of privileged migration flows in the later-in-life stage of the life course.

The third theme, 'Far away but emotionally near to family, later-in-life', draws attention to findings that show that family togetherness, and the different strategies later-in-life transnational families employ to sustain connections across distance and time, co-exist in co-present and virtual forms. Here I demonstrate that this form of family life is characterised by co-presence in the form of visiting, but also virtual co-presence facilitated by ICTs. In this way, the findings suggest that despite the recalcitrance of distance (Burrell, 2016), a sense of familyhood (Bryceson and Vourela, 2002) is sustained, serving to defy the view that emotional closeness is contingent on co-presence.

Within the discussion of each overarching theme, I draw attention to potential avenues for further research that have emerged from the empirical findings. Finally, I end the chapter by reflecting on how in recent times, later-in-life transnational family lives (as is the case for many forms of family life across the globe) have come to exist in an

environment that can be described as one where mobilities are 'on hold'. In this discussion, I reflect on how the current global pandemic may have temporarily overturned some long-established strategies to sustain family relations over distance and time, and amplified the importance of others.

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CHAPTER 2

Later-in-life Gulf migration and linked lives

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the intersection of transnational family lives and later-in-life migration and mobility within three pertinent bodies of literature: i) Gulf migration, privilege and precarious work; ii) transnational family lives; and iii) migration, mobility and self. In the discussion to follow, I also engage with the literature on life course and linked lives – the theoretical lens through which I address the research questions set out in chapter one. Life course and the principle of linked lives, introduced initially by Elder (1994), has provided migration scholars with fertile ground for conceptual analyses in relation to topics such as: migrant precarity (Bailey et al., 2020), marriage migration (Statham, 2019); highly skilled migration (Kōu et al., 2015); residential mobility and demographic change (Findlay et. al., 2015); return migration to Ireland in mid-life (Stockdale et al., 2013); and migration decision-making and coping strategies of elderly Bengali immigrants in London (Gardner, 2002). My thesis contributes to this academic scholarship through an application of linked lives to transnational family life by drawing attention first, to a particular life-course timeframe (that of later-in-life) and second, to a specific migration context.

The chapter is organised into four sections. First, I engage with the literatures on Gulf migration and privilege (Worrall and Saleh, 2019; Walsh, 2018 and 2014; Kunz, 2016; Vora, 2012; Coles and Walsh, 2010); self-directed skilled migration (Biemann and Anderson, 2010; Richardson and Mallon, 2005); and the notion of precarity with regards to precarious work and mobility regimes (Bailey et al; 2020; Ellermann, 2020; Parreñas et al., 2018) and with regards to retirement mobility (Botterill, 2017; Hanieh, 2015). In this section I argue that professional mobility; the specificity of the UAE as a migration destination; and the later-in-life time of the life course, come together in a way that gives rise to a dual presence of privilege and precarity in the context of later-in-life mobility and migration to Abu Dhabi.

In section two, I draw attention to the literature on family lives in relation to: everyday family practices (Morgan, 2011 and 1996; Smart, 2011; Gabb, 2011); that concerned with mobile family practices (Coulter and Hu, 2017; Hall and Holdsworth 2016; Jensen et al. 2015; Holdsworth, 2013); and then scholarship concerned with transnational family lives (Holmes and Wilding, 2019; Burrell, 2016; Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016; Baldassar 2015; Long, 2014; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002). The literature on transnational family lives is especially pertinent, given the importance of distance and the maintenance of family ties to the focus of this study. In so doing, I draw attention to how migration is not an end destination in itself, but an ongoing process, entwined with that of mobility. This is illustrated within the context of family lives stretched across national borders, where everyday practices such as – for example – idle chat on Skype with family members living far away; visits to those who have remained back home; or ongoing travel mobility for the purpose of leisure or adventure, all involve mobility in some form.

In the third section I engage with literatures on migration, mobility, and self. I point to how this intersection has been considered in relation to younger people (Prazeres, 2017; Bagnoli, 2009; Collins and Shubin, 2015), older people migrating for the purpose of work (King and Lulle, 2015; Kohonem 2005) and in relation to retirement migration (Sampaio, 2018; Oliver, 2007). This literature is of relevance to my study because it points to how the present mobility stage of the life course gives rise to the ‘mobility-oriented self’ over time. The emergence of a new, evolved sense of self, shapes the way in which lives are conducted and relations are perceived in the present. For the family lives of my respondents, it also shapes the way those lives are anticipated to unfold in the future, in the post-Abu Dhabi time of the life course.

Finally, I engage with the literature on life-course theory and the principle of linked lives. I do so through an examination of three interrelated concepts embedded in this theoretical approach: relationality, time-space, and human agency. Elder (1994:5) called for the life course to be understood as a multilevel phenomenon shaped by the interconnectedness of people, institutions and timing of events arguing that: “No principle of life course study is more central than the notion of interdependent lives.” This notion of interconnectedness, which has given rise to the centrality of the principle of linked lives within life-course theory, draws attention to how individual life courses are lived in relation to significant others and to whom individuals are bound in different

ways (Bildtgård and Öberg, 2017). The conceptual discussion is then developed across the four empirical chapters to follow.

2.1. Gulf migration and relative privilege

The purpose of this section is to first situate later-in-life migrant professionals within the literatures on Gulf migration as a privileged form of mobility, and second within scholarship that focuses on migration and precarious work. In this thesis I argue that the specificity of the UAE as a migration destination and the life-course stage of this migrant group, come together in a way that gives rise to a dual presence of relative privilege and precarity (which I define in section 2.1.2). In the discussion to follow, I have adopted the term relative privilege so as to acknowledge that the notion of privilege is relational – what counts as privilege is constructed in relation to the lesser level or absence of privilege in the lives of others. Privilege and affluence, as Benson (2018) argues, are relative and socially produced.

The mobile professionals at the centre of my study are privileged in so much as their status as skilled foreign workers affords them a relatively high level of income in relation to what they could expect to earn in their home countries and also in relation to the UAE's unskilled migrant workforce. The level of income that mobile professionals are able to command, in turn qualifies them for the family residency visa. This visa is income-dependent (which I go on to explain shortly), further separating them from low-income workers and further highlighting their relative privilege as skilled migrants. However, their non-citizen status and the UAE's age-related employment practices, causes their employment and residency status to become increasingly precarious over time. This intersection of professional mobility, later-in-life as a particular stage of the life course, and the specificity of the migration context, provides the basis of my argument that later-in-life mobile professionals in the UAE exist simultaneously in a world of privilege and in a state of precarity, drawing attention to how privilege is not only relative and variable, but does not remain fixed over time.

2.1.1. Noncitizen hierarchies of privilege

As noted in chapter one, the UAE's workforce is made up of a significant proportion of individuals who move from their home countries to work in a wide range of low and

high skilled occupations. The vast disparity in the incomes of unskilled and skilled workers, and the differing ways in which their prospects are determined by the UAE's migration policy framework, produces a hierarchy of privilege in which those at the base of the hierarchy live highly precarious lives. As a privileged "tier of movement" (Fechter and Walsh, 2010:1198), mobile professionals have historically been referred to within migration studies – and in popular usage – as 'expatriates' (Kunz, 2016; Fechter and Walsh, 2010) so that skilled migration to the Gulf has come to be synonymous with lucrative financial packages used by brokers and companies to incentivise migration.

For Gardner (2010), it is at this point of recruitment that migrant privilege/absence of privilege is initially produced. In the case of the South Asian male migrant labourers at the centre of his enquiry, he shows that because this group of potential migrants are likely to be recruited through practices embedded in informal networks (such as brokers in their home countries and South Asian migrants already established in the UAE), their economic disadvantage places them in a position of indebtedness, even before the point at which their migration takes place. Skilled professionals, however, are more likely to be recruited as foreign talent through professional head-hunters who are able to use attractive packages as leverage (Malecki and Ewers, 2007) and negotiate benefits such as relocation costs, on their behalf. In the context of female domestic workers in the UAE, Parreñas et al. (2018) draw attention to the vulnerability of Filipina and female Indonesian domestic workers rooted in low-income work characterised by limited financial security. In response, this migrant group engages with a pattern of circular migration³ between the Gulf region and their countries of origin: they leave their home countries for economic reasons but then return (and leave again) because of the scarcity of financial and other resources in the migration destination. This pattern is also a product of "structural impediments" (Parreñas et. al., 2018: 235), in particular the absence of citizenship rights, which I go on to discuss presently.

³ This form of mobility is explored further in chapter four, in which I draw on my respondents' mobility trajectories to show how repeated migrations between home countries and the Gulf region are used as a strategy to manage the UAE's precarious work environment, and to maximise the success of their individual and transnational family migration projects.

Chung's (2020) study of migrant populations in South Korea, although in a different national context, provides useful insight into the role of the state in the production of an internal hierarchy of privilege within migrant populations, as exemplified by the family visa. In her consideration of how visa categories help to construct this hierarchy, she writes: "Examining how visa categories shape noncitizen hierarchies, [...] offers an important window into the mutually constitutive relationship between citizenship, migration, and social hierarchies" (2020:2). In the UAE, the foreign workforce shares a common experience of non-access to citizenship status, as will be discussed in section 2.1.2 to follow. However, the family residency visa is an important source of differential status and privilege within the noncitizen population. Because this visa is linked directly to a minimum income requirement, it is inaccessible to the majority of unskilled migrants, making it possible to argue that skilled migrants are able to claim privilege not only in economic terms, but in social and emotional terms too. As Gardner (2011:17) writes: "The dividing line between single migrants, or 'bachelors', and migrant families is almost entirely attributable to economic class, for the Gulf States require minimum incomes for family visas."⁴ In other work, Gardner (2010) suggests that with similar policies being repeated across the region, "the vulnerability and exploitation foreign migrants encounter in the Gulf are unequally borne by the poorest members of the transnational population" (2010:43).

The racialisation of migration has been identified as a further source of privilege within the broad environment of Gulf migration. As initially documented by Birks and Sinclair (1979:90), Gulf states are "more amenable to permit workers of certain nationalities to enter in preference to others". More recently, Vora (2013:45) has written of a "racial and ethnonational hierarchy" that provides an institutional framework in which white skilled workers and Gulf Arabs command higher salaries than Asian, African, and non-Gulf Arabs. In the context of the UAE, Coles and Walsh (2010) have argued that the UAE's historical status as a British Protectorate, played an important part in the

⁴ As of July 2019, the minimum monthly wage requirement for the family visa was AED 4000 or AED 3000 plus accommodation allowance (UAE government portal, 2019). In real terms, it is widely understood that the cost of living in the UAE prohibits family members of foreign workers, within this income bracket, from living as their dependents in the UAE.

construction of relative privilege through the privileging of Whiteness that accompanied that political regime.

To take these debates further, Botterill's (2017:4) argument, which states that "framing different migrants as 'winners' or 'losers' underplays the complexities of migrant biographies", provides a useful starting point from which to consider how privileged migration scholarship informs an analysis of later-in-life mobility and migration to the UAE. Botterill's argument is of value to this migration setting because it serves as a reminder that conceptualising Gulf migration primarily in terms of the privilege and non-privilege dichotomy (based on skill, race and nationality), masks the differences within privileged migration biographies. Furthermore, Coles and Walsh (2010) have pointed to the changing status of white, western migrants and Kunz (2016:93) writes that "Privileges brought by Whiteness are no longer, of course, automatic." In their study of Iranians in the UAE, Worrall and Saleh (2019) note that dual Western and Iranian citizenship status (European, North American, or Australian) is held by approximately 10% of the UAE-based Iranian population and therefore argue that: "The widespread binary conception of elite migrants and the lumpen mass fails to account for the realities of Iranians' position in UAE society" (2019:506). The case of this migrant group is further complicated by the fact that Iranians work in a range of (mostly private sector) well-paid occupations and as business owners located in the middle to higher levels of earnings. Hence their income status affords them greater influence than many other migrant groups within the UAE, and highlights the complex ways in which privilege is constructed and enacted in this particular migration context.

In my study, this complexity is highlighted by, for example, the fact that some of my respondents, born in the 'West', have non-western heritage. Others in turn, were not born in a western country but have secured citizenship there. All of this raises the question of who counts as privileged Westerners, and if this mode of analysis does not in fact suggest a Eurocentric starting point in the first instance. It is also the case that prior to moving to the UAE, the qualifications, and the professional skills of my respondents from non-Western countries, afforded them a position of privilege relative to their fellow citizens. So, although the institutional cementing of a racial hierarchy is enormously important to determining the experiences of all migrants in the UAE, and plays an important part in the construction of privilege/non-privilege, it also requires

closer interrogation of who (in racial terms) makes up privileged migration flows to the UAE and how those flows are defined and constituted.

In turn, income levels determined by skill cannot be unproblematically conflated with privilege. Walsh (2018b:183) for example, points to the presence of British 'middling transnationals' situated in lower-paid graduate sectors in the UAE, whose qualifications and/or experience, categorise them as highly skilled but their skills "may not be recognised or rewarded so strongly by the global economy". Similarly, Bradatan (2016) argues that despite their significant human capital, highly skilled migrants are not innately protected against the consequences of global recession or more local economic downturn.

In the discussion to follow, I take these arguments further by drawing attention to how skilled migrants negotiate entry into the UAE not only as expatriates (moving with their existing employing companies) but also as autonomous migrants, sourcing their own employing company in the UAE and managing their own mobility strategy. Scholarship on professional mobility has largely focused on those who have been sent by multinational companies to work abroad as company-assigned expatriates (Goxe and Paris, 2016; Biemann and Andresen; 2010). Those who move autonomously have been singled out for dedicated study by scholars largely within the disciplines of human resources and business management, who variously refer to this group of mobile professionals as 'self-directed expatriates' (Richardson and Mallon, 2005); 'expatriates in motion' (Khalaf and Alkobaisi, 1999); and 'overseas experience' (Inkson et al., 1997). In my thesis, I have adopted the term 'autonomous mobile professionals' so as to highlight the particular form of mobility characteristic of the migrant group at the centre of my study.

The distinction between the term 'expatriate' and 'autonomous mobile professional' is relevant to my study because only five of my 40 respondents (two couples and one individual respondent) moved on the directive of their employing company, echoing the point made by Lindsay and Shaleen (2019), that approximately two thirds of mobile professionals do not move on that basis and do not remain tied to a company in their country of origin. The differing experiences these two types of professional mobility give rise to, is of significance because it suggests that the decision to move later-in-life is made from different starting points. For example, in Biemann and Andresen's (2010) study of managers from Germany working abroad, it was found that company-assigned expatriates perceived their overseas assignments to be a condition for career

progression within the existing company and hence felt bound to agree to overseas assignments when asked to do so. However, in the case of the British academics in Richardson and Mallon's (2005) study who moved autonomously, it was found that less emphasis was placed on career progression. Other factors, such as the promise of adventure, were found to be more significant determinants of their mobility.

2.1.2. Precarity and relative privilege

Having considered how privilege for mobile professionals in the UAE is produced, in this section I draw on migration literatures concerned with the notion of precarity. I do so in order to demonstrate how the UAE's policies, which govern citizenship and visa regulations, produce an environment characterised by both precarity and relative privilege. Hanieh (2015:524) draws attention to the distinction between precarity and the more established narrative of vulnerability, arguing that vulnerability is "an inherited or traditional form of livelihood exposure", whereas precarity is a "produced or modern form of such exposure". This distinction is of relevance to my study because it highlights the legal and policy environment in which migration and mobility takes place, opening up the opportunity to consider how relatively privileged migrants in the UAE exist in a state of precarity. As Ellermann (2020:2464), argues "whereas legal precarity has long been associated with undocumented and temporary immigration status, over the past two decades precarity has penetrated all immigration status, including those that have long been understood as secure".

The term precarity also draws attention to the broad economic environment that has produced a particular form of precarious work. It is a "societal outcome of the economic forces that drive late capitalism and structure its effects and is therefore qualitatively different from the vulnerability that was viewed, formerly, as constitutive of marginal lives and living" (Hanieh, 2015:517). More recent work has expanded intellectual engagement around precarious work, and precarity more broadly, to incorporate familyhood and linked lives. For Bailey et al. (2020:3), there exists a "mutually constitutive relationship between precariousness and the linking of lives". In their study of newly arrived migrants to Hong Kong, for whom opportunities were restricted by factors such as precarious employment and lack of access to permanent housing, the consequences thereof spilled over into the family lives of newcomers. The lives of individual migrants became more firmly characterised by precarity because they were

not able to realise their hope of living in Hong Kong in a co-present family form. With this emphasis on economic forces that are of particular relevance to the modern time (economies draw on the skills of people from across the world in a system of global capitalism), the literatures on precarious work and the state of precarity it produces open up the possibility of thinking about how these debates might be extended into analyses of privileged migration flows. Similarly, conceptualising precarity in relation to familyhood, usefully draws the everydayness of transnational family lives into the analysis, potentially highlighting the harsh consequences of separation and distance for transnational families later-in-life.

Taking the notion of precarity forward into privileged migration in the context of the UAE, I first focus on the question of citizenship. Within broad academic debates, the absence of entitlement to citizenship is “rarely understood to apply to privileged migrants” (Walsh, 2014:7), pointing to the specificity of the migration context in which my respondents are situated. In the case of the UAE, the migration policy is such that – in almost all instances – foreign workers are not able to secure the right to citizenship (Vora, 2013). Granting of citizenship is ultimately at the government’s discretion and requirements for naturalisation are not formalised, giving rise to a highly speculative, popular interpretation, of what might lead to a successful naturalisation application: “Requirements to be considered for citizenship are often thought to include thirty years’ residence, being Muslim, being Arab, being an Arabic speaker, having a clean police record, having ‘proper’ academic qualifications, and having a ‘healthy’ bank balance.” (Ali, 2011:559). Even if to some extent speculative, taken together, the long list of requirements that must be met to secure citizenship in the UAE serve to “guard the gateway to the significant entitlements associated with citizenship in the GCC States” (Gardner, 2011:18), with such restrictions giving rise to an environment of “inflexible citizenship” (Mahdavi, 2016:76).

For Sater (2014), the non-existence of citizenship rights means that, regardless of the number of years a foreign worker might have been resident in the UAE, belonging and a sense of emotional attachment cannot develop over time. However, Vora (2013) argues that for many long-established middle-class Indian families in Dubai, their migrant emplacement has come to be thought of as home and they have come to informally claim parts of the city. In doing so, they have altered the texture of the neighbourhoods in which they settle, even though they remain temporary residents.

They remain what Vora (2013) describes as ‘impossible citizens’ in a place that represents both belonging and exclusion.

In the absence of the right to citizenship, permission for foreign employees to remain in the UAE is determined by a three-year resident visa linked to employer sponsorship. Historically referred to as the ‘kafala’ system, sponsorship shows that the sponsor “has vouched for the presence of the foreign worker, and thereby has assumed legal and economic responsibility for the individual during a period established by contract” (Gardner, 2011:8). The bounded length of the contract and the linking of residency to gainful employment, draws the work element of precarity very clearly into the argument I am making here. For all foreign residents in the UAE, a state of precarity is created by the exclusionary citizenship policy described above. It is also created by what could be described as ‘the time of waiting’ that accompanies the period of visa renewal and the time when an applicant must temporarily surrender their passport. This time of waiting is particularly salient for those over the age of 60 because after this time (as I have drawn attention to in chapter one), the visa must be renewed every year for those employed in the public sector and up to a period of three years (at the discretion of the employing company) in the private sector. In their study of family reunification in Canada, Belanger and Candiz (2020:3473) argue that ‘waiting’ plays a key part in shaping contemporary migration flows, and embodies a sense of urgency in the case of stay-behind elderly parents: “For elderly parents, ‘waiting’ to immigrate to live with or close to their adult children, length of ‘waiting time’ is particularly critical, since their coming is often associated with the birth of grandchildren and childcare needs or with their own need for care from their adult children.” For the families in Belanger and Candiz’s study, waiting is managed by the state policies on which they depend “to exercise their right to family life” (2020:3473). For my respondents, the centrality of state governance gives rise to a heightened state of precarity at the time of their visa renewal.

Although scholarship on precarity has largely been concerned with explaining low-income precarious work and the lack of legal protection associated with that work, scholars have more recently drawn on this conceptual field to gain insight into privileged migration, most notably in the context of retirement migration. In her study of white British retirees in Thailand, Botterill (2017) has employed the concept of precarity to draw attention to how, for this migrant population, retirement migration as

a form of privileged mobility at a later stage of the life course also produces a state of precarity. Their privileged position as white, western expatriates who are able to access the lifestyle benefits Thailand offers, runs parallel to an environment characterised by “financial insecurity, health inequality and status discord” (Botterill, 2017:2) in which ageing, and state policies in host and home countries, give rise to a simultaneous experience of privilege and precarity. Such insecurity, which results from factors such as the loss of annual pension increments paid by the home country and the cost of healthcare, means that – over time – everyday life as a British retiree becomes increasingly precarious. Equating privilege with lifestyle migration therefore runs the risk of “masking some of the more precarious aspects of ageing abroad” (Botterill, 2017:1). This argument is echoed in the work of Kahveci et al. (2020) in their study of German retirees in Turkey. Their findings point to how factors such as income, health insurance status, and political volatility increased the state of precarity for older people who had moved from Germany to escape financial hardship. Similarly, in Green’s (2015) study of western, male retirees in South East Indonesia, the practice of visa running was highlighted, drawing attention to how migration policies construct precarious residential statuses for older people seeking a relatively privileged way of life.

The discussion above has situated the migrant group at the centre of my study within the privileged migration debates and the literatures on precarious work and migrant precarity. In the section to follow, I pay consideration to key debates within the literatures on transnational family lives that are of particular relevance to my study.

2.2. Transnational family lives

Although Kofman et al. (2011) argue that family and family lives have been a forgotten dimension in migration scholarship, recent research has opened up fresh debates about what constitutes ‘family’ and how households function, nurture, manage, sustain or lose connection in the event of migration. This new era of scholarship, as well as family studies more broadly, has challenged the long-established tradition of thinking about ‘the family’ as a homogenous entity. ‘Families’ have come to be conceptualised in the plural, as demonstrated by the emergence of new family types such as families of choice (e.g. Bowlby, 2011), astronaut families (e.g. Waters, 2002), commuter and ‘living apart together’ families (e.g. Coulter and Hu, 2017); ‘stretched families’ (Porter

et al., 2018); and of particular relevance to this study, transnational families (e.g. Nedelcu and Wyss 2016). As a family type, transnational families are geographically dispersed but nevertheless “create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely ‘familyhood’, even across national borders” (Bryson and Vourela, 2002:3), drawing attention to the significance of proximity and distance and the ways in which transnational families develop strategies to sustain ties over time.

In co-present family lives, everyday family practices and the ‘doing’ of family (Morgan, 2011) are central to the maintenance of togetherness. Family practices such as children’s bathing routine (Gabb, 2011), ‘family talk’ (Morgan, 2011), or travelling to school and work (Jensen et al., 2015) are significant because they give meaning to those located within them. As Morgan (2011:6) argues: “When the term [family] is used in everyday life it is not being deployed as an abstract and timeless category but as a flexible, and often highly localised term that has immediate meaning to speakers and hearers at the time of its utterances”.

For transnational families, for whom geographical dispersal defines everyday family life, distance mitigates against the employment of co-present practices as means by which family togetherness can be created and sustained. As a family type, transnational families challenge the established, normative discourse that surrounds family and family life. So, within this family form, members may internally negotiate and construct their own understanding of the meaning of normative/non-normative in relation to each other, spatially and temporally challenging established conceptions of what counts as a ‘proper’ family (Long, 2014). Hence, new practices to sustain family ties across distance are built up over time so as to sustain feelings of togetherness despite the “recalcitrance of distance” (Burrell, 2016:13) that sits at the centre of transnational family lives much of the time.

As family members move between homes in their transnational lives, co-presence, distance and separation are added to the agenda of everyday life so that the emotions also come to be “on the move” (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015:74). For example, for those who move, the emotion of guilt may be ever-present within the emotional terrain of migration. The negative feelings to which guilt gives rise are highlighted in Baldassar’s (2015) study of adult migrant children and their ageing parents in Italy, where guilt was found to be a strong motivating factor for family practices such as visits

home. In the act of moving, adult children break the “generational contract” (Bengtson and Achenbaum, 1993 cited in Baldassar, 2015:18) based on a mutual understanding that parents care for their children – who in turn care for their elderly parents. In this context, emotions such as guilt can become intertwined with the moral obligation of care, and the strategies employed to actively sustain family ties.

Strategies to sustain transnational family ties across distance have spurred a new area of scholarship that has brought the importance of ICTs and family visiting to the fore. For Baldassar (2008), ICTs go some way towards negating distance, and for Holmes and Wilding (2019), they challenge the notion of proximity because these forms of communication bridge the distance that separates transnational members from each other. For others (Alinejad, 2019; Sihto, 2018), ICTs blur the boundaries between presence and absence and distance and proximity, and for Felton (2014:13) they recalibrate the concept of presence. Nedelcu and Wyss (2016) take the argument further to say that the use of ICTs has become so routinised that co-presence and virtual communication have become one and the same.

Visiting as a means by which distance can be mediated, has given rise to the ‘visiting family and friends’ (VFR) typology. Scholars have drawn attention to the importance of visits home to the maintenance of family ties and the economic impact of those visits on home countries (Munoz et al., 2017; Lehto et al., 2001) and have shown how visits home enable migrants to establish a more accurate picture of the state of health of elderly parents who have stayed behind (Baldassar, 2008). Lesser attention has been paid to visits from family members to migrants in host countries, with the work of Miah and King (2020) and Klekowski von Koppenfels et al. (2015) drawing particular attention to the importance of this form of visiting to the maintenance of transnational family ties.

However, others point to the limitations of ICT-mediated family ties. Acedera and Yeoh (2020) have highlighted the negative impact of migration on the marriages of Filipino couples when women move and men stay behind, suggesting that ICTs are not a substitute for co-presence and that couple relationships cannot be sustained solely by ICTs. In their study of skilled migrants, Ryan et al. (2015) argue that, despite ICT-mediated strategies to sustain family ties, distance remains an obstinate presence and therefore those ties (still) run the risk of weakening over time. Furthermore, Cojocaru (2020) and Bass and Yeoh (2019) have drawn attention to how, despite the

accessibility of ICTs, different time zones still have to be negotiated across countries of residence. Hence ease of access does not necessarily result in ease of use.

The scholarship on transnational families drawn upon here, highlights a range of concepts and practices of relevance to the focus of this thesis: family togetherness, familyhood, co-presence, distance, emotion, and strategies to sustain family ties. Furthermore, this body of literature highlights the intersection of these concepts and processes, and how that intersection gives rise to new ways of thinking about how presence, co-presence, and mobility, come to interact and be afforded particular meaning within transnational family lives.

2.3. Migration, mobility, and self later-in-life

In her analysis of intimacy and UK-based mobile family lives, Holdsworth (2013:22) argues that the process of moving from one place to another involves the movement of bodies but that “our own identities, relationships, and desires and aspirations” move too. As individuals reflexively engage with the physical process of moving, so lots of other things happen: relationships are influenced and individuals may come to think in new ways about themselves – they come to forge a sense of self that is directly influenced by this broad experience of, and embodied situatedness in, movement and mobility. Hence, for Holdsworth (2013), the self, which characterises late-modernity, is a mobile self. This connection between self and mobility points to the centrality and all-pervasive nature of mobility in contemporary lives which, as Urry (2007) has noted, takes place in a social world that, more than ever, is on the move.

Importantly, in this social world constantly on the move, mobility scholars have also paid attention to the differential positionality of individuals and wider social groupings, and the range of meanings and subjective experiences embodied in the process of mobility. As Molz (2009:273) writes, “not everyone moves, and those who do move certainly do not move under the same conditions”. A car journey to and from school for example, will give rise to an experience shaped by the purpose of that mobility event as well as a particular set of social relations (driver/passenger/child/possibly parent). In contrast, a foreign work assignment will give rise to an experience shaped by a different purpose that underpins the mobility event and particular set of social relations (employee/sending company/colleagues and so on). It is clear then that

context, and also significant (and less significant) others with whom we share the journey, are important to shaping the lived experience of the mobile self.

Focusing on the question of self within the broad environment of migration and mobility, Collins and Shubin (2015:97) argue that the experiences those processes give rise to, means that lives are always “open-ended and always becoming”. Similarly, for Geist and MacManus (2008), life-course events (and the re-examining of self that may emerge out of those events) can trigger mobility, but mobility in itself may be a “precipitating event that leads to further changes for the individuals that experienced the move” (2008:286). In a study of Canadian university exchange students temporarily located in developing world countries, Prazeres (2017:910) found that “Mobility to a new place can bring about a powerful journey of the self that is both reflexive and transformative”. In the case of young New Zealanders who had moved to the UK for the purposes of work and travel, Conradson and Latham’s (2005:290) findings show that for this group of young mobile people, their experience of moving away from New Zealand (as well as the experience of travel itself) facilitated a “process of sustained self-experimentation”.

Whereas for young adults, travelling for temporary or prolonged periods of time may be viewed as a rite of passage, which marks a transitional time in the life course and a time characterised by significant life changes, for those who move at a later stage of the life course, mobility holds the possibility of reflecting on and adjusting the existing sense of self. In a study of Finnish company-assigned mobile professionals working in China, the UK and the US, Kohonen (2005:30) found that the process of embracing new cultural values and managing the move as a life event, provided “an incentive for identity construction, self-renewal and learning.” As a result, existing identities were challenged, although ultimately rearranged rather than abandoned. In their study of older female Latvian migrants in the UK, Lulle and King (2016) point to the transformative potential of travel and working abroad in relation to how such experiences disrupt established perceptions of age and ageing. Their findings point to how migration and mobility may open up the possibility for older migrants to ‘age well’ in their new mobile lives, facilitated by the opportunity to build new romantic lives, earn a living, and secure access to a UK pension in the future. In the process, the sense of self as an ‘older’ woman shifts; age itself comes to be thought of and experienced in a new way. In the case of this migrant group, their mobility ultimately “enhanced their

self-worth and identity” (2016:458). Similarly, work on retirement migration as a form of later life mobility, points to how mobility may be motivated by factors such as the desire to live in a warm climate, collectively conceptualised as the quest for a ‘better life’ (Benson and O’Reilly, 2009). Alongside the benefits of amenity migration, Oliver (2007) points to how this form of mobility for older people is imbued with a sense of freedom. For Sampaio (2018) too, moving abroad as an older person for the purpose of accessing a more favourable lifestyle, can reshape expectations of everyday life in the later stages of the life course.

In the same way that respondents in the studies noted above engaged closely with the new mobility environment (but still continued to travel back to their home countries), so did respondents in Åkerlund and Sanberg’s (2015) study of Swedish lifestyle migrants in Malta. Their findings pointed to how life in Malta was associated with a sense of freedom and being in control of their own lifestyle decisions. Mobility gave new meaning to the personal relationships and identities of movers, but their findings also showed that they still maintained their ties to Sweden – they still kept a foot in each door because they were troubled by the long-term feasibility of their project, and how that project may become compromised by diminishing financial resources over time.

While it is true that both young and older people move to other countries for the purpose of work, adventure, sunshine and so on, the studies noted above point to the intersection of age, ageing and mobility and how differing motivations for mobility are evident at different stages of the life course. In particular, this body of literature points to the ways in which age and ageing shapes the transformation of self, and also how the notion of ageing itself is perceived. Mobility can be seen to provide a temporary reprieve from the inevitability of growing old, enabling individuals to delay the onset of that time of the life course.

2.4. Life course and linked lives

Elder et al. (2003:10) suggest that the life course is made up of “age-graded patterns that are embedded in social institutions and history”, in which five principles work together to influence individual lives: development and ageing are lifelong processes; individuals possess and have the capacity to enact human agency; life courses are situated in particular historical times and places; the timing of key life events shapes

life course outcomes; and lives are linked and interdependent across the life course. Taken together, these principles “enhance the understanding that human lives cannot be adequately represented when removed from relationships with significant others” (2003:13).

Within the field of migration studies, the life-course approach has been harnessed by scholars to develop conceptual arguments in relation to key aspects of international migration and mobility. Early work in this regard is evident in the work of Bommes (2000), who argued that the life course is institutionalised by national welfare states through the provision of social entitlements such as access to education or employment. In this way, the state is seen to establish a set of expectations that shape how citizens anticipate their life course trajectories to unfold. As a result, national citizens are able to “realise an ordered life course” (2000:94). However, he argued that immigrant populations have a different relationship to the welfare state, shaped by politico-legal frameworks, historical factors, and so on. Therefore, unlike national citizens, they cannot expect their life course trajectories to unfold in an orderly, predictable way. They cannot rely on the welfare state to provide the “institutional safeguard” (Bommes, 2000:197) that would enable them to follow an ordered, structured biography through the rest of their life course.

This connection between migration, life course, disorder, and disruption is demonstrated in more recent scholarship concerned with migration and mobility across the life course. For example, in their study of young foreign English language teachers in South Korea, Collins and Shubin (2015) draw on the life course concept of time, which I go on to explore more fully in section 2.4.2. Their study showed that migrant teachers no longer orientate themselves to a future point in the life course, a point they would have arrived at by following an ordered life course sequence in their pre-migration lives (establishing a career, having a family and so on). The experience of migration and mobility instead caused their everyday life to become characterised by the notions of ‘drifting’ and ‘floating’. They had come to “depart from temporal routines of life and pursue unknowable possibilities” (2015:101). In the transnational family migration context, Kobayashi and Preston (2007) also point to how the expected, ordered trajectory of family lives at certain times of the life course is disrupted by unexpected events. In their study of Hong Kong immigrants in Canada, who had migrated initially as families, their findings show that when economic circumstances

weakened their ability to earn an income, family lives necessarily reconfigured in the migration destination. In many cases, wives remained in Canada so that their children could continue to be educated there, and husbands returned to Hong Kong to work. As pointed to in section 2.1.2, Bailey et al. (2020) have drawn on the life-course approach in their study of newly-arrived migrants in Hong Kong. Their findings show that in an environment in which structural barriers mitigate against co-present family living, the concept of linked lives provides a useful analytical framework in which comprehend the precariousness of migrant family lives: “Linked lives and precariousness are mutually constitutive as they embed subjects in the social, spatial, and temporal relations of everyday life while referencing transitions, trajectories, and biographies that unfold through the life course” (2020:1).

For other migration scholars, the human agency element of the life course-approach is used as a framework to explore how structural factors limit, but not entirely restrict, the ability of individuals to beneficially negotiate migration and mobility. This has been explored in relation to mobility and self in the context of older people (e.g. Sampaio, 2018; Lulle and King, 2016; Oliver, 2007). The life course is conceptualised as a non-linear trajectory in which it is evident that, to some extent, older migrants harness the challenges and opportunities migration presents. In the process, a transformation of self emerges. As Sampaio (2018:462) observed in the context of retiree migrants to Malta, “moving abroad is a step to freedom and an opportunity to redefine, even reinvent oneself”.

My thesis contributes to existing scholarship on migration and the life course, through an application of the principle of linked lives to transnational family life. I do so first, by drawing attention to a particular life-course timeframe (that of later-in-life) and second, to a specific migration context. By drawing on the principle of linked lives, I am concerned to show how the intersection of mobility, later-in-life, and transnational family life is situated in a context of family relations, institutional governance, and the hopes and desires of individuals navigating their own particular life courses.

In the discussion to follow, I show that I have organised the analytical thread of linked lives that runs through the thesis, around the embedded concepts of relationality, space-time, and human agency.

2.4.1. Relationality

The concept of relationality draws attention to how individuals exist in relation to others, and to the structural forces that shape their particular life courses. If we take relationality, at its basic level to mean that “objects can only be understood in relation to other objects” (Jones, 2009; cited in Coulter et al., 2016:353-354), then it is possible to argue that individuals, and the collection of individuals that constitutes a family, can be only understood in relation to those who occupy their life-course context, whether they be close by or far away. Relationality is evident in relation to those who live in proximity to family members and those who live geographically apart; those who remain in touch with their significant others as well as those who no longer do so; those who have meaningful relationships with significant others and those who do not; and finally, in relation to those who go and those who stay. Gabb’s (2011:8) claim that: “As we emotionally, physically and symbolically rub off each other, we connect ourselves to something/someone else” is relevant to all the scenarios set out above. Furthermore, her observation illustrates the complex form that the webs of connectedness between significant others take, with those webs becoming further complicated in an environment of migration and mobility because they effectively cross international borders. So, whether it be that we hold significant others who live far away or in close proximity dear to our hearts (or in contempt), we continue to remain connected to them: physically, emotionally, and symbolically.

Relationality is also present in the context of regulatory frameworks that govern migration and mobility in home and destination countries. Those who move are linked to institutions such as employers, and to both sending and receiving states that govern mobility (Findlay et al., 2015). As has been described in section 2.1 of this chapter, in almost all instances, the UAE’s foreign workforce is not eligible for citizenship and does not benefit from the security that immigration status usually provides (such as the right to reside in the host country indefinitely and the right to access healthcare and other welfare provision).

In the empirical discussion chapters, I draw attention to the concept of relationality in a number of ways. In chapter four, for example, I examine my respondents’ spheres of global mobility, showing how mobility is defined not only by their own movement, but the non-movement of those who have stayed behind. In chapter six, I explore the

ongoing connectedness between family members through the use of ICTs and family visiting as a relational exchange. In chapter seven, I consider how decisions pertaining to return migration and/or onward mobility are made in relation to those with whom new relationships have been forged in the destination country; those to whom individuals return in the event of ultimate return migration; and the regulatory frameworks of countries that influence possibilities for retirement and return.

2.4.2. Space-time

With reference to space-time, Findlay et al. (2015:390) write that: “The linked lives of mobile people are situated in space-time”, pointing to the interconnection between mobility, the life course as it unfolds over time, and the macro contexts in which they are situated. So, space-time is crucial to the linked lives perspective because it draws the broader social, political, economic, and geographical contexts into the analysis, emphasising how the life courses of individuals are linked at different points in time.

Space-time is also integral to the linked lives framework because it draws attention to how individuals and family lives are situated in an environment of relationality created out of the relations people have with each other. It also draws attention to how the environment is shaped by a range of factors: social, political, technological, and geographical, that operate at different points in time. Collectively, those factors create the bounded (temporal) space within which family relations are played out. In this way, it becomes possible to take account of the significance of life-course events later-in-life (the life course stage of particular relevance to my study), whether that be family events such as grandparenting or divorce, or more regulation-determined events such as return or retirement migration. For example, in their study of high-skilled migrants from India to the Netherlands, Kōu et al. (2015:1645) draw attention to the importance of family events such as marriage or having children, and to the timing of initial migration and ultimate return, arguing that “events in the life course do not take place in isolation but in a specific place and time”.

Similarly, in their study of early retirement to Northern Ireland, Stockdale et al. (2013) found that retirement decisions were closely linked to earlier, childhood experiences of place, drawing attention to the connectedness of different stages of the life course and the spatial environment in which those connections are made. At the same time,

the retirement decisions of their study participants also corresponded with the family context, demonstrated by the arrival of the “empty nest” stage of the life course (2013:241). Other scholars have drawn attention to how other broader structural contexts shape the timing of events. For example, Coulter et al. (2016:6) argue that residential mobility is determined by the connected life courses of individuals, but also by structural opportunities and constraints in relation to the actions of private and state actors: government housing policy, employers, landlords and so on. Hence, through the life course, social context matters (Geist and MacManus, 2008).

The concept of space-time is drawn upon in a number of ways through the empirical chapters of this thesis. For example, in chapter four, I draw attention to how residency regulations link the right to remain in Abu Dhabi with that of gainful employment. Residency status in turn facilitates access to health care, raising important questions in relation to the ability for older mobile professionals to live in Abu Dhabi beyond retirement age, and to age in place (Gardner, 2002). In chapter five, I engage with the concept of space-time in relation to distance as a physical entity in which separation is measured in real time, but in chapter six, I draw attention to how ICTs alter perceptions of distance and time. Finally, in chapter seven, I show that time shapes travel as a form of mobility. From Abu Dhabi, certain areas of the world become more accessible as regards the time it takes to travel there. Therefore, journeying to new destinations comes to shape the mobility-oriented self, discussed in more detail in chapter three. This leads into a discussion of human agency, the final conceptual strand of the linked lives perspective.

2.4.3. Human agency

The concept of human agency draws attention to the way in which individuals exercise choices available to them, notwithstanding the constraints imposed by the space-time contexts in which they are situated. For Elder et al. (2003:11), the concept of human agency is significant because it draws attention to the capacity for individuals to be “choice makers” and agents in their own life courses. In her study of the transnational care provided by Chinese grandparents who resided with their immigrant children in Canada, Zhou (2013) points to how the later time of the life course was delayed for this group of older immigrants because they had become actively involved in their grandchildren’s care. The human agency that emerges from such forms of activity

“permeates individuals’ interactions with the broader context and their decision making”, leading to identity reconstruction and the capacity to alter the timing of life events (Zhou, 2013:53). The presence of human agency in the lives of the grandparents in Zhou’s study, draws attention to how the expected order of life course events may be disrupted by new relational environments, and how that disruption may bring agency to the fore at a later time in the life course.

Of course, choice and agency are situated within the boundaries of individual life courses. Therefore, at any point in the individual’s life course, agency is exerted “within the constraints of their own worlds” (Elder, 1994:6). Hence, the time-space dimension of the life course later-in-life means that the regulatory frameworks specific to that point in time (visa restrictions or access to health care for instance) may limit agency. In his study of retirees in Indonesia, Green (2015) argues that although his respondents made their retirement decisions as individual agents, they did so as relational subjects. He argues that retirees, in this case Australian retirees in Indonesia, exist as relational entities, connected emotionally and intimately to others who are present – and less present – in their immediate life-course context. Hence, the new lifestyle that this group of migrants have forged for themselves can be understood to embody elements of agency (as demonstrated by their decision to seek out an alternative retirement destination and to benefit from a more favourable retirement lifestyle). However, the new direction in selfhood that retirement migration facilitates for this group of retirees, is shaped not only by their individual agency, but also by the wider life-course environment they share with others, and to whom they may be accountable.

Taking the view offered by Findlay et al. (2015) that space is an active context that shapes life course relationships, it is therefore possible to think about the concept of agency in a more dynamic way. That is, through their ongoing negotiation within their specific space-time contexts, the potential exists for mobile individuals to negotiate the basis of their relationships with those contexts; to push back at the limitations imposed by their situational environment and the normative expectations of how lives should be lived later-in-life. They may do so by retiring to Bali (Green, 2015), moving to work in the UK as older women on their own (King and Lulle 2015), or moving to work in Abu Dhabi as mobile professionals later-in-life. In each example, visa regulations, family contexts, the prospect of ageing, and other limitations will be ever present, but the possibility for negotiation also exists. Hence limitations may – to varying extents and

not in all cases – be negotiated within the bounded realm of the possibilities that individuals' capacity for human agency permits.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has situated the focus of my thesis within the several literatures on privileged Gulf migration; transnational family lives; self and mobility; and life course and linked lives. In bringing these literatures together, I have arrived at three conclusions pertinent to my study.

First, I conclude that it is possible to argue that privilege and precarity, as a broad state of being that emerges out of precarious work and the migration policies of home and destination countries, exist simultaneously for later-in-life mobile professionals situated in the UAE. In reviewing the work on Gulf migration and privilege, it has been shown that the literature on low-income migrants (for example, Parreñas et al., 2018; Gardner, 2011, 2010), emphasises the precariousness of this group of migrants not only in terms of the regulatory regime in which they are situated, but also in terms of the absence of financial security that results from their low paid work. As migrants, they therefore come to exist in a state of precarity. In relation to skilled migration, the debate I have identified emphasises the privileged position of this migrant group, based on the income and skills associated with privileged migration flows. However, this literature also draws attention to the relational or relative privilege of this group and how vulnerabilities arise from, for instance, periods of economic downturn (Kunz, 2016; Coles and Walsh, 2010). Moving the focus away from the UAE but still within the field of migration and mobility at the later stages of the life course, scholars concerned with retirement migration (e.g. Botterill, 2017; Green, 2015) have drawn ageing, migration and mobility regimes together to show that this form of migration is not always privileged – but is sometimes precarious. For Botterill (2017), the intersection of age and migration policies can place this migrant group in a state of precarity. As will be shown in chapters four and seven, I have extended this argument to show that, as professional migrants, my respondents are privileged (as evidenced by their income and skills). However, the mobility regime in which they are situated, as well as the significance attached to age and ageing in their migration environment, give rise not only to vulnerability but also a state of precarity.

Second, I conclude that forms of mobility intertwine to bring about a complex set of mobility patterns at various points in the life course. Of particular interest to this study is the later-in-life stage of the life course. By drawing on the privileged migration literature, I have identified autonomous professional mobility (e.g. Biemann and Andresen, 2010) to be of relevance to my study. Meanwhile, the literature on travel mobility offers a useful pathway into thinking about how the two come together to bring about changes to the existing sense of self (e.g. Collins and Shubin 2015; Bagnoli, 2009). Finally, the retirement migration literature (e.g. Oliver, 2007) draws attention to how mobility can be conceptualised across the whole life course, including anticipated, future family lives and potential retirement.

My final conclusion is that the literature on transnational family lives demonstrates that emotional closeness to family members who live far away can exist in parallel with feeling (physically) far away from those who have stayed behind. I have drawn attention to how visiting (Munoz et al., 2017; Miah and King, 2015; Klekowski von Koppenfels et al., 2015) is used as a practice to mitigate against distance. So too are various forms of ICTs, argued by some to be so meaningful to family members who are separated across distance (Sitho, 2018; Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016), that the boundaries between physical and ICT-initiated co-presence become blurred. In this way, the very notion of what constitutes family becomes more complicated; how family togetherness comes to be a state of being (Long, 2014; Morgan, 1996) calls into question the relevance of normative/non-normative and together/apart as distinct dichotomies in the context of transnational family lives.

Finally, in this chapter I have set out three key components of life-course theory, which come together to highlight the notion of linked lives across the life course. The discussion points to how lives are linked in the processes of migration and mobility because first, those processes take place in an environment of relationality: in relation to family members who also move and those who stay behind, and to the macro environment in which transnational families live their everyday lives. That is, migration projects are shaped by the policies of sending and receiving countries and the state institutions in which those policy frameworks are embedded. Second, across the span of the life course, lives are linked because the life course takes place within particular time-space contexts; that is migration and mobility are shaped by places, people and events and the timing of those encounters. Third, the life-course literature draws attention to the capacity of individuals and families to actively shape their own life

courses within the parameters of constraining macro factors.

Together, these elements collectively give rise to the argument that lives are linked across the life course. As a conceptual framework, the notion of linked lives offers an effective channel through which to navigate the research questions at the centre of my study. First, it places importance on the shifts, adjustments, strategies, and movement that continually shape transnational family lives. Second, it draws attention to how historical time may filter into the present and future, influencing how lives have come to be, and how they might unfold in the future. Finally, it enables the broader migration and mobility environment to be drawn into the analysis. In this way, the notion of linked lives draws attention to how transnational families develop practices to manage geographical distance within the regimes of mobility they occupy.

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CHAPTER 3

'Is this what you are wanting'? Mapping and verbalising mobility later-in-life

INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out the methods of data collection and methodological considerations of my study, thereby laying the groundwork for the empirical chapters to follow. First, I introduce my respondents by way of a discussion that centres around a table of key characteristics that provides an overall picture of my sample group. Given the study's focus on later-in-life as a particular stage of the life course, the age of 50 was used as the starting point for respondent selection. In doing so, it has not been my intention to uncritically collapse chronological age with social age – scholars working in the area of ageing studies have long argued that numerical age in itself does not construct its own, objective meaning. As Sampaio et al. (2018:441) write, age and ageing are complicated by the “intertwining of social, cultural, and biological and physiological, dimension of ageing and later life”. In the introduction in chapter one, I made reference to how I have consciously adopted the term later-in-life for use in this thesis so as offer a more open-ended, looser articulation of a life course stage not primarily associated with physical decline, but with active economic activity and geographical mobility. At the same time, I have endeavoured to remain mindful of how institutional parameters, and potential physical limitations to ongoing mobility, are not entirely absent at this time of the life course.

In the second part of the chapter, I focus on my method of data collection, providing an explanation of how and why I combined mapping, as a new mobile method (Jensen, et al., 2015), with an interview method. Adapted from the ‘walking interview’ (for example, Murray et al., 2018), I adopted the term ‘mapping-interview’ to draw attention to the use of visual (mobility maps) and oral (face-to-face, semi-longitudinal interviews) in an interconnected, mutually dependent way. Hein et al. (2008) suggest that the interview is a largely sedentary method of data collection. I show that in the context of my research project, it came to be a more active method of data collection when combined with the practice of physically mapping mobility routes over time. In my

study, verbal and visual stories mesh together in the mapping-interview to provide rich discussions of mobility routes and their underlying meaning, within and across three geographical spaces over time: the UAE, my respondents' country of origin, and the world. In this first part of the chapter, I also draw on respondents' narratives to demonstrate how the mapping-interview encouraged them to engage with, and establish their own place within the data collection process. In this way, I show how the method opened up the opportunity for my respondents to become collaborators in the process of data collection (Reed-Danahay, 2015). The respondent's question that I have included in the chapter title: 'Is that what you are wanting?' demonstrates the way in which the mapping-interview elicited the need for further clarification, but also how it encouraged respondents to critically engage with the method itself. Finally, I draw attention to the particular ethical considerations of this study, demonstrating that my ongoing reflexivity as a researcher impacted positively on the methodological decisions I made before and during the data collection stage of the project.

Methodologically, this thesis seeks to contribute to the growing field of mobile methodologies through a focus on the use of a mobile method (the mapping-interview) in a research context concerned specifically with later-in-life mobility and family lives. Although examples of projects utilising mobile methodologies abound, as evident in the work of Hein et al. (2008) for example, the use of mobile methodologies that focus on later-in-life, and the intersection of this stage of the life course with mobile family lives, is less apparent. By utilising a dynamic methodological approach in which respondents are able to place themselves at the centre of how their stories of mobility are conveyed, the study contributes to existing work that challenges the long-established dichotomy that equates mobility with youth and stasis with older age, and highlights the negotiating, active role that older migrants may play in their spaces of mobility (e.g. Näre et al., 2017; King and Lulle, 2015).

The methodological approach taken in this thesis also contributes to the field of cartography, demonstrating how mapping practice facilitates deep respondent engagement in the research process and provides a highly creative way to represent mobility trajectories and to tell the accompanying stories. Using maps to represent stories rather than solely physical, geographical information, contributes to the field of cartography by drawing attention to how mapping practice can enable everyday experiences of mobility - across geographical space and places - to be captured in a

multifaceted way, leading to a rich understanding of the lived experiences of migration and mobility (Campos-Delgado, 2018).

3.1. Building the knowledge: selection and recruitment of respondents

Over a period of eighteen months of fieldwork, I recruited 40 respondents and conducted a total of 84 interviews with mobile professionals in Abu Dhabi whose chronological age positions them in the social and demographic category of later-in-life. Interviews were conducted either in respondents' homes, my place of residence, or in a coffee shop in the city, with slightly more interviews being conducted in my respondents' own homes than in the other venues noted here. Respondents were asked to choose the meeting venue for each of the three interviews. In the majority of cases, they chose to continue to meet in the same place and, in cases when interviews were conducted in a coffee shop, to sit at the same table every time.

I approached the task of interview analysis in a cumulative fashion, hence situating my analysis firmly within the inductive approach, defined by Brewer (2003:155) as "an approach in social research which argues that empirical generalisations and theoretical statements should be derived from the data". By implication, I did not follow a deductive path, within which "hypotheses are derived from theory and then tested against data" (Brewer, 2003:155). A deductive approach would have been at odds with the qualitative, exploratory emphasis of my study in which I aimed to pay consideration to the migration and mobility biographies of my respondents as embodied, meaningful, reflective experiences.

For MacKian (2010), analysis and accompanying interpretation of data starts at the point when the researcher selects the actual topic to be studied. The formalised analysis in my project began however, from the point of my first interview with each respondent/s. My reflective practice following each interview - such as jotting down aspects that immediately 'jumped out' of the narrative, or holding the interview encounter in my mind, led to an initial, loose form of analysis. This was followed by detailed transcription of each interview and further building of emerging knowledge using Express Scribe transcription software. Before beginning my fieldwork, I intended to share out the task of transcription with a paid transcriber. However, due to the significant cost involved, only two single interviews were transcribed in this way. This

meant that analysis came to be part of the transcription process, drawing attention to how transcription can be more meaningful than the seemingly simply clerical process it represents (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018). In a similar vein, I chose not to carry out computer-aided analysis because I wanted to manage the act of reading and annotating the printed transcripts in a way that kept the stories of my respondents' physically at my fingertips.

Once transcribed, I began to formalise the analysis of my interview data by ascribing broad codes to the narratives, reflective of the questions I asked of my respondents (Deterding and Waters, 2021). For example, the label 'family' was assigned to relevant material discussed initially in interview one (see appendix 4 for the subject areas explored in each interview) and 'visits home' to the relevant material in interview three, in particular. As I moved the analysis on – as I continued to build the knowledge – I moved back and forth between transcripts, research questions, and the pertinent literature. Through a process of what Walsh (2018b:6) describes as “multiple re-readings”, I began to move beyond the assigned broad codes, digging deeper to understand the meaning embedded in each section of each narrative. Akin to a process of reassembling the data (Yin, 2016), by moving beyond the confines of broad codes I began to work more intuitively. In that space of greater analytical freedom I began to capture the “richness and messiness of human experience” (Mackian, 2010:2). Consequently, my analysis remained driven by the interview material rather than what the existing literature had already told me, reflecting an inductive approach to analysis. That is, I allowed the data to “speak for themselves” (Brewer, 2003:155).

3.1.1. Selection of respondents

In the introduction to chapter one, attention was drawn to the age-related terminology and numerical age boundaries used in existing studies on older people and the later time of the life course. Although age was the primary point of reference for the selection of my respondents, I remained mindful of my commitment to build a research sample that would provide space for the richness of different mobility stories to emerge over the course of data collection, as set out in Table 1. To this end, I ensured that a

range of characteristics within the broad life-course category 'later-in-life' were given consideration, each of which I go on to discuss in turn.

Table 1: Key characteristics of research respondents ⁵

No	Pseudonym & Gender	Age	Country of origin	Relationship type; no of children	Employment Sector	Years since arrival ⁶
1	Chris (M)	Mid-60s	UK	IR 1 child	Media	9
2	Emily (F)	Mid-50s	South Africa	NIR 2 children	Education	5
3	Fran (F)	Late 50s	Australia	M1 3 children (1 In Abu Dhabi)	Education	10
4	Patrick (M)	Late 50s	Australia	M1 3 children (1 In Abu Dhabi)	Construction	10
5	Mura (F)	Mid-50s	Singapore	M1	Not in paid work	8
6	Fred (M)	Early 60s	Germany	M1 (3 children)	Education	8
7	Michelle (F)	Late 50s	Australia	M1 (2 children)	Not in paid work	5 weeks
8	Matthew (M)	Late 50s	USA	NIR 1 child	Finance	2
9	Angela (F)	Mid-50s	UK	M2 No children	Media	8 months
10	Christine (F)	Mid-50s	UK	M1 3 children	Not in paid work	2

⁵ My respondents are presented in the order in which they were interviewed. They are also grouped into couple respondents (shown in white) and those I interviewed without a partner present (shown in grey). So as to facilitate easy cross-referencing for the reader at any point in the thesis, I have constructed a second version of this table (see Appendix 1), in which respondents are listed in alphabetical order.

⁶ 'Years since arrival' refers to my respondent's most recent migration to Abu Dhabi. Thirteen respondents made recurrent, repeated periods of migration to either the Gulf region, or the UAE specifically, which I explore more fully in chapter four.

				(1 in Abu Dhabi)		
11	Nathan (M)	Mid-50s	UK	M1 3 children (1 in Abu Dhabi)	Media	2
12	Ella (F)	Mid-60s	France	M1 2 children (1 in Abu Dhabi)	Not in paid work	17 years
13	Jean (F)	Mid-60s	USA	M1 1 child	Not in paid work	12
14	Richard (M)	Early 60s	UK	IR 3 children	Media	10
15	Mazia (F)	Mid-30s	Lebanon	M1	Education	3
16	Fazi (M)	Early 50s	UK	M1 No children	Media	3
17	Cheryl (F)	Early 50s	USA	M1 3 children	Not in paid work	3
18	Ken (M)	Mid-50s	USA	M1 3 children	Military	3
19	Jeff (M)	Early 50s	Zimbabwe	NIR No children	Film	9
20	Carlo (M)	Early 60s	Australia	M1 2 children	Oil	6
21	Reena (F)	Mid-50s	India	M1 2 children (1 in Abu Dhabi)	Not in paid work	9
22	Arjun (M)	Late 50s	India	M1 2 children (1 in Abu Dhabi)	Oil	9
23	Vera (F)	Mid-50s	New Zealand	NIR No children	Medical	14 months
24	Navi (M)	Late 50s	India	M2 1 child	Retail	15
25	Penny (F)	Late 50s	USA	NIR 2 children	Medical	2
26	Leyla (F)	Mid-50s	Australia	NIR 1 child	Education	14

27	Susan (F)	Mid-50s	UK	M1 2 children, 1 in Abu Dhabi	Not in paid work	12
28	Ivan (M)	Late 50s	UK	M1 2 children, 1 in Abu Dhabi	Construction	12
29	Helen (F)	Mid-50s	South Africa	M1 2 children	Education	19
30	Jim (M)	Late 50s	South Africa	M1 2 children	Waste management	19
31	Hattie (F)	Mid-50s	South Africa (both)	M1 2 children	Not in paid work	12
32	Phil (M)	Late 50s	South Africa	M1 2 children	Engineering	13
33	Raj (M)	Mid-50s	India	M1 2 children	Oil	24
34	Tahil (M)	Mid-60s	India	M1 2 children	Not in paid work	18
35	Pam (M)	Late 50s	Zimbabwe	M1 2 children	Not in paid work	17
36	Nada (F)	Early 50s	Serbia	NIR 2 children	Aviation	1
37	Claire (F)	Mid-50s	Columbia	M1 3 children, 1 in Abu Dhabi	Not in paid work	5
38	Marcus (M)	Early 60s	Sweden	M1 3 children, 1 in Abu Dhabi	Telecommunications	5
39	Sarah (F)	Mid-50s	Argentina	M1 1 child, in Abu Dhabi	Not in paid work	2
40	Matias (M)	Mid-50s	Argentina	M1 1 child, in Abu Dhabi	Medical	2

Key:

NIR (not in a relationship)

IR (in a relationship)

M1 (married, spouse in Abu Dhabi)

M2 (married, spouse not permanently in Abu Dhabi)

Table 1 shows that all but one respondent was age 50 or over at the time of the first interview. In this outlier case, I decided that the inclusion of Mazia (mid-30s) as a joint-interview respondent was justified on the grounds that her partner's age (early 50s) would ensure that the overarching research question would still direct the focus of discussion. Furthermore, I took the view that that one partner being younger than the baseline age of 50 held the potential to add a further dimension to potential discussion on ageing, and related topics such as return or retirement. This potential was certainly realised in my interviews with Mazia and her partner Fazi, particularly in relation to the discussion on retirement and future family plans. Similarly, my one-to-one interview with Carlo (early 60s), pointed to how his plans for the future were clearly shaped by the prospect of building a family with his new partner, who was in her early 40s at the time. Importantly then, the flexibility to include Fazi's partner (Mazia) even though she was under the sampling threshold of the age of 50, serves to highlight how the objective measurement of age is experienced in subjective terms across the life course.

Male and female respondents are represented almost equally in the sample (19 male and 21 female respondents). This was not planned with the purpose of providing an analysis of the gendered dimension of later-in-life migration and mobility, and does not form the basis of any of the research questions set out in chapter one. Rather, the purpose was to further strengthen the expansive nature of my sample group and corresponding richness of the oral and visual narratives. Of the 40 respondents interviewed, 22 were interviewed as couples, and 18 were interviewed on their own. Of the 18 one-on-one interviews, four types of relationship status were identified: those not in a relationship (8); those who lived with their spouse in Abu Dhabi (6); those whose spouse lived in the country of origin (2); and those who shared their life with a partner in Abu Dhabi (2). By capturing a range of relationship types within the sample, it was possible to extend the breadth of the discussion on family practices, and the concept of relationality in the immediate and distant geographical locales in which my respondents are situated. Although family composition was not directly applied as a sampling consideration, this information is nevertheless detailed in Table 1 so as to provide a broader picture of the overall sample.

As regards family composition, in my thesis I have explored the intersection of migration, mobility, and transnational family lives specifically from the perspective of

later-in-life mobile professionals. For a number of reasons, I chose not to include the perspectives of family members who stayed behind (or indeed had themselves moved away), an approach taken by scholars such as Boccagni (2016) and Baldassar (2008). First, that would have required the inclusion of additional research questions and a much broader, less focussed scope of the project. This would potentially have diluted the focus from one demographic group, located in a specific location, to include (in the case of adult children) younger respondents resident elsewhere. Marcus (2011), writing with specific reference to ethnography as a methodological approach, argues that a multi-sited approach (one that allows a range of voices across research sites to be documented) can over-broadening the field of enquiry. In so doing, ethnographers run the risk of diluting the value that immersion in the field brings to any study. That is, researchers run the risk of familiarising the familiar. Transferring this argument to the context of transnational family research, initial familiarity with the stories of one side of the migration story (say, the side of those who move), means that - at the point when the stories of those who have stayed behind are gathered - "the subject's perspective is no longer so clearly other but in the realm of the already known" (2011:18).

Second, I focussed on 'one side' of the migration story because including the voices of stay-behind family members would have raised particular ethical considerations in relation to, for example, privacy and confidentiality. The nature of my specific research setting, as well as the existence of emotion (such as missing and longing) that permeates transnational family lives, would have required careful management. As Boccagni (2016:10), who used a multi-sited approach to explore transnational family relations across Italy and Ecuador writes: "As I found out, matching together a variety of sites and life circumstances is emotionally, no less than cognitively and practically, challenging". That is not to say that attending to the emotion of transnational family life cannot produce positive benefits, as documented by Baldassar (2008) in the context of a multi-sited study of Italian migrants in Australia and their family members in Italy. As she writes "Many of the Italian migrants I interviewed were delighted by the prospect that I would visit their parents, particularly those I had come to know well, knowing that this would bring their parents some measure of happiness" (2008:259). However, as Baldassar notes, she recruited stay-behind family members only via those who had migrated. The sample was therefore reflective of families who had remained connected after the event of migration. Such research design is therefore less able to address the question of the 'de-linking' element of linked lives, which I explore in

chapter five.

Other scholars have argued that the benefits of recording both sides of the family migration story can lead to a deeper understanding of the meaning behind specific family practices, such as the sending of goods. In agreeing to carry gifts on behalf of his respondents, resident in Italy and Ecuador, Boccagni (2016) suggests that he was able to gain greater insight into the strength and quality of family ties. Similarly, Abranches (2014:271) argues that her multi-sited ethnography approach enabled her to give “equal time to both sides of the migratory journey.” In this way, she was able to develop a fuller understanding of the meaning embedded in the sending of food items along the Guinea-Bissau/Portugal migration corridor; how the mobility of food spoke more generally to “the materiality and symbology of the Guinean land from which that food and other products of the natural world originate” (2014: 262). However, as is clear from the studies pointed to here, and Baldassar’s (2008) project referred to earlier, such studies are concerned with the mobility of people and goods that flow within one transnational social field. My thesis is concerned with migration and mobility between the UAE and a total of fifteen countries of origin, which presents a different set of logistical challenges to the work referred to above.

Finally, although acknowledging the benefits of a multi-sited, multi-voices approach, I chose to focus exclusively on the experiences of later-in-life migrants in one locale because of practical considerations associated with geography, time and financial resources. As a self-funded, part-time student, it was not possible to conduct fieldwork outside of my chosen research site, especially as my respondents originated from a range of countries across the world, as pointed out above. It is true that interviews with stay-behind family members could have been conducted by remote means such as Skype. However, that would have opened up new critical questions in relation to non-comparable modes of interviewing, and the ability to build up trust and rapport with both groups of participants over a series of interview encounters (as I have described in section 3.1).

To ensure that a range of relationship types were represented, I conducted an almost equal number of joint and one-to-one interviews. Writing of the value of interviewing couples separately or apart, Valentine (1999) points to the opportunity that joint interviews offer for verification and remembering, suggesting that this approach

encourages new, unanticipated areas of discussion to come to the fore. Similarly, in support of interviewing couples together, Bjørnholt and Farstad (2014:5) argue that “going beyond the one-on-one researcher-informant relationship can be seen as a way of opening up new and interesting knowledge, rather than a limitation”. Although mindful of the critical dimension offered by Mellor et al. (2013), who suggest that some research areas (in this case health) are best explored with each partner separately in order to take privacy issues between partners into account, my research experience resonates with Valentine’s (1999) point that joint interviewing has the potential to elicit new areas of discussion through a process of verification and remembering. In the case of my couple respondents, approaching their map-making as a shared endeavour served to extend the discussion; shared remembering often jogged their memories of mobility routes that they traversed together or encountered on their own. Therefore, by including a range of relationship types in the sample, as set out in Table 1, it was possible to explore my respondents’ map-making practice both as a shared and as an individual experience.

Fifteen countries of origin are represented in the sample, drawing attention to the diversity of Abu Dhabi’s foreign workforce. Although not exhaustive, the countries recorded in Table 1 provide a further source of rich discussion in relation to – for example – the factors that motivated my respondents to move to Abu Dhabi, or how structural factors within their countries of origin have shaped their mobile family lives. The five most frequent countries of origin recorded are: the UK (7), Australia (5), South Africa (5), India (5) and USA (5). The remaining ten countries are represented by one, or in the case of Zimbabwe, two respondents.

Breaking down the sample by country of origin highlights the diversity of the sample but also submerges the complexity that surrounds nationality and country of origin. As Molz (2017) found in her study of worldschooling families, in which she used country of residence to identify the global diversity of her sample, in some cases parents within two-parent families were from different nationality backgrounds, which could not be captured by the category ‘country of residence’. In my study, ‘country of origin’ is complicated by the messiness of global mobility, and associated realities such as: no right to re-entry; the adoption of new countries as places of belonging; and the

relinquishing of long-held citizenship rights. Wimmer and Glick Schiller's (2002:217) critique of methodological nationalism is helpful to draw attention to here. Defined as "the assumption that the nation state society is the natural social and political form of the modern world" (2002:217), these authors argue that methodological nationalism ought to be challenged because, among other reasons, it shapes what we see. Carling et al. (2014) argue that a critical perspective is important because the emphasis that methodological nationalism places on nationality-based differences apparent within groups of individuals, means that attention to transnational mobility and the many interacting factors that shape mobility trajectories still remains limited. Or it is certainly the case that other factors remain subordinate to the nation-state narrative.

Empirically, this argument is illustrated in the case of one of my respondents who left Germany as a young man in protest at forced military conscription, and was permitted to re-enter the country for the first time 10 years later. Although his visual and oral narrative points to the importance of Germany to his earlier mobility trajectory, that connection has weakened over time, as explained here:

I have no intention to going back to Germany. My mother has passed away. I have no relatives there. (Fred)

Furthermore, as I draw attention to in chapter five, some of my respondents continue to maintain ties to their country of origin but, since moving to the UAE, have secured citizenship rights elsewhere (in a third country) as a form of insurance against untoward political or economic crises in Abu Dhabi or their first country of residence. Over time, the emotional connection to the latter, holds the potential to become re-oriented towards their new country of citizenship, within which they have secured the right to reside.

Both examples serve as a reminder that sampling categories (such as country of origin) provide a useful starting point from which to make sense of stories of mobility constructed over distance and time. However, in reality, mobile lives tend to be lived in a far less orderly way. Hence, the fluidity of place and geographical spaces of connection and belonging, arguably unsettle the efforts of researchers to organise data in a way that satisfies entrenched notions of academic rigour and research validity. However, it can be said that unsettling the given order of things encourages critical

engagement with data collection protocols, in this case within migration and mobility scholarship.

Finally, as Table 1 shows, a range of employment sectors and employment statuses are represented. As has been detailed in chapter one, the right to residency in the UAE in almost all cases is contingent on full-time employment and an employer-sponsored visa. Table 1 shows that all my respondents are either in full-time employment or dependent on a spouse who meets the qualifying criteria for residency. It also shows that not all female partners were in paid work, and only one male partner was not employed. Although professional occupation was not an essential sampling criterion (none of the research questions noted in chapter one seeks to directly address occupation), as with the previous categories discussed above, I aimed to include a range of professional experiences. Fourteen sectors of employment are represented, including 'not in paid work', so as to capture the breadth of experiences within the sample group.

Although this research category adds depth to the overall picture and facilitates a greater understanding of how residence visa requirements are met, and how professional experience facilitates migration and mobility later-in-life, the categories 'employment status' and 'sector of employment' demand critical deliberation because they do not allow for the categorisation and recording of more complicated employment stories. For example, in my study, the category 'not in paid work' includes one respondent who actively made the decision to take a career break when she and her partner moved to Abu Dhabi. Two other respondents in this category had recently retired after working in Abu Dhabi for a significant period of time and were entitled to remain as dependents of their spouses. Neither were drawing a pension, and both indicated that they were in the process of thinking through new work-related possibilities. In practice, they were in limbo between paid work and retirement.

The principal basis on which respondents were selected, as discussed above, was also adopted in the selection of narratives for empirical analysis. As with the overall sample composition, I aimed to include a range of voices in the discussion, seeking to avoid over-dominance of a small number of respondents. Through a process of continually going back and forth between transcripts, analysis, and writing, I worked to select narratives that spoke to typical stories in a clear and accessible way. However, I also

aimed to include less typical, outlying cases in the empirical discussion. The discussion of strategic family separation in chapter four, section 5.3, is a case in point.

3.1.2. Recruitment of respondents

To get my fieldwork under way, I used an opportunity sampling technique, which involved contacting a small number of people (over the age of 50) already known to me in Abu Dhabi. To expand my range of recruitment avenues, I joined a golf group; went along to a 'meet and greet' social evening organised by a global expatriate organisation; and attended the annual South African Heritage Day event held in Abu Dhabi. I also approached two neighbours in the compound in which I was living at the time of my fieldwork, and invited younger friends to pass on my project information to their older work colleagues and friends. In this way, I successfully opened up new recruitment routes. By the use of snowball sampling, I then increased the number of respondents by way of referrals from existing respondents. However, referral opportunities were declined when I felt that following up on a referral would mean that one nationality, or one sector of employment for instance, might begin to dominate the sample profile.

Mindful of the advantages of accessing potential respondents through routes other than opportunity and snowball sampling, I also attempted to include self-selecting participants in the sample. I attempted to do so by first, posting an invitation to participate in my study as well as my project information sheet (appendix 2), on the UAE Facebook sites of three university alumni associations. My rationale was that by posting online, I would gain access to three hubs of alumni working in Abu Dhabi, and would then be able to include self-selection participants in my study. I contacted the organisers of two alumni associations to which I had some existing connection, and one in which a friend, living in Abu Dhabi at the time, was an active member. All the organisers agreed to post my project information, and one offered to email all the Abu Dhabi alumni members on my behalf.

Second, I contacted an organiser at the India Social and Cultural Centre, a long-established organisation in Abu Dhabi, who approached potential participants on my behalf. Finally, I contacted an organiser of a 'meet-up' group in Abu Dhabi, specifically for mobile professionals over the age of 50. In the process of reflecting on why none

of these avenues proved successful, I gave some thought to the idea that younger people might generally feel more invested in the culture of social media platforms, such as Facebook. In her Australian-based study of young adults' experiences of unwanted sexual attention in licensed venues, Fileborn (2016:99) found that the use of Facebook as a recruitment tool gave her ready access to potential participants, suggesting that young people have a greater collective presence on that particular social media platform. By deduction, it is possible to argue that older people do not have that kind of online presence. My own research experience certainly suggests that older people lack a critical presence in that environment. However, rather than seeking explanations within debates on how much older people engage, or fail to engage with social media, I would argue that it is more constructive to think about how their migration emplacement (in which residency is never entirely secure) may explain a reluctance to respond to online postings, or to accept a request from a third party to participate in a research project.

As my data collection progressed over the course of fieldwork, I became increasingly aware that the quality of the interview material I was accumulating, my respondents' willingness to completing the mapping activity, and their commitment to see their series of interviews through to the end, was indicative of the trust they placed in me as a researcher. In an environment of precarious work, in which employment contracts can be severed by employers without recourse and residency visas can be cancelled with little notice, the process of data collection required me to develop a keen awareness of appropriate discussion topics. I would therefore argue that recruitment via respondent referrals, and direct recruitment by means of opportunity sampling, makes it more possible to establish that crucial relationship of trust at the outset.

3.2. Is this what you are wanting? Mapping and verbalising mobility later-in-life

Mapping methodologies used by critical cartographers to explore subjects as wide-ranging as everyday family mobility (Holdsworth, 2013), or irregular migration (Campos-Delgado, 2018), constitute a growing approach to data collection within geo-humanities and is: "connected with many scholars and practitioners interested in artistically informed and unconventional representations of place" (Dodge, 2017:95). As Dodge argues, 'deep mapping', is "a kind of topographic storytelling" that facilitates

a layered representation of space, and a rich understanding of the ways in which individuals experience place in physical and emotional terms (2017:91). Similarly, Hein et al. (2008:1266) point to the widespread use of mapping practices, particularly in research projects that prioritise “investigation of everyday life practices and life worlds”. They argue that the ‘walked interview’, as an example of creative mapping methodologies, brings mobility directly into the research process and draws attention to how movement and non-movement lead to particular forms of engagement with life worlds, and stimulate the construction of different types of knowledge. That said, it is also possible to argue that creative mapping techniques draw attention to immobility by the very absence of (visible) mobility routes. The representation of routes travelled, as well as the absence of such representation, says much about the way in which individuals engage with their immediate and further environments, as well as their relatedness to others.

3.2.1. The mapping-interview: process and practice

I conducted three interviews with each individual or couple respondents, as I explain below. I also used three maps as the basis for discussion: a world map; a map of their country (or in the case of some couples, of their respective countries of origin); and one of the UAE. This made it possible to visually capture their movement across three sites of mobility and to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations for, and meaning embodied within, that mobility.

In the first interview, I introduced my study and invited respondents to complete the project consent form (appendix 3). I was therefore able to set out a list of assurances, as detailed on the form. This first meeting also helped me to get a sense of their overall mobility story, serving to provide a broad context to the more detailed discussion of their mobility routes in the interviews to follow. In the second interview, the discussion focused on the three maps that respondents created in their own time, following our first meeting. Each depicted their movement across space and time in a way that allowed visual representations to become “part of participant’s tales” (Murray et al., 2018:3). In their study of retired underground workers, these researchers used the method of ‘shared walks’ to explore their participant’s working and post-work experiences of retired underground workers. By walking with participants in a guided tour of disused underground tunnels, they built up oral accounts of their working lives, and a visual representation of their experiences that were produced by an illustrator

as they walked. In this way, a visual narrative became part of the oral construction of their stories. By walking with their respondents, Murray and fellow researchers were, as Ciobanu and Hunter (2017:3-4) put it, implicated in participants' "acts of mobility". Although I did not physically follow my respondents across any of their three spheres of mobility, the tangible presence of their mobility maps provided a vehicle through which, in all three interviews and during the data analysis stage of my project, I could more closely feel and engage with their past, present and hoped for patterns of migration and mobility.

The final interview served as a valuable opportunity to verify my interpretation of the mobility maps that my respondents presented at the start of the second interview. I used this interview as an opportunity to cross-check dates; further explore core themes that had begun to emerge in our previous discussions; and ask new questions pertaining to topics such as future plans. The interview guide (appendix 4) lists the discussion points I set out to explore in each interview.

Although conducting three interviews with each respondent/set of respondents does not strictly qualify as a longitudinal approach (I did not follow my respondents over a length of time), meeting with my respondents on consecutive occasions made it possible to capture new developments within their mobility stories. In some cases, interviews were spaced no more than a week apart but in others, a more significant period of time elapsed between meetings, usually as a result of respondents' existing travel commitments. In this way, I was able to receive updates on their mobility activity since the time of the previous interview.

In the discussion to follow, I demonstrate how the mapping-interview unfolded in practice. I do so by firstly providing examples of two typical approaches to map-making. Although I provided general guidance at the outset, I also encouraged respondents to represent their mobility routes in whichever way they wished. Some followed a very prescriptive process and others approached the task in a much looser way, as illustrated in the maps presented below. So as to ensure that they felt comfortable with the requisite task, I reiterated that they were welcome to seek further clarification from me at any time. My invitation to do so prompted questions along the lines of the three conversational exchanges with Emily (1); Hattie and Phil (2); and Mura and Fred (3) noted below.

(1)

So, do I do Germany? Do I show you that? So, there's Germany and there's Cape Town. Is that what you're wanting? (Emily)

Yes, that's fine (Colleen)

Then South Africa to the UAE and back many times. Abu Dhabi is here isn't it? (Emily)

It is. (Colleen)

Aargh, that doesn't matter, does it? [she smudges the ink on one of her maps] (Emily)

(2)

So, do you want us to start from birth? (Hattie)

I'll leave that to you. Some people have found their childhood travels to be really important – what's of significance to you, really. (Colleen)

And are we doing that [points to the South Africa map] separately for her and for me or ...? (Phil)

I've provided two because that will allow you to decide what you'd like to do. (Colleen)

(3)

Should we include just travelling somewhere? Like last year we went to Zanzibar for a week. Would that be included? (Fred)

Yes, absolutely. The travelling aspect; yes. (Colleen)

Maybe we should start with where we lived? Or plan to live? Because that is quite a lot already! (Mura)

So, we need to separate travelling from where we lived. Shall we use different colours? (Fred)

Absolutely. (Colleen)

The excerpt below details the guidance I provided at the start of my first interview with Cheryl and Ken; a format I repeated when I first met with each respondent/s.

Okay, my approach – as you will see – is to combine the use of maps and interviews. This one here is obviously a world map. What I'm asking you to do, is record your mobility routes across the world. So, it might be that um, you have been on holiday to various places, or you might have been to places for work. It might also be that you go for family reasons. So, I'm interested in your movement across this global space. Timewise, you can show routes from when you were much younger or from more recently; you choose how best to represent your routes.

Okay. (Ken)

So, there is no set process. Some reference to dates is quite useful though. And when I say dates, I mean generally – a year or a decade. And you might want to use colours – different colours for different purposes of movement. Or you might choose not to do that. That's also fine. (Colleen)

What continents we haven't been on! That's more like it! (Ken)

Oh, okay! Then this is the map of the US. Here I'm interested in the way your mobility is apparent within your own country.

And finally (and my respondents tell me this is the easiest map to do), is the UAE map – where in the UAE you go to and move between. For example, some people go to Dubai a lot and others don't go at all. So, the map would show extensive, limited, or no movement between the two places. So I'm interested in how you generally move around the country. (Colleen)

Okay. (Ken)

Right, so, any immediate questions? Does that look good? (Colleen)

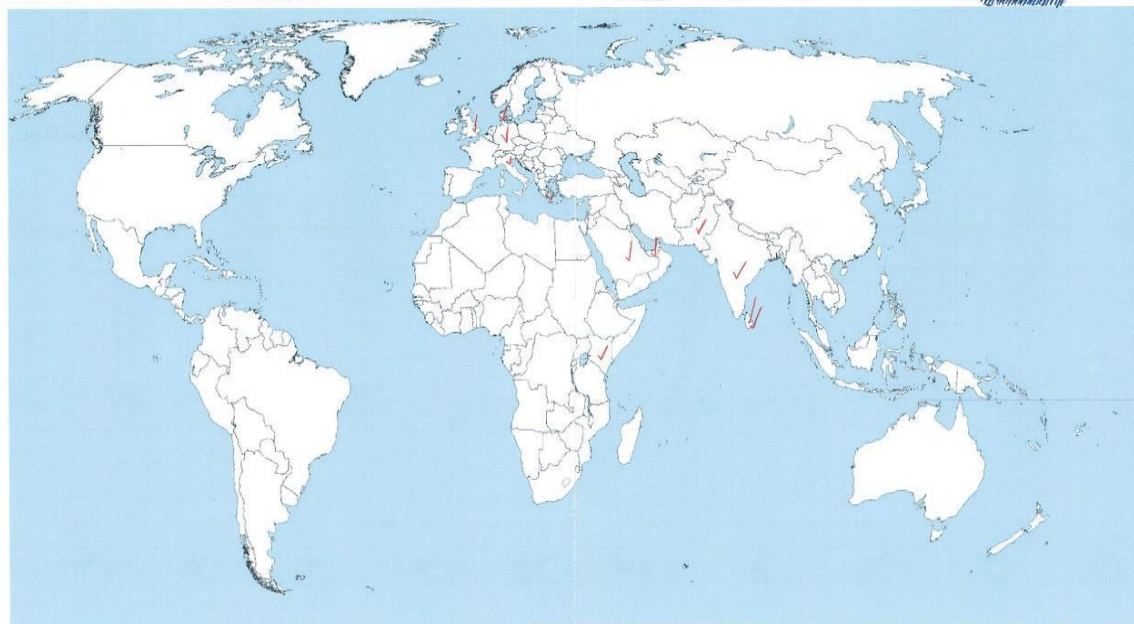
No questions. It sounds very straight forward. (Ken)

Right, thank you!

Now, could I now ask you to tell me a little about your mobility context and about yourselves: perhaps your family composition, how long you've been here, and why you came to Abu Dhabi? (Colleen)

Their annotated maps, and the excerpt from my second interview with Ken and Cheryl, point to how they chose to represent their mobility patterns across their three geographical spheres of mobility in a structured way. Firstly, the world:

Figure 2: Map depicting global mobility (Cheryl)



AMSTERDAM - BETWEEN 1972 & 1981 (VISIT)
 GERMANY - BETWEEN 1972 & 1981 AND 2016
 INDIA - BETWEEN 1972 & 1981 (VISIT)
 ITALY - " " "
 KENYA - " " "
 PAKISTAN - " " "

SAUDI ARABIA - LIVED BETWEEN 1972 to 1981
 SCOTLAND BETWEEN 1972-1981 (VISIT)
 UAE " " "
 " LIVE JUN 2015 - PRESENT
 UK BETWEEN 1972-1981 - (VISIT)
 BAHRAIN " " "

FLIGHTS FROM U.S. TO SAUDI ARABIA 1972
 VISITS TO ALL LISTED COUNTRIES FROM SAUDI
 RETURN TO U.S.A. 1981
 RETURN TO MIDDLE EAST JUN 2015
 UAE TO US AND RETURN 5 TIMES

Figure 3: Map depicting global mobility (Ken)



As their annotated global maps, and Ken's verbal explanation below show, these two respondents followed a systematic process, using a combination of their places of birth, dates of mobility, and the order in which they each visited countries outside of the US. In this way, they created a visual story of their geographical and temporal mobility. As Ken explains:

On the world wide one, I marked each country I've been to with a checkmark. And I then put in alphabetical order, each of the countries and the years I was there. I was in Afghanistan 24 times. So, I didn't put months – just years. And then we did the same for Cheryl.

To depict their movement within the UAE, Ken circled the places they have visited since moving to Abu Dhabi:

For the UAE, what I did is circle ... we've been everywhere in the UAE basically. We go to Dubai at least once a month, sometimes more than that. (Ken)

I go to the Dragon [an indoor market in Dubai] (Cheryl)

Have you not been to the Dragon? (Cheryl/Ken)

No. (Colleen)

Oh, my goodness! (Ken)

I love it! (Cheryl)

For this sphere of their mobility they constructed separate annotated maps (illustrated on the next two pages) so as to visually record that there are two places that Ken, but not Cheryl, have visited. In this way their UAE mapping practice further illustrates the systematic, detailed process they chose to follow.

Figure 4: Map depicting movement within the UAE (Cheryl)

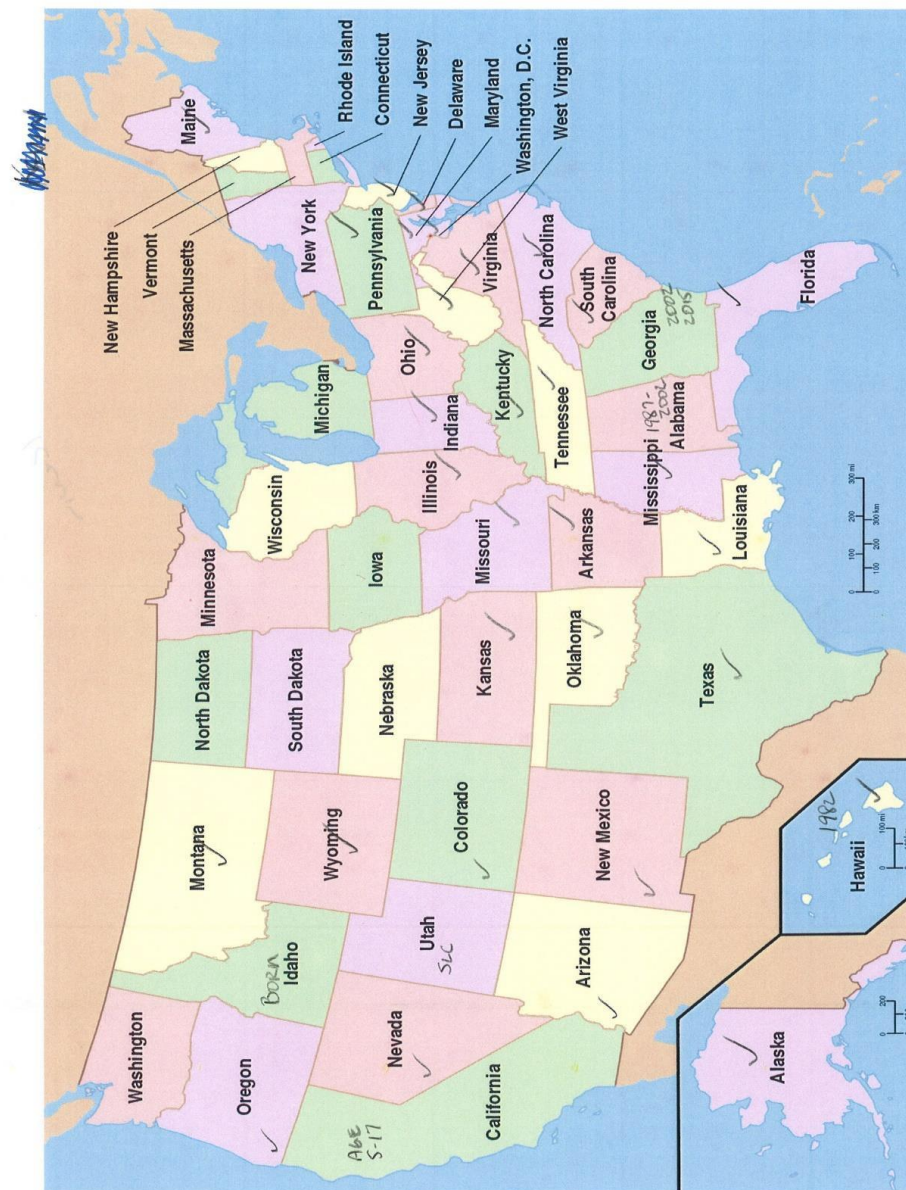


Figure 5: Map depicting mobility within the UAE (Ken)



Finally, their annotated maps of the US (their country of origin) show that Cheryl and Ken followed the same systematic process to depict their movement within this geographical sphere of mobility, as figure 6 shows.

Figure 6: Mobility within country of origin (Ken)



As Ken explains here, dates and numerical age were used to systematically record their mobility routes across their country of origin.

So, here's mine. This is my map of the US. I put check marks on every state that I visited. I indicated where I was born, and that I lived in California from the age of 15-17. And I spent a great deal of time in Salt Lake City, living there for a month or two and then back to California because of the way my parents worked. And I lived in Alabama from 1987 to 2002 and in Georgia from 2002 to 2015 – and then here [Abu Dhabi].

In the case of Pam however, her mobility routes were annotated and conceptualised in a much looser way. She used arrows to depict the direction of those routes, as shown in figure 7 below. Her narrative here suggests that the names of places, and the sequence of her movement, are less important than the 'general direction' her life has taken, pointing to the absorption of mobility into and across her life course.

I didn't put names. I just sort of drew the lines towards the place it was – if you see what I mean. (Pam)

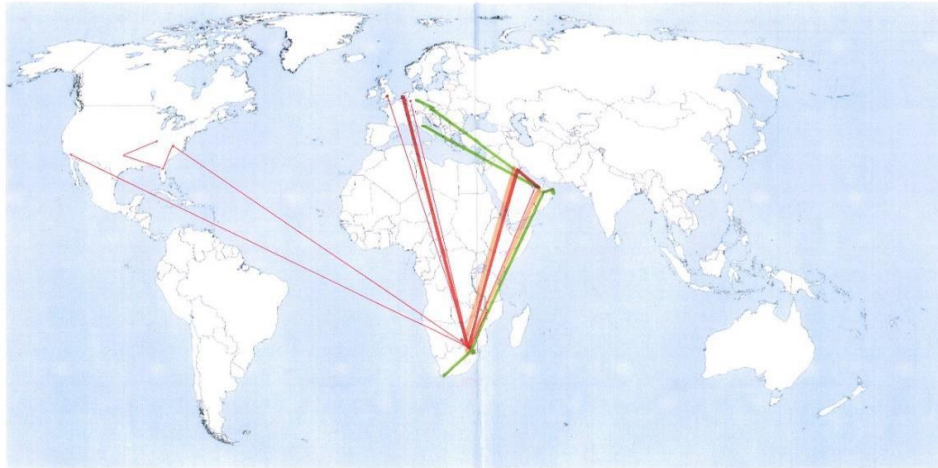
Sure. (Colleen)

The general direction. So, you can see where my life went. (Pam)

Okay. (Colleen)

Starting there, then going there. Then going back to there and then down to there. And then – hang on. Where's the ... oh yes, then it goes: there. And then there. Can you see? (Pam)

Figure 7: Map depicting global mobility (Pam)



Pam's global mobility map shows that her mobility activity covers some geographical breadth. However, the way in which she has chosen to represent the visual story of her mobility, and to explain it verbally, suggests a layer of engagement that runs deeper than simply recording the frequency of her mobility routes. Her narrative, which centres around her visual, mapped mobility story, points to a normalising of continual mobility. Just a short way into my first interview it was possible to arrive at a more complicated understanding – a “moodier account” (Molz, 2017:22), of Pam's relationship with movement and mobility. In this way, I was able to highlight the embodied nature of her mobility, which I draw out in the discussion to follow. In her map-making practice, Pam places herself as a mobile subject within her own story woven from extensive movement during childhood, and continued mobility into her own, adult family life. Hence the visual representation of her mobility makes visible experiences that would, most likely, have remained hidden in the written or spoken form (Youngblood, 2006).

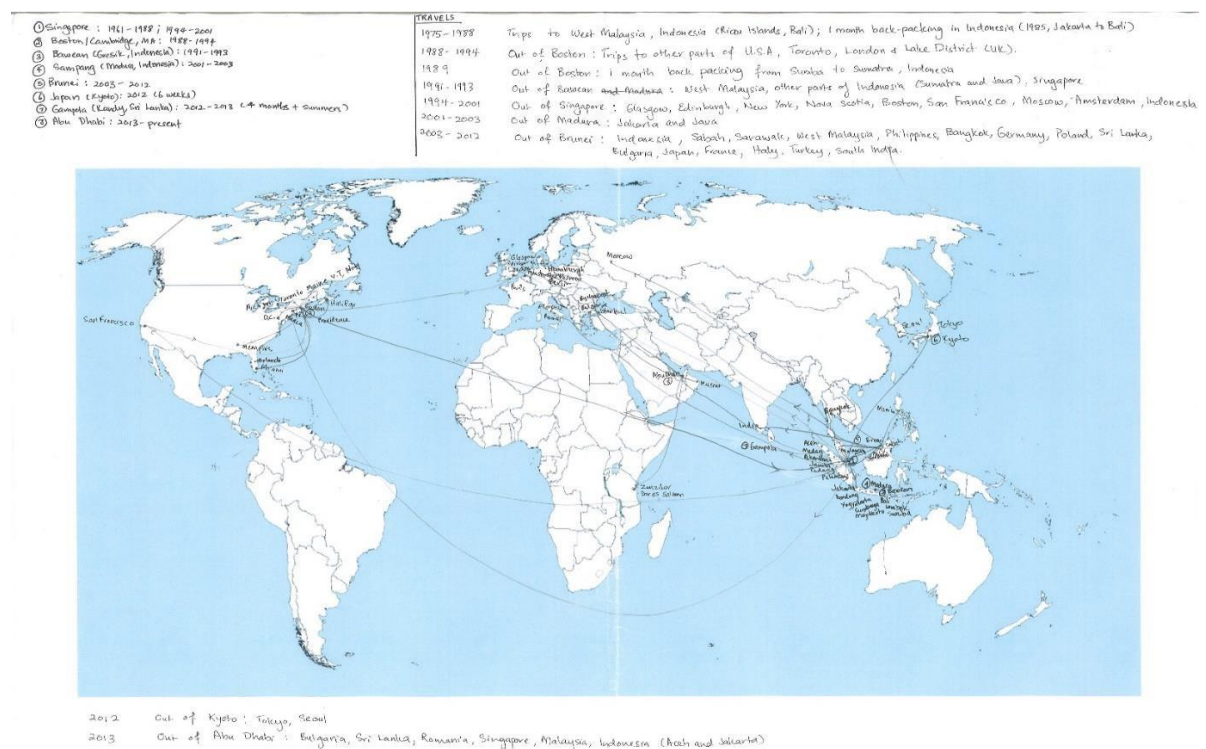
3.2.2. The mapping-interview: embodied, reflexive, relational

As the examples provided above demonstrate, my respondents' maps record mobility routes and patterns over time ('I lived here and then I moved there'). However, they

also tell a deeper story of mobility. They provide insight into why respondents moved from 'here to there', who they moved with, and who they left behind. Hence routes capture the affective dimensions of their mobility (Jensen et al., 2015) but also provide insight into the unprompted, emotive dimension of mobile lives. As her narrative shows, Pam's explanation of her mobility routes – 'they start here and then go there ... can you see?' – highlights the intrinsically embodied, reflexive practice of map-making, and emphasises the meaning embedded in her migration and mobility routes in a very direct, tangible way.

At the start of interview two, I asked respondents to comment on the experience of working with the three maps and recording their mobility routes. Some of my respondents chose to comment on the length of time they spent annotating their maps, as illustrated by the case of Mura, whose global map is presented below. As the narrative to follow makes clear, Mura spent a significant period of time annotating her three maps and has presented a very detailed visual depiction of her global mobility.

Figure 8: Map illustrating global mobility (Mura)



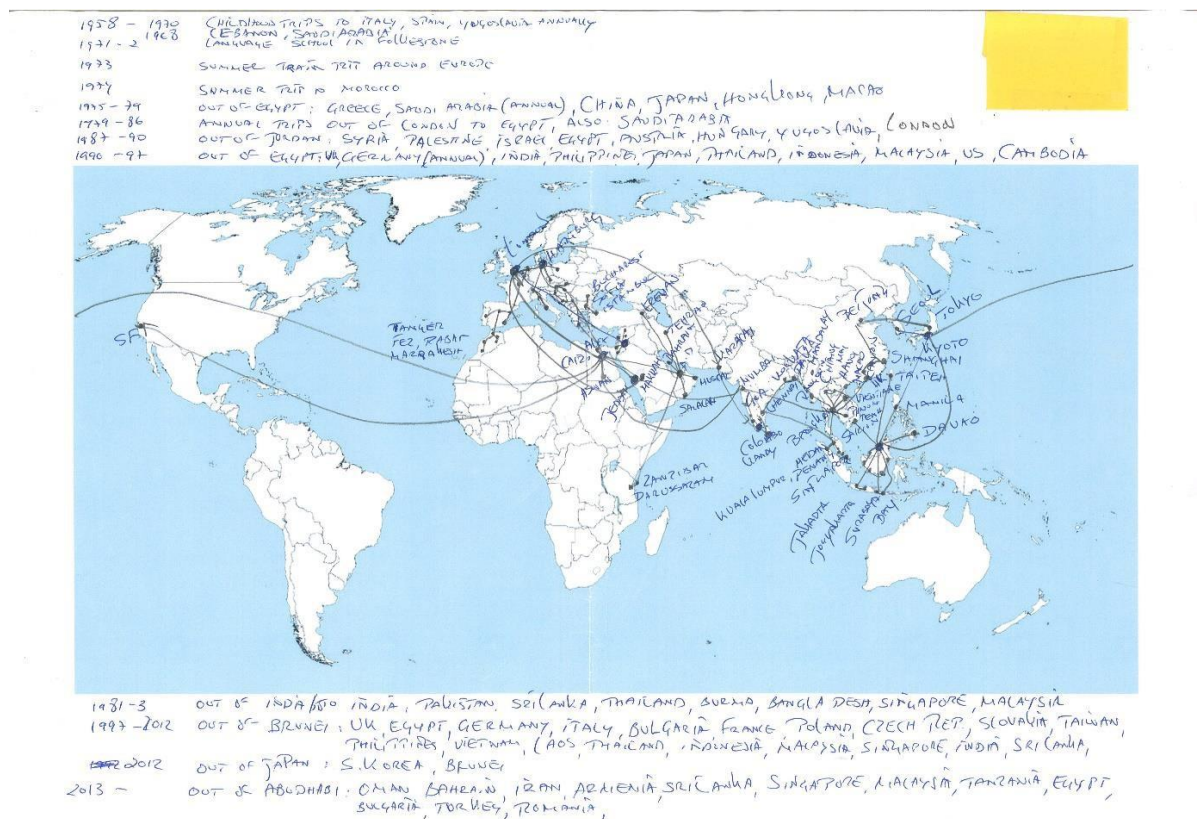
How long did you spend on your maps? (Colleen)

I spent yesterday!

It was quite interesting. For the first time, it's actually connected together. Our [global] movement was fragmented, but now I've put it together in one map (Mura)

In the process of reflecting on her map-making practice, Mura's narrative suggests that she has begun to view her mobility in a more holistic way. Fred, her partner, produced his own set of maps, over which he spent 'maybe an hour or so'. Although - as figure 9 shows - he too recorded a significant amount of detail on his global map.

Figure 9: Map illustrating global mobility (Fred)



Fred annotated the map of his country of origin (see figure 10 below) after completing his global and UAE maps. As he explains here, his memory of Germany - as one of his spheres of mobility - is not very strong.

I didn't do it in one go. I did the Germany one last. I started with the other places. That took more time. I think I did it by the most easy to remember, which is just the places where I lived. All in all, maybe an hour or so. And actually, my travel in Germany was when I was kinda young, so the movement [the memory] was quite faint. (Fred)

Figure 10: Map illustrating mobility within country of origin (Fred)



As has been noted in section 3.1.1 above, reference is made to how Fred left Germany as a young man in protest at military conscription and was not permitted to return until 10 years later. In our first interview, he spoke of how he has little sense of connection to the country now, finding that when he speaks German, he ‘searches for words’ and has ‘no intention of returning to Germany’. In the process of constructing his maps, Fred visually tells a story of how he is tied to some places and no longer to others; the visual representation of his mobility routes – experienced over time – tells a story of changing ties to places and the people who reside, or no longer reside there.

For Ivan, who recorded his mobility routes alongside his partner to produce one set of maps, their mapping practice encouraged him to reflect on the breadth of his family’s mobility to date.

I’m pleased to do this. It makes us reflect, actually. That’s quite good for us at this stage of our lives. We’ve lived in Asia, we’ve lived in the Americas, we’ve lived in the Middle East – obviously. And the UK. And it’s quite a journey for us; as individuals and a family. Isn’t it, really? It takes a bit of time to work out your travels. It makes you think about your life a bit ... what we’ve been doing. Doesn’t it? (Ivan).

Ivan’s remark (that creating their maps encouraged he and his partner to reflect upon and to take stock of their transnational mobility to date), is evident also in Patrick’s narrative below. In the case of he and his partner Fran, their map-making practice encouraged them to think differently about their future mobility, suggesting that it was experienced as an empowering process (Gabb and Singh, 2015).

The other thing is, now we’re mapping and counting the number of trips...when we’re back in Australia, we’ll be retired. Therefore, going away for two weeks won’t be a problem because we won’t be asking the boss for leave. Therefore, the parameters against which we’ve made the current decisions won’t apply. And we’ve never done that! And so, this bloody exercise has changed the dynamic of our planning! Which is probably good. We haven’t looked at it in detail until this. (Patrick)

In Patrick and Fran’s case, their mapping practice prompted them to think about the future as a time of greater freedom, when their prospective retirement might dismantle

current constraints on their free time. For Jeff too, his engagement with the process of mapping out his mobility patterns across three geographical spheres of mobility took him back in time, but also encouraged him to think more creatively about his future work. His answer to my question: 'How did you find the experience of putting the maps together?' elicited a lengthy response, which I have recorded below in full because it hints to the reflexive outcome of his mapping practice and highlights the role of memory within that practice. The extent of Jeff's reflexivity is illustrated in Appendix 5, which shows that in addition to annotating his maps, he also recorded his mobility in a spreadsheet format.

It was really cool because, you know, Matebateba is on the map and so you google it; you find it on the map and when you see the roads, you have memories. You think wow, I remember that – and I remember that. And then, was Chimanimani in the south or in the north? Where's Chimanimani river? And then Rusape? Oh shit, I forgot about that! And it was like an amazing blast from the past – a trip down memory lane. It was cool. Thank you. I wouldn't have done it otherwise.

There's a movie I want to make about my time in [...]. Something happened there. Not to me; it's about someone else. And when you go through this, then all those other stories pop up. And you know, most movie scripts are a collection of anecdotes. People draw on their experiences to build a story. And this was a wonderful experience for that. Just to ... but I need to document it myself. Just to remember some of that stuff: some of the sad stuff, some of the happy stuff, some of the crazy stuff. I've had a big pendulum in my life in terms of stuff that happens. It's always extremes for me somehow. There's a Chinese curse: 'May you have an interesting life.' I've had an interesting life. But you know, you kind of keep going forward and you don't look back. So, this was a really nice exercise. (Jeff)

Other respondents also commented on how creating their maps tested their memory in a way that encouraged reflection on past mobility. This in turn, highlights the presence of relationality within their environments of mobility.

It [the process of recording her mobility routes] was quite good; quite illuminating because, you know, every place you sort of tick off or draw

a line to; I was conscious of the memory. The clump is because these are the countries that are closest to the UK. These are the shortest journeys and um, I possibly used the wrong kind of pen, so you've ended up with just a big smudge! Yeah, Europe was my first travel experience. My mother was Italian, so we went to Italy a couple of times through my childhood because that's where my mother's family was. Ukraine I've been to for pure pleasure, really. I've been three times because that's where Dad was from. (Angela)

Angela's narrative above, echoes that of other respondents in my study: the falling away of some routes but the increased frequency of other routes were shown to be closely shaped by their relatedness to others; a concept I drew attention to in chapter two and with which I engage with more closely in chapters five and six. As an individual rather than couple respondent, Angela produced her mobility maps on her own. Most of my couple respondents co-constructed their maps, making it possible to gain some insight into how they approached their mobility in relationality terms (in relation to each other and the immediate geographical environment). For the three couples whose narratives I have drawn upon to illustrate how togetherness influences mapping activity (1: Claudia and Marcus; 2: Hattie and Phil; 3: Fran and Patrick), relationality is reflected in the co-production of their maps.

(1)

It's interesting for you, in your research, to see how people moved around before they got together and then when they were together. Because the differences you get as a couple, and the possibilities you have together; that you didn't have before, is interesting.

This is Colombia: Claudia before me and then together. Marcus and tourism before Claudia, and tourism on her own. And then we have Sweden – Marcus before Claudia, and then together. We've travelled almost equally in Sweden; myself, and then us together. We haven't been up to the North; it's quite a distance. Sweden is quite long!

Then in the emirates, we have Marcus for work and then together. We can put some more information in there if you like. But we felt it was a bit blurry! (Marcus)

Did you do the maps together? (Colleen)

Yes. It was a nice time to sit down and remember. First to organise

and then to agree how to colour them – and so on. (Marcus).

(2)

We thought of different ways to approach it. We decided to have Phil pre-marriage and then Phil marriage. We did it together. We did it yesterday morning. What we did is we went down to the beach and we were sitting, and we discussed what we'd do and then last night I was drawing it up. (Phil)

3)

We did it together. (Patrick)

Here's the map of Australia for both of us. So, I'm in pencil, both of us are in purple, and P is in green (Fran)

Oh, perfect. (Colleen)

By thinking about their mobility in terms of 'before and after'; of being without and then with their partner, the narratives above also highlight the ways in which a mapping-interview draws attention to the life course as it is experienced in relation to significant others. For Ivan, his narrative below suggests that his own life course and that of his partner are understood as a trajectory which, at a particular stage in their respective life courses, has come to be defined by the presence of each other; a typical instance of the 'linked lives' concept introduced in chapter two.

I mean, what you'll see with us, is the different phases of our lives. So, it's kind of well [refers to partner] you were over here, weren't you? And then we met each other and then we were over there [points to the global map]. Then we went back here, and then there, and now we're here. And actually, it all comes back to London Heathrow at some point. That's the hub, obviously – of our travels. Isn't it? (Ivan)

For Marcus too, his global mobility is expressed in terms of the physicality of his mobility (he comes from Sweden and has previously spent some years living in the Dominican Republic and Colombia), but it is also defined and is experienced in a relational way. Places are remembered by years: '2006 I was there – and there' but also by the absence or the presence of couple togetherness in his life: 'before we met and after we met'. These excerpts show that combining a visual method of data collection with a more sedentary (interview) approach, offers the opportunity to explore

the broad subject of migration and mobility in a way that enables such processes to be approached as a multi-layered experience. However, it also allows for a comfortable connection to be maintained between the 'doing' of data collection and the ensuing conceptual analysis.

3.3. A foot in each camp: researching later-in-life mobility in Abu Dhabi

Methodologically, this study is guided by what Coles and Fechter (2007) have termed the 'biographical connection', an approach that views the researcher's biography as feeding into the research process in a way that facilitates a deeper understanding of the meaning embedded in experiences of migration and mobility, and transnational family life. My own biographical connection is shaped by back-and-forth movement (Perez, 2013) between the UK, Abu Dhabi, and South Africa. In this way, my family life has come to be metaphorically stretched across space (Lee, 2009), an experience that affords valuable insight into my respondents' own transnational way of life. My biography is also shaped by my own 'later-in-life' positionality, in my case an advantageous position, as drawn attention to by Oliver (2007). As a young researcher at the time of her study on retirement migration, she found that in some instances she could only 'sit and watch' her respondents engage in everyday activities. Although I did not follow my respondents in an ethnographic sense, my age afforded me common experiences of everyday life in Abu Dhabi, and of family life lived across geographical distance.

At the start of my fieldwork, I was intent on taking an ethnographic approach, having concluded that my mobility biography (a person in her mid-50s whose partner was already living in Abu Dhabi prior to relocating there to embark on fieldwork; having left young adult children behind in the UK; and with ongoing family responsibilities in South Africa), would provide a channel through which to harness my own experience of transnational mobile family life. In this way it would be possible to understand the experiences of those at the centre of my study more fully (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Indeed, ethnographic studies of migration and mobility in the context of the UAE provide valuable insights into how migrants experience the places and spaces in which they live and work, as is the case in Walsh's (2007) study of home among British expatriates in Dubai, and Vora's (2013) study of the established middle and upper-

middle class Indian community in Dubai.

However, in the early part of my fieldwork I gave some thought to the importance of reflexivity, defined by Guillemin and Gillam (2004:14) as “a process of critical reflection both on the kind of knowledge produced from research and how that knowledge is generated”. In so doing, I became mindful of Lund’s (2012) point that the emotions of a researcher may at times mirror those of participants, demanding deep awareness of the potential impact on the overall study. I also reflected on Chang’s (2008) view that the value of ethnography lies not so much in the autobiographic account per se, but in how the researcher’s own story is used to tell the stories of others. That is, the main aim of research is to enhance existing knowledge and understanding of the lives of research participants and the societies in which they live. As Chang (2008) argues, the ethnographer’s story in itself is less valuable than its potential to serve as a vehicle through which a collective narrative can be conveyed.

Such ongoing reflexivity served to draw attention to my researcher positionality, constructed from a host of markers such as age group, name, occupation and title, ethno-national status (in my case an immigrant from South Africa in the UK but living temporarily in the UAE), gender, and migration experiences (Carling et al., 2014), creating the basis of the insider-outsider dialectic around which conversations around positionality revolve. For these authors, the insider-outsider distinction is typically understood as a relatively simple distinction: “an insider researcher is a member of the migrant group under study, whereas an outsider researcher is a member of the majority population in the country of settlement” (2014:36). In practice, that distinction is often more complicated. In my case for example, neither my respondents, nor myself as a student researcher and a spouse-sponsored resident, can be described as members of the majority population, given the absence of long-term rights normally associated with that status.

In that sense, my respondents and I share a common situatedness and sense of precariousness within the migrant destination. With some, I share a similar experience of migration; the same country of origin, the same country of citizenship, a common age-group and so on. But with others, my experience of migration is markedly different. I am younger than some and older than others. At the time of my fieldwork, I had a different occupational status to every one of them. In sum, embarking on my fieldwork

and reflecting on my positionality in my particular research setting, led to conclusions that gave further credence to my earlier argument that migrant categories (such as nationality, occupational status, and chronological age) are not neatly bounded or easily defined.

As a result of the reflexivity I have discussed above, I reversed my original decision to keep field notes in the style of auto-ethnography. Instead, I moved to a position where my biographical connection merely hovered comfortably through the fieldwork stage of my project. In the ethics section of the research outline that I prepared at the end of my first year of registration as a PhD student, I wrote that it was likely that new, unexpected ethical challenges would emerge once my research project got under way. Hence, in time, I reflected on whether or not it was ethical to record my own family practices, and the emotions I experienced in relation to – for example – the arrival and departure that accompanied visits from my adult children to Abu Dhabi. I extended this argument to my emerging friendship circle, asking the same question in relation to how my researcher positionality might impact upon my interactions with those individuals as the project progressed. At this point, I reflected on the value of inserting a degree of emotional space between myself and the methodological approach I anticipated taking in the early stage of fieldwork. In sum, the rationale for my decision was that adopting a biographical connection rather than ethnographic approach, would allow me to keep a foot in each camp while still maintaining the ethical integrity of the project.

3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained the process of respondent recruitment and the composition of my research sample; drawn attention to my researcher positionality and how the project's broad ethical framework guided my methodological decision-making; and I have set out my rationale for the use of the mapping-interview as a research method. Through the course of discussion, I have argued that adopting a methodological approach directly aligned to the practice of mobility and migration (respondents constructed visual representations of their own mobility and migration trajectories), I have been able to gain deep insight into how the physical act of moving to and between geographical places globally, nationally, and within the migrant destination is an embodied and reflexive process. In their map construction, respondents engaged in "topographic storytelling" (Dodge, 2017:91), to which I

referred earlier in the chapter. The discussion has demonstrated that the mapping-interview, as a method of data collection, has made it possible to arrive at a rich understanding of how mobile families 'do' family across geographical distance by taking their lived experience as the starting point for further discussion.

As Table 1 shows, while keeping 'later-in-life' common, my research sample cuts across gender, relationship types, country of origin, occupation, and length of residence in the UAE. This sampling approach reflects the enormous diversity within the foreign workforce in Abu Dhabi and captures a range of experiences incorporated within later-in-life as a broad life course category. In this chapter I have argued that my particular research setting, and the research questions this thesis set out to address, calls for emphasis to be placed on this collective later-in-life narrative. Although other Gulf migration scholars have sought to place nationality (e.g. Walsh, 2014) or gender (e.g. Parreñas et al., 2018) at the centre of enquiry, I would argue that dedicated analysis of each of those categories in relation to a focus on later-in-life, would: a) diminish the importance of the collective story I am concerned to highlight in this thesis, of which little is currently known, and b) would risk treating the migrant categories (set out in Table 1) as being neatly bounded and easily definable rather than complicated, variable in their consequences, and not always (at all points in the life course and in all mobility contexts) of central importance to the lives of those they attempt to define.

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CHAPTER 4

To Abu Dhabi and back (and back again): Complicated mobilities later-in-life

INTRODUCTION

The factors that motivate individuals to move later-in-life from the country in which they reside, has been considered in relation to retirement migration (e.g. Oliver 2008); return migration (e.g. Percival, 2013); family reunification (e.g. Belanger and Candiz, 2020); and global outsourcing of care (e.g. Schwiter et al., 2020). However, little attention has been paid to understanding the factors that motivate later-in-life mobile professionals to move abroad for the purposes of work. As noted in chapter two, such consideration has largely been embedded within broader studies of self-directed expatriate mobility (Richardson, 2006). In this chapter, I contribute in two ways to this limited body of work and to migration studies more broadly.

First, in seeking to understand the reasons for which my respondents moved from their respective countries to Abu Dhabi, I draw attention to the multifaceted collection of motives that impelled their mobility. In this way, the analysis goes beyond well-entrenched “normalised scripts of migration” (Collins, 2018:969). As Collins argues, migration is typically conceptualised as an event driven either by economic factors or by forced migration. All respondents in my study moved to Abu Dhabi primarily for employment-related reasons, either as an employee or as a dependent of their spouse, thereby meeting the primary condition for residency status (as set out in chapter two). However, their narratives show that other factors are nestled beneath this overarching impetus, collectively reflecting the relationality, agency, and temporalities of their individual and coupled life courses.

Second, this chapter contributes to existing migration scholarship by drawing attention to the presence of repeated phases of migration within skilled migration flows, particularly within the Gulf migration corridor and the UAE specifically. The discussion shows that this form of mobility, indicative of low-income migration flows to the region

as considered by Gardner (2011, 2010) and Parreñas et al. (2018), is also evident within privileged migration flows, although to a lesser extent and with more advantageous economic and social outcomes. I argue that in the context of their migrant destination and later-in-life stage of the life course, evidence of repeated phases of migration among my sample group (predominantly autonomous mobile professionals) suggests they draw on their expertise and skill to engage with this pattern of mobility as social actors in possession of their own particular human agency. However, I also argue that this form of mobility reflects the precarious nature of migrant work in the Gulf region and demonstrates that later-life migration is characterised by a state of precarity as well as relative privilege.

The discussion is organised into two parts. In part one, I examine the factors that motivated my respondents to move to Abu Dhabi. I divide this decision-making into four elements: i) the desire to achieve greater financial and personal security; ii) favourable childhood memories of living in the Gulf region; iii) a theological explanation for their mobility; and iv) the appeal of adventure.

In part two, I develop the notion of ‘complicated mobilities’ by drawing attention to the practice of repeated phases of migration to Abu Dhabi and the UAE, as introduced above. This form of mobility is evident in the migration trajectories of twelve respondents within my overall sample. Nine respondents moved to Abu Dhabi and then returned to their home country of residence with the intention to settle for good, only to move back again to embark on another phase of migration. In a few cases, this pattern was repeated for a third and fourth time. Three respondents, one individual and one set of couple respondents, demonstrate a trajectory of ongoing mobility between Abu Dhabi (as the first migration destination) and another country (as the second migration destination). In each of these cases, one partner and the children remained in Abu Dhabi, and the partner who moved away returned on a weekly or bi-monthly basis for the duration of the time spent working away. Consequently, their mobility trajectories resembled less of a linear progression, and more a process of “juddering mobilities” (Hui, 2013:895) and a series of “starts and stops” (Collins, 2018:972).

4.1. “Why would you go there?”: Motivations for mobility later-in-life

When one set of couple respondents, Christine and Nathan, informed their family and friends in the UK that they had accepted a job offer in Abu Dhabi, they were repeatedly asked: Why would you go there? As Christine said: ‘Everyone thought we were mad!’ This question, incorporated in the sub-heading above, draws attention first to how the specificity of the migration destination serves as a strong motivation for mobility. In choosing to move to Abu Dhabi, Christine and Nathan chose to move somewhere that is geographically far away from the UK and – in the collective imagination – a certain kind of place. Secondly, it draws attention to the value of thinking more expansively about why individuals and families make the decision to move to Abu Dhabi at a later stage of their professional lives or, for those who moved as younger people, why they choose to remain resident in Abu Dhabi once they had entered the later-in-life stage of the life course. Hence, to reach a deeper understanding of why people such as Christine and Nathan would decide to move in the later stage of their professional lives, the multifaceted nature of mobility and associated decision-making demands close consideration, as demonstrated in the discussion to follow.

4.1.1. ‘They offered me a job with a lot of money. And I took it’: moving to achieve financial and personal security

All my respondents secured an employment contract prior to arriving in the UAE, thereby satisfying the primary condition for an employer-sponsored visa and the right to reside. Although few made explicit reference to being motivated to move to Abu Dhabi for financial gain, it is generally understood that attractive salaries in the Gulf region strongly influence migration decisions. For example, in a study conducted by Richardson and Mallon (2005) on British academics working in New Zealand, Turkey, the UAE, and Singapore, the respondents working in the UAE reported that they had earned more money than they would have done working in the same sector in their home countries. In more recent years, although it is understood that highly lucrative packages have become less common following the 2008 global economic crisis, salaries are still considered to be higher relative to those paid in the same sector in many other parts of the world. As the excerpts below show, this was verified by two of

my respondents: Richard, who worked in the newspaper industry in the UK, and Nada, who worked in the aviation sector in Serbia prior to moving to Abu Dhabi.

I mean, I earned a good salary in the UK, but I still earn a lot more here than I can back there. (Richard)

It's a very similar job to what I did in Serbia, only better paid. (Nada)

Ken too was attracted by a salary offer that would allow him to earn a higher income relative to what he would earn in the US. His statement: 'I was offered a job with a lot of money. And I took it', points to his prime motivation for moving. Ken was preparing to retire from the military in the US when, at the age of 52, he was made job offers in the US and in Abu Dhabi. At the time of our first interview, he and his partner had lived in Abu Dhabi for two and a half years and were planning to stay a further four, after which, as he put it: 'That's it'. As Ken explains, the lucrative salary attached to the Abu Dhabi job offer sealed their decision to move.

Why we came here is purely mercenary. They offered me a job with a lot of money – and I took it. That's basically it! The pay here is significantly higher than what I make in the States. So, we decided to do it – away from the family. And we can do this for a shorter period of time, whereas I would have done that other job for a lot longer. This is just going to offer us the opportunity to completely retire at a younger age. (Ken)

Although it is clear that Ken and Cheryl's move was financially motivated, they also came to realise that moving to Abu Dhabi, in the latter stage of Ken's working life, would allow them to make positive adjustments to their existing retirement planning and to their coupled life-course trajectory. Immediately following his retirement from the military, Ken could have taken a job in the US to see him through to final retirement. However, he quickly calculated that accepting a lucrative job offer elsewhere at his age, would allow him and his partner to retire earlier than anticipated. That is, the move would enable them to fast-forward the retirement stage of their shared life course.

In sum, Ken and Cheryl's decision to move to Abu Dhabi was made with the expectation that it would enable them to invest more fully in their non-working future

life – it would allow them to “bring the good life into being in the future” (Schwiter et al., 2020:108). Their life in Abu Dhabi can certainly be described as living a good life in the present, as evidenced in Ken’s account of how they spend their leisure time: ‘Cheryl really loves the beach, so we go to the beach a lot. And I play a lot of golf’. But it is the anticipated, future-retired-life back in the US that dominates their current narrative. It is their desire to hasten the life they hope to enjoy on their return that motivates their present mobility, rather than a wish to live ‘the good life’ in the present (in Abu Dhabi), as argued to be the case for lifestyle migrants motivated by the lure of warmer climes and other amenities (Benson and O’Reilly, 2009).

The discussion above highlights the financial gain associated with mobility and how it holds the potential to bring about unexpected benefits – in Cheryl and Ken’s case, early retirement. Chris, who moved from the UK at the age of 56, was also motivated by the prospect of greater financial security. However, as his narrative to follow shows, the context in which he made the decision to move was markedly different to Ken and Cheryl’s account set out above.

I took redundancy in 2007 and I got an absolute fortune. But I spent it in a year. Don’t ask me what I spent it on! So, I realised after a year that I had no money left, so I thought I better find a job. And that was in 2008 when the [financial] crash happened and newspapers were laying people off left, right and centre. Even for [casual] shifts, they were paying rubbish money. A friend of mine phoned me up and said, ‘Do you want to come over here?’

I pinged over an email and within 20 minutes he was calling me. I had an interview on the phone and they offered me some money, but I said that wasn’t enough. I then worked it out – what the equivalent would be here [in the UK] with tax etc, and I said okay, go on then. (Chris)

As Chris explains, he accepted the salary he was offered in Abu Dhabi because it made financial sense, but also because he needed to get back into full-time employment. For Chris, his own life course biography, shaped by the past, present and future, served to “fold together” (Collins, 2018:966) in a way that gave rise to a particular set of migrant subjectivities, reflective of broader life course events. So, although his mobility was shaped by the desire to achieve greater financial security, that desire was triggered by

a long period of unemployment in the UK. The loss of his job at a later time in his life course, the unfavourable state of the UK labour market, and his choice to spend his redundancy pay-out 'in a year', meant that Chris arrived in Abu Dhabi with a particular set of migrant subjectivities in place. Therefore, although an attractive salary offered him the opportunity to enjoy a relatively privileged lifestyle in Abu Dhabi, and potentially offers him a relatively privileged future, his account draws attention to the diverse circumstances that motivate later-in-life mobility and shape privileged migration flows.

The set of narratives above point to how mobility may be motivated by the desire to achieve a greater level of financial security ahead of the retirement stage of the life course. For others, the desire to achieve greater security late-in-life is expressed in terms of the quest to achieve greater personal security. For Mazia and Fazi, the decision to move to Abu Dhabi was shaped by their need to find a country that offered them the potential to earn salaries that would enable them to improve their financial position, but also because it provided a place where they could live together. Neither of their countries of previous residence (Lebanon and London respectively) presented the possibility for them to build a life together as a couple. Hence, in deliberating where that would be possible to achieve, they needed to identify a country where work opportunities and visa regulations would allow them to both live and work. In the excerpt to follow, Mazia and Fazi set out the factors that drove their decision to move to Abu Dhabi, even though that destination could only provide them with a temporary place of settlement.

We had to make a decision [to move to Abu Dhabi] because he was living in London, and I was in Beirut. How long do you keep a relationship like that for? He came to visit once. Then I said ... we both thought we needed to do something about this. We either end this relationship or we find a home. And we needed to find a country that was not Beirut and was not London because it was difficult for me to move to London while he didn't have a stable job. He had freelance, but it was probably impossible for me to live in London like that. And the situation in Lebanon was still deteriorating and I thought, it's not fair for my husband – who lives in London – to come and live in Lebanon. The UAE was the best option because we were both treated, in a way, equally. We could both have residency. I was working in Lebanon, but

it wasn't enough pay for both of us to plan our future or even save a little money. It was difficult. (Mazia)

It was impossible. (Fazi)

It was impossible, yeah. (Mazia)

This is essentially what Abu Dhabi has done for me. It's given me the opportunity to start a home with my wife. Our first home – that isn't our parents' home. So, I came here because we needed somewhere to live. (Fazi)

For these respondents, moving to Abu Dhabi from Lebanon (Mazia) and the UK (Fazi), was firmly grounded in the need to settle in a place where they would both have the right to reside and to work, where they could save money, and where they could live that was not (unlike Lebanon) continually faced with the prospect of renewed civil war. They moved to Abu Dhabi because they 'needed somewhere to live' that was 'not Beirut and was not London'. In a way, the strategy they employed to achieve togetherness resonates with the findings of Nowicka's (2007) study of mobile transnational professionals working for the United Nations, for whom home as a place of belonging came to be disassociated from any fixed geographical location. As she writes: "Home is not seen by these individuals as a particular location. It is defined by the relationships connecting the mobile individuals with people and objects" (2007:79). For Mazia and Fazi, Abu Dhabi is articulated as 'home' in so much as it provides a place to enable couple togetherness.⁷ As Fazi stated in the excerpt above, 'This is essentially what Abu Dhabi has done for me. It's given me the opportunity to start a home with my wife'.

The joint narrative that Fazi and Mazia offer, also draws attention to how their mobility trajectory and their coupled life course has been shaped by "regimes of mobility" which "calls attention to the role both of individual states and of changing international regulatory and surveillance administrations that affect individual mobility" (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013:189). By situating their narrative within the wider regulatory

⁷ I examine the concept of family togetherness in chapter five in more depth, exploring the ways in which my respondents sustain their transnational family ties.

contexts of nation states (the UK, Lebanon, and the UAE), attention is drawn to how their mobility story is shaped by the precarity produced by multiple mobility regimes. But it is also the case that their skills and qualifications afford them a relatively privileged position within the UAE's migrant workforce.

Two factors point to how their story of mobility demonstrates a state of precarity. First, the regulatory framework that governs long-term residency in Abu Dhabi means that, should there be a time when neither of them are in full-time employment, they would lose their right to an employer-sponsored visa. At the time of our final interview, Fazi had just been informed of his impending redundancy, following the sale of his employing company. This meant that he faced the imminent prospect of losing his right to residence. However, by drawing on the agency he and Mazia possess as a couple, they responded to Fazi's new precarious residency status by applying for a spouse-dependent residency visa. This allowed Mazia to become his new sponsor. By drawing on their collective, couple agency, it became possible for Fazi to avoid an unplanned ultimate return to the UK or to be forced into onward migration.

The precarity produced by the mobility regimes in which they were located at the time, also meant that Mazia and Fazi could not live as a couple in the UK. Fazi's freelance employment status meant they knew they were unlikely to meet the UK immigration requirements in place at that time⁸, as suggested by Mazia's statement that it was 'difficult for me to move to move to London while he didn't have a stable job.' In turn, they could not live together in Lebanon because first, it was not possible to earn enough money to 'plan for their future' and accrue savings, and second they felt uneasy about the political uncertainty surrounding Lebanon's future at that time.

A further source of precariousness can be identified in the ambivalent terms in which Mazia expresses her sense of connection to Abu Dhabi as the migrant emplacement. On the one hand, as Fazi states in the excerpt above, moving to Abu Dhabi provided

⁸ Mazia's reference to stability of income is likely to refer to financial requirements under the Immigration Rules in the UK. Part 8 of Immigration Rules, which relates to family members, contains the minimum financial requirements to be met where the application is made on the basis of family life with a person who is a British citizen, or who is settled in the UK.

them with an opportunity to set up a home together. But on the other, Mazia's narrative to follow points to a strong sense of disconnect from the broader urban environment in which they presently live.

There's no community here. The free time we have is not spent with lots of other people. We either sit at home or we go together somewhere, like NYU. We watch TV. But I can't think of interactions with the surroundings. I don't like to walk outside not only because it's too hot, but it's dusty. And um, there are a few people, but the few people we know are friends. That's not enough to make a community where one belongs to, where you can talk about your projects, your research. Compared to other places ... in Lebanon we see family. It's sometimes annoying – but you see family.

In the UK, you go places. You feel engaged. Here, you feel that you are isolated, excluded. In most other cities, to go from A to B you can walk. You don't feel like you're putting in a lot of effort to go. Let's say you want to go the National Gallery [in London] and then you want to go to the Portrait Gallery – they are close to each other. It doesn't feel that distant. It feels normal emotionally and physically. There are routes to these places. And it creates a familiarity with them. And belonging. We've been to NYU five times and it just feels distant. (Mazia)

Mazia's narrative above draws attention to how her sense of belonging to place is contingent on the presence of inclusive urban space, and the intellectual engagement those spaces engender. She describes her visits to the Abu Dhabi campus of New York University, where public events such as lectures and film screenings are held, as a place that feels 'distant'; as a place that produces a sense of alienation to the immediate environment (Manzo, 2003). Previously situated in the heart of Abu Dhabi's city centre, a new campus was built in 2014, on a site quite separate from other areas of urban activity. For Mazia, it is the physical connection between places and the regular use of the routes that connect them, that builds a sense of familiarity and belonging to place. It is evident that her expectation of how public spaces are arranged, and for what they are used, is also shaped by her relational experience. Abu Dhabi is experienced in relation to two other places: Lebanon, where her belonging is

represented by the presence of family; and London, where connectivity between urban spaces, and accessibility to public spaces, creates a sense of belonging to place.⁹

Sarah and Matias's accounts to follow, resonates with Mazia's discussed above. Having moved from Argentina to Abu Dhabi in their mid-50s, two years prior to interviewing them, their account shows that, in the first instance, moving was motivated by the desire to achieve greater financial security in their family life. As Matias suggests, they hoped to achieve a better quality of life in the present and, by accumulating savings, to ensure a good quality of life in the future. But their move was also motivated by the desire to move from a specific place (Argentina) to another kind of place, which Matias hoped would provide a safer living environment for him and his family. He was also motivated to move to Abu Dhabi because, as a migrant destination, it recognised his medical qualifications and professional experience. In this way, following a successful outcome of an examination set by the UAE medical governing body, he was able to practise outside of his home country.

The only way we could improve our quality of life, and save some money to ensure our daughter's university education, was to move here. In my special case – as a doctor – I cannot work in the UK, I cannot work in the United States, I cannot work in Canada, or in Bolivia. I cannot work anywhere – just a few countries in the rest of the world, because of my different qualification. This is a country that said 'okay, you can come here because you have a lot of experience. We will record your employment and now we will upgrade you as a consultant'. So that's why we moved here. (Matias)

As you know, Argentina is something like this [makes an up and down hand movement] due to economic and political problems.¹⁰ We finally

⁹ In chapter seven, I draw on alternative narratives that point to how some of my respondents feel a sense of connectivity with Abu Dhabi's built and natural environments.

¹⁰ In her study of middle-class Argentinean immigrants in the US and Spain, Vermot (2015:139) draws attention to the political and economic issues that triggered higher levels of immigration from the early 2000s, writing that because of high levels of unemployment and hyperinflation, "Argentineans lost trust in their state" and came to live in an environment of "increased social uneasiness."

moved here. Argentina was in bad position, both the political and economic situation. (Matias)

And the security. (Sarah)

Yes, the social situation also. (Matias)

There's a lot of violence. (Sarah)

Robberies and so on. (Matias)

It is evident that both narratives embody a relational dimension. As Skinner et al. (2015:787) write, “spaces and places only emerge through their connections with other spaces and places.” Matias’s statement, that his qualifications and skills are recognised in very few countries, illustrates the relational context in which his mobility is played out.¹¹ His migration options are determined in an environment of relationality in which medical boards and institutional frameworks assess his worth in relation to medical professionals from other countries. Second, for both Sarah and Matias, Abu Dhabi is experienced in a different way to their home country: their migrant emplacement is what Argentina is not. In their study of migration to the Algarve, Torkington and Ribeiro (2019:685) suggest that mobility results in a rejection of the previous country of residence prior to the event of migration: “The juxtaposition of the here and there is thus a form of ‘othering’, helping to reinforce the positive status (and identity) of the ‘insider’ by rejecting what lies on the outside.” However, Sarah and Matias have sustained a connection to Argentina through annual visits home and they own a property there, both of which sustain their connection to Argentina. Importantly, they draw on their (uneasy) past experience in Argentina to establish a relational frame of reference to Abu Dhabi. In a sense, that legacy of insecurity migrated with them, shaping their sense of connection to Abu Dhabi as the place where they live out their present, everyday lives.

¹¹ The issue of overseas qualification recognition and transferability of skills across national settings has been examined by scholars such as Shirmohammadi and Stewart (2018) and Bailey and Mulder (2017), whose work is concerned with skilled migration.

4.1.2. 'I remember it being fun because – you know – we were kids': childhood memories as a motivation for mobility

In the discussion above, I pointed to how Ken and his partner Cheryl moved to Abu Dhabi because Ken was offered a job with a lucrative salary, which in turn led them to conclude that if they accepted the offer, they would then be in a position to retire earlier than anticipated. However, their decision to move was also influenced by Cheryl's happy memories of childhood years living in the Middle East. Cheryl lived with her family for eight years in Saudi Arabia, returning to the US at the age of 14. As the excerpts below illustrate, the positive memories she holds of that period of her life, and Ken's awareness of how those memories continued to remain important to her, points to a more complex basis to their mobility than suggested by Ken's initial statement: 'They offered me a job with a lot of money. And I took it.'

When we were there it was um, underdeveloped and we lived in a compound. We lived in the middle of nowhere and you actually got to see the camels and nomads. We would jump the wall to see. There were maybe 30 houses in the compound. I remember it being fun because – you know – we were kids. Kids from all over. There was a constant change of kids. We only went home for one month in the summer. It was probably longer; but I don't remember. Then we'd have two rest and recreation trips somewhere in the year; we could travel outside. We'd go for a week and sometimes two weeks. (Cheryl)

Yeah, her history of being there as a child ... she wanted to do it again. She's always spoken very well about Saudi – that it was a great deal of fun. (Ken)

Richardson (2006:479) writes that relationships to place are "embedded in the history and social experience and relationships dating back to childhood". For Cheryl, the positive memories she has of living in Saudi Arabia as a child, clearly influenced her commitment to move with her partner to Abu Dhabi in adult life. As two people now in a later stage of the life course, it is apparent that their decision was made not only in relation to a work opportunity and the pure economics of migration, but was also shaped by memories earlier in the life course, pointing to how life-course stages are connected across time.

Importantly, Cheryl's narrative suggests that her childhood memories of Saudi Arabia are memories of a specific place (a compound), and a particular way of life. In their study of Danish business expatriates in Saudi Arabia, Luring and Selmer (2009) found that adult experiences of living in compounds as expatriates were shaped by the social norms governing expected social behaviour. Danes were expected to socialise with fellow nationals, strengthening and protecting the membership of this in-group and minimising their freedom to forge friendships with non-Danes. In contrast, Cheryl's childhood memory is rooted in the multinational composition of her compound life. It is the memory of playing with 'kids from all over,' and the specific form of relatedness that everyday friendship gave rise to, that has become etched in her memory over time. Intertwined with her memory of having readily available playmates, are also experiences of living in Saudi Arabia that she holds in her "museum of memories" (Richter, 2011:225). The people and places that form the basis of her childhood memories, as Richter suggests, "might once have been places of daily action, but they became powerful in a symbolic way that is linked to past stories" (2011:225). Cheryl's memory of jumping over the compound wall to watch the camels and nomadic people walking past, and of living 'in the middle of nowhere', is a memory of a way of life she lived as a child. It is possible that the prospect of moving to Abu Dhabi with her partner in adult life was viewed as an opportunity to experience that way of life once again, albeit at a different time in her life course.

For Fred too, his memory of family holidays enjoyed in the Middle East influenced the decision that he and his partner made to move to the Gulf region, and then later to Abu Dhabi.

My first trip to the Middle East was when I was a child. Travelling was something my parents always liked and I kind of got used to it. And I guess that's why I felt I wanted to go somewhere else. It's been a part of me since childhood. I always thought, you know, that I would come back to the Middle East as I felt there was some sort of connection. The adventures and experience – so much to see. But it didn't really work out like that for a long time. (Fred)

Fred's comment that he has always felt 'some sort of connection' to the Gulf region, resonates with Marschall's (2015) notion of personal memory tourism, a practice that involves a retracing of early journeys and the evoking of happy (or painful) memories.

As Marschall (2015:884) argues, “the gaze of the personal memory tourist is unlike any other tourist’s gaze, because it is not constructed through difference, but through memory”. Fred moved into and out of the Middle East a number of times over the course of his career, and was working in Brunei when a job became available in Abu Dhabi, just as he and his partner were considering retirement. His comment that the Middle East has ‘been part of me since childhood’ reinforces the relational nature of migration and mobility.

4.1.3. ‘We felt God was leading us’: theological explanations for mobility

Although religion was not a topic I had identified as a potential area for discussion, over the course of the interviews it became clear that faith played an important part in the everyday lives of a small number of my respondents. For example, while discussing the topic of ultimate return, Nintin explained that he had a clear time scale in mind. However, he then went on to qualify his explanation by saying: ‘We can plan but God decides!’ Similarly, whilst relaying the story of her arrival in Abu Dhabi, Penny mentioned that she had found the process of house hunting easy to negotiate because she was supported by members of her church congregation. In the case of Emily, and of Jim and Helen, whose narratives form the focus of the discussion to follow, their faith directly influenced their decision to move to Abu Dhabi.

Emily’s move to Abu Dhabi was motivated in the first instance by the lucrative salary and housing package she was offered, but the personal circumstances that were central to her life at that time also influenced that decision. Prior to leaving South Africa, she was ‘not in a good marriage’ and her divorce left her in a precarious financial position. As a result, she applied for a teaching job in Abu Dhabi with a salary and a housing allowance that would enable her to ‘send everything home’. However, although the financial component sits at the centre of her migration decision-making, as the excerpt below demonstrates, her decision-making was closely influenced by her faith.

I thought it was a way ... I thought it was a way in which God was showing me ... you know, giving me a chance to get out of that marriage. (Emily)

Rather different was the case of Jim and Helen, who had moved to the UAE with two small children 17 years prior to interviewing them. They were 'quite happy' living in South Africa but when he 'got an offer', they decided to move. However, as in Emily's case, their decision was also influenced by the faith that steered their everyday lives.

We felt God was leading us. We had just got married and had a new home. We had settled in – it was a really nice home and we were quite happy there. And I got an offer. Well, I was headhunted. I went through the whole process with them. I wouldn't say that I was enthusiastic about it, but I had looked at travelling before and we saw it as an adventure. But all along, I was straight down the line with these guys. This is who I am, you either like me or lump me. I'm not here to mess around. And they went for it. So, we certainly felt that God was opening doors for us. (Jim)

Given that Jim, Helen, and Emily's decision to move to the UAE was an economic decision in the first instance, their decision cannot be defined as religiously motivated migration driven by a sense of altruism (Oberholster et al., 2013). However, it is possible to describe their decision-making as a 'theologizing' experience (Smith, 1978 cited in Connor, 2009). Although their primary motivation to move was not based in the missionary ethos of "individual salvation and compassion for others" (Anderson, 2016:391), it is clear that they each made sense of their potential mobility through the lens of their personal and collective belief systems.

4.1.4. 'We came here literally not knowing anything!' An opportunity for adventure

As discussed above, Helen and Jim's initial (financial) motivation for mobility was fuelled by their belief in a divine calling to realise their move. However, their narrative also indicates that they viewed a potential move to Abu Dhabi as an opportunity for adventure, adding yet a further layer to their decision-making. As Jim stated in the excerpt immediately above, 'I had looked at travelling before, and we saw it as an adventure'. Jim's viewpoint is shared by Helen, who suggests that their lack of knowledge of the UAE, and the fact that their relatively uncomplicated family

responsibilities at that time meant they could leave South Africa with few fixed plans in place, added to their sense of impending adventure.

I mean we came here literally not knowing anything. You know the thing is, because our children were so small, we didn't really need to do homework as far as schooling or whatever. So, we just saw it as an adventure, and it was just like, oh well (Helen).

The way that Helen equates adventure with the unknown and the unfamiliar, is echoed in Pam's account of a conversation she had with her husband who was on a visit to Abu Dhabi at the time, with the view to securing a job there.

He phoned me from Abu Dhabi and said: 'I don't know what you're going to think of this place. In the airport, everyone's in these sort of dress things!' It's a weird place. What do you think? Nobody had heard of it! But I said, 'I'm prepared to give it a go!' (Pam)

Pam's reference to the *abaya* worn by Emirati women in the UAE draws attention to the role of dress in constructing a sense of Self/Other, as put forward by Coles and Walsh (2010). For Pam's partner, the presence of women wearing *abayas* in the local airport served to construct Abu Dhabi as a place of difference. In that environment of difference, Abu Dhabi was presented as 'weird' and unknown. Her comment: 'I'm prepared to give it a go!' hints at the sense of adventure this unknown territory promised to provide.

For Nathan and Christine too, the (mis)representations of the Middle East they encountered before their move, serve to frame their mobility as being in some way exotic. Such imaginative geographies arguably construct "an essentialist binary and hierarchical position: Occident/Orient" (Coles and Walsh, 2010:1319), and fuel public misconceptions of places such as the Middle East, as demonstrated here:

It feels quite adventurous – that we've done it. Everyone thought we were mad. Especially given the misconceptions about the Middle East. Why would you go there? What food would you eat? So, I'm really glad we took the leap and came to see what it's like. Really glad. (Christine)

Likewise, Matthew moved to Abu Dhabi at the age of 56 because he was made an attractive salary offer, but also because the move offered the possibility for adventure. As in the case of Christine and Nathan, Matthew situates adventure within the everydayness of life.

You mentioned earlier that one of the reasons you came here was for a sense of adventure. Has it felt like that? (Colleen)

Oh yeah, definitely. Yeah. (Matthew)

In what way? (Colleen)

Just in terms of being exposed to a new physical environment. I mean, it's not like an adventure up the Amazon – that kind of adventure. It's just...different. You know. Anytime you're exposed to new things to me an adventure is ... you know, the entire experience. It's not like it has to be exciting every day. It's an adventure just being at work, just listening to different people, that type of thing. It's an adventure driving around here! It's not a good adventure. It's just an adventure. (Matthew)

In the process of enfolding adventure and the everyday practice of driving in Abu Dhabi, Matthew transforms a previously insignificant, largely mundane act, into an adventure; a unique experience in the new environment in which he now drives. As Conradson and Latham (2010:228) write, everyday practice comes to be “reworked and re-imagined” in the transnational mobility context. For Pearce (2017:585), car journeys, regardless of the global setting, move from the “habitual and generic” when the cognitive dimension of such journeys are drawn into the analysis. When it is acknowledged that ‘other things’ (the passing landscape, conversations between a driver and passengers) are thought about at the same time as the act of driving, then the mundane act of driving becomes an event. Therefore, as Pearce (2017:595) writes, each of those events “has the potential to become something special and unique on account of what the driver’s thinking brings to bear upon it”. Hence for Matthew, it is possible to argue that in his everyday life in Abu Dhabi he drives so as to get from one place to another. But in doing so, he engages with Abu Dhabi as his everyday place,

not only through the observations he makes, but the way he thinks about those observations (and possibly talks to passengers about), as he drives.

4.2. Repeated migrations: second (and third and fourth) time around

In his study of recurrent patterns of mobility amongst South Asian labourers moving between Qatar and their home countries, Gardner (2010) set out to answer the question: Why do they keep coming? Why, despite the adverse working conditions, do this group of labourers move to work in Qatar, make the definitive return trip home, and then leave again, each time accepting a new employment contract despite knowing the hardships they will endure on each new contract? Gardner argues that they return to Qatar again and again firstly because their families “insist upon it” (2010:48). Second, they do so because the relative value of wages in the Gulf states is considerably higher than those paid in South Asia for the same type of work, to which I referred earlier in this chapter. Hence repeated mobility is driven by the financial benefits that a further phase of migration promises to offer. In their study of domestic workers in the UAE, Parreñas et al. (2018:1234) examine the phenomenon of repeated migration as ‘circular migration’, which involves: “the repetition of movement between a specific sending and receiving country, or a seasonal flow between a rural and urban region within a country”. For this group of migrants, it is their limited financial capital and low educational qualifications that drives this pattern of migration, which itself becomes a “mode of livelihood” (Parreñas et al., 2018:1234).

The purpose of this section is to explore a pattern of mobility that I have termed ‘repeated migrations’ within one particular migration corridor: the UAE and the Gulf region. In doing so, I expand upon current Gulf migration scholarship concerned with this pattern of mobility by drawing attention to its prevalence within privileged migration flows. Repeated phases of migration are evident in the mobility trajectories of 12 of the 40 respondents in my study. Although not a high proportion of the whole sample, the finding is significant for three reasons.

First, repeated migrations specifically within one migration corridor (in this case, the Gulf region) is not usually evident within skilled migration flows. Within those flows, ongoing mobility is more likely to include diverse mobility patterns and a range of migration destinations (Kōu, 2014). Although Table 2 shows that other geographical

routes also make up the mobility trajectories of my respondents, in all cases repeat routes of mobility were specifically situated within the Gulf migration corridor. Second, a pattern of repeated migrations draws attention to the dynamic and fluctuating nature of employment and employment practices within the UAE and the Gulf region more broadly. The region's reliance on foreign labour means that the demand for skilled labour, although dependent on a host of economic and other factors that might be present or absent at any one time, gives rise to precarious work. The loss of an existing work contract and subsequent return to one's home country, or a move to a new migration destination, may well be followed by an opportunity to secure a new contract back in Abu Dhabi or within the Gulf region at another point in time. Third, although it is true that the employer-linked residency visa produces a precarious work environment, later-in-life mobile professionals respond to the ebb and flow of work opportunities in a way that demonstrates their capacity to enact human agency.

Table 2 sets out the repeat mobility trajectories of my respondents whose mobility trajectories provide evidence of this form of mobility. It shows the number of repeated migrations to the Gulf region (in italics) and to the UAE (in bold type). Respondents are listed by the number of repeated migrations to the UAE in ascending order, and the sequence of all migration destinations for each respondent/s are noted. The table is organised into two categories:

- i) Repeated migrations between the home country of residence, the UAE (referred to as 'UAE migration') and the Gulf region (referred to as 'Gulf migration'). In this category, shaded in green, other migration routes are also recorded so as to provide a broad context to the repeated migrations my study draws attention to.
- ii) Repeated migrations from Abu Dhabi to another migration destination and back to Abu Dhabi (shaded in yellow), while Abu Dhabi remained a place of residence because their families continued to reside there.

Table 2: Repeat migrations to the UAE and Gulf region

No	Pseudonym	Total number of migrations to UAE	Migration trajectory
1	Fran	2	Australia ⇄ AD (UAE migration 1) Back to Australia Australia ⇄ AD (UAE migration 2)
2	Mazia	2	Lebanon ⇄ AD (UAE migration 1) Back to Lebanon Lebanon ⇄ AD (UAE migration 2)
3	Jeff	2	South Africa ⇄ Dubai (UAE migration 1) Dubai ⇄ New Zealand New Zealand ⇄ Dubai ⇄ AD (UAE migration 2)
4	Michelle	3	Australia ⇄ Kuwait (<i>Gulf migration 1</i>) Back to Australia Australia ⇄ Abu Dhabi (UAE migration 1) Abu Dhabi ⇄ UK UK ⇄ Abu Dhabi (UAE migration 2)
5	Ella	3	France ⇄ AD (UAE migration 1) Back to France France ⇄ AD (UAE migration 2) Back to France France to AD (UAE migration 3)
6	Carlo	3	Australia ⇄ AD (UAE migration 1) Back to Australia Australia ⇄ AD (UAE migration 2) Back to Australia Australia ⇄ Saudi Arabia (<i>Gulf migration 1</i>) Back to Australia Australia to AD (UAE migration 3)

8/9	Reena/Arjun	4	India ⇌ Dubai (UAE migration 1) Back to India India ⇌ Dubai (UAE migration 2) Back to India India ⇌ AD (UAE migration 3) AD ⇌ Canada Canada AD (UAE migration 4)
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10/ 11	Ivan/Susan	Weekly return to Abu Dhabi	UK ⇌ Hong Kong Hong Kong ⇌ Caribbean Back to UK UK ⇌ AD (UAE migration 1) AD ⇌ Qatar (<i>Gulf migration 1 ongoing</i>)
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12	Raj	Bi-monthly return to Abu Dhabi	India ⇌ Dubai (UAE migration 1) Dubai ⇌ Tunisia (repeated return visits to AD) Tunisia ⇌ Mexico (repeated return visits to AD) Mexico ⇌ AD (UAE migration 2) AD ⇌ Canada Canada ⇌ AD (UAE migration 3)
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Key:

AD: Abu Dhabi

Green: repeat migrations to the UAE and the Gulf region

Yellow: repeated mobility from Abu Dhabi to another country whilst their spouses and children remained resident in Abu Dhabi

For five respondents (Fran, Jeff, Carlo, Reena and Arjun), their second or subsequent returns to the UAE were triggered by new offers of employment. In the case of Ella however, her repeated migrations were triggered by a combination of health and work-related reasons. She made her first return to France, for a period of a year, to undergo treatment for a critical illness. The purpose of her second migration was to re-join her family who had remained in Abu Dhabi during that time. Her third, work-related phase of migration (made as a family), followed a period of living back in France for seven years. In the case of Michelle, her repeated migrations were motivated by a combination of work and family factors. For Mazia, her second phase of migration was prompted by the realisation that moving to Abu Dhabi would enable her, and her new partner, to live together as a couple (as has been explained more fully previously in section 4.1.1). For Ivan and Susan, their mobility trajectory involves a continual pattern

of Ivan's departure (for work in Qatar) and return (to see his family in Abu Dhabi), as discussed more fully in chapter 5, section 5.3.1. In the case of Raj, his (past) repeated migrations were also made for the purpose of work and family reunification. In the discussion to follow, I go on to discuss the mobility trajectories of Michelle, Carlo, and Raj in more detail.

Michelle's repeated mobility trajectory, set out in the table above, shows that her first migration to the Gulf and subsequent return to Australia was followed by two further phases of migration to the UAE, which she explains here:

I was working in Australia and a job came up in Kuwait. I had just – not got divorced, but that was the end of it. The youngest daughter went with my husband and the oldest one had just finished school and started university. I came back from Kuwait during the August but during that time I ran out of money so the following July or August I saw a job in Abu Dhabi. I was here for about 18 months and then [...] arrived from the UK. Twelve months later we got married. We left 15 months later (that was two years ago). That's it. We retired. We went back to the UK and bought a house, bought a place to live. And we bought a boat. And then [...] emailed him and asked if he was interested in the same kind of job, the same kind of set-up. That was last year. So we came back. That was four or five weeks ago. (Michelle)

Michelle's comment that she moved from Australia to Abu Dhabi a year after returning from Kuwait because she 'ran out of money', points to an economic motivation for her continued mobility. However, it is also evident that her repeated mobility was influenced by the relational environment in which she was situated at the time. In her first migration phase, her mobility was relational to the immobility of her daughter and estranged family members – the "non-movers" (Findlay et al., 2015:391) within Michelle's sphere of mobility. Her second phase of migration came to be shaped by a new set of relations, revolving around meeting her new (British) partner in Abu Dhabi, which led to further mobility; this time to the UK to retire, where they 'Bought a house, bought a place to live. And we bought a boat'.

It is evident that their onward mobility to the UK was not only relational to a significant other (she and her partner wanted to live together as retirees in the UK), but also to

“those in the state who govern mobility” (Findlay et al., 2015:391). That is, Michelle was able to reside in the UK because she had married a UK citizen. It can also be argued that her repeated migration trajectory is shaped by her capacity to enact her individual agency. After running out of money following her return from Kuwait, Michelle harnessed her experience of working in the Gulf region and sought out work possibilities in Abu Dhabi. Subsequently, she and her partner drew on their couple agency (economic and otherwise) to build a new retired life for themselves in the UK, drawing attention to the argument that “human agency permeates individuals’ interactions with the broader context and their decision-making” (Zhou, 2013:53). Their agency again surfaced in the context of a second phase of migration, triggered by her partner’s job offer in Abu Dhabi. Hence Michelle’s account of her mobility trajectory cannot be understood only in economic or structural (such as labour market) terms, but also in terms of family relations and the agency she enacted at different stages in her life course.

In the case of Carlo, the ‘there and back and back again’ pattern of repeated migrations encompassed one move from Australia to the Gulf region and then three phases of repeated migrations to Abu Dhabi.

I came over in 2007 to start a project. In 2009 the contract was over, so I went back to my old company in Australia. Then I was asked to become the CEO in another company there, so I did that for about nine months. In 2010 I got a call to ask: ‘Would I like to come back?’ [to Abu Dhabi]. So, we moved in 2010 and by 2012 we had finished with that contract. And then I worked in Saudi for six months on another project for a German company. I finished that job and then I was asked to come back, so I came back here for the third time! It was the same format after two years [his contract ended]. So, I joined this current company in 2015. (Carlo)

It is clear that the precarious nature of contract work played a key role in Carlo’s recurrent mobility trajectory. It was only when he joined his present employing company in 2015, that he began working in a more secure environment in which contract work was not the norm. For the first time in his Abu Dhabi work history, he was in a settled position, delivering in-house training to staff in his employing company. However, his narrative suggests that during his previous periods of employment in the

Gulf and Abu Dhabi, he positioned himself as a social actor within his complicated mobility environment, drawing on his individual agency to develop strategies to respond to potential vulnerabilities. In Carlo's case, he engaged with a pattern of repeated mobility so as to respond to the volatile and precarious nature of his employment environment.

For Raj too, the precarious nature of work (in his case engineering), led to a period of repeated mobility. As set out in Table 2 above, he left Dubai to work in Tunisia because his salary was being paid only intermittently. After six months in Tunisia, he moved to Mexico for a shorter period of time and then moved back to the UAE to take up a job offer in Dubai. When he again encountered salary-related problems, he immigrated to Canada, having started the application process three years previously. This pattern of ongoing mobility, interspersed with times of stasis, points to how ongoing mobility can become 'woven' into the fabric of transnational life, as Bailey et al. (2020:3) suggest here: "As precariousness is encountered and experienced in daily life, and is thereby woven into spatial and temporal meanings that structure biography, it may cumulatively shape subsequent events, transitions, and trajectories". This is demonstrated in Raj's next period of migration. On arrival in Canada, it became apparent that the way of life there would not suit his family, so he returned to the UAE after 15 days, this time to Abu Dhabi. Since embarking on that phase of repeated migration, he has worked for the same company for the past 12 years. In total, his family have lived in the UAE for 24 years. Raj's narrative below sets out his mobility trajectory in more detail.

The problem was that the company was not paying my salary. So, I moved to Tunisia. I'm basically from the power plant background so he [the recruiter] knew my potential well. He said, after that we'll move you to the next I worked there for six months and then they transferred me to Mexico.

Then I came back and joined a company in Dubai. Salary-wise it was a bit less, but I could be with my family. I thought, it's not money alone that matters, so I continued with that job for three years.

In 2008 I migrated to Canada. The reason was that the company wasn't paying my salary, so I thought okay, I'm finding a lot of people who are migrating to Canada. Why not me? I applied for some positions and got

two job offers. But I didn't like the culture, you know. There's a big difference between that culture, coming from India. Here [the UAE] you will find that the culture is more or less the same.

Then I headed for here [Abu Dhabi] and I've been here for 12 years now. (Raj)

Of particular significance to Raj's mobility trajectory is that all the while, his family remained in the UAE. His spouse was sponsored by her employer, and in turn was able to sponsor their two dependent (under the age of 18) children when Raj moved first to Tunisia and then Mexico. Hence his mobility is shaped by the relational environment in which his repeated mobility took place. First, his narrative shows that his mobility is relational to his immediate family in the UAE, illustrated by his bi-monthly visits home and then full return. Second it is relational to four mobility regimes, but in a different way than is evident in Michelle's account set out earlier. Raj's migrations to Tunisia, Mexico and Canada were enabled by the professional regulatory bodies of those countries that recognised his qualifications and engineering expertise, and the migration policies that gave him the right to entry on the basis of those professional skills. On this basis he was granted temporary residence rights in Tunisia and Mexico, and the right to permanent residence in the case of Canada. His mobility was, and remains, relational to the UAE's mobile regime: Raj was granted a new work visa at the start of each phase of repeated migration and his family had the right to remain in Abu Dhabi during his absence. As he commented in our first interview:

I have changed my visa how many times in the UAE? This is now my eighth or ninth! In 24 years, of course. (Raj)

Finally, Raj's mobility is also relational to individual agency and familial agency. In her study of young male refugees in the UK and Finland, Kallio (2019) draws attention to the notion of 'familial agency', a more collective form of agency that may work alongside individual agency. The basis of her argument is that in the context of migration, and the enormous challenges refugee families face, the migration environment is negotiated by enacting individual agency (as parents or grandparents, for example). But this migrant group also negotiate that environment as families – that is, they "act as families" (2019:1). Although Kallio makes this argument in a different migration context to that which my study is concerned, the notion of familial agency

provides a trigger to thinking about how agency is present across the migration spectrum. This point draws attention to Gomes' (2019) study of young skilled migrants (students and skilled workers mostly under the age of 30 living in Singapore). Over time, her respondents came to "see transience as *part of* their own life course to which they have the power to dictate" (2019:229). They engaged with their current migration destination in highly transient terms, with little expectation that they would ultimately settle there. In Raj's case however, his transience was in fact anchored by the continued presence of his family life in Abu Dhabi; his mobility trajectory became anchored by his family's stability in that first migration destination (Abu Dhabi).

Finally, Raj's complicated trajectory highlights the historical and geographical dimensions of the 24 years of his life since leaving India, and therefore illustrates the centrality of time-space to the shaping of his individual and collective family life course. His mobility illustrates how sequence and timing over the life course vary (Geist and MacManus, 2008). After moving to the UAE, unexpected life course events (in his case employment related events) altered the direction of his anticipated life course. Yet the sequence of repeated migrations back to Abu Dhabi in an almost rhythmic manner, also points to a stability within his pattern of mobility, shaped by the environment of linked lives in which his migration and mobility has been enacted.

4.3. Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that despite the seemingly simple, economic-driven motivation for migration later-in-life, and the seemingly uncomplicated patterns of mobility subsequent to arrival, later-in-life mobility in the context of Abu Dhabi is motivated by a spectrum of factors. I have drawn on my respondents' narratives to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations and mobility trajectories of those who moved to Abu Dhabi later in their career, and those who moved when they were younger but continued to reside in the emirate into the later-in-life stage of the life course. In chapters one and two, I noted that for foreign workers to reside in the UAE, evidence of salaried employment is mandatory, even before the point of initial arrival. Therefore, in the first instance, the economics of migration drives decision-making. As Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) argue, migration takes place within particular regimes of mobility (in this case employment as a condition to entry). So an employment offer, accompanied by a salary that makes moving financially worthwhile, serves as the

starting point for discussions about potential mobility that individuals have in their own heads, and which they have with others.

However, taking up Collins' (2018) argument that migration is never motivated only by economics, but always influenced by a much wider spectrum of factors, I have shown that other factors interact with the economic basis for later-in-life professional mobility. Therefore, an emphasis on employment as a conditional basis for mobility hides the existence of other influencing factors. In the case of my respondents, the desire to achieve greater financial and personal security; positive childhood memories of living in the Gulf region; personal faith; and the prospect of adventure: all of these factors played an important part in the ultimate decision to bring their migration projects into being. Although the opportunity to earn well at the later-in-life stage of professional life was shown to be a strong motivator for mobility, it was also shown that a wider collection of beliefs and desires influence how this form of mobility, within a particular migration setting, comes about and then spatially unfolds.

The discussion in this chapter has also pointed to how the spatiality of mobility is evident in the practice of repeated migrations. Although documented among low-income workers in the Gulf region (Gardner, 2010) and the UAE (Parreñas et al., 2018), Gulf migration scholars have evidently not identified this pattern of mobility within skilled migration flows. Ali (2011) examined the return to Dubai of young Asians who had spent their childhood years in the UAE, and then returned as young adults after a period of studying or working abroad. But the demographic life-course and Gulf migration history of those with whom he is concerned, differs significantly from the demographic group that constitutes the focus of my study.

In the process of identifying the practice of repeated migrations, I have highlighted the presence of both agency and precarity within later-in-life migration flows and within the particular migration context within which my respondents are situated. The capacity to weave complicated patterns of mobility in an on-off temporal pattern, points to how this group of mobile people draw on their individual agency to respond to macro events, such as economic downturn, by using their skilled status to seek out new work contracts in the Gulf region, or the UAE specifically. However, this pattern of repeated phases of mobility also reflects the precarious nature of employment in the context of migration and work, drawing attention to wider debates around how migration itself

gives rise to a state of precarity produced by economic insecurity and insecure livelihoods (Paret and Gleeson, 2016). In this chapter, I have noted how these more established debates have been joined by scholarship that brings the intersection of ageing and migration (Botterill, 2017) into this framework of analysis. In turn, the chapter contributes to this body of literature by bringing together both centres of analysis: migration and professional mobility during the later-in-life stage; and also, migration, age, and ageing.

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CHAPTER 5

Less together now?

Distance, separation, and mobility later-in-life

INTRODUCTION

The bearing that separation and distance have on transnational family lives has been considered by migration scholars in relation to low-income migrants and higher earning mobile professionals. Across both income groups, a range of issues have been explored: family rupture and communication technologies (Acedera and Yeoh, 2019); crisis return (Mahdavi, 2016); left-behind children (Pratt, 2012); transnational care (Baldassar, 2014); the impact of separation and distance on family intimacy (Walsh, 2018); the challenges of providing informal elderly care from a distance (Sihto, 2018); and ICT-mediated family ties (Ryan et al., 2015). In this chapter, I contribute to these literatures through an examination of the distance-separation connection¹² in the context of family lives and later-in-life mobile professionals. Despite the fact that distance does “not necessarily rupture or destroy families and family relationships” (Long, 2014:244) and that transnational families develop effective strategies to mediate distance (as I explore in chapter six), the emotional consequences of geographical separation continue to shape the everydayness of transnational family lives. As Ryan et al. (2015:207) note, despite the potential for ICTs to reduce distance, the use thereof fails to bring about the ‘death of distance’.

¹²In the context of ICT-mediated long-distance care, Baldassar et al. (2017) argue that analyses which highlight the negative consequences of distance and separation feed into the dominant assumption that distance care is inferior to that provided in a co-present setting. The purpose of the distance-separation connection I set out here is not to suggest that family lives cannot be lived across distance in meaningful ways. Rather, I incorporate distance into the analysis so as to acknowledge the consequences that the physical, lived reality of distance has for family relatedness over time.

In the discussion to follow, I draw attention to how the physicality of distance injects emotional vulnerability into transnational later-in-life family lives, sometimes resulting in long-standing consequences and significant emotional cost to those who move and those who stay behind. However, I also point to the multi-dimensional nature of the distance-separation connection and how transnational families operate as agents of their own circumstances, as they negotiate that connection. In a sense, they dance with distance in a way that involves careful strategising to maximise the worth of the migration project in the whole. To develop this argument, the discussion is organised around three modes of separation, which I have termed permanent, intermittent, and strategic separation. I show how these three modes of separation are experienced in a combination of ways and are reflective of particular patterns of relationality, temporalities, and individual agency embedded within the life course.

The chapter is structured into three sections. In the first, I focus on permanent separation, where I draw attention to marital dissolution as a formal mode of separation that occurs ahead of the initial act of migration. In this mode, ties become disassembled as a direct consequence of the anticipated consequences of moving, both in terms of the physicality of distance that moving away represents, and incongruent perceptions of the migration destination. In the second section, I draw attention to intermittent separation, a mode of separation in which family members repeatedly connect and disconnect at different points in time: ties are rekindled and then lie dormant in an ongoing but intermittent cycle of relationality. In the final section, I focus on what I have referred to as strategic separation: where partners live in different countries for a period of time to (ultimately) ensure the long-term success of the family migration project. I suggest that this mode becomes so integrated into the fabric of everyday family life, that it comes to be a normalised way of 'doing' family for the period of time over which this form of separation endures.

5.1. Permanent separation: marital dissolution at the point of migration

The connection between migration, mobility, and marital relations has been considered in the context of co-present migrant couples, such as in Walsh's (2018) Dubai-based study where she found that marital relations became strained by a longer working week and more frequent periods of work-related travel than experienced in the UK. Caarls

and Mazzucato (2015) examined the relationship between international migration and divorce rates among Ghanaian couples in the case of joint and lone migration. Similarly, Acedera and Yeoh (2020) draw attention to the marital difficulties experienced by Filipino couples, where the wife takes on the role of migrant and the husband stays behind.

In the discussion to follow, I examine the question of marriage dissolution in the context of migration and mobility by drawing on my respondents' narratives to show that the very prospect of migration can provide the trigger for marital dissolution. Although numerically small, the three accounts of marital dissolution presented in this section are significant because they offer insight into how distance, as a real and imagined force, has significant consequences for family lives – sometimes even before the first steps onto foreign soil are taken. Parke (2013:57) makes the point that divorce is not experienced as a single event but a “complex series of steps that start long before the couple separate”. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that for each of these three respondents, a climate of marital discord may well have already been present prior to the onset of the migration project. However, the narratives to follow show that the very prospect of distance, as well as the prospect of living in Abu Dhabi as a specific migration destination, were highly instrumental in bringing final marital dissolution about.

5.1.1. ‘I’m not moving here. The dogs would hate it’: resistance to place

Having struggled to secure a permanent contract in the UK following redundancy, Chris accepted a job offer in Abu Dhabi a year after he was made redundant. He moved on his own with the expectation that his partner would join him after a period of time, and their adult son would remain in the UK. However, after her first visit to Abu Dhabi, Chris's partner decided to remain in the UK, as described here:

They [his wife and son] came over in May and after one day she said: ‘I’m not moving here. The dogs would hate it.’ ‘Well where does that leave me?’ She said: ‘You can come over a couple of times a year.’ She never came back again. She hated it. Absolutely hated it. She didn’t like the weather, she didn’t like the people, she didn’t like’ That was the end of the marriage really! I could have said okay, ‘I’ll go back. I won’t take the job. I’ll quit’. But what would have been the point? There’s no work there [in the UK]. (Chris)

In his portrayal of the visit, Chris frames his partner's reluctance to move in terms of her intense dislike of Abu Dhabi as a place and a potential migrant destination. As an aside, it is of interest to note how Chris's partner involves their dogs as part of his partner's resistance to move to Abu Dhabi: 'The dogs would hate it.' Chris in turn rejects his partner's suggestion that he could work in Abu Dhabi and return to the UK 'a couple of times a year'. His account suggests that the separation-distance connection that would come to define their relationship (if he agreed to an arrangement of return visits) does not fit easily with his seemingly established view that marriage is predicated on co-presence. His view is in sharp contrast with those couples who choose to 'live apart together' and for whom relations are premised on a spatially centred arrangement, in which moving to and then away from each other provides the framework in which everyday relations are carried out (Jensen et al., 2015).

His statement 'that was the end of the marriage' suggests that for Chris, his partner's reluctance to move to Abu Dhabi meant that his own normative frame of reference that shapes his perception of the spatiality of everyday married life, did not fit with that of his partner. As Cheal (2002:67) writes: "The preservation of marital ties, it is thought, depends heavily upon common residence and it is threatened when that condition does not exist." Chris's partner felt that regular return visits would suffice. But for him, the need for co-residence was clearly a condition of their relationship. His partner's decision not to join him meant that co-presence, as a core condition of the relationship, could (for Chris) no longer be met.

A similar theme is echoed in Jeff's narrative below. He and his partner moved from South Africa to New Zealand prior to Jeff's move to Dubai, and subsequently to Abu Dhabi. When his employment contract in New Zealand ended, he and his partner were no longer in receipt of the work-based visa status that would enable them to remain in New Zealand. Jeff wanted to accept a job offer in Dubai, and his wife wanted to remain in New Zealand. It was at this point that their marriage ended.

I got married in 2008 and divorced in 2014. Um, it was basically the New Zealand cock-up that affected that. She wanted to stay in New Zealand, and we couldn't. But she believed she could. So, when I was

in Dubai and saying she had to move here, she was like: 'I'm not moving there!' (Jeff)

Jeff's partner's exclamation 'I'm not moving there!' suggests that she was drawn to New Zealand as a place, but also that she was appalled at the thought of moving to Abu Dhabi (as a place). As Jeff's narrative makes clear, his marriage ended because of the unresolved tension over mobility and stasis. In the final interview, I established that Jeff's partner subsequently returned to South Africa, having failed to secure the right to remain in New Zealand. This scenario reveals a complex interplay of relationality and temporality. Jeff wanted to move to the UAE because he no longer had a job in New Zealand, but he did have a confirmed job offer in the UAE. His wife wanted to stay in New Zealand and harboured no desire to move to the UAE. It is evident that the decision to end their marriage was made in an environment of relationality: in relation to place, each other, the job market, and also to the state's mobility governance. As Bryceson (2019:3054) writes, a "proliferation of official categorisations of immigration status underpin the evolution of country-specific rules and regulations regarding border entry". Jeff's comment: 'She wanted to stay in New Zealand, and we couldn't. But she believed she could,' suggests that the immigration policies of their first migration destination became increasingly difficult for them to negotiate as a couple, once the basis on which they had been initially accepted into New Zealand had fallen away.

In the cases of Chris and Jeff and their respective partners, the prospect of moving to Abu Dhabi might well have been the final straw in relationships that were already failing, resonating with Cheal's (2002) point that marital dissolution happens in stages over time. Nevertheless, the accounts presented above offer insight into how the prospect of migration, and also the prospect of moving to a particular migration destination, are important complicating factors within the distance-separation connection.

5.2. Intermittent separation: the ebb and flow of family ties over time

As I explore more fully in chapter six, for transnational families, distance and separation can be physically and virtually punctured by periods of co-presence, leading to a

“cyclical, temporal rhythm of absences and presences” (Thomas and Bailey, 2009:620). In the discussion to follow, I draw attention to the time in between: how family lives are characterised by often significant periods during which co-presence is absent, and in which ties are weakened or become non-existent for a period of time. Intermittent separation may be a consequence of a breaking down of the “repertoire of coping” (Coe, 2014, cited in Butt, 2018:128) usually drawn upon to manage distance. But relations may also just “quietly weaken over time” (Ryan et al., 2015:211). Drawing on my respondents’ narratives, I frame these possibilities firstly in terms of the prolonged absence of co-presence, and secondly in terms of the gradual fading away of common ground – predicated on shared interests and common experiences among those who move and those who stay.

5.2.1. ‘I mean, you’re just not there’: distance and weakening of family ties

Carling (2017:33) writes: “People move in relation to places and other people, thereby weaving the webs of connectedness and separation that we think of as transnational families”. The idea that connectedness and separation combine to create a point of reference for transnational families is apparent in all the accounts set out below, although in different ways.

Over the years, you just drift apart. With my immediate family, there’s one brother I’m very close to but I’ve drifted away from the other brother and sister a bit. You know, things happen over the years. I mean – you’re just not there. (Vera)

Vera’s point, ‘you’re just not there’, resonates strongly with Burrell’s (2016:814) assertion that distance is not an “imagined condition” but one that mobile beings have to “steer in their real lives”. In Vera’s case, distance is arguably far more than an imagined condition because substantial time and monetary resources are needed to travel from Abu Dhabi to New Zealand, where her immediate family members live. However, at the time of our first interview, Vera was only in her second year of working in Abu Dhabi. Her reference to drifting apart ‘over the years’ can therefore best be understood in the context of her broader migration trajectory, which traces the following sequence and spans more than 30 years: New Zealand, Chatham Islands, New Zealand, Australia, New Zealand, Australia, Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, Abu

Dhabi. Vera's intermittent pattern of connection to family members not only runs parallel to a pattern of absence and co-presence that emerged from return visits, but also her long-established pattern of outward and return migration, pointing to the accumulated effect of her complicated pattern of mobility on family relations over time.

The relevance of previous periods of migration to the question of distance and family ties is also apparent in the case of Pam, whose first stage of mobility was encountered as a university student when she left Zimbabwe to study in South Africa at the age of 18. After eight years there, she and her partner moved to the UK, returned to South Africa, then moved to the Netherlands before moving to Abu Dhabi four years later. At this point her mobility trajectory deviates from that of Vera's noted above. First, unlike in Vera's case, mobility has defined Pam's life since childhood, as is evident in Pam's excerpt here.

Granny came to visit Zimbabwe, but grandad didn't. He never came to Africa. And the other granny; she died in Africa. She came to live with us. And she died when I was six. She came to live with us on the farm. Very brave, wasn't she? She had come all the way from the UK – and she lived with us on the farm. (Pam)

Second, unlike Vera, Pam has herself come to be at the receiving end of the distance-separation connection. At the time of my interviews with her (I conducted all three interviews at her home), Pam was beginning to pack up their family villa, where they had lived for all of the 17 years since moving to Abu Dhabi. Over time, her three children had left to study or work in the UK or South Africa.

They've all left and gone their merry way! And we've been left here, which isn't a bad thing. I mean they would have gone anyway, wherever we were. And I'm used to that because I was bought up on a farm – in Africa. So, I had to leave home and go thousands of miles away to [university] and so, I'm kinda used to that. But it's quite hard when they're such a distance away. And least I was a bit closer to home. But they are REALLY far away! (Pam)

Pam's description of how her three children feel 'REALLY far away', points to how distance is experienced as both a physical reality and an embodied entity. Despite the relatively favourable flight time from Abu Dhabi to South Africa and to the UK, and her use of ICTs to sustain ties, Pam finds it to be 'quite hard' that her children are 'such' a distance away, drawing attention to the emotional cost of separation transnational families are required to manage, as highlighted by Pratt (2012) and by Parreñas (2001) in the context of Filipino migrants and left-behind children.

On the face of it, this ongoing mobility story spanning three generations can be understood as one shaped by a culture of migration, embedded in the ongoing life course of Pam's family. As Bailey (2009:410) writes, the processes of "generationing", serves to "link social constructions of generations and generational relations to intersections between biographies, historical times, and social times that play over the spaces of lifecourses". For Conradson and Latham (2005:299), such linking across generations points to a set of interconnected "biographies of movement". In these terms, the very notion of migration and mobility, and the geographical separation that it gives rise to, has in some ways become absorbed into Pam's life as a normative family practice. And yet in both her narratives presented above, distance remains the 'elephant in the room'. The reference she makes to her children being 'REALLY' far away and how her grandmother travelled 'all the way from the UK' to Zimbabwe, illustrates the tangible, conscious awareness of the actuality of distance, in which physical geography presents "stubborn stretches of space which still require time and effort to cross" (Burrell, 2016:11). As such, distance is not inconsequential to her own movement and that of other family members. Rather, the centrality of distance and ongoing mobility across her life course has shaped the form of relatedness that sits at the centre of her past, present, and future family life. Her family life has been "actively produced through particular places and moments" (Long, 2014: 246), meaningfully defining her memories as well as her current experience of mobility.

Penny's two adult children in the US remain an important part of her life, as I point to in chapters six and seven. However, the narrative below suggests that the intensity of her relationship with her son and daughter has altered over the two years she has resided in Abu Dhabi.

I'm not as close to my kids now. We're more on this time schedule of being able to talk because of the distance, and the time difference. Even if you're just sitting at home watching TV, reading a book or knitting – they're at work. (Penny)

For Penny, not living in the same time zone as her children, presents a stubborn barrier that reduces the ease with which she is able to communicate with them. As Bass and Yeoh (2019:165) note, despite the possibilities that ICTs present for ongoing connectivity, “migrants frequently engage with and negotiate multiple time zones in daily life in order to meet the demands of work, family and friends”. However, as Penny’s narrative suggests, the time-zones produced by vast geographical distances impact negatively on the frequency with which she is able to communicate with her children - the time difference between the US and the UAE takes away the shared temporality of everyday life. While Penny is experiencing time as ‘down time’, her children are not: ‘They’re at work’. Of importance is not so much that she must plan the right time of day or night to call her children, but that she cannot easily feel connected to them as she goes about her everyday life. She feels a sense of disconnect because their lives are governed by a different daily rhythm to hers; the two geographically and temporally determined rhythms are “out-of-sync” (Acedera and Yeoh, 2019:255). And yet, because she is intent on remaining connected to her children, despite the temporal challenge of the differential time zones she and her children occupy, she is constantly anchored in a second temporal reality that requires her to “manipulate the qualities of everyday time despite the struggles that come with absence and a sense of provisionality.” (Cojocaru, 2020:2).

Patrick’s use of the term ‘the tyranny of distance’, as it appears in the interview excerpt below, in a sense encapsulates the meaning at the centre of Vera’s earlier statement: that family relations have become more distant since moving to Abu Dhabi simply because she is ‘just not there’. However, in the scenario that Patrick sets out, he explains how he came to feel the tyranny of distance directly after a short period of family co-presence in Abu Dhabi. Patrick and his partner Fran relay the story of how their relationship with Patrick’s sister broke down immediately following a visit she and her son made to Abu Dhabi:

There was something quite trivial ... so pretty much since then, she hasn't spoken to Patrick. And that was five years ago. (Fran)

I don't know if it's because we are here, or if it's the tyranny of distance. When things go wrong, then the wounds fester. We've had a couple of experiences when the message that got back home [following the visit] wasn't what we see to be the full truth. Then you have got to ask yourself: 'what energy do you want to put into pursuing this, to correct the record?' And whilst we're over here, working hard, we don't have the energy. And then you hope your family won't judge you too harshly and if they do, you think well ... big deal! (Patrick)

Patrick's use of the evocative phrase 'the tyranny of distance' reiterates the argument that despite building strategies to subvert the physicality of distance, distance is still experienced as a real, lived, hard-edged consequence of globally dispersed families. His narrative points to the potential for family disagreements to become more complicated and unsolvable in the absence of co-presence. The language Patrick chooses to use is powerful for the rawness of emotion it suggests. Although disputes are of course an accepted part of non-mobile everyday family lives, his account shows that following his sister's return to Australia, not being in the position to resolve their differences in an environment of co-presence caused the wound to fester more deeply over time.

For Michelle, the emotional impact of her estranged relationship with her one daughter prior to moving to Abu Dhabi, has been felt more acutely since the arrival of her first grandchild, as described below. Michelle left her family home with one of her two daughters after she and her husband divorced, some years before she first left Australia to work in Qatar initially.

It's the young one I don't have contact with. She had a baby daughter on the 14th of January, so I know about [her becoming] the mother. Most of the photos came via my [other] daughter or my sister. (Michelle)

Michelle's reference to receiving photos via intermediaries, resonates with Baldassar's (2016) argument that to some extent, care can be delivered from a distance through the use of technology (electronic remittances, skype calls and so on). Physical care,

for which co-presence is required, must however involve the efforts of others - that form of care must be delivered by proxy. Michelle's narrative points to how her granddaughter is present in her life (she has photographs of her to look at from time to time), but at the same time she is not present. As Butt (2018) suggests, absent children come to take on a ghost-like presence because they are forever there: physically present yet absent. Michelle's ties to her daughter have become severed and she has never met her granddaughter. And yet, since the baby's birth, a new form of linking to her estranged daughter has been established via two intermediaries: her oldest daughter and her own sister. So, the web of relations that made up the broader tapestry of Michelle's family life means that even though ties to her daughter have become severed, she still remains connected to her. As Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) state, family lives are relational because they are a product of ties with others. So, even when separation between some family members becomes seemingly irrevocable, that separation continues to be situated in an environment of relationality – family lives are still organised around the notion of “relational living” (Findlay et al., 2015:392). That is, separation occurs in relation to another, or to other, family members. This perspective elicits a fuller understanding of transnational family ties because it highlights the connection between two seemingly dichotomous positions; between ties that endure and ties that have become ruptured or weakened over time.

The narratives above point to a space of “uncertain grief as involving a kind of waiting that cannot straightforwardly be ended” (Parr and Fyfe, 2012:631). For Michelle, waiting is particularly poignant because her granddaughter is in this world, but she is not part of Michelle's world. The child, as Parr and Fyfe (2012:619) put it, occupies a “yearning space” in her everyday life. Butt (2018:127) argues that for transnational families, in which a child or children are physically absent because they have been fostered by another family or have being hidden from a parent/s, “children live as ghosts in their family's daily lives” and therefore remain powerfully present in the emotional arena of those lives. For Penny, the breaking of ties with her daughter, and hence the absence of ties with her granddaughter, “troubles the smooth façade of ordinary family life” (Smart, 2001:551). That façade is – in turn – exacerbated by the physical distance that diminishes opportunities for (co-present) reconciliation.

5.2.2. 'They're getting on with their lives': moving away, staying home, and moving on

In this section, I consider how for some of my respondents, distance “ruptures shared social experiences” (Ryan et al., 2015:211), weakening family relations over time. The narratives to follow suggest that distance mitigates against the building of shared, co-constructed memories that help to sustain a sense of relatedness within family lives. In contrast to Licoppe’s (2004) argument that communication technologies blur the boundaries between absence and presence, the narratives to follow suggest that the absence of shared experience results in relations breaking down in two ways: those who stay and ‘get on with their lives’; and those who move away and relinquish the commonality of everyday life they may have once shared with those who have remained behind.

Although contextually specific, and relevant to couple relationships specifically, Thomas and Bailey’s (2009) study of seafarers is illustrative of the need for families to get on with their lives in the absence of (in this case) the seafaring husband. The family left on shore are forced to get on with everyday life and to continue to engage with family practices (such as the celebration of special occasions) in the absence of the seafaring partner. In turn, after a return to sea after each period of shore leave, Thomas and Bailey (2009:619) found that: “The seafarer’s situated trajectory was ‘interrupted’ or temporarily paused while their partner’s continued”. Likewise, as documented by Jervis (2008), during extended periods of deployment by (usually) male spouses, female partners in military families manage that absence and uncertainty by simply ‘getting on with it.’

As demonstrated by Patrick’s narrative below, ironically the strategy of ‘getting on with it’, can in itself further weaken any existing sense of connectivity to stay-behind family members.

Have you remained connected to your family back home? (Colleen) For some family members, the relationship has become more distant because they’ve actually removed themselves from our aura. They’re not on Facebook, they don’t come to visit. They’re getting on with their lives. (Patrick)

Patrick is of the view that this weakening of ties is a direct result of certain family members failing to buy into the strategies that transnational families usually employ to manage distance. In his view, the family members in Australia who have chosen to 'get on with it', have become 'more distant' because they have failed to exert the effort needed to sustain a sense of connection across the geographical distance that separates them.

Patrick's perception that his family in Australia are 'getting on with their lives' in his absence, is one shared by Hattie and Phil, whose extended family lives in South Africa. However, their narrative suggests that ties to some of those family members would have weakened over time, even if they had not moved away.

Do you feel that relations with family in South Africa have remained the same? (Colleen)

No, I don't think so. (Hattie)

Ya, if you look at families, it's like life is going on for them. (Phil)

Maybe if you lived in South Africa, maybe you'd still have that experience because um, I mean everyone grows up and starts their own ... (Hattie)

Their own careers. (Phil)

Everybody starts to do their own stuff. They start their own families. (Hattie)

So, regardless of you going away? (Colleen)

Yes. It's just part of growing up. And people coming and going. (Hattie)

For Hattie and Phil, family relations have changed over the life course. As siblings and other family members started to build their own careers and own families, so the relational environment of their family life changed. As everyone started 'to do their own stuff' as Hattie puts it, their emotional closeness begun to wane. However, the excerpt below suggests that relations have altered further because in the perception of stay-behind family members, Hattie and Phil's move to Abu Dhabi has set them apart, financially.

A problem that we sit with is that sometimes the family (because you work in the UAE), have the perception that you have money, and everything is just perfect. And they don't realise the sacrifice of being outside of your country, because we miss our country. We love Abu Dhabi but um, when we go back, we realise what we are missing ... where we grew up. And the culture and the people ... all that environment ... we still love that. (Phil)

In their study of left-behind partners in Australia, Straughan et al. (2020:639) employ the concept of 'stuckness', in which waiting for the return of those who have left, is experienced as a form of immobility that limits "future-orientated actions". Hattie and Phil's family members in South Africa have not been 'left behind' – but they have stayed behind. In doing so, they have set up an image of Hattie and Phil's life in Abu Dhabi that fuels their sense of disconnection, drawing attention to the view that an absence of shared social experiences exacerbates distance (Ryan et al., 2015), as referred to at the start of this sub-section.

For Mazia too, relations with some of her family members in Lebanon have weakened because 'people have their own lives', as she explains here:

You mentioned that you have lost contact with some of your family in Lebanon. Why do you think that has happened? (Colleen)

Because there's nothing in common, I think. And um ... because I also think it's the way things happen. That people have their own lives. I ask my parents about them [her relatives] sometimes. It's similar with my first cousins. We don't talk much, although everything is fine. Over the years I think we only see each other for either weddings or funerals. And also, it's because where we live is a bit ... inside the city. Most of the cousins or families live outside of the city and they tend to live in areas where, for example, all the people from the village live in this neighbourhood. But my parents never did that. We bought a house in the city. I think that's why we aren't very close any more. We grew to be different from my cousins. (Mazia)

Although similar to the experiences of Patrick, Hattie and Phil above, Mazia also points to how she too has come to 'get on with her life', which she frames in terms of her and

her cousins having 'nothing in common'. Not only has she moved to Abu Dhabi in her adult years, but as a child, she and her family also chose to live 'a bit ... inside the city', breaking with expectations of normative ways of doing family. Although writing in the context of diaspora family lives, Long (2014) argues that 'proper' family life is tied to spatial and temporal conventions, so that when families become dispersed, the very essence of what constitutes a 'proper' family comes to be questioned. In Mazia's case, her family broke with extended family conventions over the years, which encouraged a reimagining of their everyday family life. Their lives were reimagined as a result of their internal mobility within Lebanon and also their earlier move as a family to Saudi Arabia, as has been documented in chapter four and will be explored further in chapter six.

The core shared message highlighted by the comments documented above: 'it is like life is going on for them'; 'people have their own lives'; 'everybody starts to do their own stuff,' suggests that although distance has undoubtedly contributed to the weakening of family ties, in the case of the respondents whose accounts are presented above, their family members back home have continued to carve out everyday lives for themselves in their own absence. In the process, a new form of relatedness emerges; one in which family members grow to be 'different' and come to no longer be highly present in the 'aura' in which family lives are situated.

5.3. Strategic separation: concurrent mobility

In her study of skilled migration from Asia to Australia, in which she focuses largely on migrants in their twenties and thirties, Robertson (2019:170) draws attention to the dynamic way in which this group negotiates mobility through "journeys of circularity" between Australia, Asia and other regions. In their search for opportunities to secure permanent residency outside their country of origin, they build a form of mobility characterised by "contingent, multi-directional and multi-stage mobility pathways – where the boundaries between temporariness and permanence (as both legal status and subjective state) are increasingly blurry and mutable" (2019:174).

In this final section of the chapter, I extend this notion of circular journeys to examine a pattern of strategic mobility that I refer to as 'concurrent mobility'. The narratives to follow demonstrate how strategising is variously triggered in response to a range of

opportunities and new challenges and – within this mode of separation – a particular culture of relatedness (Long, 2015). Rather than distance being experienced as a recalcitrant force as Burrell (2016) makes reference to, the strategic mode of separation draws attention to the presence of human agency within this mode of separation, pointing to the complicated way in which the distance-separation connection is manifested in transnational family lives.

In my overall sample, a strategic mode of separation (in which one partner moves and the other stays behind in the existing country of residence) is evident in the case of seven of my respondents. Navi's young daughter and his partner remained in India when he moved to Abu Dhabi 15 years prior to my interviews with him. Angela's partner remained in the UK; and Michelle moved on her own, leaving behind her ex-partner (from whom she had already separated), and her two young-adult daughters. Although Carlo's case is also illustrative of the strategic mode of separation, it arises out of a different set of circumstances. He and his Uzbek partner moved to Abu Dhabi soon after they were married in Australia. However, at the time of our interviews, his partner had returned to Australia so as to reside there for the statutory period of time needed to meet the conditions for citizenship status. For all these respondents, strategic separation underpins their decision-making. Whether it be that decisions were taken for monetary or health reasons; to maintain the stability of family life for those who stayed behind; to enable stay-behind partners to continue with established careers; or to satisfy immigration regulations, the four cases in my sample demonstrate a particular relationship to the distance-separation connection.

However, in the cases of Raj and of Susan and Ian, the strategic mode of separation they put into place exhibits a unique spatial and temporal quality, and it is these accounts that I consider in greater detail here. I have framed these accounts as 'concurrent mobility' so as to draw attention to how their mobility trajectory pivots around both onward mobility and a sustained connection to Abu Dhabi, where their family life continued/s to be based. In this sense, their mobility pattern is illustrative of the 'economics of transnational living' (Erdal and Carling, 2020) that is created from ongoing mobility between two countries for, amongst other reasons, the purpose of work. Or what these authors refer to as 'livelihoods'. Hence, they argue that: "In contrast to literature on migrant transnationalism, where sources of livelihoods are assumed to be primarily in countries of settlement, empirical observation of

transnational living reveals a number of complementary patterns, with livelihoods anchored in one or both countries” (2020:5). Although the outlier cases I discuss here do not fully resonate with Erdal and Carling’s findings (contrary to their findings my respondents do not express a significant attachment to the second migration destination), their study is of relevance because it draws attention to how the intersection of work and mobility gives rise to complicated mobility patterns within later-in-life transnational family lives. It also “helps make visible the ways in which diverse economic practices exist and interact” (Erdal and Carling, 2020:2), and how transnational family lives may become even more geographically stretched after settlement in the migration destination, even when that settlement cannot be permanent.

5.3.1. ‘I went to Tunisia – it happened just like that!’: concurrent global mobility

As noted in section 4.2 of chapter four, over the course of 24 years, Raj has built a complicated trajectory that includes three countries of onward migration. Raj moved to Tunisia, in his capacity as an engineer, with little time to prepare for his departure: ‘I went to Tunisia – it happened just like that!’ He worked there for six months and then moved to Mexico. After a short while, he was offered a job in Dubai, where, as he explains: ‘Salary-wise it was a little bit less, but I could be with my family’. Once there, he again encountered the salary-related problems that had triggered his move to Tunisia. So, as documented in chapter four, whilst continuing to work for the same company, he spent three years preparing an application to immigrate to Canada. In 2008 he left for Canada with the view that his family would join him once he had found employment. He was made two job offers almost immediately but soon decided to abandon that effort and return to Dubai to accept an offer of employment with a new company. After three years, Raj transferred to Abu Dhabi with the same company, for whom he had been working for 12 years at the time I interviewed him.

Of significance to the focus of this chapter, when Raj moved to work elsewhere in the world, his partner and children remained in the UAE. This was possible within the governing framework of the UAE because his spouse was sponsored by her employer, and therefore not dependent on Raj as a sponsor. In this way, he and his family were able to respond positively to a precarious labour markets without relinquishing their

residency status in the UAE. In so doing, his family exhibited high levels of familial agency and were able to sustain their UAE-centred migration project within a precarious work environment.

Raj's complicated mobility trajectory demonstrates that for his family, distance, and the ensuing separation they experienced for temporary periods of time, was approached in a highly strategic way. Having moved from India to the UAE, he and his family decided that rather than abandoning the UAE stage of the migration project when Raj encountered difficulties at work, they would extend the project to encompass first Tunisia, then Mexico, and potentially Canada. All the while, his spouse and children continued with 'life as normal' in the UAE: they continued to 'get on with it', as discussed earlier in section 5.2.2, with regards to military and seafaring families. Rather than seeing this onward mobility as a disruption to their collective, family life course, it is evident that his family drew on their familial agency to harness that disruption to their advantage.

Although his family continued with 'life as normal', Raj remembers the emotional cost of temporary separation. Having grown up in the UAE, his two daughters have now moved away to study at universities in the UK and Canada, respectively. But when they were very young, he remembers missing them during his periods of onward mobility. Although Raj and his family drew on their individual and familial agency to respond positively to a time of "turbulence", when the family migration project ran the risk of being "interrupted, shaken, pushed off course and [...] turned back or held still" (Sheller, 2019:338), that agency did not shield him from the emotion associated with moving, distance and separation.

I worked [in Tunisia] four days on and four days off. So, because my family was in Dubai, I had nothing to do. So, I was free. I explored a lot. I would get four days off every two months for family leave, and I'd come here. (Raj)

Did they visit you? (Colleen)

No, my children were small. (Raj)

Oh, I see. How did you communicate with your family? (Colleen)

Telephone only! I used to have a phone card given to us by the company, and I could speak for an unlimited time. So, I used to agree a

certain time with my family, and they would be waiting for me to call. Then I would be reminded of the value of staying with the children. They really miss you. I used to enjoy those calls. They were still small, so I couldn't call in the evenings because of the three-hour time difference. So I would call 6am there and it was 9 o'clock in the morning here. They would wake up and we would talk. (Raj)

However, by Raj moving to work elsewhere, the family was able to protect their established life in the UAE, as well as the long-term future of their overall migration project. In the time he worked elsewhere, it could be argued that Raj engaged in the process of what Wang (2020) refers to as 'positive waiting'. By waiting for the right job to come up in the UAE (which it eventually did), he was able to make "a supposedly precarious stage into something meaningful" (Wang, 2020:2137). Acedera and Yeoh (2020:256) write that "the liminal characteristic of migration, at certain times demands that families must make the decision to suspend, abandon, or pursue a migration project in the knowledge that family ties will be sustained or broken as a result". Although his onward migration required Raj to be temporarily apart from his family, the strategic mode of separation they devised was put into action so as to protect the long-term viability of their family migration project.

5.3.2. 'The Doha thing had already kicked in': concurrent regional mobility

Susan and Ivan's mobility trajectory draws further attention to how the distance-separation connection is influenced by the need to respond strategically to the changing labour market within the initial migration destination. Ivan works for a foreign-owned construction company with an office in Abu Dhabi. The family had moved to Abu Dhabi 11 years prior to interviewing him and his partner Susan. However, a year previous to that, Ivan's company requested that he move to Qatar to manage a long-term project there. As a family, they were able to make the choice for Susan and their daughter to continue to live in Abu Dhabi because Ivan's employer-sponsored visa was registered in Abu Dhabi. As a result, their daughter's schooling was not interrupted, and they could continue their established family life in Abu Dhabi.

As the narrative to follow demonstrates, their distance-separation connection requires Susan and Ivan to make complicated arrangements around their daughter's school

schedule and the logistics of travel – arrangements that involve the “organizing and sequencing of movement” (Sheller, 2019:338). Since the time he started working in Qatar, political relations between the UAE and Qatar have become increasingly strained, and it is no longer possible to fly directly between the two countries. This development added a new temporal dimension to their family life. The narrative below demonstrates how arrangements to manage these spheres of mobility are complicated even further when other spheres of family mobility are added into their transnational family life, at certain points of the year. As a couple, in everyday life they live with their daughter across two countries in the Middle East; their son and Susan’s elderly mother live in different parts of the UK; and they have a family home in the UK, where Susan and their children spend all of the summer each year.

Last summer the Doha thing had already kicked in. We had a holiday in Asia and because we started our journey in Asia (I found a good deal to do that) and we all flew to the UK from there. But the Asia trip took up the predominate time of his holiday, really. So he [Ivan] was only back in the UK for three days – he’s never there for very long. He had booked to travel again to the UK in September, and we would all fly back to Abu Dhabi together [and then Ian on to Doha] but then it would have been two months – from July to September. So he came back to the UK, basically for a long weekend. But it was just too far for him to travel to Swansea, so we went up to London to meet him. But then British Airways were on strike in the summer, so not only did you have the Doha situation, you had the British Airways situation. The Qatar Airways flights were so expensive. I did it on points and he had to come via Milan and go back via Budapest. (Susan)

This complicated story of travel mobility draws attention to how families have their “own culture of relatedness; that is, their own idiosyncratic ways of being connected to one another that need not conform to conventions that do not necessarily conform to conventional notions of doing family” (Long, 2014:245). On the face of it, in contrast to co-present families for whom international mobility does not shape their everyday lives, the doing of family as set out above, presents a highly unorthodox organisation of family life. However, Long’s (2014) reminder that distance does not preclude familial intimacy, demands a closer look at how seemingly unconventional family lives are

themselves experienced in normative terms. Although the travel arrangements that Susan puts together to manage the distance-separation connection each summer appear complicated, it is also possible to identify a routine and rhythm within that complexity. The family practice of meeting up in London because her partner's visits are 'never very long', suggests that there is a predictability embedded within their mobility. Even in a situation of external uncertainty (an airline strike and an ongoing regional dispute), a rhythm within adjusted travel arrangements prevails, suggesting the building of "contingent temporality" (Robertson, 2019:170) in a precarious environment characterised by unanticipated events and unforeseen circumstances.

As was the case for Raj and his family, Susan and Ivan have come to experience distance and separation within a strategic frame of reference that pivots around a pattern of concurrent mobility. The latter live their everyday (weekday) lives in the same region but in different countries. To make that possible, they have drawn on their individual and familial agency to maintain the migration project they began eleven years previously, and to maintain the relatedness that sits at the core of their family life. That agency is enabled by the transferability of Ivan's skilled status from one construction project, and one country, to another. But it is also enabled by their familial agency – collectively they have built up new mobile family practices that ensure ongoing togetherness within their complicated mobility environment. Contrary to Long's (2014) argument that migration may entail the replacement of previously normative family arrangements with practices typical of family life in the migration destination, it is evident that in Susan and Ivan's case, strategically exercised family practices have been built up over time. Over time, they have built a different way of doing everyday family life. Such practices are created by geographical distance and the enacting of their own particular familial agency.

5.4. Conclusion

Drawing on Burrell's (2016) assertion that for transnational families, distance exists not as an 'imagined condition' but as a physical state of being that profoundly shapes everyday family relations, in this chapter I have developed an argument that centres around the 'distance-separation connection'. In so doing, I have drawn attention to the embodied, emotional, and spatial essence of distance, and how that connection shapes the ways in which transnational family relations later-in-life are played out, both

in terms of the weakening of relations but also (as I go on to explore more fully in chapter six), the maintenance of those relations.

As argued by Burrell (2016), I have shown how the physicality of distance (Abu Dhabi is sometimes experienced as being simply very far from many of the countries to which my respondents are connected), is central to later-in-life transnational families' relations and their attempts to sustain those relations across distance and time. To revisit Vera's statement noted earlier, living far away means that you are 'just not there'; distance is physical, raw, and embodied. However, in this chapter I have extended the basis of this argument by pointing first to how separation and distance as a state of being is experienced in different ways, and second, that it can be harnessed as a strategy to bring about long-term benefits for the migration project in the whole. In so doing, I have shown that distance as a spatial, physical entity, is complicated by: i) the fact that family members are bound up in a relational environment; ii) they have the capacity to call on individual or familial agency; and (iii) family lives exist within their own temporal environments.

To this end I have identified three modes of separation evident within my respondents' mobility trajectories. First, marital dissolution, which I have shown to arise out of the very prospect of moving to Abu Dhabi. For a small number of respondents in my study, their marriages were dissolved even before the migration project came to fruition, resulting in permanent separation at the outset. Second, I explored the way in which distance and separation are experienced in an intermittent way, punctured by periods of co-present family life (Thomas and Bailey, 2009) so that the cycle of being together and then apart becomes intrinsically relational and temporal. However, that relationality is not fixed in time; intermittent separation may in some cases become more akin to permanent separation, as distance gradually diminishes the value previously placed on relations with particular family members. Finally, I have drawn attention to how distance is harnessed in a strategic way and consciously incorporated into family mobility trajectories. Building on Gomes' (2019) argument that transnational families navigate their migration environments as agents of their own circumstances, it has been shown that couples may consciously decide to spend time apart in different countries so as to manage unanticipated events that would otherwise threaten the sustainability of the Abu Dhabi migration project.

Taken together, my findings highlight the dynamic, slightly messy nature of later-in-life transnational family lives in the context of separation and distance. In the chapter to follow, I move the discussion on to consider how such families develop strategies to sustain relations across distance and over time, and how they mitigate against the harsh consequences of distance I have explored in this chapter.

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CHAPTER 6

Keeping it together: Mobility, togetherness, and family practices later-in-life

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I examine the practices employed by my respondents to sustain family relations in the context of their transnational, mobile lives. The analysis is organised around the notion of togetherness,¹³ which takes the form of ‘virtual’ togetherness (co-presence in the absence of physical proximity through the use of ICTs) and temporary togetherness (physical co-presence enabled by family visits). This exploration of togetherness provides an alternative language to the co-presence and proximity that characterises co-present family lives. As Reynolds and Zontini (2013) point out, physical family proximity within the borders of nation states has long been the principal starting point for scholars seeking to understand family relations and the ‘doing’ of everyday family life. But physical proximity does not typify everyday transnational family lives. Hence it is not a constructive starting point for further analysis since it masks the nuances and complexities inherent in this form of family life.

In the discussion to follow, I draw on my respondents’ narratives to demonstrate how migration and mobility gives rise to what I have termed a ‘proximity-togetherness connection’. In an era in which virtual forms of communication have become so prevalent, meaningful relations with significant others are no longer contingent on physical proximity because technological-centred modes of staying connected provide a way of bridging distance (Holmes and Wilding, 2019). However, for transnational families, as has been noted in the previous chapter, “the tension between physical proximity and distance is an important lived reality” (Svasek, 2010:868). Such tension

¹³ McCarthy (2012:84-5) suggests that ‘togetherness’ is a language that points to ‘general talk’ about the everyday collectivity of family lives, expressing a sense of belonging “that goes beyond the individual relationship of which it is comprised”.

is thread through with emotion and with the challenges of negotiating family togetherness and intimacy at a distance (Wilding, 2017).

Although for transnational families the emotional dimension of togetherness is founded on previous knowledge and previous experience of face-to-face interaction (Svasek, 2010), this chapter shows that togetherness – in terms of how it is captured and the meaning it embodies – is also reshaped in the everydayness of managing transnational family lives. No longer premised on everyday physicality, the narratives to follow show that togetherness has come to be felt and expressed in temporal and virtual, as well as (sometimes) co-present terms. The two forms of togetherness I explore in this chapter are in part premised on physical proximity but not entirely so. Hence, the analysis calls for togetherness to be conceptualised in physical terms (to capture intermittent periods of co-present togetherness) but also in terms of emotional closeness felt from afar (virtual togetherness). As Burrell (2016:4) puts it, family practices drawn upon to build and sustain togetherness are intertwined in the “emotional registers” of mobility and distance.

The interconnectedness of emotions, people, and mobility in the context of transnational family lives, requires emotion to be understood as partly, although not entirely, distinct from the emotion that sits at the heart of co-present everyday family practices. Family practices such as children’s bathing routine (Gabb, 2011), family talk (Morgan, 2011) or travelling to school and work (Jensen et al., 2015), provide a co-present space for emotion between family members to be expressed and displayed. Such everyday practices are possible for transnational families who have moved with young children at an earlier time in their collective life course. But for those who do so later-in-life, when their family composition may involve adult, stay-behind children, grandchildren, and elderly parents, these types of practices cannot be utilised in the same way. In addition, for those living away from their adult children, those children may have built nuclear families of their own, around which their own specific family practices will revolve. Svasek (2010) states that emotion positions individuals in relation to others. For Holmes and Wilding (2019) too, relations enacted from a distance require individuals to actively reflect upon the strength of feelings they have for those with whom they are emotionally connected, and what it actually means to feel ‘close’ to significant others who live far away.

This complexity draws attention to how family relations, and family practices, are specific to the personal geographies of individuals and family lives (Davidson and Milligan, 2004). As Sheller (2019:337) writes, individuals produce “their own biographical narrative through migration.” It also draws attention to how family practices reproduce the social relations embedded in the carrying out of those practices so that: “There is, therefore, a certain circularity between these practices and the sets of other individuals and relationships within which these practices have meaning” (Morgan, 2011:2). Such observations are significant in the pursuit of sustained togetherness because they point to the continuity of family ties across distance and over time. In the absence of everyday co-presence, when everyday events such as shared family meals or car journeys may be used as opportunities to sustain togetherness, the regularity and rhythm of family visiting, or use of ICTs, takes on a heightened significance when geographical distance cuts into established ways by which family togetherness is expressed.

In the discussion to follow, I focus first on family visiting, within which three forms have been identified: visits home; visits from family members; and meeting up with family members in a third geographical holiday location. Second, I examine the ways in which my respondents use ICTs and I explore the sense of family togetherness such engagement fosters. I also draw attention to how and why the potential for ICTs, to engender a sense of togetherness, is limited by either a reluctance to engage with ICTs or the lack of wherewithal to do so.

6.1. Family visiting

The routes recorded by my respondents on their mobility maps (as explained in chapter three), provide a valuable starting point from which to examine family visiting as an ongoing family practice. By using each completed global map as a basis for discussion in the second interview, it was possible to establish the frequency and duration of visits home¹⁴. It was possible to explore, in a fairly organic way, the emotions

¹⁴ In making this reference to ‘home’, I acknowledge the argument that international migration complicates this term (see for example Walsh, 2018a). In this chapter I use the term to denote a sense of attachment to people, places and emotions (Belford & Lahiri-Roy, 2019:66), which

embodied in the essentially physical act of moving from Abu Dhabi to the home country, and back to Abu Dhabi again. Importantly, although this circuit of mobility features strongly in the visual representation and oral accounts of my respondents' movement, those accounts draw attention to two other forms of visiting: visits made by family members to Abu Dhabi, and the practice of family 'meet-ups' in a third geographical location that is sometimes, but not always, equidistant between Abu Dhabi and the country in which other family members reside.

The inclusion of family meet-ups within the practice of family visiting, extends the analysis of visiting beyond that offered by the visiting family and friends literature originating in tourism studies, and since of interest to migration scholars. As a typology of mobility, VFR draws attention, in particular, to the impact of return visits on receiving communities (Munoz et al., 2017). The work of Lehto et al. (2001) for example, points to the economic impact this group of travellers has on receiving countries. They argue that VFR travel is important to receiving countries not only for the expenditure on accommodation, food, and other temporary needs this form of travel involves, but also because visits home are likely to follow a pattern of repeated, regular travel. Others broaden out this form of mobility to include visits received from friends and relatives in the migration destination. For example, Klekowski von Koppenfels et al. (2015) draw attention to the 'bidirectionality' this form of visiting brings about, and King and Lulle (2015) point to its prevalence amongst Latvian labour migrants in Guernsey. In addition, Miah and King (2020) document the importance of this form of visiting among Bangladeshis living in London, in particular visits received from parents still residing in Bangladesh. Such visits were found to be important because they help to ensure "the maintenance of transnational familyhood" (2002:9).

In the discussion to follow, I demonstrate how an examination of visiting can be broadened out further still, to include not only visits home (there) and visits to Abu Dhabi (here) but also meet-ups in a third geographical location (somewhere). In this way, the discussion draws attention to how an analysis of visiting is complicated by

my respondents express in relation to the places from which they have directly or indirectly moved, and to which they sometimes return.

these differing forms; the intricate arrangements required to bring visits about; and the emotion that the act of visiting embodies.

6.1.1. Visits home: going ‘there’

In this section, I draw on my respondents’ narratives to highlight the importance they attach to the regularity and rhythm of trips home. This is evident first in Emily’s narrative set out below, which illustrates the frequency of her travel between Abu Dhabi and South Africa.

In total, say last year, how many times did you go home? (Colleen)

You know Colleen, I haven’t counted. Off the top of my head I can’t ... but probably five times. Easily, easily five times. (Emily)

And your travelling is always to go home? (Colleen)

I always go at Easter, I went for his [son’s] 21st, which coincided with Easter this year. So, I was home in December and then Easter. Um, then there was the mid-term break and then I went for July/August, which was long. Then I went for a mid-term break – that was September. And then for the wedding. So, from Christmas until now, that’s six times. And I’m going now again, so that’s seven times already this year. And the other years were very similar. (Emily)

For Navi too, visits home are characterised by a long-established rhythm of two trips every year. Navi, whose immediate family have remained in India during the 15 years that he has been working in Abu Dhabi, describes the rhythm of his visits as such:

And how often do you go back? (Colleen)

Every six months for 10 days and every year for a month. Once every six months. Once for 10 days and once for a month – to be with my family (Navi)

For Richard, the long-established tradition of returning to the UK every November for his grandchild’s birthday, draws attention to the regularity of his annual visits and the certainty with which he views this event, as he explains here:

Okay, so thinking about trips to the UK, are they always the same time of the year? (Colleen)

That's right. Yeah. Spring and then 28th November. It's like – if you have a 10-year-old family tradition then this is a 10-year-old family tradition! It's called the annual jamborie! (Richard)

And that's over a couple of days? (Colleen)

Oh, the entire trip lasts three weeks. (Richard)

Oh, okay, so you have a real catch-up. (Colleen)

Yes, I think it might actually be in my [employment] contract! (Richard)

For all three respondents, it is evident that the regularity and rhythm of their visits emphasises the importance they place on co-presence as a means of sustaining family togetherness, and that visits home are imbued with a sense of certainty. As recorded in Emily's excerpt, she goes to South Africa at various times of the year but she 'always goes at Easter'. In the case of Navi, without hesitation, he was able to answer my question: 'How often do you go back?', suggesting the rhythm of his visits home is embedded in the family routine he and his immediate family have built up over years of geographical separation. In Richard's case, the rhythmicity of his trips is anchored around the key date of his grandchild's birthday celebration each November. The sense of togetherness that the memory of the event evokes is contingent not only on his physical presence, but being in a particular place (the UK) on the same date each year.

In his study of transnational childhood and motherhood in Cape Verdean families, Carling (2017:33) concludes that the centrality of place and time within the process of migration means that "mobility should not primarily be conceptualized as movement across space, but as separations and unifications with people and places". For Collins and Shubin (2015) place is important to individual stories of migration because places, in their physical form, are imbued with meaning. Time is equally important because time itself is a measurable entity that influences when individuals move to, from and between places. Hence, place and time are bound up with the people who are situated within that environment. So, individuals make visits home in an environment of relationality, in which the presence of significant others (a grandchild, a wife) at a specific point in time (a birthday, annual leave from work) dictates the location/place

and timing of those visits. In the same way as migration “takes place at a specific moment in the lives of the other people affected by the departure or arrival of the migrant” (Carling, 2018:13), visits home are influenced by events and moments in time that are meaningful to those who have moved away, and to those who have stayed behind.

As stated, the narratives of all three respondents above highlight the importance placed on the regularity and rhythm of their visits home. However, they also point to the personal geographies (Davidson and Milligan, 2004) referred to previously in this chapter, which give rise to different patterns of visiting mobility and the differing meanings attached to return visits. In the year prior to my interviews with her, Emily had visited her family in South Africa seven times and as such, that mobility trajectory tells a story specific to her. She has worked as a teacher in Abu Dhabi for five years, she is divorced, and has two adult sons who live in South Africa. Her youngest son’s life is profoundly shaped by ongoing illness, and much of her narrative is centred around the pain of mothering from a distance (Parreñas, 2001), as evident in her comment here:

When he’s ill, when he’s really bad, he doesn’t even tell me. So that’s my worry. I never really know what’s going on there. (Emily)

For Emily, in the first instance, her frequent visits are made possible by the regularity of school holidays. But they are also essential for the purpose of monitoring her son’s health. Her frequent visits are essential for the purpose of seeing for herself what her son has ‘edited out’ (Baldassar, 2008) of his conversations with her. Likewise, for her son, it is apparent that information sharing requires co-presence, possibility because, as Baldassar writes: “when kin are physically absent, their ability to respond appropriately to bad news is limited by distance. It is their lack of ability to simply be there in a physical sense that is the issue” (2008:254).

Although editing out bad news is meant to minimise his mother’s anxiety, for Emily it arguably “doubles the distance” in emotional terms (Matyska, 2019:59). The annual flight allowance built into her employment contract is crucial to her distance-management strategy because it allows her to partly fund her flights home, reflecting the relative privilege her skilled status confers. The structure of the school calendar,

with regular holidays dividing up the school year, also points to how the nature of her job shapes the rhythm of her visits home and her ability to attend important times of family togetherness (birthdays, weddings, Christmas). However, her son's ill health, and the importance she places on optimising opportunities to see him, also means that she forgoes possibilities to travel elsewhere. Her limited global mobility shines a different light on long-established understandings of how privileged forms of migration, and resulting travel mobility, are experienced by mobile professionals. Commenting on her completed global mobility map during the second interview, Emily concluded:

There you go. That's me. Not very much, but that's it. Not very interesting. Is it?

I thought I was going to do the whole of Europe while I was here, but it doesn't look like that's going to happen. (Emily)

Emily's narrative points to how hoped-for, anticipated travel, has come to be experienced as, what Hui (2013) has referred to as "travelling-in-disappointment", where dashed-hopes means that "travelling becomes embodied in the alternating contrasts of anticipation and frustration" (2013:896). In stating that she anticipated travelling widely in Europe following her move to Abu Dhabi, but that 'it doesn't look like that's going to happen', Emily's account draws attention to her personal disappointment but also to how her limited global mobility is relational to those who inhabit her immediate environment. In the broader collective story of professional mobility, opportunities for travel and adventure form part of the shared narrative and play an important part in motivations for mobility, as found by Richardson and Mallon (2005) in their study of academics who had moved as autonomous mobile professionals to the UAE. Emily's narrow mobility pattern, as illustrated on her global map (Appendix 6), means that she cannot share in the "sociability of sharing [travel] stories" (Hui, 2013:899) that are likely to circulate amongst friends and colleagues in her immediate, everyday environment. Her migrant privilege enables her to make frequent visits home. But her privilege is experienced in relative terms because the frequency of those visits means that she has dissociated herself from a certain expression of privilege (travel and holidays), which she had initially anticipated for herself.

For Navi, his personal geography gives rise to a rhythm of visits home distinctly different to that of Emily. The frequency of his visits is not determined by the school term, as in Emily's case, where the regularity of school holidays freed up her time to take frequent trips back home. In the case of Navi, his month-long annual visit home is determined not by the rhythm of his job, but those of his family. The longer of his two annual visits is planned to coincide with his wife's own rhythm of annual leave from work and the rhythm of his daughter's school terms, but also with Diwali celebrations. As a result of the busyness of these times of the year:

One month goes just like that! With the ceremonies, one month is over ... it goes! (Navi)

Richard's narrative also demonstrates that his visits home pivot around family. But they too are shaped by his personal geography and the circumstances specific to him. The success of his grandchild's birthday celebration, and the sense of togetherness his memories of the event evokes, is contingent not only on physical proximity, but his physical presence in the UK on the same date of each consecutive year. Visits home are characterised by regularity and rhythm that – in itself – is shaped by a personal geography that tells a unique story. Richard has divorced three times and has three children and four grandchildren. He also lives with his partner in Abu Dhabi, with whom he travels to China, to visit her family there. So, as is the case for Emily and Navi, visits are characterised by regularity and rhythm. However, in Richard's case, those visits are complicated not only by his family ties in his own home country, but to those of his partner also.

Of course, the rhythm of visits home, and the certainty with which they are viewed, is never assured. Although on the face of it, the routine and rhythm associated with family practices is indicative of stability, it is also the case that life events may disrupt the established rhythm of visits. As can be seen in Arjun and Reena's exchange noted below, the changing needs of Arjun's ageing mother quickly gave rise to a new rhythm of visiting. Their family mobility pattern resembles one of repeated mobility between India and the UAE. Their most recent phase of migration to Abu Dhabi (in 2012), was undertaken in the knowledge that Arjun would be required to make more frequent visits back to India to see to his mother's care needs.

Once we came back in 2012, our travel to India became more often.
(Arjun)

Like every two months he goes back. (Reena)

Oh, okay. (Colleen)

Because now he ... he has to do that duty. He splits his leave five or six times. (Reena)

I go for a week each time. (Arjun)

Although the pattern of Arjun's visits had settled into a well-established rhythm, in Tahil's case, visits home were accelerated by his father's declining health, demonstrating how such visits ebb and flow in line with the needs of others and the rhythm of birth and death (Baldassar, 2014), as demonstrated here:

My parents died in 2002 and 2010 respectively. This is the reason why we are going to India less now. When my father was very ill, I went around 10 times a year. You go because you like being with them but, in the field of life, you then move on. And that aspect of your life finishes. And then you look forward to your children and other responsibilities.
(Tahil)

Reena's comment that 'he has to do that duty' and Tahil's inference that the loss of his parents freed up his time to focus more closely on his own children and other responsibilities, draws attention to how visits home are complicated by the underlying presence of obligation, as explicitly referred to in Mazia's narrative below.

I have to go there [to Lebanon] to see them otherwise I would just feel ... what if something happens to my mother? What if something happens and I don't see her any more? And how would she feel if I don't see her? 'My child doesn't care about me any more'? We actually end up going there as an obligation. Of course, I love my mother. I love her so much. I love my parents. I love my sister and brother. But I'm also obliged to show up and to be fully to have all my energy on charge.
(Mazia)

For Mazia, the knowledge that one day in the future, travel to see her ageing mother in Lebanon will come to an end, amplifies the feeling of obligation she associates with visits home. As highlighted by King and Lulle (2015:605), in the event of family emergencies, return visits cannot always be accommodated within the confines of work schedules, leading sometimes to “painful emotional consequences”. The worry that ‘something’ will happen to her mother, in large part drives Mazia’s resolve to make regular visits home and gives rise to a “messy complexity of emotions” (Baldassar, 2015:76). Such messiness is also characterised by ambivalence, as illustrated by two statements she makes in the excerpt above, which are seemingly at odds with each other. Mazia’s statement: ‘Of course I love my mother. I love her so much’, speaks to a deep emotional attachment to her mother. However, her assertion that ‘We actually end up going there as an obligation’ suggests that visits home are associated with a lack of choice; that such visits are framed as something she has no choice but to undertake on a regular basis.

The ambivalence with which Mazia approaches visits home points to how visiting family might be a relatively simple exercise in spatial terms (the physicality involved in making the visit) but complicated by the fact that they are “circumscribed by conflicting emotions” (Mueller, 2015:632). In a co-present family existence, one might choose to visit a relative one afternoon, stay for a while, and arrange to return another time, yet still achieve a sense of togetherness. In transnational family lives, arguably visits are far more heavily weighted down by anticipation, hope, and waiting. As Mazia states, she is obliged to ‘show up’ and to have all her ‘energy on charge’.

Although she approaches visits home with ambivalence, Mazia clearly feels a strong emotional attachment to those she goes back to see. For Chris, marital discord, and eventual separation from his wife, meant that visits home during the last years of their marriage came to be increasingly motivated by a sense of duty rather than any meaningful emotional attachment.

I’m prepared to say that it’s a waste of a holiday [going back home] because I used to go back and do loads on the house. Fix the fence in the garden, and all that stuff. I resented doing that. It’s a terrible thing to say, I know. I would have liked to have gone somewhere else. But you felt obliged to go back, you know. (Chris)

Chris's statement that a visit home is 'a waste of a holiday', points to the normative expectations associated with holidays as an event. For annual leave from work to be viewed as a holiday, that time away from work must differ from the mundane routine of everyday life (Gram et al., 2018). It must also involve a process of anticipation and provide the possibility for reminiscing once back home (McCabe and Stokoe 2010). For Chris, using part of his holiday allocation to visit his family home in the UK meant that he lost the opportunity to escape the mundane routine of everyday life, in his case, 'fixing the fence in the garden and other stuff'. Chris's statement also points to the presence of deep emotion, expressed as a sense of feeling morally obliged to use part of his annual holiday allowance to make a visit home. His narrative suggests that, although he gave up opportunities to go 'somewhere else', it also meant that he was then able avoid the sense of guilt that accompanies choosing to go 'somewhere else'. It can therefore be argued that, at the time he was still married, Chris internalised the "superiority of physical co-presence" (Wojtyńska and Skapatadóttir, 2019:6) as a means by which family relations are defined and sustained across distance, and the basis on which his family input was measured by others.

Similarly, the process of constructing their global mobility map prompted Patrick and Fran to reflect on how their decision to travel to Hawaii, to meet their new-born granddaughter, was one that arose out of their desire to share a joyful event with their daughter and partner, who were living there at the time. But their decision is expressed in ambivalent terms. As their narrative shows, their willingness to allocate part of their annual holiday allowance to the trip, was also driven by a sense of obligation to their family in Hawaii.

I don't ever remember looking at holidays and saying half of our holidays were to service other people's needs. We would never have gone to Hawaii if our granddaughter hadn't been born there. We've never said: 'Let's isolate holidays just for the personal pleasure of being together and for enjoying something together'. (Patrick)

Patrick's statement that 'We would never have gone to Hawaii if our granddaughter hadn't been born there', points to how obligation is experienced as the process of putting someone else first amid the "persistent tensions" of transnational family life

(Gallo, 2013:109). Patrick and Fran's decision to make the trip was rooted in the desire to meet their grandchild for the first time, but also in their sense of obligation as parents and grandparents. That sense of obligation made them feel that a substantial part of their travel mobility had, to date, been largely about 'servicing the needs of others'. Despite having the economic means to travel for the purpose of leisure, they felt bound to prioritise the practice of family visiting. As Klekowski von Koopenfels et al. (2015:614) write: "highly skilled Global North migrants who, for the most part, have the ability to engage in tourism and travel for the sake of leisure, are bound by familial and other felt obligations". Patrick and Fran's account suggests that in the process of constructing their mobility maps, they began to disassociate the notion of 'holiday' with the practice of visiting family. As in Chris's case discussed earlier, Patrick and Fran's visit to Hawaii involved both joy (meeting a new grandchild) and the loss of ring-fenced time with each other, drawing attention to the "interplay of opposite emotions" (Wojtynska and Skaptadottir, 2019:5) that visits to see family members involve.

Although the narratives above point to the centrality of obligation as a deep-seated emotion associated with visits home, it is also the case that – by a process of careful strategising – it is possible to resist the all-consuming sense of obligation those visits gives rise to. In the effort to minimise the strain of having to manage time, distance and family obligation, Christine and Nathan have come to approach the event of visiting in a strategic way, as their conversation to follow shows.

The first two times we went home (our parents live in different parts of the country), we spent a whole two weeks living out of our car and sleeping on other people's floors and spare rooms. It was great to see them, but it was so tiring, and we just couldn't do that every year. (Christine)

It got to the point where last time I went home I didn't tell them [his parents] that I had gone home. I just had a trip to London for the weekend and then flew out. (Nathan)

Yes, we didn't see many friends that last time, did we? (Christine)

What I'll probably like to do, the next time I want to see the folks, I'll probably just do that – get a flight from Dubai to Newcastle. You can fly direct. So, I won't be going up and down the country. (Nathan)

But then you won't see the boys [their sons]. (Christine)

I'll make them come to me! I think that's the case with expats. It's like, if you want to see me, you come over to me because I'm not going around the country. (Nathan)

For Christine and Nathan, the pressure that distance places on their couple-time during their visits home, has encouraged them to seek out ways to balance the obligation they feel towards their parents, alongside the desire to also see other family members and friends. As Bryceson and Vuorela (2002:15) have argued, for non-proximate mobile families, a constant, ongoing process of "conscious rationalization" becomes part and parcel of their everyday lives. However, it is clear that the tug-of-war of "competing responsibilities" (Ryan et al., 2015: 209) in Nathan and Christine's case remains unresolved, as is evident in Nathan's insistence: 'I'll make them come to me!'

To some extent, Nathan has given himself the licence to ease the intensity of family obligation they have come to feel since moving to Abu Dhabi three years prior to interviewing him and his partner. He has done so by putting practical strategies into place to manage visits home more effectively. As shown in the excerpt to follow, following a conversation with her brother about the regularity of her visits back to Australia, Leyla was able to let go of the obligation she had come to internalise over the 14 years she had lived in Abu Dhabi, at the time of interviewing her.

I tend not to go back in the summer now. Um, I just ... I got tired of going back in the summer. It's winter and it's really a turn-off!

One of my brothers said to me: 'Don't feel you've got to come back to see us. You've got a chance to travel and enjoy it. Don't feel you've got to come home every holiday'. Which was actually quite freeing because I did feel like that.

Just for him to recognise, I guess, that you are spending a lot of money and time and there's all of this enticing travel you could be doing. And to see that he understands that and, you know, that he understood my anxiety: I want to know your kids, I'm out of touch! You know, there is some of that anxiety. So just for him to say basically: 'If I was away, I wouldn't come back every time. You don't have to come back every time.' And so yeah, it was freeing – in that way. (Leyla)

As the narratives presented in this section show, for transnational families, visiting is important because it offers an opportunity for temporary, but regular and certain periods of co-present togetherness. In some cases, however, the anticipated enjoyment of visiting family members is complicated by feeling obligated to make the visit and to ensure that opportunities are created for regular times of co-presence. In the discussion to follow I explore the idea that sustaining family togetherness, through the receiving of visits by family members, moves the emphasis away from obligation and also replicates practices of old, in comforting and productive ways: the receiving of visits from an elderly parent or adult children allows for previous visiting routines and times of togetherness to be enjoyed in the everyday migration environment.

6.1.2. Family visiting: coming 'here'

In this second dimension of visiting, I explore the importance of family visits to Abu Dhabi in relation to sustaining transnational family ties. This dimension is integral to the broader analysis of visiting because it brings into focus those who have stayed behind – it brings 'nonmigrants' into the analysis (Miah and King, 2020). It does so first, by considering family visits to Abu Dhabi, during which (typically non-mobile) family members become active agents in the quest to sustain togetherness. Second, it draws family members living back home into the analysis by recognising that financial, and other factors, constrain travel mobility and hence limit this particular means of sustaining transnational family relations.

As noted in chapter two, the life-course perspective places emphasis on the concept of relationality. That is, individuals live their lives in relation to others to whom they are bound and dependent in a variety of ways (Bildtgård and Öberg, 2017). In the case of family visiting, family members situated within the broader family mobility story shape the form, frequency and meaning attached to family visiting. In this way, they too are key actors in the quest to sustain togetherness through the physical proximity to which visiting gives rise, as illustrated by Nada's account to follow.

Nada left Serbia to work in Abu Dhabi a year and a half prior to my first interview with her. Although her job in the aviation industry enables her to make fairly regular visits to her daughter in Germany and her son in the US, their recent visit to see her in Abu Dhabi is one that she clearly holds close to her heart, particularly because it enabled

them to rekindle a long-established family practice. Nada lives as a permanent resident in a hotel and is entitled to have guests to stay for limited periods of time.

My son and daughter came over at the same time. I thought, maybe I should take another room for them, but it was nice because during their childhood, we would sometimes spend all night together chatting. So, we all stayed in the same room when they came. I think we spent almost all the night chatting! There was no benefit in taking another room. We only had five nights to spend together, so we tried to spend all of that time with each other. (Nada)

Nada's narrative suggests that the visit from her son and daughter was deeply meaningful because, for a short time, she was able to resurrect a previous, treasured family practice premised on physical proximity. That particular practice, as Nada's account indicates, demands co-presence. It cannot be substituted by other forms. As Baldassar (2008:252) writes in the case of stay-behind elderly parents of Italian migrants: "While virtual and proxy forms of co-presence are highly valued, it is generally felt that longing, missing and nostalgia are best resolved through *physical co-presence*; actually being bodily present with the longed for person or in the longed for place."

The importance of conceptualising visiting in a context of complex linked lives, is clearly illustrated in Christine and Nathan's narrative below. Here they point to the way in which Christine's parents, who divorced when she was a child, each feel differently about travelling to see their daughter and her family in Abu Dhabi.

My dad comes here. And my mom won't travel. She's quite nervous. But my dad's here all the time. So, I'm not worried about that [seeing him in the UK] because he can get on a flight over here and we don't have to go and see him. (Christine)

We see him here more than we do at home (Nathan)

He just loves the sun. I mean it rains all the time in Lancaster. He loves the water. He absolutely loves it here. It's brilliant!

The last time we went home, we dropped in (it was like a two-hour detour) and he was out! (Christine)

The willingness of Christine's father to visit her in Abu Dhabi helps her to remain connected to her father, but also allows her to spend more time with her mother when she goes home to the UK. Her father's willingness to travel, indirectly releases her from the obligation to see him during visits home. This in turn frees her up to spend longer periods of time with her mother, pointing to the co-production of togetherness that visiting has the potential to achieve. In this way, visits back home and visits to Abu Dhabi can be conceptualised as mutually reinforcing events that together create a family practice employed to sustain and strengthen togetherness in the absence of everyday co-presence.

For other respondents too, a great deal of importance is placed on receiving visits from elderly parents. Susan's narrative below, which centres around 'Gran's chair' (a symbolic material object associated with the receiving of visits from her mother), shows that the act of visiting can become complicated by the intersection of age, ageing and geographical distance.

She's aware of the fact that she's turning 80 next year. She orders a wheelchair now [at the airport] and she'll never go back to not using one – she went straight through immigration. But it's funny how it's different when you have somebody staying with you rather than just visiting. We had to go out and buy a chair for her because our sofas are quite low, and she had trouble getting in and out. And now, that will always be known as 'Gran's chair'. (Susan)

In their second year in Abu Dhabi, Sarah and Matias arranged for each of their elderly mothers to visit them from Argentina, as they explain here:

My mother is 91. She came for Christmas last year. The two of them came. Her mother is 85. (Matias)

She came too! (Sarah)

She came too. They both came alone – on different planes. (Matias).

The brief exchange recorded above is notable because it too highlights the significance of age and ageing in the context of visits to the migration destination. In the case of Sarah and Matias, this is evident in the palpable pride and surprise with

which they narrate the way their elderly mothers navigated their respective journeys across the world, so as to help to sustain their family togetherness.

Having explored the practice of family visiting as it pertains to receiving visits from family members in Abu Dhabi and making visits home, I move the discussion on to examine a third mode of visiting, which I have termed 'meet-ups'.

6.1.3. Family visiting: meeting up 'somewhere'

This final form of family visiting is one that takes place neither in Abu Dhabi nor in the respondent's country of origin but 'somewhere' – the Maldives, South Africa, Oman, St Petersburg or elsewhere. The defining criteria for the geographical location of meet-ups: of meeting up 'somewhere', is that they are held neither in Abu Dhabi (where my respondents live) nor in the country of origin (where their family members live), suggesting that less importance is given to the physical location of the meet-up than to the potential it offers for a time of family togetherness.

Murray and Mand (2013) argue that mobile space is always in-between space. Applied to visiting, this can be considered in relation to how visits home or visits by family members involve the arrival, a stay, and then departure. The period for which individuals 'stay' constitutes an "in-between space of mobility" (2013:75). As demonstrated in her study of airport transit areas, Colomer (2018) extends the basis of this argument by conceptualising the airport as an embodied, meaningful place of in-betweenness. Applying this line of enquiry to family meetups is constructive because it draws attention to how places of in-betweenness embody meaning, not for the holiday destination it promises, but for the opportunity it offers for togetherness. The cruise ship, or a specific city in which family meet-ups take place, on the face of it are places of in-betweenness for everyone concerned. However, the potential for togetherness that a city – or a vessel – holds, means that those places become acutely meaningful, even if only for a brief period of time.

For the small number of respondents whose partners had not moved with them to Abu Dhabi, meet-ups enabled them to maximise the amount of time they were able to spend together, as well as the potential quality of that time. At one point in their Abu Dhabi-Australia mobility trajectory, Fran and Patrick managed the distance that separated

them by taking turns to visit each other when their annual holiday allowance enabled them to do. On one occasion however, they decided to share the travel responsibility and meet geographically halfway between their countries of residence.

In 2014, Patrick and I met in the Maldives. So, this is my flight via Singapore [pointing to their global map] and this is Patrick's directly to the Maldives. It got to July and I said, it's too hot. I'm not going to go to Abu Dhabi or Al Ain to spend a week or whatever, so let's meet halfway. And so: the Maldives, yeah. (Fran)

Likewise, Angela's partner, who had remained behind in the UK, on occasion has agreed to meet somewhere that would require both of them to travel and, by deduction, allow them to both enjoy some holiday time.

He's done three trips to Abu Dhabi and I've done more [to the UK]. But then, amongst those, we also had a holiday when neither of us was here. We met in South Africa. We're meeting in Muscat soon. (Angela)

For Angela and her partner, and for Patrick and Fran, meeting up in places of 'in-betweenness', as highlighted by Murray and Mand (2013), points to how visiting, as a means of sustaining togetherness over long distances, is reflective of the intersection of their professional and their family life-course trajectories, later-in-life.

For some couple-respondents in my study, meet-ups were chosen as a form of visiting because it alleviated the sense of obligation usually associated with visits home, as examined earlier. In the case of Jim and Helen, their experience of meeting up in Russia with Jim's parents, who lived in South Africa, enabled them to view the trip to Russia as an adventure from which they could all benefit in equal measure, as their narrative suggests.

Our first big trip [from Abu Dhabi] was Russia (Jim)

So these were with parents. We didn't want to go to South Africa every time, you know, because we just felt we were missing out on seeing the rest of the world. So our parents came with us. Jim's parents came with us. In fact, it was his parents who initiated that trip. We sort of said: 'Can we come with you?!' (Helen)

We met in St Petersburg. (Jim)

Jim and Helen's experience of a meeting up with Jim's parents in an 'in-between space', enabled them to start 'seeing the rest of the world' while simultaneously strengthening their feeling of co-present family togetherness. The respondents' accounts of visits home I have explored in section 6.1.1, point to how such visits can give rise to feelings of resentment at having to give up potential holiday time to see family members back home. However, Jim and Helen's account of their trip to Russia suggests that the meet-up with Jim's parents allowed them to discard potential feelings of resentment and obligation, enabling them to enjoy their time of family togetherness more easily.

Soon after my final interview with Tahil, he and his wife were meeting up in Venice with family members and friends living in the UAE, Canada, and India. Once assembled, they were to all embark on a cruise. For Tahil, the cruise ship – which in this case served as the meet-up location, provides a neutral place in which he and his family and friends can meet and sustain their feeling of togetherness, despite being dispersed across the world in everyday life.

We can all enjoy the view. And you don't have to bother with food or anything. Everyone is able to relax. Everything is on the house – once you have paid. We can all just unwind. (Tahil)

Tahil's comment: 'We can all enjoy the view', suggests that the form this particular meet-up takes made it possible for everyone to 'unwind', providing an opportunity to optimise family togetherness for a bounded period of time. As his narrative suggests, time away (in this case on a cruise ship), means that he and his family and friends are able to temporarily suspend the everyday, more mundane routines associated with 'doing' family life (Morgan, 2011), resonating with Gutberlet's (2019) argument that cruise ships create an environment that spatially places passengers within enclosed 'tourist bubbles'.

Tahil's narrative is in sharp contrast with the view that the notion of a 'family holiday' is entrenched in everyday family life. Holdsworth (2015:96) for example, writes that the family holiday is more than a "temporary displacement" because, in the process of

saving and planning, they become part of the routine of everyday family life. Similarly, for McCabe and Stokoe (2010:1134), holidays are talked about (planned for, reminisced about) in everyday family life, so that “holiday talk occupies a mundane relevance in people’s lives, appearing frequently and regularly as they go about organizing their lives, activities, and social relations”. Although Tahlil’s family meet-up he describes above would have undoubtedly required forward planning, contrary to McCabe and Stokoe’s (2010) findings his narrative suggests that less emphasis is placed on planning the meet-up or reminiscing about the holiday. Rather, emphasis is placed on the opportunity for co-present family togetherness, which their chosen meeting place (the cruise ship) promised to make possible.

This argument is further illustrated in the case of a meet-up in Belgium, arranged by Jean and her family in the US. After attending a family wedding, the group were planning on spending time touring the country together.

This year we’re going to Belgium because my nephew is getting married there. My Denver relatives, the brother and sister-in-law, my nieces and nephews ... I’m not certain who else is coming. (Jean)

Jean had just arrived back from Belgium when I met her for the final interview, so I was able to ask her how the trip went.

And how was your Belgium trip? (Colleen)

Oh, it was lovely. It was lovely. Yeah, we had quite a time! Everyone arrived. Everything went off without a hitch. And this was with three different vehicles, various cell phones and us trying to get all over – get here and there. But um, we did it. We managed. (Jean)

Good – I’m glad it was a success! (Colleen).

The accounts of family meet-ups shared above add value to an analysis of how transnational families sustain ties across distance because the practice further highlights the importance of conceptualising visiting in a broader framework –beyond that of visits home or visits received from family members. As with visits by family members to Abu Dhabi, which I examined in the previous section of this chapter, family meet-ups incorporate stay-behind family members into the analysis. The narratives

offered above show that meeting up in an ‘in-between’ place with family (and in the case of Tahil, also friends), enabled everyone to enjoy the experience of travel while also serving the purpose of strengthening their sense of family togetherness. Respondents’ earlier accounts of visits home suggest that this form of visiting often embodies the baggage of obligation. Opportunities to travel specifically for the purpose of going on holiday may be relinquished so as to fulfil their sense of obligation to make visits home. However, the narratives offered immediately above suggest that the ‘in-between’ place that meet-ups represent, creates a form of visiting that casts aside obligation, highlighting the spatial dimension of visiting within a global context.

6.2. “And we can Skype!” ICTs and the maintenance of family togetherness

In the second part of this chapter, I examine the ways in which my respondents draw on ICTs to build an environment of transconnectivity (King-O’Riain, 2015), and how they use ICTs to sustain a sense of family togetherness across distance and time. Penny’s comment ‘And we can Skype!’, as appears in the sub-heading above, was made in the context of having recently received news that she was to become a grandmother for the first time. As Penny’s excerpt below indicates, her future, anticipated relationship with her granddaughter is premised on utilising Skype-calling to build their future relationship, “imagining transnational family life into being” (Baldassar, 2008:250) in the process.

They’re due on Valentine’s Day, so in my mind I’m not going to be there for the birth and I’m not going to be there at the beginning. The baby won’t know me anyway. And we can Skype!

My son sent me a message, maybe the beginning of last week, um, talking about the baby and saying: so, when she is born, will you be able to be here? And I was like, aargh!! I waited a couple of days and wrote back to say unfortunately I won’t be home until I come home [for good], the end of next year. So, I said we’re going to have to do a lot of Skyping so that I can see her – and she can start to see me, until I physically get there.

And they were like, okay, okay, we’ll Skype a lot! And I was like, phew! I wasn’t sure how that was going to go. (Penny)

Penny's claim that through Skype her new grandchild 'can start to see me', suggests that the visibility of Skype-calling will allow her to begin to build a relationship of familiarity with her granddaughter, ahead of their first physical, co-present meeting. Her narrative also suggests that this mode of communication will allow her to fulfil her son's indirect request that she be part of the impending family event, as evidenced by her palpable relief that he was happy to communicate via Skype ahead of her ultimate return home.

In their study of the co-present interaction of grandchildren and their grandparents in the US, Dunifon and Near (2018) found that the majority of their research participants lived near their grandchildren, with a small number of respondents reporting that they lived with their grandchildren. Grandparenting, especially in the pre-school years of their grandchildren's lives, was built on the basis of face-to-face activities such as play and shared meals. This form of everyday grandparenting contrasts sharply with the mode of grandchild-grandparent interaction Penny expects to have in the early part of her grandchild's life. Until she is able to act upon her intended ultimate return, she will not – for instance – be able to cradle her grandchild. But she will be able to visually share in everyday activities such as mealtimes, pointing to how Skype calling has the potential to blur the boundaries between presence and absence (Alinejad, 2019) and distance and proximity (Sihto, 2018). As Alinejad (2019) argues, ICTs open up possibilities for emotional closeness to be experienced in new ways, suggesting that the primacy of co-presence comes to be challenged in the 'always on' environment of communication technologies, as highlighted by Matthew's comment here:

I make use of it [communication technology] at work, I make use of it when I get up, I make use of it when I go to sleep. I mean, it's like ... I dunno ... it's constant. (Matthew)

For Matthew, the use of communication technologies is ever-present. For Raj too, the use thereof is built into the temporality of his everyday life. Here he provides an account of the rhythm of communication he and his partner have established with his two daughters, each studying at universities in different parts of the world.

How often do you speak to your daughters? (Colleen)

We call on a Saturday morning at 8 o'clock. When it's 8 o'clock here it's 10 o'clock there. So she waits for our [Skype] call. The same on Saturday night – the one in St. Andrews waits for our call.

Apart from that, their mother talks to them and we use Whatsapp and they phone if there's something urgent.

My one daughter is writing exams. Today I got a Whatsapp to say it was very good. Tomorrow I'll get another one. (Raj)

The familiarity established by this routine of messaging and Skype-calling points to the way in which routine helps to engender a feeling of family membership and, in so doing, softens the distinction between co-presence and absence. In the case of mobile family lives, distance mitigates against regular proximity. However, the way in which ICTs have widely been adopted as a family practice, and the meaning embedded within the lines of communication that ICTs make possible, challenges the established view that co-presence is synonymous with 'doing family', pointing instead to the way in which families may simultaneously exist together and apart.

6.2.1. "It allows us to be more mobile": ICTs as a facilitator of mobility

As the comment embedded in the sub-title above alludes to, for Carlo and his partner, the availability of ICTs made it possible for them to move back to Abu Dhabi for a second time in a process of repeated migrations (a pattern of mobility I set out in chapter four). The narrative below points to how they were able to return to Abu Dhabi, safe in the knowledge that the availability of ICTs would enable them to sustain their connection with Carlo's ailing mother.

I saw my mom die on Skype. I was here – we were working here. Mum got really sick, really quick. And the day she passed away happened to be my day off. We were on Skype, watching and talking, as she passed away. (Carlo)

She knew you were there? (Colleen)

Yeah, right up to the end. It was really ... I was so pleased that the technology was around. I got to have a last word with my mum, and stuff like that. (Carlo)

For Matyska (2019:51) “Death illuminates the material and cultural contingencies of transnational living.” As a critical, often unpredictable life-course event, what this author refers to as ‘death kin work’, must be done differently in a transnational context. The timing of his mother’s death (‘Mum got really sick, really quick’), meant that Carlo could not get back to Australia to hold his mother’s hand or embrace the other family members present. But he, and the family members who were with his mother as the end of her life drew near, were able to draw on other senses to feel part of the moment. It is possible then to consider how the available technology helped Carlo’s mother to have a “good death” (Matyska, 2019:52), and for Carlo to alleviate himself of “the survivors’ guilt” (2019:65) he might have felt had it not been possible to ‘have a last word’ with his mother. And for her to have known he was ‘there’.

Carlo’s account points to how his use of Skype blurred the division between ‘here and there’ so that – to him – it felt as if he and his mother were together despite being physically apart. In the blurring of co-presence and absence, emotion too becomes less bounded. Being able to witness and participate in his mother’s final day, being able to speak to and see her and other family members in real time, meant that – for that moment – Carlo was intimately part of a collective family unit with its palatable sense of family collectivity (Vertovec, 2004). Within that collective moment, the boundaries of intimacy were dissolved, serving to recalibrate the concept of presence, so that “relationships mediated via technology retain their levels of intimacy and affect despite geographical distance” (Felton, 2014:13). Despite the miles that separated Carlo and his partner from the significant family event he describes, at that moment, family membership was uncompromised by distance. As such, this critical event represented a “shared social field” (Ryan et al., 2015:200), in this instance created out of a collective family experience at a particularly significant moment.

Taking this argument further, it is possible to consider how Carlo’s experience resonates with Nedelcu and Wyss’s (2016) point that ICT-mediated communication does not result in a ‘blurring’ of virtual and face-to-face interaction but are, in fact, one and the same. These authors argue that ICT-mediated communication has become so routine (and for transnational families, such an integral part of everyday family life) that the two forms of communication come to embody the same meaning. Just as ‘doing’ family in a context of co-presence is predicated on everyday routine, so routine comes

to characterise and to be part and parcel of the way transnational families do family across distance. ICTs, which mediate “ordinary co-present routines” (Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016:203), are shaped by the technological factors associated with ICTs, but also the norms and obligations that govern everyday transnational family lives.

Of further significance is that Carlo’s account points to the virtual normalisation of a critical family event usually located so firmly in the realm of co-presence. As referred to earlier, the knowledge that he would be able to secure access to ICTs once settled in Abu Dhabi, made it possible for he and his partner to move back for a second time. His move was dependent on the availability of ICTs and, as his narrative shows, enabled him to share a time of family togetherness when his mother was nearing the end of her life. He was able to use communication technology to “collapse distance” (Baldassar, 2008:254) at that moment in time, allowing him to ‘have a last word with mum, and stuff like that’.

For Jim and Helen, ICTs did not enable their initial mobility, but it helped them to sustain it once their children, who had grown up in Abu Dhabi, returned to South Africa to complete their last two years of schooling. At the time of my interviews with them, both children were at boarding school there.

How do you communicate with them? (Colleen)

Whatsapp, Skype and phone calls. Whatsapp tends to be during the day. Not so much this year but last year, with [his son] being there on his own, I would Whatsapp him every single night, just before I went to bed, um, just to let him know that we were there for him. (Jim)

Ya, he battled that first year. He seems to forget about it now because he’s okay now. But he actually did battle. (Helen)

Ya, so [they used ICTs] to try and close the gap. (Jim)

Jim and Helen’s account shows that through routine use of Whatsapp messaging, they were able to continue to parent their children in a fulfilling way, despite the distance that separated them. Their narrative shows that their sense of continued togetherness was predicated on routine and regularity, enabled by the availability of ICTs. It was the technological properties of Whatsapp that allowed them to message their son every

night to tell him they 'were there for him'. In this way, their experience of parenting resembled one of co-presence, evident in the language Jim uses. By messaging at the same time every single night, Jim was endeavouring to shorten the distance between Abu Dhabi and South Africa. Through the "reappropriation of customary rituals of copresence" (Licoppe, 2004:150), he was able to 'close the gap'.

6.2.1 'I don't text my parents because they can't work it out': limits to ICT-mediated family togetherness

In this final part of the discussion, I draw attention to the limits of ICT-mediated family togetherness. I pay consideration to how the unbounded nature of ICT forms of communication; the later-in-life stage of the life course and impending older age; and individual resistance to its use, limit the capacity of ICT-mediated family togetherness in the context of later-in-life transnational family lives.

Patrick and his partner make use of Skype-calling on a regular basis to keep in touch with their family in Australia, and as such, they recognise the value this form of technology adds to their family life. However, the unbounded nature of ICTs can also foster ambivalence, as demonstrated by this interview conversation:

Yesterday my daughter rang us. She had the two little kids on Skype and it was our morning. The kids started becoming a bit too ... and we said, let's call it off. It's been 20 minutes. You go and do what you need to do with the kids, and maybe we'll catch up later today. That's directly related to this idea that: Skype goes off, it's working, and you've got everybody there. So you sit and talk and talk until there's nothing left to talk about. And that takes about an hour. (Patrick)

It's unnatural! (Fran)

And then you ... you're looking for a reason. It's like going for a visit, you know? 'When is it a good time to leave?' We think: treat Skype like a phone call, even though it's free. If you get on and you go: '10 or 15 minutesand let's do it again tomorrow' – it's more entertaining.

It's not an anti-Skype approach. It's how to keep Skype ... (Patrick)

It's managing it. (Fran)

So that it doesn't become 'oh God, it's a chore'. (Patrick)

Patrick's comment: 'Skype goes off, it's working, and you've got everybody there' resonates with what Licoppe (2012) has termed, with reference to the telephone, the 'crisis of the summons'. At the root of the crisis sits the "tension between the demand for accessibility and connectivity, on the one hand, and individuals' concern to protect themselves" (2012:1089). The argument that the maintenance of family ties across distance requires not only technological availability, but also emotional availability (Ryan et al., 2015), is salient here. Although Patrick and Fran value frequent Skype interactions with their children and grandchildren, they resent the timeless, unbounded nature of those conversations. Such timelessness has, in part, become a factor they are required to manage because the obstacle of cost, which previously curtailed the length of landline calls, has now largely fallen away. Consequently, they have been forced to think about how Skype interactions require the development of strategies that will allow them to ringfence some couple time. In so doing, they have layered a traditional conceptualisation of time on to the sphere of 'timeless time' in which ICTs operate.

The notion that traditional forms of communication are at odds with the unbounded character of ICTs noted above, also shapes the way in which some of my respondents communicate with elderly parents back home. As the narratives of Penny (1), Ella (2) and Mazia (3) demonstrate, age and ageing are central to their experience of staying connected, and to the specific way in which advancing age restricts ICT-mediated forms of togetherness.

(1)

I call my stepmother every couple of weeks. She does not do technology. She's the only one [in Penny's family]. She gets frustrated with things she doesn't understand. You know, she still has the rotary dial phone and if it's push button, it ends up being thrown out in the garbage (Penny).

(2)

With my mom, I phone. When we first came to Abu Dhabi, she sent letters or fax. She used to go to the library and ask the lady to fax her letter to me. I didn't get her a computer and now she's too old. But when

she wants to phone, she phones me. And I phone her twice a week.
(Ella)

(3)

I don't text my parents because they can't work it out. So I call them.
(Mazia)

For Penny, Ella and Mazia's elderly parents, their frame of reference continues to be the historical time when the telephone dominated as a mode of communication. The pace of technological change is such that it was only recently that cheap international telephone calls became a viable option for many more people, leading Vertovec (2004: 223) to write that: "cheap international telephone calls join migrants and their significant others in ways that are deeply meaningful to people on both ends of the line". As her narrative above indicates, for Ella and her elderly mother, letter-writing came to be assigned to memory when they replaced that form of communication with regular, affordable telephone calls. As (Ryan et. al., 2015) note, as the speed of change flies past a generation for whom Skype, Whatsapp-messaging and other forms of ICT-mediated communication were never part and parcel of their (younger) everyday lives, so it is that the telephone continues to endure.

In Leyla's case, it is not elderly parents, but the resistance of younger stay-behind family members to make use of ICTs, that calls into question the potential for this form of communication to sustain transnational family togetherness.

My family are really poor communicators. My mother and I will Skype almost every week but my two brothers and my sister – we hardly ever communicate unless I'm back in Australia. We email with emergency things or a quick Facebook message and my brother and me Whatsapp each other. I said to my sister: 'Shall we get on Whatsapp?' And she said 'What?!' She doesn't want to Skype, she doesn't want to so when we get together, we get together. But it hasn't been good as far as communication is concerned. And I felt a bit disappointed. Like: 'Come on guys, there's all these ways to communicate. Can't you make an effort?' But they don't basically. They just don't. (Leyla)

Leyla's experience is in sharp contrast to the scenario Patrick and Fran set out earlier, for whom the perceived invasive dimension of Skype requires careful management to protect their own free time. It is also in sharp contrast to Matthew's 'constant' use of ICTs. Leyla's account is therefore an important reminder that the personal geographies and life-course biographies of those on the other end of the line (those back home), also shape the practices transnational families employ to remain connected and sustain togetherness, across often vast geographical distance. For Leyla's sister, their relationship is defined by proximity. Having declined an invitation to communicate using Whatsapp and Skype, her sister has chosen to prioritise co-present togetherness, so that – as Leyla puts it – 'when we get together, we get together.'

6.3. Conclusion

This chapter has centred around the notion of togetherness, a language that points to a collective sense of family belonging (McCarthy, 2012). In the context of transnational family lives, togetherness is made more complicated by distance and separation, and therefore, the long-established view that co-presence is a pre-condition for proximity requires closer examination (Reynolds and Zontini, 2013). By exploring the strategies my respondents use to sustain ties with family members across geographical distance, I have argued that for later-in-life transnational families, togetherness is indeed predicated on physical closeness (their temporary times of co-presence), but also non-proximate closeness (emotional closeness realised by their engagement with virtual forms of communication).

In this chapter I have identified two forms of togetherness, emerging from different but parallel family practices. It has been shown that such practices help to sustain a sense of togetherness despite the geographical distance that separates family members, enabling them to remain situated in a web of linked lives (Gardner, 2002). The first form, 'temporary togetherness', was shown to arise from three different modes of visiting: visits by relatives to Abu Dhabi, visits home, and visits that take the form of meet-ups in a third geographical destination. Although my analysis is firmly situated within the 'visiting friends and relatives' scholarship, by adding a third type of visiting to the analysis, that of family meet-ups (referred to in the chapter discussion as 'meeting up somewhere'), I have been able to extend the analysis of family visiting in

spatial terms by paying consideration to how lives may remain linked through the presence of a further (temporary) mobility route and how this gives rise to a new environment of relationality. For the short period of time during which family members meet up somewhere in the world, their chosen place gives rise to a different form of relationality, but one that still engenders a sense of family togetherness and sustained connection. The chosen meet-up place is neither home nor the migrant emplacement. It is something else; a place to relax, or a place in which it is possible to forgo feelings of obligation and to explore other parts of the world, whilst simultaneously sustaining a sense of family togetherness.

The second form, 'virtual togetherness', has been shown to emerge from the use of ICTs, which in the absence of physical proximity, makes it possible for family life to exist in a state of "imagined co-presence" (Baldassar, 2008:252) and to still function in a routinised, habitual way. As Nedelcu and Wyss (2016) argue, such technology comes to be used in such a routinised way that, for transnational families, it gives rise to an ordinary way of doing family life. By exploring the notion of virtual togetherness, the discussion in this chapter has contributed to efforts by family migration scholars, in particular those exploring ICTs and family migration (e.g. Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016; Felton, 2014), to offer a critical response to the argument that co-presence is a pre-condition for family togetherness and sustained emotional connection.

However, in this chapter I have also shown that ICTs indeed mediate family togetherness for many of my respondents, but not for all members of their families. It has been shown that the use of ICTs to sustain togetherness is not embraced by everyone. For some, it is the practice of visiting – the opportunity for co-present togetherness, that defines and sustains their relations with family members who have moved away. The narratives point to a reluctance or inability of some younger, but mostly older family members, to embrace non-proximate forms of sustaining family relations. At the same time however, the narratives also point to how those who have moved are sometimes caught between the desire to embrace ICTs as a (relatively) readily available way of communicating with family members back home, and the desire to protect their own free time in their migrant destination.

The discussion in this chapter therefore highlights the complexity inherent in practices to sustain family togetherness. In this way, it contributes to the broad debate on migration, mobility, visiting, and ICTs, by threading together a range of significant

dimensions within the broad environment of linked lives: distance, emotion, agency, temporality, age, and ageing, and the expectations and roles associated with the later-in-life stage of the life course.

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CHAPTER 7

Into the future:

Reorientation of self later-in-life and anticipated family lives

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding empirical chapters, I examined the factors that motivated my respondents' initial move to Abu Dhabi, and I explored the ways in which they manage their mobile family lives later-in-life across geographical distance. In this final empirical chapter, I expand the spatial boundaries of the existing analysis by focusing on how my respondents anticipate their future, and their future family lives, to unfold beyond their current environment of mobility. Carling and Erdal (2014) write that for some migrants, return is a definitive end point in the migration project. But for others, over time it comes to be "written off completely" (2014:3). In the context of the UAE, writing off ultimate return (or onward migration) is never an option for the vast majority of those who move there to work, owing to the exclusionary immigration policies described in chapter two. As Gardner (2011:17) writes, because of such policies, "in the final accounting [foreign workers] can never belong". Hence, thinking about when they will return, or how their lives will be lived elsewhere, is ever-present in my respondents' everyday environment of mobility. As one of my respondents put it:

We all come here with the desire to go home. Not to live here. Always in the back of our mind ... we're always heading back home. (Carlo)

However, in this chapter I am not concerned with return migration as a topic of dedicated study, as offered by migration scholars such as Hunter (2018), Erdal (2017); Percival (2013); and Cerase (1974). For my respondents, the prospect of ultimate return is ever-present, but they are still actively situated in work and everyday life in Abu Dhabi. Therefore, in the discussion to follow, I conceptualise return as an anticipated mode of mobility within the future life course. I show that my respondents' planning for and imagining of their future, post-Abu Dhabi life course, is influenced by their present mobile lives and therefore has the potential to shape their future family lives. In this way, my argument echoes Elder's (1994:5) assertion that family lives are

linked and interconnected across the “full life course.” That is, future, later-in-life transnational family lives are shaped by what has come before and what those lives encompass in the present.

The chapter is organised into three sections. First, I explore the ways in which migration and mobility and the physical act of travel that involves, shapes the self-concept over time, giving rise to what I refer to as the ‘mobility-oriented self’ later-in-life. I draw on respondents’ narratives to show how the transformative potential of mobility and travel is not the preserve of young people – the demographic focus in the work of Prazeras (2017) and Bagnoli (2009) for example. It is also of relevance to those situated in the later-in-life stage of the life course. Second, I focus on onward migration as a form of mobility that is linked in with hoped-for futures. Here I organise the discussion around the possibilities and constraints associated with this form of mobility. I argue that the open-ended way in which the future is viewed, heightens possibilities for future mobility later-in-life and fuels the existing mobility-oriented self. Third, I focus on anticipated family life after ultimate return, suggesting that although return may signal an end to the distance and separation that currently characterises my respondents’ transnational family lives, that mode of living may in fact continue after that event or into onward mobility to a new migration destination. For instance, where stay-behind family members have themselves become geographically mobile, returnees face the prospect of onward mobility to a new destination to achieve family co-presence. The narratives of other respondents suggest that they do not anticipate settling in geographical areas proximate to their family members, and still others indicate that further international mobility, for work or travel, is likely to follow the initial period of settlement after return.

7.1. Making a mobility-oriented self later-in-life

The interconnectedness of different stages across the life course opens up the potential for migration and mobility to bring about significant changes to how mobile people think about themselves and the lives they lead. For Prazeras (2017:910), “Mobility to a new place can bring about a powerful journey of the self that is both reflexive and transformative.” In the discussion to follow, I argue that in later-in-life mobility, this transformative potential is manifested in the emergence of a mobility-oriented self. In recent years, scholars have drawn attention to the transformative

dimension of mobility in relation to the work, holidays and extended global travel mobility of young people (Prazeras, 2017; Lean 2012; Bagnoli 2009; Conradson and Latham 2005). However, less attention has been paid to the potential this holds for the less young, with a few notable exceptions, such as Åkerlund and Sandberg (2015) and King and Lulle (2015).

In the discussion to follow, I first show that the transformative hopes and plans for life 'after Abu Dhabi' are influenced by the legacy of previous migration and mobility. In planning for life as it could be, the existing mobility-oriented self is carried into the future, resonating with the notion of 'possible selves' (Markus and Nurius, 1986) imagined for the future but linked to the past and present self: "Possible selves derive from representations of the self in the past and they include representations of the self in the future. They are different and separable from the current or now selves, yet are intimately connected to them" (1986:954). Second, I draw attention to how the transformative element of migration and mobility emerges not only from the physical movement it involves – the travelling to and from places, but also the relational context in which it takes place. It emerges in relation to the continued and assumed stillness of those who stay behind.

7.1.1. 'Travelling really does root out those last horrible bits inside you': travel mobility and ongoing reflexivity

By its very nature travel (the bodily movement to, from, and between places) provides ongoing opportunities for reflection (Lean, 2012). Hence, the development of a mobility-oriented self can be understood to arise from the initial act of moving but also from the travel mobility that, for mobile professionals, is likely to follow on from that event. Jeff's narrative below points to a deep process of self-reflection, prompted by his own migration and ongoing mobility. The adjustments he has made to the way he views the world, as his migration project has progressed, supports the view that lives are "always open-ended and always becoming" (Collins and Shubin, 2015:97). Having lived in Zimbabwe and South Africa throughout his childhood and young adult years, the experience of travelling and the alternative belief systems that he has subsequently come to embrace, have profoundly reshaped his view of the world and his existing sense of self, as is evident here:

There are always visages of bigotry that sneak up on you from time to time. Like the Palestinian issue. The Israeli thing was pushed on us [while living in South Africa]: ‘Oh those Israelis turned deserts into orchards! And those bloody Palestinians never do anything!’ Personally, I already had a pretty good idea of what’s right and wrong, and what’s fair and what’s not. But travelling really does root out those last horrible bits inside you, I hope. (Jeff)

Jeff’s narrative endorses Prazeras’s (2017) argument that mobility encourages reflection and transformation of the self. Similarly, Lean (2012) argues that travel can function as an agent of personal change because it facilitates new levels of cross-cultural understanding and greater awareness of global issues. For Jeff, travel has ‘rooted out’ the parts of his being that he describes as ‘horrible.’ This process has caused him to reflect on versions of the truth he was offered as a younger person, and the extent to which that worldview shaped his selfhood at that particular time in his life course. In this process of reflection, he has come to question and adjust his sense of self. Over time he has come to engage in an active process of reconstruction of self, resonating with Bagnoli’s (2009:343) point that travel “can make people look at their everyday life with new eyes”, opening up the potential for an active reconstruction of self in the process.

In addition to the transformative potential of travel as movement, the narratives to follow show that the relational environment of mobility also contributes to the emergence of a mobility-oriented self. They draw attention to how that sense of self is constructed in relation to the immobility of others, serving to undermine the apparent dichotomy between mobility and immobility (Gehring, 2017). Acknowledging the connection between these two states of play – movement and stasis – draws further attention to the notion of relationality as a key component of life-course analysis. As earlier discussion in this thesis has shown, mobile family lives are situated in an environment of relationality because family lives are shaped by ties (and the absence of ties) to family members back home. Here, I draw on my respondents’ narratives to show how the environment of relationality extends to the development of self because that self is – in – part, constructed in relation to the immobility of others.

For both Fran and Jeff, the perceived (mundane) continuation and rhythm of everyday life in their home countries, provides the basis of self-reflection within their mobile lives. In the continued sameness of everyday life – a way of living which they perceive to typify the lives of those who have not moved – their own mobility is magnified.

If I had stayed in Australia, I'd still be working in the same job. I would have socialised with the same people and family would have carried on. So ... I don't think there would have been anything unpredictable at all about that. (Fran).

When you keep on country-hopping, you're starting from scratch every time. And there's sharks, sharks around every corner. So, what it does, is it sharpens your instincts – the experience you get from starting over again and again. Something you notice about people who have lived in one place – who haven't really travelled – they're bloody lazy! It's because they haven't had to sharpen their instincts in the way that you've had to. (Jeff)

Fran and Jeff's perception that the lives of those who live geographically settled lives remain relatively unchanged over time, highlights the unpredictable, more expansive nature of mobility-oriented lives. Therefore, to feel that one's life in the present is no longer the same, and one's sense of self has been adjusted as a consequence of migration and mobility, the immobility of others is critical to engendering this state of being. That is, those who have stayed behind must have physically stayed still in order to emphasise and give meaning to the mobility of those who move. As King and Lulle (2015:602) write: "At the relational level individual mobilities (migration, visiting, tourism etc.) may be contingent on the (im)mobilities of others."

In Jeff's excerpt to follow, it is evident that relationality also operates in the context of place. That is, places to which one has travelled exist in relation to each other in the imagination. His past experiences of living in Zimbabwe and then South Africa as a young person, forms an important part of the relationality upon which Jeff's current sense of self is constructed. As his narrative shows, his past experiences remain firmly lodged in his memory and clearly shape the construction of his current, relational mobile sense of self.

If we look at this stuff – these stories that are here [he points to his annotated maps], we are so fortunate to have come from where we came from. Travel stories can be inane or boring really – anywhere else in the world. You didn't see a lion there. You didn't go white-water rafting there. You didn't climb down a cliff and fall 20 metres. All of that exciting stuff that Africa has for us. (Jeff)

Lean (2012:163) argues that reflection is “mediated by prior-travel experiences, whom one is travelling with and the particular mobile places, spaces and/or landscapes through which one is moving”. For Jeff, his travel experiences as a younger person are remembered as adventures carved out of the specificity of the African landscape. In turn, the travel practices that characterised that stage in his life course (white-water rafting and such) – what Hui (2013:900) terms the ‘praktik’ of leisure – played a profoundly formative role in the construction of Jeff's sense of self over time.

For Pam too, the regular childhood trips from her home in Zimbabwe to England, where her grandparents lived, are central to the travel narrative she offers some years later.

We did this amazing sea trip when I was five or six, I think. My mother and all of us five kids took us all down on the train [to South Africa] and then we took a boat to Southampton to visit her father and granny, and my other granny. They were massive trips when we went to see Granny and Grampa. They were like hugely important to us – those trips.

The regular journeys from Zimbabwe to the UK to see her grandparents, and the ongoing mobility across her life course, are integral to Pam's current travel narrative. Both the past and the present has come to shape her current mobility-oriented self. As she says:

I should have kept a diary because jeez, the number of places we've travelled to – it's a lot. (Pam)

7.1.2. 'Abu Dhabi is a great jumping off point': extending the mobility-oriented self

As June (1) , Chris (2) and Nada's (3) narratives below illustrate, moving to Abu Dhabi opened up new travel possibilities for each of them. By realising those possibilities, they expanded their existing mobility-oriented selves once they had settled in Abu Dhabi.

(1)

Since we've been here, we find that Abu Dhabi is a great jumping off point. So, we've travelled very extensively since we've been here.

(June)

(2)

Since I've been here, I've been obviously back to the UK to go back home, but also to India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore. Had I not moved here; these are places that I wouldn't have gone to. If you're in the UK and you've got four or five days off, you'd go to Spain or ... you can't say 'I'm going to go to India, Sri Lanka or Malaysia' or whatever. I've noticed that a lot of people you ask: 'Where are you going to?' They'll say 'Oh, I'm going to the Far East' because it's such a good place to get to. If you lived in the UK, you wouldn't bother. If you had four or five days off, you wouldn't go to the Far East! Whereas here, you can. (Chris)

(3)

I'm planning to visit one new country a year and to use the location of the Middle East – Abu Dhabi, as a base. Zanzibar is the next country I'd like to visit. This year I chose Germany, Italy and the USA. No connection to Abu Dhabi! But, next year ... (Nada).

For June, Abu Dhabi functions as 'a jumping-off point' and for Nada it provides 'a base' from which new travel routes radiate, so that previously unreachable destinations become travel possibilities. Chris's point that he would not have visited India and neighbouring countries had he not moved to Abu Dhabi from the UK, suggests that he now views himself as more widely travelled; demonstrating the emergence of a sense of self in a migration emplacement where seeking out new travel destinations has

become part and parcel of everyday life. Although their respective careers in the airline industry mean that June (from the US) and Nada (from Serbia) had travelled extensively in the past, their present narratives point to the emergence of a new, heightened sense of a mobility-oriented self. As June notes, she and her husband have ‘travelled extensively’ during the past 12 years they have lived in Abu Dhabi. Similarly, Nada, who had lived in Abu Dhabi for just over a year at the time of interviewing her, points to how the geographical location of the Middle East provides a gateway to countries she previously considered to be physically out of reach.

7.1.3. “I’m contemplating Japan in April”: anticipation of travel

Hui (2013:889) writes that “Whether excited, tired or bored, the emotions and ‘material corporeality’ of moving has proven important to understanding the social dynamics and consequences of travel”. Hence it is possible to think about the present as being connected to future mobility. It is in the present that places are imagined and plans to realise dreams in the future are assembled. Nada’s account, included in the set of narratives above, suggests that moving to Abu Dhabi has already opened up new travel possibilities for her but also draws attention to her future hope to visit Zanzibar. So, as well as highlighting the spatial dimension of travel, Nada’s narrative points to anticipation of travel (Hui, 2013; Bagnoli, 2009) as being integral to the construction of a future mobility-oriented self. In the process of making travel plans, she thinks about places as she imagines them to be, giving support to the argument that travel is both an imagined and a physical experience (Urry, 2007). For Salazar (2012:2) this duality gives rise to the notion of tourism imaginaries, where existing representations of places “interact with people’s personal imaginings and are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices”.

Penny’s excitement at the prospect of future travel is clearly evident in the excerpt below, pointing to the building up of the atmosphere of place (Hannam et al., 2006). In so doing, she imagines what the places she has long hoped to visit, might look and feel like.

I’m contemplating Japan in April, for the cherry blossoms. I’d love to see the Great Wall, Germany ... I’ve always wanted to do a Rhine and Danube cruise back-to-back. Man, all the places you’d hit doing that! I’ve just always wanted to do that. We did Kenya but I’d be interested in

maybe doing South Africa, and other parts of Europe that I've not been to. (Penny)

From seeing the cherry blossoms in Japan, to dreaming of taking a river cruise in Europe, the prospect of future (at this point imagined) travel plays an important part in sustaining Penny's present sense of a mobility-oriented self. Her expression 'Man, all the places you'd hit doing that!', demonstrates the importance she attaches to an ongoing exploration of new places; places that she has as yet 'not been to'. Although her comment might suggest a superficial engagement with place, it is apparent that experiencing new places is integral to her overall migration project, and how that project has placed the prospect of fulfilling long-hoped for travel aspirations within reach.

Similarly, Chris has long dreamed of watching an important cricket test match in Australia. As his narrative suggests, it is the geographical location of Abu Dhabi that allows him to incorporate the realisation of his dream into his future travel plans. In so doing, he continues to build a sense of self that in large part, is shaped by his ongoing travel mobility.

I might just treat myself to a week or two in Australia for the Ashes match, which I think is this summer – no, next summer. If I don't do that before I leave here, I'm never going to do it. So, I've got to do that. (Chris)

So that's on your wish list? (Colleen)

Ya, it's always been my dream to watch a test match in Australia. And, while I'm here ... (Chris)

By articulating a future trip to Australia in dreamed-for terms, Chris's narrative is a reminder that travel exists not only as a physical mobility and an anticipated event, but also as an embodied state of being. Returning to Hui (2013) and Bagnoli's (2009) argument that individuals project their existing self into the imagined, hoped-for future, we can see that imagining oneself watching the Ashes in Australia, or enjoying the cherry blossoms in Japan, holds the potential to extend the present (already mobility-oriented self) into another future period of time. So, importantly, the very act of

imagining what travel destinations await or are hoped for in the future, undoubtedly fuels and extends that form of self.

7.2. Sustaining the mobility-oriented self: ongoing mobility later-in-life

As a way of bringing my final interview with each respondent to a close, I posed two interrelated questions: 'What do you feel the future holds for you?' and 'What do you hope for the years ahead?' Fran's response: 'Oh right, the future? Ooh, this is the scary one!' is suggestive of the enormity of these questions in the later-in-life stage of the life course, since the future brings numerous considerations to the fore: leaving Abu Dhabi for the final time; settling back home or establishing a new place of belonging; potentially being in closer physical proximity to family members and significant others or accepting the reality of continued separation; deliberating potential retirement; and navigating the inevitability of ageing. In this section I show how the (present) mobility-oriented self serves to shape the hopes and dreams my respondents have for the post-Abu Dhabi time of their life courses, both in terms of future travel mobility but also anticipated impediments to future mobility.

7.2.1. 'That is a deep question!': hopes for the post-Abu Dhabi future

In chapter four it was shown that the desire for financial and personal security played an important part in my respondents' decision to move to Abu Dhabi. The four excerpts to follow show that those two factors are important to the present transnational family lives of many of my respondents, but also to their hoped-for, post-Abu Dhabi lives. The first two excerpts Sarah (1) and Matias (2) centre around the hope that in their post-Abu life, they will live a comfortable life as they move into old age. The second (Mazia), highlights the importance of financial stability to her future life, and the hope that she and her partner will be able to continue to live in co-present togetherness. The third excerpt (Jeff), points to how his hoped-for future is contingent on a climate of political stability, so that he can safely live in South Africa somewhere by a river.

(1)

My last questions are: what do you wish for the future and what do you hope for the years to come? (Colleen)

That is a deep question! I want to be here [in Abu Dhabi] with a job, health, friends. I want to do something for people, which I don't know what will be, yet. Yes, I want to be happy here, because in Argentina I wasn't. The situation in that society, in the street, the people ... it's not relaxed. Here there is more security. (Sarah)

For me its um, basically I want my family to have a good quality of living. I enjoy very much seeing her [Sarah] having time for herself. And my daughter is happy with the challenge. And then I want to have a stable economic situation to be able to go to Argentina, or any other place, with or without our daughter and spend our last 25-30 years without any kind of pressure about who is going to pay my medicines, who is going to take care of me.

Before these last two years, I was very worried about our life as an old couple. Argentina is difficult if you don't have a very good pension and you don't have somebody to take care of you. It's difficult to think in future years because rules of the country change frequently. Today it might be good. You can buy food; you can buy basic things. But maybe in a couple of years the government will change; and they will move everything. And you would say, what happened to all the things I could get before? And now I have to start selling my car, my house, or whatever. So, coming here for us has like – opened new doors. We have different possibilities and um, one of the different possibilities is that we can think about our future with a little more peace. And a little more security. More security in relation to your life. I can now give my family a better future and, for me, a better post-retired life. (Matias)

(2)

The future? I think that yeah, I would like us to see more financial stability and be able to be together, wherever that is. Maybe not 'wherever' – maybe Scotland. (Mazia)

(3)

A stable South Africa, the global climate not going as bad as quickly as we think it might, so that I can actually have a river – you know – and do my thing. (Jeff)

As part of Abu Dhabi's foreign workforce, my respondents cannot hope for a long-term future life in Abu Dhabi. Should it be their desire to make their future there, the agency they could draw on to bring that about, is restricted by the regime of mobility in which they are presently situated, as explained in chapter two. However, at the same time, their narratives suggest a sense of broader geographical agency over their future life course. The future is viewed as a time when they will be able to shape their own life-course with a sense of agency which, to some extent, is made possible by the very mobility regime in which they are situated: their narratives suggest that even though their future agency is likely to be constrained by political turmoil, climate change or other structural factors, the agency they have built up during their Abu Dhabi-based lives (through accumulated financial capital and the emergence of a mobility-oriented self) means that there now exists the possibility for Mazia to think about the possibility of living in Scotland; for Jeff to pursue his river dream; and for Sarah and Matias to approach the future with a greater degree of peace and security.

7.2.2. 'You know – there's a big wide world out there': possibilities for ongoing mobility

It has been shown that political and other factors have closely shaped the accounts set out above. However, my respondents' narratives also suggest an open-ended, fluid narrative of mobility, grounded in the present and the possible, future mobility-oriented self. For each, the future is viewed as a time of limitations but also as a time of possibilities. In this section, I continue this line of argument by considering how ongoing mobility later-in-life is multifaceted. Although for some of my respondents the post-Abu Dhabi time of the life course is envisaged as a return to homeland (Percival, 2013), it is evident that for many it is envisaged as a time of unknown possibilities: they might exercise their choice to settle somewhere new; they might engage with further international mobility for the purposes of work or travel mobility in retirement; or they might acquire a second (holiday) home that would facilitate regular periods of mobility. The group of narratives to follow point to how these different routes into onward mobility are viewed in an open-ended way, which suggests that their post-Abu Dhabi life is envisaged as a time of fluidity and movement. It can be argued, therefore, that their future mobility will continue to exist in an environment of relationality, characterised by mobility and stasis. That is, their future ongoing mobility is likely to take place in relation to the mobility and non-mobility of significant others, a point I explore in relation to family lives in the final section of this chapter.

The first route into onward mobility (work-facilitated mobility) is evident in Leyla's narrative to follow. As an English teacher, she views the option to work outside her home country of Australia as a clear route into ongoing future mobility, which would involve paid work but not a fixed, full-time career. Although Leyla does not refer to her post-Abu Dhabi life as a time that will herald retirement, it is possible to view her plans as being indicative of how retirement is a "process that occurs over time" (Moen, 2003:269). For Leyla, retirement could well involve a repeated pattern of paid work, followed by no work, and then travel. In this way, her mobility-oriented self would be maintained through into the (semi) retirement stage of her life course.

I might go to South America for six months and teach English and travel around. Or I might go to Italy and do some wolfing [organic farming] and get my Italian back up to speed because as soon as you stop talking it, you start losing it. You know – there's a big wide world out there. And being an English teacher, you can find work almost [anywhere] ... if you don't care what money you're making. So, I don't want to leave here with debts that can't be paid by the rent of my house [in Australia]. Then I can go anywhere and explore a bit. (Leyla).

The option to travel and to work for little financial reward in her future, post-Abu Dhabi life, arguably allows Leyla to contemplate the future as a "zone of flexibility" (Belford and Lahiri-Roy, 2019:67), in which she may be able to teach English but also 'travel around'. Similarly, for Nada, although she will need to continue to work in the field of aviation after she leaves Abu Dhabi in order to retain some level of financial security, it is evident that she views the future as open-ended. For Nada and Leyla, the future is viewed as a time of 'always becoming' (Collins and Shubin, 2015), to which reference was made earlier in this chapter.

The future is a grey zone for me. Or even a black hole! I don't have plans for my future, but I'd like to stay in Abu Dhabi for five more years for financial purposes. After that, I'll conduct audits [on the aviation industry] maybe five or eight times a year, when I'll be retired from my primary job. To survive financially, I need to audit every six weeks or every two months. And I would like to spend one or two months a year with my son and the same with my daughter. But everything I planned in life in the past ... nothing has happened that way. That's the reason

why I stopped planning and I just enjoy the current situation. At 65, I'll get a state pension but, in my country [Serbia], it will not be a huge amount. So, who knows? (Nada)

Although both Leyla's and Nada's narratives are oriented towards the future, their present mobility is important to the future life they hope to have in the post-Abu Dhabi stage of their respective life courses. Although Nada no longer meticulously plans her future, the nature of her job, and her current salaried mobile life, arguably allows her to consider the future in the fluid, open-ended way she narrates above. In the case of Leyla too, the easy transferability of her existing skills opens up possibilities to work elsewhere in the world and to negotiate future ageing as a time of "productive fulfilment" (Oliver, 2007:6). But it is her current sphere of mobility that allows her to contemplate working for little financial return in the future, and to 'go anywhere and explore a bit', reminiscent of the "narratives of freedom" (Bagnoli, 2009:329) that characterise young people's extended travel narratives.

The second route into ongoing mobility is highlighted in the three excerpts to follow. For Raj, and for Fran and Patrick, the increased free time they envisage having after retirement, opens up the possibility for further travel mobility. The connection between retirement and return has been of interest to migration and mobility scholars for some time, in particular with regards to the binary decision to stay or to return to the country of origin at the point of retirement. For example, in his study of the return of migrants from the US to Italy, Cerase (1974) pointed to retirement as marking an important point for final return. Expressed as 'return of retirement', he argued that return was motivated by the reality of future ageing and served as a time when "thoughts turned to the place they [migrants] had come from" (Cerase, 1974:257). In the contemporary context, Hunter's (2018) study of older African migrants in France, all of whom continued to live in single-men hostel accommodation after retirement, shows that most of his respondents chose to return to their countries of origin only intermittently, continuing to live as full-time hostel dwellers in France. In this way, they were able to draw their pension in France and also access a high standard of health care.

In contrast, Raj's narrative below, in which he sets out his plan to travel for six months 'the moment I retire', is suggestive of the freedom narrative to which I have referred above. In much the same way as young travellers may internalise a 'gap year' or similar travel adventures much earlier in the life course, for Raj, the anticipation of having

more leisure time once he retires has encouraged him to think more expansively about his future mobility.

By the time I retire I would have worked for almost 36 years. That's quite a long period! Now I need time for myself. Even if I get a job that is highly paid, I will decline politely. Now I want to relax. The moment I retire, I'll be going travelling for around six months of the year. That is my plan.
(Raj)

For Fran and Patrick too, retirement is articulated as freedom from the constraints that working life currently places on their time. In their less time-bounded retirement life, they visualise being free to explore travel options as and how they wish.

We have a dream that we'd like to drive a Mustang – across America!
(Fran)

It's not just a dream. We know a guy who owns a Mustang and he's offered to lend it to us so we can do the trip. And he's offered to let us stay in his house as the starting point. (Patrick)

I had the idea that we could get a Winnebago. But then you can't weave it through narrow streets. (Fran)

We've talked about taking a train across Russia, and that takes about a month. (Patrick)

Mmm ... (Fran)

The concept of the time boundaries is suddenly under the microscope in a way that wasn't before. (Patrick)

And the world would be our oyster. (Fran)

Fran's statement points to how it is possible that their coupled sense of self in the future might come to be negotiated in a more fluid way than it does in the present. She and Patrick might take a long road trip through America. But equally, they might choose to spend a month travelling across Russia on a train. This in turn, brings the analysis back to the notion of anticipation of travel, as discussed in section 7.1.3 of this chapter. For Fran and Patrick, America and Russia are anticipated, hoped-for travel destinations. They might, or might not, actually visit these parts of the world. But in

their imaginations, they have constructed a mobility-oriented sense of self to which they aspire and, in so doing, project their current (mobility-oriented) sense of self into their post-Abu Dhabi future life.

In the literature on second-home ownership abroad, the final mobility route I am concerned with in this section of the chapter, scholars focusing on amenity migration have drawn attention to the motivations and benefits associated with this mobility practice. As noted by Paris (2010:3), there are a host of reasons for which individuals become second-home owners, pointing to the role of structural factors and the role of individuals as “knowing agents”. Second-home ownership may, for example, be seen to offer a flexible lifestyle at the retirement stage of the life course (Marjavaara and Lundholm, 2016). The narratives to follow draw attention to how second homes act as a vehicle for continual mobility during retirement, making it more possible to sustain mobility as an integral part of self in the later stages of the life course.

As Christine and Nathan point out in the conversation relayed below, when they leave Abu Dhabi they might buy a property abroad so they can live somewhere warm for part of the year – a motivation for retirement migration documented by, for example, Benson and O'Reilly (2009); Oliver (2007); and King et al. (2000). However, of interest to the focus of this chapter, is that it is the characteristics of their present mobility environment (such as warm weather), that has prompted them to think differently about what they would like their post-Abu Dhabi retired life to look like.

Before we came here, our plan was to sell our house when we both retired and move to the North East, to Tyne Valley or somewhere there. It's a beautiful part of the world. But now that we've lived here, we're thinking that maybe (if we don't have to give the boys all of the money from the house!) we'll buy somewhere at home, and then maybe somewhere hot; like Europe. Because we like the sun. And I don't want to just live in the North East. (Christine)

Somewhere with a bit of guaranteed warmth. Somewhere like the Canaries. (Nathan)

I didn't realise I would enjoy the hot climate. I thought I wouldn't be that comfortable. (Christine)

It just makes you happy, doesn't it? (Nathan)

As their conversation shows, Christine and Nathan's enjoyment of Abu Dhabi's climate has introduced them to the possibility of a future lifestyle that would enable them to embrace 'the good life' (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009), a notion they construct in relational terms: they plan to buy a property 'somewhere hot' so as to escape the cold weather once they settle back in the UK. But importantly, in this relational sense of a place in the sun (relational to the UK and to Abu Dhabi) they also demonstrate a continued, hoped for mobility-oriented self, resonating with Geist and McManus's (2008:286) argument that "geographical mobility is not only a consequence of life events, but may itself be a precipitating event that leads to further changes for the individuals that experienced the move". Christine's point that 'now that we've lived here' she does not wish to 'just live in the North East', highlights the expansiveness of the future life she imagines for herself and Nathan when they enter the later stages of the life course. Her statement resonates with Oliver's (2007:1) argument that retirement migration is akin to "flirting with freedom" and Sampaio's (2018:460) point that moving away to a place of choice, holds the promise of "profoundly shaping, for the better, how later life can be lived, felt and experienced". It is evident that since moving to Abu Dhabi, Christine's own spatial map has been expanded. That is, she considers the future as a time of further travel mobility possibilities, shaped by her and Nathan's engagement with their current environment of mobility. The 'good life' that they picture for the future, is also evident in the way Marcus envisages retired life after he and his partner make their ultimate return to Sweden, as explained here.

We've been talking about having something ... because Sweden during the summertime is quite lovely – there could be a way to have an apartment or something. Or a summerhouse in the countryside in Sweden, and then something in Spain also. (Marcus)

Marcus's narrative suggests that Sweden and Spain are "imagined and positioned in relation to each other" (Åkerlund and Sandberg, 2015:361). However, it also shows that relationality does not, in all cases, involve a hierarchical pitching of places against each other. For Marcus, both countries offer opportunities for a favourable life after Abu Dhabi, pointing to an anticipated convivial, co-existence of places: Sweden in the summer is 'quite lovely' and Spain offers (as he went on to explain later on in the interview), a place where he and his Colombian-born, Spanish-speaking partner would feel comfortable living. In doing so, in the future he could well inhabit both "transnational and translocal worlds" (Bolzman et al. 2017:10). So, Marcus's narrative

suggests a potential dual anchoring to Sweden and to Spain, indicating that he views retirement as a time of continued mobility and also a time of stability. In a sense, he and his partner's potential mobility and immobility are intertwined in a way that enables them to maintain "a balance between mobility and moorings" (Åkerlund and Sandberg, 2015:367).

In the same way as the mobility of individuals sits in a relational context to the immobility of others, Marcus and his partner are likely to benefit from being simultaneously situated in spaces of mobility and immobility, as pointed to by a number of studies that focus on older people's mobility trajectories. For example, in their study of the back-and-forth mobility of Swiss immigrant retirees, Bolzman et al. (2017) suggest that this pattern of mobility enables older people to retain access to benefits offered by their home country as well as that offered by the retirement destination, resonating with Hunter's (2012:4) point that retiring outside of one's country of origin – but still retaining ties to it, offers the "best of both worlds".

A similar sentiment was noted in Lulle and King's (2016) study of older female Latvian migrants in the UK. By keeping "one foot in England and one in Latvia" (2016:459) this group of migrants were able to secure their entitlement to a UK pension, and also manage relations with family members in Latvia more effectively. This evidence lends support to the argument put forward by Bolzman et al. (2017), which suggests that the retirement stage of the life course cannot be understood as a definitive event that provides a settled way of life, but as a time when sophisticated mobility patterns may emerge. Complex mobility patterns, as I go on to consider in section 7.3 of this chapter, continually shape the self and, in turn, the doing of family in the later stages of the life course. However, as the narratives to follow illustrate, my respondents are keenly aware of how – in time – ageing and some level of physical decline will come to define their post-Abu Dhabi everyday lives. In that process, it is likely that their ability to sustain the ongoing mobility-oriented self will become increasingly curtailed.

7.2.3. 'Like all the other grey nomads': limits to ongoing mobility

I haven't explored many areas of Australia, so I guess that's the thinking – that I'll do that when I go home to live. Like all the other grey nomads are doing! (Leyla)

Is that what they're called? (Colleen)

Get an old van and slowly travel around Australia! (Leyla)

In the excerpt above, Leyla makes light-hearted reference to how, should she wish to, she could live life as a 'grey nomad' in the future, contentedly criss-crossing Australia in an old van. However, her narrative also speaks to an acknowledgment that at some point she herself will enter into the later, less physically able stage of the life course, and might then have to travel around rather more slowly than she does now. As Zontini (2015:334) writes, in the context of international mobility later-in-life, there comes a time when "ageing bodies put a brake on their ways of being transnational."

For my respondents, the brake on ongoing transnational mobility is expressed in two ways. First, as the three excerpts below draw attention to, older age (as a biological process) is understood to be a time when their mobility-oriented self may become increasingly reined in by the physical component of ageing. Consequently, Patrick (1), Raj (2), and Marcus's (3) excerpts, point to a sense of urgency as regards the timing of retirement.

(1)

There's a financial component, there's a grandchildren component, and there's a let's not work until we're too old component. (Patrick)

(2)

I think you should retire when you are fully capable, not when you are at least for the next 10 to 15 years after retirement, I want to see my own country, and see outside of my own country; I want to see the world. (Raj)

(3)

We have become very interested in travelling around, and meeting new cultures, and seeing new countries. So we could do that if we had more time. And of course, there are a number of factors – economic factors too. But I think we'll be able to manage. So, maybe 62, 63 would be a good age, if possible. There would be a better chance of being in a healthy state, as well. (Marcus)

The narratives above demonstrate an awareness of a future when material, bodily ageing (Oliver, 2007) may diminish opportunities for travel. Patrick is aware that if he continues to work for too many more years, he will have fewer years left to enjoy the things in life he has been waiting to have time for; Raj's view is that if he waits too long to retire, he will run the risk of no longer being physically capable of going out to see more of the world; and Marcus feels that the longer he delays retirement, the less chance he will have to retire in his present, good state of health.

The second way in which my respondents express the potential, future curtailment of their transnational mobility, is in terms of the intersection of ageing (as a physical process) and the institutional policies that shape that process. Jeff's narrative below speaks to how age-related institutional barriers are likely to heavily influence his future mobility plans. As he explains, he has the option to settle in either South Africa or in the UK when he leaves Abu Dhabi. But he might also choose to settle in a third migration destination.

This is the last move I'm going to make. I'm not going to move somewhere at the age of 80. If I make that, I've got to try and do it again. This really is going to be my last move. I don't want to make another move. And I don't think I'll be able to. Given another three or four years from now, I'll be close to 60. Countries don't want old people immigrating. Health is always going to be a problem. I have a British passport, so I could always go there but I don't want to. So, it really has to be somewhere that's got some legs, as best as I can tell – that hasn't got a dodgy government or somewhere that can go pear-shaped. (Jeff)

Despite the options open to him, it is clear that wherever he decides to settle in his post-Abu Dhabi life, that will be the point when Jeff expects his well-established mobility trajectory will come to an end. As shown in the discussion above, macro conditions complicate the prospect of return for individuals regardless of their age. However, such conditions arguably take on a different significance in the later stages of the life course because age and ageing come to complicate the seemingly definitive act of return. In his position as a medical consultant, Matias is not able to move from Abu Dhabi to a third country to work because his qualifications are not recognised outside the UAE and Argentina.

The situation in Argentina: in my case: a doctor from Argentina, I don't have other possibilities. If I go back to Argentina, I have to start at zero again. I don't have the possibility of moving to another country. It would be a difficult situation because I would have to start again growing my work – patients and so on. So, if we go back to Argentina, it will be difficult to continue with my profession. (Matias)

Matias's narrative draws attention to the intersection of age, and ageing more broadly, in the context of return migration. At the age of 52, just at a point when his career as a medical consultant has become established in Abu Dhabi, having to 'start at zero' again should he return to Argentina, would most likely bring about the end of his career. Hence, as Matias indicated later in the interview, he and his partner plan to delay return until such time as they are financially secure to do so.

For Marcus too, staying in Abu Dhabi for another few years 'maybe to 62 or 63,' would ease the financial worry associated with ultimate return. As a respondent who moved to Abu Dhabi on the directive of his employing company, rather than as an autonomous mobile professional, at the time of our final interview Marcus was negotiating an extension to his contract to avoid imminent return to Sweden. As his narrative to follow indicates, at age 60, he recognises that his age could compromise his future career prospects in Sweden.

I have a guaranteed place for when I get back – not the same position but an equal position. But I know they [the company] are having difficulties because they have to organise this. I mean, I'm 60 now! And I know they have difficulties because if you go back at this age, you're too expensive. They can get two younger guys, recently graduated, for the same money.

I am 60 and I don't have that drive to go back and start something else. We're quite happy here, and I have a very interesting job with customers, and a lot of possibilities.

If I lose my job, it won't be easy to find a new one. I have experience and I think that's valuable, but still, age is a factor which is quite important for people. (Marcus)

As has shown to be the case for Matias, Marcus too has little desire to 'start something

else' when he returns to Sweden. It is also clear that he feels his age will limit possibilities for suitable employment on return; his years of professional experience make him 'too expensive' for companies to employ on his return. Matias's and Marcus's narratives are significant for the fact that they point to how time and timing occupies an important place in the process of planning for anticipated return and potential retirement. Although contemporary conceptualisations of retirement point to this stage of life as being fluid and negotiable, in her US-based study, Bures (1997:116) argues that the increased prevalence of dual-earner couples has given retired couples "more options in the timing and activities of retirement." However, Matias's and Marcus's narratives show that in the context of ultimate return and subsequent retirement, the timing of those events must be carefully strategised in order to ensure they entered into the retirement stage of the life course at the optimal point.

7.3. Anticipated, future family lives

In this last section of the chapter, I draw attention to how my respondents' planning for return is linked to their perceptions of how future family lives might unfold following the point of ultimate return. In the discussion to follow, I show that for some respondents, future family life is likely to involve a return to a co-present relationality; but for others, separation and distance are likely to continue to characterise their family lives in their post-Abu Dhabi future. And for others still, the vision of future family life involves the hope that they will be able to build a new family later-in-life.

7.3.1. 'I'm not overly excited to go back. But I'm excited to see the kids': co-present and geographically distant future family lives

For some of my respondents, their ultimate return is conceptualised as a straight road ahead; a decision set in stone because it promises a return to co-present family life, as illustrated by June's narrative below. At the time of my interviews with her, June indicated that although she was hesitant about leaving Abu Dhabi and returning to the US for good, she was motivated by the prospect of living in closer proximity to her adult children and their families, as she points to here:

There's just an awful lot we have to do. The house and the grounds and um, you know ... I'm not looking forward to that – but it has to be done.

So, I'm not overly excited to go back because I know there's an awful lot of work to be done. But I'm excited to see the kids. (June)

Cheryl and Ken present a similar narrative of return to co-present family life, at which time they hope to enjoy doing a range of activities with their grandchildren.

A great deal of our plans includes the grandchildren. We really like playing with the kids, doing four wheelers and dirt bikes and camping – and stuff like that. So we'll do those things as they grow up (Ken).

Yeah, we'll go home and take them over! Your job's done: go away! (Cheryl).

However, in other cases, hopes and plans for how future family life might unfold, are complicated by the relational environment in which return is anticipated. Tahir's narrative to follow, serves as a reminder that while my respondents have been living mobile lives away from their home countries, in some instances, so too have their families. In chapter five, in which I explored the ways in which transnational families endeavour to remain linked across distance and over time, I pointed to the practice of family 'meet-ups' as a strategy to sustain family ties. In some cases, those meet-ups took place at a geographical midpoint between Abu Dhabi and the countries to which other family members have themselves moved, pointing to the breadth of mobility that may exist within any one transnational family.

For Tahir, his geographically expanded family mobility trajectory has led him and his partner, to view ultimate return as a flexible process. In their case, mobility comes to be experienced as a "continual circulation across the life course" (Pocock and McIntosh, 2011:632). As the excerpt below shows, his daughter's own mobility trajectory means that return to India is not planned as a definitive event because she no longer lives in India; she emigrated to Canada.

We have a house in India – the house is ready, and we have a vacation there for a month every year. But if we have to go somewhere, we will go to Canada. We'll have six months of the year there. My daughter is there and my grandchild. The other factor is medical insurance. In India, nobody will give us medical insurance at this age [64]. In Canada, we would get free medical insurance from day one. (Tahir)

In their study of Hong Kong transnational families in Canada, Kobayashi and Preston (2007) identified a pattern of younger adults moving back to live once again in Hong Kong, leaving their elderly immigrant parents without their children in Canada. In a similar vein, should Tahil and his partner return to India, they would do so in the knowledge that their daughter did not reside there. They would therefore return to live not in an environment of family co-presence, but one in which transnational family living would continue to direct their everyday lives – but this time the geographical base would be India.

Tahil's narrative of return points to how mobility later-in-life is shaped by the desire to live a co-present family life once again, but also that later-in-life mobility can be prolonged by the ongoing, relational mobility of significant others. However, his narrative also highlights the intersection of age and ongoing mobility later-in-life. Not only does Canada present a future opportunity to re-link to family for at least part of each year, it also provides an opportunity to access (private) healthcare provision otherwise denied to him in India on the grounds of his age.

This entanglement of the hoped-for future family life and prospective ageing is also central to Chris's planning for his post-Abu Dhabi time of the life course. Although he does not intend to return to the UK immediately after leaving Abu Dhabi, Chris's choice of retirement location is strongly influenced by the vision he has for a new form of transnational family life in the future.

Originally, I was going to go here [points to his annotated world map]: to Malaysia. That's where I was going to retire to. But as my son pointed out, if I suddenly became a grandfather, it's a hell of a long way to come back and see my granddaughter or grandson. But if I'm living here [he points to the world map printout on the table], it's like two and a half hours away. And they can obviously come and visit me. Or I could fly back and pick up my granddaughter and say right, I'm having her for a week. And then I could take her back a week later, which I obviously couldn't do in Malaysia. (Chris)

The hope that one day he will have a granddaughter with whom he can fly back and forth between Spain and the UK, guides Chris's planning for his post-Abu Dhabi, retired life; his return narrative is influenced by his perception of anticipated family life.

He has chosen not to retire to Malaysia because Spain's geographical proximity to the UK will allow him to live in closer physical proximity to present, and hoped-for, family members. However, Chris is also aware that as he ages, potential physical decline may necessitate further ongoing mobility, this time back to the UK.

Spain, Spain is going to be my home (Chris)

Does the UK still feel like home? (Colleen)

Not any more. No, no it doesn't. Obviously, the UK will always be 'home' and I'll probably end up back there when I'm old and decrepit and can hardly walk and I'll need to live in an old people's home. So, I'll probably end up there, sponging off the NHS. (Chris)

So, for Chris, his decision to retire to a destination within reasonable geographical proximity to the UK, will allow him to enjoy retirement in Spain and still live a co-present family life some of the time. But his narrative also draws attention the constraints and considerations that accompany the onset of physical ageing and how that scenario has the potential to curtail the retirement migration project, as Giner-Montford et al. (2015) found in relation to British retirees in Spain. Similarly, in Åkerlund and Sanberg's (2015:367) study of Swedish lifestyle migrants in Malta, it was shown that research participants came to question the long-term financial sustainability of their migration project. They therefore maintained their ties to Sweden as a form of insurance for their older years. Chris too anticipates that his mobility-oriented (although retired) self will unfold within the limitations of his own, later-in-life parameters. His wished-for Spanish retirement is therefore planned with the limitations of older age and possible ultimate return to the UK in mind, highlighting the potential for his mobility-oriented self to be projected further into his future life course.

7.3.2. 'We don't have children yet. We're working on it!': anticipated new forms of family life

The narratives presented in the section immediately above point to how anticipated family life (with existing family members) might unfold following return. For others however, it is the prospect of bringing children into their family at a later stage in their life courses that constructs the vision of what that future life might look like, as evident in Carlo's, and Fazi and Mazia's narratives here:

My wife is 20 years younger than me. We don't have children yet. We're working on it! Although I often say to her, if we had a kid right now, I'll be 80 and I'll still have to work. And the child will be 20! For a man that's frightening. But I also understand her point because she's almost 40. (Carlo)

What do I think [about the future], in the long term? For me, I don't know really. I'm kind of thinking for the long term but I'm not expecting anything. I'm quite happy with what we've got. I do want to see some kids but if it happens, it happens. If not, we can adopt. Or we can borrow some nieces. (Fazi)

For weekends! (Mazia)

Fazi (early 50s) and Carlo (early 60s) are contemplating a life-course event that is likely to have significant implications for their future in lots of ways: the joy that a new child can bring, the probable curtailment of their mobility, and in the longer term, a rethinking of age and ageing. For both, the potential scenario they point to, emerges from having met their partners fairly later on in their lives (Fazi in his 40s and Carlo in his 50s) leading to a "restructuring of the chain of interdependent lives" (Bildtgård and Öberg, 2017:14). In their study of older people's new intimate relationships, these authors note that as transitions in and out of relationships within societies become more evident over time, individuals in the later time of life are more likely to have complex marital biographies characterised by flux and movement. As one relationship is lost as a result of the death of one partner or as a result of divorce, existing familial relationships (such as relationships with adult children), may need to accommodate the arrival of a new partner. Although Carlo, Fazi and Mazia's narratives centre around established couple relationships, Bildtgård and Öberg's (2017) observation that family lives are restructured in the event of the arrival of a new romantic partner, is nevertheless helpful because it points to how the addition of new family members is likely to involve adjustment and reconfiguration in the later stage of the life course.

In Statham's (2019:6) study of Thai-Western marriage, in which male partners first entered into their relationship with younger Thai women at or beyond the age of 50, attention is drawn to how "differential ageing" (2019:6) influences the decision-making of couples in relation to having children at this time of life. He argues that the inevitable

declining physical health of the older (male) partner, causes the relationship to become re-centred: the care needs of the male partner comes to define their relationship and the female partner's role in it. Carlo's comment that if he and his partner were to have a child in the near future, he/she would be 20 years old when he is 80, speaks to this re-centring of relationships at a later stage in the life course. As Carlo's anticipated future family life unfolds, his particular environment of linked and interdependent generational lives may well come to profoundly adjust the direction of his life course, in the later years of his life.

7.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the ways in which migration and mobility; the later-in-life stage of the life course; and transnational family lives, come together to give rise to a 'mobility-oriented' sense of self. Following the arguments presented by Prazeres (2017) and Bagnoli (2009) in relation to younger people, I have pointed to the transformative dimension of travel mobility created from the travel opportunities that moving to Abu Dhabi generated for many of my respondents. Likewise, the manner in which some respondents conceptualise their future retirement years, echoes the findings of Sampaio (2018) and Oliver (2007) who point to how retirement migration may be experienced as a time of freedom.

I contribute to this established line of argument by paying consideration to how planning for anticipated return and potential retirement is shaped by the present, mobility-centred time of the life course. In discussion, I have highlighted Elder's (1994) point that stages of the life course are connected and mutually reinforcing across the whole life course. My analysis therefore takes forward the intellectual enquiry that sits at the centre of this thesis – the linking of transnational family lives across distance and time – by bringing the intersection of present mobility, ultimate return, and anticipated family lives to the fore. I have been concerned to show that their migration environment, and the travel mobility it has enabled, refashioned my respondents' sense of self in a way that places mobility at the centre of their selfhood. This refashioning of self is of relevance to later-in-life family lives because it influences the ways in which family lives are anticipated in the post-Abu Dhabi future. I have argued that the influence of the present mobility environment does not abruptly end at the airport departure gate – the point in time when they finally leave Abu Dhabi. Rather,

those experiences, new worldviews, and transformative elements of mobility are carried forward into the next stage of the life course and shape family lives after ultimate return. For some, family lives may then again become co-present. However, for others, distance and separation will evidently continue to shape the ways in which their family relations, and family practices, are enacted after the point of ultimate return.

Finally, this chapter has drawn attention to the constraints that ageing places on the mobility-oriented self. Although my respondents are still in an economically active stage of their lives, the prospect of material, bodily ageing (Oliver, 2007) nevertheless shapes their present and future view of the mobile self. Although they will acquire more free time to travel and enjoy new adventures as they get older, it is also the case that future ageing and potential physical decline is likely to limit their ability to appropriate those opportunities, signalling a directional shift in the mobility-oriented self.

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CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I have focused on the experiences of a group of mobile professionals whose demographic profile and migration environment offers a new perspective on skilled migration and mobility. For later-in-life mobile professionals, the intersection of family practices, the regulatory framework that governs the employment and the residential status of foreign workers in the UAE, and later-in-life as a particular stage of the life course, combines to shape the mobility and transnational family lives of this migrant group in very particular ways. In this final chapter, I set out three overarching themes that have emerged from the empirical findings, drawing attention to the contribution they make to the broad field of migration studies and the possibilities they offer for future research. I encapsulate the three themes as follows:

- Freedom (?) to roam later-in-life
- Privileged migration, precarious lives
- Far away but emotionally near to family, later-in-life

8.1. Freedom (?) to roam later-in-life

We had originally been looking at an area on the other side of the lake and they [the properties] were nice, but I started getting a bit anxious inside and I said: 'I can't look there, it's giving me the heebie jeebies'. It was one road in and one road out, so it was this concept of really being really locked into that space. Whereas this [house] is close to a main road. But the place still has privacy. (Fran)

This story of searching for a place to live when they return to Australia one day, was relayed by Fran during the last of my three interviews with her and her partner Patrick, during which they showed me photographs of a house they were hoping to buy. In

many ways, Fran's narrative exemplifies the first empirical theme with which I am concerned here. As she explains above, she had viewed a particular property during a previous visit home to Australia but the geographical locale made her feel she was being locked in because there was only 'one road in and one road out'. In contrast, the location of the house they were hoping (at the time of the interview) to purchase, was considered an attractive option because it promised potential freedom to easily move into and away from the immediate geographical locale. In chapter three I suggested that as a research method, the mapping-interview captures the embodied, reflexive essence of movement across geographical space and gives greater visibility to the complex nature of mobility trajectories later-in-life. For Fran, a brief interaction with a particular property location sometime in the past, was clearly embodied and reflexive, influencing a potential house purchase decision years later. But further to that, her narrative speaks to the first overarching theme, which centres around migration, mobility, movement, constraint, and freedom later-in-life; and cuts across the empirical discussion chapters of my thesis.

In the methodology chapter of this thesis, I argued that the use of a mapping-interview method, as a creative mapping technique, acts as a springboard for further discussion. In my study, the method has provided the opportunity for accounts of migration and mobility to emerge as a form of topographic storytelling (Dodge, 2017), in a way that complements verbal forms of data collection. Furthermore, it has enabled layers of meaning that sit within the physical act of my respondents' migration and mobility to become more visible. In so doing, the mapping-interview has made it possible to gain greater insight into what the act of moving to, within, and (often) in and out of Abu Dhabi, actually means for later-in-life mobile professionals: what that mobility means for their transnational family lives, but also for the individual hopes, dreams and fears that typify the life course stage in which they are situated.

Collins (2018) has pointed to how migration is motivated by a complex mix of factors, necessitating a move beyond economic-based explanations for migration and mobility. In chapter four I argued that an active employment status and an attractive remuneration package sit at the core of why later-in-life mobile professionals move to Abu Dhabi. But I also moved the analysis beyond established, 'normalised scripts,' as Collins (2018) has encouraged scholars to do. For many of my respondents, the 'freedom to roam' strongly influenced their decision not only to move across

international borders, but to move to a very particular migration destination. Abu Dhabi offered a sense of adventure; possibly one last chance to work somewhere new; and a base from which to explore new travel destinations at a time in the life course when such opportunities usually begin to fade. Prazeras (2017) and Conradson and Latham (2005) have written of how international travel and work can be a time of transformation of the self and a time of self-experimentation for young people. At a later stage in the life course, Oliver (2007) has written that retirement migration may be experienced as a time of personal freedom. Green (2015), too, has pointed to how this form of mobility may provide an opportunity for older people to live a more youthful life. This thesis contributes to these literatures by drawing attention to how mobility is enacted among those who are situated in the 'later-in-life' stage of the life course: those who are neither young, nor older and economically inactive. In this way, my study contributes to existing life-course analysis within the field of migration studies by bringing a spatial perspective to the analysis. I show that by so doing, it becomes possible to arrive at a nuanced account of how mobile professionals later-in-life move through their individual and collective worlds, and how the 'mobility-oriented self' – actively and consciously – is drawn upon to construct their spaces of work and travel mobility.

The capacity to draw on personal and familial agency later-in-life, so as to actively shape mobility trajectories, is evident in the practice of repeated migrations to the Gulf region and the UAE, set out in chapter four. As has been described, the on-off temporal pattern of this form of mobility has been identified among low-income migration to the Gulf (Gardner, 2010) and to the UAE (Parreñas et al., 2018), necessitated by the precarious nature of work in sending countries and also in the migration destination. However, there is no apparent evidence in the Gulf migration literature to show that this pattern of mobility is also a characteristic of skilled, autonomous mobile professionals (i.e. not those whose mobility is directed by an existing employer in their home country). Ali (2011) has drawn attention to the return of second-generation skilled Asian residents to Dubai. However, their mobility is predicated not on later-in-life mobility, but on the experience of growing up in Dubai, leaving to study and work abroad as young adults, and returning to established extended family lives there.

For my respondents (of relatively high-income status), their repeated migrations are in large part a response to a precarious work environment, resonating with the findings of Gardner (2010) and (Parreñas et al., 2018) referred to above. However, the agency

of mobile professionals (that agency being a product of their existing resources and marketable skills), enables them to strategically respond to that precarious environment from a more powerful vantage point than is the case for the migrant group with whom the authors noted above are concerned. Hence repeated phases of migration, although triggered by precarious work, is strategised so that – to some extent – this form of mobility comes to be experienced as a form of freedom to roam. Similarly, in chapter five, the empirical analysis was arranged around the notion of distance, and drew attention to ‘strategic separation’ as being a conscious, knowing form of family separation brought into being to successfully sustain the UAE-based family migration project. It has been shown that family members who became spatially separated for periods of time added yet another route to their existing transnational family mobility trajectory. Their lives remained linked, but geographically they became stretched even further. In the first instance, this separation was brought about by their existing precarious work environment. However, the respondents whose trajectories encompass this form of mobility were able to respond to macro circumstances by drawing on their individual and familial agency: they moved away from Abu Dhabi to work elsewhere for a period of time while still maintaining a (family) presence in Abu Dhabi.

The process of strategising I have highlighted above shows that in their specific space-time contexts, in which they negotiate precarious work later-in-life in a particular migration destination, my respondents drew on their agency to manage the limitations imposed by the parameters of their positionality. However, in chapter seven, I drew attention to how ageing has the potential to limit the agency I have pointed to here – that ageing has the potential to limit their freedom to roam. In the contexts of environments of vulnerability and constraint, the significance of ageing has been examined by Åkerlund and Sanberg (2015), who demonstrate how pension and other regulatory concerns curtailed the freedom to roam in the case of Swedish retirees to Malta, as was reported in Botterill's (2017) study of British retirees in Thailand. Similarly, in relation to travel mobility, Morgan et al. (2015) have commented on the physical constraints that ageing places on travel, and the anxiety to which the prospect of imminent travel may give rise.

For many of my respondents, living in Abu Dhabi has provided a gateway to further travel, an easy ‘jumping off point’ due to the UAE’s geographical proximity to travel

destinations they found to be previously out of reach. However, as set out in chapter two, and explored more fully in section 8.2 to follow, that opportunity comes to be increasingly reined in as retirement age beckons, curtailing hopes for travel and opportunities to sustain the mobility-oriented self. My thesis has contributed to this area of literature by shifting the spotlight onto how mobility, age, and ageing, may become intertwined with employment and the structure of mobility regimes in a way that constrains the freedom to roam later-in-life.

This first overarching theme draws attention to two interesting avenues for further research. First, as previously noted, there is little evidence in the Gulf migration literature to show that mobile professionals (who direct their own mobility independently of existing employing companies) follow a pattern of repeated migration to the UAE. Seeking further insight from respondents in relation to their repeated migration experiences, and paying more detailed attention to the temporality of this form of mobility as illustrated by their mobility maps, could further illuminate this pattern of mobility within privileged migration flows. Similarly, this theme could be usefully expanded to include younger mobile professionals and, in this way, provide an opportunity for cross-generational analysis. In so doing, it would be possible to consider how the freedom to roam might be contingent on family ties. That is, it would be pertinent to ask if that freedom is in fact constrained for those who move with young families, and for whom repeated phases of upheaval and resettlement is arguably more arduous.

The second, connected avenue for further research, lies in the possibility to expand my current focus on Abu Dhabi to a cross-emirate line of enquiry. Although not a dominant narrative, and not an area of enquiry I initially expected to encounter, in the construction of their UAE mobility maps it became apparent that a number of my respondents viewed Dubai as a place for young people. Abu Dhabi was presented as being a place where the pace of life is slower, there is (as one respondent put it) less 'bling', and life is generally more measured. As a result, the majority of my respondents make limited trips to Dubai, despite the close proximity of the two emirates. Similarly, it was not within the remit of this thesis to explore the notion of migrant emplacement and belonging in any great depth: to consider to what extent later-in-life mobile professionals come to foster a sense of attachment and belonging to Abu Dhabi, and how that might encourage repeated migrations. In the final interview with one of my respondents, she shared her experience of

visiting the Louvre Abu Dhabi, a museum of art in Abu Dhabi designed in such a way that the building and surrounding water of the Arabian Gulf merge, making it possible for visitors to sit right at the point where the sea meets the museum's walls. For Vesna, her frequent visits to the museum are made not so much to see the exhibits, but to enjoy the immediate environment. As she said in the final interview, when she is there, she could spend 'two hours just watching the sea'. Unpacking this, and similar narratives of other respondents, would provide quite a unique way of exploring the spatiality of ageing, place, and mobility and the "entwined becomings" (Schwanen et al., 2012:1291) this intersection has the potential to give rise.

8.2. Migrant privilege, precarious lives

We're here at the pleasure of the sheik you know. So, our [film] company – we're a kind of novelty for the government. But when you look at what film represents in this country compared to its other interests, it's marginal. They could lose patience or lose interest very quickly. (Jeff)

Maybe because the UAE is such a young country ... what's it, 42/43 years old? Maybe because it's such a young country you just don't see ... when is the last time you saw an elderly Emirati with a walking stick? You don't – do you? It's so unusual that you think 'Hell, there's an elderly person, there's somebody in a wheelchair'. Can you imagine getting around Abu Dhabi in a wheelchair? That's probably why they get rid of people at 65! (Chris)

Jeff's narrative, which I discussed in more detail in chapter four, relays the precariousness of the industry he works in. That precariousness is not a product of financial reasons as such. As he went on to explain: 'We try not to take money from the government at all', but is more a product of the UAE government's right to close down the film industry at any point in time. Chris's comments, within his narrative above, emerged from a general conversation we had about his experience of living in Abu Dhabi at the later-in-life stage of the life course (age 62). As the age profile of the foreign workforce set out in chapter one shows, the number of foreign workers in Jeff's age bracket is proportionally small. This demographic profile, and the relatively small

size of the Emirati population, means that Chris perceives it to be 'so unusual' to see elderly people in Abu Dhabi. But in his narrative, he also refers to the age-bounded limit to employment that is set for foreign workers, as explained in chapter two.

In chapter two, I also argued that later-in-life mobility and migration to Abu Dhabi is characterised by precarious work and a general state of precarity, arising out of the UAE's migration policies. This state of precarity exists alongside relative privilege (a level of privilege that emanates from their existing financial resources and relatively high remuneration packages). As pointed to in section 8.1 of this chapter, mobile professionals draw on their personal and familial agency to negotiate their way through their precarious work environment and the constraining regulatory environment in which they are located. But it is still an everyday reality that the lives of this migrant group are shaped by the precarious nature of migrant work (as illustrated by Jeff's interview excerpt above); and by the specificity of the UAE's regime of mobility in relation to age and non-entitlement to citizenship (as alluded to in Chris's narrative also presented above).

In chapter four, I drew out this argument in relation to the practice of repeated migrations and revisited that topic in section 8.1 of this chapter. On the one hand, this practice reflects the ability of mobile professionals to move elsewhere (with their skills) when working conditions in their host country become unfavourable, and to then return when those working conditions become favourable once again. But on the other hand, this practice exemplifies the state of precarity that Parreñas et al. (2018) and Gardner (2010) identify in relation to low-income workers in the UAE and Qatar, respectively. For both skilled and less-skilled migrant groups, a state of precarity is created out of the precariousness of work and the UAEs exclusionary migration policies.

In 2018, the UAE government passed a resolution that would enable certain categories of highly skilled foreign workers to apply for a 10-year visa as part of the 'golden visa' programme. Those who are eligible to apply are described as "specialized talents and researchers in various fields of science and knowledge" (UAE government portal 23/11/2020) and must meet at least two requisite conditions. Medical professionals for example, must meet conditions such as being in receipt of a PhD from one of the top 500 universities in the world, and have made a major contribution to scientific research.

The National (04/09/2020) reported that in May 2020, more than 200 doctors in Dubai were granted a 10-year visa.

In some ways, the development I have drawn attention to above calls into question the argument that the UAE's migration policies are exclusionary – indeed, a small number of respondents in my sample may well be eligible to apply for the ten year visa. However, most will not be eligible. This visa, as it pertains to the highly skilled, therefore gives further weight to the argument that migratory policies are exclusionary for those broadly classified as privileged migrants. The potential for the visa to create a new tier of division within the existing hierarchy of privilege opens up the possibility for a fascinating new area of research.

In chapters five and six I focused on the question of geographical distance and strategies to sustain family ties over that distance. As relatively well paid skilled migrants, my respondents were entitled to a family visa, which five couples at the time of our interviews were in receipt of, allowing a spouse and children under the age of 18 to live with them (Table 1 in chapter three records those whose dependent or adult children live in Abu Dhabi). In the case of one respondent (Ella) and one set of couple respondents (Fran and Patrick), each has an adult child living in Abu Dhabi on their own employer-sponsored visa. It was not the aim of this study to draw co-present children into the analysis. That would have required a new set of ethical guidelines and a separate set of research questions, outside of the remit and purpose of this study. As a consideration for future research however, how later-in-life family lives are influenced by co-present children, and how that everyday form of family life combines with having children resident in another country/countries, would be a fruitful area to explore.

Finally, in chapter seven, I addressed the question of precarity in relation to the non-entitlement of citizenship. This was noted by Carlo, whose narrative included the phrase 'always in the back of our mind ... we're always heading back home'. In this chapter, I was concerned with the intertwined questions of anticipated return, retirement, and future family lives. In that discussion, and also in chapter two, I noted that only under exceptional circumstances is it possible for previously employed foreign workers to retire in Abu Dhabi because the right to residency is linked directly to an active employment status.

The fact that ultimate return (or ongoing mobility) is not negotiable for the majority of foreign residents, could provide the basis for an interesting area of exploration in relation to thinking further about family togetherness and the practices employed to sustain that desired togetherness. For example, it would be of interest to consider how the effort and resources that transnational families put into sustaining their ties to significant others, may be influenced by knowing that the future will always involve ultimate return. Or that it might involve an onward journey somewhere new.

In September 2018 the UAE Cabinet approved the issue of a five-year retirement visa to foreign residents over the age of 55 who meet one of the following criteria: property investment worth AED 2 million, financial savings of at least AED 1 million, or a proven income of at least AED 20,000 per month (UAE government portal, 19/07/2020). In September 2020, the Dubai Government launched its five-year 'Retire in Dubai' visa programme. Although, as yet, there is no apparent evidence to show that Abu Dhabi has launched a similar scheme, the potential for that to be put in place would offer an interesting area of future research, in particular should the programme be extended to non-residents. Future research on the experiences of retirement migrants in the UAE could offer further insight into existing scholarship on financial privilege and retirement migration.

8.3. Far away but emotionally near to family, later-in-life

My knitting is coming along. I worked on it quite a bit last night. I'm past the half-way point. But it turns out they're going to do the baby shower in December. I was so positive it was January! There's no way I'm going to get it done on time.

What I'm going to do (now that I know it's a girl); I'm going to purchase a few little outfits then and send those for them, and then I'll have the blanket. I've picked up a couple of souvenirs for them from a couple of places, so I'll put those in the box, along with the blanket and stuff. (Penny)

Penny's narrative, in which she explains her plans to send a gift box to the US in time

for the arrival of her first grandchild, speaks to the third theme around which the findings of my thesis are organised. Her narrative draws attention to how transnational families are geographically dispersed but – nevertheless – a sense of familyhood (Bryceson and Vourela, 2002) still prevails. In this way, following Morgan's (2011:6) argument that 'family' is itself a localised term to which meaning is attributed by "speakers and hearers at the time of its utterances", attention is drawn to the notion of family togetherness, which constituted the thread of analysis through chapter six in particular. In the act of knitting a blanket for her future grandchild, Penny is engaging in a long-established, widespread family practice, in which grandparents and others who wish to express their excitement at the arrival of a new family member, prepare gifts ahead of the event.

Of significance to the analytical theme that forms the focus of discussion here, Penny is making the blanket in Abu Dhabi, many miles from her family in the US. In the same way as the act of remitting money home may embody love (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015), so the blanket expresses the warmth Penny feels at the arrival of her future grandchild. The act of preparing the gift also provides her with a sense of family togetherness, despite the absence of family co-presence. Although the blanket will travel many miles to its destination and – as her extended narrative in chapter six indicates – she is unlikely to see her new grandchild for some time, she is nevertheless engaging with a family practice that is both proximate and distant. In the same way as grandparents-to-be might prepare gifts while living in close proximity to their adult children, so she is knitting a blanket in an environment in which distance sits at the centre of her everyday life. In this way, the meaning embodied in the act of knitting draws attention to Long's (2014) argument presented in chapter two; that transnational family lives – spatially and temporally – challenge established conceptions of what counts as a 'proper family' because family members internally negotiate the meaning of normative/non-normative in relation to each other, and at different points in the life course.

In chapters five and six, I identified two schools of thought in regard to the ways in which geographical distance and co-present proximity are connected, and how they shape transnational family lives. For scholars such as Burrell (2016) and Ryan et al. (2015), whose work is situated within the first school of thought, distance remains a stubborn, physical entity that profoundly shapes the way family lives are experienced

when members are located many miles from each other. In chapter five, I explored the notion of distance through the lens of three forms of separation that emerged from the interviews: permanent, intermittent, and strategic. In doing so, the discussion showed support for the argument that, despite greater ease of travel and availability of ICTs, distance still remains recalcitrant (Burrell, 2016), as illustrated in the case of those respondents where spouses separated permanently at the point of migration. However, the analysis also pointed to how, as I suggested in chapter five, families dance with distance. They negotiate internally, within their own family lives. They also employ various forms of agency so as to manage the harshness of distance by, for example, moving apart for periods of time. The discussion around these forms of separation set out in chapter five, makes a useful contribution to the literature on distance and transnational family lives in so much as it draws attention to the temporal patterns of separation, and to the agency enacted by transnational families as they navigate their way around the physicality of distance that is so integral to their everyday lives.

In chapter six I also drew attention to the work of scholars situated within a second school of thought; those who suggest that in a world in which ICT usage has proliferated, and where international travel has become more accessible and readily available, distance itself has metaphorically collapsed. The discussion focused on two family practices my respondents employed to sustain family relations across distance and time: family visits and ICTs. Both these practices draw attention to the essence of the theme I am concerned with here; that transnational family lives are lived at a distance much of the time, but that the practices employed to sustain family relations engender a sense of emotional closeness and a sense of being near to those who are far away. During times of co-present visits, physical presence has the potential to strengthen closeness. Here three forms of visiting were identified: visits home, the receiving of visits from family members, and meet-ups with family members in a third destination. However, as Holmes and Wilding (2019) have argued, physical presence is no longer a condition for emotional closeness because virtual forms of communication have the potential to bridge physical distance, a point that Nedelcu and Wyss (2016) take further, arguing that ICT usage has become so routinised that co-presence, and presence initiated by virtual means, become indistinct. The empirical analysis in chapter six supports this argument in that it was shown that the use of ICTs has become so much part of my respondents' everyday lives, that they build such use

around their own temporal pattern by, for instance, messaging or calling their children at the same time every night or weekend. This everydayness was also demonstrated in the need to ring-fence time to ensure that the rhythm of everyday life did not become dictated by ICTs, akin to an ever present 'crisis of the summons' (Licoppe, 2012), as referred to in chapter six.

By pointing to the importance of both 'virtual' togetherness (co-presence in the absence of proximity through the use of ICTs) and temporary togetherness (physical co-presence arising from visits), this thesis has contributed to the VFR literature and to the family migration literature. My empirical analysis sought to explore the spatially creative ways in which respondents worked to sustain family ties, as well as the way they managed their relations so as to protect their own time during visits home. Although not entirely particular to the later-in-life stage of the life course, I would argue that both are especially indicative of this period of time. In relation to meet-ups as a form of visiting, the economically-active status of my respondents means that, financially, they are more likely to be in a position to meet up in Russia or on a cruise ship than those who are dependent on retirement income. They are also more likely to be physically able to engage with this form of mobility than older people who have already moved deeper into the life course.

In regard to ringfencing personal time in the context of visits home or the use of ICTs, the findings set out in chapter seven are relevant here. As noted in section 8.1 of this chapter, the experience of migration, mobility, and travel, strongly influenced my respondents' sense of self. Ring-fencing their own time so as to have time to work, but to also be actively engaged in their migration destination and explore further afield, suggests later-in-life mobile professionals do not compromise their personal ring-fenced time in favour of boundless contact with family members back home.

This brings the discussion on to the final finding of relevance here. In chapter seven I explored the question of anticipated, future family lives following ultimate return or onward mobility. I argued that for my respondents, their next stage of the life course may well continue to be influenced by the ongoing presence of a mobility-oriented self. Rather than this sense of self being discarded on return, their narratives point to an ongoing desire to be mobile beings, whether that be as travellers or retirement migrants. In relation to the theme of direct concern here, it is therefore possible that

family lives will continue to be lived from afar, at least some of the time. It is possible that existing family practices, employed to manage distance and engender a sense of being near to significant others in their migration emplacement, will be continued through into their post-Abu Dhabi family life. As stated in chapter three, section 3.1.2, my thesis did not encompass the perspectives of family members who stayed behind. However, the research design element of my project could be usefully extended to add further insights into the linked lives perspective as it relates to later-in-life transnational families. It would be interesting to develop a further avenue of research that enabled the question of linked lives, possibly in relation to the question of return (as I go on to raise in more detail below), to be addressed from both the perspective of returnees and their significant others. There is potential to construct a multi-sited research design, with a fit for purpose set of ethical guidelines and research questions. By including a limited number of countries to which my respondents returned, the potential project could be manageable from a practical point of view, and provide the opportunity for interesting cross-country comparison.

In her study of British retirees in the UK who had previously lived in Dubai, Walsh (2018a) explores their experience of ultimate return through the lens of the materialities and changing meaning of home at a later time in the life course. The findings of my study, which point to a conscious desire to nurture the mobility-oriented self rather than to fully invest time and resources in a place to settle, offers a valuable area for future research in the area of migration, mobility, return and ageing. This potential area of research would be of particular value, should it be possible to focus on the period of time immediately following final return, and to draw from a cross-section of countries to which those later-in-life have returned. In this way, it would be possible to capture the intersection of life course, family lives and perceptions of self, and to achieve further insight into how ultimate return shapes that intersection. Similarly, it would be interesting to explore how the family practices of visiting and the use of ICTs might differ in the context of return – how distance from and proximity to family members might reshape those practices following the event of return.

8.4. Mobilities on hold

Two of the sub-research questions set out in chapter one: ‘How do everyday family practices maintain transnational family links in the context of later-in-life mobility and

migration to Abu Dhabi?’ and ‘To what extent do family members become de-linked in the context of mobility and migration?’ are addressed directly within the third and final theme discussed above. These questions are also addressed in themes one and two, where I have drawn attention to the environment of mobility and constraint in which later-in-life transnational family lives are situated. However, when I formulated these particular research questions at the start of this project, I did so in a world which Urry (2007) had described as being more than ever on the move. Correspondingly, at the start of the thesis I noted how migration scholars have referred to the UAE as a place of mobilities, in which arrivals and departures define the fabric of everyday life. As I finally conclude this thesis, it is pertinent to reflect on how the current global pandemic has undoubtedly begun to give migration scholars new food for thought, and how such complicated patterns of later-in-life mobility; opportunities for construction of a mobility-oriented self; and co-present transnational family practices in Abu Dhabi, have been put on hold.

A few months into the pandemic, when residents in the UK and many other countries were instructed to shelter in place, I listened to a BBC World Service programme (BBC 2020) that set out to investigate the impact of the pandemic on the commercial shipping industry. The investigation showed that all across the world, seafarers were stuck out at sea, unable to dock in any port. They were described by the programme presenter as the forgotten victims of the crisis. As noted in chapter five of this thesis, Straughan et al. (2020:639) employ the concept of ‘stuckness’ to describe the experience of individuals who had remained in Australia when their partner had moved to work in another part of the world. In many ways, the seafarers’ scenario exemplifies the feeling of ‘stuckness’ that those on land, in countries across the world, have experienced in recent times. The purpose of this discussion is to draw attention to an important, final area for potential research.

At the end of March this year, it was possible for foreign visitors to enter Abu Dhabi by flying into Dubai airport, follow Covid-19 testing protocols, and to then travel onward to Abu Dhabi. Foreign workers residing in Abu Dhabi could fly directly into the emirate, depending on the status of the virus in the country from which they were travelling. After a short time, the Dubai entry route became arduous for both residents and non-residents to negotiate and Abu Dhabi came to firmly resemble a place of immobility. Significantly, these policies were further complicated by age restrictions; residents over the age of 60 were advised not to move out of their places of self-isolation or to

travel out of the country.

Since the end of September, Abu Dhabi's borders have again become more porous. Residents may re-enter the country from abroad directly into Abu Dhabi airport and then follow testing, quarantine, and tracking protocols. Non-residents are permitted to enter into Dubai airport only. Once at the Dubai/Abu Dhabi border, visitors are required to follow testing and tagging protocols before entering the emirate and abiding by quarantine rules. Workplaces have reopened, but those over the age of 60 (and those with certain health conditions) are advised to continue to work remotely. In section 8.2 of this concluding chapter, I began the discussion with an excerpt from my first interview with Chris, where he reflected on the lack of visibility of older people in Abu Dhabi. I also pointed to the tapering age pyramid for foreign workers over the age of 60. In many ways, this immediate discussion reinforces the intersection of life course, migration, mobility, and family lives that the title of this thesis speaks to. Exploring this intersection in an environment of relative (im)mobility, has the potential to extend the scope of this thesis into a new and potentially rich avenue of family and Gulf migration scholarship.

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APPENDIX 1: KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH RESPONDENTS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER ¹⁵

No	Pseudonym & Gender	Age	Country of origin	Relationship type; no of children	Employment Sector	Years since arrival ¹⁶
1	Angela: F	Mid- 50s	UK	M2 No children	Media	8 months
2	Arjun: M	Late 50s	India	M1 2 children (1 in Abu Dhabi)	Oil	9
3	Carlo: M	Early 60s	Australia	M1 2 children	Oil	6
4	Cheryl: F	Early 50s	USA	M1 3 children	Not in paid work	3
5	Chris: M	Mid- 60s	UK	IR 1 child	Media	9
6	Christine: F	Mid- 50s	UK	M1 3 children (1 in Abu Dhabi)	Not in paid work	2
7	Claire: F	Mid- 50s	Columbia	M1 3 children, 1 in Abu Dhabi	Not in paid work	5
8	Ella: F	Mid- 60s	France	M1 2 children (1 in Abu Dhabi)	Not in paid work	17 years
9	Emily: F	Mid- 50s	South Africa	NIR 2 children	Education	5
10	Fazi: M	Early 50s	UK	M1 No children	Media	3
11	Fran: F	Late 50s	Australia	M1 3 children (1 In Abu Dhabi)	Education	10
12	Fred: M	Early 60s	Germany	M1 (3 children)	Education	8

¹⁵ My respondents are presented here in alphabetical order. The first version of this table (see Table 1) lists respondents in the order in which they were interviewed. In this table (presented as appendix), couple respondents are shown in white and those interviewed without a partner shown in grey.

¹⁶ 'Years since arrival' refers to my respondent's most recent migration to Abu Dhabi. Thirteen respondents made recurrent, repeated periods of migration to either the Gulf region, or the UAE specifically, which I explored more fully in chapter four.

13	Hattie: F	Mid-50s	South Africa (both)	M1 2 children	Not in paid work	12
14	Helen: F	Mid-50s	South Africa	M1 2 children	Education	19
15	Ivan	Late 50s	UK	M1 2 children, 1 in Abu Dhabi	Construction	12
16	Jean: F	Mid 60s	USA	M1 1 child	Not in paid work	12
17	Jeff: M	Early 50s	Zimbabwe	NIR No children	Film	9
18	Jim: M	Late 50s	South Africa	M1 2 children	Waste industry	19
19	Ken	Mid-50s	USA	M1 3 children	Military	3
20	Leyla: F	Mid-50s	Australia	NIR 1 child	Education	14
21	Marcus: M	Early 60s	Sweden	M1 3 children, 1 in Abu Dhabi	Telecommunications	5
22	Matias: M	Mid-50s	Argentina	M1 1 child, in Abu Dhabi	Medical	2
23	Matthew: M	Late 50s	USA	NIR 1 child	Finance	2
24	Mazia: F	Mid 30s	Lebanon	M1	Education	3
25	Michelle: F	Late 50s	Australia	M1 (2 children)	Not in paid work	5 weeks
26	Mura: F	Mid-50s	Singapore	M1	Not in paid work	8
27	Nada: F	Early 50s	Serbia	NIR 2 children	Aviation	1
28	Nathan: M	Mid-50s	UK	M1 3 children (1 in Abu Dhabi)	Media	2
29	Navi: M	Late 50s	India	M2 1 child	Retail	15
30	Pam: F	Late 50s	Zimbabwe	M1 2 children	Not in paid work	17
31	Patrick: M	Late 50s	Australia	M1 3 children (1 In Abu Dhabi)	Construction	10
32	Penny: F	Late 50s	USA	NIR 2 children	Not in paid work	2
33	Phil: M	Late 50s	South Africa	M1 2 children	Engineering	13
34	Raj: M	Mid-50s	India	M1 2 children	Oil	24
35	Reena: F	Mid-50s	India	M1	Not in paid work	9

				2 children (1 in Abu Dhabi)		
36	Richard: M	Early 60s	UK	IR 3 children	Media	10
37	Sarah: F	Mid-50s	Argentina	M1 1 child, in Abu Dhabi	Not in paid work	2
38	Susan: F	Mid-50s	UK	M1 2 children, 1 in Abu Dhabi	Not in paid work	12
39	Tahil: M	Mid-60s	India	M1 2 children	Not in paid work	18
40	Vera: F	Mid-50s	New Zealand	NIR No children	Medical	14 months

Key:

NIR (not in a relationship)

IR (in a relationship)

M1 (married, spouse in Abu Dhabi)

M2 (married, spouse not permanently in Abu Dhabi)

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APPENDIX 2: PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET



Participant Information Sheet

I would like to invite you to take part in my PhD research project on the migration experience of skilled professionals in Abu Dhabi. In the course of my research I will conduct interviews with 30-40 participants who meet the following sampling criteria: skilled professionals who moved to Abu Dhabi at the age of 50 or older and who moved independently of their existing employing company in their country of origin. In the case of couples who moved together, I aim to conduct joint interviews with both partners, and will conduct individual interviews with those who moved on their own. Before you decide if you would like to take part in my project, please read the following information that outlines the purpose and nature of the research.

Project Title

"Later-Life migration to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: Life Course, Family and Linked Lives."

Purpose of the Study

My study aims to explore the migration journeys of those who move to Abu Dhabi in the later years in their professional lives. Although this category of professionals has been included within wider studies of the mobility of skilled professionals to the UAE and elsewhere, it has not been singled out for dedicated study as yet. I therefore hope that this study will shed light on the experiences of this particular category of professionals who live and work in Abu Dhabi. In this project, I am particularly interested in exploring the connection between family and migration: how for instance, decision-making and strategies are influenced by the family unit, the members of which may be situated in more than one country. The project therefore focuses around one central question: 'How are the lives of later-life skilled migrants to Abu Dhabi linked to family and household across distance and over time?'

Data collection

The data-gathering stage of my research will run from August 2016 to October 2017. Two data gathering techniques will be used. Firstly, I will record my own everyday

experience of living in Abu Dhabi by adopting an ethnographic approach. Secondly, I will conduct a series of interviews with each research participant. Should you agree to participate in my project, I will ask to meet with you on three occasions.

(i) In the first meeting, I will ask if you have any questions arising from this information sheet and I will ask you to sign the attached consent form. I will also outline my project in more detail and explain the research method referred to as mobility mapping, for I will ask you and your partner to record your migration patterns onto printed copies of maps provided (expected duration: 40 minutes).

(ii) In the second meeting I will interview you/you and your partner, the purpose of which will be to discuss the migration patterns you have recorded on your maps, and to explore your experience of migration to Abu Dhabi more broadly (expected duration: 1.40 minutes).

(iii) In the final meeting, I will ask you to do a final check of your mobility maps and will give you a copy of the maps you have constructed, should you wish me to do so. I will also check that you are happy with the way in which I have interpreted your mobility maps and will answer any remaining questions you/or your partner might have regarding the project (expected duration: 40 minutes).

Taking part in the project

Participation in my project is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet and a copy of the consent form to keep. As is stated on the consent form, if you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and will not be expected to provide me with an explanation of your decision to do so.

All the information I collect from our meetings will remain confidential and you/your partner will remain anonymous. Confidentiality and anonymity will be assured by: i) omission in the written report or any subsequent publications of your name/s and the names of any institutions you may refer to in the interviews (such as your place of work); ii) your interview transcripts and mobility maps will be allocated a personal identifier and your name will be erased from the original copies. The list of personal identifiers and corresponding names will be stored in safe place, separate to the interview transcripts and mobility maps; iii) the services of a professional transcribing company will be used to provide a typed version of the audio-recordings of interviews but the names of you/your partner will be erased from the audio-recording prior to transcription.

Institutional affiliation

I am a second year PhD student registered in the School of Global Studies at the University of Sussex in the UK. I am not funded by any external body and I am registered as a part-time student. As my research is based in the UAE, I am required to be affiliated to a university in the UAE for the duration of my fieldwork, although the University of Sussex is responsible for the approval and ongoing review of this project. The University of Sussex has insurance in place to cover its legal liabilities in respect of this study.

Contact information

For further information or verification of this project, you may contact my PhD supervisor, Dr Katie Walsh: Katie.Walsh@sussex.ac.uk. Should you wish to contact me at time, my email address is: C.Mcneil-walsh@sussex.ac.uk

Thank-you for taking the time to read this information sheet. Please feel free to ask me to clarify any points that may not be sufficiently clear to you.

Date: 6th June 2016

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APPENDIX 3: PROJECT CONSENT FORM



CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

PROJECT TITLE:

Later-Life migration to Abu Dhabi, United Arab

Emirates: Family, Life Course and Linked Lives

**Project Approval
Reference:**

ER/CM552/1

I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex research project being carried out by Colleen McNeil-Walsh (PhD student, Centre for Global Studies). I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- Be interviewed by the researcher on three separate occasions but I understand that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.
- Complete the mobility mapping exercise for the purpose of discussion during interviews.
- Allow the interviews to be audio-taped.
- I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of myself or any other individual or institution in the researcher's final thesis or any subsequent academic publications by the researcher. I understand that I

will also be given the opportunity to review and approve the mobility maps before they are included in the write up of the research.

- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW 1

- 1) Thank respondent/s for agreeing to participate in my project.
- 2) Confirm age, country of origin, sector of employment.
- 3) Go through project information form (sent to respondent ahead of first interview). Expand on information provided and check if further clarification is needed.
- 4) Explain each element of the consent form (sent to respondent ahead of first interview) and ask for signature.
- 5) Present a copy of each the three maps that respondent/s will be required to work on. Explain purpose of the method.
- 6) Explain what I am asking of the respondent/s (to record their mobility routes over time on each map).
- 7) Check if further clarification is required and invite respondent/s to seek further clarification via email or phone if needed.
- 8) Ask respondent/s to provide a brief overall picture of their mobility trajectory. Prompt questions: family composition, where family members are located, reasons for moving to Abu Dhabi, length of stay to date.

INTERVIEW 2

- 1) Thank respondent/s for meeting with me a second time and for completing the map work.
- 2) Ask respondent about the experience of working with the maps and recording their mobility routes.
- 3) In the case of couples, did they construct their maps together or separately?
- 4) Ask respondent/s to explain each map in turn. Prompts: what was the purpose of travelling along each of the route you have recorded? How many visits have you made home? Who went with you to that particular place? What are your connections to the places you have annotated on each map?
- 5) Establish modes of communication with significant people living elsewhere and who they might have become delinked to.

INTERVIEW 3

- 1) Thank respondent/s for meeting me for the third and final time.
- 2) If required, ask for further clarification on any aspect of their map work, for example dates and length of time spent in different places.
- 3) If required, ask for clarification on any points made in interviews one and two.
- 4) Take the opportunity to expand on emerging themes in interviews one and two.

- 5) Explore the topic of the future such as plans, hopes, concerns. Prompt questions: 'what do you feel the future holds for you?' and 'what would you like the future to look like?'
- 6) Thank respondent/s for their time.

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APPENDIX 5:

SPREADSHEET DOCUMENTING MOBILITY OVER TIME (JEFF)

Living in	Year	Destination	Country	Mode of Travel	Purpose
Harare	1974	Cape Town	South Africa	Train	School Holidays - Sister's graduation
	1975 - 76	Rusape	Zimbabwe	Car	Family visits (2 or 3)
	1975	Mary Mount Mission	Zimbabwe	Light Aircraft	School Holiday
	1976	Chimanimani Mountains	Zimbabwe	Car	Hiking Holiday with Parents
	1977	Mtweelumi	South Africa	Car	Family Holiday
	1978 - 79	Mtshatshata	Zimbabwe	Car	School Holiday visits to my brother (3 or 4)
	1979	Durban	South Africa	Bus	School Holiday visit to my sister
	1980	Turk Mine & Nyamandlovu Areas	Zimbabwe	Car	School Holiday visit to my friend's farm
		Johannesburg	South Africa	Car	School Holiday visit to my sister
	1981	Hurungwe	Zimbabwe	Truck	Zim Schools Exploration Society
	1982	Chinnoyi	Zimbabwe	Hill Hike	Snake catching for Snake Park
	1982	Kariba	Zimbabwe	Car	End of School camping trip with friends
		Johannesburg	South Africa	Hill Hike	For the fun of it
	1983	Inyanga	Zimbabwe	Hill Hike	Easter Weekend camping trip with friends
Johannesburg		Johannesburg	South Africa	Car	Emigration
	1984	Klerksdorp	South Africa	Car	Weekend Skydiving - 10 or so
		Durban	South Africa	Car	Visit Girlfriend - Twice
		Scottsburgh	South Africa	Car	Work
	1985	Montagu	South Africa	Hill Hike	Visit to my Brother
		Harare	Zimbabwe	Car	Visiting friends
Cape Town	1986	Cape Town	South Africa	Motorcycle	Visit Girlfriend - Twice
Cape Town	1987	Cape Town	South Africa	Commercial Flight	Work
Laingsburg	1988	Laingsburg	South Africa	Car	Work
Cape Town		Cape Town	South Africa	Car	Work
Johannesburg		Johannesburg	South Africa	Commercial Flight	Work
		Durban	South Africa	Car	Work
	1990	Durban	South Africa	Car	Weekend Getaways - 18 trips
	1992	Maputo	Mozambique	Commercial Flight	Work
	1992 - 1993	Maputo	Mozambique	Car	Work - 12 trips?
	1993	Weonan Game Reserve	South Africa	Car	Easter Weekend camping trip with friends
Cape Town	1994	Cape Town	South Africa	Hill Hike	Work
	1995 - 2016	Wellington	South Africa	Car, Motorcycle, Fly	Second Home - Farm belonging to best friends - 100+ trips
	1997	Johannesburg	South Africa	Commercial Flight	Work
	1998	Walvis Bay	Namibia	Truck	Work
		Irene	South Africa	Commercial Flight	Work
		Dublin	Ireland	Commercial Flight	Work
	1999	Chester	England	Ferry	Work
		Verneukpan	South Africa	Car	Work
		All over SA	South Africa	Van	National Tour - Work
		Johannesburg	South Africa	Car	Work
Johannesburg	2000	Maputo	Mozambique	Commercial Flight	Work
	2001	Broederstroom	South Africa	Car	Work
		Abu Dhabi	UAE	Commercial Flight	Work
	2002	Abu Dhabi	UAE	Commercial Flight	Work
Cape Town		Capetown	South Africa	Car	Work
	2003	Kimberly	South Africa	Car	Work
	2004	Richards Bay	South Africa	Car	Work
Johannesburg	2005	Johannesburg	South Africa	Car	Work
		Sutherland	South Africa	Motorcycle	Work
	2006	Swakopmund	Namibia	Commercial Flight	Work
	2007	Broederstroom	South Africa	Car	Work
Dubai		Dubai	UAE	Commercial Flight	Work
Wellington NZ	2008	Johannesburg	South Africa	Commercial Flight	Holiday
		Wellington	New Zealand	Commercial Flight	Emigration
	2009	Johannesburg	South Africa	Commercial Flight	Paperwork Visit
		Jeddah	Saudi Arabia	Commercial Flight	Work
		Dubai	UAE	Commercial Flight	Work
		Singapore	Singapore	Commercial Flight	Extended stop-over and visit with friends
Dubai	2010	Dubai	UAE	Commercial Flight	Work
		Dubai	UAE	Commercial Flight	Work
	2011	Muscat	Oman	Car	Work
		London	England	Commercial Flight	Work
		Ripon	England	Train	Family visit
	2012	Doha	Qatar	Commercial Flight	Work
		Sun City	South Africa	Commercial Flight	Work
	2013	Johannesburg	South Africa	Commercial Flight	Personal Business
		Pokora	Nepal	Commercial Flight	Xmas Holiday
		Amman	Jordan	Commercial Flight	Work
		Petra	Jordan	Bus	Work
		Wadi Rum	Jordan	Bus	Work
	2014	Ripon	England	Commercial Flight	Family
		Johannesburg	South Africa	Commercial Flight	
Abu Dhabi		Cape Town	South Africa	Commercial Flight	Holiday
		Wellington	South Africa	Car	
		London	England	Commercial Flight	Work
	2015	Amman	Jordan	Commercial Flight	Work
		Barcelona	Spain	Commercial Flight	Holiday
		Johannesburg	South Africa	Commercial Flight	Holiday
		South Africa Road Trip	South Africa	Car	
		Cape Town	South Africa	Commercial Flight	Afrika Burn
	2016	Tankwa	South Africa	Car	
		Florence	Italy	Commercial Flight	Holiday
		London	England	Commercial Flight	Work
	2017	Kahsab	Oman	Car	Work

APPENDIX 6

MAP ILLUSTRATING LIMITED GLOBAL MOBILITY (EMILY)

