A transnational family story: a narrative inquiry on the emotional and intergenerational notions of 'home'

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Abstract

At the core of migratory experiences lie key questions pertaining to one's emotional changing Self: the complexity of conflicting identities, feelings of (un)belonging, varying degrees of emotional place (un)attachment, and more simply, the fundamental (re)conceptualizations of 'home'. Though well-researched from various angles, 'home' as an emotional concept in the context of generational family migration research has many gains yet to be made. Through an in-depth, qualitative study on three generations of the author's own family, this thesis finds that irrespective of individual differences, notions of 'home' are actively and similarly maintained across generations which have migrated. Places of familial origin are seen to play a role in the conceptualization of 'home' through a retainment of cultural practices and values derived from the ancestral homeland. Equally, though the exact location of 'home' differs between individuals, the notion that 'home' is where the family is remains predominant. Given the geographically dispersed nature of family members, 'home' is often multiple. Transnational emotional ties and transnational notions of 'home' make way for a setting in which 'home' is transient. Above all, interview responses and post-migration reflections on 'home' demonstrate that such conceptualizations do not exist in an emotional vacuum. Future studies could benefit from working upon this research to establish whether such findings are applicable across various family settings and contexts. Additionally, this paper calls upon future research to actively reflect and include discussions on emotions throughout the research process, especially on topics central to the human lived experience as is often the case in migration research.

Keywords*: home, emotional migration, emotional transnationalism, family research, insider research*

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In our mobile world, though still far from the 'norm,' it is becoming increasingly common to find families that are transnationally and geographically dispersed (Ahmed, 1999; Bauman, 2011; Falicov, 2006). Adult children can often be found living in countries other than that of their parents', and in some cases, even that of their grandparents' and/or great-grandparents' (Harutyunyan, 2012; Wolf, 1997). The latter case presents a situation in which multiple generations of one family are in a sense 'dislocated' from the land of ancestral, familial, or parental origin. This transnational family dynamic presents a different sort of contemporary family, in which family members' identities are increasingly hybrid, belonging to place is increasingly multiple, and notions of 'home' are increasingly complex (Bauman, 2011; Mallman, 2019; Massey, 1994). These identity-home processes, embodied by the migrant-Self, are often not easy processes, but ones reflecting deep and internal negotiations of identity that follow one throughout life (Ahmed, 1999; Falicov, 2006). As Falicov puts it: "If home is where the heart is, and one's heart is with one's family, language, and country, what happens when your family, language, and culture occupy two different worlds?" (2006, p. 399). Falicov's question evokes the uncertainty encompassing identity and belonging in such a transnational family context, and yet leaves unsaid: what happens when 'home' and heart occupy *more* than two worlds, or rather, "multiple worlds" (Ahmed, 1999)?

Using this question as a backdrop for the scope of study, this thesis furthermore bases its founding on the notion that pre- and post-migratory processes, of which (re)conceptualizations of 'home' are fundamentally a part of, are by essence emotional processes (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015; Campos-Delgado, 2019; Falicov, 2006). This notion does not form the basis of the majority of migration research, which remains predominantly focused on rational economic-political dimensions of migratory processes (Paterson and Larios, 2020). However, this traditional perspective is increasingly criticized by those who argue that an understanding of emotional processes is fundamental towards an understanding of human experiences (Antonisch, 2010; Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015; Paterson and Larios, 2020; Ross, 2017). In studying migration, the emotional and feminist turn in the field of geography has equally emphasized the need to include human emotions in geographical discourses, placing attention on the unique relationships between place, identity, and our emotional Selves (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015; Bondi et al., 2007).

1.2 Research Problem

Within migrant families, the cumulative transmission of identities, places, and cultures across generations (and which younger generations may have no direct ties to) adds increasing complexity to the notions of 'home', a topic largely sidelined in broader academia. Studying these emotional lived experiences is essential towards further understanding aspects of lived migrations such as the increasingly found transnational attachments towards place. The fact that the emotional realm is so understudied in migration often disregards the human element of migratory experiences, which are otherwise left to aggregated economics and numbers, void of real-life association, and inaccessible to the non-academic public (Adams and Manning, 2015; Boccagni

and Baldassar, 2015). The problematization of emotions in academia itself poses a problem, and within migration research this has come at the cost of official attitudes often lacking empathy and compassionate understanding (Granek, 2017; Paterson and Larios, 2020).

While previous research has been conducted on perceptions of home and identity within migrant families, these studies are far from abundant and limited in scope (Falicov, 2006; Mallman, 2019; Wolf, 1997). Though valuable contributions, these studies mainly focus on second-generation children of migrants and rarely look at the entirety of one extended family nexus, applying the generalization that transnational identity and notions of a familial home diminish in following generations (Levitt, 2002). Little research examines processes undergone in families in which multiple generations are migrants; where the children of migrants become adult migrants themselves, and how this shapes identity-home processes. Ignoring the validity of these experiences in the past has sidelined the 'transnational identity', reinforcing the norm of one home, one culture, and one belonging (Falicov, 2006). This gap in the research thus presents an important note of study for this paper.

This thesis further positions itself within the recently developing field of (auto)ethnographic 'insider' research. In this field, the researcher, as an active, subjective player throughout the research process, chooses to explore a topic through the lens of their own personal and familial experiences (Adams, 2006; Adams and Manning, 2015; Ellis, 2007; Ross, 2017). The case of my own maternal family provides a unique case study in which all three living generations have embarked on transnational migratory moves themselves and currently reside in countries other than that of their familial origin. In examining the nuances of home and identity through a study on my family, the overarching aim of this thesis is to provide a deeper understanding of the (intergenerational and emotional) complexities within this topic. Based on the studied literature and my own personal experiences with migration, the following research question is thus proposed for this thesis:

> *Following a transnational migratory move, in what ways are notions of 'home' within one intergenerational migrant-family (re)conceptualized, maintained and/or abandoned across the generations?*

In order to adequately answer this question, three sub-questions will be addressed to focus the scope of the study:
1. How do the different members and generations in a migrant family define 'home'?
2. What are the existing emotions found towards personal and familial places of the past (i.e., place of birth, childhood, familial origin)?
3. (How) is familial culture and heritage (re)enforced throughout the migrant life-course?

1.3 Structure

Chapter 2 of this thesis explores and links the existing literature on topics of 'home' within the context of emotional migration processes. This theoretical framework is the precedent for the conceptual model guiding this paper. This thesis further builds upon a qualitative study design to reach its own empirical findings. Chapter 3 elaborates on the methodological use of narrative

inquiry, the interview and analysis process, and relevant ethical considerations in light of my own positionality within the research. A brief overview of the family background under study is then presented in Chapter 4, proceeded by the main findings in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 discusses these findings in line with the studied theory and presents an adjusted conceptual model for future reference. Chapter 7 concludes with answering the main research question, reflecting on the research limitations, and presenting paths for future research.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 'Home', memory, and family

How we define ourselves in relation to place is to a great extent guided by our 'geographies of the past' (Jones, 2007). These are the places that we have been to that have left traces on our Selves, and that we maintain throughout our lives (Belforda and Lahiri-Royb, 2019; Jones, 2007). The remembered places of childhood are some of the most fundamental in determining our current emotional landscapes, an essential point to understand when unpacking the concept of 'home' (Jones, 2007).

Though defining 'home' proves to be near impossible, differing per culture, language, context, and personal experience, at its most base level, Rapport and Dawson (1998, p. 9) define 'home' as "where one best knows oneself." This leaves substantial room for interpretation, but the unanimous consensus in the literature is that 'home' is to some extent space-bound (note: *where* "one best knows oneself") (Morse and Mudgett, 2017; Rapport and Dawson, 1998; Scharp et al., 2016). Despite often being used synonymously, 'home' is not limited only to the physical structure of a "house" (Morse and Mudgett, 2017). 'Home' can extend far beyond one's physical dwelling and can embody a node of multiplicities: between social relationships, the natural landscape or physical environment, and broader collective imaginations or memories – felt both at the local and/or national level (Massey, 1994; Morse and Mudgett, 2017).

In terms of our emotional landscapes, it is not just personal history but also familial history, and familial geographies of the past, which form the emotional ties to place and 'home'. The extension of 'home' to a place of a broader collective, beyond oneself, is often distinguished into the concept of 'homeland'. A purely mythical or imagined place, homeland is reliant upon a broader community to exist, propagated through the imagined collective memories of a nation or people (Parvin-Steward, 2017). Ultimately, the importance of the role of community – and especially of family – in defining 'home', or the 'where' of homeland, is thus essential when further unpacking the concept. Familial memories and conceptualizations of 'home' and homeland are remembered, retold, passed over generations, and thus reinforced over time (Harutyunyan, 2012).

2.2 'Home' away from home: emotional migration

Central to our emotional attachment to 'home' is the sense of security we feel in knowing our place – both literally and figuratively (Jones, 2007; Rapport and Dawson, 1998). Following a transnational migratory move *away* from home, one is not only dislocated spatially (physically),

but also temporally and inner-spatially (Kokanovic and Bozic-Vrbancic, 2015). Consequent longings for 'home', or homesickness, are thus as much for a past time as they are for a past place, or to be even more nuanced: a past Self in that place at that point in time (Ahmed, 1999; Kokanovic and Bozic-Vrbancic, 2015; Morse and Mudgett, 2017). Decisions to leave the security of 'home' are then by default emotion-filled processes, threatening perceived security with change, often of the unknown (Kokanovic and Bozic-Vrbancic, 2015; Raffaeta, 2015). The emotions felt encompass everything from excitement and hope to sorrow, longing, anxiety, guilt, and grief (Raffaeta, 2015; Kokanovic and Bozic-Vrbancic, 2015; Morse and Mudgett, 2017; Campos-Delgado, 2019). These emotional experiences do not disappear throughout the migrant life-course but remain and often manifest themselves into aspects of one's identity.

The paradox in acquiring "transnational identities" (Belforda and and Lahiri-Royb, 2019) is that migrants acquire multiple homes and yet often claim no one *Home* (Ahmed, 1999; Brun and Fabos, 2015). This paradox sees the growing theory of an internalization of 'home' in the Self, to replace the physical land, locality, or residence of 'home' which was left behind (Ahmed, 1999; Bauman, 2011).

2.3 Familial and emotional transnationalism

Within migrant families, the internalization mechanisms of 'home' are increasingly complex. Besides juggling one's own personal history, familial history and memory also contribute to conceptualizations of 'home' and identity (Mallman, 2019). The reinforcement of familial identity and the ancestral homeland through rituals and storytelling of emotional ties to past places is often an active process in families who have left the homeland (Levitt, 2002; Mallman, 2019). Younger generations of migrant families may hold emotional ties to places that they have never been to or conceptualize 'home' as something irrevocably lost and faraway (Falicov, 2006; Levitt, 2002; Wolf, 1997). In some cases, children of migrant families are seen to only "discover" home in later-life, through visits to ancestral or parental homelands where some recognize a strong sense of familiarity and belonging (Huang et al., 2013; Levitt, 2002).

The concept of 'emotional transnationalism' encompasses all the emotional processes experienced by migrants, or children of migrants, towards places (across nations) elsewhere (Falicov, 2006). Migrants can be termed as 'emotional transmigrants,' in the sense that emotions towards places of the past abroad are maintained throughout the migrant life-course (Falicov, 2006; Mallman, 2019). Studies on second-generation perceptions of 'home' and belonging, though not abundant, have made a key effort to bring questions of these conceptualizations to the forefront (Falicov, 2006; Levitt, 2002; Mallman, 2019; Wolf, 1997). The question remains, however, in how internalizations of 'home' embody themselves throughout migrant generations, in which the familial place of origin becomes increasingly spatially and temporally distanced.

For this thesis, the interest thus lies in how the emotional ties towards 'home' and this 'emotional transnationalism' is not only cultivated in the Self, but within migrant families passed down over generations.
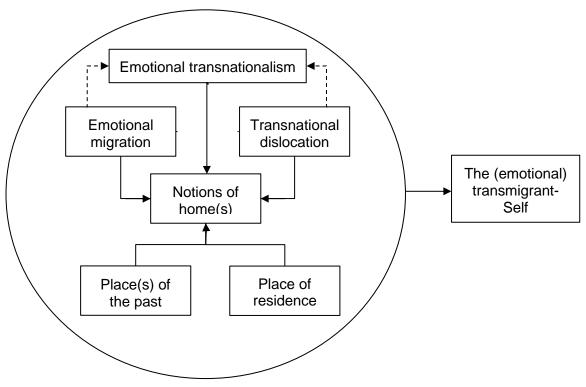
Figure 1. Conceptual model (Author, 2021)

Though there are several dimensions to 'home', this thesis limits its scope of research in studying how notions of this concept are specifically affected by emotional migratory processes: emotional migration, transnational dislocation, and arising emotional transnationalism towards both places of the past and place of (current) residence. As outlined in the theoretical framework, our 'places of the past' are often ingrained in our memory and current emotional landscapes (Jones, 2007). Within migrant generations, place of (current) residence often does not correlate with one's familial and personal 'places of the past'. Those past places are often spatially and temporally left behind, though the impression of these places on the Self may remain. How these impressions intersect within a migrant's (new) place of current residence is fundamental in understanding how notions of 'home' are embodied by the Self.

In *Figure 1* above, the encircled concepts by and large represent the internal processes forming the (emotional) Self, or in this context of migration, the "emotional transmigrant" (Falicov, 2006). This model thus places an emphasis on the processes taking place at the individual level. For this thesis, this represents the processes affecting each individual family member to be interviewed. Hence, as is elaborated upon in the next chapter, each family member is questioned on their specific experiences with places of the past, their place of current residence, and feelings of emotional transnationalism to decipher how these elements work towards their conceptualizations of 'home'.

Chapter 3. Methodology

The scope of this thesis is rooted within postmodern, interpretivist and feminist paradigms. As such, the underlying beliefs forming this thesis are that meaning is constructed, inherently subjective, emotional, and in need of being explored in-depth (Ellis, 2007; Ross, 2017). With this reasoning, the method of data collection and analysis follows an intensive qualitative research design through narrative inquiry. This specific method places emphasis on extracting subjective meaning and interpretations of experiences through one-on-one storytelling interviews. In this way, participants can reflect upon their lives and notions of 'home' so that emotional and sensitive components may also be expressed.

3.1 Interview participants

As previously stated, this thesis pulls away from traditional approaches to methodology by investigating the research topic through the lens of my own familial experiences. Following closer to the lines of family (auto)ethnographic research, I address the richness and merit in exploring the notions of 'home' from an insider's perspective on my own family (Adams, 2006; Ross, 2017). For the data collection of this thesis, semi-structured interviews with six family members were conducted in the period of April-May 2021. The chosen family members make up three generations of the maternal side of my family, all who have a personal and familial history in transnational migration with a common land of ancestral origin. These are namely: my maternal grandparents (G1), two of their adult children (my mother and uncle, G2), and two of their mature grandchildren (my sister and cousin, G3). Throughout the paper, they will be referred to by their first name followed by which generation cohort they belong to (G1, G2, or G3). For clarity, a family tree visualizing the family relations as well as my own position within this network is presented in Appendix A.

3.2 Interview style and process

Taking example from similar studies exploring 'home' and migration (see: Belforda and Lahiri-Royb, 2019; Kokanovic and Bozic-Vrbancic, 2015, Mallman, 2019), I approached interviews from an angle of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry places emphasis on storytelling and narration of life experiences through oral histories, giving interviewees the space to explore their life biographies at their own pace (Butina, 2015). With this interview style, interviewees are not only able to recount key life events, but also verbally and non-verbally communicate the emotional component of their reflections (Atkinson, 2011a). To capture the richness of felt emotions and non-verbal responses, interviews were later transcribed according to Dresing et al.'s "*Manual (on) Transcription*" (2015), with observations on mood or voice change noted down.

A semi-structured interview guide covering three key topics was formulated to ensure comparability between responses while leaving the space for interviewees to lead onto different notes of interest relevant to conceptualizations of 'home' (see Appendix B). Each topic was guided by its respective research question on 1) emotional places of the past (RQ2), 2) retainment of family heritage (RQ3), and 3) definitions of 'home' (RQ1). Questions were chronologically

formulated so that interviewees would first recount their life stories, reflecting on childhood memories and familial upbringings. The second half of the interviews then focused on the current emotional landscapes of interviewees and their notions of 'home' in light of this personal history. Given the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that interviewees were geographically dispersed, most interviews were conducted through online video-calling platforms (Lupton, 2020; Madge, 2010). Though there are downsides to interviewing online, such as the missing of bodily senses that would be present in real life (Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst, 2016), the fact that family relations between myself and the interviewees have been maintained through online calls for most of my life helped to ensure a familiar setting in which both parties were comfortable. As I was at the time residing within the same household as my mother and sister, these interviews were conducted live in a location of their choosing.

3.3 Data analysis

With the consent of interviewees, all interviews were recorded and transcribed to allow for interpretation of the data following a narrative thematic analysis. Consent was established two-fold: verbally upon commencement of the interviews and post-interview, after interviewees received a summary of their interpreted interviews for verification in use of the research. All consent forms were digitally signed and returned via email. An outline of the final consent form is presented in Appendix D, with a sample interview summary in Appendix E.

Adopting the methodology of previous studies (Butina, 2015; Scharp et al. 2016), the analytical process consisted of the following five elements, depicted in *Figure 2* below: organization of the raw data (transcribing interviews), obtaining an overview of the data (creating interview summaries), coding of the data (highlighting recurring or prominent ideas), thematic organization of the codes, and final data interpretation. External tools and programs, namely easytranscript and Atlas.ti, were used throughout this analysis process.
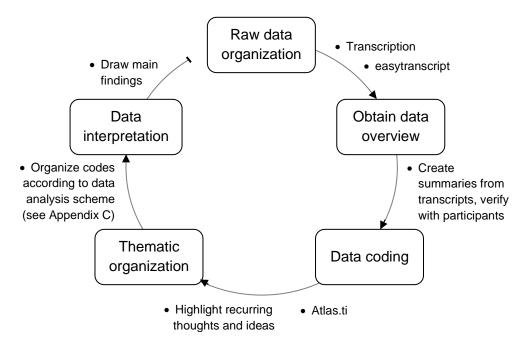

Figure 2. The data analysis process adapted from Butina (2015), with own additions (Author, 2021).

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Based on the studied literature and the interviews, a deductive-inductive code-tree was established to organize codes into well-established themes contributing to notions of 'home'. These are namely: 'familial associations' (Levitt, 2002; Mallman, 2019; Raffaeta, 2015), 'personal associations' (Ahmed, 1999; Jones, 2007; Kokanovic and Bozic-Vrbancic, 2015; Morse and Mudgett, 2017), and 'emotional transnational ties' (Falicov, 2006; Levitt, 2002; Wolf, 1997). Following the interviews, additional subcodes contributing to these themes were inductively established, such as 'knowledge of family history', 'language fluency', and 'desire to reconnect'. The full data analysis scheme is presented in Appendix C.

3.4 Ethics and points of consideration

In studies conducted under close research-participant relationships, especially within family research, participants are usually glad to retell stories and share personal experiences that they perhaps would not with an 'outsider' (Given, 2012; Larossa et al., 1981). In such a research setting, however, several ethical considerations must be taken into account.

The risk of identification and lack of confidentiality are prominent issues of consideration due to the direct familial ties between the research participants and myself (Adams and Manning, 2015; Larossa et al., 1981). Equally, the close relationships could have influenced family members' notions of obligation and free-choice in participating in the research (Given, 2012). To alleviate these concerns, issues of anonymity were made explicitly clear to all participants throughout the research process, as were reassurances that participation was voluntary, the choice of non-participation would not in any way influence pre-existing relationships, and participants could retract their data at any given point.

Additionally, family members were encouraged to see themselves as active participants in the research process. In conducting interviews, a hierarchal structure often easily emerges in which the researcher is presented as the "expert" of a given situation (Atkinson, 2011a). Providing interviewees with a summary of their interviews (see Appendix E) and the possibility to review their full transcripts was a key method in removing this traditional research-interviewee barrier (Atkinson, 2011b). This presented family members the opportunity to question my interpretations as well as ensure an accurate representation of their stories.

3.4.1 Positionality

Though the close researcher-participant relationships provided me with an insider ability to target important past experiences, broach sensitive topics, and empathize with emotional responses (Ross, 2017), my own personal history is inextricably tied to the narrated accounts, thus influencing the outcomes of all responses. I am not only the researcher in this study, but also the sister, cousin, daughter, niece, and granddaughter of participants. Critical reflexivity on my own behalf thus remained a prime focus throughout the research process.

In the interviews themselves, to prevent my predisposed biases from asking leading questions with answers that I might know and expect, care was taken to ensure questions were formulated as open-ended, with my role as interviewer predominantly falling back to "narrator". This is a practice often used in the narrative inquiry approach, where the emphasis is placed on eliciting stories uninterrupted (Atkinson, 2011a; Butler-Kisber, 2019; Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk, 2007).

Throughout the analysis process, I was further confronted with the task of organizing and interpreting narrated accounts which I was also emotionally affected by. In family research, there is yet no standard protocol for how to act in such situations (Adams, 2006; Larossa et al., 1981). I thus openly address my subjective positionality within this research and apply the guiding principles outlined by the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (KNAW et al., 2018): honesty, transparency, scrupulousness, independence, and responsibility. Constant self-verification of these principles is something I actively practiced throughout this research process.

Chapter 4. Family Context: From Chile to Scotland, Italy, and DR

To contextualize the main findings of the thesis, a background of the family's migration stories as recounted throughout their individual interviews is briefly summarized here.

In the 1940s, Nancy and Tito (G1), my grandparents, were born respectively in Santiago and Iquique, Chile. They spent their childhoods and young adult lives there, met in Iquique and were married in their early twenties. In Chile they had three children, including the eldest two: Hector and Pamela (G2), who were aged 7 and 5 when the family decided to move to Europe. In 1975, the family migrated by ship to Spain, where they remained for two years before moving and settling in Scotland for better job opportunities. There, in northeastern Scotland, Nancy and Tito's then four children went to school, learned English, and integrated into Scottish society. As young adults, Hector and Pamela (G2) went to universities across Scotland. Over the years they met their own partners and began their own families.

In 1999, Pamela (G2) had her first child (myself) in Scotland, and together with her German husband moved to England where they had their second child, Alicia (G3). They moved onwards to Germany in 2001, then to the USA in 2005 where they lived for 10 years before returning to Europe and finally, for a job opportunity, to Italy. Alicia (G3) is now 20 years old and lives between Italy and Scotland, where she studies at university.

In 2005, Hector (G2) also had his first child, Pablo (G3), in Scotland. After splitting with Pablo's mother, at age 5 Pablo (G3) moved from Scotland with his mother to Hungary. From then on, Hector (G2) met his current partner, whom he moved to London with along with their children before moving again and settling in the Dominican Republic (DR) a few years ago. Pablo (G3) is now 16 years old and often spends time between Hungary and the DR with his father.

Nancy and Tito (G1) remain in Scotland, living in Edinburgh as grandparents, in close proximity to their last two adult daughters and younger grandchildren.

Chapter 5. Main Findings: "Home is…"

Cross-generationally, the life stories presented throughout the interviews provided rich accounts on the experiences, emotions, and implications of moving countries, both from personal and familial perspectives. This emotion was especially evident in interviewees' accounts of their life stories and childhood memories, with what Harutyunyan (2012) terms as "transportation" to past places within memories.

Across the interviews, the biggest difference remains that the place of common familial origin (in this case, Chile) becomes more spatially and temporally distant throughout the generations. Within that, naturally there are differences between age, current residence, life stage, personal life experience, and more generally: generational shifts on a broader societal and global scale. However, these differences prove to be largely irrespective in the clear storyline which emerges on how conceptualizations of 'home' can be traced back and across all generations. With the backdrop of interviewees' life stories, migratory experiences, and subsequent reflections, the findings below present the leading notions of 'home' within this family's generations.

5.1 'Home' is family

Unanimously, the most explicit and recurring conceptualization of 'home' is that of being together with the direct family (partner, parents and/or (grand)children). The role of a close family unit in providing a safe and familiar space in which one can be the most comfortable closely follows Rapport and Dawson's (1998, p. 9) definition of 'home' as "where one best knows oneself". In the context of migration, the role of family takes on a new meaning of stability in the face of change:

> *"I think I am my whole self, with you guys, with family, you know. Mum, dad and you. Because, well, we were the only constant thing that I've had. EVER. (…) we're the only thing that, you know, has never changed over time, and well, no – we HAVE changed, but we've changed together, at least." (Alicia, G3)*

This notion that 'home' is where the family is remains consistent from G1 through G3. Irrespective of the specific locality in which family resides, the family itself creates a sense of belonging that makes the residence of the family 'home'. Over time, with movement of the family, this locality of 'home' also changes; as older generations pass away and newer generations are born, the focal location of the family geographically shifts. In this case, the passing away of "*pillars of the family*" (as termed by Pamela, G2) in Chile and the birth of grandchildren in Europe figuratively shifts the emotional ties towards where the main bulk of living family resides. This is especially seen to affect how 'home' is conceptualized by G1. As the oldest living generation of the family, their emotional ties to their mature children and grandchildren close by further solidify their residence in Scotland as 'home', with less ties to their land of origin.

In this sense, in almost all cases the location of the direct living family, and thus 'home', coincides with the place of current residence. This is especially the case for G3, who, as the youngest

cohort, still currently live in the same residence as their parents and feel the role of a parental structure strongest. In cases where parents do live abroad, however, there is a more transnational attachment to their place of residence as well. Such is the case for Pamela (G2), who although lives in Italy, feels very much at home in Scotland:

> *"I feel really at home there [in Scotland] because my family's there, my parents, my sisters, and just having that connection, that familiarity, just being comfortable, like a place where you belong." (Pamela, G2)*

Similarly, for Hector (G2) in the Dominican Republic, the choice of current residence was actively chosen as a "halfway" point between Europe and Chile, accessible to family from both sides. This pull of the family abroad is again reflected by Pablo (G3), who at the time of interviewing was in the midst of planning his trip to the Dominican Republic from Hungary: *"I belong with family, and I belong where I love it." (Pablo, G3)*

5.2 'Home' is culture

One aspect in which the specific location (and country) of 'home' does present itself as very important is in being within a culture like one's own. As evident from the narrated accounts, Chilean traditions and family customs were actively maintained across generations, which can be traced back to the strong enforcement of this identity of G1 post-migration:

> *"We didn't forget Chile, but rather we rooted ourselves as much as possible in our customs, because we have always remained, to this day, very, very attached to our Chilean customs." (Tito, G1)*

Retainment of these customs and this culture, from certain foods to religious practices, language, and celebrations such as Chilean Independence Day, were cited in interviews across G1 to G3. For members in G2, who grew up in a very Chilean household despite being in Scotland, the importance of establishing 'home' as somewhere with a familiar culture to their own is especially apparent:

> *"They say home can be where you lay your hat, and that can pretty much be anywhere (…) but there's nothing like living in a society where, which is close to your own. The own society that you were brought up within." (Hector, G2)*

For Hector (G2), this society was actively sought by moving and settling in the Dominican Republic, a Latin American country with the same values, language, and culture of solidarity he relates to the one he grew up with. Pamela (G2) also voices the role of shared cultural values, such as the importance of the family unit, as being fundamental in feeling more at 'home' in her

country of residence (Italy) than in previous countries. In places where there was a felt cultural dissonance between broader society and one's own, comparisons were made to feeling like "*a foreigner*" and "*a fish out of water*" (Pamela, G2).

Despite differences in length of stay in each interviewee's respective country of residence, this by and large does not affect how well one feels attached to the culture of the host nation. Though Nancy and Tito (G1) demonstrate how living more than 40 years in Scotland has helped them integrate into society, this length of time does not detract from the feeling that they felt well received and fitting in – despite differences – upon initial arrival. Similar feelings of the importance of belonging to a broader culture and national or societal values are prevalent equally through G3, though interestingly, their direct relationship with culture, or which aspect of culture they relate to, is not made explicitly clear. This may be partly because cultural practices, passed over generations and displaced from their original national context, become subtly ingrained within the family's 'way of doing' rather than being directly affiliated with the country of cultural origin (Chile). Though made implicitly, allusions are made to 'fitting in' better within one culture or society than another, again, where one can be more of one's "*whole self*" (Alicia, G3).

5.3 'Home' is (un)certain: language, knowledge, and experience

Directly tied to the notion of 'home' as culture is the crucial role of language. Fluency in the language of familial origin proved to be one of the main determinants in feeling like one belonged to the culture of familial heritage. Most notably, a lack of fluency in family language is noted by G3, who at times expressed emotional accounts of feeling excluded from family interactions, while equally expressing a strong desire to improve this fluency. Fluency in the family language (most dominantly, Spanish) is seen as a way to sound "valid" and solidify one's own identity, as told by Pablo (G3): *"I wanna sound real, I wanna sound valid (…) I wanna sound native you know, so like people take me seriously and not just like a tourist."*

Language, in this sense, can be seen as a gateway to the notion of 'home'. The lack of fluency in G3 is however more closely tied to the broader factor of knowledge of the family past. Interviews demonstrated that a lack of knowledge on certain aspects of familial history was most prevalent in G3, following the pattern of previous studies (Levitt, 2002). This ambiguity of familial past and one's own identity leads to a broader uncertainty on the notion of 'home' itself:

> *"If you travel a lot (…) home becomes a place that you do not know for certain, because you've travelled so much that you do not have time to actually think of it, which one is your home, until you, well until you start missing one, and really, that's when you know. If you wanna be there, and when you move there, you know, and spend enough time there, it becomes your home." (Pablo, G3)*

From this it is possible to deduce that those most certain in their notion of 'home' are G1, and those most uncertain are G3. There are several other clear indicators of why this is the case, such as the increased migrations conducted by G3, their younger ages (in that much of their future life is still unwritten), as well as their increasingly mixed identities in comparison to G2 or G1 (Alicia:

Chilean-German-British and Pablo: Chilean-Hungarian-British). Though their experiences are spoken of fondly, the transnational emotional attachment to multiple places, and multiple 'homes', at times presents itself as a source of inner conflict: "*That's one side effect to (.) being so diverse. (…) I feel like it's just too much for one person, sometimes. (…) Too much, identity? I don't know, like too much!*" *(Alicia, G3)*

Chapter 6. Discussion

Confirming theory of previous studies, the findings demonstrate that places of the past remain present and strongly influence one's current emotional landscapes and notions of 'home' (Jones, 2007; Belforda and Lahiri-Royb, 2019). This is particularly seen in the retainment of specific cultural practices or values derived from familial places of the past. An alignment or acceptance of these cultural practices with one's current place (or country) of residence post-migration is then a fundamental determinant of whether one's current residence feels like 'home' (Richardson and Hwa Ng, 2019).

The central role of family in determining the 'where' of 'home' has also shown itself to be important, both through actively transmitting cultural practices to younger generations and by remaining the focal point of emotional transnational ties. As transnational identities are increasingly layered in the youngest generation, findings support the research of Levitt (2002), Falicov (2006), and Wolf (1997) that the youngest generation of a migrant family are the most 'unfixed' on ideas of 'home'. However, the clearly expressed desire to reconnect with places of familial origin, most predominantly through language fluency, challenges the notion that feeling towards ancestral or familial homelands diminishes over generations (Levitt, 2002). In contrast, feeling towards past places is sometimes felt strongest by the youngest generation, vocalized both through their desire and aspirations for reconnection. This finding is reflected by Huang et al. (2013) on the paths of second, third, and even fourth generation (children of) migrants who similarly feel strong attachments to such physically distanced places of the past.

6.1 Adjusted conceptual model

Considering these findings, *Figure 3* below visualizes the adjusted conceptual model representing the processes forming notions of 'home' within the Self. Rather than seeing the elements leading to 'home' as separate entities, as in the original model (see *Figure 1*), this adjusted model demonstrates the interrelation between the concepts. As discussed above, places of the past (familial and personal) remain present and affect notions of 'home' in the place(s) of (current) residence, for example through retainment of cultural practices, language, and active knowledge of these past places.
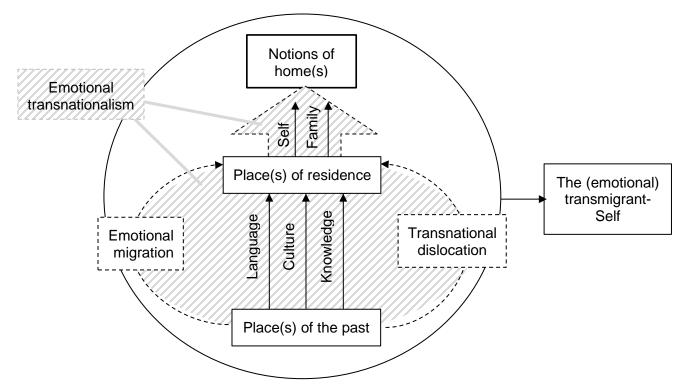
Figure 3. Adjusted conceptual model (Author, 2021).

Emotional transnationalism is here further visualized (shaded) as the emergent phenomenon arising from the transnational migration from one's places of the past to place of (current) residence. Throughout this migratory process, emotional ties towards places become transnationally dispersed. Adding complexity to notions of 'home' is the fact that places of residence may be multiple, divided between where the Self resides and where one's family resides. In cases where the place of residence between the Self and one's family is further transnationally dispersed, notions of 'home' become emotionally and transnationally multiple.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

In answer to the main question of this thesis, it is evident that notions of 'home' within a family network are often actively maintained across generations. Overall, the findings of this thesis demonstrate that conceptualizations of 'home' across generations which have migrated remain centered around two fundamental aspects: family and culture. In defining 'home' (RQ1), establishing emotions felt towards places of the past (RQ2), and recounting the retainment of familial culture and heritage (RQ3), it is found that though the location of 'home' can differ, 'home' as a feeling centered around family location (irrespective of place) and societal culture (ingrained in place) remains consistent.

'Home' is further shown to be an inextricably emotional concept, often tied to notions of belonging, attachment, and identity. Associations with 'home' to expressions of love, gratitude, longing, and nostalgia were prevalent throughout all interviews, signaling that 'home' is a topic held closely to the heart. In the context of transnational migration, in which 'home' is not necessarily stable or a given, the emotional component to these elements can often be felt especially strong.

7.1 Reflection and limitations

Throughout the research process, several limitations were encountered which potentially influence the final outcomes of this thesis. First and foremost, the ongoing context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which the running mantra is to "stay at home", has seen a popular and societal shift in the definition of the concept (Aridi, 2021). Although it is yet unclear how this may have directly influenced interviewee responses, it remains something to reflect on, especially considering strong responses highlighting the importance of family closeness in a time where this (physical) closeness is not always acceptable.

Practically speaking, the geographically dispersed and online nature of the research resulted in at times fragmented communication with family members. Time and scheduling differences prevented interviews with all family members from taking place, limiting the applicability of the found results unto the 'whole family'. It is possible that additional accounts would alter the main findings, or at least provide other notes of interest to remark upon.

Finally, this research process proved a challenging mental exercise in which I, the researcher, was unavoidably emotionally and personally tied to. This thesis was written with the knowledge that many of my family members expect to receive a copy and read it. To the best of my ability, I have remained open and truthful about my own positionality within the research, while non-judgmental and honest on my own interpretations of the presented data.

7.2 Society and future research

In the context of an ever-globalizing world, the findings of this thesis present keen avenues of interest to explore in the field of migration research. As an intensive case study analyzing one family network, the first step would be to replicate a similar research design to evaluate whether such findings remain consistent across generations of various cultures, countries, and familial contexts, including outside of a pandemic setting. It is the belief of this thesis that the inclusion of emotions in data analysis, and the vocalization of felt emotions across the research process are key steps towards transparency in research ethics, as well as in acknowledging the role of emotions in all human experiences. Future research would benefit from further exploring the smaller discrepancies that could influence conceptualizations of 'home' within families in migration research, especially from the lens of gender and long-established family positions in *where* one feels at home, or *where* one feels one's culture most matches one's own. In researching the topic of 'home', which very often crosses with aspects of identity, such nuanced explorations could help provide a deeper meaning to the found responses.

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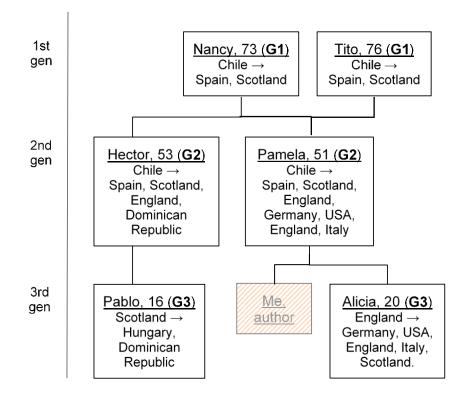
Appendices

A. Supporting family tree

Figure 4. Family tree listing name, age, generation cohort, and migration history of interview participants, with my own position highlighted (Author, 2021).

Questions marked with * are taken from Robert Atkinson's sample interview guide in "The Life Story Interview" (2011).

Introductory
<u>Short intro</u>: intergenerational notions of home within a migrant family; why you are chosen.
<u>Research purpose:</u> case study for my thesis, interviews as part of data collection and analysis.
<u>Ethical considerations:</u> clarify confidentiality and free-will participation
1. To have it on record, are you okay with this interview being recorded (purely for transcription, analysis, and supervisor overlook), and the use of your first name in the paper?
2. Would you like to briefly introduce yourself for the recording?

Key Topic: Emotional places of the past (life stories) (RQ2)
3. Where: were you born / did you grow up / did you spend most of your childhood? *
4. Do you remember anything about the early years in your country of origin/birth? *
5. Can you start by telling me where your story with moving countries began?
6. How do you feel when you think about those places of the past?
7. What is the ethnic/cultural background of your parents/family? Where are they from? *
8. How do you feel when you think about their places?
9. Has moving away from (some of) these places shaped how you feel towards them?

Key Topic: Familial and cultural upbringing (life stories) (RQ3)
10. What was growing up in your house or neighborhood like? *
11. What are some early memories of cultural influences? *
12. Was your family different from other families in your neighborhood? (How?) *
13. What family or cultural celebrations, traditions, or rituals were important in your life?
14. How were stories of family origin and familial home/homeland passed down in your family?
15. What cultural/family influences and practices are still important to you today?

Key Topic: Home and homeland (RQ1)
16. Considering all of this, what does the term 'home' mean to you?
17. Is it the same as 'homeland'?
18. What do those terms/places mean to you?
19. Where are you right now and how long have you been living there?
20. Where would you say is your home/homeland and how do you feel toward those places?
21. How easy is it for you to answer that question?

Concluding
22. Is there anything more you'd like to add on the topic of 'home'?
23. Do you feel you have given a fair picture of yourself? *
24. What are your feelings about this interview and all that we have covered? *
25. Do you think differently about 'home' / 'homeland' after this interview?
In a few weeks, I'll send a summary of your interview as well as a consent form that you agree with the use of the data.
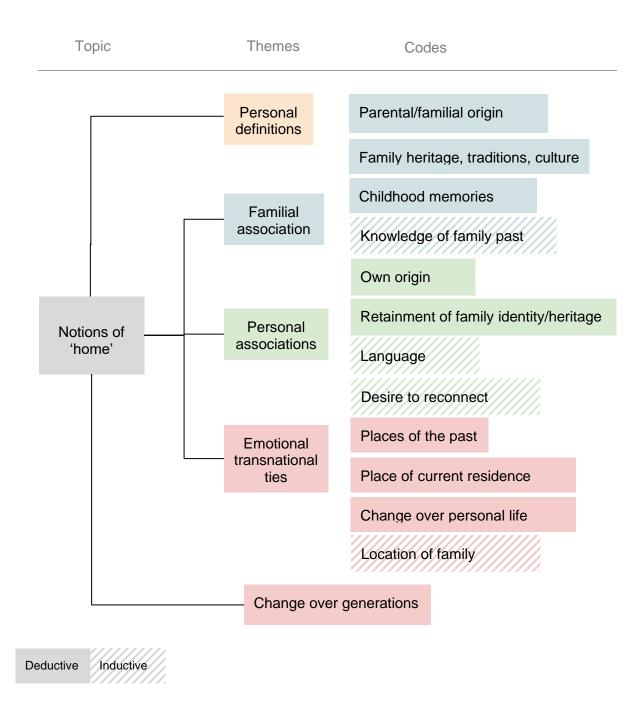
C. Data analysis scheme

Topic	Themes	Codes

Personal definitions

Parental/familial origin

Family heritage, traditions, culture

Childhood memories

Knowledge of family past

Familial association

Own origin

Retainment of family identity/heritage

Language

Desire to reconnect

Notions of 'home'

Personal associations

Places of the past

Place of current residence

Change over personal life

Location of family

Emotional transnational ties

Change over generations

Deductive | Inductive

Figure 5. Data analysis scheme, inductive and deductive coding (Author, 2021).

D. Data consent form

[Interview participant name],

On [**dd/mm/yyyy**], you participated in an interview on the topic of home, family, and migration. A summary of the interview is presented here below for your verification in use of the research. Please review this summary and if you feel that there are any misinterpretations of the interview, raise these concerns. The full transcript that this summary is based off is additionally provided, should you wish to review this further. If you are satisfied with the representation of your views, thoughts, and ideas, please sign this form.

[Inserted thesis (working) title]

[Inserted interview summary]

Participant:

I agree that the summary above reflects my interview response and is a fair account of my experiences. I have been informed about the research aims and purposes, as well as ethical considerations. I was able to ask questions and my questions were answered to my satisfaction. I had enough time to decide to participate in the research.

My participation in the research is <u>completely voluntary</u>. I can withdraw from the research at any time, without having to give a reason.

I hereby give my permission for using the interview data for scientific and educational purposes.

Name and signature of research participant: _____

Date: _____

Researcher:

I declare that I have informed the research participant about the research topic, aims, and purposes truthfully. I will notify the participant about matters that could influence his/her participation in the research accordingly.

Name and signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

A sample interview summary as presented to a research participant from G3.
This sample is included here with consent from the participant. All other summaries follow a similar format in length and style and are available upon request.

Alicia, G3.

You were born in Lancaster, UK, then moved to Germany and the US when still very young. At 14 you moved back to England for 2 years with your family, then to Italy (where you are now) and Scotland (where you study). There are lots of memories you have in all these countries, especially the US, where you spent most your childhood.

You feel that the family was always a 'foreigner' in each country you lived, though the family always made the house feel like 'home' with your own traditions and customs, like 18 de septiembre, and the food you grew up with. On those days of more traditional celebration, a window opened towards the past cultural heritage of the family. This family culture is one constant you've had throughout your life, wherever you lived.

One big factor you associate with your culture is language, i.e. Spanish and German, coming from respective Chilean and German sides of the family. The fact that you don't speak those perfectly is a source of frustration, and in some ways a barrier to deeper connections with extended family and countries of familial origin.

'Home' to you is both a feeling and a place. The origin of your parents, like Germany, 'feels' like home because of the familiarity and cultural associations you have with it. Scotland and Italy (Aberdeen and Monza) *are* your home, where you relate to being more of your "whole self". Monza, with your direct family (parents + sister) is in some ways the most 'home'. This is because there you feel your most comfortable, most yourself, and find more similarities between the Italian culture and your own.

Ultimately, 'home' is not an easy concept for you, you often feel conflicted or don't have a clear idea of where it is (you have "multiple homes"). You relate it a lot to aspects of your own identity: your mixed nationality, mixed culture, and mixed heritage. Sometimes this feels like "too much", though you are overall happy with your experiences and going forward, have a strong desire to reconnect with your family origins, especially through language.