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**Transnational Family Relationships of Migrant Academics in Britain**

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# ABSTRACT

This research investigates how migrant academics in Britain maintain their family and kinship relationships across national borders. Drawing on Morgan’s (1996) concept of ‘family practices’, it aims to explore how and in what ways -and also under the influences of which factors- migrant academic staff working at British universities navigate their familial and kin relationships transnationally.

Within the scope this research project, forty five life-story interviews were conducted with migrant academics who were from twenty-seven different countries in the world. Additionally, sociogram maps are used as embedded in qualitative interviews. Migration background (as European or non-European countries); gender; age; the length of the stay in the UK; academic position/contract type; annual income level and marital/relationships status were given significance in forming the sample. Since the fieldwork overlapped with the global Covid-19 outbreak, five of the interviews were face-to-face while forty interviews were conducted online.

Applying thematic analysis technique, this research reached four overarching conclusions about how and in what ways migrant academics negotiate their family and kinship ties transnationally. First, despite migrant academics’ ‘floating ties’ (Wilding, 2014, p. 17) that are scattered across different parts of the world, academics’ decisions are still anchored by considerations of space and spatiality. Second, it is found that time and temporality are deeply entrenched in academics’ migration and mobility trajectories; their individual life-course progressions and everyday life activities involving transnational family practices. Third, this research shows the significance and prevalence of friendship ties operating together with other familial and personal transnational ties to exchange care and emotional support across distances. Finally, migrant academics tend to have diverse, multi-local, fluid transnational networks involving both professional and familial, personal ties.

**Keywords**: migrant academics; transnational family relationships; academic migration; family practices

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*The truest guide for everything in the world, for civilization, for life, for success, is science. Seeking a guide outside of science is heedlessness, ignorance, and deviating from the right path. If one day, my words are against science, choose science.*

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

I have come a long way… This is the culmination of countless memories, experiences, feelings and thoughts… Indeed, doing a PhD is a long journey. And during this journey, I had the chance to meet so many wonderful people who have been helpful, encouraging and supportive. It would be impossible to list their names here. I am thankful to all of them.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates the transnational family and kinship relationships of migrant academics in Britain. The overarching aim is to explore how academic staff who migrated to Britain negotiate their family and kinship relationships across national borders. While the design, conduct and findings of the research are comprehensively presented throughout the thesis, this introductory chapter sets the scene by presenting the research topic, aims and questions of the research and by introducing the key concerns of the thesis. In this regard, this chapter is divided into three major parts. The first part focuses on the research aims and questions. The second section introduces some of the key concepts that are used in this thesis and includes a discussion of how this research uses and gives meanings to specific terms. Finally, the structure of the thesis is presented.

## 1.1. Research Aims and Questions

The migration of academic staff is considered to be a specific type of highly skilled migration (Ackers, 2005; Morley et al., 2018). Mahroum (2000) divides the literature on transnational engagements of highly-skilled migrants into two categories: the first group consists of research conducted on the basis of nationalities, such as British (Scott, 2006), Indian (Robinson & Carey, 2000) and French (Favell, 2004; Ryan & Mulholland, 2014b); and the second group includes studies which focus on occupations/sectors, such as migrants from the medical (Raghuram, 2004) and financial sectors (Beaverstock, 2005; Ryan et al., 2015). This thesis is one of the first attempts to consider international migration and mobility of academic staff in the UK through the lens of transnational family relationships.

It has long been shown that individuals can maintain relationships based in the country of origin through various channels, after migrating to a different geographical place (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1927). However, starting from the 1990s, with the paradigmatic turn to transnationalism in migration studies, economic, political and socio-cultural activities that span geographical distances and political borders of countries came to the forefront. The term ‘transnational’ has proliferated and is widely used across public and academic discourse. For example, transnational politics deals with issues arising from migrants’ involvement and participation in the political processes of the countries of origin while they are away (Portes et al., 1999). Similarly, studies about transnational business focus on the international production and management of goods and services and engagement of foreign investments and asset management (Rondinelli, 2003). Recently, the term ‘transnational education’ has become popular in studies investigating the provision of education in a different country from the institution that gives the award (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2006).

At this time, the concept of transnational family relationships emerged as a tool for capturing migrants’ family and kinship relationships between countries of birth and residence. The literature also acknowledged the role of transnational kinship ties (Best, 2014; Mason, 2004; Olwig, 2002; Souralová, 2020). As shown throughout this thesis, the concept ‘transnational family and kinship relationships’ defies generalisations (Goulbourne et al., 2010; Vuorela, 2002). Due to the diversity and dynamism of the term, no single definition can encapsulate the actual practices of family relationships spanning different locations, though there are useful and oft-cited definitions in the literature (see Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002). However, some of these definitions tend to be too large to limit the analytical use of the concept (Goulbourne et al., 2010). In a similar vein, the concepts of ‘family’ and ‘kinship’ are also contended terms especially in a different strand of the literature (Jamieson, 2011; Mason, 2004; Morgan, 2011). However, despite these conceptual difficulties, some migrants and non-migrants engage with efforts and practices (motivated by a range of factors from intimacy to cultural obligations) aimed at creating and maintaining a sense of closeness and relatedness between at least two geographically separated individuals connected by familial and kinship ties. I should also make a note about my positionality that, as the researcher of this project, I am one of the migrant students who maintain his relationships with his family and friends in his country of origin and with his partner living in a different country. Therefore, on a factual basis, migrant academics tend to navigate their relationships after migration through a variety of ways. However, as I show in the Chapter Two, far too little attention has been paid to the contexts of transnational family relationships of migrant academics in Britain.

As shown throughout the thesis, these efforts and practices influence and are influenced by not just those particular family relationships but also myriad factors such as gender, age, employment conditions, career and migration stages. Therefore, the research aims to answer

1. How do spatial and temporal dynamics shape the ways migrant academics maintain their family relationships transnationally?
2. How and under the influence of which factors do migrant academics provide and receive care from family and kin across national borders?
3. What is the position of transnational family networks in migrant academics’ wider networked relationships such as local families, neighbourhood relations, and scientific and/or diasporic networks?
4. How do conditions caused by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic affect migrant academics’ local and transnational family relationships?

## 1.2. Why Study Migrant Academics?

This research addresses a gap in knowledge by studying the family relationships of migrant academic staff, practised across national borders. Moreover, it is one of the first research projects conducted in the British context involving academics from various migration backgrounds. In Chapter Two, I present a literature review and analysis, and the justifications for why this research aims to combine the concept of transnational family relationships and the context of migrant academic staff in the UK. However, I would like to emphasise here two points that show the relevance of studying migrant academics through the lens of transnational family relationships.

The situation of migrant academics constitutes an intriguing gap in the transnational family relationship literature. As shown in-depth in the literature review (Chapter Two), the transnational family (TNF) relationships concept is predominantly studied with so-called low-skilled labour migrants (especially in preliminary studies) (e.g. Al-Ali, 2002; Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2011; Fresnoza-Flot, 2009; Parreñas, 2001). Additionally, one strand of the literature focuses on inequalities in TNF relationships, such as performing family roles in an unequal atmosphere caused by the juxtaposition of cultural codes, traditional gender norms, migration policies and economic inequalities (Dreby, 2010; Fresnoza-Flot, 2009; Parrenas, 2005). Therefore, the concept is more readily applied to so-called low-skilled labour migrant groups’ inequalities and the challenges they face during the continuation of family ties across distances. There is an implicit assumption both in the literature and in academic discourses that since they are ‘highly-skilled’ and highly mobile, academics do not need to continue family relationships transnationally (Ryan, 2015). Due to these reasons, when designing this PhD research project, it was determined that migrant academics’ cases are ‘worth’ looking at through a transnational lens.

In addition, studies in the existing literature tend focus on one ethnic and national group in their analyses. In this regard, studies concentrated on some ethnicities and regions such as South to North America (Basch et al., 1994; Glick-Schiller et al., 1992; Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002; Levitt, 2002; Sørensen & Vammen, 2014) and Asia-Pacific to Australia (Baldassar et al., 2007a; Baldock, 2000; Hoang & Yeoh, 2012; Waters & Waters, 2010). It is acknowledged that each case of these migratory patterns has specific socio-political, economic and cultural factors. However, this research does not focus on one ethnic/national group of academics in Britain (see, Amelina & Faist, 2012). Rather it focuses on analysing the transnational family relationships of academics from various migration backgrounds. Furthermore, as elaborated in Chapter Three, it situates the context of migrant academics into the British migration regime and Higher Education (HE) system.

Therefore, this study therefore expands knowledge in this area by showing different life and family relationships in various migration and mobility contexts. It, thereby responds to calls to investigate different migration and mobility types which are ‘rarely considered at the nexus of migration and family studies’ (Kilkey & Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2016b, p. 3). Additionally, the growing body of literature focusing on highly mobile and skilled migrants (Ackers, 2004; Carlson & Schneickert, 2021; Geddie, 2012), as Ryan and colleagues (2015) argue, reveals that family and family-like relationships might be ‘a necessary emotional source for all migrants, irrespective of their economic standing and skills’ (2015, p. 201). However, it is frequently emphasised that little is known about the ‘human face’ of skilled migration (Favell & Smith, 2006).

Furthermore, this research also contributes to Higher Education (HE) studies by examining the transnational family relationships of people working at British universities. The British HE system can be considered a useful laboratory to look at the migration of academic staff. The population of migrant academics in the British HE system illustrates the significance of the phenomenon. According to the UK Higher Education Statistical Agency’s (HESA) census in the 2021/22 education period (the last available data set), the number of migrant academics who were not UK nationals was above 70,000, which constitutes over 31 per cent of total academic staff in the UK. Additionally, the population of migrant academic staff is so diverse that there are migrant academics from nearly every country in the world (HESA, 2021).

Moreover, particular features of todays’ British HE system further distinguish the situation of migrant academics working at British universities. Although I delve into the historical development of the British HE system in the second part of the literature review chapter, it is important to locate the research in the current global and British HE context. As detailed in the next chapter, the British HE system is central to the increasingly internationalised global higher education system. Since the mediaeval ages, British universities have been an important host country for migrant academics from across the world (Kim, 2009a). However, with the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s, the British HE system gradually came under the influence of neoliberal managerial principles yet at the same time it has become one of the most popular destinations for migrant academics (for an extended analysis see Radice, 2013). Today, according to many, the British HE system is governed by market-driven motives and market-like rules and behaviours (Bamberger, 2018; Kim, 2009; Rosa, 2021). This neoliberal logic not only determines legal rights and contracts but also migration and career choices, by acting as a system of ethos permeating into academics’ lives and decision-making processes regarding their daily lives. Moreover, current global and national trends further complicate this context, such as: the restrictive migration regulations of the UK; anti-immigrant and ‘hostile environment’ discourses; the increasing polarisation of the socio-political environment with Britain’s exit from the EU; and the social implications of the COVID19 pandemic (see, Meraviglia & Dudka, 2021; Settles & Linderman, 2020) .

However, as shown later in detail, the literature on the migration and mobility of academic staff is characterised by a lack of attention to the personal and family lives of academics, due to the over-concentration of studies on the brain drain/circulation issues. Giorgi and Raffini (2015) stress the need for studies which investigate familial and intimate lives of migrant academics by articulating that academic not only have ‘brains’ but bodies as well. Therefore, studying the transnational family and kinship relationships of migrant academics in Britain fills a significant gap in both TNF relationships and HE studies given the numbers of migrant academics living in Britain. Thus, this research takes a significant step in understanding the familial dimensions of academics working actively at British universities. It will have significant theoretical and practical implications for migration policies, regulations and HE systems.

## 1.3. Clarifying the Use of Key Concepts in the Thesis

Throughout the thesis, I use a wide range of terms and concepts. However, their definitions and usage have particular meanings in the context of this research for at least two reasons. First, given the subjective nature of the qualitative methodology, the terms and concepts might not have uniform, exact and clear descriptions and usages. Their meanings can change in accordance with my theoretical position, as the researcher who collects, analyses and interprets the data. Second, the international migration and mobility of academic staff can challenge some of the traditional terms and concepts in the literature. Therefore, this section meets a need to elucidate how specific terms are used and what is meant by their usage in this thesis.

With this aim, I discuss the concept of academic migration and mobility in terms of conceptual differences. I then answer the question of whether academics are/should be considered as ‘migrants’. I make a significant caveat on the use of the term highly skilled migrant, arguing that skill is socially constructed and politically valued. After that, considering migrant academics’ high levels of geographical mobility, I criticise the understanding that equates high levels of mobility with being ‘global elites’. In relation to the mobility of academic staff, I argue that some traditional concepts used in the literature such as border-crossing, settlement and integration can lose their attributed meanings in the context of migrant academics.

**Academic migration and mobility**

As shown in the Chapter Three, much of the literature from HE studies tends to use the term ‘academic mobility’ instead of using ‘academic migration’ and ‘migration of academic staff’ (Teichler, 2015). Indeed, it is difficult to draw clear lines between the terms migration and mobility; however, an oft-used explanation takes the intended duration of the move as the basis for explaining the differences. That is, the term ‘academic mobility’, in this context, means international/cross-border movements of academics for the purpose of study or work, usually referring to ‘non-permanent border-crossing: for temporary study, for study of a whole programme, for mid-career international experience of employment in another country for a while’ (Teichler, 2015, p. 11). Moreover, academic mobility can take different forms. Although it is generally associated with self-motivation (Bauder, 2015; Mahroum, 2000), Ackers (2008) argues that academic mobilities can also be in the form of ‘forced mobility’, both accidental and negotiated (Cantwell, 2011).

However, the definitions of migration of academics stresses the permanence of border-crossings (Kim, 2009). Although there is no unanimously acknowledged definition of migration, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2003) it ‘is the movement of a person or group of persons from one geographical unit to another across an administrative or political border, wishing to settle definitely or temporarily in a place other than their place of origin’ (quoted in Hoffman, 2009, p. 348). According to Teichler (2015), while academic migration is usually used with the terms ‘inflow and outflow’ migration, academic mobility is likely to be used with the terms ‘inward and outward’ mobility. As seen in these definitions, duration of mobility can be the main difference between these terms. As such, both the UN (1998) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2020) take 12 months as the limit in their descriptions of migration. Similarly, the national statistics of the UK do not recognize mobilities of less than one year as migration (Home Office, 2018). Focusing on capturing long-term transnational family relationships, this research also makes ‘having stayed or intended to stay in Britain for at least a year’ a prerequisite for participation (see section 4.3 for an extended discussion on recruitment criteria).

**Are migrant academics counted as ‘migrants’?**

This thesis uses the term ‘migrant academics’ as the general term for people who engage with academic migration. However, in the literature on academic migration, the same group might be described in a number of different ways. These terms can include expats and expatriates, foreign academics, foreign researchers and knowledge workers, or knowledge migrants (Burford et al., 2019; Cerdin & Selmer, 2014; Mendoza et al., 2020; Selmer & Lauring, 2010). Meanwhile, in the public discourse, terms such as overseas academics and international academics are more likely to be used (Thompson, 2014). As an addition to this complex picture, the term academic migrants, in some contexts, can convey a metaphorical meaning signifying an individual ‘who has a cultural transition involving different cognitive styles of learning and who locates their field of enquiry in a supra-national frame of reference’ (Mason & Sanaei-Rawlings, 2014, p. 14). Therefore, various terms are used irrespective of any established analytical differences in their usage.

I argue that ‘migrant academics’ is the best term to denote academics who move to another country and actively work in the national HE system (or at least intend to) for at least one year. However, other alternatives listed above can be preferred over the term migrant academics in both academic and public literature. I argue that abstaining from using this term can be a result of the value-laden understanding of the terms ‘migration’ and ‘being a migrant’. As Bryceson and Vuorela clearly articulate (2002, p. 8):

the term “migrant” tends to carry class connotations and is applied more to people that are considered economically or politically deprived and seek betterment of their circumstances…

Thus, many academic and official documents avoid using the term migrant and find alternative ways such as international academic and overseas staff. This understanding also has roots in the hostile environment and anti-immigrant discourses which are used pejoratively against migrants who do not contribute to the income and production of the UK. Therefore, the term migrant is also constructed in the mindset of contemporary individuals and carries class connotations.

**What is a ‘highly-skilled’ migrant?**

Another issue that has to be elucidated is the use of the term ‘highly-skilled’ and ‘skilled’ migrants. These terms are used throughout this thesis – as in the majority of the literature – to indicate the skill levels of academics. However, I use this term with the caveat that classifying migration on the basis of skill level (e.g., low or high-skilled migration) should be problematised. I argue that the concept of skill demarcating different forms of migration is contentious due to it being socio-culturally constructed. Categorising migrants on the basis of skills and expertise reveals the mindset that defines migrants in relation to employment and areas of expertise. In other words, this way of understanding tends to define and construct the concept of skills whether it is profitable and of practical use for the contemporary capitalist social system (Iradale, 2001). For example, it is difficult to acknowledge the reason a construction worker’s practical skills and expertise at installing tiles is considered ‘low’ while an academic’s expertise on giving lectures on a specific topic is regarded as ‘high’ on the skills spectrum. Moreover, the term highly-skilled migrant has the connotation that the individual is a ‘wanted’, ‘acceptable’ and ‘unproblematic’ migrant and that ‘low-skilled’ is the opposite (Boucher, 2020). Therefore, the term high-skilled migrant is a social constructed and value-laden term. This thesis uses the term ‘highly-skilled’ for migrant academics but only in consideration of the caveats above.

**Mobility and being transnational elites**

The discussion of being highly-skilled is also pertinent to being ‘highly-mobile’ in the context of academics. Indeed, academics are highly mobile and academic mobility has reached such a level in history that some scholars state that high carbon emission due to increasing academic aero-mobility (the mobility of academic staff, students and managerial staff through flight) is threatening the environment (Glover et al., 2017; Hopkins et al., 2019). However, such a level of geographical mobility is not necessarily related to transnational eliteness. There are transnational elites (Beaverstock, 2005), such as the CEOs of international corporations, (Beaverstock, 2005) and even so-called ‘scientific elites’ among migrant academics (Laudel, 2005). However, making such a generalisation about migrant academic staff would fail to notice the wide diversity. Thus, although there may be ‘transnational elites’ among migrant academics – the academic superstar group (Kreber & Hounsell, 2014) – it is not possible to generalise and call migrant academics highly-mobile transnational elites due to their diversity. As Conradson and Latham (2005) state, in this ‘middling’ form of transnationalism of migrant academic staff there are countless intermediary forms between the elite and so-called labour migrants.

**Border-crossing, settlement and integration**

A possible outcome of such levels of geographical mobility is that many terms and concepts that are used in the traditional sense in migration studies cannot deliver in migrant academic contexts (Parreñas et al., 2015). The term ‘border-crossing’ is one of them. Many migrant academics do not have an experience of border-crossing in the sense that traditional migration studies portray. In this sense, the border-crossing is a life-changing event, even a matter of life and death, an outcome of systematic deliberation or thinking and a ritual that commences the journey of migration (Kley, 2011). When this happens, a different spatial movement or reversal of the decision is usually difficult. Therefore, crossing national borders has different meanings in the context of the migration of academic staff.

Similarly, the concept of ‘settlement’ and ‘settling’ also takes a different shape in this context. The concepts settlement and settling refers to starting to live permanently in a new country; however, such a settlement in traditional sense may not be true for all migrant academics (see, Erdal & Ezzati, 2015; Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2018a). It is frequently emphasised that academics tend to have high levels of geographical mobility (Ackers & Oliver, 2007; Kim, 2009a). For instance, some studies stress that some academics regard mobility and changing institutions and organisations as significant practices for personal development and career progression (Ackers & Gill, 2008b; Bauder et al., 2018; Chankseliani, 2018). These academics frequently change place and not settle in a certain place in the traditional sense. Also, due to the casualisation and instability of academic labour, academics who are holding fixed term contracts tend to be geographically mobile since they follow their jobs (Ivancheva, 2015; Lopes & Dewan, 2014). Therefore, Ackers (2004) calls these academics as the ‘peripatetic academic’ who do not settle in a place and are always on the move. Therefore, due to their spatio-temporal contexts, some academics do not engage in settlement in one geographical location which makes us questioning the validity of the concept of settlement in all migratory contexts.

Moreover, in such a spatiotemporal context, the terms integration and adjustment are also rendered irrelevant. However, scholars note that these concepts are also problematic for many groups of migrants, not just migrant academic staff. In this line of thought, the concept of integration follow similar understanding to that of assimilation theories which tend to conceive integration as a one-way, unilateral path starting from being a stranger and ending up with being neutralised in the host society (Schinkel, 2018). There are at least two problems with this understanding. First, such a view considers ‘society as an entity with an identity, and as an order with a border’ while failing to consider the diversity of social organisations (Schinkel, 2018, p. 7). Moreover, groups defined by ethnic, racial and national categories (see Bhambra, 2017 on “methodological whiteness”) are measured to what extent they are integrated to the whole. Questioning the extent to which non-migrant populations are ‘integrated’ to the entity called society, Dahinden argues for ‘de-migranticization of migration and integration research’ (Dahinden, 2016, p. 2207). Second, using the concept integration and measuring migrant groups’ integration levels can also increase the risk of discrimination, segregation and counter nationalism (van Reekum & Duyvenyak, 2012). The practical use of the concept makes it possible for governments to use the neo-colonial apparatuses and surveillance techniques over less empowered groups (see Gowricharn & Çankaya, 2017). Therefore, the concept of integration is problematic on both theoretical and practical grounds.

## 1.4. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into nine further chapters. First, as this research engages with two different sets of literature, Chapter two focuses on reviewing the literature on transnational family relationships. After introducing the key conceptual understandings used in this thesis, it analyses the relevant studies that focus on the family relationships of migrants across national borders.

Chapter Three analyses the literature on the migration of academic staff in three stages. First, it provides rich information about the migration and mobility of academic staff. It considers both the historical background of these migrations and mobility flows and places them into a global economy model. Then, it specifically focuses on the British context of the academic migration flows. At this stage, drawing on national statistics, it describes the sociological dimensions of the research phenomenon. It also deals with recent debates in the British HE system by focusing on discussions related to the market-oriented, neoliberal university sector. Finally, it analyses the literature on the international migration and mobility of academic staff using the salient themes in the literature.

Chapter Four presents the methodological choices and preferences before, during and after the conduct of the research. It first introduces the elements of the research design by focusing on the qualitative methodology and relevant research philosophy. Then, it provides comprehensive details about the data collection tools and processes and the choices that led to the specific data collection method - life-story interviewing - used in this research. Issues related to the interviewing process, the researcher’s positionality in face-to-face and online interviews and the use of sociograms as embedded in the life-story interviews are discussed in a reflective way. Finally, issues around sampling, participant details, recruitment, data analysis and research ethics are discussed.

Chapter Five constitutes the first findings chapter and is divided into three parts: the first shows the importance of geographical distance and closeness in transnational family relationships. It shows that the closeness of Britain to migrants’ countries of origin and locations in Britain are critical to migrant family relationships. The chapter moves on to the local physical mobility of academics and its impacts on both the local and transnational family relationships of migrant academic staff. Finally, it discusses the multidimensionality and multi-nationality of the transnational family relationships of academics with a special focus on some transnational family practices.

Chapter Six shows how time and temporality are deeply entrenched in the migratory experiences and family relationships of migrant academics who participated in this research. First, it shows that migrant academics give significance to the timings of some transnational family practices. This is followed by the issues of synchronicity and asynchronicity in transnational family practices. The chapter then moves on to analyse the temporal disjunctures in the individual biographies of participants. It shows that due to heightened mobility and academic motivations, participants tend to experience some dissonances between their individual biographies and the notion of ideal life course progression that are developed by socio-cultural factors. Then, the double temporal precarity of migrant academics and its effects on the lives and family relationships are analysed. The final section illustrates the issue of time scarcity and its repercussions on both local and transnational family relationships.

Chapter Seven focuses on the caring relationships of the participants in three subsections. First, it shows the caring responsibilities and obligations of academics in their local family environments. Influences of the affordability of professional caring, access to the local welfare system and the gender dimension in local domestic environments are discussed. I show that transnational friendship ties are also used actively for emotional support while immediate family members continue their existence in a symbolic way.

There is a brief analysis of the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to its impacts on the caring relationships of transnational family relationships. Finally, the chapter provides details about care provision to the elderly parents who are left-behind. After stressing the determining role of culture, it provides details about the moral dimension of the financial remittances and caring obligations between some academics and their elderly parents. Finally, the chapter shows that some migrant academics make active use of their close friendship ties and mobilise them for the potential caring needs of their left-behind elderly parents.

Chapter Eight deals with the issue of social networks and shows the changing position of transnational family ties of migrant academics in their wider networked relationships. First, it provides details about the scientific ties of migrant academics. It is shown that although these ties are seemingly scientific, some migrant academics make use of them for purposes of relationships in local and transnational families. Then, I move my focus to the local contacts of academics I have spoken to. Migrant academics’ ties with the local diaspora, native British culture and local scientific ties are discussed. Finally, the chapter categorises the networked relationships of migrant academics and shows that transnational family and kinship relationships are at the core of their transnational social ties.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by summarising the key findings of the research, revisiting the research rationale and questions, and illustrating the wider conceptual implications of the research findings to the relevant bodies of literature.

# CHAPTER 2: TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

*Go, little letter, across the broad sea, for I cannot come to you. When I arose in the morning, I looked up to the heavens and thought to myself that to you, dearest Olejniczka, a little letter I must send* (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1927 p. 312).

This thesis engages with both transnational family relationships literature and academic migration literature. Therefore, this chapter aims to gain an insight into existing scholarship in this area and comprises a conceptual ground for the research project. Chapter Three then focuses on literature related to the migration of academic staff.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, the concepts of transnational family relationships are discussed within the overarching concept of migrant transnationalism. After an introductory section on the transnational family relationships, I present the transnational family care analytical approach. The literature on transnational family relationships is then analysed in three parts: first, the members who can be involved in transnational family relationships; second, the practices that transnational family relationships might be involved in; and finally, the factors that can shape these relationships. The concluding section presents the significance and specific context of this research by evaluating the gaps in the literature.

## 2.1. Migrant Transnationalism

The family relationships of migrants with their family and kinship members across national borders can be considered under the theoretical umbrella of transnationalism. In this section, the transnationalism theory is introduced. It also addresses what makes contemporary migrant transnationalism different from earlier forms of migrants’ contact across distances.

The transnationalism theory emerged from the observation that earlier conceptions of migration were no longer enough to understand the actions, behaviours, and perceptions of migrants. In 1992, Schiller and colleagues (1992, p. 1) stressed the inadequacy of the earlier conceptions of migration by saying that ‘a new kind of migrating population’ was emerging, ‘whose networks, activities and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies’.

Transnational contacts between sending and receiving countries led some scholars to suggest a division in transnational activities (Basch et al., 1994; Smith, 2005; Vertovec, 2004). While ‘transnationalism from above’ signifies the societal level of transnational activities such as global media, political institutions and capitalist expansion and distribution, ‘transnationalism from below’ refers to more micro level activities such as cultural, familial and religious activities spanning the borders of nation-states (Portes et al., 1999; Vertovec, 2009).

Migrant transnationalism is not a new or modern phenomenon. Although it is not possible to give an exact date or period, the marital relationship between Cleopatra and Mark Anthony (83-30 BC), conducted by messengers at a time of frequent wars, is an early example of transnational family relationships (Skrbis, 2008). The extract that introduced this chapter was retrieved from Thomas and Znaniecki’s monographic research based on a secondary data analysis of Polish immigrants’ letters in 1927. Their work, ‘The Polish Peasant in Europe and America’ (1927), is considered a classic, showing transnational family relationships in the past. Thus, migrants’ connections across distances existed in the past.

There are, however, attributes that make today’s migrants’ transnationality specific and worth investigating. These particularities of transnationalism will form the themes running through this part of the literature review. First, however, it is important to acknowledge the role of the global network society and modern technology in transnational contact (Goulbourne et al., 2010). Technology can penetrate nearly all transnational activities. As the seminal work of Castells (2000), ‘The Rise of the Network Society’ stresses, the social morphology of this era is largely shaped by technological advances. Second, in relation to the intensity of the transnational contacts, it is significant to note that modern global migration flows are increasing daily. Stressing the unprecedented rate of global movements, Castles’ work (1993) calls this era the ‘age of migration’. Such global and ever-increasing migration flows can also bring together a repertoire of transnational activities. Third, migrant transnationalism is also pertinent to the societal economic system, that is, the global production system. Migrants’ decisions are sometimes influenced and shaped by this mode of production such as the decision to migrate to a ‘better’ country. Moreover, migrants’ transnational activities can also create economic micro-systems such as economic remittances. Finally, modern migrant transnationalism is controlled, regulated, and managed by nation-states’ regulations regarding the mobility of individuals and materials. Therefore, technology, levels of mobility, regulations and capitalist modes of production make modern transnational contacts distinctive from earlier forms of transnationalism.

## 2.2. Transnational Family Relationships

Transnational family relationships can be seen as a part of ever-increasing globalisation and transnational contact in the domain of family lives. An oft-used definition by Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) describes these relationships as being based on a ‘a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely “familyhood” even across national borders’ (2002, p. 3). I see the transnational family ties as a set of enduring yet ever-changing family and kinship relationships that create material, moral, emotional, and intimate connections across national borders through various practices, such as direct visits or financial exchanges.

This definition requires elucidation in three ways. First, I use the term ‘relationships’ as the basis of both the definition and analysis. However, most of the literature approaches this issue using the term ‘family’ and ‘transnational families’ (e.g., Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Graham et al., 2012). However, the concept of family does not have a ‘thing-like quality’ (Finch, 2007, p. 69). This ‘misplaced concreteness’, according to Finch (2007, p. 9), brings about the risk of reification of the concept. Instead, she recommends focusing on ‘relationships’ in defining families:

The question “who is my family?” is really a question about relationships – which of my relationships has the character of a “family relationships?” (Finch, 2007, p. 69).

Focusing on relationships, in this regard, appears to capture the diversity and dynamism of these ties, in the sense of meanings of family that extend beyond the household and non-heterosexual relationships as well as non-biological connections. Therefore, I tend to use the term ‘transnational family relationships’ throughout this thesis although there might be a rare use and reference to the term ‘families’ out of necessity. In a similar vein, maintaining relationships with kinship members should be considered from a relational perspective. According to Finch and Mason (2000, p. 165), ‘kinship is very much about doing, reasoning and working it out in your own relationships’. The literature on transnational family relationships also acknowledges the relational dimension of kinship networks (Mason, 2004; Souralová, 2020; Zontini, 2007; Zontini & Reynolds, 2018).

Second, as the definition stresses, these relationships are ‘enduring’ and not ephemeral or momentary. The reasons behind this maintenance of ties, such as love, intimacy, obligation or culture, are also widely discussed below. Although I acknowledge the dynamic nature of transnational family relationships, research on these relationships shows how these transnational family ties can be enduring and resilient.

Finally, my definition emphasises that transnational family relationships are based on practices, and they are enacted by family members. As seen throughout this thesis, the concepts and discussions in British family studies literature – as is the case in Finch’s (2007) focus on relationships mentioned above – help considerably in developing the conceptual framework of the study. To understand how transnational family relationships are enacted, this research uses Morgan’s concept of ‘family practices’ (1996, 2011b). Morgan stresses that ‘family’ is no longer a static and fixed category of people with blood ties or that are coresident; in this sense, Morgan argues that ‘family’ should no longer be used as a noun, but rather as a verb: people cannot ‘be’ family, rather they ‘do family’ through various practices. Thus, this research has a special focus on migrant academics’ practices aimed at maintaining family relationships across national borders.

## 2.3. Transnational Family Care

The transnational family care concept provides scholars with a key analytical approach to understand how support, intimacy and protection are exchanged in a variety of ways, including practical, material and emotional, between members of transnational families (Baldassar et al., 2007; Baldassar, 2016b; Merla, 2015; Zontini, 2007). Two sub-themes are important: while the first theme focuses on the inequalities in caring arrangements arising from global capitalism, the second approaches care within family dynamics. First, adopting a feminist perspective towards ‘family separation through migration’, the preliminary transnational family relationships literature focuses on care in the context of social and global inequalities. The scope of studies focusing on transnational family relationships has been widened through data gathered from various migration types, cultural backgrounds, different national migration contexts and family types and relationships.

The implications of global inequalities between Southern and Northern countries on the family lives of migrants led early researchers to conceptualise the care chain approach. Researching migrants from the Philippines, Parrenas (1998, 2005) stresses that when the impoverished conditions in the countries of the Global South merge with the increasing demand for care work in the Global North, people become motivated to migrate to the richer countries and work as paid carers. Thus, the demand from the Global North for particular types of (reproductive) labour encourages people, especially women, to migrate for the purpose of living a better life. Including a three-tier transfer of care, this process is theorised under as ‘international division of reproductive labour’ (2001) or the ‘international transfer of caregiving’ (1998) by Parrenas. Therefore, in this chain of care, the care drain resulting from the migration of mothers who are employed as paid care givers in the Global North is usually compensated by either the extended family or paid care workers.

Second, the transnational care approach is embedded and analysed in wider familial and migratory contexts. As the next section presents, diverse caring relationships and arrangements have been studied in both marital and intergenerational contexts (Baldassar et al., 2007b; Zontini, 2004). Thanks to technological advancements, different types of familial care, such as emotional and financial, have been found to be reciprocally provided by migrant family members to varying degrees. Merla and Baldassar (2011) identified six different resources determining the capability of migrants to provide care. The first is the mobility of family members and is key, considering the significance of direct family visits. Second, communication is an important resource that migrants use to exchange various types of care. Third, they stress the significance of social networks based in both countries, which migrants can mobilise for different purposes such as direct care provision or travelling.

Fourth, time is a critical factor shaping the frequency and intensity of transnational familial activities. Kilkey and Merla (2014), situating migrants’ caregiving arrangements in institutional contexts, draw attention to various employment conditions that shape the working time of migrants across all industries in the labour market. Fifth, knowledge, according to Merla and Baldassar (2011), refers both to the knowledge required to provide care from afar, such as using communication technologies, and having a good grasp of the host country’s language. Finally, being able to communicate with family members and distant kin is also regarded as a significant resource for providing care. Kilkey and Merla (2014) add appropriate housing to this list, pointing out that housing is a critical resource when engaged with direct care provision, communication and family visits. Studying the caring arrangements of migrants in Belgium for left-behind ageing parents in Morocco, Zickgraf (2017), for instance, finds that ‘small European flats’ restrict migrants’ ability to bring their parents and provide direct care at home. Therefore, various resources such as mobility, communication, time and knowledge, are distributed differently within transnational families in different socio-cultural contexts.

## 2.4. Analysis of the Literature

In the introduction of one of the earliest and influential books in transnational family relationships literature, Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) describe migrants’ family relationships across national borders as an ‘elusive phenomenon’ (p. 3). In a similar vein, Goulbourne and colleagues describe the concept of transnational family relationships as ‘too large, too porous, and therefore too vague’ (2010, p. 4). What makes these relationships difficult to grasp arises partly from their variety, size, intensity and diversity. There have been attempts to create typologies of ‘transnational families’ through generalising some of their attributes.

A recent typology suggested by Cho and Allen (2019) found four types of transnational families: i) a worker with low human capital coming from a developing country to a developed country to find a job; ii) a worker and their family with a medium or high level of human capital; iii) parents staying in the home country while children migrate for study; iv) family members with high level of human and social capital migrate to multiple countries for the purpose of career development.

However, these attempts to identify types of ‘transnational families’ fail to notice various critical dimensions of transnational family relationships. Making generalisations about transnational families is as difficult as making generalisations about families more broadly. For instance, an academic migrating from a developed country to another developed country, not purely motivated by career progression, falls into none of the categories above. Therefore, transnational family relationships tend to have diverse nature which naturally led researchers across the world to investigate this phenomenon from the view of their socio-cultural perspectives and historical contexts. As of 2022, the literature on transnational family relationships constitutes a significant corpus of work and includes overarching literature involving some sub-themes.

Regarding this diversity of transnational family relationships, I analyse the literature from three perspectives. First, there are studies focusing on specific members of transnational family relationships, such as migrant women, men, left-behind children and ageing parents. Second, focusing on the concept of family practices, I analyse which transnational family practices, and which transnational and social settings, have been investigated. Transnational parenting, family visits, financial remittances and communication are subordinate themes. Finally, the dynamics shaping transnational family relationships, such as dynamism and institutional contexts, are analysed.

### **2.4.1. Who is involved in transnational family relationships?**

As stated above, some studies in the literature tend to concentrate on certain members of transnational families. Thus, this section analyses studies which are centred on migrant women, migrant men, left-behind children and ageing parents, living apart couples and extended family and kinship relationships.

#### 2.4.1.1. Migrant women

Among individuals within transnational family relationships, migrant women are one of the most studied family members (Pessar & Mahler, 2003). It has been found that women tend to shoulder the burden of maintaining family and kinship relationships across national borders (Moorhouse & Cunningham, 2012; Ryan, 2007; Zontini, 2004b). These studies generally involve the absence of migrant mothers and its implications for left-behind children and the family unit as a whole (Cabalquinto, 2020; Dreby, 2006; Fresnoza-Flot, 2009; Guendouzi, 2006). How and to what extent migrant mothers’ family roles change with migration to a new country, and how they perform their roles transnationally are the main questions of studies in this theme. I consider these discussions below.

Under the influence of feminist approaches, one strand of the literature focuses on the migration of women in relation to the traditional gender norms prevalent in the country of origin. In this regard, Pessar and Mahler’s (2003) concept of gendered geographies of power is influential in delineating how gender norms are socially and culturally constructed. They argue that the geographical scale of the migration, and social locations and power geometries that migrant women are involved in, are determinants of gender relations after migration. That is, on the one hand, in some contexts, researchers stress that inequalities are exacerbated for women after migration. For example, Barajas and Ramirez (2007), who study Mexican women in the US, argue that traditional gender norms are maintained after migration and women’s situations deteriorate with the incommensurable demands of family roles. Researching African migrant women in Europe, Caarls and colleagues (2018) also found that migrant women are in a more difficult position compared to non-migrant women in their home countries. Similarly, conducting research with Zimbabwean women who had migrated to South Africa, Moorhouse and Cunningham (2012) state that migrant women experience a ‘double othering’, since they are othered by both the host and home country in which cultures are highly influenced by traditional gender norms.

Other studies do not focus on whether migration ruptures traditional gender norms or if it leads to more egalitarian gender divisions in cultures. Rather, some studies highlight the active agency of migrant women despite the influence of traditional gender norms. For instance, Ehrkamp (2013), researching Turkish migrant women in Germany, points out that such women challenge the patriarchal gender codes in both public and private spheres of life. She adds that these areas of transgression are significant in breaking the notion that migrant women are passive victims of their ‘potentially violent men’ (p. 19), which is remarkably prevalent in Western societies (see also Al-Ali, 2002; Erel, 2002). Therefore, contrasting sets of findings are presented in studies focusing on migrant women.

#### 2.4.1.2. Migrant men

Another focus of transnational family relationship research is migrant men. The migration of men, as a point of empirical analysis, is not as studied as migrant women within the transnational family literature. This is partly because existing migration literature assumes migration to be a movement of men and their households (Souralová & Fialová, 2017).With the impact of feminism in migration studies, migration of men and its implications on various life domains has been neglected. Fresnoza-Flot and Shinozaki (2017) call this process the feminisation of gender. However, it is significant to point out that, like women, the migration of men defies any generalisations since it is dependent upon not just institutional, socio-cultural and historical dynamics of migration, but also societal changes in understandings and meanings of masculinity (Kilkey et al., 2014).

#### 2*.4.1.3. Left-behind children*

The third party that can be involved in transnational family relationships are children who stay behind after the migration of their parents. Although children can also be migrants, such as Korean migrant children in ‘*kirogi families’* (Jeong et al., 2014), a significant body of literature has a particular focus on left-behind children. This issue is largely studied from different perspectives such as economic and psychological (Mazzucato & Cebotari, 2017).The reasons for left-behind children being one of the largest areas in this field are twofold. First, the literature is overly concentrated on labour migration and/or undocumented migrants who are more likely to face highly restrictive migration policies. That is, in the context of undocumented labour migrants, refugees and asylum seekers can suffer more from restrictive migration regulations regarding family reunification (Chamberlain, 1999; Dreby et al., 2007; Reynolds & Zontini, 2014). Second, when family reunification is theoretically possible, bringing children to another country might not be economically or practically feasible and achievable.

It should also be noted that left-behind children do not form a specific category of people. There are some factors which can provide a more nuanced picture: the age of children is a significant factor. Schmalzbauer (2004)for example studied the migration of Honduran people to the US and found that the age of the children who stay behind determines many things, from distance to types of migration and visits. Similarly, the gender of the children, according to Dreby’s (2010) study of Mexican transnational families, determines the allocation of responsibilities, obligation and remitted money among siblings (see also Jordan et al., 2018). Furthermore, the socio-cultural contexts that the left-behind children live in also influences their emotional states and psychological well-being. For example, Beazley and colleagues (2018), investigating left-behind children in Indonesia, found that children do not have other options beyond accepting their parents’ migration and absences. The authors further reported that these children experience a sort of ‘community anxiety’ and ‘emotion of shame’ arising from the codes of the culture they live in. However, some studies reach competing conclusions. For example, Mazzucato and Cebotari (2017), who conducted one of the largest quantitative studies on left-behind children, concluded that the lives of these children are not necessarily traumatic. Similarly, Erel (2002), focusing on left-behind children in Turkey, noted that they do not necessarily feel bad or passive actors in family relationships; on the contrary, they healthily engage in family dynamics as long as the primary left-behind caregiver deals with the care of the children. Therefore, various factors, including age, gender, culture, family visits and care arrangements, are found to play significant roles in left-behind children’s lives.

#### 2.4.1.4. Ageing parents

Another family member involved in transnational family relationships are left-behind parents. Although ageing parents can also migrate for different purposes, significant attention has been paid to the context of migrants’ parents who are ageing in their country of origin (Baldassar, 2011; Chan, 2017). Migrants can meet the caring needs of elderly parents at home from afar. This literature can provide a more detailed understandings of how migrants arrange care and the dynamics shaping this care provision. As in the broader nature of transnational family relationships, caring arrangements for elderly parents are multifaceted and dynamic. In this regard, four points can be made to analyse this multifactorial phenomenon.

First, the age of the parents might be a significant factor, especially in determining the type and frequency of care. For instance, the age of parents can determine whether they need direct hands-on care provision and whether transnational contact via new communication technologies is possible (Ahlin, 2018; Baldassar, 2016a; Baldassar et al., 2007). Second, in some contexts, siblings who are left behind take over the caring child role from migrants. For example, in one influential study in this area, Baldassar, Baldock and Wilding (2007) focused on the caring arrangements of some labour migrant and refugee groups in Australia and found that care delegation to siblings was common in some contexts. However, it is not as simple as it might seem since the delegation of care to siblings or extended family is usually performed after a series of negotiations and deliberations. They stress that migrants in some cases have ‘legitimate excuses’ allowing them not to provide care directly or from afar (p. 105).

Third, social welfare provision in both sending and receiving countries is a significant factor. Kilkey and Merla (2014) stress the importance of analysing a country's welfare regime separately from its migration regime. They argue that welfare regimes determine the social entitlements of migrants by either excluding or including migrants and their families from various welfare qualities such as health, income and housing. They stress that migrants and their dependants, falling into the category of ‘no recourse to public funds’ (NRPF),[[1]](#footnote-1) are largely excluded from social welfare policies in the context of Britain.

Finally, socio-cultural norms encompassing caring arrangements for elderly parents shape the process significantly. In some contexts, ‘filial piety’ is a norm which requires children to take care of their parents when they become elderly. Research considering Taiwanese (Hsu, 2021), Chinese (Lan, 2002) and Indonesian (Chan, 2017) migrants’ contexts show how filial piety is understood and the negotiations and strategies involved such caring arrangements. Similarly, research stresses that meanings attributed to ageing can also be socio-culturally structured. It is thus important not to adopt one single Western perspective of ageing in researching transnational family relationships (Næss & Moen, 2015).

#### 2.4.1.5. Long-distance romantic relationships

Long-distance relationships can refer to couples’ intimate and sexual relationships across varying geographical distances. Compared to the literature on other members of transnational families discussed so far, long-distance romantic relationships are rarely considered in the migration and family relationships literature. Rather it constitutes a separate strand of literature since this concept also includes couples in long-distance romantic relationships in the same country. Thus, this concept also includes locally separated family relationships (Maguire, 2007). There are also significant factors influencing long-distance romantic relationships. One of the most influential factors is the continuation of relationship imaginary; that is, the ‘relational continuity’ (Sigman, 1991 cited in Maguire, 2007), which can be achieved in many ways. For instance, Pistole and colleagues (2010) argue that transparency, assurance, and being open to advice are key maintenance behaviours for long-distance romantic relationships. Also, studies stress that when couples are certain that they will reunite at a certain time, they experience less distress about the relationship (Maguire, 2007).

The literature in this area suggests that long-distance romantic relationships have at least three different forms. First, couples may be forced to maintain their relationships from afar due to economic or legal problems (e.g., Alan & Johnson, 2022; Parreñas, 2005). At this point, traditional gender and family norms can be influential; for example, examining Ecuadorian migration and conjugal relationships, Pribilsky (2004) reports that left-behind women usually have to deal with men’s infidelities (see also Dreby, 2010). Second, long-distance romantic relationships can be the outcome of binational marriages. For example, Kudo (2017) studied Pakistani and Japanese marriages and transnational family arrangements in which Japanese women migrate to Pakistan and take care of their child, while Pakistani men continue to work in Japan and provide financially for the family. Finally, long-distance romantic relationships can be seen in the contexts of highly skilled migrants. In these contexts, separating the family and maintaining the romantic relationships for a period might be feasible and practical for couples. However, as frequently stated by researchers in this area, very little is known about the long-distance romantic relationships of migrant professionals not just in the European context but across the world (Ackers, 2005; Beaverstock, 2005; Butcher, 2010).

#### 2.4.1.6. Extended family and kinship ties

Extended family and kinship ties can also be part of transnational family relationships. Transnational family relationships are usually maintained by the mobilisation of left-behind ties and networks. As such, Zontini (2004c), focusing on the relationship between social capital and provision of care in Italian families in Britain, points out that:

The very existence of transnational families does, in fact, rest on kin ties being kept alive and maintained, in spite of great distances and prolonged separations (p. 11).

A relatively large amount of literature focuses on the role of transnational kinship ties (Best, 2014; Mason, 2004; Olwig, 2002; Souralová, 2020; Zontini & Reynolds, 2007). One of the primary conclusions drawn from the literature is that the involvement of extended family and kinship ties is highly culture-specific and dependent upon family kin biographies. For example, investigating the transnational kinship relationships of Filipino and Moroccan migrant women residing in Barcelona, Zontini (2004b) illustrates how transnational practices differ in two contexts. While some family cultures give significance to individualism, in other contexts, extended family members penetrate all migration processes from decisions to migrate to their return. For example, investigating Cameroonian migrants in Germany, Fleischer (2007) finds that individuals cannot make the migration decisions themselves unless the extended family authorises them to do so.

In many cases, extended family members take care of the left-behind children or ageing parents. Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) argue that migrants strategically materialise the extended family as an imagined community through a process of what they call ‘relativising’. Moran-Taylor (2008), who focuses on the left-behind kin of Guatemalan migrants, calls them the ‘unsung heroes and heroines’ (p. 91). Schmalzbauer (2008), investigating Honduran migrants, reports that parents cannot migrate unless they find a reliable member of the extended family to take care of their children. It is often stated that thanks to the involvement of extended family and kin in child rearing, migrant parents do not worry about the care of the family members at home. For example, through two-year multi-sited fieldwork between Senegal and Spain, Vives and Silva (2017) observe that thanks to the care of extended family and kin, migrant mothers do not need to ‘care for’ their children, rather they only ‘care about’ them by keeping in touch through calls. In some cultures, extended family’s care provision may be more of a material exchange through money, letters and gifts; however, in some contexts, researchers report that left-behind children regard their relatives who take care of them as their real mothers rather than their migrant mothers (Åkesson et al., 2012).

What is meant by ‘extended family and kin’ is also wide and diverse and can range from siblings to distant relatives and friends. As such, familial care provision in friendship ties is also reported in the literature (Bowlby, 2011). As stated above, this phenomenon is significant in showing the need for going beyond the household perspective in operationalising transnational family relationships and avoiding Western understandings of the meanings of care and the role of extended family and kin (Heath et al., 2011; Orellana et al., 2001).

So far, I have shown what transnational family relationships are and who might be involved in these relationships. Thus, the literature presented so far includes studies focusing on specific members of transnational family relationships such as migrant women and men, left-behind children and elderly parents. However, this research contends that a special focus on family practices is helpful in examining the ways in which migrant academics maintain a sense of familyhood across national borders.

### **2.4.2. Family practices in transnational family networks**

This section focuses on family practices in transnational family relationships, analysing transnational parenting, family visits, exchanging financial and material remittances, and communication. Two conceptual points that comprise the grounds of my further analyses on transnational family relationships are discussed. First, I show the significance and necessity of having a social network dimension while exploring transnational family relationships. Then, I discuss the underpinning reasons why this research adopts Morgan’s (1996) family practices concept to investigate the transnational familial relationships of academics. This research approaches transnational family relationships through a social network lens: it contends that transnational family networks operate in the wider networked relationships of academics. As Bilecen (2013b) points out:

By sharing not only emotional and personal matters, but also goods, services and social activities and financial remittances, transnational family networks extend beyond the households of origin to members of the extended families in other countries (2013b, p. 219).

Having a social network perspective enables this research to grasp how multiple local and transnational ties of migrant academics can generate a variety of resources. Such a focus is necessary since seeing migrants as actors who engage only with transnational relationships poses the risk of failing to notice the other types of social relationships they have. Stressing that transnational family relationships do not operate in a vacuum, Ryan (2011b) observes:

migrants do not live their lives only in transnational spaces. They negotiate their daily lives; their access to jobs; commute to work; social interactions with colleagues, friends, and neighbours; involvement in schools; experience of discrimination, harassment or abuse in localized spaces (pp. 86-7).

In addition, as I show in detail in Chapter Three, migrant academics have a particular social network context arising from their occupation. That is, building professional networks and engaging with mobility are the two major pillars of building a successful career in contemporary academia (Ackers, 2010; Schaer et al., 2020). Academics tend to build local, national and transnational academic ties that can yield employment opportunities, reputation and promotion (Toader et al., 2016). It is also evident that academics tend to have an active use of social media platforms to build online networks, publicise research and findings and receive social and material support (Lupton, 2014). Thus, this research considers transnational family relationships as part of the broader social networks of academics that can transmit various resources and spin across multiple geographical areas.

Second, as noted above, this research draws on British family studies literature in defining and drawing the conceptual framework of transnational family relationships. I see transnational family relationships as a web of dialectical linkages between family practices and intimacy/relatedness. In other words, understanding transnational family relationships of migrant academics depends on generating in-depth knowledge of which practices in migrant academics’ relationships lead to intimacy and relatedness between the parties involved. In this formulation, two points – family practices and intimacy – need further elaboration.

First, Morgan argues that ‘family’ should no longer be used a noun but instead it ought to be used as a verb, contending that ‘there is no such thing as “the family”’ (Morgan, 2011, p. 3): families need to be enacted and worked at. Pointing out a contradiction between the ideological notion of family and the reality of family relationships, Morgan (1996) argues that in contemporary life people do not *have* a family, but they ‘do family’ through various activities. The concept of family practices, according to Morgan, emphasises active doing of everyday life and regular and fluid practices that are meaningful in individual and family biographies. Family practices are indicators of how people ‘do’ family. At this point, it should be noted that family practices may be unique to particular families. Acknowledging the fluidity of the concept, Morgan (2011) states that ‘different sets of people may see sets of practices in different ways’ (p. 4). Therefore, family practices should be looked at through the lens of relationality and subjectivity since certain practices can only be meaningful for certain people.

Second, intimacy is a key part of transnational family relationships. Again, in the British sociology of family literature, Jamieson (2011) stresses the analytical potential of the concept of intimate practices, asserting that there are no universally recognised definitions of intimacy; however, intimate relationships:

…are a type of personal relationships that are subjectively experienced and may also be socially recognised as close. The quality of ‘closeness’ that is indicated by intimacy can be emotional, cognitive, with subjective experiences including a feeling of mutual love, being ‘of like mind’ and special to each other (Jamieson, 2011, p. 2).

Intimacy is different from love – though Jamieson (2011) states that they are close relatives – and might part of the cognitive, emotional and sexual dimensions of the relationship. Such a definition enables research to use it as an analytical concept since it indicates the level of closeness in a particular relationship. Therefore, the focal point of this research is to examine which relationships lead to cognitive, emotional and/or sexual intimacies without limiting conceptions of family by focusing only on household family members or heterosexual notions of family practices. Smart’s ‘Personal Life’ (2007) is influential in highlighting the need to move beyond heteronormative assumptions in operationalising transnational family relationships. In a similar vein, Manalansan (2006), who has been writing specifically about the global care chain, argues that the literature makes normative assumptions around family, heterosexual reproduction and marriage and has an unwitting tendency to normalise heteronormative relationships. According to Manalansan, researchers need to question and re-conceptualise their understanding of family and its activities (2006). Therefore, focusing on the transnational family practices that lead to varying degrees of intimacy is a simple yet robust approach to examining not just how family relationships are enacted and worked at but also how various practices lead to intimacies in different relationships at the level of personal biographies. In this section, the range of practices for ‘doing family’ transnationally are analysed under the subsections of transnational parenting, direct family visits, exchanging financial and material remittances, and transnational familial communication.

##### 2.4.2.1. Performing transnational parenting

Transnational parenting may not be considered a family practice; rather, it signifies the maintenance of family roles through a set of gendered practices. Several studies have found that gendered parenting roles traditionally expect the mother to perform emotional and domestic labour, while the father is traditionally expected to provide financial support to the family as the ‘breadwinner’ (Dreby, 2010; Parreñas, 2008). Since gender has a direct influence in shaping this practice, this section considers the notions of transnational motherhood and fatherhood Transnational mothering is a commonly researched phenomenon in the literature and such practices are generally represented as activities arising from sacrifices, moral and ethical dilemmas and ambivalences (Boccagni, 2012; Uy-Tioco, 2007). In most research contexts, migrant mothers’ migration journeys become a paradox since, according to Bryceson (2019), ‘migration takes place for the purpose of improving children’s economic welfare but is often at the cost of children’s emotional well-being’ (p. 11). It is mainly found that mothers attempt to compensate for their absences by trying to exceed the gendered expectations of mothering. For instance, Madianou (2012) emphasises that de-territorialised notions of mothering practices involve ‘intensive mothering’ practices since migrant mothers often find themselves in an ‘accentuated ambivalence’ between their migration and children. In a similar vein, Tungohan (2013), who studies migrant live-in caregivers in Canada, finds that migrant women’s mothering practices bear a sense of ‘hyper maternalism’ (p. 32). Transnational mothering practices, according to Boccagni (2012), studying Ecuadorian migrant women in Italy, can involve ‘distance filling’ activities, which generally occur in both emotional and material realms such as video calls, sending gifts and letters. He further argues that migrant mothers involved in these distance-bridging practices know that they cannot compensate for their absence. Thus, transnational mothering practices are generally depicted as sacrifices, ambivalence, and uncertainty due to the fragile nature of relationships. For instance, Aranda (2003), focusing on the case of Puerto Rican migrant mothers’ relationships, argues that even the smallest issues can lead to emotional dislocations for the left-behind children. Therefore, exploration of the inequalities that migrant women face while performing mothering from afar is one of the most dominant themes in the transnational parenting literature. Such an overconcentration on inequalities, moral issues and challenges might stem from the research contexts in which traditional gender and family roles prevail.

Second, in relation to literature about transnational fatherhood, a chronological approach is suitable. Initially, all types of migration were considered in terms of the migration of males. As such, according to Mahler and Pessar (2003), the prevailing portrait of a migrant before the 1990s was ‘the lone, rugged male who left his family behind in the homeland as he ventured across seas to seek his fortune, hoping to return to them after achieving success’ (p. 822). Although there was no specific focus on men and transnational fathering practices, the scholarship took for granted that migration was a male practice. However, in the 1990s, feminist scholarship drew attention to the inequalities that migrant women experience. As presented above, this strand of research emphasises the unequal, ambivalent and often difficult position and efforts of migrant mothers to compensate for their absence. According to Souralová and Fialová (2017), who published a review article on this issue named ‘*Where have all the fathers gone?*’, the scholarship on migrant fathers experienced three stages.

Initially some strands of migration literature influenced by feminist scholarship overly focused on women and migration and neglected fathers (Fiałkowska, 2019; Palenga-Möllenbeck & Lutz, 2016). Such neglect, according to Kilkey, Perron and Plomien (2014), was ‘increasingly problematic in the context of rising social, political and academic interest in the significance of fathering in European (and other) societies’ (p. 178). Studies then began to discover how fathering roles and practices changed through migration (e.g., Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999). At the second stage, migrant fathers were described within traditional gender norms – having the breadwinner role. According to Souralová and Fialová (2017), during this period, masculinity was also generally based on gender essentialism. That is, at this stage studies on migration and family relationships employed a gender binarity in their analyses to compare migrant mothering and fathering. According to studies in this strand (e.g., Carling, Menjívar, & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Dreby, 2006; Dreby & Adkins, 2010; Parrenas, 2005) migration creates deep inequalities between mothers and fathers: while migration allows fathers to maintain their socially expected family role by providing financial support, it does not enable mothers to sustain their expected roles – keeping the family emotionally together. Positioning migrant fathers at a remove from emotionality led to portraying them as emotionally distant from their families. For instance, in her research on Filipino families, Parreñas (2008) stresses an ‘emotional gap’ between migrant fathers and the family members left behind. Also, according to this view, the absences of mothers and fathers are not judged equally in the eyes of left-behind children and kinship members (Erel, 2002; Moorhouse & Cunningham, 2012).

At the third stage, however, migrant fathering practices are analysed on their own rather than in comparison to migrant mothering roles and practices. Kilkey and colleagues’ (2013) work on Mexican *jardineros* in the US and Polish migrant handymen in the UK questioned the gender binary between breadwinner and nurturing father identities. In a similar vein, Schmalzbauer’s (2015) research on Mexican migrant fathers also found that these relationships are fluid and that there are particular transitions from the breadwinning father to caring/nurturing father. According to Kilkey and Palenga-Möllenbeck (2013), this focus should also be evaluated together with the ‘Europeanization’ in masculinities whereby norms require migrant fathers to be involved in the emotional and moral dimension of family relationships such as care provision (see Elliott, 2015 on 'caring masculinities').

To sum up, while studies on transnational mothering overly concentrate on depicting the inequalities in performing parental duties transnationally, the literature on transnational fathering has undergone conceptual shifts (Chen, 2019; Kilkey et al., 2014; Olwig, 2010). This research is designed to explore how migrant men and women perform their family roles across national borders. It thus focuses on how different family roles – transnational mothering, fathering and grandparenting – are performed and navigated from afar.

##### 2.1.4.2. Family visits

Although it is difficult to classify transnational family practices in terms of degrees of significance, due to the subjective nature of relationships, family visits are one of the most essential family practices (Baldassar et al., 2007). The term family visits signifies routinised temporary return travel to the places where the left-behind family members live. This section discusses the types and significance of family visits and the factors influencing them.

First, under the umbrella term of family visits, there may be different types of visits. Family visits can be conducted by both migrants and non-migrant family members. According to Baldassar, Baldock and Wilding (2007b), there are five different types of family visits: routine visits for keeping in touch and maintaining contact; crisis visits for providing direct care for serious illnesses, divorce or sudden deaths; duty and ritual visits for rites of passage such as births, deaths, christenings, wedding or funerals; special purpose visits for relieving homesickness and reconnecting with kin; and tourist visits for spending holiday with a stopover to visit family and relatives (Baldassar et al., 2007, pp. 125, 139). In terms of duration, family visits are diverse and dependent upon many factors, and they range from short stays to long-term return visits. For instance, researching Senegalese migrants in Spain, Vives and Silva (2017) find that migrants adopt the strategy of circular mothering in which migrant mothers return home and care for their children for three to six months; after that, caregivers (paid or unpaid) take over the care of their children when they are away. In a similar vein, Dreby (2007) finds that most Mexican parents use their return visits not just to perform parenthood and provide direct care but also to refresh family roles.

Second, the special meanings of family visits are commonly appraised in the literature. Nearly all researchers consider family visits to be essential parts of transnational family practices. As such, apart from migrant families who suffer from mobility restrictions, it is safe to argue that nearly all transnational family relationships involve family visits. According to Boccagni (2012), who investigates Ecuadorian migrant mothers in Italy, nearly all other types of transnational practices are dependent on refreshing relationships through family visits. He therefore criticises the double presence hypothesis, which I elaborate later, arguing that nothing can substitute the corporeal existence. Similarly, investigating the narratives of left-behind children in the Caribbean, Olwig (2010) finds that left-behind children’s psychological well-being is generally good and healthy as long as their parents visit them. Also, from a social networks point of view, family visits play critical roles in refreshing and re-establishing ties and family roles. According to Baldassar, et.al., (2007b) family visits are key:

in establishing, maintaining and reinvigorating family relations, in reconciliation and acceptance of change, in fulfilling family obligations and duties and in the myriad issues implicit in the relationship between identity and place.

Thus, migrants can rejuvenate their social networks based in their countries of origin. For instance, studying the importance of wedding ceremonies in Caribbean transnational families, Olwig (2002) finds that through attending such ceremonies, migrants get the chance to re-activate their kin networks on the Caribbean islands.

Family visits are also essential for the migrant members who provide care from afar. Bacigalupe and Camara (2012) underline that checking corporally whether the family member is in a good condition reign above all other virtualized forms of caring. As Baldassar, Baldock and Wilding note (2007), ‘seeing is believing’ for many migrants and non-migrants (p. 149). Apart from immediate family members, the left-behind extended family and kinship ties are also highly dependent on family visits. It is argued that since the maintenance of contact through communicating is more common for immediate family members, the ties with extended family members largely depend upon direct visits (see Mason, 2004 on Pakistani migrants in Britain). Studying Italian migrants in Australia, Baldassar argues that only after visiting do migrants start to ‘attach faces and personalities to kin who were previously “just names”’ (2001, p. 20). According to Baldassar, bonds with extended family and kin are re-discovered through these visits. Therefore, family visits play critical roles in reinvigorating ties with both immediate and extended family members.

Finally, however, not all migrants can visit their family and kin at any time without considering the conditions dictated by structural, social, familial and individual factors. For instance, a quantitative study conducted in Australia with a large number of migrants from different backgrounds found that only 11% of migrants conducted return visits on a regular basis (O’Flaherty et al., 2007). Therefore, as stated above, visiting family members left behind depend on a diverse constellation of factors. One of the most salient dynamics reported in the literature is the cost of travel (Baldassar, Baldock, & Wilding, 2007). In this regard, the geographical distance between the sending and receiving countries takes significance. For example, researching the transnational family relationships of Turkish migrants in the US, Şenyürekli and Detzner (2008) find that air travel is expensive for many Turkish migrants in the US. The other factor relates to time allocation, which is contingent on several factors. As Kilkey and Merla (2014) underline, working time regimes can largely shape working hours, annual leave and holiday periods. Moreover, in some cases, having limited access to the social welfare system in the receiving country can prompt migrants to visit the country of origin for the purpose of medical treatment and operations. For example, studying Zimbabwean migrants in London, Thomas (2010) finds that most migrants prefer to have medical treatment in their countries of origin due to limited access to the welfare system in London.

As illustrated above, family visits are multifactorial but there are areas that might be investigated further. For example, most of the literature conceives family visits as travelling from one country to another. In other words, family visits are depicted as travel from one point to another. Migrants who are generally from developing countries and move to developed countries for work visit their countries of origin where their immediate family members, extended family and kinship members live. However, little is known about how family visits are conducted when different family members are geographically dispersed around the world. As a more recent conceptual development, Bryceson (2019) differentiates multi-national families from bi-national families: the latter are generally resident only in sending and receiving countries and tend to be labour migrants who rely on home country norms and developing relationships with the diaspora. However, members of multi-national families are generally scattered in multiple destinations across the world and open to job opportunities in the global market. They tend to have highly varied, fluid and eclectic cultural and familial practices (see, Bryceson, 2019, pp. 6-10). Thus, echoing Bryceson (2019), I argue that considering family visits only between two countries can fail to appreciate the context of transnational family members who are scattered around the world.

##### 2.1.4.3. Financial remittances

Another significant component of maintaining transnational family relationships is financial and material exchanges between family and kinship members. As stated above, transnational family relationships are a part of migrants’ networked social relationships that can involve the reciprocal provision of social support, care, goods, services, financial and material remittances (Bernardi, 2011; Bilecen, 2013b). Financial and material exchanges can be in the form of money, gifts, photos, domestic artefacts, and heirlooms (Dreby et al., 2007; Fedyuk, 2012; Lam & Yeoh, 2018). In some contexts, sending gifts in a certain manner and tradition have become norms. For instance, Parrenas (2001, 2005) points out that Filipino migrants send ‘*balikbayan’* boxes, which include gifts, foods, clothes and toiletries to their family members in the Philippines. Apart from these material exchanges, sending money to the left-behind family members is a common and oft-studied area in the literature (Butsch, 2020; Schweppe, 2011). Three factors are key in understanding financial remittances between migrant family members: cultural and socio-historical context, diaspora, and income level.

First, research findings show that the migratory and historical context plays a determining role in both the meanings and process of financial remittances between migrant families. For instance, Schans (2009), who conducted a large-scale quantitative survey with Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese migrants in the Netherlands, found that while the vast majority of migrants tend to have close ties with family members left behind, only one third sent money on a regular basis. However, research findings from different contexts generate different results. Comparing Bosnian and Eritrean refugees in the UK, Netherlands and Germany, Al-Ali, Black and Koser (2001) reveal ‘the importance of historical context, and the interconnection of social, political and institutional factors in producing highly uneven patterns of transnational activities’ (p. 578). Thus, while Bosnian refugees tend to be reluctant to send financial remittances, sending money in the context of Eritrean refugees is almost a cultural norm encompassing even unemployed migrants.

Similarly, meanings attributed to financial remittances can also be shaped by socio-cultural and communal norms and traditions. How financial remittances are understood by family members, and whether they create intimacy, can also be shaped by the research context. Some studies underline the risk that financial remittances can turn family relationships into a sort of ‘money transfer’ which can undermine the intimacy between family members (see Boccagni, 2012 on Ecuadorian migrants in Italy). Similarly, Muller (2009), studying Afghan refugees in the Netherlands, argues that the only reason migrants send money to extended families is that they want to keep them as possible ‘stepping stones’ (p. 407) in case of a return migration.

However, in different research contexts, contrarily, sending money and meeting the needs of family members can reflect intimacy and caring. For example, studying Ghanian left-behind children, Coe (2011) highlights that love, intimacy and care is ‘understood to take place through the provision of the necessities of life’ (p. 11). Voigt-Graft (2005) stresses the difference in the financial remittances of Indian migrants in Australia. According to the author, Indian migrants’ financial remittances to the extended family and kin should be considered within the Indian extended family culture. Thanks to financial remittances, left-behind extended families take care of their immediate family members, such as children and ageing parents. In many cases, Voigt-Graft finds, the money from migrants is not enough and extended family and kin meet the expenses of their relatives from their own budgets. Therefore, family cultures and socio-historical contexts are significant in both the meaning and intensity of financial remittances.

Second, diaspora is an important dimension of financial remittance exchanges. Although reverse financial remittances – receiving money from the family members left-behind – are also possible (Mazzucato, 2010), it is reported as being less frequent both in both research and statistics. Financial remittances are part of an economic development theory in which a large diaspora consisting mainly of labour migrants in the developed countries sends money to their less-developed countries. According to the World Bank (2021), the financial remittances from migrants living in developed countries are estimated to reach 589 billion dollars in 2022. This amount surpasses the global foreign direct investments occurring in the world annually. The biggest benefactors of financial remittances are Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North America, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia. Latin America and the Caribbean received 126 billion dollars in 2021. Although these figures also include migrants’ savings and investments in origin countries, the World Bank report notes that a very large proportion of this amount is exchanged among family members (World Bank, 2021). In the UK context, the Migration Observatory’s report (Varga-Silva & Klimaviciute, 2020) showed that the outward financial remittance from the UK was expected to reach £23 billion in 2021. Nigeria and India received more financial remittances from the UK than any other countries, followed by Pakistan, China and Poland. According to the economic development approach, sending countries are dependent upon financial remittances and set up regulations to allow money to be sent more easily (Schweppe, 2011). The diaspora infrastructure, including banks, international money transfer organisations and phone applications, is key in managing financial remittances. Also, diasporic culture and social norms are critical in the financial remittances of migrants (Butsch, 2020; Lindley, 2009).

Thirdly, however, the financial exchanges of migrants who have less diasporic relationships and networks almost remain intact – the geographies and research contexts are concentrated on diasporic populations. The World Bank (2021) report conceptualises financial remittance flows between high income countries and low/mid income countries. However, in terms of academic knowledge, little is known about the financial remittances between high income countries (Lindley, 2009). Furthermore, studies on financial remittances between migrant families conducted to date use the context of either labour migrants or refugees. In many of these contexts, earning money is a key motivation for migration, though it defies generalisation. The underlying meaning of migration is for economic betterment. How financial remittances are negotiated, processed and understood by skilled and relatively privileged migrants clearly needs further investigation.

##### 2.1.4.4. Transnational family communication

Communication is a critical part of transnational family relationships. The technological advancements of the 21st century – which have paved the way to easy, constant yet also instantaneous contact – have fundamentally changed the nature of transnational family relationships. As mentioned above, new technologies are largely what makes contemporary migrant transnationalism distinguishable from previous examples of transnational contacts (Basch et al., 1994; Wilding, 2006).

Communication in transnational family relationships constitutes a significant theme in the studies of family relationships across national borders. Research conducted under this theme is diverse: some focuses on one nationality and migrant group such as Iranian (Shaker, 2018), Turkish (Şenyürekli & Detzner, 2008, 2009), Mexican (Cuban, 2017, 2018; Dreby, 2010), Filipino (Madianou, 2014; Madianou & Miller, 2012; Parreñas, 2014), Korean (Kim, 2016), and Polish (Kędra, 2020b) migrant transnational family communication. Similarly, different terms are used such as ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) (e.g., Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2011; Cuban, 2017; Nedelcu & Wyss, 2016) and CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) (e.g. Xu et al., 2011). Some studies also have a special focus on the communication medium, such as Facebook (Yount-André, 2018), WhatsApp (Kędra, 2020a; Plaza & Plaza, 2019), and Skype (King-O’Riain, 2015; Share et al., 2018), although communication technologies change at an accelerated pace. As Madianou and Miller point out (2012, p. 7):

The greatest challenge of studying new media in the context of transnational family relationships is that the technologies themselves are constantly changing and research often seems to be chasing a moving target of technological developments and innovative appropriations on the part of the users.

As such, in 2004, Vertovec heralded cheap landline telephone calls as the social glue of migrant transnationalism (2004). Similarly, not so long ago, emails were considered cutting-edge technology that enabled transnational family relationships to easily maintain contact (Panagakos & Horst, 2006). Some early scholars took an overly positive stance towards these new communication technologies which were sometimes seen as a kind of blessing and magic (Francisco, 2015), granting migrants an opportunity for ‘filling in absence by a sort of incantation’ (Licoppe & Smoreda, 2005, p. 331). Transnational family communication is often associated with notions of the double presence hypothesis, which can be summarised by saying that thanks to these technologies, those ‘who are physically absent are in fact increasingly present in everyday situations’ (Nedelcu, 2012). However, this early over-optimism is now approached with high levels of caution. Many studies find that the double presence hypothesis might not hold true in all kinds of transnational efforts aimed at creating intimacy and exchanging care (Boccagni, 2012).In this section, I focus on three dimensions of transnational family communication: how it enables instant contact; how it provides higher levels of awareness; and how it is shaped by various factors.

First, new communication technologies provide transnational families with cheap, instantaneous and constant audio and video contact. Such an ability can enable the performance of some family practices from afar. Various studies emphasise the significance of communication technologies in providing care and performing parenting tasks at a distance (Chereni, 2015; Lee, 2019; Zhu, 2020; Zontini, 2007). According to Madianou (2012),who studies Filipino migrant women, new communication technologies create an ‘empowered experience of distance mothering’ (p. 272) and she goes further to argue that migrant women are granted ‘opportunities to “feel like mothers” again’ (p. 292). Migrant families can broadcast their lives through these media. For example, drawing on the family display concept, Share, Williams and Kerrins (2018) investigate the intergenerational relationships of Polish migrants in Ireland and find that the most significant affordance of Skype is that it allows for ‘emotional streaming’:

whereby mothers can stay emotionally connected to their own mothers as they leave the webcam on through the day, thereby lessening the isolation they feel as new migrant mothers (2018, p. 3025).

In a similar vein, research emphasises that communication is essential in any forms of direct care provision for ageing parents left behind (Baldassar et al., 2007b; Baldassar, 2016). For instance, Ahlin and Sen (2020) find that for the left-behind ageing parents of Indian migrants, being a ‘good daughter’ has undergone a shift from providing financial remittance to calling frequently. As with many other family practices, communication can be reciprocal, a two-way process. Non-migrant family members who stay behind can also provide care and perform family practices from afar thanks to communication technologies. For instance, research conducted by Chakrabarti (2010) with Bangladeshi and Indian pregnant migrant women in the US found that participants rely on communication with transnational family networks to get advice about the pregnancy process due to the therapeutic effects of communication with left-behind family members.

Second, the proliferation of new communication technologies and social networking websites such as Facebook and Instagram have created communicative spaces of flow in which members of transnational families and kinship groups can communicate and interact with each other (Hepp, 2009). In the context of academics, I anticipate that migrant academics use new communication technologies for a variety of purposes (Madianou, 2014). One purpose might arise from professional motives – Chapter Three shows that academics tend to make use of new communication technologies to build networks, disseminate research results and receive support (Lupton, 2014; Toader et al., 2016). Therefore, transnational family communication comprises one segment of their wider digitally defined networks. The proliferation of these media on transnational family communication can lead to escalated awareness of the family members' lives and relationships from afar (Hepp, 2009). In other words, migrants may not need to engage with communicative actions such as audio and video calling, sending SMSs or emails, as posts on the social networking sites can make them aware of their family members’ lives. Drawing on the mediatization paradigm – which argues that contemporary social relations are digitized (see Couldry & Hepp, 2017) – Madianou (2016) describes this escalated awareness as the ‘ambient co-presence’. Through long-term ethnographic research on Filipino migrants in the UK, Madianou observes that:

The constant stream of information through social media now often replaces other mediated interactions, such as the daily Skype call, which has become more infrequent but is still regular… The photographs, comments and status updates ‘do family’ (Morgan 1996) and provide an ambient background (p. 192).

This escalated awareness can be interpreted as transnational family members having the power to watch, get involved and interfere with the lives of their loved ones. In some cases, researchers find that migrants tend to apply a sort of ‘emotional filter’ by deliberately hiding some information and processes from their family members (Boccagni, 2012). Studying Bolivian migrants in Spain, Choi (2013) found that migrants usually rely on ‘white lies’ to hide some serious problems. Similarly, Baldassar (2007a) finds that left-behind ageing parents tend to hide their ageing processes and health issues from their migrant children as well.

Finally, several different factors can impact transnational family communication, especially the digital divide. Many parts of the world do not have an effective Internet infrastructure (Ahlin, 2018b). Also, research finds that some places, such as Iran, have limited and censored Internet services (Shaker, 2018). Similarly, studying Cuban migrants in Germany through multi-sited fieldwork, Brandhorst (2013) states that since the Internet is still restricted in Cuba, many left-behind family members rely on the ‘work of imagination’ (p. 65). Second, individuals’ technological skills are significant. According to the literature, elderly parents of migrants especially tend to have issues regarding the use of new communication technologies (Kang, 2012; Share et al., 2018; Wilding & Baldassar, 2018). However, it should be noted that for many left-behind family members, migration and having a family member abroad can also serve as a driver for learning and appropriation of these new communication technologies (Khvorostianov, 2016).

Third, time zones are an issue that migrant families must negotiate while communicating. It has been reported that due to the difference between time zones, some migrants must get or stay up late at night to communicate with their family and kin (Ryan et al., 2015 on American migrants in London) or sometimes cannot participate in family rituals and gatherings due to the time difference (Gherghel & Gall, 2016 on Azorean migrants in Canada). Gender also continues to be a critical dynamic in transnational family communications. For instance, examining communication between Chinese migrants in London and their ageing parents in China through more than 50 in-depth interviews, Kang (2012) found the development of ‘gender ghettos’ on transnational virtual familial spaces since women are usually silenced and prevented from having adequate levels of Internet and communication technologies skills.

Finally, allocating time for communicating with family members can be of paramount significance for some migrants. The work of Masselot (2011) focuses on investigating the work-life balance and transnational caring practices of post-doctoral researchers in New Zealand. As the only study combining the migration of academic staff with the concept of transnational family relationships, this work is the most similar to the present research, thus, I analyse it in more detail in Chapter Three. However, Masselot (2011) finds that time is one of the primary resources that post-doctoral researchers need to maintain their family relationships from afar. Considering the time scarcity, workload and work-life balance issues that are prevalent among higher education staff (Goździak & Main, 2021), it is highly probable that migrant academics who participate in this research would cite the importance of time allocation for maintaining their relationships from afar. Little is known about how these dynamics shape transnational family communication, therefore research investigating transnational family relationships should address the difference regarding digital divide, time zones and gender-related factors in shaping family communication patterns.

### **2.4.3. Factors influencing transnational family practices**

This section discusses the factors that shape transnational family relationships, focusing on commitment, dynamism and institutional dynamics. Transnational family engagement cannot be taken for granted for all migrants as maintaining family and kinship relationships transnationally requires ongoing commitment and willingness (Baldassar, 2011; Ryan & Mulholland, 2014a; Skrbis, 2008). In some contexts, migrant families might be reluctant to have transnational contact with family and kin. For example, focusing on Zimbabwean refugees in Johannesburg, Worby (2010) found that some participants did not want to answer calls or give their addresses in the country of settlement to family and kinship due to economic expectations, threats of violence and insecurity (see also Muller, 2009).

Secondly, the willingness and commitment of family members to maintain family relationships across national borders cannot be considered as fixed, stable and everlasting. Thus, maintaining relationships with family and kinship members has a temporal dimension. Relationships are dynamic; they tend to ebb and flow over a lifetime. As Wilding (2006) notes:

Distances, and the capacity to overcome them, are perceived differently by different social actors at different moments in time… even within family networks – and sometimes in the life history of one person – there was often variation in perceptions of communications, caregiving exchanges, and migration histories, including how satisfied people were with the past and present situations (pp. 129 & 135).

Thus, transnational families are ‘complex and fluid entities capable of adapting to different circumstances’ (Zontini, 2006, p. 325). In addition to events such as marriage, starting or changing jobs, and having a baby, gradual changes can also transform the trajectories of transnational family relationships. Moreover, structural and societal transformations can shape and impact relationships. For instance, drawing on longitudinal data on Polish migrants in the UK, Kilkey and Ryan (2020) introduced the concept of ‘unsettling events’. Focusing on 2004 EU enlargement and the 2008 economic crisis and Brexit, they revealed how migrant families changed in response to these potentially disruptive events.

Furthermore, the temporal dimension of transnational family relationships becomes more complicated considering the issue of time at an individual level. Based on the conceptual premises underscoring how migration scholarship focuses on the spatial dimensions of migration, some scholars draw attention to the temporality of migration (Cwerner, 2001; Griffiths, 2014; Robertson, 2021a). Therefore, global and national time regimes can influence transnational family practices (Kilkey & Merla, 2014). Studies in HE literature emphasise how temporal conditions arising from working in British academia can shape academics’ family relationships and everyday lives (Osbaldiston et al., 2019; Ylijoki & Mäntylä, 2003).

Third, institutional dynamics can be said to circumscribe how transnational family relationships are negotiated. In many cases, the definition of nation-state prevails over socio-culturally or individually shaped definitions of family (see Menjívar, 2012 on Central American immigrant groups in the US). Thus, while socio-cultural and familial dynamics can shape how relationships are maintained transnationally, it is equally significant to acknowledge the ‘jurisdictional context of the nation-states a given of the transnational families experience’ (Goulbourne et al., 2010, p. 9). For instance, family reunification is largely determined by the rules and regulations of the receiving country (Fernandez, 2019). However, institutional dynamics’ influences on transnational family relationships cannot be reduced to migration regulations shaping entry and departure. Kilkey and Merla’s (2013) notion of situated transnationalism is critical: they argue that migrants and non-migrants’ capacity to engage with familial care is largely dependent upon their respective positioning in different institutional factors and regimes. That is, drawing on the regime theory, they argue that migration, welfare, gendered care, and working-time regimes as well as transport and communication policies shape how migrant families engage with familial care. Institutional dynamics permeate transnational family relationships through: migration policies; the structure of social security and the welfare system of the receiving country; socio-cultural and historical codes and norms around family care such as obligations and expectations; the working hours and work-life balance of migrants and their family members (Hochschild, 1997; Kilkey & Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2013); and the infrastructure of transport and Internet connections. Therefore, the agency of migrants and non-migrants should be situated in institutional forces.

## 2.5. Discussion and Conclusion

This section summarises the analyses of the literature presented so far and situates this research against the relevant literature by showing areas where further exploration is needed. Three points can be drawn related gaps in the existing literature: skill level, the ethnic lens, and the network dimension. Firstly, transnational family literature is overly focused on labour migrants and undocumented migrants such as refugees and asylum seekers (although see Baldassar et al., 2007). The transnational family relationships concept is somewhat restricted to a set of particular contexts in which ‘low-skilled’ labour migrants – whose major migration aim is economic betterment – maintain familial relationships across distances – often with inequalities arising from traditional socio-cultural gender and family norms. As Voigt-Graf (2005) says, this trend fails to take account of other forms of migration:

The assertion that migrant transnationalism is largely linked to working-class responses to global capitalism overlooks the experience of professional, middle-class migrants who make up a substantial and increasing share of the world’s migrants (p. 367).

According to Ryan and colleagues (2015), it is often assumed in the literature that highly skilled, educated and mobile migrants do not need to maintain their family relationships transnationally. It is surprising that, until recently, research on highly skilled migrants (Beaverstock, 2005; Conradson & Latham, 2005; Ryan, 2015; Ryan et al., 2015) has tried to show that familial relationships are ‘a necessary emotional source for all migrants, irrespective of their economic standing or skills’ (Ryan et al., 2015, p. 201). However, the middling transmigrants who are ‘social actors occupying more or less middle class or status positions in the national class structures of their countries of origin’ (Smith, 2005, p. 242) not only constitute a significant growing population but also form the basis of contemporary cosmopolitan urban areas (Beaverstock, 2005; Conradson & Latham, 2005). The share of skilled workers – although definitions of skills are value-laden and socially constructed (see section 1.3.) – in global migration statistics continues to increase and has become the ‘new migration waves’ (OECD, 2019 see also IOM, 2022). Therefore, considering its demographic and academic significance, such neglect of this area in existing literature is of paramount importance. This research aims to contribute to filling this gap by providing empirical evidence from the context of transnational academics living in Britain.

Secondly, a conceptual framework for investigating transnational family relationships should encompass both family practices and social network perspectives. As indicated above, understanding transnational family relationships requires taking relationships as the main unit of analysis and exploring how and through which practices these family relationships are done and redone in the life stories of participants. Additionally, to explore how these relationships are embedded in locality and how they change over the course of life necessitates a social network approach. Studies in social networks literature have long focused on pre- and post-migration (trans) local networks. Early studies emphasise that migrants are more liable to make connections with the diaspora to reduce the costs of adjusting to the new environment (Beine et al., 2011; Ben-Rafael, 2010; Carrington et al., 1996). However, recent research repeatedly challenges the assumption that migrants weave social ties within the same ethnicity (Bilecen, 2013b; Plöger & Becker, 2015; Plöger & Kubiak, 2019; Ryan, 2021). Some studies also show that migrants generally consider the local culture in Britain to be cold and difficult to establish meaningful connections within (Ryan & Mulholland, 2014a; Wessendorf & Phillimore, 2019); others emphasise a lack of language competency and familiarity with the local life and culture (de Haas & Fokkema, 2011; Mazzucato, 2008; Sert, 2012). Despite its significance, the social network approach has been neglected in transnational family studies, as Bernardi (2011, p. 791) suggests:

basic social network indicators, such as size, density, and composition, are left out of transnational families research.

In the same vein, the local and transnational social networks and the position of family networks in this web of migrant academics’ social relationships in Britain remains largely unclear. Thus, this research will fill a significant gap in the literature by shedding light on both local and transnationally based familial and professional social networks of migrant academics in Britain.

Finally, as presented throughout this chapter, most studies in the literature focus on one ethnic group, and the research is designed and analysed based on that ethnicity. However, this ethnic lens might be problematic since it poses risks of ‘essentializing views on ethnicity’ (Amelina & Faist, 2012, p. 1707). This research contends that categories of ethnicity and nationality are socio-culturally constructed, applied and distributed to varying degrees. However, in the literature, the lens of ethnicity is:

too often used as central criteria in research designs with no regard to either the way in which these categories are formed by scientific and non-scientific discourses or the conditions under which they are relevant for the social practices of mobile and non-mobile people (Amelina & Faist, 2012, p. 1711).

Therefore, to elude the ‘danger of reproducing simplistic accounts of ethno-national differences’ (Ryan et al., 2015, p. 214), this research places a profession – academics – and being a migrant at the centre of its design. Like other studies focusing on professions (Hayakawa, 2020; Raghuram, 2004; Ryan et al., 2015), this research puts the research category in its context. That is, the migration of academic staff has its own particularities such as the global intellectual centre and periphery relations and distribution of scientific knowledge. Also, working as migrant academic staff in the British Higher Education system comprises a particular institutional context. Discussions of these specific features of academic migration in Britain are found in the next chapter.

To summarise, this chapter has analysed the literature on transnational family relationships in three ways. First, the diversity in these relationships was addressed by reviewing studies focused on, respectively, migrant women, men, left-behind children and ageing parents, long-distance romantic couples and extended family and kinship ties. This diversity is significant since this research aims to capture the transnational family relationships of migrant academics in various contexts. The second part, focused on the family practices dimension, presented four transnational family practices: transnational parenting, family visits, financial remittances, and transnational family communication. Finally, factors intersecting with how these relationships are managed were discussed by focusing on the dynamism of the relationships and the impact of institutional factors on them. Finally, this chapter provided a critical discussion of the literature by focusing on ‘skill levels’, the ethnic lens and the network dimension. This part of the chapter not only critically analysed the relevant literature but also positioned itself in terms of the discussions around research on transnational family relationships. The following literature review chapter includes critical analyses regarding the migration and mobility of academic staff and the research context: the case of academic migration in the contemporary British higher education system.

# CHAPTER 3: ACADEMIC MIGRATION AND THE BRITISH CONTEXT

This second literature review chapter focuses on academic and higher education migration flows of academic staff. The term academic migration refers to the mobility of both international students and academic staff. Central to this research’s inquiry, the migration of academic staff is the primary focus throughout this chapter. The chapter is composed of three overarching sections: first, specific features of the migration and mobility flows of academics in the world are considered; then I present the conditions of the British Higher Education system using statistical and contextual information; then, I review studies conducted on the international migration and mobility of academic staff. Finally, at the end of the chapter, I synthetise the analyses of the reviews of the literature on transnational family relationships and academic migration.

## 3.1. Situating Global Movements of Academic Staff: Social, Historical and Economic Dynamics

The migration and mobility of academic staff shows contextual differences from other professions’ migrations, including nurses and engineers (Barwick & Le Galès, 2021; Ryan, 2008). The aim of this section is to show the social, historical, and economic background of the contemporary migration of academic staff in three areas. First, I briefly discuss the historical background of academic migration. This is followed by an analysis of the contemporary forms of academic migration flows. Finally, I locate contemporary academic migration flows in the global economic and political system by casting light on trajectories of academic migration flows from Global South to Global North countries and universities.

### **3.1.1. Historical Background of Academic Migration**

The issue of academic migration and mobility is not just a contemporary phenomenon. It has such deep historical roots that, according to Kim, ancient Islamic or Mediaeval European universities had ‘far more transnational communities of scholars than the modern national universities’ (2009c, p. 388; see also, Neave, 2002). This section shows that the migration and mobility of academics has undergone serious shifts in relation to global and societal transformations and changes over time (Gürüz, 2008; Kim, 2009b).

Although there is no exact historical point when academic migration first appeared, early examples can be seen in Ancient Greece. Sophist philosophers – wandering scholars teaching philosophy and wisdom to the upper social class children (*Snyder*, 2017) – are early examples of migrant academics (Welch, 2016). In parallel, Confucianism remarkably boosted the mobility of both students and scholars in Asia. However, these preliminary examples were limited, irregular and periodic forms of academic mobility.

Mediaeval times can be characterised as featuring more established forms of academic mobility among academics. Regulations and the support of the Church and kingdoms were critical in the remarkable increase of academic mobility in this age. For instance, in 1155, the introduction of the *Privilegium Scholasticum* – a legal code issued by Roman Emperor Frederick I. Barbarossa – provided a range of rights and protective measures to migrant academics for the first time (De Ridder-Symoens, 1992). Similarly, the Pope, as the Head of the Catholic Church, granted scholars *ius ubique docendi* – the right to teach in any universities in Europe without any restrictions – at the end of the 13th century (Parker & Weik, 2014). These developments boosted academic migration and mobility in Europe.

This situation led to a change in the meaning attributed to academic migration and it started to carry a sacred mission. Since knowledge was perceived to be a gift from God, scholars’ travel was considered to be done for a divine, sacred reason. Stressing the sacred dimension of this type of mobility, historian De Ridder-Symoens (1992) calls academic mobility in this age ‘academic pilgrimage’:

Until the end of the eighteenth century, pilgrims or travellers (*peregrini*) of another kind were also a familiar sight on the roads of Europe. These were the university students and professors. Their pilgrimage (peregrination) was not to Christ’s or saint’s tomb, but to a university city where they hoped to find learning, friends, and leisure’ (p. 280) [emphasis added].

Due to their divine purpose, scholars’ other commitments were not expected to interrupt their sacred mission and journey. According to Parker and Weik (2014), these scholars were expected to ‘dedicate all [their] time and effort to the holy cause and not to be distracted by family and other allegiances’ (p. 171). Traces of similar motivations may be found in the lives and perceptions of todays’ migrant academics (Ackers, 2004; Kim, 2009b; Kim & Locke, 2010).

However, at the beginning of the modern era, academic mobility almost came to a halt, not being revived until after the Second World War. This situation coincided with the rise of nation-states being established based on one shared nation, language and socio-cultural background (Kim, 2009). New nation-states were reluctant to receive migration flows of scholars due to the economic and political competition between states (de Wit & Altbach, 2021, p. 30). However, during the interwar period, British universities received an influx of migrant academics. After Hitler took power in Germany in 1933, fleeing persecution, Jewish academics in Germany migrated to the UK and US, including the best scholars of the time, such as Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Karl Popper and Theodor Adorno (Kim, 2009b).

After the Second World War, encouraging academic mobility was among the priorities of many developed countries. Organisations and programmes for boosting academic mobility, such as the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) in Germany, the British Council in Britain and the Fulbright Program in the US, were established. Academic mobility started to be seen as a tool for ensuring peace and mutual understanding and supporting the foreign policies of nation-states. The ancient examples of academic mobility peaked in Mediaeval Europe thanks to several social developments. Although the rise of nation-states and world wars undermined academic mobility, the period after the Second World War created the conditions for academic mobility. With the rise of contemporary globalisation and its economic, political and technological impacts, this trend reached its peak and brought about the internationalisation of contemporary higher education institutions.

### **3.1.2. Internationalisation of Higher Education**

Todays’ international academic migration and mobility flows should be considered as part of the larger political agenda of the internationalisation of HE systems. The internationalisation of HE can be broadly defined as ‘the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education’ (Knight, 2015, p. 2).Although, since ancient times, HE systems have long been internationalised, as detailed above, the internationalisation of HE, as a political and socio-cultural agenda, started after the Second World War. The hopes of European countries were that ‘increasing international activities would help overcome the hatred and mistrust between countries and contribute to mutual understanding and readiness to cooperate’ (Teichler, 2015, p. 7). Despite this aspiration, between 1950 and 1970, there were few concrete strategies of internationalisation and international academic activities were not even described as ‘international’ (Brandenburg & Wit, 2011).

However, in the 1980s, internationalisation emerged as a political agenda especially, for the US and the European Union. The terms ‘international education; international student and international academic’ started to be used in this period (de Wit et al., 2015). In parallel with the Fulbright programme in the US, the Erasmus programme has been a driver for international education and research within European countries. Today, international and regional political organisations such as the European Commission, UNESCO, OECD and World Bank have supported programmes for creating a more internationalised higher education system globally. The international mobility of academic staff and students is part of the motivations and rationales of the internationalisation of HE. According to Knight (2004), idealist, educationalist and instrumentalist rationales can be found behind this phenomenon. As such, it is believed that a more internationalised HE system can boost world peace and trust (the idealist discourse), broaden the horizons of scientific knowledge and educational activities (educational rationale), and enable universities, governments and stakeholders to make profits and contribute to economic growth and financial goals (instrumental rationale) (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Taskoh, 2014).

The situation of contemporary higher education institutions (HEIs) and nation-states is also influential in internationalisation motives. Demographically, universities’ postsecondary tertiary education programmes have become areas of mass production/consumption. According to de Wit and Altbach (2021), during the last 70 years, the gross enrolment ratios in tertiary education reached a 90 per cent rise in some countries; while there are 260 million students in 20,000 universities worldwide (de Wit & Altbach, 2021). There is no doubt that such a massification in HEIs creates competition and triggers the international mobility of staff. Moreover, governments have realised the significance of the connection between science and economic and political power of a nation-state. As the political and economic investments in research turn out to yield great economic benefits, governments start to compete to attract ‘the best and brightest’ researchers and race to conduct the most ground-breaking and innovative scientific projects (Kapur & McHale, 2005). Furthermore, the ranking system which is obsessed with quantifying nearly all components of HEIs fuels the already severe competition. Universities, tertiary education programmes, departments, scholarships and even the performance of academic staff and students, with cross-cutting analysis on age, gender and ethnic background, are ranked annually by supra-national organisations and institutions (Fontinha et al., 2018; Heike Jöns & Hoyler, 2013). Also, employing the knowledge and intellectual capacity of HEIs in supporting nation-states’ economic and foreign policies is common in the global knowledge economy regime (Marini, 2017).

Thus, the international mobility of academic staff should be considered in the context of the global internationalisation of HE agenda. The environment of today’s internationalised tertiary education involves the massification of postsecondary education through recruiting international students (Bilecen, 2013a, 2014; Chankseliani, 2018); endeavours to build transnational branch campuses to recruit international students and academic staff in their countries of origin (Liu & Lin, 2017); to build an internationalised and fixed curriculum; and to attract the mobility of academic staff for the idealist, educationalist and pragmatist purposes described above (Potts, 2014; Suzuki & Rao, 2020).

### **3.1.3. Global Movements of Academic Labour: From Periphery to Centre**

Compared to other types of migration and mobility patterns, such as undocumented and labour migration, academic migration flows have their own particularities. In this section, I place the migration of academic staff within the wider geo-political order. In this global economy of scientific knowledge production model, the movements of academic staff circulate between countries and central countries (Coey, 2018; Zeitschrift & Jöns, 2018). In this global knowledge economy model, peripheral countries tend to be characterised by being less developed in terms of economy, human rights, technology, education and health systems, while central countries usually have the best resources in these areas (Jöns, 2007; Schott, 1998). Peripheral and central countries are usually formulated by a geographical division between Global South and Global North (Dixit, 2021; Mendoza et al., 2020). Thus, academic migration flows tend to take place from scientifically peripheral countries in Global South to central countries in the Global North, such as the UK, US and Canada. Comparing global academic activities via the two most reputable ranking systems – the Shanghai and QS-rankings – Jöns & Hoyler (2013) conclude that:

the resulting geographies display striking disparities between the global North and South as well as between the economically prospering regions in North America, Europe, East Asia and Australia and large parts of South America, Africa and Asia (p. 56).

Therefore, a similar path is also visible in the regional contexts. For instance, in the European context, it is evident that academics from Southern European countries such as Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Cyprus tend to migrate to the more developed and affluent countries in Northern Europe such as the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway (Giousmpasaglou & Koniordos, 2017). Also, in the context of Europe, migration flows from the Eastern European countries to the countries and regions in the Western Europe are significant. Due partly to the EU enlargement schemes (Ackers et al., 2017; Anniste et al., 2012), the migration flows from Eastern Europe to Western Europe such as the UK and Germany, according to Favell (2008), is 'probably the most dramatically evolving and changing context of migration in the developed world' (p. 711). Studies show that Western European countries like the UK has been attracting students and academic staff from Eastern European countries (Anniste et al., 2012; Chankseliani, 2018). This situation also poses risks of ‘brain drain’ in the Eastern European countries such as Bulgaria and Poland (see Guth & Gill, 2008). Thus, in this model, the interdependencies between central and peripheral countries tends to shape academic migration flows.

From the perspective of the centre, developed countries have socio-economic and political advantages that enable them to pull academic knowledge, staff and students like a magnet pulling iron powder (Mendoza et al., 2020; Morley et al., 2018). As of 2021, more than 6 million international students were studying abroad and nearly half were concentrated in the US, the UK, Germany and France (UNESCO, 2021a) – migrant academics from developing countries such as China, India, Pakistan, Turkey and South Korea tend to prefer to move to these four countries. I examine the statistics about migrant academic staff in the UK in this chapter.

One of the advantages of centre countries is language as English has long been the lingua franca of academic knowledge. Academic materials written in a language other than English have little chance of dissemination and circulation around the world (Ackers & Gill, 2008b; Pherali, 2011). Furthermore, research infrastructure; financial investments; and the academic rankings of universities and institutions provide considerable advantages to central countries. For example, according to UNESCO (2022), as of 2022, global investment in research and development activities reached a record 1.7 trillion dollars, and 80 per cent of this was invested by only ten developed countries, including the US, the UK, Germany and Canada. Such subsidies boost international activities and circulation of academic knowledge, students and staff. In this sense, through several exchange programmes such as the Turing, Erasmus+ and Fulbright programmes, central countries attract the best and brightest academic staff from across the world (Ackers, 2008). Additionally, the rise of online academic activities – which gained momentum during the Covid-19 pandemic (Kazemian & Grant, 2022; Ma et al., 2021) – and the development of transnational branch campuses (Liu & Lin, 2017) have made international academic mobility easier, simpler and quicker than it used to be. These temporary academic mobility experiences can turn into the long-term migration of academic staff. For example, analysing the trajectories of migrant academics via a dataset of 10,000 Indian academics working in different parts of the world, Czaika and Toma (2015) found strong emphases on path-dependency; that is, previous short-term international activities of academics played a determining role in their long-term movements. Due to path-dependency, countries and institutions based in central countries are increasingly becoming the main receivers of global migration of academics (Czaika & Orazbayev, 2018; Czaika & Toma, 2017; Liew, 2005). Therefore, in the context of central countries there is a reciprocal relationship between economic development and investment in science and the movement of scientific knowledge, people and ideas (Jöns, 2007, 2018; Sidhu et al., 2015).

Second, from the perspectives of academics in peripheral countries, both academic and socio-economic factors can drive academic staff to look for academic jobs abroad. A series of motives drives academic staff to migrate from peripheral countries to centre countries. According to the OECD’s report on ‘*Higher Education to 2030’*, academics in peripheral countries often face problems when they want to cooperate with other academics in central countries such as gaps in technology and research facilities (Enders & Musselin, 2008). Also, economic differences and life quality can be strong motives to migrate for academics working at the periphery. Indeed, academics usually fit in the middle-class income level even in periphery countries (not lower income groups) (OECD, 2021). However, they might have relatively lower conditions compared to those of their counterparts working in centre countries. The thesis of relative deprivation is frequently used to explain the motivations of academics who left South European countries after the 2008 Financial Crisis (Gomes et al., 2015; Minneci, 2015; Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2014). Political and human rights issues also drive academics to search for posts abroad (Schott, 1998). For instance, studying migrant academics in different countries, Morley and colleagues (2018) point out that:

Another type of mobility involved moving from the Global South to the Global North for economic, political and human right motivations. This was the case with our four Latin American academics living and working in the USA (p. 541).

Thus, academic autonomy and freedom of expression are significant characteristics of institutions in centre countries (Beiter, 2014; Xing & Bolden, 2020). However, academic migration flows in such global knowledge economies further widen the academic, economic, technological and socio-cultural gaps between peripheral and central countries (Altbach, 1998). The extract from Yang and Welch (2010) below clearly articulates the worsening of inequalities arising from academic migration flows in the global knowledge economy:

A few countries at the centre retain extraordinary academic power, while the rest remain on the periphery or semi-periphery. The lack of well-trained academic personnel is a major factor for the peripheral countries failing to move closer to the centre. While the mobility of the highly skilled could raise the total world output, and benefit the world as a whole (Johnson, 1968), the international mobility of human capital tends to result in a loss of technological development and economic growth for sending countries (p. 595).

Therefore, the global knowledge economy is designed particularly for the benefit of central countries. In some contexts, losing academic labour can be a serious barrier for a nation’s socio-political and economic conditions (see Odhiambo, 2013 on outflow migration of academic staff from Kenya). Although recent studies show peripheral countries can also be effective and successful in attracting skilled migrants (Chen et al., 2022; Heikinheimo, 2004; Saxenian, 2005), research still emphasises the deepening of inequalities between peripheral and central countries (Luczaj & Holy-Luczaj, 2022).

To summarise, this section situates the migration of academic staff in the context of the global knowledge economy. What this means for this research is that the migration of academic staff to Britain has a specific context. Unlike other types of migration, the migration of academic staff tends to follow a path from intellectual periphery to centre (Kim, 2009a). British universities still tend to be central institutions and occupy privileged positions in this system (Al-Mahdawi, 2022; Mahony & Weiner, 2019), which makes the context of British universities a useful space for studying the transnational familial relationships of migrant academics. Another factor that can explain the inflow migration of academic staff to Britain is the colonial links. As such, it is well known that during the Medieval and Modern era, Britain was attracting scholars as well as exporting its HE system and university models to the previous British colonies (Kim, 2009a). Furthermore, the colonial heritage still seems to dominate the mobility of academics and international students (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017). One of the most significant factors behind this is the English language which is the *lingua franca* of scientific research. Research found that coming from an English speaking HE system makes many migrant academics’ mobility and transfer to the British HE system easier (Laakso, 2020). Also, studies found that a remarkable part of the demand of academic labour in many previous British colonies are usually met by scholars who got their education in Britain or other English speaking countries (Hurst, 2014; Richard Woolley et al., 2009). Thus, it should be acknowledged that the British universities have long been the destinations of academics due to colonial links and some of these post-colonial linkages are still significant in shaping the contemporary British HE system.

## 3.2. The British Context

In this section, I present and discuss details about the higher education system in Britain in two areas. First, drawing largely on national datasets, I present statistics about migrant academic staff working at British universities. Second, I discuss the socio-political and employment conditions of migrant academic staff under the neoliberal British higher education system, which can be broadly defined as operating within the principles of free market capitalism and deregulation (Savigny, 2019; Tight, 2019). In so doing, I aim to achieve two outcomes: first, demographically, I demonstrate that the situation of migrant academics is worthy of sociological attention and empirical investigation; second, by presenting the latest issues and discussions around the neoliberal management of universities, I reveal the employment conditions and prevailing managerial culture at British universities. This sets the stage for this research’s further analyses since employment conditions – including working environment and hours, holidays, and salaries – are critical in the analyses of transnational family relationships (Kilkey & Merla, 2014).

### **3.2.1. Facts and Figures**

This section provides statistical information about migrant academics in Britain. I draw mainly on the datasets of HESA (Higher Education Statistical Agency), which is the official organisation for the collection, assurance and dissemination of information related to UK HE. However, I also draw on statistics from the organisation Universities UK (UUK) (the official organisation for universities in the UK) and the Universities and College Union (UCU), a trade union of higher education staff in the UK (UCU, 2020). Before moving to the data, I should note that the statistics I analyse here are designed for the United Kingdom – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – as HESA act as the UK’s official body for figures on this topic. This research’s focus is on British universities since I will not gather data from universities in Northern Ireland. Due to this reason, the information here is not solely for the British context since they also include the figures of Northern Ireland. However, figures and trends in the context of Britain (three countries, England, Wales and Scotland) tend to parallel the overall UK figures to a large extent. Therefore, although the statistical information provided here is not solely for Britain since it includes Northern Ireland data, it is still significant in understanding data about migrant academics in Britain. In this section, I analyse data in relation to number of migrant academic staff; their ethnic and age distribution; contract types; professorship and salary ranges. Before starting to analyse the statistics, two important notes are required; the first is related to how to read the HESA tables. There are different variables in the row. As for the columns, the term ‘No.’ refers to the number of the staff shown. The percentage sign with an arrow down (‘**↓%**) shows that the percentage of the variable should be read from to top to down. Similarly, the percentage sign with an arrow to the right side means that the percentage of the variable (**→%**)should be read from left to right row.

Second, it is significant to clarify HESA’s definition of being an academic staff. HESA states full obedience to the regulations of 2010 the Standard Occupational Classification (Office for National Statistics, 2022) in its definitions and analyses. In this regard, HESA defines academics as ‘staff with at least one academic contract of employment’ (HESA, 2021, p. 14). This definition excludes only the ‘atypical academic staff’ which refers to staff who meet one or more of the criteria below (UCU, 2021):

i) working for less than four consecutive weeks without any statement of terms and conditions issued

ii) working for one-off tasks such as organising an academic conference

iii) working away from the normal work provider

iv) working only when required such as for catering and demonstrators in conferences

Although it is difficult to trace the number of atypical academic staff at British universities, according to the UCU (2021), as of 2021, there were approximately 66000 atypical academic staff. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the atypical academic staff is excluded in HESA’s statistics and analyses.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Academic Staff** | | | **Professional and Support Staff** | | | **All Staff** | |
| **No.** | **↓%** | **→%** | **No.** | **↓%** | **→%** | **No.** | **↓%** |
| **UK nationals** | 151,695 | *68.4* | *46.7* | 172,855 | *88.6* | *53.3* | 324,545 | *77.8* |
| **Non-UK nationals** | 70,180 | *31.6* | *75.9* | 22,260 | *11.4* | *24.1* | 92,440 | *22.2* |
| **EU** | 38,400 | *17.3* | *72.7* | 14,455 | *7.4* | *27.3* | 52,855 | *12.7* |
| **Non-EU** | 31,780 | *14.3* | *80.3* | 7,805 | *4* | *19.7* | 39,585 | *9.5* |
| **All staff** | 221,875 | *100* | *53.2* | 195,110 | *100* | *46.8* | 416,985 | *100* |

Table 1: Number of non-UK national academics in the UK (HESA, 2021)

To begin with, as can be seen in Table 1, in the 2021/22 education period, more than 30 per cent of academics were not UK nationals, which accounts for 70,180 academics.

There was a notable decrease in the number of non-UK nationals compared to the previous year’s data, with over 90,200 in 2020/21 (UUKI, 2021). One explanation might be the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic when, as with nearly all sectors, numbers of non-UK nationals in the higher education sector in the UK reduced significantly. As such, overall staff working in the UK higher education sector diminished from 280,000 to 220,000 in the same time period (UNESCO, 2021b). Similarly, in 2021, more than 5,000 overseas academics started an academic job in the UK. However, more than 2,000 academics left their institutions and went to a non-UK higher education system (HESA,2021).

Figure 1: Trends in the Number of Academic Staff (Source: HESA, 2022)

The line graph above is drawn based on the HESA data on the numbers academic staff (HESA, 2022). Overall, upward trends can be easily in the numbers of all staff; UK national and non-UK national academic staff. However, these numbers start to rise slightly from the period 2019-2020, which is due partly to the negative influence of Covid-19 outbreak on the UK HE system. It is known that, alongside the other sectors, the British HE sector has been shrinking because of the Covid-19 global pandemic (Gamlen, 2020; Kazemian & Grant, 2022; Ma et al., 2021). Another significant point arises from the comparison of the European background academics and non-European background academics. The difference between numbers of European and non-European background academics has been decreasing as the number of non-EU academics goes up while the number of EU academics decrease. One possible reason behind this is the effect of Brexit; although it is difficult trace how many EU background academic staff left the British HE system, studies show that British universities are losing some of their EU background academic staff due to Brexit (Al-Mahdawi, 2022; Fowler et al., 2018; Marini, 2018a; Samarsky, 2022). To sum up, from a historical perspective, an upward trend is visible in the numbers of all staff; UK national and non-UK national staff. This rising trend has started to decrease due to the effect of Covid-19. Also, because of the influences of Brexit, the number of European background academics has been decreasing while the number of non-EU academic staff are going up.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | **England** | | **Scotland** | | **Wales** | | **UK** | |
|  |  | **No.** | **↓%** | **No.** | **↓%** | **No.** | **↓%** | **No.** | **↓%** |
| **UK national** | **White** | 218,920 | 87.8 | 32,770 | 95.5 | 16,325 | 95.2 | 271,510 | 89.2 |
| **BAME total** | 30,435 | 12.2 | 1,550 | 4.5 | 830 | 4.8 | 32,930 | 10.8 |
| Asian | *13,055* | *5.2* | *570* | *1.7* | *290* | *1.7* | *13,955* | *4.6* |
| *Bangladeshi* | *1,310* | *0.5* | *35* | *0.1* | *30* | *0.2* | *1,375* | *0.5* |
| *Indian* | *6,880* | *2.8* | *230* | *0.7* | *125* | *0.7* | *7,255* | *2.4* |
| *Pakistani* | *2,335* | *0.9* | *165* | *0.5* | *55* | *0.3* | *2,555* | *0.8* |
| *Other Asian* | *2,535* | *1.0* | *140* | *0.4* | *80* | *0.5* | *2,770* | *0.9* |
| Black | *6,595* | *2.6* | *145* | *0.4* | *110* | *0.6* | *6,855* | *2.3* |
| *African* | *2,860* | *1.1* | *15* | *0.0* | *40* | *0.2* | *2,920* | *1.0* |
| *Caribbean* | *3,340* | *1.3* | *115* | *0.3* | *60* | *0.3* | *3,520* | *1.2* |
| *Other Black* | *395* | *0.2* | *10* | *0.0* | *10* | *0.1* | *415* | *0.1* |
| Chinese | *2,825* | *1.1* | *245* | *0.7* | *120* | *0.7* | *3,220* | *1.1* |
| Mixed | *5,455* | *2.2* | *390* | *1.1* | *180* | *1.0* | *6,050* | *2.0* |
| Other | *2,500* | *1.0* | *205* | *0.6* | *135* | *0.8* | *2,850* | *0.9* |
| *Arab* | *560* | *0.2* | *35* | *0.1* | *25* | *0.2* | *625* | *0.2* |
| *Other* | *1,940* | *0.8* | *170* | *0.5* | *105* | *0.6* | *2,220* | *0.7* |
| **All staff** | **249,355** | **100.0** | **34,320** | **100.0** | **17,155** | **100.0** | **304,435** | **100.0** |
| Unknown | 15,000 | 5.7 | 4,255 | 11.0 | 760 | 4.2 | 20,110 | 6.2 |
| **Non-UK national** | **White** | 46,245 | 67.0 | 7,110 | 69.9 | 1,580 | 63.6 | 56,695 | 67.7 |
| **BAME total** | 22,730 | 33.0 | 3,060 | 30.1 | 905 | 36.4 | 27,005 | 32.3 |
| Asian | *8,125* | *11.8* | *990* | *9.8* | *280* | *11.3* | *9,550* | *11.4* |
| *Bangladeshi* | *350* | *0.5* | *35* | *0.3* | *30* | *1.1* | *420* | *0.5* |
| *Indian* | *3,420* | *5.0* | *415* | *4.1* | *105* | *4.1* | *4,025* | *4.8* |
| *Pakistani* | *775* | *1.1* | *95* | *0.9* | *35* | *1.4* | *925* | *1.1* |
| *Other Asian* | *3,575* | *5.2* | *445* | *4.4* | *115* | *4.6* | *4,180* | *5.0* |
| Black | *3,355* | *4.9* | *340* | *3.3* | *95* | *3.8* | *3,820* | *4.6* |
| *African* | *285* | *0.4* | *10* | *0.1* | *5* | *0.2* | *300* | *0.4* |
| *Caribbean* | *2,690* | *3.9* | *285* | *2.8* | *80* | *3.1* | *3,075* | *3.7* |
| *Other Black* | *380* | *0.6* | *45* | *0.5* | *10* | *0.5* | *445* | *0.5* |
| Chinese | *5,690* | *8.3* | *770* | *7.6* | *260* | *10.4* | *6,810* | *8.1* |
| Mixed | *2,520* | *3.7* | *325* | *3.2* | *60* | *2.5* | *2,925* | *3.5* |
| Other | *3,035* | *4.4* | *630* | *6.2* | *210* | *8.4* | *3,905* | *4.7* |
| *Arab* | *955* | *1.4* | *65* | *0.6* | *45* | *1.9* | *1,065* | *1.3* |
| *Other* | *2,085* | *3.0* | *565* | *5.5* | *165* | *6.6* | *2,835* | *3.4* |
| **All staff** | **68,970** | **100.0** | **10,170** | **100.0** | **2,485** | **100.0** | **83,705** | **100.0** |
| Unknown | 6,390 | 8.5 | 2,015 | 16.6 | 225 | 8.3 | 8,735 | 9.5 |

Table 2: Ethnic backgrounds of non-UK academics in the UK (Source: HESA 2021)

In relation to the ethnic and racial distribution of academics, Table 2 above shows that more than two thirds of non-UK national academics were white and one third were from BAME ethnic backgrounds. The number of BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) academics is composed of Asian background (such as Indian, Pakistani and Bengali; Black (for examples, Caribbean and African) and Chinese and other ethnicities.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **BAME** | | | **White** | | | **All staff** | |
|  | **No.** | **↓%** | **→%** | **No.** | **↓%** | **→%** | **No.** | **↓%** |
| UK nationals |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <25 | 2,570 | 7.8 | 14.9 | 14,635 | 5.4 | 85.1 | 17,205 | 5.7 |
| 26-30 | 3,475 | 10.6 | 12.1 | 25,170 | 9.3 | 87.9 | 28,645 | 9.4 |
| 31-35 | 4,245 | 12.9 | 11.8 | 31,605 | 11.6 | 88.2 | 35,850 | 11.8 |
| 36-40 | 4,905 | 14.9 | 12.3 | 35,090 | 12.9 | 87.7 | 39,995 | 13.1 |
| 41-45 | 4,430 | 13.5 | 12.1 | 32,080 | 11.8 | 87.9 | 36,510 | 12.0 |
| 46-50 | 4,345 | 13.2 | 10.7 | 36,320 | 13.4 | 89.3 | 40,660 | 13.4 |
| 51-55 | 3,935 | 11.9 | 9.5 | 37,555 | 13.8 | 90.5 | 41,490 | 13.6 |
| 56-60 | 2,925 | 8.9 | 8.4 | 31,785 | 11.7 | 91.6 | 34,715 | 11.4 |
| 61-65 | 1,535 | 4.7 | 7.7 | 18,360 | 6.8 | 92.3 | 19,895 | 6.5 |
| >66 | 565 | 1.7 | 6.0 | 8,910 | 3.3 | 94.0 | 9,475 | 3.1 |
| **All UK nationals** | **32,930** | **100.0** | **10.8** | **271,510** | **100.0** | **89.2** | **304,435** | **100.0** |
| Non-UK nationals |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <25 | 1,455 | 5.4 | 35.7 | 2,625 | 4.6 | 64.3 | 4,085 | 4.9 |
| 26-30 | 4,750 | 17.6 | 39.1 | 7,410 | 13.1 | 60.9 | 12,160 | 14.5 |
| 31-35 | 7,135 | 26.4 | 38.8 | 11,255 | 19.9 | 61.2 | 18,390 | 22.0 |
| 36-40 | 5,450 | 20.2 | 32.7 | 11,205 | 19.8 | 67.3 | 16,655 | 19.9 |
| 41-45 | 3,400 | 12.6 | 28.2 | 8,660 | 15.3 | 71.8 | 12,060 | 14.4 |
| 46-50 | 2,060 | 7.6 | 24.9 | 6,205 | 10.9 | 75.1 | 8,265 | 9.9 |
| 51-55 | 1,390 | 5.1 | 24.0 | 4,385 | 7.7 | 76.0 | 5,770 | 6.9 |
| 56-60 | 805 | 3.0 | 22.3 | 2,815 | 5.0 | 77.7 | 3,620 | 4.3 |
| 61-65 | 400 | 1.5 | 21.7 | 1,440 | 2.5 | 78.3 | 1,840 | 2.2 |
| >66 | 160 | 0.6 | 18.7 | 700 | 1.2 | 81.3 | 860 | 1.0 |
| **All non-UK nationals** | **27,005** | **100.0** | **32.3** | **56,695** | **100.** | **67.7** | **83,705** | **100** |

Table 3: Age distribution of non-UK national academics in the UK (Source: HESA, 2021)

In relation to the age of academics, as Table 3 shows, non-UK academics’ age ranges are concentrated in the 31-35 and 36-40 age groups. This also corroborates the argument that middle-aged academics are more mobile than younger or older academics (Cañibano et al., 2020). Nearly two-thirds of all non-UK national academic staff are below 40 years old.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **UK Nationals** | | | | | | | | |
|  | **White** | | | **BAME** | | | **All staff** | |
| **Academic staff** | **No.** | **↓%** | **→%** | **No.** | **↓%** | **→%** | **No.** | **%** |
| **Open-ended/**  **permanent** | 90,825 | 72.8 | 89.4 | 10,760 | 68.6 | 10.6 | 101,585 | 72.3 |
| **Fixed-term** | 33,990 | 27.2 | 87.3 | 4,935 | 31.4 | 12.7 | 38,925 | 27.7 |
| **All contracts** | 124,815 | 100 | 88.8 | 15,695 | 100 | 11.2 | 140,505 | 100 |
| **Non-UK nationals** | | | | | | | | |
|  | **White** | | | **BAME** | | | **All staff** | |
| **Academic staff** | **No.** | **<%** | **%** | **No.** | **<%** | **%** | **No.** | **%** |
| **Open-ended/**  **permanent** | 26,550 | 62.8 | 71.7 | 10,490 | 50 | 28.3 | 37,040 | 58.5 |
| **Fixed-term** | 15,725 | 37.2 | 60 | 10,505 | 50 | 40 | 26,230 | 41.5 |
| **All contracts** | 42,275 | 100 | 66.8 | 20,995 | 100 | 33.2 | 63,270 | 100 |

Table 4: Comparison of contract types between UK and non-UK nationals (Source: HESA, 2021)

The types of contracts that UK academic staff held in 2021/22 are shown in Table 4. While the percentage of open-ended permanent contract holders of UK nationals was above 70 per cent, only 58 per cent of non-UK nationals held permanent contracts. This figure is further complicated when ethnic and racial backgrounds are included: more than 70 per cent of non-UK national permanent contract holders have white backgrounds while BAME non-UK permanent contracts account for 28 per cent. This gap widens among UK nationals: while 89% of permanent holders were white, 10 per cent were BAME.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | **BAME** | | | **White** | | | **All academic staff** | |
| **No.** | **↓%** | **→%** | **No.** | **↓%** | **→%** | **No.** | **↓%** |
| **UK nationals** | APS1 | ≤ £19,612 | 35 | 0.2 | 18.9 | 150 | 0.1 | 81.1 | 180 | *0.1* |
| APS2 | ≥ £19,613 and ≤ £25,941 | 240 | 1.5 | 11.2 | 1,910 | 1.5 | 88.8 | 2,150 | *1.5* |
| APS3 | ≥ £25,942 and ≤ £34,804 | 2,370 | 15.1 | 11.1 | 18,985 | 15.2 | 88.9 | 21,355 | *15.2* |
| APS4 | ≥ £34,805 and ≤ £46,718 | 5,500 | 35.1 | 12.1 | 39,885 | 32 | 87.9 | 45,385 | *32.3* |
| APS5 | ≥ £46,719 and ≤ £62,727 | 4,910 | 31.3 | 10.7 | 41,035 | 32.9 | 89.3 | 45,945 | *32.7* |
| APS6 | ≥ £62,728 | 2,640 | 16.8 | 10.4 | 22,850 | 18.3 | 89.6 | 25,490 | *18.1* |
| **All** | **All pay spines** | **15,695** | **100** | **11.2** | **124,815** | **100** | **88.8** | **140,505** | **100** |
| **Non-UK nationals** | APS1 | ≤ £19,612 | 60 | 0.3 | 51.6 | 60 | 0.1 | 48.4 | 120 | *0.2* |
| APS2 | ≥ £19,613 and ≤ £25,941 | 415 | 2 | 43 | 545 | 1.3 | 57 | 960 | *1.5* |
| APS3 | ≥ £25,942 and ≤ £34,804 | 5,725 | 27.3 | 43.3 | 7,510 | 17.8 | 56.7 | 13,235 | *20.9* |
| APS4 | ≥ £34,805 and ≤ £46,718 | 9,430 | 44.9 | 37.5 | 15,730 | 37.2 | 62.5 | 25,160 | *39.8* |
| APS5 | ≥ £46,719 and ≤ £62,727 | 4,100 | 19.5 | 25.5 | 11,980 | 28.3 | 74.5 | 16,080 | *25.4* |
| APS6 | ≥ £62,728 | 1,260 | 6 | 16.3 | 6,455 | 15.3 | 83.7 | 7,715 | *12.2* |
| **All** | **All pay spines** | **20,995** | **100** | **33.2** | **42,275** | **100** | **66.8** | **63,270** | **100** |

Table 5: Pay spine range differences between UK national and non-UK nationals (Source: HESA, 2021)

Concerning the differences in the APS[[2]](#footnote-2) pay ranges of academics, as Table 5 shows, there are notable differences. For instance, while the APS3 range (between £25k and £34k annually) is 15 per cent among UK nationals, the same salary group accounts for more than 20 per cent among non-UK nationals. In a similar vein, non-UK nationals’ salaries are generally concentrated in the middle group, APS4 which is between £34k and £46k annually. However, the percentage of non-UK nationals in higher salary groups such as APS5 (£46k-£62k) and APS6 (above £62k) are lower than their UK national counterparts. Therefore, it can be easily said that the percentages of non-UK national academics in higher salary ranges tend to be lower than academics who are UK nationals.

As a surprising result, the percentage of BAME staff in the non-UK APS6 range is 16.3% while the percentage of UK national BAME staff in the same range remains 10.4%. However, it should be noted that the non-UK BAME staff seems more disadvantageous when making comparison in the same range. That is, only six percent of the non-UK BAME staff can be in the APS6 range; however, this percentage is rising above 16% in the case of UK national BAME staff. Additionally, the percentage of non-UK BAME staff in the APS5 range is lower than all the groups, that is, the non-UK white staff; UK national BAME staff and UK national white staff in the same range. Therefore, an inequality can be easily seen in the higher earning positions of academic staff.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **Professors** | | | **Non-professors** | | | **All staff** | |
| **No.** | **↓%** | **→%** | **No.** | **↓%** | **→%** | **No.** | **↓%** |
| **UK nationals** | White | 14,455 | 90.7 | 11.6 | 110,360 | 88.6 | 88.4 | 124,815 | 88.8 |
| BAME total | 1,490 | 9.3 | 9.5 | 14,205 | 11.4 | 90.5 | 15,695 | 11.2 |
| *Asian* | *600* | *3.8* | *9.4* | *5,780* | *4.6* | *90.6* | *6,380* | *4.5* |
| *Black* | *100* | *0.6* | *4.0* | *2,380* | *1.9* | *96.0* | *2,475* | *1.8* |
| *Chinese* | *350* | *2.2* | *17.0* | *1,705* | *1.4* | *83.0* | *2,055* | *1.5* |
| *Mixed* | *230* | *1.5* | *8.1* | *2,645* | *2.1* | *91.9* | *2,875* | *2.0* |
| *Other* | *210* | *1.3* | *11.0* | *1,695* | *1.4* | *89.0* | *1,905* | *1.4* |
| **All UK staff** | **15,945** | **100** | **11.3** | **124,565** | **100** | **88.7** | **140,505** | **100** |
| **Non-UK nationals** | White | 4,295 | 84.5 | 10.2 | 37,985 | 65.3 | 89.8 | 42,275 | 66.8 |
| BAME total | 790 | 15.5 | 3.8 | 20,205 | 34.7 | 96.2 | 20,995 | 33.2 |
| *Asian* | *305* | *6.0* | *4.0* | *7,310* | *12.6* | *96.0* | *7,615* | *12.0* |
| *Black* | *55* | *1.1* | *2.5* | *2,170* | *3.7* | *97.5* | *2,225* | *3.5* |
| *Chinese* | *235* | *4.6* | *3.9* | *5,735* | *9.9* | *96.1* | *5,970* | *9.4* |
| *Mixed* | *65* | *1.2* | *2.9* | *2,090* | *3.6* | *97.1* | *2,155* | *3.4* |
| *Other* | *130* | *2.6* | *4.3* | *2,900* | *5.0* | *95.7* | *3,030* | *4.8* |
| **All non-UK staff** | **5,080** | **100** | **8.0** | **58,190** | **100** | **92.0** | **63,270** | **100** |

Table 6: Professorships of UK and non-UK national academics (Source: HESA, 2021)

Similarly, Table 5 compares the professorial percentages between UK nationals and non-UK national academics based on ethnicity. Among all UK staff, 11% were professors while 89 per cent were not. However, among non-UK national academic staff, eight per cent were professors while 92 per cent were not. It can be calculated that nearly three out of four professors were UK nationals while only a quarter were non-UK nationals.

To summarise the panorama of migrant academics in the British context, as of 2021, there were more than 70,000 academics who had migrated to the UK for study, work and/or other reasons, which equals one-third of the academic workforce of the British higher education system. While their age ranges and career stages were generally concentrated on early and mid-career academics, they have lower percentages in the distribution of permanent contract types and higher pay ranges (HESA, 2021).

However, statistics are not enough to make overall arguments and judgements about the situation of migrant academic staff in the British context. As stated above, these figures represent the UK context, including Northern Ireland. Although there are similarities between the figures of the UK and Britain, these figures are designed on the basis of the UK. Also, tracing who are ‘migrants’ and who are not is difficult due to the slippery nature of the concept. It can be noted so far that the common criterion of being a migrant academic in official statistics is being a non-UK national. Therefore, when an academic who migrates to the UK becomes a UK national, they do not appear in the non-UK national academic staff statistics, which can conceal the exact numbers of migrant academics. Considering the ethnic diversity in UK national academics might provide a clue about the migration background of academics. As of 2021, HESA reported that over 33,000 UK national academics had a BAME ethnic identity. However, this does not necessarily mean that these BAME academics migrated to the UK from another country. Therefore, although these figures provide detailed statistical information about academic migration, the context of the HE system at British universities requires further contextual analyses. To this end, the next section focuses on the socio-economic and employment conditions found in the British higher education system.

### **3.2.2. British Higher Education System under the Influences of Neoliberalism and New Managerialism**

In this section, I provide details about the British HE system and discuss the employment conditions of academics at British universities. Understanding the British HE system is critical in the later analyses of transnational family relationships since migrants’ employment conditions and working environments can also play a determining role in transnational family practices (Kilkey & Merla, 2014; Merla & Baldassar, 2008). The roots of the current British HE management system can be dated back to changes in 1980s (Lomer et al., 2018; Mahony & Weiner, 2019). In line with the Thatcher government and ensuing socio-political changes, Britain’s HE system also underwent a series of neoliberal transformations. Neoliberalism, in Harvey’s definition, is:

a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade (2005, p. 2).

According to the neoliberal ideology, free market economics, deregulation, and privatisation of state assets are a priority for a more effective use of resources (Taberner, 2018). Also, the concept of new public management (NPM) was based on the idea that the public sector’s management by private sector principles lead to efficient results in terms of money, time and energy (Bleiklie, 2020). These principles were quickly adopted by British higher education institutions. For instance, Taberner’s (2018) study found that neoliberal and NPM transformations were evident in different types of British universities such as ancient, old, new, plate-glass, and post-92. He stresses that in nearly all universities, there is:

efficiency and quantity over effectiveness; autocratic managerialist ideology over academic democracy and debate; instrumentalism over intellectualism; de-professionalism and fragmentation of the academy; increased incidence of performativity, bullying and workplace aggression’ and work intensification (Taberner, 2018, p. 129).

Analysing the general panorama at British universities is key to show the working conditions of academics in the system. That is, migrant academics – apart from their migratory and familial issues – need to deal with and adapt to the employment conditions in their working environments. In this section, I analyse the working environments of academics in the British HE system under the influence of neoliberalism in three parts: the massification of higher education; the casualisation of academic labour; and audit culture.

#### 3.2.2.1. Massification of Higher Education

Under the influence of neoliberal policies, some critical changes occurred in the 1980s that led to the massification of the British higher education system. Getting a post-secondary education was an elite activity which was pursued by those who were particularly interested in academia. However, after the 1980s, the British HE system followed a path of mass production and mass consumption. At this time, full cost fees to overseas student were introduced. Thus, the major income source of universities became tuition fees paid by students (Bryson & Barnes, 2015; Radice, 2013). Also, the binary division between polytechnics and universities was abolished by the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992 (Dearlove, 2002). This resulted in a sudden yet remarkable increase in the number of universities, with new universities referred to as post-92 universities. In a similar vein, from the 1980s to the mid-1990s, the number of academic staff working in universities rose by 60 per cent (Bryson, 2004).

#### 3.2.2.2. Casualisation of Academic Labour in the British HE System

Another significant transformation in 1988 was the abolition of tenured positions in the British HE system. Academic positions were no longer secure and any academic staff could be sacked or hired by managers (Radice, 2013). Influenced by these changes, student and academic staff ratios rose remarkably, while the per capita salary levels of academics and research funding sharply decreased (Bryson, 2004).

Academics in the present British HE system tend to struggle with casualisation. According to the UCU (2021), more than one third of academics at British universities held precarious employment contracts (zero hour, hourly-paid or fixed term) in 2021. Research stressed that the casualisation of employment creates temporal anxiety and pressures for many academics at British universities (Leathwood & Read, 2020). Investigating the context of academics at British universities, Loveday (2018) introduced the concept of the ‘neurotic academic’ ‘ as the embodiment of the contradictions at the heart of the UK’s HE sector’ (p. 156).

#### 3.2.2.3. Audit culture

Another significant feature of the British HE system is the prevalence of audit culture, which means the efforts and activities ‘to ensure that professionals “deliver” “excellence” in terms of teaching and research “outputs”, with management having more ability to increase the “performance” of professionals, in a “market environment’ (Cruickshank, 2016, p. 2). The roots of the audit culture in British HE dates to the 1990s (Mahony & Weiner, 2019). According to Radice (2013), one of the fundamental transformations was the shift in understanding of knowledge ‘from a collective social endeavour’ to ‘a marketable commodity’ (p. 412). Due to the influence of new public management, universities started to be seen as ‘corporate enterprises’ rather than ‘republic of scholars’ (Bleiklie, 2020, p. 1). As such, in 1995, Parker and Jary introduced the concept of ‘Mc University’ drawing on the audit culture at British universities. As Bean (1998) suggests, even the language used in academy illustrates the use of audit culture:

efficiency, productivity, technology, credit hours generated, grants with overhead received, accountability, assessment, competition, costs, total quality management. This is not the language of education or morality or scholarship or learning or community; it is the language of counting, accountants, accountability and, to a greater or lesser extent, it is how we imagine our enterprise (p. 497).

These principles led to a situation in which managers make nearly all decisions alone and monitor activities of all actors in the HE system with generally extrinsic metrics. Stressing the surveillance nature of the HE system in Britain, Mahony and Weiner (2019) draw attention to the similarities between surveillance and audit culture in the British HE and Jeremy Bentham’s conception of panopticon – the prison built around a central area that can see all the cells. A more striking set of similarities is reported by Brandist (2017) who stresses the similarities of the British HE system to 1930s Stalinist Russia. He argues that ‘the introduction of quasi-market and audit culture have replicated some important patterns and pathologies of the Soviet model (Brandist, 2017, pp. 587-8).

To summarise, massification of higher education (e.g., mass production and consumption), casualisation of the workforce and the prevalence of an audit culture are the major features of the British HE system. Apart from these dynamics, academics working at British universities also work in an environment of hyper-performativity. To survive in such a ‘wild’ environment, academics are required to outperform their ‘counterparts’ who used to be their fellow academics. The age of hyper-performativity, according to Macfarlane (2021), has fundamentally shifted traditional understandings in the British HE sector:

Practices that might have been regarded as ethically dubious by earlier generations of academics such as grantsmanship, self-justificatory expressions of interestedness and tangential claims to authorship, are now regarded as legitimate and positive virtues in a more aggressive age of hyper-performativity (p. 459).

In addition to the publish or perish motto, Musambira and colleagues (2012) use the term ‘get grants or perish’ to delignate the grantsmanship culture that prevails in the British HE system. However, several researchers argue that becoming the ‘service providers’ for other research projects and grant providing bodies makes academics feel the loss of their autonomy and creativity (Mahony & Weiner, 2019). A recent study found that a notable number of academics prefer not to apply for external funds and to conduct self-funded research considering their intellectual creativity and autonomy (Edwards, 2022).

However, despite all these influences, academics also have strategies for resistance. The study by Mahony and Weiner (2019) finds creative strategies in the resistance of academics; for instance, ‘machines used to track staff location and activity might be “mislaid” or batteries left to go flat, meeting time tabled as “discussions about student progress” which were really research seminars’ (p. 569). Avoiding international travel and engaging with working from home to allocate time with family (Oliver, 2012) and aligning pregnancy with the end of a contract and semester dates (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012) are also reported in the literature.

In conclusion, it is significant to note that some problems such as casualisation, precarious contracts and loss of autonomy are experienced by many academics (regardless of their migrant status) working in the British HE system. However, this research adds migratory and familial dimension to this context: having to deal with temporary visas, restrictive migration regulations and tight controlling mechanism and practices to maintain relationships with left-behind family and kin. Thus, transnational family relationships of academics do not operate in isolation from external factors of actors in everyday lives. This section situates migrant academics’ transnational family relationships in a context of an employment regime which is influenced by neoliberal policies.

## 3.3. The International Migration and Mobility of Academic Staff

Literature on the international mobility of academics is continually growing, although it is not extensive compared to that on international student mobility (Ackers, 2010; Heike Jöns, 2018). However, a recent review article found 343 papers in the Web of Science on academic mobility (including the mobility of international students) from 2010 to 2020 (Liu et al., 2022). Most of the authors of these papers were based at universities in England, from diverse departmental backgrounds including Education, Business, Economics and Geography. According to the results of this review, Louise Ackers, Terri Kim and Heike Jöns are the scholars with the highest citation frequency of publications on this research topic (Liu et al., 2022). In this section, I critically analyse the research on migration and international mobility of academic staff. My analysis demonstrates two key points about the migration and international mobility of academic staff: first, they set the scene for understanding the lives and familial and intimate relationships of migrant academics. Thus, the empirical knowledge from the existing literature guides the design of my research, including the interview questions and analyses. Second, analysis of the relevant literature also justifies the need for this research: it considers academic migration through the gaze of transnational family relationships, an attempt rarely undertaken before. As the analyses of the research themes demonstrate, a research project focusing on the family and intimate dynamics of academics’ lives is a necessity that this research aims to address.

In this section, studies on the international migration and mobility of migrant academics are analysed by means of three overarching strands. The first strand demonstrates the implications of academic migration and mobility on academic knowledge and scientific practice. Despite being one of the largest areas in the literature, this part is briefly presented since there is an overconcentration of studies on the scientific practice side of academic migration and mobility, and the family and kinship relationships of academics are often neglected. Second, I discuss studies on the adjustment processes of migrant academics to their new working environments. In this section, language, recognition of skills and socialisation issues that migrant academics tend to face are discussed in light of relevant studies. Finally, I move on to analysing studies that aim to capture various inequalities associated with the global mobility and migration of academics.

### **3.3.1. Scientific Practice**

In this section, I analyse studies aimed at investigating the scientific side of academic migration in two ways: the academic factors influencing academic migration and mobility; and migration’s influence on academic knowledge and scientific practice. Various academic dynamics influence individuals’ global mobility patterns, for instance, some studies find that previous academic visits can be influential in the migration of academic staff (Czaika & Toma, 2015; Serpa et al., 2020). In addition, it is found that academics in the disciplines of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are far more mobile than their counterparts in disciplines such as art, humanities and social sciences (Carrozza & Minucci, 2014; Mählck, 2013; Mavroudi & Warren, 2013). Furthermore, career stages, duration of short-term visits, the departure and destination and frequency of international visits and contacts can also have significant influence on the migration of academic staff (Cañibano et al., 2011, 2020).

Second, the influences of migration and mobility of academics on scientific practice and academic knowledge have long been topics of scientific research. The higher education literature focuses on analysing how the migration and mobility of academic staff impacts on scientific outputs like publications and industrial engagement, and how it yields benefits to higher education institutions and governments (Dubois et al., 2014; Uhlbach et al., 2022; Veugelers & Van Bouwel, 2015). As detailed above, the audit culture also influences individuals’ scientific practices by creating competition, hierarchies and issues of performance among the faculty (de Wit & Altbach, 2021). Studies in this area generally find that migrant academics’ academic performances such as productivity and innovation tend to be higher than their native counterparts. For instance, Franzoni, Scellato and Stephen (2014) analysed the scientific outcome of more than 47,000 academics in 16 countries collected by bibliometric methods. Making comparisons on the basis of migrant and native academics, the researchers found that migrant academics clearly outperform domestic academics with or without international migration and mobility experience. Then, considering the migration of academic staff is a selective process, the researchers excluded migrant academic staff whose migration aims were to work and study in their further analyses. They conducted their further analyses on academics who migrated to receiving countries with their families when they were children. They reported the same results: migrant academics perform better than their domestic counterparts. Similarly, studies report better performances of migrant academics in terms of academic productivity, innovation and the dissemination of scientific results (Horta et al., 2021; Siekierski et al., 2018; Tartari et al., 2020). These can be explained by migrants’ ability to combine the knowledge of two different research cultures (Agrawal et al., 2011; Saxenian, 2005) and make use of different sets of habitus and socio-cultural capitals in the Bourdieusian sense (Bourdieu, 1977). Finally, according to the concept of epistemic living spaces,which refers to how academics perceive the material, symbolic, intellectual and temporal dimensions of the space they work in (Felt & Fochler, 2012), the research culture and environment in the destination institutions can also be a possible answer to their outperformance. Therefore, the academic dynamics of migration and mobility and the influences of academic migration on the performances of academics, universities and higher education system have all been the subject of existing studies.

However, there is an overemphasis on the scientific practice dimension of the migration of academic staff. This overemphasis is aligned with the political and economic understandings, motives and perceptions of high-skilled academic migration (Alemu, 2014; Amelina, 2013). In this regard, examining the scientific and material dimensions of academic migration is also encouraged by governments, usually funded by research councils and organisations. However, too much concentration on the scientific side of academics leads to the negligence of their socio-cultural, familial and personal lives (Carrozza, Giorgi, & Raffini, 2017).

### **3.3.2. Adjustment Processes and Social Networks of Migrant Academics**

A corpus of work in the academic migration and mobility literature deals with how academics adjust themselves to their new cities of living and working environments. Various dynamics are found to influence the process. Before moving to the analyses, I should note that I prefer the word ‘adjustment’ to refer to the process in which migrant academics get used to the life in their new country of residence and mix with their co-workers in these institutions. However, the terms integration (e.g., Cohen-Bokek & Davidovitch, 2014), acculturation (e.g., Jiang, Napoli et al., 2010; Nekby, Rödin, & Özcan, 2009) and even cultural assimilation (e.g., Shin, Cheol, & Douglas, 2018) are frequently used in academic mobility and higher education literature. I contend that using those words should be approached cautiously for at least two reasons. First, concepts like integration, assimilation and acculturation have long been widely criticised in the migration literature on the grounds that they assign a linear, unilateral and fixed pathway to migrants’ lives (Schinkel, 2018; Tsuda, 2012). As shown in the last chapter, the transnationalism approach itself is a reaction to this linear understanding of immigrants’ lives, arguing that migrants can have multiple, non-linear relationships and social ties (Basch et al., 1994; Marger, 2017). Secondly, as I elaborated in the introductory chapter, some traditional terms and concepts tend to blur and lose their conventional meanings in the contexts of migrant academics. In the case of high geographical mobility of academics, traditional understandings of border-crossing, settling in a country or socially and culturally integrating to the newly settled country do not have traditional meanings. Therefore, instead of terms like acculturation and/or integration, I prefer to use ‘adjustment processes’ throughout this thesis.

There are two general areas affecting the adjustment processes of migrant academics to their new working and living environments: social life and academic environment. First, related to the socialisation of migrant academics, the language abilities of migrant academics can be a potential problem. Many studies find that although academics are generally good at formal and academic language, they tend to worry about using their language skills in social life. For instance, studying with eight Chinese academics working at a British university, Hsieh (2012) found that participants had difficulty communicating with local social language, which not only affected their socialisation but also teaching processes. Thus, stressing the significance of the social language against formal/academic language, instead of recommending formal language courses and training, Hsieh (2012) suggests using ‘informal conversations, peer-pairing or buddying systems’ to improve the language abilities of migrant academics (p. 380). This is significant in terms of acknowledging migrant academics’ need to socialise and communicate in the university environment. In addition to social life and teaching practices, the language abilities of academics can play a determining role in their academic careers and employment opportunities (Gimenez et al., 2017).

Furthermore, social interactions are also significant for the social life issues faced in migrant academics’ adjustment processes – issues that academia and researchers have generally neglected. However, an unsuccessful process of adjustment and poor levels of social interactions can lead to traumatic experiences. I find the words of Enriquez-Gibson (2018), talking about her own migration journey from the Philippines to Liverpool in an autoethnographic research, as striking yet touching:

As a migrant academic, I have become homeless, not because I lived far away from my birthplace, but because, here in the UK, I have become aware of an irreplaceable and unshakeable minority identity that is imposed upon me and imprinted on my skin. I am simply an ‘other’, lacking the visible features of the ‘locals’, or the familiar persona of a university scholar, or the look of someone the predominantly white cohort of students could easily identify with (p. 126).

Therefore, social isolation and a lack of social interaction can lead to detrimental effects in migrant academics’ lives and identities. It is also significant to note that migrant academics do not tend to have much time for socialisation due to academic workloads (Pherali, 2011). Moreover, socialising within a newly settled city and working environment different from one’s previous experiences can be challenging. Thus, two processes are cited as being critical: academic collaboration and informal talks within departments. One study finds that migrant academics tend to spark their first social connections through academic cooperation and general informal talk in the department (Greek & Jonsmoen, 2021). The researchers report that migrant academics are generally talented at enlarging their social circles, starting from within their departments.

It is often thought that migration and mobility lead to a serious decline in people’s social capital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). However, the literature on migrant transnationalism illustrates that migration does not necessarily bring about a decline in the social capital of migrants; rather they can improve their social capital by being in touch with at least two different locations and social systems (Schiller, 1995; Vertovec, 2002). Again, studies indicate that having ties with the diaspora can make the adaptation process easier and lead to an increase in social capital (Chuatico & Haan, 2020; Sue et al., 2019). However, this should not be seen as a norm. According to Zontini (2004c), who investigated the social capital of Italian families in the UK, the literature tends to idealize ‘the cooperative nature of certain ethnic minority groups’ and overlook the power relations within the group (p. 8). Therefore, ties with the same ethnicity are not a prerequisite for the increase of social capital. Migrants can also weave bridging ties (Putnam, 2000) with other ethnic, social and cultural groups.

As such, some studies highlight that adjustment processes bring about an increase in the tolerance and awareness towards ‘other’ cultures and ethnicities and build a cosmopolitan understanding and identity (Nilemar & Brown, 2019). Kim (2010) associates this process with the concept of ‘transnational identity capital’, which refers to ‘generic competences to engage with otherness’ (p. 584). Therefore, studies focusing on the social capital dimensions of international mobility generally highlight a personal and social change towards a cosmopolitan identity and networked relationships. As Ackers points out (2008), as academics continue to be internationally mobile, they both develop an academic reputational capital and engage with their own and other cultures and build scientific and diasporic networks. However, other studies have found that as academics build international scientific and diasporic networks, they tend to lose their initial networks based in their countries of origin, which tend to preclude return mobility (Bauder, 2020; Burris, 2004; David et al., 2010). Therefore, during the adjustment process language and social life can be significant issues. However, many studies emphasise that, having surmounted these issues, migrant academics tend to develop various types of networks.

Second, the academic dimensions of the adjustment processes are also stressed by studies in the literature. Many studies consider that these processes are necessary and natural since adjustment is an ongoing process. For instance, Green and Myatt (2011), who investigated migrant academics’ experiences at a research-intensive university in Australia, suggest five different phases of adaptation. These are: ‘preparing (a time of excitement and uncertainty); arriving (a time of disorientation and survival); re-establishing (a time of new equilibrium); reflecting (a time of self-acceptance) and generating (a time of action and change)’ (pp. 37-42). According to Green and Myatt, although migrant academics experience difficulties in the initial stages, they generally resolve these issues and become more academically productive afterwards. One of the most cited challenges concerns the differences between scientific practice and academic cultures. Maadad (2014), who collected data from 75 migrant academics in six different Australian universities, aimed to understand how academics ‘learn and live a new academic culture’ (p. 137). He found that migrant academics tend to adapt their previous academic cultures and often find themselves questioning the very basics of their academic practices such as teaching and assessment. Similarly, studying Chinese academics in the British higher education institutions, Jiang and colleagues (2010) report that although the academic practice between Chinese and British universities tends to be similar – due to increasing globalisation in Chinese institutions – migrant academics often have difficulties arising from the division of roles and discipline between teacher and students. In such situations, the host HE system swallows the differences; in other words, migrant academics have few options other than adopting the academic culture of the host culture. This situation can lead to professional satisfaction issues among migrant academics. Morley and colleagues (2018) point out that the obligation to embrace the local academic culture can undermine innovation and creativity and turn academics into ordinary knowledge workers:

In some academic settings, migrant academics may feel more like knowledge workers than knowledge producers, constrained to absorb the local ways of (re)producing knowledge instead of actively contributing to creating it (p. 550).

Therefore, adjustment to the local academic culture and scientific practice can also be problematic for some academics. To summarise, while language and social interactions are significant for the social adaptation processes of migrant academics, teaching and assessment styles and in general adapting to the local academic culture can compromise the academic adjustment processes.

Studies in this strand of the academic migration and mobility literature tend to suffer from at least two key problems. First and foremost, issues around the familial, romantic and kinship relationships of academics across national borders have largely been neglected in the context of migrant academics. However, the huge corpus of literature on transnational family and kinships relationships of migrants demonstrates that migrants’ relationships with members of their families (partners and immediate and extended family members) tend to be at the core of their migration journeys, irrespective of their skills levels (Baldassar, 2016; Ryan & Mulholland, 2014a).

Also, migrant academics’ relationships with their local family and local social networks (like neighbours) have not attracted the attention of researchers in contrasts to other migrants (e.g., Bilecen, 2021; Keskiner et al., 2022; Ryan, 2011a). One possible explanation is that the literature has an overemphasis on the scientific outcome and productivity of migrant academics. As stated above, some studies equate being ‘fully adjusted’ to the new environment with starting to be academically productive (e.g., Green & Myatt, 2011). This arises from the understanding that sees migrant academics as only ‘brains’ capable of contributing the income and development of countries, overlooking that they also have bodily, familial and romantic relationships (Carrozza et al., 2017). This research – approaching migrant academics’ lives from the perspectives of family and kinship relationships across national borders – will be a valuable contribution to this literature.

Second, the adjustment processes of migrant academics to receiving countries depend on a constellation of factors, including the cultural backgrounds of migrant academics. Pherali (2011) investigated the adjustment of migrant academics who were working at five different universities in the Northwest of England. The study revealed that migrant academics from EU countries were generally confident about their language skills even if they were not proficient and had a weak sense of diaspora in the UK. However, non-EU background academics were more likely to display anxieties about the local culture; to feel incompetent in the English language, irrespective of their language levels; were concerned about their permanent residency in the UK; and had strong ties with the diaspora. Furthermore, local, regional, institutional and individual variables are significant for the adjustment process. For instance, examining the adaptation processes of 40 international academics who had moved to the UK in the past five years, Kreber and Hounsell (2014) also stressed the involvement of multiple factors such as ‘the city of living, personality (openness to new experiences); expectations; department and research field; previous experiences; the university and institution’ (p. 17). Finally, migrant academics are a remarkably diverse group in terms of titles and employment conditions. In this regard, the adjustment and migration journey of post-doctoral faculty who are generally on precarious fixed-term or zero-hour contracts (Goździak & Main, 2021; Lopes & Dewan, 2014) cannot be compared with the elite and ‘academic superstars’ (Kreber & Hounsell, 2014) that universities compete for in terms of government and university support, socialisation and working environment. Therefore, migrant academics are a diverse group not just in terms of socio-cultural and familial backgrounds but also in academic hierarchies and employment conditions. Thus, researching this group necessitates addressing this diversity by acknowledging various concepts such as European and non-European backgrounds, different career stages and academic titles.

### **3.3.3. Inequalities in the Experiences of Migrant Academic Staff**

The second group of research in the literature deals with inequalities in the experiences of migrant academics. Compared to the first strand focusing on the adjustment processes detailed above, the literature investigating the inequalities embedded in the international migration and mobility of academic staff is larger. This may be because areas in the higher education systems that create and deepen inequalities are manifold. As Bilecen and Van Mol (2017) point out, ‘higher education is one of the social fields where inequalities are produced and reproduced’ (p. 1241). In this section, I analyse studies focusing on three inequalities that tend to affect migrant academic staff’s experiences: academic practice, gender, and race.

#### 3.3.3.1. Academic practice

In terms of academic practice, the very process of migration and mobility of academic staff can be a cause of inequalities. It is evident that academic migration is inherently selective (Kastberg, 2014), since not all academics can successfully migrate and find a job abroad. As Ackers (2008a) states:

the relative attractiveness of [some] regions enables employers to be more selective and ‘cherry-pick’ across the global markets (p. 438).

In this regard, professional competences and academic skills are of capital importance since universities tend to employ only ‘the brightest and best’ (Kapur & McHale, 2005). It is reported that academics who have inadequate subject-specific skills and language proficiency have difficulty finding a job abroad (Rostan & Höhle, 2014). Additionally, personal experiences such as taking part in international exchange programmes can also influence the international employability of academics (Czaika & Toma, 2017). Furthermore, the transferability of professional qualifications can create inequalities among migrant academics. According to Giousmpasaglou and Koniordos (2017), the non-recognition of skills leads to ‘brain waste’ and deskilling of migrant academics. Studies highlight that qualifications obtained from countries and organisations that are central in the global knowledge economies, such as the US, the UK, Germany, Canada and Australia, are more easily transferable than peripheral countries and organisations such as the Middle East and Asia (Minneci, 2015; Odhiambo, 2013). In addition to the recognition of qualifications, there are significant problems in the transferability of the skills that migrants gain in other countries. For example, studying Ukrainian academics in Germany, Amelina (2013) highlights that although their degrees and qualifications are officially recognised, they are not valued and considered as equal to German degrees. Therefore, recognition and transferability of skills and practices are at least as important as the recognition of degrees and qualifications for migrant academics.

#### 3.3.3.2. Gender and family arrangements

Gender is a significant dimension to consider in relation to the inequalities in the international migration and mobility of academic staff. Instead of having essentialised arguments on gender and mobility, it is necessary to consider the dynamic nature of gender relations and acknowledge the fact that ‘gender is “done” and “undone” by the academics and their partners [or other significant actors] throughout these mobility trajectories’ (Schaer et al., 2017, p. 1304). Studies on this theme generally focus on: i) the links between gender and mobility; ii) gendered inequalities in academia; and iii) family arrangements.

There is growing attention on investigating issues around mobility and gender in general andsome scholars even mention the formation of a new epistemic community focusing on gender and mobility in this context (Kofman, 2020). In relation to the link between gender and academic migration and mobility, there are competing findings. Many studies find that female academics tend to be less internationally mobile than their male counterparts (e.g., Heike Jöns, 2011; Shauman & Xie, 2007).The unequal distribution of familial obligations and expectations between female and male academics is reported as one of the causes (Cohen et al., 2020; Morley et al., 2019). For instance, a study conducted in the context of South Korean migrant academics reveals that female migrant academics’ decision-making process to migrate is more complicated since they need to negotiate their career moves with other family members and are supposed to prioritise family over academic careers (Yoon & Kim, 2018). Therefore, according to one view, female academics tend to be less mobile.

However, findings from different contexts contradict this conclusion. For example, a study on the outflow of early career researchers from France finds that since the academic positions available to early-career researchers in France are largely dominated by male academics, female academics are more likely to search for positions abroad (Moguérou, 2004). Some studies find a significant decrease in the gap between the international mobility of male and female researchers (Heike Jöns, 2011, 2018). Therefore, being highly subjective and contextual, the issue of gender in the mobility rates of academics defies generalisation. However, to what extent ‘left-behind’ family members are involved and how relationships within the immediate and local family ties are navigated are not adequately known. Therefore, instead of over-emphasising the migration and mobility levels of male and female academics, studies need a detailed, nuanced and contextual understanding of how familial relationships are negotiated, discussed and navigated when decisions to migrate are made.

In terms of gendered inequalities in academia, it has long been shown that women academics cannot progress up the career ladder as fast as men. As the leaky pipeline hypothesis puts it, women academics are disadvantaged in terms of career progression – particularly in STEM subjects (Bataille et al., 2017; Fusilier et al., 2013). UK-based research reveals that lack of transparency, severe competition, lack of collegiality and networking based on homosociality – networking within the same sex group – all constitute major barriers for women academics’ career progression (Fletcher et al., 2007). US-based research shows that the academic tenure rates of women have long been lower than male counterparts (Kulis & Sicotte, 2002). Moreover, statistics show that women academics are generally paid less than men. According to the UK Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA, 2021), women academics earn less than men in nearly all fields and salary ranges. In February 2022, UCU’s response to this data was to continue industrial action against the ‘shocking pay gaps’; they stated that ‘what we see at the top of the institutions is just the tip of the iceberg with equality failings rife across the entire sector’ (UCU, 2022). Therefore, gender issues are still relevant in creating inequalities, not just in mobility practices but also in career progression.

In relation to the issue of family arrangements, studies overly concentrate on understanding the familial arrangements of double-career couples. However, how these arrangements are negotiated and how family roles and practices are maintained have been paid far too little attention. Instead, the priority of studies focusing on the family arrangements of migrant academics tend to be the trailing spouse (Heike Jöns, 2011; Leung & Waters, 2017; Alina Toader & Dahinden, 2018). For example, based on the results of a qualitative study conducted at three universities, in Zurich (Switzerland), UCLA (the USA) and Cambridge (the UK), Schaer and colleagues (2017) identified three types of family configurations among migrant academics: a ‘conventional family arrangement’ (based on conventional gender norms); ‘female primary-male tied mover’; and ‘male primary-female tied mover’. The ‘male primary-female tied mover’ is reported to be one of the most common family arrangement types and has received most attention in the literature (Ackers, 2004; Alina Toader & Dahinden, 2018; Vohlídalová, 2014). Many studies highlight how family arrangements in dual-career families tend to culminate in women’s exit from their academic careers (Ackers, 2004; Cangià, 2018; Alina Toader & Dahinden, 2018; Vohlídalová, 2014). Conducting research with tied movers in Switzerland, Cangià (2018) contended that tied movers tend to be in a precarious situation:

Trailing in mobility creates a paradox in that, while being with the family can give the security and comfort for dealing with change both for the assignee and for the partner it is the very choice of moving for the family that creates spouses’ condition of precarity (p. 22).

As stated above, while there is an overemphasis on dual career couples and trailing spouses in the literature, how migrant academics maintain their relationships has largely been neglected. Although there is a general lack of research on this topic, there are a few instances that study this issue. In 2015, Italian researchers Giorgi and Raffini (2015) focused on the LAR (Living Apart Relationships) of academics who moved from Italy and Portugal to Northern Europe. Their article, ‘Love and Ryanair’ (Giorgi & Raffini, 2015), argues that the social and familial dimensions of the mobility of academic staff ‘are as important as the economic and scientific aspects, and [thus] need specific policies’ (p. 50). Two years later, the same researchers, joined by Carrozza, published a book chapter titled ‘Brains and Bodies on the Move: A research agenda on precarious researchers’ mobility’ (Carrozza et al., 2017). They drew attention to the LAR of migrant academics, calling this area ‘the new research agenda’. In their chapter, a few sentences were devoted to how family relationships are maintained in the LAR of South European migrant academics:

The periods of separation are mediated by devices (like Skype, Facebook, mobile phones) that allow constant communication and, at the same time, mediate the relationship, somehow de-coupling ‘brain’ and ‘body’. An ambivalent relationship with these devices emerges, in their unexpected and complex intervention in the love relationship (Carrozza et al., 2017, p. 78).

They hinted at the use and significance of transnational family communication in the navigation of transnational family relationships of migrant academics. However, their call for attention to this ‘new research agenda’ has largely remained unanswered. No previous study has so far investigated issues such as frequent family visits, transnational communication, exchanges of care and emotional support and financial remittances in the context of migrant academics.

However, how caring obligations influence the academic activities of ‘non-migrant academics’ has frequently been studied in HE literature. For instance, using diary methods with 25 academics residing in different countries, Henderson and Moreau (2020) show how HE systems ignore the caring obligations of academics. Similarly, a study conducted with 42 academics in the US revealed academics’ strategies for arranging their caregiving obligations when they need to travel for academic purposes (Lubitow & Zippel, 2014). According to the results, academics generally adopt strategies of: i) avoiding international research; ii) keeping international travel short; and iii) combining international research with their caregiving obligations generally through the help of their partners. However, since these studies focus only on academics (not migrant academics), how migration and transnational relationships with family and kin influence these conditions is largely unknown.

However, there is one exception to this, to the best my knowledge, in the work of Masselot (2011), which focuses on the transnational caring practices of early career researchers in New Zealand. The research is a successful early example of using a transnational family care lens on the study of migrant academics. However, it suffers from being too narrow since it only focuses on work-life balance and its influences on transnational caring relationships. The research was conducted during a Marie-Curie fellowship and published in the Canterbury Law Review since the researcher is a professor of law in the UK. Nevertheless, adopting a transnational family concept with a focus on caring relationships across national borders, the Masselot’s (2011) work has the most similar research aims and concepts to this research.

To summarise, the family arrangements of migrant academics have largely been studied in the context of dual career academic couples. Calls for attention to be given to transnational families have largely gone unanswered. Thus, very little is known about the transnational family relationships of academics such as family and caring practices across national borders, except for Masselot (2011). Therefore, this project provides an exciting opportunity to advance knowledge on the transnational family lives of migrant academics, through empirical evidence generated in the British context.

#### 3.3.3.3. Race and intersectionality

Another topic reported in the literature as a cause of inequalities in migrant academics’ experiences is the issue of race. Some studies highlight that there are differences in terms of entry into and progress in academia on the basis of race (Bhopal & Henderson, 2021). This is also evident in the national statistics: according to the HESA (2021) figures, both academic mobility and income levels are lower in the context of BAME academics. It is significant to note that the distinction Acker (2006) draws between the base of inequality and visibility of inequality is especially relevant in the context of academia. Studies highlight covert racism that migrant academics generally face in British HEIs instead of overt racism (Bhopal & Henderson, 2021; Mählck, 2016). Investigating the race equality in British HEIs, Ahmed (2007) reveals the discrepancy between the equality and diversity mottos of universities and the actual experiences of academics, which conceals the covert racism:

Diversity becomes a brand, and a form of organizational pride. Not only does this re-branding of the university as being diverse work to conceal racism, but it also works to re-imagine the university as being anti-racist and even beyond race: as if the colours of different races have ‘integrated’ to create a new hybrid or even bronzed face (p. 606).

Therefore, a sort of racism can be seen behind the diversity mantras of higher education. Mahlck (2013) asked academics in Swedish HEIs to describe a ‘good researcher’. The results revealed white and male dominated understandings of higher education, despite Swedish universities’ so-called ‘colour-blindness policy’. Highlighting the intersection of being migrant and women of colour in academia identifies deep inequalities. In a study of women of colour academics in British HEIs, Stockfelt (2018) called this group the ‘minority of minorities’ (p. 1012). Being exposed to hyper-surveillance and scrutiny and exclusion are some areas of discrimination reported in the literature (Pilkington, 2013).

Similarly, studying Black migrant academics in British HEIs, Sang and Calvard (2019) found that they are exposed to strategic exclusion from paid activity. While they are usually overloaded with too much work, sometimes they are given little work when there is hourly payment. Therefore, the implicit dominance of white and male academics in the HE system creates severe inequalities, especially for those at the intersection of gender and race. Overall, the inequalities based on the intersection of various factors provide a critical ground for understanding the employment conditions of academics. Although it is hard to reach overall conclusions and generalisations in the British HE system, the prevalence of inequalities is also key to this research’s analyses around migration, family, working environment, institutional support, gender and race.

## 3.4. Conclusion

Discussions and analyses presented throughout this chapter situates this research in a particular way in terms of the existing literature. As detailed in the beginning of the chapter, the migration of academic staff has its own particularities compared to the migration of other highly skilled professions. I made this point in two ways. First, I showed that the migration of academic staff has a specific socio-historical context and meaning, especially in the context of British universities. Second, I discussed that the global migration and mobility flows of academics are deeply entrenched in a global knowledge economy in which academic labour circulates between peripheral and central countries, regions and organisations. In relation to this, I analysed the contours of the employment conditions of the British HE system which is highly influenced by neoliberal motivations. These analyses are significant in terms of describing the contexts of the research group – migrant academics – and sets the scene for understanding the dynamics of transnational family relationships in the context of academic migration.

Furthermore, it is shown that this research will constitute a significant contribution to the existing literature. As the analyses of literature on the migration of academic staff shows, existing research concentrates primarily on the scientific aspects and outcomes of the migration of academics, their adjustment processes, and the inequalities they face in terms of international migration and mobility. I demonstrated that although there have been several calls to investigate the transnational family dimension of academics’ relationships, very little empirical research has been conducted in this area. The present research will make a valuable addition to the literature by shedding light on the transnational family relationships of academic staff who have migrated to and work in Britain.

## **3.5. A Summary of the Literature Review Chapters**

Since this research positions itself at the intersection of transnational family relationships and HE studies, these two different bodies of literature have been examined so far. This section synthetises the reviews of these two bodies of literature and comprises the basis for the analysis of the empirical findings.

This research applies the concept of transnationalism into the context of a group of migrants that are not usually studied in the literature on transnational family relationships (although see Masselot, 2011). As the Chapter Two shows, transnational family relationships literature has been overly concentrated on labour or forced migrants’ contexts in which at least one family member migrates from developing countries to industrial countries and regions usually for the purpose of economic betterment (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Goulbourne et al., 2010). Although there are also studies focussing on the skilled migrants’ transnational family relationships (e.g., Beaverstock, 2005; Conradson & Latham, 2005; Ryan, 2015; Ryan et al., 2015), looking through the gaze of transnational family perspective has been neglected (although see Masselot, 2011). However, the migration of academic staff tends to occur in a sociological context that is different than the usual labour migration. As such, migration flows of academics tend to follow a direction from intellectual periphery to centre (Li et al., 2021; Schott, 1998; see, Section 3.1.3). Also, academic migration has a particular socio-historical context which is characterised by a number of factors from religious and idealist motives for knowledge migration, colonialism and nation-states competitions (see, Section 3.1.1.) (Kim, 2009a). Although these migration flows of academic involve discussions around significant economic and developmental differences between countries and regions such as brain drain and brain gain (Baruffaldi & Landoni, 2016; Sbalchiero & Tuzzi, 2017; Welch & Zhen, 2008), this research aims to understand a more ‘human face’ of academic migration (Favell et al., 2007); that is, family relationships of academics spanning across national borders.

The synthesis of these two bodies of literature shows that looking at the migration of academic staff through the gaze of transnational family relationships concepts offers a very fruitful research ground. As the analysis of the transnational family relationships literature suggests that there are some areas and themes that are overly researched such as some family members and nationalities/ethnicities (see, section 2.4.1.). Also, some studies focussed only on some specific transnational family practices (see Cuban, 2017; Madianou & Miller, 2012 on transnational family communication; see Baldassar et al., 2007 on transnational family care). Thus, looking at the intersection of these two literatures enables this research to shed light on to the often-understudied areas in both bodies of scientific research. For instance, although family visits have been studied thoroughly in the literature on transnational family relationships, we do not know much about the return visits in the context of migrant academics who are highly mobile due to academic activities such as conferences, excursions and summers schools (Baldassar et al., 2007; Mason, 2004). In a similar vein, there is not enough data about how migrant academic staff in British HE system which is characterised by increasing casualisation of employment and low salaries send and receive financial remittances between their family and kinship members (Bleiklie, 2020; Leathwood & Read, 2020; Taberner, 2018 also see section 3.2.2.). Similarly, although the audit culture, time scarcity and gendered inequalities in British HE system are discussed in HE literature (see Brandist, 2017; Macfarlane, 2021 on academic labour and hyper-performativity), how migrant academic mothers and fathers experience negotiate these inequalities in their transnational family relationships, e.g., visiting their family and friends scattered around the world; communicating with their left-behind ageing parents, can only be understood by an approach combining transnational family concept with academic migration and mobility.

With these aims in mind, I examined the bodies of literature on transnational family relationships and academic migration, and designed the research so that its findings cast light on the following questions: i) how do spatial and temporal dynamics shape the ways in which migrant academics maintain their family relationships transnationally?; ii) how and under the influence of which factors do migrant academics provide and receive care from family and kin across national borders?; iii) what is the position of transnational family networks in migrant academics’ wider networked relationships such as local families, neighbourhood relations, and scientific and/or diasporic networks?; and iv) how have conditions caused by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic affected migrant academics’ local and transnational family relationships? The next chapter shows the methodological approach and the decisions that were taken in order to collect the data that can answer these questions in a rigorous way.

# CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

As in every other social research project, many decisions had to be made at different stages, from designing the research to collecting data in the field. Additionally, the decisions made at earlier stages were subject to constant re-consideration and deliberation on the path to achieve the research aims. Therefore, in this chapter, I highlight the methodology of the project, focusing on both the theoretical/philosophical grounds and my practical experiences in the field. This chapter consists of six sections: research design; sampling participant details and recruitment; the data collection process; data analysis; research ethics; and conclusion.

## 4.1. Research Design

This section discusses issues involved in the research design. It first provides the justification for using a qualitative research methodology and discusses the philosophical grounds behind the research design.

### **4.1.1. Qualitative Research Methodology**

This research adopts a qualitative research methodology which includes ‘research that produces findings not at arrived by statistical procedures or other means of quantifications’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 10). Qualitative methodological approaches deal with perceptions, meanings, thoughts and emotions rather than statistics, scales and measures. Therefore, ‘people’s knowledge, views, understandings and interactions are meaningful properties’ in qualitative research projects (Mason, 2002, p. 63). In this section, the reason for embracing a qualitative approach in this research is discussed in two parts. Firstly, a qualitative research methodology is relevant to the aim of this project as it focuses on exploring people’s transnational relationships, which are subjective, relational and dynamic. This suits the objectives of qualitative methodology, according to Miles and Huberman (1994):

[the] primary goal of qualitative research is to understand the ways that people come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day activities (p. 7).

Additionally, as illustrated above, the research questions focus on understanding how a range of factors such as spatiotemporal factors (e.g., physical distance and time), gender and generational differences shape people’s experiences, decisions and negotiations pertinent to their transnational familial relationships. This also fits with the objective of a qualitative methodology, which is generating the knowledge of ‘meanings and motivations that underlie cultural symbols, personal experiences and phenomena and on detailed understanding of processes in the social world’ (Kalof et al., 2008, p. 79). Such a methodology ‘studies things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 3). Therefore, qualitative methodology enables this research to gain insights into the complexities of the research participants from their own points of views (Gilgun et al., 1992, p. 4).

Secondly, the merits of adopting qualitative methodology are expressed by both the sociology of family and transnational family literature. For instance, Gilgun and colleagues (1992) emphasise that qualitative methodology is particularly appropriate for the ‘examination of the diversity of family experiences and family forms as it can focus on the processes of maintaining and producing family realities’ (p. 4; see also Greenstein, 2006). Similarly, Franklin (1996) argues that:

Qualitative research methods are especially relevant to studying families because there are many aspects of family process and interactions that are hidden, or may be too personal or complicated to be easily ascertained with quantitative methods such as structured questionnaires or standardized measures (p. 253).

Similarly, studies aiming to generate in-depth knowledge about transnational familial relationships tend to employ a qualitative research methodology (Carling et al., 2012). Although quantitative studies are predominant in studies of ‘transnationality’ (Faist & Özveren, 2004; Somek, 2012), transnational family relationships have been studied mainly by adopting qualitative research methodologies (although see Caarls et al., 2018; Cebotari, 2018; Mazzucato & Dito, 2018; Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). Qualitative research techniques such as ethnography (Abdul, et al., 2017; Baldassar, 2017; Barglowski, 2014; Fedyuk, 2012; Kordasiewicz, et al., 2018), focus groups (Beazley, et al., 2018; Forssell, 2013; Pribilsky, 2004) and case study designs (Baldassar, 2016; Olwig, 2010) have been widely adopted. Therefore, qualitative methodology is a fruitful approach for generating detailed knowledge about transnational family relationships since, as Ryan (2011) notes: ‘data derived from interviews and focus groups provides an insight into processes that statistics cannot capture, such as the dynamics within migrating families and the ongoing ties that operate transnationally’ (p. 3).

### **4.1.2. Research Philosophy**

Every piece of social research has a philosophical basis framing the nature of the research phenomenon and how (or whether) knowledge about it is gathered and analysed. These significant assumptions and beliefs can be associated with the researcher’s scientific tradition and worldview. Thomas Kuhn (1962) calls these sets of ‘common beliefs and agreements’ about the nature of social phenomena ‘paradigms’. It is difficult to argue that a particular paradigm is true or wrong; however, particular philosophical grounds can best suit specific research designs. In this section, I argue that relativist ontology and interpretivist epistemology paradigms fit best with the design of this research project.

First, this research understands the ‘social reality’ of transnational familial relationships as a combination of multiple actors – including different family members, institutions and states (see Chapters 2 and 3). The decisions, perceptions and interpretations of actors can greatly depend on social, cultural and individual codes, time, geography, previous experiences and personality traits. In other words, actors who are influenced by numerous dynamics co-create different ‘realities’ of transnational familial relationships. This was also the main reason for employing biographical techniques which lend themselves to understanding how different realities are constructed by different actors (Merrill & West, 2009).

Second, the interpretivist epistemology fits well with how this research aimed to gather knowledge about the research phenomenon. Interpretivist tradition holds that reality needs to be interpreted (Bryman, 2012; Scotland, 2012). Max Weber (1864-1920), one of the earliest champions of interpretivism, argued that the nature of social actions is different from natural realities and thus entails interpretation by social scientists (Crotty, 1998). Thus, according to Weber, the goal of sociological research is *verstehen*, which is a systematic process of interpretation whereby the researcher tries to interpret a situation through the eyes of people involved in the process (Gerber & Linda, 2011). Instead of generalisability and verifiability, interpretivist epistemology has different criteria in identifying the quality of work, such as consistency, applicability, neutrality and authenticity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, cited in Seale, 1999). Thus, an interpretivist paradigm does not lend itself to generalisations about the outcome of the research (Payne & Williams, 2005). Similarly, this research does not promise to generate data which is generalisable to the research universe (all migrant academics in Britain). Rather, as Schofield (1993) notes, my aim is to ‘produce a coherent and illuminating description of’ the research subject (p. 202). Thus, interpretivism’s accounts about the knowledge of the research phenomenon corresponds to this research’s objectives.

## 4.2. Sampling, Participant Details and Recruitment

In this section, I present the sampling methods used for data collection, general details about the participants of the research, and the ways in which I gained access to and recruited participants, respectively.

### **4.2.1. Sampling**

Forty-five participants constituted the sample used in this research. Two qualitative sampling strategies were used: purposive sampling and snowballing. Purposive sampling was used for determining participants more effectively because:

the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience… to identify and select the information-rich cases for the most proper utilization of available resources (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2).

Therefore, in the purposive sampling method, the researcher specifies criteria which are connected to the research questions (Bryman, 2012). For instance, investigating the labour market participation of skilled migrants in Switzerland, Riano and Baghdadi (2007) employed three criteria: ‘migration status, time of residence and marital status’. Similarly, researching mobile phone communication by adults in the UK, Rettie (2009) determined ‘class, education level and the presence of children’ as the criteria for their qualitative research. The pre-requisites of participation in the present research were:

1. Having previously migrated to Britain and now working actively at universities in Britain (to exclude atypical academic staff who are retired or not working at universities as part of teaching and research staff (see HESA, 2021)); and
2. Having been in Britain for at least one year (to exclude short-term academic mobilities such as academic excursions, exchange programmes and visits).

In addition, to generate a more diverse sample and achieve ‘the most proper utilization available resources’ (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2), this research also considered additional factors when arranging the research sample: migration background (European or non-European countries); gender; age; length of stay in the UK; academic position/contract type; annual income level; and marital status. The aim was to create a sample range that had the most diverse backgrounds and contexts. Thus, these factors acted as a guideline and also constant reference points for achieving internal and external validity of the research (Bryman, 2012; Whittemore et al., 2001). Before the end of the data collection, the progress was checked and a decision was made about whether any context needed further data collection. At the end of the process, a diverse sample was produced which involved different gender and relationship types; age and length of stay in the UK ranges; academic positions and income levels. Snowball sampling enabled this research to gain access to new chains of participants (Morgan, 2008) and allowed me to quickly build a wide research network.

The snowballing method in an online space proved to be successful and effective. This stems from my observations that migrant academics are more available and better organised online since they generally have a mobile and busy lifestyle. Therefore, it was more difficult to snowball from face-to-face meetings compared to online. However, after online interviews, participants generally ‘forwarded’ my invitation email, sometimes adding some notes or inviting, to their friends/colleagues who were migrant academics and may be interested in the research. From the perspective of the potential participant, because the email was sent from a friend and also showed previous correspondence, the potential participant tended to feel more inclined to trust the request. One further observation which is related to the success of online snowballing in the case of this research was migrant academics’ active use of emails. They regularly responded to my emails, and while some potential participants refused to take part in the research, others accepted; some requested to schedule the interviews late or wanted me to contact them after a certain period of time; but very few people left my invitation unanswered. Therefore, the professional characteristic of migrant academics influenced the success of online snowball sampling.

### **4.2.2. Participant Details**

In terms of participant details, 45 participants constituted the sample of this research. As Figures 2 and Figure 3 show, there were 26 female, 16 male, and three non-binary participants. At the time of the data collection, 29 participants were aged between 25–39-year-old; 14 were 40-54 years old and two participants were 55 or over.

Figure 2: Participants’ gender

Figure 3: Participants’ ages

Figure : Participants’ nationality

Figure 4 illustrates the nationalities of the participants. Although the concepts of nationality, origin and home country were complicated in many cases, Figure 4 reflects the nationality and citizenship status of the participants, including those who held dual citizenship, such as British Chinese, British Iranian and British Turkish. There were participants from 30 different nationalities, which reduces to 27 when overlapping dual nationality statuses (e.g., ‘Turkish’ and British-Turkish’ are counted as one Turkish nationality) are excluded and British nationality is counted as one nationality.

Figure 5: Participants’ migration background

Although this research’s aim was not to create a representative sample of the research universe, the distribution of European and non-European background migrant academics was dissimilar to figures reported in British academia (see HESA, 2018). As shown in Figure 5, there were 29 academics with a non-European background and nine from Europe. The ‘na’ stands for ‘not applicable’, referring to migrant academics who held dual citizenship. According to my observations, the reason the sample range was concentrated on non-EU migrant academics stems from migration identity. Although it is difficult and risky to make generalisations, I observed that the participants who had high levels of migrant identity, that is seeing oneself as a migrant, were greater in number among non-European background academics than the Europeans. Similarly, some European academics rejected participation, arguing that they did not consider themselves migrants. On the other hand, I observed that in the conferences, networks and campaigns about migrant academics that I attended, the number of non-European academics was generally higher. Although this is not to say that non-European academics ascribe to a migrant identity while European academics do not, the academics who were active and also interested in taking part in this research were generally those whose background was non-European.

Figure 6: Participants’ visa types

Figure 6 shows the types of visas each participant possessed: 17 participants did not need a visa since they were either from EEA countries or had British citizenship. Furthermore, five participants had ILR (Indefinite Leave to Remain), 16 participants had Tier 2 Skilled Worker Visas, one participant had a Tier 1 Global Talent Visa, five had Spouse/Partner Visas and one had a Tier 4 Postgraduate Visa.

Figure 7: Participants’ length of stay in Britain

Figure 7 shows the distribution of length of stay of participants in Britain. At the time of the interview, four participants had been in Britain for 1-4 years, 17 participants for 5-9 years, 16 participants for 10-14 years, three participants for 15-19 years, and five participants had spent over 20 years in Britain.

Figure 8: Participants’ titles

Figure 8 shows the participants’ academic titles and positions. Additionally, while 18 participants held fixed-term contracts, 27 had permanent contracts at the time of the interview. In relation to annual income levels, 22 participants’ were between £40k and £59k; 18 were between £20k and £39k, and five were £60k and above.

Figure 9: Participants’ relationship status

Figure 9 shows participants’ relationship statuses: 18 were single, while three were in long-term relationships. Four participants were in civil partnership and 17 were married, while two were engaged and one was widowed. Furthermore, while 35 participants did not have children, four had one child and six participants had two children each.



Figure 10: Participants’ locations in the UK

Finally, regarding the participants’ locations in the UK, 19 different cities were represented (see Figure 10): Bath, Dublin, Birmingham, Cambridge, Canterbury, Cranfield, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Lancaster, Leeds, Leicester, London, Manchester, Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Sheffield and York.

### **4.2.3. Recruitment**

This research used multiple methods to recruit participants. I first approached a number of national migrant academics communities, including the Association of British Chinese Professors (ABCP); the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science ([JSPS London](http://www.jsps.org/about_us/about-jsps.html)); the Egyptian British Research Education Organisation ([EBREO](http://ebreo.org.uk/index.html)); the Society of Spanish Researchers in the United Kingdom ([SRUK](https://sruk.org.uk/about-us/)); the Association of Italian Scientists in the UK ([AISUK](https://www.aisuk.org/)); and Unis Resist Borders (for invitation emails sent to these organisations, see Appendix E). I asked the organisations to circulate my recruitment email to their voluntary research databases, if they had them. Some accepted, while others either did not reply or responded negatively, stating that they did not have an email list for this purpose. I managed to circulate my invitation email through three societies; however, I did not gain participants from these organisations.

I then contacted the UCU (Universities and College Union) branch in Sheffield, who welcomed my invitation, and some members of the committee asked to participate. The Sheffield UCU branch invited me to give a talk during strike teach-outs – the UCU frequently led strikes since the announcement of proposed cuts to the USS pensions scheme in 2018. When I contacted the UCU for my research, staff at the University of Sheffield were also on strike. They offered me to give a lecture about my research during the striking period. I gave a one-hour talk in the one of the conference rooms in the Student Union at the University of Sheffield in which I predominantly presented the findings in the literature and mentioned the research gap in transnational family research in the context of migrant academics. I later gave a presentation at the York branch of UCU’s teach-out sessions on ‘Migration, Bordering, Human Rights and the Global Hostile Environment’. During these talks, I asked interested people to provide their names and contact details. Although I collected names and details from a few migrant academics, securing the initial contact with these academics was very helpful in developing snowball sampling. After that, I attended the Annual Conference of Migrant Academics in London and created a relatively small network thanks to these activities.

When I moved the research to online mediums, I re-approached my initial contacts and my other personal contacts. As Zontini (2004c) suggests, researchers might also make active use of their social capital when conducting social research. Thanks to snowballing, I easily developed a sort of ‘research network’ among migrant academics. However, in some ways, some challenging circumstances skewed my sample. An example is the practical and temporal conditions: at the outset of the data collection period, overlapping with the first Covid-19 lockdown in the UK, academics were in an extremely busy period. Many academics I contacted for research participation rejected it during their marking period, thus I started arranging interviews after the marking period. However, soon after I started to receive many emails requesting to reschedule the interview time to a different time. I learnt that universities had made a sudden decision to continue education online and they wanted academics to produce the materials for online education in a very limited timeframe. Some participants even stated that it was the busiest period in their academic lives.

Furthermore, as academics started to work from home, issues arising from domestic responsibilities arose. Since working from home would sometimes mean the dismantling of the borders between family time and working time (Hochschild, 1997; Kilkey & Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2013), some migrant academics stated that they had problems combining domestic chores with paid work. This also had a gendered dimension considering that it was generally women academics who had to bear the brunt of home-schooling. As the majority of participants were women academics, there were particular problems in arranging interview times with them and squeezing them into their tight schedules.

## 4.3. Data Collection Process

The interview process in this research consisted of three parts: completing a socio-demographic questionnaire (see Appendix I); completing sociograms (see Appendix A, for an example sociogram); and the actual interview. The fieldwork lasted nearly one year due to some unexpected and unprecedented issues. As soon as I received my ethical approval letter in November 2019, I started preparations for data collection, such as establishing access to potential participants through the strategies presented above. However, around February 2020, the spectre of the Covid-19 pandemic started to loom over the UK. In 2020, the Covid-19 outbreak swept across the world with over three million cases (Worldometer, 2020). This led to the UK Government implementing strict social distancing measures in March 2020. University restrictions were put in place in response to and parallel to this. Thus, I had to stop collecting data and postponed all the scheduled interviews to an indefinite future date.

For a long period, I did not collect data. During the UK lockdowns, I revised the literature and my research design as well as taking care of myself, before I could restart collecting data. The pandemic was a significant milestone because not only did it lead to serious repercussions regarding the project plans but, more importantly, it created a completely new yet equally relevant context for the research topic, my participants and me, as a migrant PhD student. Thus, as presented below, some changes and revisions had to be made during the data collection process. In this section, the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic will be a recurrent theme which criss-crosses different data collection stages and procedures of the research. This section presents the techniques that were used to generate data for the research. The main methods of data collection, life-story interviewing and the use of sociograms, are discussed in a critical and reflexive way.

### 4.3.1. Life-Story Interviews

The life-story interviewing technique constituted the primary data collection method of this research. Broadly defined, life-story interviewing is a biographical data collection technique which focuses on ‘the essence of what has happened to a person’ (Atkinson, 2002, p. 4). It allows for ‘understanding not only one life across time but how individual lives interact with the whole’ (Atkinson, 2002, p. 8). However, life-story interviewing differs slightly from life history interviews. While life history interviews engage with ‘how the patterns of different life stories can be related to their wider historical, social and political context’ (Adriansen, 2010, p. 2), life-story interviewing focuses on ‘the account of a person’s story of his or her life, or a segment of it’ (Ojermark, 2007, p. 4). As I discuss later in this section, the life-story interviews that I conducted also focused on particular parts of life, through the use of an interview guide (see Appendix J). This section is divided into three parts: I first present the justifications for employing the life-story interviewing method; then I provide details of the interviewing procedure; and finally, there is a short discussion of online interviewing based on my experiences during this project.

#### 4.3.1.1. Why use life-story interviews?

Methods, as Silverman says, ‘cannot be always “right” or “wrong”, only more or less appropriate’ (2013, p. 6). What made the life-story interviewing technique the most expedient method for this research stems from the nature of the research phenomenon. As demonstrated in the previous literature review chapters, transnational family relationships are highly dependent upon individual experiences and familial factors. In other words, the subjective and dynamic nature of the research phenomenon (Baldassar et al., 2014; Dreby & Adkins, 2010; Wyss, 2016) necessitated a focus on the background of the relationships and how transnational and also local relations evolve over time. Otherwise, missing these details about the relationships would risk removing the data from its broader and historical context. Investigating the Skype use of Irish transnational families, King-O’Riain (2015) emphasised the processual nature of the research phenomenon when working in this field:

We need tools that capture migrants’ simultaneous engagement in and orientation toward their home and host countries… Transnational migration is a process rather than an event. Transnational practices ebb and flow in response to particular incidents or crises (p. 1012).

In this regard, biographical methods were especially useful to understand the features of transnational family relationships and how these factors are experienced and interpreted in different life settings. Chamberlain and Leydesdorff (2004) argue that life-story interviews allow researchers to ‘reveal the peculiar dynamics of transnational families, and the ways in which gender intersects within families’ (p. 233). Similarly, Goulbourne and colleagues (2010) underscore the significance of life-story interviews since they allow:

the respondent to express their views about significant aspects of their individual lives, as well as the complexity of their relationships with their senses of identity, members of their immediate families, their wider kinship network, friends, and significant others outside the boundaries into which they were born and socialised (pp. 40-41).

Studies employing biographical methods such as life-story and life history interviews have been effective in providing a rich understanding of the dynamism of transnational family relationships over time (Baldassar, 2007a; Brandhorst, 2017; Merla, 2015; Pustułka, 2015). Thus, I decided to use life-story interviews since they provide the researcher with the historical background and sequence of relationships by revealing the shifts that relationships have undergone (see Bauer & Thompson, 2004).

### 4.3.2. Use of Sociograms

This research used sociograms – also known as ego-centric network maps – embedded in qualitative interviews for collecting and visualising data about the life stories of participants. Sociograms constituted both part of the collected data and an elicitation tool for the data collected during the interviews. The main reason for using this technique was to understand how transnational family networks are embedded in the everyday lives and other social networks of migrant academics. As highlighted in the transnational family relationships literature, family networks that cross national borders are characterised by relationality and subjectivity (Bilecen, 2013; Bilecen & Seibel, 2021; Ryan, 2018; Ryan & Mulholland, 2014). That is to say, migrant academics’ reliance on transnational family networks cannot be taken for granted, rather they can have different networked social relationships. The literature on the migration of academics emphasises different types of networks such as diasporic and scientific networks (Ackers & Gill, 2008b). Thus, by using sociograms, this project aimed to explore how transnational family networks are positioned in the lives of migrant academics in Britain among their other social relationships.

Studies employing this technique emphasise that visualisation enables participants to structure and analyse the actors in their personal social networks. According to Tubaro and colleagues (2016), visualising social networks through the use of sociograms embedded in qualitative interviews:

gives participants a more global view of their relationships and the social contexts they are embedded in, a view that would not emerge spontaneously from just describing their relationships in interviews or adding names of contacts to a list in a questionnaire (p. 3).

Moreover, unlike the quantitative computer-based network maps, sociograms focus on the meanings and interpretations of network relationships rather than merely on the connections between dyadic relationships (Altissimo, 2016). As Ryan and colleagues (2014) argue, ‘one advantage of paper diagrams, in contrast to post-hoc software-based representations, is that they are completed by the participants during the interview; adding to the richness of data collected’ (p. 4). Sociograms’ potential for exploring and understanding migrants’ social networks, such as family and kinship relationships, have been used and appreciated. For example, some early ethnographic studies (Barnes, 1954; Bott, 1957; Mitchell, 1969) employed the sociogram technique to explore how different kinship relationships are structured in different contexts. Holstein (2002) used this technique for understanding the social networks of the elderly; Ryan and colleagues (2014) used it to explore how social relationships of highly skilled migrants in London are created, sustained and change over time; Bilecen and Faist (2015) explored the transnational knowledge transfer networks of doctoral students; and Altissimo (2016) used this method to investigate the life worlds of international students (see also Tubaro et al., 2016). As McCarty and colleagues (2007), comparing different social network mapping and visualisation techniques, observed:

If the research topic is fundamentally interpersonal (such as influences on migration choices or political opinion) then the personal network visualization provides a perspective on these topics that cannot be gained otherwise (p. 159).

The sociograms were conducted in full obedience with ethical rules and procedures (see Appendix G). Briefly, four concentric circles were designed on A3 format paper, with the core referring to the *ego* (the interviewee, as the focal person) while the other concentric circles referred to the *alters* – the contact persons of the focal person (see Appendix A)*.* The interviewee was asked to place just the initials of the names of the important actors/people in their life using sticky notes. The four quadrants referring to different life domains were not given any specific names. According to the experiences of Ryan and colleagues (2014), who gave specific names to the four quadrants (family, friends, work, and neighbourhood), using pre-set and strict names for the life domains can play a ‘restrictive’ role. Thus, my participants were asked to name the quadrants in accordance with their own life domains. Then, in the face-to-face interviews, pen and different coloured sticky notes were used.

Completing a sociogram in face-to-face interviews was easier in practice than online. I would print out the sociogram template and ask the participant to fill in the map. Shifting from face-to-face to online interviews posed a challenge about how to conduct sociograms online. Several alternatives were considered by me and my supervisors. The first option was to ask the participant to print out the sociogram draft and fill in and show me the map during the interview. This option was not feasible as not all participants had printers at home. The second alternative was to conduct the sociogram through online software. I gained access to some tools used for online sociogram mapping. However, after a series of pilot interviews and trials, I decided that this option was too complicated since each participant had to be asked to download and set up the tool before the interview.

This period occurred during one of the Covid-19 lockdowns and I used the time to focus on finding the best way to conduct the sociograms online. Meanwhile, the PGR director of the department organised an online conference and wanted volunteers who wanted to talk about their difficulties in conducting research during the lockdown. When I volunteered and made a small presentation, I noted that some of my peers also suffered from the same problem. They suggested using the Blackboard Collaborate whiteboard function, however after conducting pilot interviews, I decided that this was not practical since I would ask each participant to draw three concentric circles and divide these circles into four quadrants. This could also waste the time in the interview process.

However, the option of opening a sociogram with Microsoft Paint was effective and timesaving in the pilot interviews. I decided to use this simple yet effective way to conduct a sociogram online. In this procedure, before the interview, I emailed the photo format of the sociogram to the participant and asked them to download it. During the interview, I would ask the participant to open the map in Paint and share their screen. Through the tools in Paint, the participant filled in the map and I was able to observe how it was filled in. When completing the map, I asked the participant to save the document and send it to me after the interview. This option proved successful in terms of conducting sociograms embedded in interviews, aside from a few small issues. For instance, in one of the interviews, the participant who did not read the email and download the image beforehand told me that his laptop did not have Microsoft Paint because he had a MacBook. After a quick Google search, I discovered Preview, which is equivalent to Paint on Microsoft computers. Since Preview is nearly the same as the Paint, there were no further remarkable problems.

Regarding the technical issues in completing the sociogram, I was surprised that some of my participants had technical issues in completing the sociogram. Despite my detailed instructions of how to use the Paint tools, in some cases, I had to help the participant by showing them the text tool in the menu. The average time spent filling in the form was about 15-20 minutes, although it ranged from 10 minutes to 30 minutes. While some participants provided clear-cut circles of alters quickly, others were uncertain about the names and locations of alters. One participant checked their wedding ceremony invitation list to see whether one significant person had been forgotten and not placed on the map. The sociogram maps revealed a lot about the participants as well as the research phenomenon.

Apart from enriching the data collected, sociograms facilitated the life-story interview process. One of the significant features of life-story interviews is its subjectivity and context-driven nature, thus the researcher does not know what they might encounter (Atkinson, 2002; Tagg, 1985). As the interview process for this research consisted of three parts (socio-demographic questionnaire, sociograms and interview), this sequence provided me with rich background information so that I could ask more contextualised questions about the topics in the guide (see Appendix J). Observing the participants filling in the form provided information about important life domains, their relationships, family members and places, which constantly guided me about the direction to proceed with the next questions so that a more natural flow of the interview could be obtained.

In the literature, some research found that highly skilled migrants can find completing a sociogram to be childish. For instance, focusing on migrants in the financial sector in London, Ryan and colleagues (2014) found their participants felt the sociogram filling in process to be childish, boring and arduous. However, the majority of migrant academics who participated in this research were very eager and interested to fill in the sociogram. Most had not completed a sociogram map before – they tended to want extra time to just think about their social networks since they had not thought about them before. Some participants even judged their completion of sociogram and categorisation of family ties. For instance, professor *Li Na* stated that her mother in-law ‘*would get upset if she sees’* that she was in the outer circle. Similarly, *Claire*, alecturer, said, ‘*my mom will kill me*’ after she wrote her mother’s initials in the second circle. These instances show the sociogram’s effectiveness in revealing the gaps and differences between blood and formal ties and actual relational and intimate positions between people. Overall, despite some slight issues, using sociograms embedded in qualitative interviews enriched the quality of the data by providing visualisations of the social ties and networked relationships of academics.

### **4.3.3. The Interview Process**

As stated above, the data collection process of this research had to undergo some shifts caused mainly by the Covid-19 pandemic. Out of the 45 life-story interviews, five were conducted face-to-face while the rest were done through online mediums such as Skype and Google Meets. In this section, I briefly reflect on how this research used the life-story interviewing technique and present how participants felt about being interviewed.

First, the use of life-story interviews prevented me from acquiring a sanitised version of events; rather, they illuminated how events unfolded and relationships changed over the course of academics’ lives. Atkinson (2002) notes that conducting life-story interviews should be considered an art form. Instead of sticking with an interview guide and plan, I tried to develop meaningful communication with the participant and let them build the narrative of their life story. Considering Seidman’s (2006) recommendation to explore rather than just probe, my main motive was to be flexible enough to understand the context and the narrative of their life story. I had to be sympathetic about the participants’ situations. This required particular attention and sensitivity about the implications of Covid-19 on the participant. One of the most cited drawbacks of life-story interviewing in the literature is that participants can have difficulty remembering events (Atkinson, 2002; Mason, 2002; Tagg, 1985). However, in this project, I did not observe participants having serious difficulty in remembering events.

Perhaps participants could remember events easily since they concerned their familial and intimate relationships. The topic guide acted as a reminder for the themes to be explored (see Appendix J). The interview guide started with a socio-demographic questionnaire asking about the participants’ age; length of stay in Britain; nationality; visa type; current academic position; contract type; income level; marital status; number and ages of children; and location of family members such as spouse/partner, children, parents and/or significant others (see Appendix I). In both face-to-face interviews (before the pandemic) and online interviews, I asked the participants the questions instead of providing the questionnaire for them to complete. Asking these initial questions introduced me to the context of the participant, their migration journey and education story. This was critical in terms of designing the next questions in a way that was seamless for the participant. Therefore, my aim was to create a natural social interaction environment and turn the data collection process into a purposeful conversation with the interlocutor (Burgess, 1984).

Second, it was clear that the timing of the data collection process, which coincided with the initial stages of the Covid-19 crisis, was not the best for participating in a research project that required being interviewed for at least an hour about local and transnational family relationships. In some cases, participants’ minds were overly occupied with their transnational family relationships and/or their careers. In this regard, studies also emphasise that, with the Covid-19 outbreak, mobility patterns shifted towards more return migration and urban-to-rural movements (Gamlen, 2020; Martin & Bergmann, 2021). As such, International Organization for Migration states that, within the scope of Return Task Force initiative, there were at least 3 million stranded migrants who were waiting to return to ‘home’, as of May 2020 (IOM, 2020). Not all type of return mobilities were recorded by official bodies; however, it is known that the number beneficiaries assisted by IOM’s Assisted Return program increased by 51% in 2021 (Migration Data Portal, 2022b). It is also known that during the global pandemic, national governments have launched evacuation operations to repatriate their citizens abroad. Migration Data Portal reports that only the Indian Government’s official repatriation program facilitated the return mobility of more than six million citizens across the world (Migration Data Portal, 2022a). in this research, there were six participants who had already to their countries of origin and nearly ten participants were planning to leave the UK at the time of the interview. As illustrated in Chapter Seven, some participants could not contact their family for a while; had upcoming wedding ceremonies; returned to their countries of origin or another country they considered safe; wanted to return to their countries but could not due to travel restrictions; and some whose family members got stuck in the UK. However, nearly all participants gave positive feedback after the interview. In some cases, participants even found being interviewed about their life and relationships to be therapeutic and relaxing, especially in the conditions of lockdown.

There was a conflict of roles for some participants who were interviewed. Since participants were also academics who conduct research, and even in some cases conduct life-story interviews, some participants found being interviewed ‘*a bit weird*’ (Khalil, a North African lecturer used this expression while he was sharing his reflections and thoughts after an online interview). In some cases, they stated that they had ‘*never been on that side of the table’*m implying that they had always been ‘the researcher’ not ‘the researched’ (*Nadezhda*, an East European lecturer said this just before a face-to-face interview). However, this did not cause any significant issues that had the potential to hinder the interview process.

Contrary to some of the assumptions in literature focusing on interviews about sensitive topics (Brayda & Boyce, 2014), most participants were eager and enthusiastic to talk about their life stories and family relationships. This may be caused by the formal nature of academia and was articulated best by one of the interviewees: after a face-to-face interview, I later met the interviewee at a university cafeteria. The participant said that she noticed that she missed talking about her personal and familial issues. Since these issues went against the formal nature of academia, some participants were especially eager and responsive about life-story interviews. Many interviewees gave me positive feedback about life-story interviews by stating that it was a different yet good experience for them.

### **4.3.4. Researcher’s Positionality and Collecting Data During a Pandemic**

The Covid-19 crisis brought about radical changes to the conduct of this research project. It not only shifted the fieldwork, data collection techniques and analyses, but also transformed the research phenomenon by creating a novel context in the lives of migrant academics and the relationships I aimed to investigate. In this section I first present how my data collection site changed and how I managed to collect data in the ‘new normal’ – to use a popular phrase during the lockdown periods. Then, I discuss my positionality as a ‘migrant’ PhD student who is living separately from his loved ones and relied heavily on his transnational family relationships during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

First, I briefly present how I navigated the fieldwork and data collection process during the peak of the Covid-19 crisis. The data collection process was not linear, rather it was more imbued with up-down and back-forth movements. As I detailed in the sampling process above (section 4.2) since my plan to recruit participants through national organisations of migrant academics was not successful, I approached potential participants through the UCU, my supervisors, and my personal contacts. However, soon after I started the data collection process, I had to stop – all fieldwork was suspended ‘until further notice’ – another popular phrase during lockdown. This process took nearly five months. During this process, I stayed in Sheffield, although most migrant students, academics and professionals returned to their countries of origin on evacuation flights. As with a few of my friends who stayed in Sheffield, I also did not want to take the risk of going to the airport and flying to Turkey and seeing my family and spreading Covid-19. This was also one of the main reasons migrant academics did not return to their countries of origin, as discussed in Chapter Seven. I could not collect data during this process and my primary concern was for my family and loved ones. This process also saw a period of a change in my supervisory team. Thankfully, my supervisors always kept in touch and asked after my situation regularly.

After more than five months, in consultation with my supervisors, I decided to re-start the data collection online. However, transforming research to the online space needed special re-arrangements. The first thing to consider was whether any amendments to the existing ethical approval was needed. My first ethics application had included online interviews, since I had envisaged that some of my interviews would need to be done online for practical reasons. In a context of total lockdown and travel restrictions, talking with a migrant about local and transnational familial relationships had to consider the current situation. Such a context brought additional sensitivity to the nature of this research. In other words, investigating the research phenomenon in the new context was more ethically sensitive – in that context, the meanings and values that participants attributed to the concepts I asked about, such as ‘family’, ‘care’ ‘visit’ and ‘communication’, took different shape. Therefore, I checked the ethical procedure for the research then made revisions to the information sheet and consent form. Furthermore, the topic guide had to take a different shape in the new context. The topic guide already included some themes regarding care and family communication in times of crisis and urgency. However, it was still unable to capture the influence of Covid-19 on the local and transnational family relationships of migrant academics. Therefore, I re-designed the guide so that I could capture data about the changing conditions of transnational family relationships during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Secondly, my positionality as the researcher is also significant in terms of its effect on the research. The social, familial and personal context I was embedded in during the data collection process was critical in relation to how data was collected and interpreted (Seidman, 2006). As a PhD student, my positionality was not totally that of an insider in some sense since I do not share the same language, identity, or employment conditions as the other participants. However, going beyond the insider-outsider dichotomy (Ryan, 2015), my position as the researcher had significant effects in terms of my migration status and relationships, which shaped the nature of investigating transnational family relationships. I was also a migrant PhD student who had been in the UK for nearly seven years at the time of the fieldwork. This helped me to ask the right questions since I could readily empathise with their experience of legal processes and procedures regarding visas and driving licences.

Moreover, my family and personal relationships also had a deep impact on my positionality and the conduct of the research. At the time of the data collection process, I was in a particular transnational family and intimate relationships context. As mentioned above, a few weeks after the first cases of Covid19 were seen in the UK, many academics, students and professionals started to return to their countries of origin. However, I decided to stay in Sheffield and not return to Turkey, my country of origin due to the risks associated with long-haul travel and use of airpots. My mother was a chronic asthma patient and was in the high-risk group and my sister was a nurse who had to fight at the front lines against the virus. Therefore, I did not want to put my family members in jeopardy. In addition, I wished to visit my girlfriend who was based in Germany. She used to work in a public zoo, selling ice-cream to visitors; however, with the Covid-19 lockdowns in Germany, she soon became unemployed. Since she could not benefit from the German government support scheme due to her international student status, she had to move to a cheaper place. I could not visit her for more than a year. There were exemptions to the travel bans; however, I could not benefit from them. In my correspondence with the German Embassy in London, I was told that ‘unmarried couples’ were not exempt from the restrictions. Therefore, I was also in a situation that was very similar to some migrant academics during the time of the data collection.

All these personal details are significant in terms of my positionality and the nature of the research. From the start to the end of the research, I was never positioned as a researcher examining a subject in a laboratory, but I was also researching my own context while researching the participants. In other words, there were no pre-set, ready meanings waiting for me to explore; rather, we (the participant and I) created the meaning together. In some cases, this led to solidarity; for instance, I was informed about when the travel restrictions to Germany would be eased by *Jenna*, a South Asian background female academic whose fiancé lived in Germany. In this section, I have sketched out the fundamental shifts in the data collection process of this research and my positionality as researcher. Acknowledging these issues is significant for the results, analyses and interpretations presented in the next chapters.

### **4.3.5. Conducting Life-story Interviews Online**

As stated above, during the data collection process, I conducted five face-to-face and 40 online life-story interviews. In this section I take a self-reflexive approach and compare conducting life-story interviews face-to-face and online based on my experiences. My reflections relate to three major issues of qualitative interview: rapport, technicality, and power relations.

To mention the online interviews briefly, email correspondence was the first online contact with the potential interviewee. I used an email template to introduce the research and offer an invitation (see Appendix B). Since snowballing sampling was used, there was always a mediator between me and the potential interviewee. Having a reference person who the participant knows well usually leads to establishing trust easily and quickly. After a series of email correspondences, an available interview date was mutually agreed. I would then create Google Calendar events and add the interviewee’s email address to the calendar note. Since I restricted the access permissions for events I created, my calendar was not visible to anyone. Only my university email account and the invited person’s account would see the event. By doing so, I strengthened the anonymity of academics participating in this research project.

After the interview, I deleted the details from my calendar. A few days before the agreed interview date, I would send a reminder email to the participant. At this point, I would ask the participant to read the consent form and information sheet carefully and send the signed version to me if they wanted to participate in the study. At this stage, I would ask the participant to download the sociogram to the computer. I would ask them to share their screen and open this document in Microsoft Paint during the interview. Sending the sociogram and explaining how to complete it beforehand saved time and energy. The interviews were generally conducted through Skype. In some cases, the interviewee preferred Blackboard Collaborate or Google Meet. The duration of interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 2.5 hours, and the average length was 1 hour. I recorded the interviews by using the same voice recorder I used for the face-to-face interviews.

Shifting from carrying out face-to-face to online interviews had three effects. First, I was worried about establishing rapport with the participant following comprehensive reading about online interviewing (James & Busher, 2016; Madge & O’Connor, 2002; Reid, et al., 2008; Stewart, 2001). However, I rarely experienced issues regarding rapport between me and the interviewee – it was more of a ‘balanced rapport’ (Converse and Schuman, 1974 cited in Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 702). As I was in a similar position to them, they could talk about personal issues without any hesitation or fear of judgement.

Reaching out to participants through snowballing and email correspondence might be effective in strengthening rapport (Iacono et al., 2016). Additionally, the combination of the type of interview (life-story interview), the method of doing it (online) and my non-judgemental listener role created an effective tone. After some interviews, some participants stated that it was ‘like a therapy’ for them because being able to talk to someone and giving meaning to a life story with a listener who does not judge can fortify rapport (Corbin & Morse, 2003). This echoes the hyper-personal perspective which argues that computer-mediated communication exceeds face-to-face interaction in reducing social anxiety and trust issues (Brayda & Boyce, 2014).

Secondly, there were not fundamental technical issues during the interview process, although the literature considers technical hurdles to be the main possible drawback of online interviewing (James & Busher, 2016; Madge & O’Connor, 2002; Reid et al., 2008; Stewart, 2001). A few issues were caused by environmental factors, such as Internet connections and background noise.

Conducting online interviews while participants were at home also caused some issues related to the transcribing process. For instance, during my interview with *Huda*, a postdoctoral researcher, since her house is near a train station, we would stop talking every 15 minutes and wait for the train to pass. Similarly, the interview with a research fellow coincided with the day her neighbours renovated their house resulting in drilling sounds. Furthermore, in some cases, the participants had to be away from the laptop for a few minutes to check on pets or children.

In addition to these practical issues, time zones posed some difficulties. For instance, for the interview with a Singaporean background professor, I had to wake up at 3am UK time. The participant was an academic who returned to their country of origin just before the lockdown and travel bans started. In some cases, we had to take short breaks in the online interviews because of incoming calls. Additionally, Internet problems, connection issues, and camera and microphone quality led to slight issues. I first used the built-in microphone of my laptop; however, in some interviews there was a continuous background noise which sometimes hindered communication. For instance, when I asked *Claire* her marital status, she said that she thought I was asking about her ‘mental status’. After a few interviews, I bought an external, semi-professional microphone which resolved the issues and improved the sound quality. Although these issues had a slight impact on the interactions, they were not barriers to the conducting of the research and they were easily resolved.

Thirdly, when it comes to power relations, I argue that shifting from face-to-face to online interviews granted me a more suitable and balanced ground for carrying out interviews. Before the data collection process, one of the main concerns I had was about conducting a life-story interview with an academic in my role as a student. To prevent any issues I attended professional training sessions about elite interviewing. The concept of elite interviewing in the context of this research can be tricky due partly to entrenched problems about the definitions of elites and the broad sample range. The sample was noticeably diverse, ranging from highly reputable academics at the top of British academia to early stage, low-income academics. Therefore, the concept of elite interviewing was in a sort of ‘relational sense’, emphasising the status and power difference between the interviewer and the interviewee (Harvey, 2015). Power issues were related to this notion of ‘studying up’ (Aguiar & Schneider, 2012).

However, conducting interviews online comprised a more equal and balanced space for me. For example, in one case, after a face-to-face interview in the initial stages of data collection, the interviewee and I had a quick chat – this happened often because the roles of ‘life-storyteller’ and ‘listener’ would usually continue even after I stopped recording. During the chat, the participant recommended that I use a mixed methods approach by including a quantitative data collection technique in my research design. After a few sentences of recommendation, she stopped herself and stated that this was due to a sort of a professional bad habit that made her want to supervise all the PhD research she encountered. This was a clear example of the ‘power gap’ (Harvey, 2015) between the interviewee and me. Considering this gap, I noticed that we can easily return to our default student-supervisor or lecturer roles, rather than the ‘researcher-interviewee’ role. However, power relations were less visible during online interviews, though these relations still existed.

In the face-to-face interviews, the space embodied the power hierarchy. Although I did not conduct interviews in participants’ departmental offices, university libraries where, for instance, the student and staff enter using different coloured ID cards can influence power dynamics. However, the online space, the *terra nullius*, dismantled the power hierarchy and created a more ‘equitable process’ for conducting interviews (James & Busher, 2016, p. 413). Overall, in conducting life-story interviews both face-to-face and online, I had significantly positive experiences regarding establishing rapport, and was able to ensure technical issues were kept to a minimum and recognised possible power issues.

## 4.4. Data Analysis

The data generated by the life-story interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, which categorises data based on similarities and patterns, to reveal particular themes and patterns in the qualitative data (Mason, 2018). Thematic analysis is one of the most commonly used techniques in analysing life-story interviews (Jugder, 2016).

Although there are various ways to use thematic analysis in the literature, this research used Braun and Clarke’s (2006) 6-step analysing strategy technique so that data was efficiently analysed throughout the data analysis process. This 6-step thematic data analysis framework includes: becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes in relation to the research questions, and writing up. First, all the recorded life-story interviews were transcribed verbatim. To become more familiar with the data, I transcribed the recordings into text myself by playing the audio at a very low speed to ensure I captured all of the data in an efficient way.

With regard to the quality of the audio and verbatim transcripts, apart from a few slight issues, they were of high quality. These issues arose from my first recording technique, using a traditional type of audio recorder, which I had been using in face-to-face interviews. Using a third-party application that was able to capture the screen and audio was not an option due to ethical considerations, nor did I use Skype and Google Meet’s recording functions for similar reason. Therefore, I began by placing two traditional audio recorders (each serving as a back-up for the other) near my laptop to record the interviews. However, during the transcribing period, I noticed that the recordings had a slight background noise caused by my laptop fan. Although it did not have a serious influence on the quality of the transcripts since the record was still clearly understandable, constantly hearing the background noise while transcribing was a problem. Although I had some technical issues that are common to online interviews, they did not negatively impact the transcription and analysis process.

After the transcription period, using the qualitative data analysing program NVivo enabled me to analyse the qualitative data efficiently. After an initial reading and analysis period, I generated preliminary codes. In doing so, I managed to reduce a diverse and huge data corpus into small chunks of codes.

At this stage, my main objective was to explore patterns in the life stories of migrant academics and identify similarities and differences in the narrated stories. As Atkinson (2002) suggests, the researcher should accept the life stories as texts and look for meaningful connections between these texts:

With the life story approach, the interpretive emphasis is on accepting the life story itself as a text that has something to say to us about life and about life in particular. The emphasis is also on identifying the connections, meanings, and patterns that exist in the story itself (p. 64).

Using these methods, the generated codes and clusters of codes were transferred into initial meaningful themes. Although the preliminary themes represented a significant analysis of the data, a re-analysis process was required. As Miles and Huberman emphasise, after the first analysis period, researchers should perpetuate their ‘openness and scepticism’ (1994). After a period of defining and revising different themes, I verified the connections between the research questions and the themes.

Sociograms were effective in visualising the narrative that the participants told me. Since sociograms were used as a subsidiary technique embedded in online interviews, they were also analysed as embedded in the qualitative data obtained from the life-story interviews. I used Ryan and colleagues’ (2016) two-phased integrated sociogram analysis method. The narrative analysis of the interview transcript and the analysis of images and drawings in the sociograms were analysed together.

As Tubaro and colleagues (2016) emphasise, ‘the joint analysis of visuals and narratives offers a systematized, holistic view of relationships, and provides more comprehensive and far-reaching insight than conventional qualitative methods’ (p. 2). I first printed out the sociograms obtained from online interviews onto A3 paper. My aim was to create a synchronicity between different types of data: visual, audio and text. The sociograms were final versions of the network maps made by participants. However, sociograms themselves cannot explain how they are completed (Hogan et al., 2007). Therefore, I read the relevant parts of the audio transcripts so that I could understand in which sequence the sociogram map was completed. Then, I generated codes and made notes on NVivo. Because the latest version of NVivo allows for analysis of different types of data together, I also attached the sociogram images to each transcript file. Thus, I was able to work on the text and image files together, to create codes, write memos and notes. All these different types of data were associated with the file of each participant in NVivo.

## 4.5. Research Ethics

This research was conducted in full compliance with the 2018 Data Protection Act (Gov. UK, 2018) and the University of Sheffield’s ‘Ethics Policy of Governing Research Involving Human Participants’ (for the ethical approval letter, see Appendix F). I commenced the data collection process after receiving ethical approval from the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield. The information sheets (Appendix C) and consent form (Appendix D) were in line with the new GDPR legislation recently provided by the University.

Before the interviews, the participants were first provided with the information sheet, which they were asked to carefully read. Then, participants’ written consent was obtained by asking them to sign the consent form before the interview – if they agreed with the terms on the form. The participants who took part in this research online were asked to return the signed and scanned consent form before the interviews. All participants had enough time to read the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Forms and they were reassured that they could ask any questions about the research.

I told participants that their data would be kept anonymous and confidential in the invitation email that I used for initiating the first contact to potential participants (see Appendix A). I made clear that the research strictly adhered to the university’s ethical rules. Before each interview, I repeated the anonymity, confidentiality and consent issues orally and asked for the participant’s permission to record, although in a few face-to-face interviews, participants wanted to skip this phase and stated that they ‘already knew’ this process.

However, some participants were also sensitive about their anonymity and confidentiality. In some cases, potential participants wanted me to provide further details about the ethical conduct of this research so that they could decide whether to participate or not. In one case, the participant wanted to see the topic guide before the interview. After providing further information and the documents, all potential participants agreed to participate in the research. As soon as I finished the interviews, I transferred the audio files to a password protector computer before deleting the audio file from the recorder. Nobody was given access to the raw data apart from me. After transcribing the audio records, I started a process of anonymisation. During this stage, I removed any data that could be used to identify participants from both the text and the sociograms. Thus, both the collection and management of the data was conducted in the most ethical way possible.

When it comes to presenting the data, I continued to give utmost significance to the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants. This research gave utmost regard to research ethics throughout the research process, from designing the research to collecting data and presenting the findings. Securing the anonymity and confidentiality of migrant academics who participated in this research constituted a significant part of this process. Also, some migrant academics that I spoke to requested extra consideration to ensure they were not identifiable to their fellow academics, students and other individuals. With this in mind, one of the effective strategies of anonymisation while presenting data is not letting the reader match two or more pieces of information to one participant (Kaiser, 2009). Thus, I use culturally appropriate pseudonyms in presenting the data. If I articulate the pseudonym of a participant, I do not reveal the name of their country of origin. Instead, using pseudonyms, I use the geographical region or continent of their country (e.g., ‘*Ahmad*, with a Middle Eastern background’, ‘*Khalil* is from a North African country’). However, there are times that I need to emphasise the country of origin of the participant. On these occasions, I prefer to reveal the country of origin of the participant without using their pseudonym (e.g., ‘an Italian migrant academic’, ‘an academic from Colombia’). It is significant to note that in these cases, the emphasis is on the geography of the countries, not the participant’s ethnicity. For example, when discussing how family visits vary across distances (see section 5.1.3), I compare participants from France and Malaysia in terms of their travel duration, costs and frequency. I only use the names of the origin countries when I need to make a point on the basis of geography. Thus, I give utmost significance to not using the pseudonym and country of origin of participants together.

There is no doubt that collecting data about maintaining familial relationships from afar in the context of Covid-19 lockdowns created a novel environment for research ethics as well; as Lee and Renzetti (1990) say; ‘it is possible for any topic, depending upon the context, to be a sensitive one’ (p. 512). I was aware that the topic of my ‘conversations’ with the interviewees could become a more sensitive issue. I contacted the organisations that would be able to give professional support to those who might need it after the interviews. As the researcher, I obtained ethical training about dealing with any unforeseen circumstance during the fieldwork (see Appendix H). Generally, universities provide professional support for the well-being of their staff; therefore, I would contact the staff well-being department of each university before the interviews. Additionally, I had prior contact with national organisations focused on the well-being of migrants and/or academic staff such as Migrant Help UK, JCWT (Joint Council for the Welfare of Migrants), Praxis UK and the UCU (University College Union). Furthermore, I would reassure the participant that they could leave any question unanswered and exit the interview without giving a reason, in which case I guaranteed that I would terminate their data – no participant chose to withdraw from the process. In a few situations, some participants wanted to see ‘the questions’ beforehand. I sent the interview guide and stated that I was not using pre-set questions, rather I had a loosely structured guide for the topics that I was planning to talk about. Despite the sensitive context created by the Covid-19 pandemic and the following changes impacting on people’s social lives, there were no particular and serious ethical problems within the data collection process.

One possible issue, however, concerned privacy and participating in research from home. Since the research was conducted during the lockdown period, participants were at their homes together with other householders, which could cause issues with privacy. My interview with *Ayse*, who had a Middle Eastern background, is an example of this. While we were having the interview online, her partner came home. When *Ayse* stated that she did not expect him at this time, I asked whether she was fine to continue with the interview. She said that she would prefer being alone for the interview, adding that because they lived in a small studio room she did not want to ‘*make noise’*. There might have been other factors related to privacy that *Ayse* or other participants did not mention. In the face-to-face interviews, we would be in a café or room in a school library, just the researcher and the participant. However, in online interviews, participants had to stay at home (during the lockdown); even if they were in a different room in the same house, they might not feel entirely free in a private sphere.

## 4.6. Conclusion

This chapter focused on the ethical and methodological dimensions of this research project. I touched upon five methodological dimensions of the research. First, I discussed the reasons why qualitative research methodology best suited the design and philosophy of the research. Then, I moved on to the data collection process and discussed how I collected data. As seen throughout the chapter, the data collection process had to undergo some notable shifts. In this chapter, I addressed how I navigated these shifts and collected data in the most effective, practical and ethical way possible. This is important as, in the qualitative research philosophy, the research design, data collection, data analysis and interpretation of findings are parts of an indivisible whole (Gerber & Linda, 2011). Having set out how the data was collected; the next chapter is the first to analyse the findings of this research.

# CHAPTER 5: SPATIALITY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON LOCAL AND TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS OF ACADEMICS

The first question of the research was asking ‘how do spatial and temporal dynamics shape the ways migrant academics maintain their family relationships transnationally?’ Thus, this question has two dimensions, spatiality and temporality. This chapter presents how spatiality have influence on the transnational family and kinship relationships of participants. It may be interesting to argue that considerations around spatiality are key in transnational family relationships of a highly mobile migrant group. Indeed, as detailed in the literature review (see section 2.2.), one strand of the transnational family relationships literature highlights how space, distance and physical proximity are becoming less and less significant in maintaining family relationships thanks to advancements in communication and transportation technologies (Baldassar et al., 2016; Nedelcu, 2012).

Also, this situation takes further shape when considered together with physical mobility in the context of migrant academics. As presented in detail below, the migrant academics I spoke with tend to have high levels physical mobility. As such, participants have varied reasons to be physically mobile across borders such as academic activities, family and friendship ties and job opportunities (see Chapter 8 on networked relationships of participants). Thus, migrant academics can sometimes be eager to be physically mobile to realise these objectives – although this is not true in all contexts (see section 5.2.2.). Despite their levels of physical mobility, the advancements of the contemporary era and some of the claims of the transnational family relationships literature, this research finds that the migratory experiences and transnational family relationships of participants are deeply grounded in considerations, deliberations and negotiations over space and spatiality.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I present how migrant academics and their family members’ considerations of their spatial contexts, e.g., geographical distances and locations, are still significant for both local and transnational family relationships. I then illustrate how the physical mobility of academics influences their local and transnational family relations. Finally, I move to presenting how participants’ family relationships tend to involve multiple and multi-spatial contexts. That is, in many contexts, participants tend to have family and kin members based in different parts of the world. However, maintaining family and personal relationships in such a multi-national spatial context depends on a variety of subjective factors such as relationships, past experiences, materiality and emotionality. Thus, I show that while some participants stress the difficulties of maintaining transnational family relationships in a multi-spatial context, others deliberately keep their distance from some of their family and kin.

## 5.1. Geographical Distance and Closeness in Transnational Family Relationships

This section presents the significance of physical proximity in the maintenance of transnational family relationships in three sub-sections. The first part shows how academics consider distance between Britain and their countries of origin while making decisions about migration. The second part focuses on how participants’ specific locations in Britain shape both their local and transnational family relationships. Finally, I present how direct family visits are influenced by factors around spatiality.

### **5.1.1. Distance and Migration Decisions**

A 32-year-old Middle Eastern post-doctoral researcher, *Ahmad*, like nearly all other migrant academics, was regarded as one of the ‘best and brightest’ (Kapur & McHale, 2005) academics in his country. His story resembles some of his fellow migrant academics’ in that it starts with a national scholarship. When he turned 25, he was granted a national scholarship to complete his postgraduate education abroad. He says:

*I have been given three options; UK, US and Australia. I thought that the US and Australia are very far from my country. So I made my decision considering the distance. The US and Australia are very far from* [his country in the Middle East]*. Actually, there are better universities and departments in the US, but it is very far. The flights take 15 hours. I do not like long flights. It is six hours to go to* [his country] *from the UK…*

As presented in Chapter 3 (section 3.1.3.), being different from the labour migration flows, migration trajectories of academic staff usually occur in an intellectual centre-periphery relationship (Kim & Locke, 2010; Schott, 1998). Participants who are generally from peripheral countries consider different factors when making decisions. *Ahmad* says that the leading scholars in his area are generally located in the US, and if it was not for the closeness, he would not have chosen the UK. The closeness of Britain to academics’ countries of origin was one of the most significant considerations that the majority of participants put forward. However, in this section, I divide the notion of distance between physical and cultural distances.

One of the first questions I asked participants was about the reasons why they migrated and preferred Britain over other alternatives. Many academics underline the relative physical closeness of Britain to their countries of origin. Many academics from Southern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East stressed that Britain is not far from their countries of origin. An Italian researcher stated that ‘*nearly half of my life was out of Italy*’. She has been to different countries and worked as an academic – mostly in Britain. Like many other migrant academics, her relationship with Britain is full of back-and-forth movements. She first came to Britain to complete her master’s degree. She explained the reasons of her first move to Britain:

*Basically, I wanted to do that in the UK for sort of two reasons. One, because I was interested in \*\*\** [a specific academic discipline] *at the time, and the type of programmes that are offered in the UK would have not been offered in Italy… They were also available in the US but… I don’t know I was very young at the time and did not want to be far away from home. You know the UK… you can’t compare it with the US… It’s like a part of Italy. And the second reason is that…*

Having the programmes that are not offered in the home country and being close to home epitomise what makes Britain an intellectual centre for regions such as Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and some parts of Asia (Alemu, 2014; Gerhards et al., 2018). This is somewhat surprising as the literature refers to the migration of academic staff as a career migration induced largely by academic motivations and professional incentives (Gureyev et al., 2020; Kastberg, 2014). However, spatiality and distance, according to participants’ accounts, is as significant as other factors.

Secondly, despite not being directly related to the physical sense of distance, the concept of socio-cultural distance can also be effective in the decisions of migrant academics. Muller (2009), who uses this concept in the context of transnational family relationships of Afghan refugees in the Netherlands, does not describe the concept and its components. However, the concept has multiple meanings and usage in different areas; Deyu and Bolden (2020) use this term to denote potential communication and adjustment issues for Chinese international students’ academic performances in Canada. Similarly, a strand of psychology literature deals with ‘national cultures’ and their ‘distances’ by focusing on some criteria such as power and gender relations and individualism/collectivism (see Hofstede, 2011). However, in the context of this research, cultural distance emerged as a more subjective concept. Instead of a whole national culture or ‘British culture’, individuals emphasised the parts of multi-cultural geographies of Britain that they found relevant to their context. For example, *Ahmad* said:

*The other thing is that the culture of the UK is closer to the culture of the Middle East. I mean… this may sound weird but when I compare the culture of the UK with the culture in the US and let’s say in Europe, I can say that the closest one is the culture of the UK to me. I’m not saying that the culture is the same here… but I made some search before coming to \*\*\** [the city he lives in the UK] *and then I noticed that there are people coming from Middle East in the UK… a really big Muslim community here you can find mosques easily. Muslim people in the UK are more relaxed and flexible.*

*Ahmad* expresses that he deliberately preferred the city in which a migrant population is predominant. He associates the cultural closeness of Britain with the ease of having Muslim people and mosques around. Therefore, this concept has a more subjective sense in the minds of participants. Similarly, another participant, from Turkey, said that he could find Turkish products like tea and desserts easily in the UK and there were kebabs‘*on every corner in the town’*. However, socio-cultural distance is not only limited to material aspects of social life. Political/historical links can also comprise a sense of socio-cultural connection. Generally, colonial and post-colonial links can shape the migration trajectories of participants. For example, one participant withan Indian background who had been in the UK for more than a decade came to the UK to get a master’s degree:

*I didn’t have so many choices. I think what happens is that typically if you did well in an Indian university, they encourage you to apply to the University of \*\*\* in the UK… because, I think, thanks to colonialism. Actually, that's the, you know, strong aspect of the aspiration.*

In her context, since she did ‘*well*’ during her undergraduate education in her country of origin she was encouraged to come to Britain. After getting her postgraduate degrees, she stayed in Britain as an academic, which is a common trajectory. Such a norm of colonial transfer of knowledge and academic staff dates back to mediaeval times (Kim, 2009). Participants from former British colonies had semi-social-historical ties to the UK. For example, *Harry*, a 45-year- old senior research fellow from a Southeast Asian country, a former British colony, said:

*Because it was a British colony… in the urban parts of the country. The kind of Anglo social life things are very prevalent. I grew up speaking in English. I grew up with a lot of English media. I used to watch a lot of British TV or American TV. I read the English press… So, I was very much involved in this kind of life…*

Therefore, these postcolonial implications on socio-cultural codes and lifestyles can play a determining role in the migration trajectories of academics (Basch et al., 1994). *Harry*, for example, emphasises the exposure to the English language as a socio-cultural link. In a similar vein, *Khalil*, a lecturer from a North African country who has been in Britain for more than a decade, confirmed the exposure to language argument in the context of his country:

*I always wanted to do further studies abroad, not necessarily the UK. In* [his country]*, we tend to go to France, many of my friends are there now. I think it’s… because of the similar language… not the similar language but familiarity with the language…*

As the concepts of brain drain and brain gain suggest, colonial links and socio-historical contexts widely shape the trajectories of international migration and mobility of academic staff (Moguérou, 2004; Ruiz-Castillo et al., 2015; Teichler, 2015). Although it is hard to generalise, it can be said that academic migration flows from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia and some African countries (such as Zimbabwe and Ghana to the UK, Morocco and Algeria to France, and from Albania to Italy) bear the effects of post-colonial historical links (Thorn & Holm-Nielsen, 2008). This ‘colonial closeness’ creates migration routes through a ‘shared [academic] mobility infrastructure’ due to the exposure to language and academic culture (Auriol, 2010; Bauder, 2015, p. 54). Therefore, spatiality manifests itself during (and before) the migration and mobility decisions of academics as considerations of the geographical distances between Britain and participants’ countries of origin and similarity and familiarity with the socio-cultural and historical context of Britain, which is significant especially for the highly-skilled migration literature (Mählck, 2016).

### **5.1.2. Locations in Britain**

One of the original contributions of this research to the existing literature is that it finds that some participants choose their spaces of living in accordance with the practicalities of their transnational family relationships. As such, many participants state that they rented houses close to airports and train stations. For instance, *Ali*, a 38-year-old Middle Eastern lecturer who left his wife and child behind in his country of origin stated that when he decided to migrate to Britain, he received offers from two different British universities. The first thing he considered was whether there was an affordable direct flight from that city to his country. Then, he preferred to work at the university he is at now, mostly because of the direct flight option to his hometown. Thus, in *Ali*’s context, physical proximity to an airport is significant. Another example involves a post-doctoral researcher from the US whose residence in Britain reflects this strategic location preference. She stated that some airlines have direct flights to her hometown in the US from an East Midlands airport. These flights are cheaper than their alternatives from airports in London and elsewhere. Therefore, she decided to work at a university close to that area. The spatial context of the participant is usually strategically considered and enacted; for instance, one participant who is an *Italian* senior research fellow stated that she rejected two job offers because:

*I didn’t want to leave here… It’s super practical to go home here. Because my flat is really close to the airport and tramline. Unless it's a busy day… in even 15-20 minutes, I can be through the security.*

Physical proximity to airports is a significant criterion for many migrant academics who participated in this research. Also some academics stated that they wanted to live in bigger cities such as London and Manchester since there were more flight and airport options (Ackers & Gill, 2008b; Bekhradnia & Sastry, 2005). However, some participants like *Ludovica*, who had a European background, did not want to fly from bigger airports since it could take more time:

*So obviously… here is easier to travel than a very busy airport in London. I’ve tried a few times but, oh my God! Waiting in the queues for hours! So it would be more time-consuming…*

Ludovica and her partner live in Britain; however, she stated that she frequently needs to visit her family and friends in her home country, which is why she places significance on being close to the airport. In a similar vein, *Alan* is a transgender academic from a country in South Asia. They and their partner, who is living in a European country, have been in a long-distance romantic relationship for nearly five years. *Alan* states that they rented their current house because it is one of the closest houses to the airport in the city, although ‘*living close to the airport means being far away from the uni*’. Their consideration in living close to the airport – not to their workplace i.e., the university – is an indicator of their highly-mobile lifestyle and also transnationally-oriented social relationships. These examples reflect participants’ considerations and deliberations over their geographical locations in Britain in terms of their local lives and transnational family relationships (Martín-Bylund & Stenliden, 2020). Although the literature stresses the significance of geographical locations, the deliberate, strategic selection of houses so that visits become easier is a finding that has rarely been found and addressed in the literature before.

### **5.1.3. How Far? The Effects of Physical Distance on Family Visits**

The distance between transnational family relationships often shapes the duration, frequency and cost of family visits. After discussing the concept of physical distance, in this section I present how spatiality shapes the duration and financial costs of family visits. Finally, the strategies that some participants adopt to avoid high financial costs and to save time in family visits are illustrated.

First, in light of the participants’ accounts, I intend to problematize the notion of distance and its general use in the literature. That is, when considering the physical distance in a transnational family relationship, a political reading of geography based on national state borders is generally used. For instance, in the context of migrants in Britain, we tend to consider European countries such as France, Belgium and Germany as geographically closest. While this is true from an aerial viewpoint, the actual and lived distance that participants experience can be different situations due to practicality involved in visits. The political reading of countries – while analysing transnational family relationships – can be caused by an overemphasis on the ‘national’ in the contextualisation of transnationality (see Amelina & Faist, 2012). However, comparing the contexts of participants from European and non-European countries, this research shows that physical distances should be considered at the level of individuals. The data show that the travels of participants from ostensibly ‘close’ countries to Britain (like France) might be notably longer than participants from the Middle East (e.g., Turkey and Iraq) and North African countries (e.g., Algeria and Morocco). For instance, a participant from France said that she could not visit her family more because it was too far although it seemed close:

*It's kind of… I'd like to do it more. And I know that my sister and my mom would love me to do it more. But because the trip is so long... Well, it's not like you know, Australia... but, um, because of where they live... like I have a friend who's an Italian colleague in \*\*\*, and she has like a direct flight between \*\*\* to where her family lives… her parents live like a 15-minute drive from the airport. So as soon as she lands easily, she's home in 15 minutes. Whereas when I land in Paris, then I have to make like an hour trip to get to the Paris train station and then four hours to get from Paris to \*\*\*\*\*\* and so it takes me about six to seven hours in total… as a journey to get home… like from door to door. Otherwise, I'd, you know, easily be like, I'll just go for a weekend. So like I do have this frustration of being like... I'd love to come to… but I can't be arsed to like, such a long trip leaves me exhausted...*

This participant compared her situation with one of her colleagues from Italy who can be at home relatively quickly after she lands. However, in her situation, the trip can take up to seven hours. However, many non-EU participants state that they arrive home in less than around five hours. Therefore, the participant’s phrase ‘from door to door’ summarises the difference between political readings of distance and the distance at the level of individual contexts and travelling practicalities.

When it comes to the influence of physical distance on family visits, the first factors can be duration and frequency of the visits. As a general rule, consistent with the literature (Baldassar et al., 2007b), participants who are relatively geographically closer visit more often and stay less, while participants whose family members are relatively far away visit less and stay more. For instance, one participant stated that she returns to Italy every couple of months. When I asked how many days she stayed, she replied ‘*three to five days*’. Similarly, a participant from Germany stated that he visited his family fairly frequently but stayed less. However, a participant from Malaysia said he can only return there twice a year. He stressed that he needs to stay there for a long time, adding that ‘*it takes more than three days to recover from jetlag!*’ Another participant, from Turkey, stressed that he stays there at least three weeks:

Mucahit*: Why at least three weeks?*

Interviewee*: I want to make it worth. You know… Initially, I went several times, like, twice or three times just for 10 days. And then it was so tiring. I couldn't… I felt like I couldn't meet anybody… like it was just running around. So they were like instant points… just for a week or three days or four days. I'd rather just wait… and when I go, I want to stay for a while to make sure that I spend time with people.*

Therefore, long-haul travels generally involve long duration and less frequent family visits, while relatively short distance visits tend to be of shorter duration and more frequent. This reflects the issues of practicality and spatiality in considering the frequency and intensity of transnational family visits (Ryan et al., 2015).

Similarly, physical distance in a transnational relationship can influence the cost of travelling. Here, it should be noted that the majority of the participants stated that their annual income levels were between £20-39k and £40-59k annually. Nearly all participants said that the income of academics in Britain was lower than their counterparts at universities in the US, Canada and many European countries. Thus, the majority of participants underlined that they generally had difficulties as a result of travel costs.

The participants whose family and friends lived in closer proximity paid less to travel. For instance, *Alan* visited their partner in a European country at least every month. They stated that ‘*it costs me like at £100 or £150 per month while he is also paying something more or less the same*’ although they use cheap airlines such as Ryanair and EasyJet. Thus, distances largely shape the cost of transnational family visits. A good example of this involves a participant from Colombia who said that it costs her over £3,000 to get tickets for her, her partner and son to visit her family in Colombia. She tried to bring her parents and siblings to Britain for a visit, saying ‘*I really wanted them to see these places like…*’ However, when they saw the cost of the potential travel, they changed their minds:

*It is incredibly expensive. Oh my God! ... my brother was going to come this year with my mom… Then, they decided not to… because now my brother is thinking of buying a house, he said “well, I cannot spend all that money on the UK flight and visa, which is ridiculously expensive. I just rather buy a house”… So he decided not to come. It's just far too expensive from Columbia, for Colombian pesos, which is too much…*

Therefore, the physical distance in her context led to expensive transportation costs. It is also important to take currency issues into consideration when analysing family members’ visits to the UK. Most of the time, the costs of air travel should be multiplied by the numbers of family members. For instance, *Xin Yi*, from an Asian background, who has been in Britain for more than three decades, said:

*The cost is the main reason why we can only go there once a year… because they are hugely expensive. I mean, in total, we buy four return tickets, I mean, me, \*\*\* [her partner’s name] and two children! So, it costs £7,000 or so, not to mention the travel costs inside my country, although travelling is a lot easier there...*

Therefore, the number of children and dependants can significantly affect the cost, duration and frequency of visits. In a similar vein, *Hayley*, from an American country, said that ‘*with the cost of my flight tickets, my friends have summer holidays in Greece and stay like a week or so*’*.* Therefore, the frequency, duration and expensiveness of family visits to some extent depend on the distance between the country of origin and the receiving country the physical distance in a transnational family relationship.

However, participants also emphasised intriguing strategies to overcome the challenges associated with the frequency and cost of visits. For example, many participants cited using academic activities to visit family and friends. The majority highlighted that they did fieldwork in their countries of origin or were visiting scholars or taught at an institution. A lecturer with an Australian background, *Gemma*,said:

*To be honest, I don't think I've ever had to pay for the tickets myself… because I've always been able to charge it to whichever research project I'm working on.*

This type of visits, arranged around a work-related activity, is also found in the literature (Baldassar et al., 2007). However, it appears that being an academic compared with other professions can be more conducive to creating a range of activities that can be combined with family visits such as conferences, projects, fieldwork and academic excursions. Therefore, this research adds another dimension to migrants’ arrangements of family visits via academic activities. This section also shows that migrant academics who are from the closest countries to the UK geographically do not necessarily have easier and quicker family visits. Therefore, instead of political considerations based on nation-states, the physical distance between family members should be considered. Additionally, how spatial differences affect the frequency and financial costs of travels are presented with the strategies that participants develop to cope with these issues.

## 5.2. Local Geographical Mobility and Family Relationships

In this section, I present the link between migrant academics’ high levels of internal and external geographical mobility and their local and transnational family relationships. I also show that participants’ perceptions towards physical mobility are varied. As such, while one group of academics strives to be more mobile due to its potential scientific and career outcomes, another group of academics – who I call the migrant academic precariat – tend to conceive physical mobility as a burden that destabilises their lives and relationships. Finally, I reveal how migrant academics’ frequent physical mobility affects their local family relationships.

### **5.2.1. Internal and External Mobility and the Academic Profession**

Physical mobility is an inherent part of the lives and relationships of many migrant academics. Within the literature, so-called highly-skilled migrants are also characterised by high levels of mobility. However, what makes the context of migrant academics specific and worth investigating is that being an academic, as a profession, encourages – and even necessitates – being physically mobile. As I showed in detail in Chapter 3 (section 3.2.), physical mobility has a socio-cultural, historical and professional background among migrant academics. The dominant contemporary discourses in academia see mobility as a sort of competence and an indicator of being a ‘good’ academic (Ackers et al., 2017; Fahey & Kenway, 2010). In this section, I present how participants’ physical mobility can be gradual and circular, at both the national and international level. I then focus on the professional dimensions of physical mobility.

In some cases, participants noted that their short-term visits to Britain gradually transformed into long-term migration. For instance, during the interviews, one of the initial questions I asked was about when participants came to the UK and how long they had been living here. I would expect the short and clear answers from such warm-up questions. After a few interviews, I noticed that this was the part that was most confusing because the most common answers that I received were usually ‘*oh, it is a bit complicated’*, ‘*nice question’* and ‘*uhm, long story’*. The main reason for this complexity is that, in the context of migrant academics, the traditional understanding of border-crossing can be no longer valid. In the traditional sense, border-crossing is often one in a life time activity that changes migrants’ lives dramatically as it involves immigrating from one place and settling to another. However, migrant academics and other highly mobile skilled migrants tend to cross border multiple times for different purposes. Thus, as border-crossing for these migrants context is circular and a ‘temporal process’ (Axelsson, 2017, p. 474), the traditional sense of one in a life time border crossing should be approached with caution in the context of some migrant academics.

As such, I soon noticed that the majority of migrant academics could not give me a specific date for that realisation of a life-changing decision in terms of coming to the UK. Many crossed the border multiple times. For instance, some participants stated that they first came to the UK for a conference, symposium or within the scope of a project. Other participants’ arrival to the UK was to obtain their master’s, PhD or postdoctoral degrees. These multiple border-crossings for academic activities did not initiate a migration journey, rather they were often just academic excursions and visits. For example, *Susan*, who came to Britain to complete her master’s degree, first said that she did not think of that as migrating; rather she ‘*felt like a holiday for a longer time’* because she did not know that she would become an academic here afterwards. Thus, my initial confusion arose because there is no specific start or finish for participants’ migration journeys. In some cases, participants’ short-term mobility plans gradually turned into long-term migration as they continued to stay in Britain. The plan of staying for longer than initially intended is also common in the literature (Lacroix & Zufferey, 2019).

Apart from gradual mobility, in some cases circular movements can occur between Britain, the home country or a third country. These circular movements can stem from several underpinning reasons such as changes in employment and family relationships. Circular mobility due to changes in employment conditions was prevalent among participants. For instance, *Oscar,* a 35-year-old European academic, came to Britain for postgraduate education, after which he returned to his country of origin and started to work there. However, after a couple years, when he became unemployed, he moved to Britain as an academic. Thus, changing employment conditions can be the major factor behind circular mobility. Familial reasons can also cause these types of back-and-forth movements. For example, *Emre*, a 45-year-old Middle Eastern senior lecturer did his PhD in Canada, after which he engaged with post-doctoral research activity in his country of origin. Then he returned to Canada and started a romantic relationship with his partner. After a while, they decided to move to Britain together since his partner found a job there. In this case, we see the intersection of changes in the personal lives and employment conditions of academics leading to circular physical mobility. Another example shows how familial dynamics impact on the mobility patterns of academics: *Miroslav* is a 35-year-old academic from a country on the European continent. After getting his master’s and PhD in Britain he decided to stay. Soon after, he returned to his home country due to the death of his father. After living two years together with his mother, he decided to return to Britain. Thus, changes in family and personal relationships and employment conditions can be major factors shaping the circular mobility of migrant academics.

With regard to the physical mobility of academics inside Britain, although there are a variety of factors influencing the process, moving to different cities and working at various universities due to academic reasons such as career progression and network development constitute a salient theme. For instance, before each interview, I looked at the public profiles of each participant so that I could gain some familiarity with their life story. I could see that the majority of migrant academics taking part in the research changed their places (workplaces) in Britain at least once. Some participants changed their institutions every couple of years. Participants’ explanations of such a high level of physical mobility generally related to employment conditions such as career progression, better salaries and social protection. *Hannah*, a 38-year-old female academic, stated that ‘*I am destined to go further’* when referring to the places on her CV. Similarly, *Dimitris*, a 53-year-old European academic, associated academic mobility with personal development:

*I tend to move every five years or so… this is kind of a personal principle… I think it is necessary for refreshing yourself… academically, because if I am at a place more than five years, I feel like I am… I start to feel less productive, innovative, creative and whatever it is. So, every year, I am changing the place and at least trying to change the institution…*

Therefore, changing universities would mean working with different people at different universities. This reflects the correlations made between physical mobility and academic productivity (Dubois et al., 2014; Fernández-Zubieta et al., 2015; Horta et al., 2010). Additionally, the academic profession relies on having both international and internal networks (the networked relationships of participants are presented in-depth in Chapter 8). However, there are participants who see internal academic mobility as the main source of building a wider academic network in Britain. *Eva*, a female professor with a Middle Eastern background, moved several times during her seven years of migration in Britain and said:

*I would not get to know all these good people in the UK, if I didn’t change my place. Also the best part of mobility… that's a top secret… is whenever you go to a new place, the new team would associate you with the best people in the past. For example, when I moved from \*\*\* to \*\*\*, there are some big Nobel Prize winner names there and they think that you work with them and they want to be friend of you. If you look at people who move places, they get promoted faster.*

Overall, migrant academics tend to be highly mobile. Instead of a one-time border-crossing, their mobility trajectories tend to be circular. Their high levels of physical mobility can challenge the concepts of border-crossing and settling in a place since the start and end of their migration journeys are difficult to trace (Teichler, 2015). It is shown that, consistent with the academic migration literature, some participants consider being mobile and changing universities frequently to be beneficial for their personal development and career progress. However, this is not necessarily true for all migrant academics. Increasing physical mobility is considered as a sort of burden rather than a blessing by some migrant academics: the migrant academic precariat, which is one of the original contributions of this research to the literature.

### **5.2.2. “I am doomed to be on the move”: Mobility and the Migrant Academic Precariat**

One group of academic participants regarded physical mobility as something beyond being a matter of choice – they feel that they are coerced to be physically mobile. I develop the notion of the migrant academic precariat throughout the thesis. The life of the migrant academic precariat is characterised by insecurity and unpredictability. The insecurity arises from the neoliberal conditions of being an academic in British academia, faced with non-permanent, fixed-term contracts and low salaries. Their relations with the space are unpredictable since their future in British academia is determined by their job contract and visa certificate. In this regard, the migrant academic precariat also tends to be physically mobile and change their places frequently. Due to the fixed-term contracts, the migrant academic precariat does not have a permanent position at a particular university. They move wherever they find a new fixed-term contract. However, contrary to some academics who praise physical mobility on the basis of academic motivations, the migrant academic precariat experiences physical mobility as a time and energy consuming activity and disruptive factor to relationship building.

Frequent physical mobility can require re-experiencing the initial adjustment phases to a new place. Generally, participants consider the situation of being obliged to re-experience the difficulties of adjusting to a new place constantly as energy consuming. *Jazmin*, a research fellow on a fixed-term contract, said that she does not have enough power to socialise again:

*I think it's quite hard to… quite hard to change… I changed spaces many times! Always changing places… I am doomed to be on the move actually. But now I don’t want to do it… You know, once I kind of made that effort with this particular location, I invested, you know, social life and space, and trying to do that again? No, I just don't have enough power.*

Not feeling the power and energy to move again is a common reaction among the migrant academic precariat. Additionally, it does not vary across career stages and ages of migrant academics. For instance, *Jacob*, a 55-year-old senior academic, stated that he had to cancel his plans to move to Paris since he did *‘not feel the energy’* to do it. Similarly, *Hayley*, a 37-year-old academic holding a fixed-term contract stressed how changing places consumes her energy. Thus, moving to another place, even if still within Britain, means the need to re-experience the adjustment process to a city and workplace. The duration spent in a specific place is generally seen as an investment which is not wanted to be sacrificed. In this regard, one participant based in Manchester said:

*I've got work colleagues who are like, "oh, like there's a job opening up in London", I'm like “no! I'm not moving", like "I'm here"… It's an okay department, I have a permanent position here. I'm not leaving Manchester. So, in my head, I know this city, I've kind of given Manchester five years. You should offer me something that is more valuable than five years to convince me.*

The time spent in a specific place was frequently noted because the majority of participants described how difficult the adjustment process can be. Due to this difficulty, they generally do not want to re-experience that phase. An East European background associate professor, *Jazmin*, described this adjustment process as follows:

*I think it's hard… it is exhausting that… you ask them* [new colleagues] *so many things and you feel dumb in the first couple of years. I think… for like a lot of different reasons… because you're just not aware of… you know, the kids' cartoons, you're not aware of the politicians… the histories and you know, you don't have in-depth knowledge… and the things that you know, are irrelevant, as a foreigner, I just keep explaining things… and I feel like I'm the weird one. I never had an issue with making friends per se. I'm fairly sociable. I do have had a big friendship group in all the places I lived in in the UK. I'm very happy with you know… my contacts here. But the, it's different… I don’t know but… it's quite painful.*

Similar terms, like ‘*exhausting’*, ‘*feeling dumb’* and *‘painful’*,were used by other participants to describe the initial adjustment process. Also, the difficulty of understanding jokes, communicating with people who have different English accents and even understanding social environments in the departments were themes that were generally cited by participants.

The physical mobility of migrant academics in Britain is generally overlooked in the academic migration literature. Furthermore, the notion of physical mobility is generally praised due to its potential outcomes of academics’ personal development, career progression and network building (Laakso, 2020; Storme et al., 2017). Higher education systems, institutions and organisations evaluate their success on the basis of figures of the physical mobility of academic staff at both the national and international level (Ackers, 2008; OECD, 2021). However, physical mobility figures also include the migrant academic precariat who are obliged to move, although they do not want to change places anymore. Its effects on the mental and emotional well-being of this group of academics are negative. Furthermore, its impact on non-migrant academics is also potentially mentally and emotionally negative, and also imposed by the nature of the HE system but the adjustment is most likely to be different and the local family networks not so geographically dispersed. Thus, this provides further evidence to the notion that the disparities of the HE system and the negative influences of employment conditions on the family and relationships of academics are exacerbated in the contexts of academics who migrated to Britain. Below, I present how physical mobility both inside and outside Britain influence on the family relationships of academics in detail.

### **5.2.3. Go Wherever Your Job Takes You: Influences of Mobility on Family Relationships**

Due to the internal mobility of participants, many families are not co-resident and are geographically dispersed around Britain. However, high levels of geographical mobility of academics have some disadvantages for both local and transnational family relationships, which is an under-addressed topic in the literature (Hopkins et al., 2019).

First, children in local families are negatively impacted by frequent physical mobility. There is also a gendered dimension of internal academic mobility since female academics are less geographically mobile compared to male counterparts as caring responsibilities primarily continue to fall on women (Ackers & Gill, 2008b; Bilecen, 2021). Gender’s influence on children and caring relationships are presented in Chapter 7 (section 7.1.). However, children are impacted by the separated family life; in some cases, being locally separated can interfere with social understandings of a ‘normal family’ which, in turn, can be distressing for a child. *Li Na*, a 42-year-old female migrant academic living separately from her partner, gave an example of this situation:

*I remember clearly in the nursery school with my little child… other kids told my boys that we are divorced because we live in different cities. So he was really upset. He thinks we are divorced. He came back home crying. And I just said, “that’s not true”. I said we have jobs in different cities… that is just it… “look, we have a house here and he has a house there”. “So you can think about this this way, we have two houses”. He said, “oh, my parents still live together. Yay! but they have two houses”. But the funny thing is, my little child went to the same nursery. He said, we have three houses here because I think he told people my sister's house back in \*\*\* [home country] is his house. So he had three houses. He told other kids that “So obviously, we are rich”.*

*Li Na* and her partner have been living separately for more than five years in Britain. Although she works as an academic, her British partner does a different job. The physical distance between the separate British cities they live in is about 250 miles, almost from the southernmost to the northernmost city of Britain. This situation also influences her transnational family relationships. *Li Na* states that she cannot allocate time to visit her country of origin since she visits her partner during holidays. She emphasises the significance of new communication technologies in keeping in touch with her parents in her home country and her partner in a different British city.

However, the impacts of internal academic mobility are not limited to the family imaginary of children, it can also have an influence on their social lives. *Baram* is a 44-year old female lecturer who has been in Britain for more than two decades. She and her partner are an international academic couple who met at an academic conference. They continued their long-distance relationship for a long time. After getting married and having a child, they reunited in Britain. Currently, both of them commute for more than two hours every day to reach their workplaces. Although neither of them works in the city they live in, they do not prefer to move to another place on the grounds that this may negatively affect their child’s social life:

*We decided to stay here in \*\*\* because my son was moved around so much… I mean we first moved to \*\*\* and then to \*\*\*\*. And so anyways, he had like seven addresses by the time he was three. That's a thing when you don't have a permanent job as a junior academic, you just go with the job, right? And then you just carry your baby with you. I said to him* [her partner] *“I don't want to move him again because he's just found friends in the school”. So now we are commuting to \*\*\* to the university but did not bring my family here…*

Participants who have children are especially concerned about the effects of changing places where their family lives on their children’s socialisation processes. In a similar vein, *Xin Yi*, a 59-year-old professor, and her partner have been commuting from the city they live in to the city where they work for many years. They have two children; one is 26 and the other is 20. She states that they did not want to interrupt the social circles of their children, ‘*even though they are not kids anymore’*. Therefore, the negative effects of the internal mobility on children’s socialisation in local families do not depend on the age of the children.

Overall, migrant academic staff are physically mobile in both internal and international spaces. This level of mobility reflects discourses relating to physical mobility in higher education literature (Kim, 2009c; Oliver, 2012; Siekierski et al., 2018). However, this level of living flexibly with the space brings about issues in academics’ personal and family lives which are often neglected in the academic migration literature. One of the original contributions of this research is to show that the ever-increasing physical mobility of academics is experienced differently by different actors at different levels. The migrant academic precariat perceives internal academic mobility as a burden and a source of unpredictability and instability. Heightened physical mobility inside Britain decreases time and energy that might be utilised for transnational family relationships. Furthermore, physical mobility also creates disruptions and discontinuities in the family imaginary and socialisation processes of children living in local families. These findings enhance the knowledge on the internal and external physical mobility of academic staff in the existing literature.

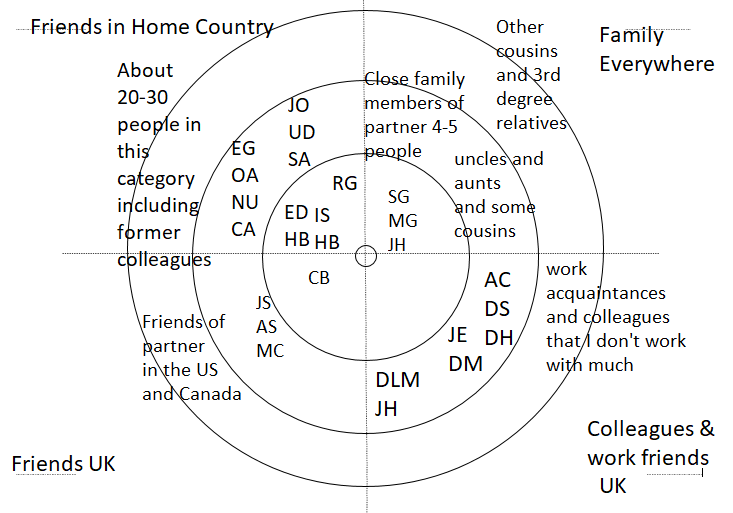
## 5.3. Transnational Family Relationships in Multi-National Contexts

Soon after I started conducting interviews with participants, I realised that their transnational family relationships are different from what I had read about in the literature. That is, although there are various formations detailed in the literature, the implicit assumption about transnational family relationships is that they occur between migrants and the family members who stay behind in their countries of origin (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Parrenas, 1998). The transnational familial activity, then, flows between the countries of settlement and the countries that migrants are from. However, this type of binational transnational contact was rare among participants. On the contrary, academics’ family members and relationships are multinational and geographically scattered. Thus, in this section, I first present the multi-spatial context of some participants’ transnational family relationships. Then, I argue that maintaining relationships in a multi-spatial context depends on a wide array of factors: while in some contexts participants strive to create different forms of presence, in other contexts they prefer to maintain a physical distance from family and kin.

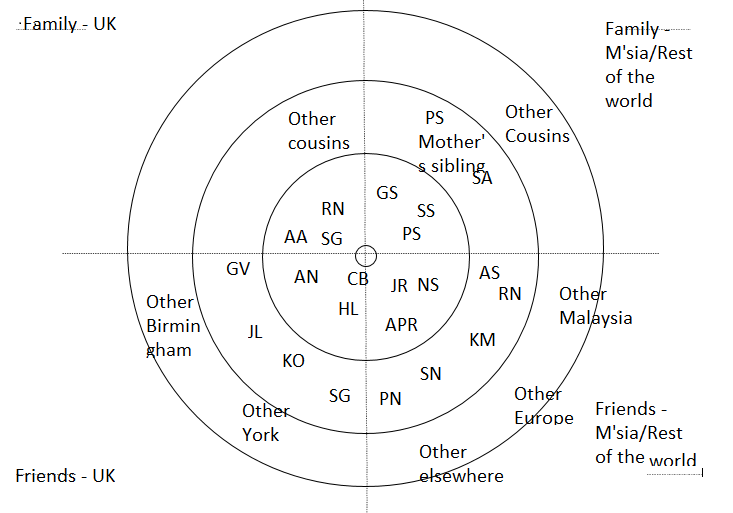
### **5.3.1. Multi-Locational and National Transnational Family Relationships**

Participants tended to have a wide range of social networks based in both Britain and their countries of origin. As presented in Chapter 8, these social networks can include scientific, familial and personal ties. Most of the participants’ familial and personal ties were not limited to being between Britain and their countries of origin. This multi-nationality is also related to the transnational habitus of some academics (Nedelcu, 2012). The transnational habitus in the context of family relationships can also be inherited from previous generations (Zontini & Reynolds, 2018). Most academics have some familial contacts in different parts of the world or at least have some migration experiences in terms of their parents and other family members. For instance, *Jenna* said that her father was an immigrant in Britain for nearly ten years and returned to their country of origin. *Baram’s* family were migrants in Germany while *Farah*’s family came to Britain as refugees fleeing civil war.

Many participants’ closest family members were scattered around the world. To give some examples, *Claire* stated that both of her siblings live in different countries due to ‘international marriages’. Similarly, *Susan*’s brother lives in the US and *Oscar* said that there are four international marriages in his family, while *Veronica* told me that her brother lives in a different country. This point is also visualised in some participants’ sociogram maps demonstrated below (Figure 10 and 11).



Sociogram : Ego-centric Network Map of a Participant



Sociogram 2: Ego-centric Network Map of a Participant

As can be seen above, some participants’ sociogram maps include more than two countries. Participants can have the closest family and friends whose names are in the inner circles in any of these countries. To address this geographical diversity in transnational family relationships, some participants tend to name the quadrants of the sociogram, such as ‘*family everywhere’*; ‘*family elsewhere’* and ‘*family around the world’*. Therefore, having family members such as siblings and parents in a country that is different from either Britain, or the country of origin is remarkably common in the sample.

Additionally, being in an intimate couple relationship can complicate the spatial dimension of transnational family relationships. There were several academics in the sample who were living separately from their partners abroad. This reflects the prevalence of long-distance intimate relationships in the context of academic migration and mobility (Bilecen, 2017; Giorgi & Raffini, 2015). In this research, at least three major patterns of romantic relationships emerged from the life stories of participants. First, there can be a maintenance of pre-migration romantic relationships. In this context, the local pre-migration romantic relationship is transferred into the transnational space with the migration of at least one partner. Second, many academics state that they completed their master’s and/or PhD education in Britain and had a transition period from being a postgraduate student to an academic. At this point, the pre-employment romantic relationship can be turned into an international long-distance relationship if one partner does not start working in the UK and returns to their country of origin after completing postgraduate education. This common pattern also reflects the diversity of inward student mobility in Britain (King et al., 2016; Lomer, 2018). Finally, instead of a transition in migration or employment, the romantic relationship can emerge as a result of short-term academic mobility such as conferences, excursions or being a visiting scholar in another country (Teichler, 2015).

Overall, the migration experiences of previous generations and the migration of siblings, parents and partners can lead to the creation of multi-national and multi-spatial transnational family relationships. This situation of having multinational relationships (Bryceson, 2019) is of great significance in terms of understanding the transnational worlds of migrant academics. Below I present the advantages and disadvantages of having a multinational transnational family relationship in light of participants’ stories. First, I show that having multiple family members scattered around the world can also mean difficulties in performing family practices (Morgan, 2011). Second, I present how some participants, however, may want to live away from their family members for various reasons.

### **5.3.2. “I wish I had met a boyfriend living on the next street”: Maintaining Multi-National Family Relationships**

Maintaining relationships with families who are based in different parts of the world can bring about some structural and practical challenges in terms of performing family practices (Morgan, 2011). In this section, the difficulty of arranging family visits in multi-spatial contexts and how family relationships are affected from this multi-spatiality are presented. Firstly, arranging family visits can be more complicated in multi-national contexts. One of the most common problems is that before each visit, migrants may find themselves between family members. For instance, *Gemma*, who describes her identity as ‘queer’ states that her girlfriend lives in a different country. She states that they need to *‘arrange every year which country to go for the Christmas holiday*’. Some couples visit their families in turn. Another strategy is to visit families separately. For instance, *Oscar* is from a European country and he met his wife, who is from a South Asian country, while he was doing his postgraduate study in Britain. They both stayed in Britain after their postgraduate education and got married. He said that his wife goes to her home country three or four times a year. Meanwhile, he visits his family members in the European country he is from and usually joins his wife on during her family visits once a year.

Furthermore, having both the partner and parents in the same country can cause complex issues in terms of family visits. For instance, one participant from India argued that the distance between the cities where her parents and her boyfriend live takes more than an eight-hour drive. Their relationship with her partner dates back to before her migration to Britain for her postgraduate education. When I told her that I am also in a long-distance relationship since my girlfriend lives in Germany, she stated that having a partner who lives in the country of origin is more challenging because trying to fulfil the physical demands of both partner and parents who are not geographically close to each other puts too much pressure on her:

*You are lucky because your girlfriend is living in a different country, I also wish that… I mean, I'm only able to see my partner when I'm in India. And that's tricky because when I'm in India, my time is really pressed and I also want to see my parents. My parents live in a different town. My partner lives in a different city and really far, this gets really tricky with trying to balance… and I feel guilty for not spending time with him, but then when I'm with him, I feel guilty for not spending time with my parents, it becomes really high pressure for me.*

Her story resembles other couples who are from the same country. Another significant factor is the physical distance between the parents and family members of couples. For instance, one participant and her partner were from China and had been in the UK for 33 years. She said that their duration of visits includes at least one week travelling time:

*It is very unfortunate that my parents and my husband’ family are very far apart in China. So, every time we travel, we spend seven to 10 days travelling from my family to his family… At least we spend one week on journeys…*

When the distance between the parents of the couple is closer, the visit becomes more practical and time saving. For example, one participant stated that his and his partner’s family live fifteen minutes apart in Nigeria – they sometimes leave the children with one family and visit the other family. Similarly, another participant explained that his and his partner’s families live close to each other in Algeria and he said that it would be difficult if one family lived far away. Therefore, arrangements for family visits can be more complex when family members live at different and distant locations (Bryceson, 2019). Thus, in the context of multi-national and multi-spatial family relationships, arranging family visits can put migrants in a difficult position between their family obligations such as visiting their parents and other family members. It also shows how family practices – direct family visits in this context – are still critical in terms of defining and maintaining family relationships (Morgan, 2011b).

Secondly, this multi-spatiality can have a detrimental effect on family roles and intimate relationships. Some participants whose family members live at different locations may have a hectic lifestyle and physical and mental weariness due to being in between multiple spatial contexts. This is especially salient in some long-distance romantic relationships. *Sophie* is a good example of this: she is a 33-year-old post-doctoral research fellow who has been in Britain for more than a decade. She is from a South Asian country, and during her postgraduate education in Britain, she met her boyfriend who is from a European country. After graduation, her boyfriend returned to his country of origin, and she started working in Britain as an academic. Since that time, *Sophie* and her boyfriend have been in a long-distance romantic relationship; they decided to visit each other in turn because her partner has a job elsewhere. However, she emphasised the difficulty in visiting both her partner in his European country and her parents and extended family members in her country of origin. She indicated that that there are two countries she has to visit each holiday:

*Oh my God! Christmas and Easter breaks… So, what I do is that, I first go to \*\*\** [the European country where her boyfriend lives] *and stay there like one week or ten days, with you know a huge luggage! Then I am flying to \*\*\*[her country of origin]. Then, I am directly coming to the UK… It is generally like this and carrying all the stuff, it is exhausting…*

*Sophie*’s travel plans were similar to mine since my girlfriend lives in Germany. I told her that I would also visit my girlfriend first and then move to Turkey to visit my family and friends. During the interview, she asked me whether we had lived together in the same place for a long time, for more than three months. When I said no, she said that she had been living with her boyfriend for more than four months. Normally, her partner would have returned to Europe more than three months ago. However, he was stuck in Britain due to Covid-19-related travel restrictions. She said that after ‘*getting the taste of*’ living with her partner together she never wants to continue their relationship from afar:

*Distances… I think that it's horrible… my partner there in \*\*\* but family there… and I would prefer us all to live in the same city, same street! But I don't like this. It makes you think you are alone! I keep saying to my boyfriend that “I wish I had met a boyfriend living on the next street”. Now for me, all of us living in the same place seems like a dream… When I was younger, it seemed a bit cool to be abroad… and to have a boyfriend abroad or to have friends everywhere… you know, different countries… but now I would very much rather live in the same village with everybody.*

*Sophie* and her partner were making plans to establish a new life in the European country where her boyfriend lived during the time of the interview. She planned to quit academia in Britain and look for a job in the European country where her partner lives. She mentioned several subordinate reasons that pushed her from the UK higher education system, including low wages, fear of losing her job, tight visa rules and the political climate. However, the main reason was the difficulty in managing and maintaining her multiple transnational family relationships based in multiple locations. The notion of multiple locations shows how increasing physical mobility creates more complicated, diverse and geographically scattered transnational family and kinship relationships (Bryceson, 2019). Also, this adds further evidence to the notion that considerations of spatiality can still matter for family relationships in the context of so-called highly-skilled and highly-mobile populations (Bilecen, 2014; Ryan et al., 2015).

### **5.3.3. “It’s really good to be away, sometimes”: Maintaining Distance from Family**

This research finds that some participants actually prefer having family and kinship relationships from afar. These participants do not cut ties and/or lose contact with their family. On the contrary, they have fairly regular, frequent and strong transnational ties (Ryan, 2016). However, they believe that their family relationships can only survive if it is maintained in the transnational space. To this end, their strategy is to deliberately maintain the distance with their family members. In this section, the patterns and steps of how some participants keep their distance from some of their family members are presented.

The common point among this group of participants is that they tend to have serious disagreements or differences in opinion with their family members which usually emerged prior to their migration. This difference can arise from political (in the case of *Benjamin*), ideological (*Sally*), religious (*Jacob*) and sexuality and gender reasons (*Claire*). Although these differences can trigger their migration to Britain, they are not the only reasons for their migration. For instance, *Claire* is from a European country and did her PhD in her country of origin. While writing her thesis, she realized her homosexual identity:

*I just come out as gay to myself. Like literally… As I was writing my PhD, I kind of had… this kind of lightbulb realisation about myself and my sexuality. I was like a 26-year-old person and kind of who didn't really know anything. It was a difficult time with my identity and tensions with the family… And I started looking at the LGBT queer community in the south of \*\*\*\** [home country] *and finding it really difficult to feel a part of it…*

However, she stated that the main reason for her migration to Britain stemmed from her supervisor’s encouragement to get a postdoctoral degree in an English-speaking country to have a position in her country of origin. Similarly, *Jacob*, from a Middle Eastern country, reveals that he had differences from his family in terms of religion.

*I need to give you another personal data which is important. So my family is religious but not super religious. But generally, just again you calibrate it with your own culture and your own religion... I had a lot of problems explaining this to British people… So, I stopped being religious in my 20s… So 10 years sort of… and had a tough long period between 20 and 30… I was living at home and that was always uncomfortable… because of the different practices and specific things during weekends. So there was tension with my family existing in the background…*

He migrated to Britain for his PhD and gradually decided to stay there. He stated that despite the tensions between him and his family members, his parents were happy with him. His family even supports and takes pride in his move to Britain within the scope of a scholarship:

*but there wasn't much about… About the studies, my parents were very happy for example, I finished my master’s with an excellent degree. And then I got a picture of my mom during my graduation ceremony… They were happy with the success in studies. Also, they were happy that I got this scholarship and came to the UK… So people "Oh Gosh! your son must be really intelligent because he goes to \*\*\* [one of most famous universities in the UK]…" so they were supportive of it.*

Therefore, the initial difference with the family was not generally the main factor in their migration and mobility from their country of origin to the UK. There were a variety of dynamics leading to the migration of an academic. However, the initial fundamental difference with their family members intensified and deepened as they continued to live in Britain. For example, *Claire* found Britain a comfortable place to build her new sexual identity:

*And when I came to the UK, I was immediately out to pretty much everyone which was great. Actually, one of my purposes of coming here was that… you know I got really sick of that… But in the UK… it felt really easy to construct my core identity and how to find queer community in the \*\*\** [the city *Claire* lives in Britain]*”*

Similarly, *Jacob* said that when he came to Britain, he realised that his new life emancipated him from the religious practices and discourses that he differed from his family members in his country of origin. I found out that usually this pattern is followed by a turning point in which the migrant academic decides to settle in the UK permanently. *Jacob* stated that after his PhD, his turning point was rejecting an offer of employment in his country of origin:

*The moment… the big change was that when I finished my PhD, I did have an offer from the university in \*\*\*\* [the capital city of his home country] but I was checking options in the UK and I was applying to the [famous university in the UK]. And then I got the job at \*\*\* [in the UK]. So it was the moment that I say myself okay I am gonna stay here…*

The decision to stay in Britain for a long time goes beyond choosing a geographical place to live for the rest of a life. Instead of being merely a geographical choice, the decision to stay in the UK for a longer term indicates the deepening of the fundamental cleavage between aspects of their lives experienced by participants. As such, it is a lifestyle preference. For instance, despite her limited initial socialisation process due to being in a small British town, *Claire* said that she decided to live in the UK as an independent person:

*And I had a very, very clear moment in my life when I realized that I couldn't keep my mom as part of my life in the same way after coming to the UK and constructing my queer identity. Otherwise, I would never get to have my own identity or like get my independence. I didn’t think I could be an academic in my country… So yeah basically, I made the decision to stay here quite early and then it was a process of getting my mother to accept it…*

The timing of these decisions is also important in the sense that they coincide generally with having spent some time and realising that they could live better in the UK. Another commonality at this stage is that generally after participants had made their decisions to stay in the UK, it took some time for family members to accept that decision. *Jacob* reflected:

*my parents were thinking this was temporary… they thought this was temporary for a long time but after a period of time then accepted… and they accepted my partner. It was difficult but ever since they accepted my life changed you know…*

In both contexts, after a period of time, the family members accepted that their migration to the UK was permanent and so was their choice of lifestyle. After this point, the participants wanted to deliberately maintain a distance from their family members at home. Being physically far away from home can create this comfortable medium for creating their identities. In the context of *Claire*, the creation of a network composed of fictive kin and chosen family was achieved in Britain (Ebaugh & Curry, 2000; Weeks et al., 2001):

*one of the best parts of being away is that… I'm not gonna tell her* [her mother] *that I'm going to Pride or to like, Queer Bowl or to like, a specific Queer party or whatever. And I don't talk about you know, me dating people on Tinder and OkCupid, I try not to share it with my mom. She is always "oh my poor baby" like "she's alone" and “she can’t do anything”. So I kind of reassure her by saying, like, "Okay, I'm fine". And then you know, I go to a therapist. And then I've got close friends here that I can talk to as well.*

Similarly, *Jacob* stated that being in Britain gives him the chance to create his own identity in relation to religion. He also said that he sees this change when he regularly visits home and sees his family member’s different religious practices. Therefore, the family visits serve as an indicator showing the degree of difference with the family. *Claire* witnessed this in a visit she made during one Christmas:

*My dad and my brother’s approach to community is very gendered… And in terms of sexuality, again, like I came out to home three Christmases ago, I think it was three years ago. And I got really annoyed at… So, when I came out to my siblings, my sister was kind of like, "Oh, well, you know, you can be gay and like, you can still be" like, "super-feminine". "I've got like this colleague and she's married to a woman but like they still both of them wear dresses and they're like, super pretty". And I was just like, I just let her talk, but I was so pissed off.*

*Claire* thought that she would have left Britain many times but the ability to live freely and construct her identity in Britain, she said, was ‘*what ties me here actually’*. Similarly, *Jacob* said that religious freedom is not perfect or flawless in Britain; however, living in Britain provides him a more comfortable ground for constructing his sense of self. Migration plays a key role here in creating a safe space and providing a ground for constructing their individual identities. I asked *Jacob* whether the pre-existing differences led him to migrate or the differences become deeper after he migrated, and he replied:

*very good question… but I don't know which is the cause and which one the effect… But… I was having structural, kind of, political and differences with my family even before I moved here… but at the time you know they were not deep differences… but after I stay here… it is also one of the very few advantages of moving to another country. You have the outsider vision, you become more objective…*

What makes the context of migrant academics specific can be explained in two points. Firstly, the contexts of migrant academics who keep their distance from their families is different from the political exile type of migration. In the context of political exile, a social pressure on an individual or a group arising from a political opinion or ideology can be visible. The ‘deviance’ and difference are experienced at a societal level, such as the exclusion and exile occurring in front of a social group. However, in this context, the difference occurs at the family level irrespective of social and cultural factors. For instance, *Claire* was from a so-called ‘a modern European country’; however, the difference between her understanding of sexuality and that of her family deepened the differences.

Secondly, what makes the notion of ‘maintaining a distance’ a unique contribution to the understanding of transnational family relationships is that despite the disparities between migrant academics and their family members, participants do not cut their family ties; on the contrary, they maintain their relationships but do so transnationally. In the literature, there are studies showing that some labour migrants and refugees deliberately cut their ties, escape from their family members and do not give out telephone numbers and addresses or answer their calls due to economic expectations or threats of violence or insecurity (Muller, 2009; Worby, 2010).

However, in this context, participants continued their transnational family ties, believing that their family relationships performed best in the transnational space, and, as described above, the academic work can give them the agency to use legitimate excuses (Finch & Mason, 1993). These groups of migrant academics can engage with familial relationships with their fictive kin and their families of choice in Britain (Ebaugh & Curry, 2000; Weeks et al., 2001) while maintaining their ties with their immediate family members in their home countries. For example, *Claire* said that she calls her mom at least every other day; her parents came here for her last birthday. While she calls the idea of returning back to home country and working there as an academic as ‘*a nightmare’*, she also said *‘my mom would kill me if I go to the US’*. Similarly, *Jacob’*s mother was under 24/7 intensive care at home, and he said that he pays for her care and watches her and her carer 24/7 through a camera in his mother’s room. He regularly visits his family and has a WhatsApp group with his siblings where they talk about the caring issues of their mother. Thus, this group of participants want to live at a distance that enables them to maintain both their relationships with the immediate family members on a symbolic level and to develop their lifestyles and build their own biographies by being free from the pressures of their immediate family members.

The strategy of maintaining a distance was also evident in some local family relationships. As an example, *Li Na*, an Asian professor whose husband lived in a different city, said she is ‘*happy*’ with living separately and does not want to unite in a city in Britain since she likes living together with their children:

*I am definitely happy with this! I always say this to him! I wouldn’t prefer living together say in \*\*\* or even \*\*\** [city she lives with her children] *as well. I mean, I really like staying with the kids here but he is not that type of person.*

Therefore, some participants believed that sometimes maintaining a relationship (familial or intimate) from afar is better than living together. This also echoes with some of the findings of the living apart together literature illustrating that living apart family members use distances for strategic undoing of varied traditional norms e.g., gender and religion (Duncan, 2015). Thus, one of the contributions of this research is to show that family reunion and co-residence are not necessarily the ultimate aim and ideal of all transnational family relationships. In some contexts, migrants and their family members may want to keep their distance and prefer to maintain relationships from afar. Also, keeping their distance does not necessarily mean the termination of family ties. Migrants may actively maintain their family ties but wish to live away from their families.

To summarise, in this second part of the chapter, three points were made. First, it is shown that participants’ transnational family relationships have the characteristics of multi-national family relationships (Bryceson, 2019) due to being scattered across the world. Second, I move to show that such a context of multi-spatial transnational relationships can lead to some practical issues performing family practices transnationally. However, in the final section, I show that some participants strategically live away from their family members while still maintaining their ties. In the last part of this chapter, I focused on the geographical mobility of academics within Britain and its influences on their local and transnational family relationships.

## 5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the spatial dimensions of academics’ migration journeys and family relationships. The original contributions this chapter presents and their wider implications to the discussion of understandings of migration and family relationships can be summarised in three points.

First, in line with the discussions around the spatial turn and new mobilities paradigm, we can say that the increasing physical mobility of migrants also intersects with personal and familial issues (Storme et al., 2017; Urry, 2007). Thus, this research shows that the increasing physical mobility of migrant academics who participated in this research leads to the occurrence of more separate, fractured and fragmented families operating in both local and transnational spaces. In addition, by showing the geographically scattered family members of migrant academics, I contribute to attempts aiming to conceptualise family relationships in contemporary forms of migration and mobility within the context of ‘multinational’ transnational families (see Bryceson, 2019). In this regard, we can mention ‘floating family ties’ to show participants’ transnational family ties that are ‘flexible, adaptable, and negotiable across national cultural and social borders’, based in multiple locations and nation-states across the world (Wilding, 2014, p. 17).

Second, this research contributes to the discussions problematising physical mobility through empirical evidence gathered from migrant academics in Britain. As such, physical mobility is generally approached in a value-laden way and often considered as the main resource creating stratifications in contemporary societies (Kristensen, 2018). Also, more studies in the academic migration literature regard mobility as an indicator of excellence, a precursor of personal development and career progression (Ackers, 2005; Mendoza et al., 2020; Rostovskaya et al., 2021). However, as with nearly all other resources, physical mobility is also unevenly distributed among the so-called ‘highly-privileged’ and highly-skilled migrant academics. The situation of the migrant academic precariat and other academics in some way resembles Bauman’s analogy of ‘tourists and vagabonds’ (1998). Both groups are physically mobile, however, one’s mobility is flawless and more desirable while the others are burdensome and coerced (Kristensen, 2018). Moreover, how feelings of insecurity, unpredictability and being coerced to be physically mobile can lead to have serious implications for both local and transnational family relationship have been highlighted.

Finally, despite migrant academics’ ‘floating ties’, which are fluid, negotiable, flexible’ (Wilding, 2014, p. 17) and scattered across different parts of the world, and a disposition to be physically mobile across the space, this research finds that academics’ decisions are still anchored by considerations of space and spatiality. As shown at the outset of the chapter, the decision-making processes of highly-mobile migrant academics are embedded in strategic thinking and deliberations over space. This line of thought is significant since considerations of spatiality and distances are deeply entrenched in negotiations of performing familial practices. It reflects the relevance of considering transnational family relationships through the lens of family practices since the persistence of family practices manifests itself as a form of mooring mechanism even in the conditions of highly mobile academics (Morgan, 2011). This notion of family practices in the context of migrant academics is developed further in Chapter Seven. However, before that, this thesis moves on to analysing the dimension of time and temporality in the migratory experiences and family relationships of migrant academics. Together with the spatiality context presented in this chapter, the temporality and time dimension of transnational family relationships provide a firm ground for understanding the research phenomenon under consideration.

# CHAPTER 6: TIME AND TEMPORALITY IN THE LIVES AND TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS OF MIGRANT ACADEMICS

As it is illustrated in the introduction chapter (see, section 1.1), the first research question asks the influences of both spatiality and temporality on academics’ migratory experiences and family and kinship relationship. As the chapter Five illustrated, despite being highly mobile across the space, migrant academics’ lives and relationships are embedded in considerations of space and spatiality. In this section, I present how time and temporality shape the research phenomenon.

Time and temporality are inherently embedded into the experiences and relationships of migrant academics. The issue of time and its connections with human existence in the world are still matters of discussion in the discipline of philosophy of time (Power, 2018). Although I do not delve into those discussions here, a conceptual distinction between time and temporality is required. Following Hoy’s (2009) theoretical division, I consider time in a more quantitative and objective sense as something which is universally measurable by humans in different forms such as seconds, years, hours and seasons. Temporality, however, refers to something manifesting itself in the human relationships and existence in the world (Hoy, 2009). Therefore, temporality is embedded in our social relationships with family members, colleagues and managers. However, time, in the context of migration, can mean how long a person is in Britain and how many times they have crossed the border. It can also refer to the difference between time zones and seasons, or the period of religious days, festivals and holidays. Sometimes it is a date denoting how long a person can reside in Britain or work at a particular university or can be absent from here in order not to lose a visa and the chance to have an Indefinite Leave to Remain. Thus, time and temporality are inherently grounded in the experiences of migrant academics.

Based on the theoretical premise that the scholarship of human migration obsessively focuses on the spatial aspects of migration, a strand of the literature draws attention to temporal aspects of migration (Cwerner, 2001; Griffiths, 2014; Robertson, 2021). This chapter presents three areas in which this research contributes to these strands of the literature across three overarching sections. First, as the previous chapter illustrated, migrant academics tend to be highly physically mobile due primarily to their profession and social relationships. However, I show that being mobile and having transnational family members in multiple places around the world can create issues of synchronicity. As such, I show that maintaining family relationships and performing familial practices from afar can require a sense of ‘temporal labour’ to synchronise time at multiple levels. Second, I move my focus towards the influence of migration and mobility on the individual biographies and family relationships of migrant academics. In this regard, migration can create temporal disjuncture and dissonances in terms of career progression, family relationships and the normative order of life stages’ progression (Wang, 2020). The second section also presents how time acts as a disciplinary power – in the Foucauldian sense (Hoy, 2009; Robertson, 2021) – on the lives, imaginaries and future plans of migrant academics via both restrictive migration regulations and the British neoliberal HE system. At this point, I continue to develop the notion of the migrant academic precariat, which I introduced in Chapter 5, by showing the permanent temporariness in academics’ migration statuses and academic careers (Hilal & Petti, 2018). Finally, the third section presents participants’ efforts to manage and maintain their family relationships at the local and national level while also trying to deal with the time scarcity related to the escalated temporal pressures of the British HE system.

## 6.1. Timings and Synchronicity in Transnational Family Practices

This section focuses on how time and temporality impinge on the migration and transnational family relationships of participants from two angles. First, it shows that considering the timings of participants’ migration can provide significant clues not just in terms of individual biographies but also the events in the global history. Second, I show that some participants try to resynchronise their time with left-behind family members by attending transnational practices at culturally specific times. Finally, I show that managing transnational family practices at multiple levels creates temporal dissonances and asynchronization issues even if new communication technologies – which were regarded as a resynchronising factor between migrants and non-migrants (Cwerner, 2001) – are involved in the process.

**6.1.1. Timings of Migration and the Flow of Socio-Historical Time**

One of the leading scholars of life course theory, Elder introduced the concept of ‘sociohistorical time’ to draw attention to the events occurred during the historical period and geographical location that the individual lives in (Elder, 1985). When analysing the life stories of participants, I realised that the timings of their migration often coincide with significant world events. One of the most common for my participants is the 2008 Financial Crisis (seen in the life stories of *Hannah, Elena, Jazmin* and *Bella*).

Such globally important events affect both migrants and their family members. For instance, *Miroslav*, from a central European country, has been in the UK for more than a decade and his migration motivation was largely academic. When he was a teenager, his professor gave him a book about his (future) area of expertise. He became impressed by this area and after university he came to the UK to do his masters within the scope of a scholarship. After a few academic mobility experiences, he tried to get an academic job in his home country. Since he found the academic environment in his country to be *‘impossible to survive’*, he found a permanent job in the UK. He met his partner in the UK and he explained how:

*my girlfriend came in 2013, that was when the Financial Crisis was in Spain. It was really bad. So, a lot of Spaniards migrated at the time to the UK. There was a visible increase in their number in \*\*\* [the university where he was doing his masters]. So… yeah, because they lost their jobs… And we met through a few friends. I don't want to bring in sort of national stereotypes but I do think Spaniards are very friendly and suddenly we have this entire Spanish group of people that that really fun and really great. So, we started relationship in that group.*

Although *Miroslav* was not particularly influenced by the economic crisis, he met his girlfriend because of it. This reflects how the timings of global events influence people’s lives through countless complexities and contingencies.

Similar to the economic crisis, two participants in the sample migrated to the UK after the Arab Spring uprisings[[3]](#footnote-3). They stated that after the Arab Spring, many academics and other highly-skilled professionals such as engineers and physicians decided to migrate to developed countries. One of the participants from Iran said that her family moved to Britain and sought asylum after the Iranian Islamic Revolution.

Thus, events occurring that specific time period can also shape the migration of academic staff to Britain. Giele and Elder (1998) point out that individuals are both active (they are agentic in making the decision) and passive (considering external factors). In the context of highly-skilled academic migration, this research shows that the timing of migration is ‘more-than-subjective’ and dependent upon how individuals perceive global societal temporal structures (Collins & Shubin, 2015). The changes that led academics to initiate mobility, such as the 2008 Financial Crisis or the Arab Spring and Iranian Revolution, also reflect migrants’ reactions to these ‘unsettling events’. Focusing on the 2004 EU enlargement, the 2008 Financial Crisis and Brexit in the case of Polish migrants, Kilkey and Ryan (2020) developed the notion of ‘unsettling events’ to show that how migrants’ lives are embedded in geopolitical events and the course of their lives are shaped by their responses to these unsettling global events.

### **6.1.1. Special Times and Transnational Family Practices**

In addition to the appropriate timings of migration, this research uniquely shows that some participants give particular attention to some time periods such as seasons, festivals and bank holidays of their countries of origin in order to re-synchronise their lives and maintain a semblance of continuity in their sense of transnational family relationships (Robertson, 2021).

For instance, cultural and religious days such as Christmas and Ramadan are the times that participants generally have transnational engagements. Many participants who observe these religious days give utmost importance to ‘being together’ with the family back home. One participant from Germany said that visiting his family there every *Ostern* (Easter) period is *‘like an unwritten rule for’* him. He further expressed his frustration since he could not visit due to Covid-19-related travel bans. The travel restrictions arising from the pandemic forced many participants to celebrate these important days from afar. For example, *Dimitris*, who has a European background, said that his partner and two children could not visit their families in his country of origin. He says that communication technologies allowed people to meet each other who were nearly impossible to meet face-to-face:

*In the country where I come from, Easter is important. So, we organized, on Easter day, a Zoom meeting that approximately 50 people, all relatives, participated from different cities, countries including UK, France, United States… So it was a massive thing. I think it lifted everyone's spirits up. And again, we had a similar meeting with close friends. And that also worked quite well. So when we do these things, and realize that, especially when the family gathering took place, around Easter, people met that would otherwise not have met.*

In a similar vein, Muslim participants were more likely to visit their families during *Ramadan* and *Eid Adha*. For example, *Ahmad* and *Ali*, who were from two different Middle East countries, both observed the significance of spending time with their family and relatives during religious festival periods. *Ali* described the round breakfast table at his grandparents’ home, where at dawn on every Eid-al-Adha (Muslim’s feast of sacrifice) all his extended family members and relatives sit together and share the first cooked piece of meat from the sacrificed sheep. Therefore, being with the family during these periods has a kind of symbolic value. It is significant to note that migration radically de-synchronises migrant academics from the temporal structure of their family and relationships (Robertson, 2021). Acting in accordance with the temporal orderliness of the country of origin reminds not just the left-behind family members but also migrants themselves that they are maintaining their social contacts transnationally at the symbolic level.

New communication technologies are one of the most influential tools that participants have to re-synchronise their lives to those of their left-behind family members. For example, many participants stated that they either call or send gifts to their family members during important days such as birthdays, Valentine’s Day, Mothers’ Day and Fathers’ Day. *Ali*, who lived separately from his wife and child, said that he had written a poem and sent a photo of it to his wife on WhatsApp on their last wedding anniversary. Therefore, this constitutes a strong additional evidence to the literature showing that how new communication technologies are used for performing family practices from afar (Baldassar, 2007; Wilding, 2006).

Being there’ for specific days and activities is regarded as resyncing and maintaining the family relationships. Cwerner (2001) argues that diasporas celebrate homeland national festivals abroad in order to create an extension of ‘imagined community’ i.e., the nation-states in the countries of destination (Anderson, 1983). This research illustrates that these re-synchronisation efforts between diasporas and imagined communities (i.e., nation-states) can also occur at the level of individuals and relationships.

Then, this research contributes to the transnational family literature by showing that the value, meaning and perceptions attributed to some specific transnational family practices (Morgan, 2011a) can differ in the timing of that particular family practice. The timing of some transnational practices illustrates how migrants’ transnational experiences are firmly grounded in the temporal structures of multiple spaces.

### **6.1.2. Asynchronicity and Daily Rhythms**

It can be seen that migration leads to the unpacking of multiple and divergent temporalities. Trans-migrant academics who have relatively high levels of physical mobility (Wang, 2020) are challenged with a daunting task of synchronising their lives and daily rhythms to that of their significant others based in various parts of the world. New communication technologies are thus usually regarded as tools that enable migrants to resync their lives to the pace of their left-behind family members (Baldassar et al., 2016; Cwerner, 2001; Robertson et al., 2016). However, this research finds that in some contexts temporal structures are so divergent that migrant academics have limited tools to achieve an absolute sense of resynchronisation. In other words, even in the case of the use of instantaneous contact, backed by new communication technologies (Madianou & Miller, 2012), migrants are not able to keep pace with the flow of the time of the left-behind.

For instance, time zones between the home country and Britain is a major source of temporal asynchronicity (Cwerner, 2001). This research has a diverse range of participants in terms of time zones, as they are drawn from twenty-seven different countries worldwide. This diversity ranges from one to eight hours’ time difference. In the context of a large time difference, participants who are in the initial stages of their migration generally experience difficulties in arranging times for communication. This situation escalates when multiple time zones are involved. For example, one participant has parents in Pakistan while one of her siblings lives in the US. She observed that the time difference between Pakistan and the US is nine hours, while to the UK it is four hours. Since she is in the middle, she has to arrange herself according to their times. However, it is not easy to arrange a proper time when multiple time zones line up. Another participant from Iran stressed that she could not see all her family together due to temporal differences:

*It is getting a bit difficult if you want to see all of the family… like, you never will have a kind of proper reunion of your family or friends. And, for example, sometimes we plan for Skype, but I know that some of them are supposed to stay up until 2am because they are in Iran and some of the US… Also, for example we wanted to have the high school reunion… couldn't really, because they've got kids now, they can't really stay all that long and they work and so, so we gave up that bit, but it's all that difficult.*

However, academics who are no longer in the early stages of migration more used to time differences and have the ability to find solutions. They generally said that the time difference was a problem only when they first came to the UK. Now, their family and friends know when they are supposed to call them. Therefore, not only academics but also their left-behind families are accustomed to living with time differences.

However, even in these situations, it is difficult to synchronise two different temporal structures and daily rhythms. Some participants stated that they have had problems in syncing working times – i.e., industrial time which is largely shaped by societies’ normative temporal structures (Griffiths et al., 2013). For example, one participant from the US but currently at a university in East Midlands UK, said that she has to call her bank frequently in the US. Due to the time difference, she has to arrange herself to the daily rhythms of the US. The issue of daily rhythms is also valid in the context of family relationships. *Harry*, who is from Malaysia and has been in the UK for nearly two decades, said that the conversations in his family’s WhatsApp groups shape his daily life routines here:

*when I'm getting up like at seven am here and three pm there… There are a hundred messages! That is fine okay because the groups are muted… If they message me about something, and then I just respond. But I have found that, over the years, it affected my work as well. Actually, not only my work, it affects my day. It is because you know*  *three o'clock they have had the day there… but here I am just getting up… I am like rubbing my eyes while they are like "blah blah blah", I am not mentally awake, even if I am awake not ready to have those serious conversations, I am just starting my day, but you finished your day… I realised that I am always thinking through what they said in the morning call all the day, which affects my job.*

*Harry* adds that he sometimes gets up on a busy morning and deliberately does not read the messages in his WhatsApp groups so that he is not distracted. Using voice messages is one of the most common strategies *Harry* and other academics use. Even in the case of mediated co-presence i.e., keeping contact via new communication technologies (Nedelcu & Wyss, 2016; Robertson et al., 2016) with the family members left-behind, problems occur in terms of synchronisation within the micro timescales of everyday lives. This reflects Cwerner’s (2001) conceptualisation of the ‘asynchronous times’ that migrants experience when trying to keep in touch with their family. Although new communication technologies are widely used for managing these temporal ruptures (Acedera & Yeoh, 2019), this research finds that claims that these tools enable simultaneous contact between migrants and non-migrants (King-O’Riain, 2015; Lei & Guo, 2020; Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004) should be approached with caution. The temporal dimensions of these transnational family practices should be considered mostly within the concept of – in Boyarin’s (1994) terms – ‘meanwhileness’; that is, ‘the mere awareness that there are others going about their separate business at the same time you are’, rather than simultaneity, which refers to ‘the sense that others are doing at the same time things that are meaningfully related to your own experience’ (Boyarin, 1994). This research contributes to the literature by showing that although new communication technologies are promising to create instant contact, (Madianou & Miller, 2012) they have little capacity to ‘transform the grey sense of meanwhileness into a vivid sense of simultaneity’ (Cwerner, 2001, p. 24).

## 6.2. Disjuncture in Individual Biographies and the Migrant Academic Precariat

In this section I first show that international migration and mobility tends to create temporal disjuncture and discontinuities in individual biographies and life stages. I then move to the situation of temporal precarity of some academics under the influence of restrictive migration legislation and a neoliberal university system.

### **6.2.1. Temporal Discontinuities in Individual Biographies**

Collecting in-depth data from participants through life-story interviews is an incisive way to analyse the temporal dimensions of migration and transnational family relationships. Thanks to the life-story interviews, I can analyse and trace individual lives and how specific events unfold during the course of migrants’ lives (Harrison, 2014). Analysing the biographies of academics, I realise that international migration and mobility and the profession of being an academic tend to create temporal discontinuities in the individual biographies of some migrant academics.

Considering that migrant academics tend to be highly mobile, in this context, migration goes beyond a one-time rupture (Robertson, 2021). Rather, as presented in Chapter 5, it can be circular and lead to several discontinuities in several life domains of migrants. For example, the story of *Ali* shows that migration can create discontinuities in migrant academics’ careers. *Ali* is a Middle Eastern-background academic who, before migration, worked as an academic in his country of origin. He had planned to become a professor at his university. However, he considered migration after he had a serious quarrel with the dean. He said that the managerial staff of the department did not want to grant funding to one of his projects, though he thought *‘it was great’*. When he learned that the funding was, in his opinion, used for ‘nepotist benefits’, he did not want to work in that academic environment. Then, he migrated and found a job at a university in southern Britain. However, he now sees his migration as a temporal journey, after which he will return to his country of origin to become a professor:

*I will return there… But when I become more powerful… I mean… when you have three books and papers and good collaboration opportunities here in England… No one can say anything to you…*

*Ali* seems so sure about this objective of returning to his country. He added that his behaviour does not arise from any sense of revenge taking. However, he also said: ‘*I should thank them because they are the people that made me come here and develop myself further’*. He compared this type of migration to the Islamic concept of ‘Hegira’ (lit., meaning ‘departure’ in Arabic), which refers to Mohamad’s migration from Mecca to Medina to form the first Muslim community. He said that the Prophet also returned to his hometown as a victorious person when he became stronger. Some participants, like *Ali,* said that they would return to their country of origin when they were able to secure a relatively secure position in the academic system of the country of origin. This reflects how the international migration and mobility of academic staff can be performed to gain credibility and reputation in the home country (OECD, 2021; Teichler, 2015; Tremblay, 2005). However, this also illustrates the temporal disjuncture and discontinuities in the career progression of migrants due to academic and migration journeys.

Furthermore, the normative understandings of life-course progression can also be exposed to serious disruptions due to migration and academic journeys. One of the most discussed topics concerned marriage and having a baby: many single participants such as *Ludovica*, *Jenna* and *Antonio* said that their family members thought that they had left it *‘too late’* to take the next step in the ‘presumed orderliness of the life course progression’ (Wang, 2020, p. 171). A 32-year-old Middle Eastern background, single post-doctoral researcher, *Ahmad* pointed out that *‘I am the only person who is single in his thirties in my extended family’*, referencing the normative life-progression of society in his country of origin. When I asked him the reason for this situation, he replied: ‘*because of PhD*’. The period of completing a PhD creates a chronological suspension (Robertson, 2021) in the life course progression of many academics’ lives. In some contexts, migrant academics do not want to conform to the normative and generally traditional sense of life course progression. The life story of *Daphne*, an academic from a Mediterranean Country, is a good example of this:

*coming from a like a very kind of tight knit family, and also a tight knit country and community… I am a bit weird… for them.*

The ‘weirdness’ of *Daphne’*s story*,* in the eyes of the left-behind individuals, comes from the fact that her individual life course progression does not align with the normative understandings of a life course. Some participants feel the pressure to, and focus on sticking with a normative life course progression. For instance, while recounting a discussion with her partner, a 39-year-old Middle Eastern background post-doctoral researcher, *Ayse*, said:

*I mean, women have a kind of age limit. So after a time, my body kind of stops being able to get pregnant.*

Therefore, there is also a biological temporal conditioning that supports the normative life course progression. Many participants themselves also seem to acknowledge the normative life course. However, as the methods and frequency of transnational contact increase, the temporal pressures from family members in the home country regarding life course progression becomes more visible and effective in academics’ lives and decisions. One participant’s story (whose pseudonym is not mentioned since he requested extra confidentiality on this topic) is a good example of this:

*So my wife also did master’s and PhD here in England… So during this time we ain’t got children. She kind of had a -like- tough thesis process. But my parents always told me that “Look! We want grandchildren!” because in my country if your marriage is like two or three years old and you don’t have a child, people start to think about whether you are infertile or that kinds of things…*

*I used to say to my parents… I mean like, “we do our best and I am not a creator of children”. And like “there is no sense putting pressure on us because if you put pressure on us the chances of children coming down”. We didn’t have kids up to five years. When my wife got her PhD, luckily, we got twins! That is also good because if that wasn’t twins, this time my mom would say like “when is the other one coming”…*

Therefore, as the participant underlined, in the normative and culturally ideal life course progression, every stage that an individual 'should’ take over the course of their life is more or less presumed and determined.

Overall, it is found that migration and academic processes interrupt the traditional presumed life stages of some migrant academics. This situation reflects how academic migration and mobility lead to the disjuncture and discontinuities in the life course progression of migrants (Wang, 2020). As a novel contribution to the literature on the temporality of migration, this research finds that as transnational contact with the left-behind family members increases, the traditional forms of normative life course progression extend its area of dominance and hegemony. Finally, it is significant to acknowledge this finding is at odds with the earlier finding that geographical distance can enable alternative life choices (see, 5.3.3.). Thus, although migration and living away from home can enable some academics to exert their own agency over their lives, familial obligations and expectations can also remain persistent as a consequence of increasing transnational contact.

### **6.2.2. Double Temporal Precarity in Migrant Academics’ Lives**

In this section I present the temporal dimensions of the participants who fall into the category of migrant academic precariat, as introduced in the previous chapter. As stated earlier, the migrant academic precariat live their lives at the intersection of the influences of the neoliberal conditions of the British HE system and restrictive British migration regulations. I show that migrant academics experience double temporal precarity in their everyday lives and social relationships. On the one hand, some migrant academics need to deal with the legal issues of their visa duration, employment contracts and finances. This temporal liminality creates uncertainty in the lives of the migrant academic precariat (Acedera & Yeoh, 2019; Stevens, 2019). As a consequence, they tend to embrace openness in their spatiotemporal strategies. That is, some participants’ response is to become a peripatetic academic – travelling to different places for an academic job over short time periods. On the other hand, I also show that dealing with the restrictions, mistakes and surveillance of both the British migration regime and higher education institutions, the migrant academic precariat’s lives are exposed to constant tensions and anxieties. Due to the unstable and unpredictable characteristics of both migration regulations and neoliberal university systems, many participants live in a state of constant anxiety and feel that they do not have agentic control over their life course.

#### 6.2.2.1. Temporal Precarity and the Peripatetics

In this section, I show how the time restrictive regulations of both the migration regime and HE institutions and financial issues make some academics pursue a more peripatetic career. At the time of the interviews, nearly half of the participants were working through fixed-term employment contracts ranging from one to four years. Many academics like *Ayse*, a postdoctoral researcher, stated that when she first got her job after her postgraduate education, she did not pay attention to the fixed nature of the contract:

*I mean, you never think that… You are like… Uhm, “I’m really lucky that I got a job”. So I didn’t care about the time. Even during, before the end of my first contract, I did not pay real attention to that.*

However, through the end of her first contract, she realised that she had to find another contract. In a similar vein, *Ahmad*,a post-doctoral researcher who had been in the UK for nearly seven years, complained about the lack of stability in his job:

*I have to renew my contract in every year. Actually, my contract will finish in three months’ time. And I do not know what to do after that. Now, I am trying to extend my contract. I contacted with my department but they do not offer me a new contract.*

When *Ahmad* talked about how hard it was to find a visa sponsor and renew his contract in these tough times (referring to the Covid-19 outbreak), he said that the Home Office gave him only 14 days to find a new job, renew his contract and apply for a new visa:

*Just 14 days. Four-teen-days! How come! How can I find a new job in two-weeks? If I cannot find another job, what they will do is that I will be deported. Also, they require me to apply the visa in the 14 days duration as well. So, I have to find a job and get the documents from my job and apply for the visa in just 14 days. How can I manage this? I’m a university staff!?*

This 14-day rule was valid for all non-European background migrant academics on professional visas and fixed-term employment contracts. One non-EU background participant faced deportation due to her absence days caused by her fieldwork. Therefore, their employment and migratory journeys are shaped by the HE system and migration regulations. Many academics stated that they could not get British visas for their family members. Migration regulations, as *Eduardo* (a South Asian lecturer) said, ‘*favours some people much more than others’*. Non-European background academics in this regard tend to have more issues with visas. Participants from certain Middle Eastern countries such as Iran and Iraq said that they do not even try to get visas for their families since they know that they cannot bring their families here. Another example of creating liminality in academics’ lives are the requirements of permanent residence; the Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). Since ILR applications require ten years of lawful residence in the UK, some academics ‘wait’ and do not leave the UK until that time (Brun, 2015). This precarious situation of participants can also be looked at with the concept of liminality. Introduced in 1909 by van Gennep (1960), the term liminality refers to transitional periods between a series of passages in individuals’ lives. From the viewpoints of some migrant academics, the liminality and the ensuing uncertainty can be inherently disruptive to transnational family relationships. For example, *Tuba*, a 39-year-old post-doctoral researcher said that when the pandemic crisis broke out, she and her friends could not return due to considerations about the time limit of ILR:

*I've been telling you, like since I was 21 years old, it has impacted my life because I can't even go home and see my family, because I have to… consider indefinite leave to remain… People asking me “oh why didn’t you return” because, you know* [implying the Covid-19 outbreak] *I cannot return… I decided to stay here because I didn't know how long it would take and when I would come back. And if they are not gonna give me ILR because of this…. These were my main concerns.*

Therefore, the fear of losing migration and/or employment status is heightened with the temporal limits of getting ILR. Another example*, Huda*, a 29-year-old post-doctoral researcher, said:

*If you wanna get ILR, you must not go to the police! You know… now, the ‘Black Lives Matter’ is happening. I could not go and protest… if I get detained by police, it’s over! And when the other strikes were happening at university, the university said, "if you go on strike for more than 10 days, you violate the rules and you never get indefinite leave to remain”. Our university said this!*

The ten year lawful residence to get the permanent residence in Britain is a form of ‘waiting’ in the liminal spaces between statuses which is widely interpreted within the context of asylum seekers waiting for their legal statuses (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014; Sutton et al., 2011). Since the concept liminality ‘has been [widely] used in relation to low-skilled and legally precarious migrants, often emphasising in-betweenness as destructive and marginalising’ (Genova & Zontini, 2020, p. 52), this research provides valuable contribution to few studies showing that liminal experiences can also be experienced by so-called highly-skilled migrants (e.g., Kirk et al., 2017; Rincón, 2017).

The second aspect of migrant academic precarity concerns the financial dimension – having hardships in personal finances. Nearly all participants who had precarious contracts had income levels between £20k and £39k annually, which was the lower than participants with more secure contracts. Many academics, such as *Ayse, Huda* and *Betty*, said that during the period they were unemployed (generally after contracts had lapsed) they received financial support from their families. Similarly, visa applications are also costly, especially when including partners and children. *Khalil*,aNorth African background academic, said that he borrowed £7,000 from one of his friends and transferred to his wife’s account in order to meet the financial requirements of their visa application (although it is a dependant visa, the Home Office require each applicant to have sufficient funds to cover their expenses in the UK). Then, Khalil states that they need to pay £4,000 as the visa fee (including NHS Health Surcharge). Apart from that, *Khalil* underlines the hidden costs such as lawyer fee, tuberculosis tests, copying and translation expenses of significant documents. Therefore, applying for a ‘dependant visa’ can involve excessive costs. It may also lead to questioning about whether the marriage is genuine from the legal authorities and even from social networks. The UK migration regime’s strict controls and ‘insulting checks’ (Taylor & Perraudin, 2019) over so-called ‘sham marriages’ are also forms of everyday bordering practices of UK migration regime (see Wemyss et al., 2018). For instance, *Elena*,whose husband is a British citizen and has one son, said:

*I remember a friend of my husband told him once that if he was sure that I was marrying him for love and not for visa… yeah, I did get that! … This is so humiliating! And you know I say to myself "God… if I were marrying for visa, I would marry someone from Europe and stay here, it's just £66 to get an EU visa rather than a £5,000 spouse visa...”*

The visa procedures are costly, even more so in the case of partners and children. In addition to visas, some participants that had a spouse visa based on their relationship with a British citizen stated that they also had to pay between £60 and £200 if they wanted to have an approved marriage certificate from the British authorities. This shows that the British migration regime’s procedures tend to be costly for many migrant academics. On top of that, the British HE system is often criticised due to providing low wages and financial insecurity to its staff (Goździak & Main, 2021; Silvey & Parreñas, 2020). Thus, some participants state that they generally have financial hardships. Also, many academics said that they were using cheap airlines such as *Ryanair*, *EasyJet and AirAsia* for visiting family and kinship members. Talking about her daily routines, *Tuba* said that she visited the shop near her flat regularly so that she could buy things that were ‘reduced to clear’. Similarly, services such as *Airbnb* and Couchsurfing are used by some of migrant academic precariat when they are travelling for visiting their family and kin.

Insecure employment conditions, low wages and unstable migration statuses reflect the temporal precarity in migrant academics’ lives (Cwerner, 2001). Their careers, migration journeys and financial situations are always under construction and in transition, which reflects their temporal liminality (Griffiths, 2014). However, in response to temporal liminality, migrant academics tend to become peripatetic academics and pursue an open-door policy to the other migration journeys and ventures. In other words, temporal precarity often led participants to become peripatetic academics and to pursue ‘contingent careers’ (Robertson, 2021, p. 77). In this context, these participants considered that they might want to move soon to a different part of the world, although they did not disregard the idea of living permanently in the UK. They did not have a place, country or city in mind as the next stop for their mobility. This group also includes participants who had intimate relationships, were married and sometimes had children. For example, *Ayse*, a Middle Eastern post-doctoral researcher, said:

*But I am just like, whoever pays me more I will have to go there. I am sorry, unfortunately. European countries is an option. Actually, I feel like a sucker for not doing it. Because I feel there's so many opportunities in Scandinavian countries or in Netherlands or Germany, maybe where life quality is so much better for academics.*

Many participants, like *Ayse,* had this peripatetic view, caused by their precarious situation. However, the strategy of academics to be open to new adventures and to travels with the academic job also reflects the nomadic, contingent and peripatetic times in the temporality literature (Cwerner, 2001; Wang, 2020). This tendency also answers the first research question focussing on how spatiality shapes academics’ transnational family relationships. Additionally, this is a good example of what Eade and colleagues (2007) who were studying the Polish migrants in London name as the strategy of ‘intentional unpredictability’. This strategy involves ‘keeping options open, taking a “wait-and-see approach” and adapting as life goes on, not excluding going back, bringing in families to the UK, travelling the world, moving further to US or Australia’ (Eade et al., 2007, p. 7). Thus, facing the dual temporal precarity, some of the academics are also found to embrace such an open strategy and intentional unpredictability against their life conditions (see also Engbersen, 2018 on “liquid migration”).

#### 6.2.2.2. Living in an Atmosphere of Double Permanent Temporariness

The precarity of some migrant academics is not only limited to their employment conditions and migration statuses. However, some participants experienced the precariousness throughout their migration journeys and everyday lives due to living perpetually under the influences of instability and unpredictability. In this section, I show that the migration regime and the HE systems’ two features – being prone to make mistakes and being preoccupied with surveillance – lead to temporal pressures, anxieties and traumas in some migrant academics’ lives. In this section, I am going to draw detailed cases to make my point. Borrowing the term ‘ontological insecurity’ from Giddens (2001), I show that precariousness leads to some migrant academics experiencing a loss of a sense of continuity and agency in their lives and actions.

First, I discovered that academics, especially those from a non-European background, constantly need to re-configure and think about their legal processes, migratory and employment status throughout their stay in Britain. Since especially non-European academics tend to have relatively less privileged status in terms of migration regulations. This constant contemplation and anxiety occurs no matter what happens in their personal and family lives. *Eva*, a 36-year-old Middle Eastern female professor experienced early childhood in a war-torn Middle Eastern country. Since she did not ‘*have the luxury of other kids*’ to play with and enjoy other activities, she decided to be successful in life by focusing on her studies. Having a successful education, she became the first female PhD holder in her area of expertise in her country of origin and started working as an academic there. She met a male academic at a conference and soon after that they got married and worked as academics together. However, after several months of marriage, they learned her husband had brain cancer. They went to a European country for treatment:

*Then six or seven months after marriage he was diagnosed with a brain cancer. And he needed a brain surgery and the best surgeon in that type of area of the brain was in \*\*\* [a European Country]. So, we went there, for chemotherapy.*

However, thenthey realised that her husband required follow-up chemotherapy sessions over six months, and *Eva* found an academic job in that European country. She went to her office, engaged in teaching, researching and other academic activities while her husband was undergoing chemotherapy. This shows how a wide variety of motivations and reasons, including personal and familial ones, can trigger the migration of academic staff, and challenges the view that academic migration happens as a result of purely academic and occupational motivations (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017; Carrozza et al., 2017; Giorgi & Raffini, 2015).

At this stage, they could not tell their parents that her husband was taking a follow-up session of chemo. Therefore, their parents thought the treatment had been successful and they were abroad, focusing on their careers. *Eva* and her husband ‘moved’ for seven years.

After a successful surgery, they moved to a city in England once *Eva*’s contract finished and she found another job at a British university. However, her husband had to commute to *Ireland* regularly for follow-up treatment by plane. After that, her husband was offered a job by a prestigious British university too. They moved to that city and *Eva* started to commute and had to drive five and a half hours every day. After 18 months, her husband found another job in another city but this time she had to drive seven hours a day. *Eva* got several job offers from different countries, including the US. She said that she had to reject the offers since they stated that her husband’s visa costs and health insurance would not be covered. She later got another offer from a university in Australia, but she did not have it since her husband was not entitled to the same types of healthcare insurance that she was offered. They first tried to buy services from private insurance companies but they did not want to provide cover due to his underlying conditions. After a series of negotiations, the university accepted covering her husband’s insurance. However, the government and migration regulations did not allow the university to cover her husband’s health expenses. Therefore, she had to reject several offers from different parts of the world due to institutional restrictions the impact of which were compounded by her husband’s ill health. After a certain period of time, her husband’s conditions get worse. *Eva* had to get career breaks and became the only carer for her husband. She had to borrow money from her friends in the US and Australia. However, as a more serious problem, at the same time, she had to think about her visa in Britain. Since she had dropped out of her job at the university, she could not apply for an extension of her professional visa. If she could not get another visa, she and her husband, who was confined to bed at the time, faced deportation. Living with trauma, according to Eva, was painful and humiliating:

*To be honest, I think this is the hardest bit that I ever experienced, the visa type, because for example, the time that my husband was in hospice, and he was dying but I was worried about my visa because it was getting to get expired but I couldn't even leave the hospice. I had no other option but to sort that out. It was terrible. It was the worst thing ever happened.* *The most painful and was absolutely humiliating feeling I’ve ever felt.*

After six months, she panicked when the doctor informed her that that day might be her husband’s last. Then, her husband died. *Eva’s* story epitomises how macro-level migration regulations impose limitations, ruptures and dilemmas in academics’ lives (Wang, 2020). It also shows how restrictive migration regulations permeate into academics’ everyday lives and stick with them.

Second, based on their previous experiences, many academics stress that they can lose their jobs and their migration status can change at any time due to the mistakes of the authorities. The mistakes that participants experienced were manifold. *Anna* for example was a senior lecturer who had been in Britain for more than five years and had worked as an academic in her country of origin for nearly two decades; however, since she could not find a permanent position there, she wanted to look for jobs abroad. She found a job at a British university and prepared to migrate with her husband. They kept in touch with the university and commenced the legal process related to their migration. However, soon before their flight to Britain, they were stunned by the news that *Anna*’s husband’s visa application was rejected by the Home Office. The reason, according to her, was due to mistakes made by the authorities:

*In retrospect, this is incredibly stupid. And a lot of people will tell you this… there was a checklist in the Tier 2 details of the Home Office and because there is not a marriage certificate there, we did not include it to the original application. Also, we worked with people and the HR staff of the University of \*\*\*. And then every bit of information that we got from UKVI was incorrect, including sending documents to \*\*\* [another city/university in the UK]. We finally got an immigration lawyer here and sorted it out. The Home Office, the University and HR people, no one knows what they are doing.*

*Anna* had to spend the initial adjustment process in the UK without her husband. Another significant point that *Anna* underlines is that the whole process of applying and receiving the UK visa is digital. She stated that this was ‘*annoying*’ as there was no officer to *‘check them or to talk about the documentation or let alone give advice’.* Therefore, this process changed her perception of British migration regime and regulations:

*Regulations? burn it down. I mean, this is a nasty racist, rainy little island which is verging on fascism, to me. And you know, just the briefest encounter with UKVI* [United Kingdom Visa and Immigration] *cracked open the entire spec… just I mean, in fact, we are… you know… educated white privileged people who could pay for immigration lawyer. But for other people... I mean what the… what is going on?*

Some participants think that the mistakes in regards to visa applications are sometimes made deliberately. *Khalil*,who was from a North African country, said that when they applied for a visa together with his wife, they wanted to start the visa one month after application because they were told that applicants could choose the start date of the visa. During the month, they held their wedding ceremony in their country of origin. However, *Khalil* said, the Home Office gave his wife only one month to collect her Biometric Residence Permit card in Britain. So, they had to go, collect the card and return to their home country for the wedding before returning to the UK. He said:

*They deliberately did it! We thought going to a lawyer, but then decided that this is much more expensive and time consuming and you know also risky, so we just bought our tickets, I had to accompany her because it was her one of the first time coming to the UK…*

Furthermore, the British higher education system is also characterised as error-prone. For instance, *Elena*, from South America, told a story from her PhD days: her university made errors in maintaining her records and she did not have attendance records:

*So, I got a letter, I was expected to leave the country in 60 days. So I contacted the University of \*\*\* they said, “sorry we’ll fix this’. Then I left and went back to my country to do my fieldwork. And at some point, I didn't know if I was going to be able to come back or not. Even though that was a mistake for the university. The Home Office refused to review my case. And I have to apply for a visa as if I was a new person.*

Many migrant academics have experienced mistakes caused by British authorities and bureaucracy. The problems arising from the mistakes made many academics think that they were not safe. Most participants said that they did not feel safe in Britain – even those with British citizenships. Additionally, academics who did not experience such mistakes had seen or heard the stories’ of fellow migrant academics in the press. The issue of not feeling safe, therefore, should be considered together with the hostile environment and xenophobia in Britain (Luthra, 2021). Therefore, many academics think that even though they take steps according to the rules, mistakes can happen anytime. This feeling creates a sense of ontological insecurity (Giddens, 1991) that leads to them losing their sense of continuity in the flow of their lives and unwelcome in both Britain and the institution of employment.

Third, the migrant academic precariat also stresses that they live under conditions of surveillance and monitoring. Many academics express that both the restrictive migration regime and the neoliberal HE system are preoccupied with quantifying and monitoring their lives – they monitor their migration and employment details. This is especially evident in visa applications for family members. Academics from non-European countries in particular have to persuade the authorities that their marriages are genuine. *Khalil,* like many other academics, bought professional services from a solicitor while preparing the ‘*huge file’* for the visa application of his wife:

*There was a huge file! Including our pictures… 15 or 20 pictures. They wanted to see conversations like screenshots of Skype calls every day. The exchange of emails and screenshots of WhatsApp chats. I had to take a solicitor for that, the solicitor helped us.*

The visa process and procedures take another shape when other left-behind family members want to apply for a UK visa in the home country. *Elena*, from a South American country, said that her parents had to travel 280 km at least twice to go to the capital city in her country of origin to apply for a visa. After that, the procedures and paperwork may be especially difficult for parents. Another participant, *Ayse* from the Middle East, described the process when her parents tried to get a UK visa to just visit her as:

*absolutely awful because everything was on the phone and I was trying to describe them. And unfortunately, they are not at the tech savvy ages… and making my 70 year-old dad… making him fill out the forms that are only in English is just so humiliating and treating him like a terrorist in the airport… I feel so embarrassed, I was like “do they have to do this?!” Like, it's just… as if they're criminals or like animals whatsoever… They don't have to do it anywhere else than the UK. So they're so incredibly offended, it's a horrific procedure. I mean, they're just retired people. I feel so embarrassed… And each time I feel so horrible that they have to go through this.*

These issues with visa regulations reflect how migrant academics’ and their intimate relationships can be shaped by ‘bureaucratic bordering’ mechanisms (Näre, 2020). In addition to visa procedures, employment regulations are perceived as designed for surveillance. *Ayse* said that the ‘*Home Office wants to record everything* *through universities*’. She said she is ‘*fed up with emails coming from the university*’ starting ‘*can you please update your details on…*’. Many academics said that they felt exhausted and anxious about being exposed to surveillance. However, several academics mentioned the most direct form of surveillance was checking whether they were working. For example, 45-year-old senior lecturer, *Anna* said:

*I remember at one point everyone is phone called while in their offices, “where are you? Are you at work?” I almost quit my job, seriously. It's done without shame, it's harassing. But I also feel that if I speak out against it, like independent, individually… I mean, I'm a member of the union and different initiatives. But I feel like… if I say, you know, I feel like there'll be retaliation. And, yeah, I worry about the legal status. I worry about dealing with the home office… I am afraid of these people. I'm afraid of Home Office and I'm afraid of the University of \*\*\*, which has proven itself to be useless, frankly.*

The culture of surveillance and monitoring is an example of 'everyday bordering practices’ of British immigration legislation and its extensions of the neoliberal HE systems (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018). *Anna*’s worries about her legal situation and the fear of ‘*retaliation*’ show how the legal factors related to migration and employment status create repression among some academics and curtail their agency in relation to both their lives and challenging systemic restrictions. As she underlines, she had worries and fear from both the migration regulations and her university.

In this section, I showed that some migrant academics are living under three conditions. First, the migration regulations and employment legislation is restrictive and exclusionary. Thus, many academics do not feel their employment and visa statuses are safe. In addition, the bureaucratic migration regime and the HE system tend to make many mistakes and are often reluctant to correct them. These liminal and ‘sticky times’ (Griffiths, 2014) are determined by the temporal structures of the British academia and migration system. This gives participants the feeling that they are not in control of their lives and their decisions. Finally, the ontological insecurity caused by the surveillance and monitoring of migrant academics’ lives leads to the loss of their agentive control over the course of their lives (Glen & Elder, 1998). The surveillance and monitoring practices also provide evidence to the hostile environment discourses and the everyday bordering practices of the British migration regime (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021; Webber, 2019). Therefore, some migrant academics live in a state of precarity not just in terms of employment conditions and financial statuses but also with regards to their mental status, agentive control and emotional state.

## 6.3. Micro Level Time and Temporality: Changes over the Life Course and Time Management in Everyday Life

In this section I illustrate how participants’ migration trajectories, transnational relationships and career paths change over time and how they manage their time in everyday life.

### **6.3.1. Shifts in Migration Trajectories and Transnational Relationships**

Migrant academics’ lives and relationships evolve and undergo shifts over the course of life. Again, the life-story interviewing technique enables this research to explore the shifts and evolutions in migration experiences and family relationships over time, although it is hard to trace and analyse changes due to the multifactorial nature of changes in relationships. To elucidate the complexity in describing the factors behind the changes in participants’ lives, using a theoretical division made by life-course approach scholars (Giele & Elder, 1998) between transition-based and level-based changes is beneficial here. While the transition-based changes refer to certain events that radically transform migration plans and family relationships such as births and deaths, the level-based shifts do not necessarily need transformative events to signify gradual changes over time. According to Elder (1985), transitions require social rituals and ceremonies such as graduations, weddings and funerals. However, level-based shifts can be the result of ageing and normative structuring of life such as in the life stages; exposure to certain events and changes in the mindsets and life views of individuals (Giele & Elder, 1998). This section shows that participants undergo both types of shifts before and during their migration experiences.

Regarding academics’ migration journeys, there are two different patterns of the changes of academics’ migration experiences and relationships over time. In the first pattern, there is a transition-based shift (often because of a social ritual like marriage) (Hockey & James, 2017) followed by a series of level-based shifts. However, in the second pattern, a long sequence of level-based shifts culminates in certain transitions. The stories of *Baram* and *Oscar* are examples that show how certain transformations are followed by levels of change over time. *Baram* is a 45-year-old Asian senior lecturer and has been in the UK for more than 25 years. Before migration she lived in the European country where she and her family migrated together several years ago. Before coming to the UK, she spent half of her life in her home country and half in the European country they migrated to. For her graduate and postgraduate education, *Baram* came to Britain. Like many other participants, *Baram* saw her education in Britain as temporary and planned to return to her country. However, she met her partner, who was a British citizen in the UK. After her graduation, they returned to their home country from the European country they migrated. However, *Baram* did not want to return, which she saw as the critical turning point in her life story.

Then, she experienced another transition and obtained her master’s and PhD degrees in another European country. Meanwhile, she regularly visited her partner in the UK. They married while they were maintaining their romantic relationship from afar. Although she migrated to Britain and lived with her partner, she wanted to realise her childhood dream and go to the US within the scope of an academic exchange program. She returned to another European country and worked as an academic while her partner still lived in Britain. She gave birth to her son while she continued to have a long-distance relationship with her partner who was still living in the UK. Bearing another fundamental transitional character, having a baby played a critical role and led her to settle in the UK:

*So, I was like a single woman working with a baby. So with the baby, it became really hard for me… I commuted from \*\*\* to London for 2 years… It was really, really hard… and then I decided to come back here…*

*Baram*’s life story illustrates the significance of human agency and the issues of time and place. As the life-course approach underlines, migrants organise and reconfigure, not only their migration trajectories and career opportunities but also their family living arrangements through the choices they make over the course of their lives (Glen & Elder, 1988). As seen here, *Baram* sometimes decided to be left-behind, sometimes moved with her partner and sometimes maintained a family relationship from afar. This also supports the life-course approach emphasis on time and place in the sense that preferences around places of living shape individual lives and experiences (Hockey & James, 2017).

In a similar vein, *Oscar* was planning to stay in the UK for a short time until he met his girlfriend, who was from a South Asian country, while doing his PhD. Then, after graduation, they married in the UK. He stated that they wanted to leave the UK; however, since their common language was English, they could not return and work in either of their home countries. *Oscar* defined their marriage as a turning point that changed not only his migration trajectory but also his relationship with his family members left-behind:

*When I got married… I actually got more engaged with my wife’s family and also my family as well. After marriage, your relationship becomes more kind of structured… And also when you are married your family calls your wife and asks your wife… even talk with her for hours. So, I become more kind of engaged and close to them with marriage. Not just engaged with my parents and with my parents-in-law too…*

In his situation, marriage made him more engaged and reliant on transnational family relationships. Therefore, these two stories show that transitions which bring about social rituals such as graduation and birth ceremonies can create sequential and level-based shifts over the course of a life. This is also in line with the gendered nature of caring roles/communication that I present in the next chapter (see, section 7.3.)

Both types of shifts during participants’ migration periods and lifetimes reflected three significant points. First, they show that migrant academics’ experiences, local and transnational relationships are not static, fixed and stable. Rather, they are dynamic, moving at full speed in space-time and involving shifts over the course of time (Harris et al., 2020; Horn & Schweppe, 2017; Kilkey & Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2016). Secondly, the shifts over the life course of participants illustrate how the lives of migrants are deeply linked with other people’s lives. The concept of ‘linked lives’ in a life course approach is also relevant in understanding how social agents influence and transform each other, irrespective of physical distances (Giele & Elder, 2014). Finally, this research contributes to the recent calls for understanding non-professional dynamics such as starting a romantic relationship, having a baby or getting married and how they are shaping academic migration and mobility (Bilecen, 2021; Carrozza et al., 2017; Giorgi & Raffini, 2015).

### **6.3.2. ‘You just spin plates’: Time Scarcity and Rhythms of Everyday Life**

The institutional discourse in higher education literature praises the merits of managing time effectively and balancing work and life (Bell, 2005; Cannon, 1996). Participants also said they had taken training sessions and were advised to use their time effectively. Along with other resources such as mobility, finance and social ties, time also constitutes a significant element for maintaining transnational family relationships (see Kilkey & Merla, 2014). Analysing the remarks of participants, time stood out as the most necessary resource for many migrant academics in maintaining their relationships with their family members. This section shows that time scarcity has four interrelated aspects in migrant academics’ lives: academic/professional aspect; social life dimension; and influences on both local and transnational family relationships.

First, some of the time issues that migrant academics experience in their everyday lives can be caused by moving from a different academic system to the British HE system. Being in the UK HE sector can create extra particularities in terms of time scarcity. The high workload and acceleration of academics’ lives are widely debated topics in the case of the British HE system (Bamberger et al., 2019; Maisuria & Cole, 2017). Generally, participants compared the HE systems and their workloads with previous academic experiences. Some academics like *Anna* thought that the time scarcity is caused by the HE system:

*the workload in British universities is deranged. There's no other word for it really… because it's a 24/7 university that operates every day of the year, except Christmas. There's no summer. Also, I teach my classes and then I go and do my research. You cannot understand the bureaucracy and the way in which the university functions… Also, you don't even have a sense of the academic calendar here. So, I think for the first couple of years, you just, I mean… I think I'll be quite honest with you; I think the job started to ruin my life. I thought I have to leave. This is terrible.*

Trying to get accustomed to the pace of academic life in British HE reflects the ‘strange times’, in Cwerner’s (2001) conceptualisation, which refers to the migrants’ encounter with an unfamiliar, other and different temporal order. In this sense, many academics experienced the ‘strange times’ and tried to keep pace with the escalated temporal pressures of a HE system obsessed with concrete outcomes (Bamberger, 2018).

High workloads also create temporal asynchronicities between work and life balances. Some periods in participants’ lives were particularly associated with time scarcity, such as marking periods. However, at other times, academic jobs could seem flexible to a certain extent, but the notion of flexibility could mean ‘going the extra mile’, especially in times of crisis. Most participants were afraid that the Covid-19 global pandemic would affect their employment negatively. Furthermore, interviewees emphasised the condition of working from home during the lockdown conditions. Many participants stated that flexibility turned out to involve the dismantling of boundaries between work and life. Especially in the first six months of the pandemic in Britain, academics were dealing with two issues at the same time: continuing their pre-pandemic commitments such as supervision and marking; and trying to develop online materials. As presented in Chapter 4, this period also coincided with the start of the recruitment process of my research and I had significant issues in arranging interviews with potential participants during this period. During the pandemic, according to *Ayse*, a postdoctoral researcher, ‘*the workload is tripled*’.

Many academics, especially post-doctoral researchers, tend to struggle with deadline anxieties. They stress the temporal dissonance between their pace of research and making publications and that of other academics and the HE system’s expectations. This acute deadline anxiety and the intense pressure to make publications was also caused because many academics did not just have their projects but were also involved in subsidiary unpaid work. For example, an Italian background lecturer, said:

*Always like literally, I always got to work on sort of my own projects that I like. And I also end up spending a bit more time on other things. Some of them are maybe not directly part of my work, or is some research that is a little bit additional on our system or my friends’ projects.*

However, many participants developed professional strategies: focusing on administrative work instead of projects requiring time was the most common strategy for creating time. Additionally, some participants said that they changed their research methods to create more time, such as doing archival research and using secondary data. Through these strategies participants planned to create more time for their career development and social lives.

This brings us to the next dimension of time scarcity on migrant academics’ life: participants emphasised that due to time scarcity they could not develop an active social life. Many academics stated that due to their workload and time scarcity, they did not keep a work/life balance. Trying to be stricter in balancing work and life did not work for some academics like *Betty*, a migrant post-doctoral researcher:

*I tried to be more strict and you know, not working on weekends but that also creates some issues because you never… It never feels like you’re getting things done. So you always feel like you’re behind. You don’t feel like you progressed…*

The blurred balance between work and life negatively influenced participants’ social lives. Many academics stated that they had problems allocating time for their leisure time activities. One post-doctoral researcher answered my question about leisure time by saying *‘what is leisure time*?!’ with a brief smile. *Ju*, a single 32-year-old Asian lecturer with a permanent contract, told me that she had not chatted with anyone face-to-face for more than three months during the lockdown. Stating that it was partly because she lived alone, *Kathrine* expressed how the workload and time scarcity had detrimental effects on her social life by giving examples from her PhD days. As stated above, according to participants, socialisation options within the workplace are also difficult. *Anna* for instance said:

*I was thinking whether the British academia has been so formalized. You know comparing with the American style… “No, it is not!” It is just… people are overwork! They don't have time for a chat. Even the buildings themselves have no spaces to even have a drink, you know, sit down and have a coffee with someone. People are super busy… And everybody is in their own little silo. So, if, like, for example, I sit on the sixth floor of a building. I've never seen anybody on the fourth third floor.*

As can be seen here, when academics arrive in Britain and start to work at a British university, they ‘almost literally’ come with ‘temporal baggage comprising codes, symbols and dispositions that cover a whole range of elements, from the pace and sequencing of various modalities of social interaction to the broad temporal organisation of social life’ (Cwerner, 2001, p. 19). However, adjusting to the temporal structure of the British academic system requires more attention. The temporal dissonances and differences between the HE system and institutions and academics’ dispositions are rarely considered in academic migration studies (although see Wang, 2020). This research contributes to both the temporality of migration and HE education literature by showing that migrant academics feel the need to deal with their ‘temporal baggage’ (Cwerner, 2001).

Thirdly, family relationships are another significant dimension of migrant academics’ time management and scarcity issues. Activities such as house chores and child caring are regarded as time consuming. Many participants said that instead of shopping outside, they usually prefer ordering food online on *UberEATS*, *Just Eat* and *Amazon* to save time. The link between time management and local family becomes complicated in the case of families with children. *Hannah* is a 37-year-old female academic who has two children. She said that when their children are not in nursery, she and her partner have difficulties in time management. Her younger child sleeps a maximum of two hours at a time and she has to care for him at other times. Additionally, her older child wants his parents to play games with him all the time. *Hannah* said that she cannot concentrate on her work:

*I was saying that this was wrong for years but now we also have to put them in front of the TV and say ‘you watch this cartoon’, in the worst-case scenario… So, there is constant interruption. You can't really concentrate. So, from that perspective, for example, writing a journal article or doing anything which is really academically challenging, it's very difficult. I mean, I haven't written a solo journal article since I had the first kid.*

She said that she always has to schedule tasks according to priority. However, her career plans and professional objectives are usually the ones that are compromised in the face of childcare. She articulated that she even makes sacrifices for herself:

*I think my life is completely full with either work or kids and family. So, I don't really have any time to myself… Just because there's not enough hours in the day. So, whenever I'm not working… I am with the kids and vice versa, whenever I don't need to do something for them, I quickly catch up on emails or quickly read an article or something like that…*

Female academics with precarious employment contracts, that are also providing care and usually taking responsibility for domestic chores, are the group that are most negatively influenced. Their condition also involves gendered notions of childcaring and uneven distribution of domestic labour, as detailed in the next chapter 7. This finding serves as an additional evidence to the studies showing that migrant women continue to shoulder the burden of domestic and caring responsibilities in the context of skilled migration (Aure, 2018; Meares, 2010; Wojczewski et al., 2015).

Therefore, as a consequence of this situation, many migrant academic women attended in this research stated that they always deal with time scarcity issues in their everyday lives. *Li Na* is an example of this situation; she was an Asian background academic who had been in the UK for more than two decades. She was married to a British citizen and she and her partner lived in different cities in the UK. She lived with her two children and said that while she was trying to do her best in all domains of her life, she felt inadequate in all parts:

*You just spin plates… I don't know, whether it's being a woman or being an academic, but you're constantly torn and you say “I can always be a better mother”, “I can always be a better academic” but sometimes they don't go together. Being a better academic means I have more publications, I have more research funding… or doing more on whatever I teach, spending more time with my students, but these are endlessly demanding. But then on the other hand, it takes me away from my kids! So I don't spend enough time with my kids. I need to be a better mother which is also hugely demanding.*

Transnational family practices such as communication, visiting, financial and emotional exchanges require time. As stated above, time is the most necessary resource for migrant academics to maintain familial relationships transnationally. Many academics stated that they experienced time problems when contacting family and friends. The majority arranged family visits according to their schedules. In addition, some academics said they sometimes had to work during their visits. *Mia*, a 46-year-old migrant associate professor, said:

*I hate this feeling but… I could not escape… I am carrying my responsibilities with me to everywhere. I was thinking about the paper that I am writing while I am having dinner with my mom on the first day I came here. The academic always sticks by you wherever you are in.*

The feeling that *‘the academic always sticks by you’* is shared by many academics. In this regard, family visits may not only be about ‘family time’ in some cases. Furthermore, other transnational family practices are also shaped by academics’ time issues (Robertson, 2021). Academics and their left-behind family members arrange their communication time collectively. Some academics said their family members knew when they were un/available and communicated accordingly.

One strategy that most participants adopted was to arrange transnational communication when they were doing some other tasks. For example, participants were generally video calling with their family members while they were on the bus or having their breakfast. One participant who lived in London stated that her parents knew the time when she got on the bus and called her at that time so that they could talk for about one hour. These incidences, created together, show the synchronicity that migrants and their family members develop collectively to maintain their practices in a time scarcity regime and also across different time zones. Again, it is highly possible that non-migrant academics also have issues around time scarcity; however, the peculiarities of living in different geographical spaces intersects with the time scarcity in a different way to when people are co-located.

In this section, I show that for most migrant academics, time scarcity is a serious issue. It is partly caused because a change of institutions (both from a different country and within Britain) can lead to a change of temporal orders and structures of everyday lives (Robertson, 2021). This research contributes to the time and temporality literature by showing how academics arrive with ‘temporal baggage’ (Cwerner, 2001, p. 19) and have issues in adjusting to the temporal structure of the neoliberal British HE sector, which has escalated temporal pressures. Additionally, it also makes a contribution to the transnational family literature by showing that in the context of migrant academics, time is the most needed resource for maintaining family relationships from afar. It is shown that many academics resort to multi-tasking to alleviate the temporal disjuncture and create time to meet various demands. It is significant to note that there are generally conflicting demands in performing family practices transnationally and locally. I present this issue in the next chapter (see section 7.1.4.).

## 6.4. Conclusion

To summarise, three points can be drawn as conclusions to the findings presented in this chapter. First and foremost, I show that migration trajectories, career steps and local and transnational family relationships are grounded in conditions of time and temporality. The first overarching section of the chapter emphasises the notion of appropriate timing in maintaining family relationships (Elder, 1985). It enlarges knowledge in the transnational family literature by showing that academics give special importance to some significant time periods. Performing family practices (Morgan, 2011) during these specific times has symbolic meanings which show that their family ties are still active. In addition, I show that migrant academics tend to experience problems in syncing their own lives in Britain with family members in different parts of the world. This stresses that even though instant contact and virtual co-presence are achieved through new communication technologies (Madianou, 2014; Wilding, 2006; Wyss, 2016), absolute simultaneity is not achieved due to temporal dissonances and disjuncture between migrants’ and left-behind family members’ temporal structures. Revealing the rifts between migrants and non-migrants, even in the context of migrants who tend to be highly-mobile and active users of new communication technologies, is significant in challenging the notion of co-presence in the transnational family literature.

Second, focusing on the individual biographies of academics, I delved into the temporal discontinuities in the normative order of life-course progression of some migrant academics. This part is significant in contributing to the literature since it shows that temporal disjuncture in the life course of migrants arises not just from migration and mobility but also career steps and academic motivations. I analysed the notion of time and temporality in the forms of disciplining power on migrants (Robertson, 2021). I showed that one group of academics experienced academic precarity in two different ways. First, I showed that unstable employment conditions, low wages, and uncertainty in migratory status create financial issues, temporal precarity and permanent temporariness (Hilal & Petti, 2018) in the lives of the migrant academic precariat. Becoming a peripatetic academic and being open to different mobility ventures is one of the defence mechanisms that some academics embrace. I showed that the migrant academic precariat also experiences temporal precarity on an emotional and psychological level. Having to live with uncertainty and anxiety due to the unpredictable, error-prone and surveillance-preoccupied migration and employment regime, some migrant academics lose their agentive control on their lives and relationships. This is a significant contribution to the academic migration literature that tends to see the migration of academic staff as a mobility of highly-skilled and privileged professionals (Luczaj & Kurek-Ochmanska, 2021; Nessi & Bailey, 2014; Tremblay, 2005).

Finally, focusing on the time and temporality at the levels of individuals and their daily lives, I show that transnational family relations can be exposed to significant shifts in the course of academics’ lives. Additionally, engaging with three bodies of literature (transnational family literature (Bryceson et al., 2002.; Goulbourne et al., 2010), temporality in migration (Cwerner, 2001; Griffiths, 2014; S. Robertson, 2021), and academic migration), I show the time scarcity issues in the everyday lives of academics. Due to the demands of the neoliberal and outcome-oriented British HE system and its accelerated understandings of academic labour, some migrant academics have temporal disjuncture with their fellow academics. Additionally, this negatively affects their ability to socialise within Britain and also to perform their transnational family practices from afar. Therefore, as the previous chapter shows, migrant academics tend to be highly geographically mobile and able to weave transnational family and personal ties in different parts of the world together. This chapter shows how they tend to be temporally precarious and under pressure in both meeting deadlines and resolving asynchronicities in order to maintain family relationships from afar. As it is shown throughout this chapter, some experiences especially relating to overwork and delaying parenthood are not specific to migrant academics rather shared by many academics across HE system. However, the influences of British migration regimes further complicate the temporal context of migrant academics. This makes one ask how and to/from whom, in such a spatiotemporal context, migrants provide and receive care and exchange support from afar. The next chapter addresses the issue of familial care and emotional support in the lives and transnational family relationships of migrant academics.

# CHAPTER 7: THE EXCHANGE OF FAMILY CARE and EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Caring relationships are ‘bedrock’ for migrants’ transnational ties with their family and kin (Baldassar et al., 2007a). As it is stated in Introduction (section, 1.1), the second question of this research project asks, ‘how and under the influence of which factors do migrant academics provide and receive care from family and kin across national borders?’. Throughout this chapter, I show that migrant academics engage with both local and transnational family care in different forms, such as practical, financial, personal and emotional support (Baldassar et al., 2007a). The dynamics influencing these caring relationships are explored in three sections: the first focuses on childcare arrangements and the division of domestic labour in local (cohabiting) families; in the second section, I show how and in which transnational channels academics receive care; finally, I show how academics deal with caring arrangements for their elderly parents.

## 7.1. Arranging Care for Children in Local Cohabiting Families

About one quarter of the participants in the study had children. Although this research does not make a claim of representativeness over migrant academics in Britain, a significant numberthat I spoke to, such as *Ayse, Oleksandra* and *Jazmin*, seemed reluctant to have children. During the interviews, this was a common topic and a matter for discussion and negotiation between couples. Academics cited different reasons for being unwilling to have a child, including the extra responsibility of having a child; financial situation; career progression; and contemporary world problems such as environmental crises. However, for those participants who had children, their children tended to occupy a central position in their lives and relationships. In this section, I show how participants arranged their children’s caring needs in cohabiting families across four sub-sections. The first point relates to the delegation of childcare to paid care organisations such as nurseries. The second point discusses the temporal mobility of family members to Britain and care for the migrants’ children. Then, I show the division of labour migrant academics’ local domestic environments. Finally, I show how academic mothers struggle with meeting the asymmetrical expectations arising from their academic and family roles.

### **7.1.1. Nursery: Can You Afford It?**

One of the options that migrant academics often consider for providing care to their children is through professional caring services. Rather than live-in care workers, nurseries are preferred. In addition, some language schools for pre-school or school-age children were prevalent in the sample. These schools served two simultaneous objectives: they both care for the children in the daytime when their parents are working and they teach second and third generation family members their original language. This is consistent with the relevant literature stressing that learning the ‘mother-tongue' is critical for the intergenerational relationships of migrants’ children with their grandparents and other left-behind family members (Hillyer, 2021; Leifsen & Tymczuk, 2012; Schiller et al., 1999) and some academics expressed how ‘*sad’* they felt when their children could not understand what their parents said. Therefore, language courses for children play a critical role for migrant academic families. An Israeli participant residing in London described these courses as ‘the best way’ of arranging their children’s caring needs. Similarly, a Malaysian background participant based in the East Midlands underlined the significance of community centres in arranging her childcare. However, one of the major drawbacks of these courses is the issue of accessibility. Participants living in relatively small urban areas or with a less common mother tongue stressed the difficulty of accessing these types of courses. For instance, finding language courses serving diaspora children was difficult in the cases of the Mexican participant in Leeds, the Nigerian participant in Belfast, the Greek participant in Cranfield, and a Colombian participant in Lincoln. One of the participants in this group said: ‘*it is sad and upsetting that he doesn’t understand anything what they* [his grandparents] *said*’ since their child could not speak their grandparents' language, and take a language course to address this. This situation reflects how cities as social spaces are key in defining and shaping transnational social relationships (Mulder & Malmberg, 2014; Ryan, 2011a). As such, many academics chose to give their children informal language lessons in their free time at home.

However, nuance tended to appear in the case of international marriages. Like many other critical decisions, the language of the children was thoroughly negotiated and navigated by taking various factors into account. International couples who had children were generally composed of academics and their British partners. This meant that they generally found a solution in teaching their children both English and a second language to maintain their transnational family relationships. However, the contexts of couples who are both migrants showed a more complicated picture. For example, one participant was from France while his partner had a Pakistani background. Although they did not have a child, he said they had thought about this issue. He underlined the significance of teaching their future children to be able to hold basic conversations in their origin languages by further adding that ‘*obviously they cannot be fluent in three languages*’ [English, Pakistani and French]. The significance of language as the initiator of transnational intergenerational contact also shows that transnational family practices need to be ‘seen’ by and displayed to the left-behind family members (Finch, 2007) and language is critical in creating this recognition and validation between members of transnational families (Walsh, 2015, 2018).

Receiving professional care services from nurseries/creches is another option that migrant academics consider. However, the majority of participants emphasised the expense of sending their children to nurseries. Nearly all participants who had children preferred using nurseries in different time periods. For example, *Kwame*, an African background lecturer and a father of two, said:

*Childcare in this country is extremely expensive. So, what we did, we send the first to the full-time creche. So in the morning, I dropped him off and in the evening, she picks him up. But then it became more expensive, more and more. So what we do now is, using creche for three to twice in a week, I stay with them because it is easier for me to work from home, and rest she stays with the kids. Full time creche again? No thank you, I don't have the money.*

He said that they were paying £750 per month for one child, which he found ‘*outrageous*’. In addition, the price of the nurseries is also dependent upon the spaces where participants live. That is, some participants living in bigger cities such as London stated that nurseries were more expensive than other cities in Britain. This shows how geography and cities that migrants are settled in shapes childcare provision choices (Lawson, 2007).

This finding is of significance for the literature in two ways. First, it shows that migrant academics tend to suffer from a double deprivation of access to institutional support and social security. First, the migration regime in Britain is frequently characterised by its restrictive policies to migrants’ access to welfare benefits and public healthcare (Harris, 2016). Migrant academics who do not have indefinite leave to remain in the UK or have spouse visas do not have access to the social welfare system. In this regard, the British government is frequently urged to abandon its policy of ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ (NRPF) in the public and academic agenda (Benton et al., 2022). Systematic exclusion of migrants from the social welfare system, according to studies, tends to result in the exacerbation of destitution, social problems and migrant poverty (Andy et al., 2022).

Second, this finding also demonstrates the lack of social support in the British HE system for the caregiving responsibilities of migrant academic staff. Shaped by neoliberal outcome-oriented motivations, the British HE system often turns a blind eye to its caregiver staff both migrants and non-migrants (Moreau & Robertson, 2019). In essence, the British HE system is often described in relation to its ‘carelessness’ and ‘care-free’ characters (Attwood, 2010; Henderson & Moreau, 2020; Moreau & Robertson, 2019). This implies that although universities acknowledge and theoretically support their caregiving academic staff, the HE system systematically excludes and does not allow them to fit into the system (Probert, 2005). This research shows that migrant academics’ caregiving responsibilities tend to be absent and marginal in the regulation of an academic environment in which even native academic staff’s caregiving needs remain ‘invisible’ (Moreau & Robertson, 2017, p. 17).

### **7.1.2. Mobility of Care: Unpaid Care Provision of Family Members**

Migrant academics’ other option for the care of their children is delegating their child caring responsibilities to family members through temporal migration. In this type of arrangement, family members – generally parents or in-laws – come to the UK and take care of migrant academics’ children. In many cases, academics find this type of arrangement to be the most suitable, practical, and cheapest way to provide care for their children. For instance, *Baram*,migrantmother of a 12-year-old child, said:

*I really believed in the idea of a nursery but then two things changed my mind: first they are excessively expensive then also… I realized that, some games which were available to them were not very nice to the children. And, and especially before they can start to speak, how do they express themselves, you know? So it didn't feel comfortable.*

Some participants were also reluctant to use nurseries since they found the education provided in these places to be inappropriate for their children. *Baram’s* mother came to Britain to take care of the child for three years in a series of intervals. *Baram* said:

*We would get kind of the general tourist visa like usually six months… We also had a nanny coming once a week. So that my mom kind of would give a break.*

According to *Baram*, the care of a family member is more intimate and ‘*very different from a service you pay for*’. She argued that her son had a close connection with his grandmother due to those three years of caring. However, after a while, *Baram’s* mother had to return to her country of origin; her father, who was older than her mother needed some practical support. Utilising family members’ mobility for the care of migrants’ children is consistent with the transnational family care literature (Hamilton et al., 2021; Wyss & Nedelcu, 2020). However, in this context, we see that the migration of family members (her mother in the case of *Baram*) can also create a care drain (Parreñas, 2012) in the country of origin.

One of the most common barriers for this type of caring arrangement is the issue of getting visas for parents. The division between those academics with an EU or a non-EU background is significant in shaping family caring arrangements. Family members of non-European academics face more obstacles to obtaining British visas. Thus, non-EU academics are usually uncertain about whether their family members can obtain a visa. For instance, *Li Na*, a Chinese academic mother, said one of her friends’ mother’s visa applications was rejected since they openly declared that the grandmother would come to Britain to take care of their child. According to her, the Home Office does not recognise unpaid care in migrant families. Therefore, as with nearly all migrant academics, *Li Na* did not explicitly state that the main purpose of the visit of her family member was taking care of her child. Instead, the visit was presented as a casual touristic visit. This reflects how migrant academics adopt alternative ways of overcoming and circumventing the restrictive migration regulations for childcare arrangements. Some participants’ parents, such as *Xin Yi*s’s and *Benjamin*’s,could not engage in such physical mobility as they also needed different forms of direct care in their country of origin. Since some migrants’ parents do not have access to social welfare and public health, they cannot come to Britain and provide care to their grandchildren (Chiu & Ho, 2020; Hamilton et al., 2021).

Moreover, not all mothers thought that the care provided by a family member was the most intimate and suitable. Some mothers believed that grandparents’ care was not the best in terms of the development of their child. *Li Na* said that since there was a ‘*huge’* generation gap between her parents and their grandchildren, they could not understand each other. She said that her parents ‘*tend to spoil them*’ and not teach discipline. For instance, *Xin Yi*, another Chinese background migrant academic, with two children, said that when her children were born her parents-in-law came from China to the UK to take care of the children. However, when I asked whether she was happy with this type of care and preferred the care of family members over nurseries, she said:

*Oh no! my second daughter, she had decay problems and got four teeth pulled out because my mother-in-law would give her anything she asked for. So, for example she loves chocolate and these sugary treats… they were really bad for her teeth… and in the end she got her four teeth pulled out when she was three or something… Nursery wouldn't do this. But my mother-in-law… I mean she was of great help, I couldn’t do otherwise but we had this…*

Thus, the childcare of some grandparents cannot meet parents’ childcare expectations. Another topic that can have the potential to lead to tensions between grandparents and migrants is the potential for conflict in family roles and spaces. Some participants cited power issues arising from living in the same household with another family member. For instance, *Eva* observed:

*One thing that kind of pissed me off I know that my mom is cleaning the kitchen because she thinks like she’s helping me… But this is actually like the invasion of my territory…*

Therefore, using the temporary migration of parents’ for childcaring purpose can also lead to family tensions. This is not adequately addressed and researched in the literature. Although there are studies in the literature looking at this phenomenon from childcare and legal dimensions, these data show that migrants’ power relations arising from sharing the same household with their parents for childcaring purposes is also worthy of investigation.

This research contributes to the literature by revealing a different dimension of the transnational political economy of care (Williams, 2014) through the context of the international migration and mobility of academic staff. As section 3.1.3. shows, the global movements of academic labour tends to flow from academic peripheral countries, generally located in the Global South, to the intellectual centres in the Global North for various reasons such as family reunification, career progression, reputation and recognition and human rights (Ackers & Gill, 2008b; Kim, 2010). However, academics from the Global South tended to find themselves between two fires. On the hand, they have to find ways to survive in a neoliberal, corporate, entrepreneurial and objective-oriented British HE system, in which academic culture, temporal structures (see Chapter 6) and recognition of qualifications and academic practices such as teaching and marking tend to be completely different from previous experiences. As stated above, due to the ‘carelessness’ (Attwood, 2010) and care-free(ness) (Henderson & Moreau, 2020; Moreau & Robertson, 2019) of the British HE system, soon after their migration academics who have caring responsibilities realise that they will not fit into the system and do not have enough practical support to be able to provide enough care to their children. On the other hand, the restrictive migration regime in Britain does not recognise the unpaid caregiving arrangements of migrant families (Huang, 2016; Kilkey & Merla, 2014). Due to exclusionary social security policies (Dwyer et al., 2019; Harris, 2016), migrant academics’ families’ access to social well-being and public health is also constrained. Because of this double deprivation and institutional exclusion, migrant academics tend to adopt the strategy of obtaining tourist visas for their elderly parents’ to not reveal their real purposes from the visa authorities (Ho & Chiu, 2020; Wyss & Nedelcu, 2020). This situation can be further complicated when a ‘care drain’ appears in the country of origin. Additionally, as illustrated, it can also lead to tensions in family roles and dynamics. The political economy of care in the context of academic migration reveals not only how global inequalities between central and peripheral countries exacerbate and lead to family care issues but also how a restrictive migration regime and neoliberal HE system can create serious repercussions for the transnational care arrangements of so-called highly-skilled and privileged migrants.

### **7.1.3. Gender Dimension of Local Caring Arrangements**

Although it is impossible to make generalisations about such a diverse sample, I recorded three types of gendered division of labour at home: traditional, intermediate, and egalitarian. Firstly, the traditional division of labour in which men deal with providing money while women engage with the household chores and childcare (Parreñas et al., 2012) was common among the sample. In this group there were participants from the Middle East, Europe, Asia and America. Income levels did not impact on this phenomenon. Some male participants also complained about traditional gender norms; *Eduardo*, a Latin American academic who migrated with his wife but got divorced in the UK, said that the major factor in their divorce was the traditional gender norms in which ‘*men are supposed to work and provide money even if unemployed*’. However, this traditional family setting, as Morgan (2011) argues, care for children is principally associated with women. For instance, *Li Na*,an Asian academic with two children who lived locally separated from her partner, stated that ‘*she is fully responsible for the care of children*’ while her partner lives away.

According to her, it was acceptable for her to take care of the children since her partner did not want to have children and it was, she who wanted them. She also said that while it was difficult to take care of children alone when they were babies, it was easy now since ‘*the older one takes care of his younger sibling most of the time’*. Therefore, these observations also show that how childcare arrangements might change over time as children get older. This common phenomenon reflects the significance of sibling care, experiences of the domestic division of labour, and how mothers respond to and deal with the unequal division of labour at home (Francisco-Menchavez et al., 2020; Platt et al., 2016). Academic positions of mothers did not change their caring obligation in this group – *Li Na* was a professor. ATurkishresearch fellow underlined this by giving examples seen among her friends:

*So, I'm 39 and all the women I know in their 30s and 40s, my friends in academia, no matter how much they work outside the house, no matter how accomplished they are in their job, they always see household and childcaring duties are things should be managed by themselves…*

This reflects that traditional gender norms are not only determined by education and skill levels. Migrants who are considered as highly-skilled and highly-educated can also perform and engage in traditional gender norms (Docquier et al., 2009; Ryan & Mulholland, 2014b). This is especially significant for policy makers in the sense of women’s contribution to economic development since a strand of higher education literature shows that women fulfilling traditional gender norms have difficulties in terms of academic productivity and career advancement (Aiston & Jung, 2015; Morgan et al., 2021; Muric et al., 2021).

The second group of intermediate/transitory gendered division of labour consists of academics who generally share the care of their children; however, regarding other reproductive domestic tasks such as household chores and shopping, they act primarily in accordance with traditional gender norms. For instance, *Kwame* said that they live in an egalitarian relationship since he also attends to the care of the children. However, he also added that since the paid childcare was expensive, he and his wife divided the childcare. Similarly, *Baram* and her partner, who is from South Korea, shared the care of their child for a few years:

*We work all the time also on weekends… sometimes so many deadlines and I think in the past, my workload was quite intensive. I think I could not have done it if my partner is not flexible. So, my partner helped childcare in the past for 3-4 years. I think otherwise I couldn't have kept up with the workload.*

Stating that she could not have succeeded in childcare without the help of her partner shows the connotation of traditional gender culture in which childcare is the task of mothers and men can help them (Näre, 2009; Parreñas, 2001; Vohlídalová, 2017). *Baram* stated that her partner began to share the childcare after he started working from home and realising how difficult it was to care for children:

*After the child... that became a real battle about fighting for every free minute. It was almost like doing mental calculation all the time, like how much one person was doing… that actually led to a lot of resentment from my side… because, I mean, I definitely felt I was doing way much more work at home whilst also having a full-time job, and he was not… just because he could go to the office… So, you always end up doing most of the housework. And I think I got him to the point where he realized that, but even then, it was not perfectly balanced. And then when he actually quit his office job and started working flexibly from home, that's when the things got reversed. I think in terms of the household stuff, we're almost equal now for the first time.*

The problem as *Baram* statedis that fathers in the study mostly did not realize (or did not want to realize) how difficult it is for migrant academic mothers to undertake the social reproduction of family in domestic environments while dealing with the demands of being an academic. The discourses of ‘being a good mother’ and a ‘successful academic’ which are constantly re-created by family members, colleagues and cultural codes have double-edged pressure on academic mothers, which is presented in the next section (Hirsch & Kayam, 2021; Tsouroufli, 2020).

Participants in the intermediate gender norm group generally stated that they had ‘*egalitarian’* gender norms in the family; some stated that ‘*of course, it is egalitarian*’. However, when asking for details of the division of labour at their homes, they tended to say that childcare and household chores were managed by women while men did shopping or ‘*fixing if something is broken down*’. Therefore, equality in this group often occurred in thought but not in practice. Some participants said they had a ‘*skill-based division of labour*’, adding ‘*she is good at cooking and cleaning*’. Having an egalitarian gender division had a discursive value rather than a practical/performative value in this group, except in some instances regarding childcare. This reflects the complexity of childcare arrangements such as practicality, temporality and availability, as Finch and Mason underline that gender norms and codes are not enough to explain a particular person’s care provision (Finch & Mason, 1993).

Finally, there were participants who experienced egalitarian gender norms in their relationships. In this group, not just childcaring responsibilities, but also housework and other familial responsibilities were generally shared between partners. *Elena*, from a South American country, had one child at the time of data collection and stated that her partner had been the primary carer of their child since she had to be away for research. She added that work and responsibilities in their domestic environments were shared between the couple. Similar to other groups above, nationality and migration background were not defining factors in terms of having egalitarian gender norms (Vohlídalová, 2017). However, there were two distinctive patterns. First, type of upbringing was an influential factor in individuals’ gender norms and roles. Some participants mentioned that they had been brought up in an egalitarian family environment. However, in this group there were also participants that came from a culture with highly traditional gender roles and social class can play a determining role. For instance, a participant from the US underlined the difference between her family’s social class and her in-laws’ social class and related this to her parents having a more traditional gender culture while her in-laws were much egalitarian. Therefore, some participants emphasised that they were brought up in an egalitarian family environment, which influences the ways in which they ‘do gender’[[4]](#footnote-4) (Mahler & Pessar, 2001; Menjívar, 1999).

Secondly, there was a group of participants who experienced egalitarian gender norms in spite of being brought up in traditional gender family environments. This group can be called ‘reactive egalitarian’ since they reacted against traditional gender norms in which they were brought up. *Ayse* provides a good example of this reaction:

*I can say everything’s on my mother's shoulders although they were both working full-time. But she was never accepting that. I mean, she didn't accept that. She was complaining about it all the time. So she always, always told us, 'you have to be financially independent’ and 'never rely on a man’, take me as an example and I don't rely on a man. My sister is very very proud feminist. So, I guess so I wouldn't say mine is very different. But I have a more balanced version of housework.*

Mucahit*: Kind of egalitarian, right?*

Ayse*: Yes, I would say entirely. Yeah, but I'm really like… recalling these from my childhood… I'm really trying so hard not to be in the same position as my mom like having to deal with everything at home.*

Some male participants also underlined this reaction to egalitarian gender norms by referring to their mothers’ roles in their families. One Malaysian and one Italian participant stated that they did not want their daughters in the same position as them in terms of gender and family roles. The reactional thought is passed down to further generations. Therefore, types of upbringings can shape the behavioural patterns of gendered divisions of labour at home.

Overall, this research finds three types of division of labour and gender roles: traditional, transitional and egalitarian. There is little research finding that traditional gender divisions are prevalent in the literature on migrant academic staff (although see; Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017). The transitory type of gender division shows how migrant families’ arrangements’ of care and other family commitments are so complex that they cannot solely be explained by gender norms (Finch, 1989; Morgan, 2011; Parreñas et al., 2012). Therefore, this research contributes to the literature by showing that gendered division of labour in domestic environments cannot only be explained by so-called skill and education levels a constellation of subjective factors such as upbringing and previous experiences are found influential.

### **7.1.4. ‘Always never good enough’: Academic Mothers Juggling Family Roles and Responsibilities**

In this section, I present the situation of migrant academic mothers in relation to their caring relationships. My aim is to illustrate the picture of the family caring arrangements of academic mothers in its own ‘situatedness’ of their familial, migratory and employment contexts (Kilkey & Merla, 2014). Analysing migrant academic mothers’ accounts of their daily life routines reveals a significant finding that migrant academic mothers tend to juggle between three different spaces: the domestic space, the transnational space, and the working environment (the university). Migrant mothers often find themselves striving to fulfil the often-overlapping demands of these three spheres. In their daily lives, academic mothers tend to prioritize their tasks and address the most urgent. Since meeting the demands of all three spaces is nearly impossible to achieve, there is usually a trade-off in their decisions and everyday routines. Often at least one domain is compromised at the expense of others. For instance, when asked about the balance between her work and life, *Hannah*, a European-background academic with two children aged one and four, said: *‘it always depends on what takes priority’*. She told me how she would strategically organise her day and weekly schedule in order to perform tasks that were of top priority. However, migrant academic mothers usually have no choice but to compromise from their academic careers, plans and motivations. For example, *Hannah* expressed that she had not written a journal article for four years:

*It's very difficult because the younger one sleeps two hours at a time and, you have two hours where you can work, but sometimes he wakes up in an hour, and then you can't do anything else. Because there is constant interruption. You can't really concentrate. So from that perspective, for example, writing a journal article or doing anything academic is really challenging. It's very difficult. I mean, I haven't written a solo journal article since I had the first kid.*

She underlined that the Covid-19 lockdowns exacerbated her work at home in relation to household chores: ‘*we are always eating something… constantly like cooking, baking things*’. This reflects how the exacerbation of gendered inequalities due to the Covid-19 pandemic (King & Frederickson, 2021; Meraviglia & Dudka, 2021) can also be seen in the contexts of migrant academics (see also Myers et al., 2020; Parlak et al., 2020).

However, one of *Hannah*’s advantages was her permanent contract. Mothers with fixed-term contracts, like *Elena*,have serious concerns regarding their employment. *Elena*, who had a 4-year-old child, said that she was planning to quit academia and find a job in a different sector because her contract was due to finish in six months and she was sure that it would not be renewed. She was 43 at the time of the interview, and shestressed that her academic performance was ‘*really low’* compared to her colleagues since she had been taking one or two days off in a week from her annual leave in order to engage with unpaid care and domestic work. Using annual leave in such a way is a common exercise to create time for care but it tends to end up sacrificing career advancement and personal well-being (Fritsch, 2015; Ledin et al., 2007; Stockfelt, 2018). This finding corroborates, and provides explanations for, the gender productivity gap found in higher education literature, revealing that mothers are more disadvantageous than their male counterparts in academic career progression (Misra et al., 2012; Morgan et al., 2021; Pinho-Gomes et al., 2020).

As presented above, one of the first things that migrant academic mothers feel the need to sacrifice from is their academic plans, career and motivations. However, there are times that migrant academic mothers have to prioritise their work and sacrifice their caring responsibilities in their local and transnational family relationships. On these occasions, according to the majority of participants, academic mothers tended to feel guilty. For example, *Elena* had to collect data in multiple countries for her research. She attended fieldwork alone while her British husband stayed in Britain and took care of their child:

*So I went first to \*\*\** [a country in Europe] *for a month and then I came back for a week. Then, I went to \*\*\** [a country in South America] *for another month and came back for a week as well. And then, I went to \*\*\** [a country in Africa]*. So I spent like my six months in the field. So what we did is, my husband and my son stayed here for like for four months like from January to April. He took care of our son… I mean like my mother-in-law stayed with them… In April, I came for a week to see them. Then, I went back to \*\*\** [the South American country*]. I decided to locate myself in the city where my family lives. So after two months, my husband came back with my son and visited me like for two weeks.*

This extract is critical in terms of showing the levels of physical mobility of migrant academics. Due to fieldwork, conferences and projects, migrant academics often tend to be very geographically mobile. It also shows that in this atmosphere of high levels of physical mobility, academics need to negotiate and arrange their caring responsibilities with their partners. In this case, *Elena’*s husband took over the care of their child due to the temporality of her fieldwork, which also reflects the fluidity of caring arrangements. However, during this process of being away from her son, *Elena* felt guilty:

*It was like one of the worst periods… I mean like, I also became ill during my fieldwork and had to deal with it for a long time. But… on top of that… my son was here with him. I mean, I was lucky because he didn’t make any problem with being the main carer for like six months… But I didn’t feel comfortable… you know leaving him here… Now if someone offers me a job doing the same, I would say “no thank you”, I would rather not have a job in academia.*

*Elena* expressed how she felt ‘uncomfortable’ due to leaving her child in Britain for six months during her fieldwork. The feeling of guilt and culpability due to not performing caring responsibilities is commonly found and studied in the literature (Elvin-Nowak, 1999; Guendouzi, 2006; Reynolds & Zontini, 2006). Also, the fact that she felt ‘lucky’ that he did not make any problem implies that she saw it as her role really and, as noted before, that he was helping out, rather than engaging with childcare. In this regard, the guilt associated with the obligations of care is a part of life for many contemporary migrant mothers in the literature (Erel, 2002; Wilding & Baldassar, 2009). It ‘operates to reproduce “tradition” and maintain community boundaries and family discipline’ (Yeoh et al., 2005, p. 309).

As stated before, many issues illustrated so far are likely to be shared by non-migrant academic staff working at British HE system. This is also valid for the academic mothers and their family roles and caring responsibilities. However, what migration adds to this already disadvantaged situation is usually extra responsibilities and obligations. In other words, the persistence of caring responsibilities also appears in migrant mothers’ transnational caring responsibilities. For instance, *Li Na*,a Chinese background migrant academic mother, said that she had been ‘*neglecting*’ her mother and sister since she had her first child due to her childcare and academic responsibilities. Additionally, the majority of participants said that they began cutting off some of their transnational ties with their friends after they had children. This is significant in terms of how and why transnational ties evolve over the course of trans-migrants’ lives (Ryan et al., 2018; Smith, 2002). Therefore, finding themselves between the demands of their academic work and expectations of care in their local families, some academic mothers had to compromise in one area: their transnational family relationships and responsibilities. For instance, *Sally*,a South Asian lecturer with two children, pointed out:

*you're constantly torn; I can always be a better mother. I can always be a better academic, but sometimes they don't go together. Being a better academic means, I have more publications, I have more research funding, I've more whatever teaching I teach, spending more time with my students, but these are endlessly demanding. But then on the other hand, it takes me away from my kids! So I don't spend time with my kids, could not spend even my evenings and weekends with them. I need to be a better mother, which is also hugely demanding. My life, in a way, is 'always never good enough'. Because both are demanding, you are never good enough. My daughter, when I talk to you in this interview, I once again notice that I should be spending more time with her and call my mother more often, you know, I should be.*

This is consistent with the literature showing that migrant women tend to have ‘more anxiety, hurt and lack of respect’ since they shoulder the burden of both care work and kin work (Zontini, 2010, p. 823). Childcare and domestic labour, academic commitments, and transnational relationships together put migrant mothers in a position in which they have to make sacrifices. This is a significant contribution to the literature which has often portrayed academic mothers as choosing between being a good mother and a successful academic (Armenti, 2004; Raddon, 2002). This dichotomy between academic work and local family life in the context of academic mothers is often referred to as ‘segmented self’ and ‘bifurcated consciousness’ (Acker & Feuerverger, 1997, p. 136). However, this research shows that transnational family relationships are a new dimension to add to this equation. Migrant academic mothers often have a dynamic decision-making process similar to what Johnston and Swanson (2007) call ‘cognitive acrobatics’, juggling between different overlapping responsibilities and identity asymmetries such as being a better mother, better daughter, and a better academic. Therefore, transnational family relationships introduce a third dimension to this situation. Moreover, this situation reflects how the patriarchal and neoliberal nature of higher education puts migrant academic mothers into tough situations in relation to their non-academic responsibilities. The ideal academic of the neoliberal higher education model, as Rosa says (2021, p. 2), is ‘someone unencumbered by non-work demands’. Thus, the patriarchal and neoliberal governance model of academia shows the gendered care regime that migrant academic mothers must confront (Kilkey & Merla, 2014).

## 7.2. Receiving Care from Afar: Transnational Care Reception of Migrant Academics

Migrant academics also receive care and emotional support from afar. In this section, I first present how migrant academics receive emotional support from both their family members and friends transnationally. Secondly, understanding the Covid-19 pandemic as a crisis of care, I illustrate how migrant academics exchanged familial care transnationally during the pandemic.

### **7.2.1. Listening to Family, Talking to Friends: Symbolic and Functional Dimensions of Receiving Emotional Support**

The majority of academics who participated in this research stated they receive different sorts of care, such as financial, practical, accommodation and emotional (Baldassar et al., 2007a); however, there was a salient emphasis on the need for emotional support and mental care. This is also corroborating with the prevalence of mental well-being issues and acute distress among academics working in the British HE system (Arday, 2022; Darabi et al., 2017; Viry & Kaufmann, 2015). The conditions caused by the neoliberal British university (see, section 3.2.2) are usually exacerbated by being a migrant i.e., having to deal with the anxieties of migratory statuses and familial, personal, and socio-cultural issues. In this section, I show that migrant academics I have spoken to tend to receive emotional care from their friendship circles more although they still keep caring relationships with their immediate family members in a more symbolic manner. Thus, members of transnational friendship networks can act as ‘fictive kin’ who can provide emotional support and care from afar (Ebaugh & Curry, 2000). Most academics said they preferred to talk with their close friends to get their advice about issues they faced. This section shows that while immediate family members have a symbolic value in terms of emotional support, they are usually considered as people who cannot deliver the need and perform the task. However, the care received from fictive kin – transnational friends – functions well in providing emotional support. This group of ‘transnational friends’, as the next chapter (Chapter Eight) on social networked relationships of academic shows, includes a wide variety of friendship ties including childhood friends based in the home country or scattered around the world, university and work friends.

#### 7.2.1.1. The Symbolic Value of Family Members

Many participants saw the emotional support of their immediate family members as symbolically significant. However, they did not tend to talk about their problems with their family members and even hid issues from them. There were some underlying causes for this outcome, and one of the most cited was the issue of familiarity with the social and academic source of their worries. Nearly all participants in this group thought that if they talked to their immediate family members about their problems, they would not understand due to lack of familiarity. A European background research fellow, said:

*they were kind of understanding of my problems like five years ago but now, if I talk like my anxiety about contract or like my desire to publish a paper but not know how to organise my thoughts or even things about my emotional kind of intimate life… Practically, they cannot understand how I feel and how I think…*

The issue of unfamiliarity with academic professional issues was the most common reason behind not talking about their problems with immediate family members. This reminds us of the necessity of ‘competence’ – along with responsibility, attentiveness and responsiveness – in Tronto’s (2015) conceptualisation of care. She argues that competence does not necessarily refer to a technical measure, rather it underlines the significance of familiarity and excellence in providing care. For instance, when I asked *Bella* the ages of her parents, she said, ‘*this is not related to their age… my siblings are the same*’. According to her, the issues she was anxious about were professional and particular to the academic profession in Britain and it was natural that her family members would be unfamiliar with them. Similarly, an Italian academic said that he ‘*got frustrated’* after he first tried talking about his professional issues to family members in Italy. Then, he started to get emotional support from his ‘best friends’ in Italy and other parts of the world. Therefore, mobilising transnational friendship ties for receiving care and emotional support was common among the sample.

However, this does not necessarily mean that these academics do not have caring relationships with their left-behind family members. In this sense, left-behind family members and friends as fictive kin are not mutually exclusive in terms of migrant academics’ transnational reception of emotional support. Many participants, such as *Tuba, Ayse* and *Daphne*, thought that knowing ‘*my family stands behind my life and decisions*’ (*Ayse*) gives them a sort of emotional support. However, according to *Emre,* despite this ‘generic’ emotional support, family members cannot understand their problems in Britain:

*I don't know what counts as emotional support, but they did support my decisions. And they always said that, you know, “you’re doing well, and you'll succeed in the end”. But it's not a case of, you know, holding my hand and "yeah, you can write that paper" nothing like that. So it's more generic because… they don't know what exactly I'm facing. They cannot know actually… So there's no point in trying to get their support, and like talking about details about your life.*

The general support he mentioned refers to the symbolic value of the support received by close family members. Thus, hiding problems about professional or social lives in Britain from their family members was surprisingly common in the sample. Many academics said that there were certain topics that they deliberately do not talk about with their family members back home, comprising two significant areas: legal issues such as their employment visas and citizenship processes; and romantic and sexual relationships. For instance, *Huda*, a Middle Eastern postdoctoral researcher, described ‘*how interesting and difficult it is to pretend*’ that she does not have any issues whereas she was facing serious problems regarding her employment and financial conditions:

*I had… many times like trying to cheer up my sister on the phone, while I’m dying here.*

Hiding bad events and news in migrants’ lives corroborates findings in the literature. Migrant academics who participated in this research also tended to utilise some sorts of ‘emotional filters’ (Boccagni, 2012)and ‘white lies’ (Choi, 2013) while communicating with their left-behind family members. The strategy of ‘protecting’ left-behind family members from conversations involving bad news and events also reflects a form of care that migrants perform during transnational family communications (Ebaugh & Curry, 2000).

#### 7.2.1.2. Emotional Support and Transnational Friendship Ties

Most participants said that they were more emotionally open to their close friends and getting emotional help from them. Participants’ transnational friendship ties were one of the most utilised networks for receiving emotional support. Therefore, the exchange of care and emotional support bears a relational character. As the next chapter presents in detail, participants’ close friends might be from their childhood friends, university and work friends who again may be scattered across different parts of the world. In this section, I show that academics’ exchanges of care and emotional support is not unidirectional. Rather, these exchanges of emotional support depend on mutuality and reciprocity. There can also be stratification and subjective hierarchies in describing ‘friends’, but this is discussed in the next chapter in detail. For now, the friend social group refers to a wide range of friendship relationships from childhood to professional friends. Getting help from friends is also subject to a variety of factors, for instance, a number of participants cited personality as a significant factor in shaping how they were to other people but being open to friends overshadowed other subjective issues. One participant said that since he ‘*is a very quiet and shy person’*, he is not good at long telephone calls. In a similar vein, a South Korean senior lecturer said that she ‘*is not the type of person who is talking about her problems on the phone*’.

However, contrary to the symbolic value of care provided by family members, according to the participants, care received from close friends functions better due to the friends being familiar with their lives. For instance, *Betty* was a European background post-doctoral researcher who returned to France due to the Covid-19 crisis at the time of the interview. She emphasises that the familiarity discourse stresses differences in educational background and professional knowledge between participants and their family members:

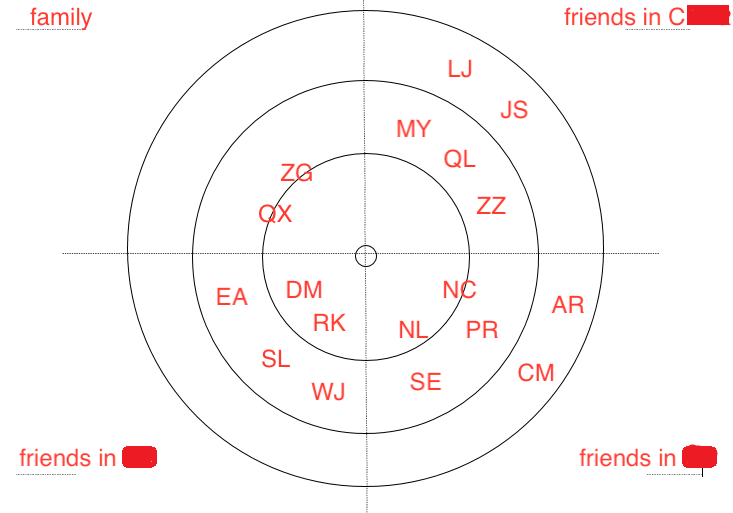
*my parents, in a way, provide emotional support but less directly than – I guess – my friends… because they know more about the details of my life and how I function emotionally. They know my first crush how we met and broke up. So, if I have an emotional crisis, I would call my best friend and then she’ll understand… So, for me, it is related to details… actually not just for my emotional side but my work, for example, my close friends or my colleagues… they know better… my parents, they don't really, they don't necessarily understand, I do talk to them but not much about these issues...*

Therefore, when participants try to find solutions to their problems and want to get emotional help and support regarding their issues, they tend to be more open, direct, and closer to their friends rather than their family members. *Betty* said that she frequently sent letters to her close friends since they thought writing letters was a more personal and direct way of communicating. Moreover, the issue of openness was salient in the different topics of conversation between family members and close friends. The majority of participants said that they talked about ‘*daily stuff’* when they called their family members whereas more personal, serious, or problematic issues were discussed when they called their close friends in different parts of the world. *Bella*, a European academic, said:

*I am calling my parents for talking about daily things. My friends… I mean we also talk about daily stuff, but we give advice to each other, discuss things… For me, their kind of advice, their opinion is really important whenever I take a decision…*

In addition to the topics of conversations, naming practices of participants illustrate the intensity of emotional care networks between friends. Many participants use family-like adjectives to refer to their friends. For instance, while filling out the sociogram, *Ju*, an Asian background lecturer, described one of her close friends ‘DM’ in the sociogram (see Figure 10), as follows:

*Oh, she is… everything to me! She’s a little bit older than me… but she is very close kind of person… that I see her as like a sister! There is this kind of feeling that she is like a sister for me. We feel that we are like sisters, she’s the older one and I am the younger sister.*



Sociogram 3: Ego-centric Network Map of JU

Interestingly *Ju* did not include any names from her family in the first circle of the sociogram while she had two names in the ‘friends…’ quadrant (see, Figure 10 above). Similarly, one participant called his two friends his ‘*real brothers*’ who lived in the same city with him throughout their postgraduate education. Calling friends brothers and sisters was interestingly common in the sample. This reflects the concept of ‘families of choice’ (Weeks et al., 2001) showing that emotional care and intimacy can be developed and exchanged beyond consanguineal and/or affinal ties. One of the most intriguing naming practices came from *Elena*, a Colombian post-doctoral researcher, while she was explaining her friends in the closest circle of the sociogram:

*in the inner circle I have LM who is a good friend. We did lots of research with her... She actually taught me lots of things about* [her research area]*, she is kind of my research mother.*

Elena said that her *research mother* currently lived in her country of origin. Their relationship dated back to 2001 when they wrote their first publication and Elena was an undergraduate student. Then, *Elena* became a research assistant on her project, after that she was a co-researcher and finally, they wrote a book together. *Elena* said that ‘LM’ was the person she could talk to about everything. Also, *Ana* an American lecturer, emphasised this ‘familyhood’ when she described some of her friends as ‘*these are people who I have considered buying a house together and retiring with*’. *Ana* had some friends who were so close to her that they planned to live together in the same house. These examples reflect fictive kinship processes among the close friends of migrant academics in Britain (Baldassar et al., 2017; Ebaugh & Curry, 2000). Some friends of migrant academics enter into a family-like relationship and almost become a member of the family/kin after a series of social processes and experiences in their life biographies (Baldassar et al., 2017). This illustrates that family caring relationships have a relational and performative nature (Morgan, 2011). Each component in Finch’s definition of emotional care – ‘listening, talking, giving advice, and helping out to put their own lives in perspective’ (Finch, 1989, p. 33) – takes utmost importance in the delivery of emotional care. This research supports conceptualizing familial care beyond affinity and consanguinity by showing that emotional care and intimacy can be provided and received from close friends scattered around the world (Bilecen, 2014; Bunnell et al., 2012; Walsh, 2007). It contributes to studies stressing the impact of friendship networks in shaping transnational experiences and migration journeys (Conradson & Latham, 2005a; Plaza & Plaza, 2019; Reynolds & Zontini, 2006; Zontini, 2004).

The caring needs of migrants should no longer be constrained to consanguineal and affinal transnational family ties. Rather, as stated above, there is a shift in the models-in-the-mind related to family, towards the model of having a ‘personal community’ which refers to the ‘micro social worlds of significant others’ (Pahl & Spencer, 2010, p. 197). In these new biographies, some caring needs that were previously met within the traditional family norms might be catered to by ‘families of choice’ (Roseneil & Budgeon, 2004; Weeks et al., 2001) and friendship relationships (Bowlby, 2011). In terms of its implications for the sociology of family, this situation can be seen as a dismantling of traditional functions attributed to families. However, considering that families still have symbolic value in terms of exchanges of emotional support, it is rather like a ‘fusion with family members playing more friend-like and friends taking on more family-like functions’ (Pahl & Spencer, 2010, p. 196).

### **7.2.2. A Crisis of Family Care: Covid-19 Pandemic**

The final research question focuses on exploring how conditions caused by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic affect migrant academics’ local and transnational family relationships. As it is stated in the Methodology (Chapter 4), the global outbreak was unforeseen, unexpected and unprecedented incident that creates fundamental changes in the research project. There is not a specific findings chapter assigned to present the influences of Covid-19 pandemic on migrant academics’ lives and relationships. However, in my analysis, the Covid-19 outbreak constitutes a dynamic and a changing point cross cutting and affecting nearly all major themes. In this regard, the impacts of Covid-19 on participants’ lives and relationships are presented throughout all findings chapter.

However, in this section, I specifically address the Covid-19 pandemic in the context of family care. That is, I see Covid-19 crisis and the following lockdowns, travel and social life restrictions as a form of care crisis (Drotbohm, 2015) and an ‘unsettling event’ since it was one of the most fundamental ‘political, social, and economic transformations with the potential to disrupt pre-existing migration projects’ (Kilkey & Ryan, 2020, p. 3). One of the most salient changes Covid-19 brought about for transnational family care is that participants saw their transnational relationships with left-behind family members intensify. Participants tended to focus on their local and transnational immediate familial relationships at the time of the Covid-19 crisis. In this section, I briefly present how the global Covid-19 pandemic turned out to be a crisis of family care for migrants in two areas.

Firstly, the Covid-19 crisis placed family caring arrangements into a sudden chaotic situation. The care arrangements of families were disrupted in three ways: mobility, institutional, and structural crises. Data on spatial mobility show that before the first peak of cases in Europe, there was a phase of large-scale human mobility (Cohen, 2020; Zhou et al., 2020). In this period, some participants returned to their countries of origin or a different place. Such a large exodus was followed by an ‘immobilizing regime’ (Turner, 2007) characterised by the closure of borders, calls to stay at home and closure and suspension of any type of public transportation. Migrant families were caught unprepared by this sudden and massive immobilisation effect of the pandemic (Merla et al., 2020). For instance, *Kwame* was a lecturer from an African country who had been in the UK for more than a decade. At the time of the first peak, his parents came to the UK to visit him and his family. However, they ‘*got stuck here for three months*’ at the time of the interview. He complained about living in a small house with two children and four adults. By contrast, *Huda* said her siblings and parents were trapped in the country they went to for a holiday. The immobilisation regime also influenced the local mobility of migrant family members. For instance, *Emre* said he had siblings who could take care of his father and mother, who were in the high-risk group, but since they lived in a different city in his country of origin, they could not travel to provide care. Therefore, being unable to be physically mobile exacerbated the high and sudden demand on family care as a result of the pandemic.

National institutional and structural resources were considered when arranging family care. Nearly all participants who returned to their countries of origin said that one of the main reasons for their return was that their countries had better and stronger healthcare systems than the UK. By contrast, those who did not return, for instance American *Hayley*, said that the health care system in the UK was better and stronger than that in their home country. Finally, basic resources of practical care such as access to food and safe accommodation became a part of the care crisis, especially during the first wave of the pandemic when the global supply chain of food was seriously threatened. Some academics said their left-behind elderly parents moved to summerhouses or cottages in a rural area to keep them away from physical contact with the virus. However, other participants were concerned about how they arranged the care and protection of family members. Therefore, the immobility crisis and institutional and structural issues made it more difficult for participants to respond to and arrange emerging caring needs.

Secondly, the Covid-19 crisis meant some academics experienced a sort of collision of unmet caring expectations from both their local families and relationships, and their transnational family members. As mentioned above, before the first ‘peak’ in Europe, many migrants returned to their countries of origin or different countries, including *Mia,* from a Central Asian country. Among the interviewees, there were participants who were based in France, Italy, China, Singapore and India – many academics emphasised that they could work at a distance. Therefore, due to the portability of academic jobs, migrant academics tended to return to their countries of origin when the Covid-19 crisis started in Britain. However, one of the main arguments of those who did not return was that they had caring responsibilities in the UK as well. Therefore, the decision not to return was caused by an overlapping of different family roles and caring needs. For example, a Middle Eastern background academic *Ayse* did not return to her country of origin:

*It was like a few days before the lockdown happened here. The flights were still active. I was thinking about it because I was worried about them. So I wanted to be with them but I think – maybe this is an interesting topic for your research – I mean my partner is British… So that is a difficult decision for me to make. Because if I go home, he will be alone here by himself. And we also have cats. And so, what do we do with the cats?*

In *Ayse’s* case, she had to consider the caring needs of her partner and her cats while making her decision about whether to return to her country of origin. Many international couples experienced these sorts of dilemmas. Migration regulations were also still a significant element in decision making. One participant from Australia decided to stay in Britain, saying that if she returned to her country, her partner, who was from an Asian country, could not return with her as he did not have a visa. She said she would worry ‘*a lot’* about her partner if she had returned to her country alone. The process of deliberation over returning also includes family roles and gender norms. Some participants returned with their family to their male partners’ countries of origin although they were from a different country. A new form of ‘trailing spouse’, in which a female partner follows the route of a male partner in times of crisis is notable (Ackers, 2004; Yoon & Kim, 2018). At the institutional level, some academics like *Mia* said that they received an email from their university that guaranteed that if they returned to their countries of origin, they would have no problems regarding their visas. Despite this, some academics such as *Huda* and *Ayse* – both female Middle Eastern academics – said they did not return since they did not trust the authorities. *Huda*, for instance, said she had been waiting for her ILR application and trying to avoid prolonged absences from Britain. Therefore, these instances show how holders of temporary visas have to consider their migratory statuses even during a global pandemic.

Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic intensified family caring relationships. Relationships with members of biological families tended to become emotionally closer and contact more frequent. For instance, *Claire*, a French postdoctoral researcher said, ‘*my mom started to treat me like I am 13 years old again*’. Many participants were engrossed in the ‘checking and updating culture’ i.e., calling and asking after one’s health during the lockdowns. According to participants, in these intensified forms of caring relationships, communication was so frequent that some participants said they ‘*got sick of talking to phone’*; video calls were more prevalent than other forms of communication and, considering the visual effects (see Alinejad, 2020; King-O’Riain, 2015), video diagnosis (asking about particular symptoms of a family member who is a medical practitioner) was common (Ahlin, 2018a). Therefore, the caring relationships both proliferated and intensified. Considering both the arrangement and relationship dimensions, the pandemic resulted in a sudden crisis of care for many migrant academics.

## 7.3. Transnational Care Provision to Elderly Parents

The family caring relationships for elderly parents who are generally left-behind in home countries constitutes a significant area of migrant academics’ caring arrangements. This section shows that migrant academics engage with nearly all types of caring practices, from practical support to emotional and financial support, to varying degrees. Exploring the caring arrangements of migrant academics for their elderly parents reveals three significant findings. Having a diverse sample range enables this research to examine the role of specific family and care cultures on their arrangements for their elderly parents. This research finds that although cultural norms are influential in family caring relationships (Ahlin & Sen, 2020; Roseneil & Budgeon, 2004), subjective experiences at the level of relationships play a decisive role in intergenerational caring arrangements. Second, the delegation of caring obligations to friendship ties was notably prevalent among the migrant academics who participated in this research. Finally, this section introduces a new form of moral economy and sense of obligation in which migrant academics support their elderly parents to repay the expenses made for their educational purposes.

### **7.3.1. Cultural Differences and Intergenerational Caring Arrangements**

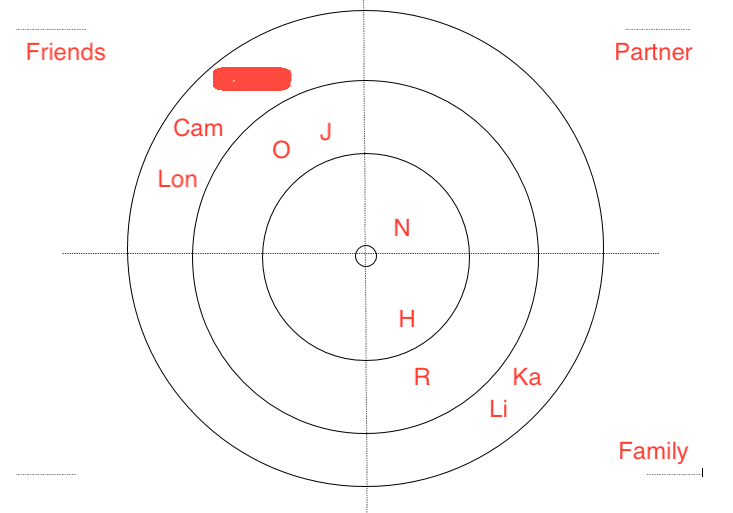
Involving participants from different national backgrounds, this research collected diverse data that illustrate subjective differences in providing and receiving family care. However, it is not possible to make overall generalisations regarding care and specific nationalities and cultures. Nonetheless, specific cultural environments and traditions that migrant academics come from can provide clues about family codes and inter-generational caring relationships as emphasised in the literature (Andruske & O’Connor, 2020; Bilecen & Barglowski, 2015; Roseneil & Budgeon, 2004). In terms of the types of family relationships, a constellation between nuclear and extended family types is visible among participants. This corroborates Pahl and Spencer’s (2010) notion of personal communities, including both familial and friendship constellations, detailed above.

For instance, while participants from Italy, the Philippines and Nigeria tended to have more extended family relationships, some migrant academics from Germany, France and the US were likely to have more individualistic and nuclear type of family relationships (Bianchera et al., 2019; Zontini, 2015). Iranian, Turkish and Mexican participants generally stated that they called their relatives regularly and kept in touch with them. However, cultural factors and norms did not play decisive roles in shaping intergenerational care. Partly as a result of being highly educated, migrant academics tend to break cultural norms and traditions while they give more importance to agency and relationality at the level of relationships. For example, *Xin Yi* stated that her parents, who were in their 80s, received professional caring support once a week. She underlined that while she was the only child and had to provide direct care to her parents, her parents accepted the idea of getting professional support as being more practical and useful. She argued that socio-cultural norms in China were also changing and non-normative and new types of caring arrangements were becoming more prevalent. Therefore, the cultural norm of Chinese filial piety (Lan, 2002; Xu et al., 2019) does not necessarily shape the internal factors and arrangements for care of elderly parents.

Similarly, some migrant academics from Iran, Turkey, South Korea and other countries emphasised that caring arrangements for their elderly parents were open to negotiations. According to them, practicality, professionality and appropriateness were more important than cultural norms. Therefore, an emphasis on the factor of agency and relationality is salient in academics’ caring arrangements for their elderly parents – instead of normative structures and trajectories of cultures. In addition to cultures in which family care is a tradition, individual cultures that do not tend to hold family members responsible for the care of elderly family members also employ this kind of non-normative behaviour. For example, *Henrik,* from a Nordic country, stated that he felt the responsibility to take care of his mother despite coming from an individual family culture:

*So generally, I would just say in the* [the Nordic Country he is from] *culture, we have caring responsibilities too… probably less common than in all other countries including Europe. However, I do feel a responsibility for my mother and I do think more and more about living close to her. I've talked to her about it and things like that. So, that's something I do think about and maybe if she needs any practical help, I would be there. And also, for her mental health because she's alone… I feel she needs maybe a bit more company and that she would appreciate me being there.*

As is clear from the extract above, *Henrik* felt family care responsibility despite coming from an individualist culture. He considered living closer to his mother although she did not need any practical support at this stage.



Sociogram 4: Ego-centric Network Map of Henrik

Considering *Henrik’s* life story further and analysing his sociogram suggested that the context of his relationship with his mother was significant. His mother was the person he was closest to, and he shared both daily things and deep issues with her. While his brother was in a different country, and his stepsister lived in the same country as his mother. *Henrik* thought that his mother might have felt isolated, especially since his father died. Thus, *Henrik* placed his mother at the centre of his life and networks (see ‘H’ on his sociogram map). Therefore, his decision to care for his mother was more meaningful considering this relationality. This illustrates the significance of individually located transnational family practices rather than culturally and/or communally located family practices (Morgan, 2011).

### **7.3.2. ‘I send money without dad knowing it’: Morality Behind Transnational Care of Elderly Parents**

This section illustrates the morality dimension behind the caregiving arrangements of migrant academics for their left-behind elderly parents. Many academics said that since their parents helped and supported them during their higher education, they felt the need to repay them with different forms of care. Although there is no strong sense of financial need demonstrated by their parents, academics tend to support them in financial and material ways.

Some caring practices of migrant academics arose from them feeling morally obliged to do something, instead of from parents’ expectations. Parents’ expectations of academics were generally related to their relationship statuses or migration. Nearly all academics said that their parents wanted them to be in a relationship or to have a child. A few parents expected their children to return to their country of origin and work there, generally as an academic. Therefore, in the context of academic migration there is no strong sense of financial or material expectation on the side of the left-behind parents, which can be found in cases of economic migration (Butsch, 2020; Dankyi et al., 2017; Dreby, 2010).

However, many migrant academics felt a sense of moral obligation to take care of their parents due to their help and support during their higher education. Since parents did not need financial support in many cases, some participants found novel ways to help. For instance, *Baram* said she sends money to her parents ‘*without* *dad knowing it’.* Some participants performed this moral care work by buying expensive gifts for their parents. Participants from different backgrounds said that they bought holiday packages (generally international holidays) for their parents. However, holidays were not appropriate for all parents due to reasons such as immobility or illness. Gifts to use in their daily lives and domestic environments were considered useful by some participants. For example, *Harry*, an Asian academic, said that since his mother was in her 70s, he could not buy her a holiday or travel tickets. Instead, he preferred to help her with renovating her home and *Harry* underlines the moral dimension as follows:

*Whenever I am there, I am repairing some stuff at home. Sometimes small things like changing an appliance, repairing things at home. Okay, she has monthly pension, but it is just for her to spend on food and all the rest of it… I feel like an obligation because she did spend a lot of money on my education over the years, I feel an obligation to not make use of her savings her pension to things like this… it's a small way of giving back in my head. So, there have been some major pieces of work that I bought like I renovated the kitchen last year. When more major expenditures are done, sometimes she doesn’t want it and she is like ‘Oh I don’t need this’, but she likes it in the end because she is living there.*

As *Harry* noted, academics tend to feel obliged to repay the expense of their education even though their parents do not require it. This reflects how a transnational family practice (Morgan, 2011) can replace and compensate migrants’ ability to provide direct hands-on care as a co-located family practice. In some contexts, when academics did not find any financial and material ways to repay the expenses, they felt a sense of guilt. For instance, *Betty*, from a European background, said that she wanted to help her parents financially in return for help with her expenses. However, since they did not have any financial material need, she could not help. Then, she preferred to donate to a charity on their behalf. This shows the moral dimension behind the obligation – when the obligation is not met, there is a sense of ‘moral gap’ experienced by migrants (Drotbohm, 2015).

Finally, this novel form of moral obligation is sometimes applied to the idea of returning to the origin countries. Some academics believed that since they were educated or received financial help from institutions in the home country (in the context of scholarship holders), they felt obliged to return and serve the country. For instance, a Serbian academic who completed his higher education through his country’s scholarship in the UK described his not returning to his home country as ‘selfishness’:

*I did feel for a long while that there is a moral obligation to go back to Serbia. Because in the end, you know, that's where I was brought up. That's the country that paid for my education, blah, blah. So, you know, you should acquire some skills, go back and do something. But then a there's probably an element of selfishness like, I don't know, the living standards that are there compared to here…*

In this context, academics believe that they owe their countries of origin something due to being brought up there and receiving a scholarship from their institutions. In some cases, the discourse of returning and serving the country of origin is brought up and recreated by their parents. For instance, *Tuba*, *Jazmin* and *Ahmad* stressed that the returning as a way of repaying the country discourse was frequently referenced by their parents to trigger their potential return. Therefore, this finding is significant for the strand of higher education literature that studies the reverse brain drain and return migration patterns of academics (Baruffaldi & Landoni, 2012; Hussain, 2015; Li et al., 2018).

Additionally, having a sense of moral obligation to take care of elderly parents due to their previous support contributes to transnational family caring literature. The moral obligation and reciprocity norms in some cultures involves the care by migrant children of their elderly parents in return for their parents’ raising them (Baldassar et al., 2007b; Bastia, 2015; Drotbohm, 2020). However, this finding shows that participants felt that they should repay the expenses their parents made when they become financially stable, although this was not expected by their parents. Thus, care is provided as a consequence or repayment of a sort of intergenerational contract (Izahura & Shibata, 2002) in which parents are repaid their expenses as different forms care from their migrant academic children.

### **7.3.3. Care Delegation to Friendship Circles**

In many cases, the elderly parents of migrant academics require various types of health care, from practical care to emotional support. This depended largely on the age and health conditions of the parents. Although definitions and descriptions of being old varies, general gerontological categorisations describe age ranges as young (25-44), middle-aged (45-54), the elderly (55-64), the young-old (65-74), and the old-old (75+) (Bures, 1997). At the time of the interviews, the youngest parent of participants was 48 while the oldest was 92. Thus, when I use the term ‘left-behind elderly parents of migrant academics’, I refer to a remarkably diverse group of family members. In this regard, in terms of practical care provision to elderly parents, some migrant academics who were generally early career researchers said that they did not arrange any care for their parents since they were still young. In addition, a group of academics who can be classed as middle-aged said that they had started to think about how they would arrange the care of their parents, although they did not require any practical support at that time.

However, regarding the practical care needs of parents of participants, I found a salient emphasis in delegating the caring responsibilities of migrant academics to their fictive kin (Ammann et al., 2013; Baldassar et al., 2007a). Many migrant academics tended to rely on their left-behind close friends to care for their elderly parents more than their siblings. However, in the case of parents who needed practical and professional care, the most common solution was paid care workers or caring centres (depending on the healthcare system of the country). Siblings dealt with organising the practicalities around paid care workers. For instance, *Jacob* was a Middle Eastern academic whose 90-year-old mother was under 24 hours care. His siblings organised his mothers’ paid care services; he said that the social security system in his country of origin paid for half of the practical caring expenses of his mother, while the rest was paid by *Jacob* and his siblings. He said that he paid more than his siblings since they also organised the paid care of his mother. To ‘compensate’ for his absence from the practical care of his mother, *Jacob* paid more and virtually attended the caring process by watching the CCTV camera in his mother’s room. This reflects how the transnational caring relationships create power relations and asymmetries between migrant and non-migrant siblings (Bilecen, 2020; Buchanan & Rotkirch, 2021). In addition, there were three more participants whose parents were MS, Alzheimer and cancer patients and under constant care. In their stories, siblings were the messengers and mediators who organised the paid care.

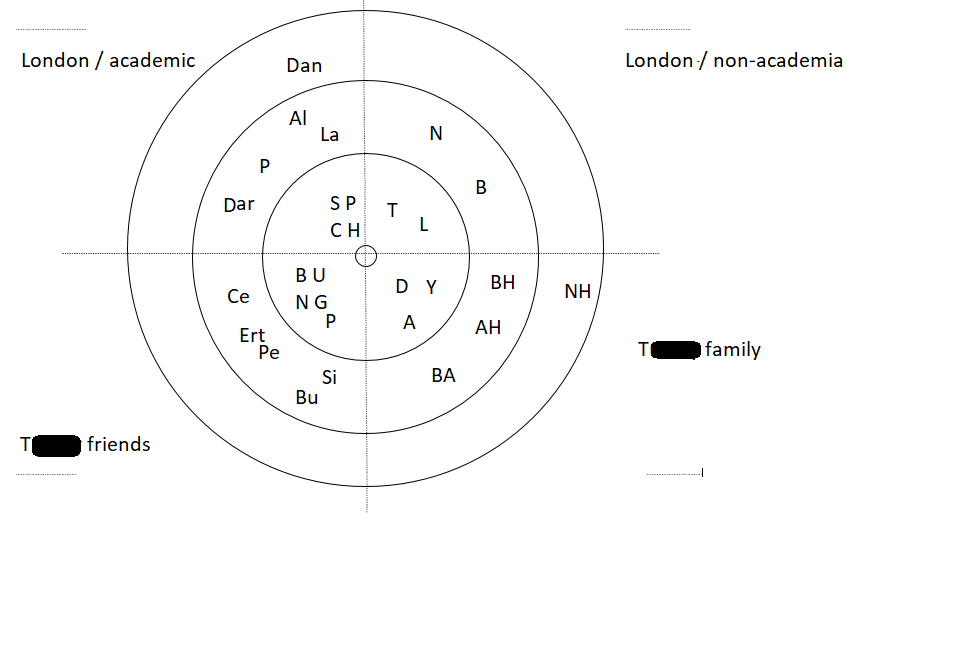
However, in situations where left-behind family members do not need any practical and professional care, there is an emphasis on left-behind close friendship circles rather than siblings. Participants pointed out that their siblings also lived either in different countries or different cities from their parents. In many cases, the availability of siblings is critical for the care provision of the elderly parents (Baldassar et al., 2007a). Additionally, some participants like *Ayse* thought that delegating care work to siblings was ‘unfair’:

*I try not to delegate because I don’t think it’s fair! So I really try to do my own share. But of course, you know, you are always doing to a certain extent… Like unless you are living with them. That’s why I generally ask from my friends.*

Therefore, in some cases, to meet family caring obligations, some academics mobilise their friendship ties to act in family-like ways to meet caring obligations (Thomas & Smith-Morris, 2020). Asking friends to ‘check’ on their parents was a common practice among many migrant academics. For instance, *Claire*, with a European background, said that her friends in her country of origin did her parents’ shopping during lockdown. Similarly, *Ayse* said that her friendship circle helped her mother during lockdown:

*I asked my friends to – like when she was staying at home – to chat with my mom through the window… at least to chill my mom. They did it a lot and it helped.*

She said that she has a few ‘*very close friends*’ in her country of origin from whom she ‘*could ask any help’* (see Figure 12 below).



Sociogram 5: Ego-centric Network Map of Ayse

Generally, migrant academics used these networks to care for their elderly parents. Although this type of delegation seemed to require friends living in the same city as their parents, in some cases friends could also provide care locally, but from afar. For example, aChinese background academic said that her friends who were in Beijing frequently called and visited her parents, who were in a different city in China, during the pandemic. She said that whenever her mother missed her, ‘*she immediately calls them’*. According to the participant, her friends provided ‘*good companionship*’ to her parents in the pandemic.

Finally, many participants said that when they sent money to their parents, they asked their friends to do so since sending through international transfer and online banking can be time consuming and difficult for parents. While siblings tended to step in with familial decisions and arrangements, mobilising friends for the care of left-behind family members was a more common caring practice, involving emotional, financial, and practical care.

This finding adds a further dimension to the literature in which care of left-behind elderly parents is delegated to siblings (Baldassar et al., 2007a.; Khvorostianov et al., 2012). This research shows that migrant academics tend to mobilise their friendship ties and collaborate with them to make practical arrangements for their parents’ care, to check on their health and to provide some of their basic needs. These ‘close friends’ are a good example of ‘fictive kin’ as they tend to have a great significance and large historical background over the course of migrants’ lives (Ebaugh & Curry, 2000). Therefore, after a kinning process (Baldassar et al., 2017; Souralová, 2020), these close friends act as shadow siblings and become an integral component of academics’ transnational relationships with their parents.

## 7.4. Conclusion

This chapter presented those caring relationships are embedded in the core of many participants local and transnational family relationships. Caring relationships were presented in three sub-sections: local provision of childcare; receiving care from family and friends and arranging care for the elderly family members in countries of origin. This chapter showed that a number of different factors are involved in the caring relationships of participants. First, it is shown that the cost of nurseries combined with issues around lack of social benefits are significant in understanding why many participants turn to unpaid caring relationships (Harris, 2016). At this point, this research provided further evidence to the mobility of care in the contexts of grandparents’ temporary visits to Britain in order to meet the childcare demand (Wyss & Nedelcu, 2020). However, the restrictive migration regime of Britain often delimits this type of caring arrangements with temporary visas and practices of everyday bordering (Mavroudi & Warren, 2013; Wemyss et al., 2018; Yuval-Davis et al., 2018). Second, this chapter showed the intricate caring relationships of academics between family and friends. It illustrated that while family members remain to hold their symbolic positions as being both the receiver and provider of care, transnational friendship ties become more visible in participants’ caring relationships. This finding added further empirical evidence to the literature on caring exchanges between friendship ties both in local and transnational arena (Bowlby, 2011; Schaer et al., 2020). Finally, regarding caring arrangements for elderly parents, I showed how friendship ties located in the countries of origin are used for the purposes of care provision for left-behind elderly parents. These findings show the relevance and worthiness of considering the wider networked relationships of migrant academics when exploring their transnational family relationships. The next chapter focuses on presenting findings about the positionality of transnational ties in the diverse networked relationships of academics’ lives.

# CHAPTER 8: SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE POSITION OF TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY TIES

The third research question aims to understand the position of transnational family networks in migrant academics’ wider networked relationships such as local families, neighbourhood relations, and scientific and/or diasporic networks. Networking is an influential dynamic in the social morphology of the contemporary era (Castells, 1996). In the context of transnational familial relationships, exploring the networks shaping the local and transnational social worlds of migrants is of critical significance in terms of understanding how and in what ways migrants are transnationally connected to their family members and significant others (Bilecen et al., 2018; Boyd, 1989; Ryan et al., 2014; Ryan, 2021). These transnational relationships do not operate in a vacuum, nor do migrant academics live merely with one set of social relationships. Rather, as illustrated throughout the chapter, migrant academics’ lives are locally and transnationally embedded in various networks, such as local ties rooted to neighbourhoods, universities and workplace, transnational scientific networks and personal relations. However, as Bilecen et.al., (2018, p.1) stated social network analysis is one of the ‘missing links’ in the studies focussing on transnational socio-cultural and familial engagement of migrants.

This research finds that transnational family and kinship relationships of migrant academics are maintained alongside migrant academics’ other local and transnational social networks. To address this multi-dimensionality, this chapter is divided into three overarching sections. The first focuses on the scientific social networks of migrant academics that are either based in the British HE system or in a transnational space. The second section presents the socialisation practices/activities of migrant academics within their immediate localities. At this point, academics’ ties with local British people and members of the diaspora and their friendship ties forged in the immediate circles are respectively presented. The final section takes a broader approach and describes various types and degrees of transnational social networks, showing the position of family ties in the geographically scattered web of ties.

## 8.1. A Profession Built on Networks: Local and Transnational Scientific Networks

When it comes to networks, migration and higher education form a dynamic duo: a specific context of networking arises from a combination of the traits of both. On the HE side, one of the characteristic features of being an academic in the contemporary HE system is its reliance on and the intensity of networking (Ackers, 2010; Fritsch, 2015; Larner, 2015). In the academic migration literature, successful networking is considered as a sign of excellence, a prerequisite for academic success and career progress (Ackers, 2008). As detailed in Chapter 3, physical mobility is closely associated with academics’ network capital and, by extension, their career progression and reputation (Yong & Salaff, 1998; Woolley, 2009). The increasing internationalisation and marketisation of higher education, global collaboration between institutions, multinational and interdisciplinary research projects and programmes, and the mobility of knowledge, students and (academic and managerial) staff are placing networking practices at the centre of HE systems (Ackers, 2005; Bilecen, 2014; Bilecen & Van Mola, 2017; Kim, 2010b; Teichler, 2015). Moreover, networking is a significant practice for nearly all individuals at different levels of the HE system. For instance, Elena a South American background postdoctoral researcher states that:

*Yeah, my UK contacts, they predominantly from my postgrad days. I did my master at \*\*\* and PhD \*\*\*. Especially when I was doing PhD, I built a really good and active network around the UK.*

Similarly, many participants stressed the significance of the scientific ties forged when they were students. Individuals tend to be in search of personal, social and scientific networks that can be translated into economic, social and professional benefits (Ackers, 2005). The benefits may be acquiring new skills or knowledge, getting a new job offer, promoting and disseminating research, or gaining reputation and recognition in an academic community or research area.

The networking culture that is prevalent in modern HE systems is further complicated when they are combined with the cultures, practices and experiences of international migration and mobility. The influence of networks on migratory experiences and trajectories have long been stressed in the literature (Boyd, 1989; Thomas & Znaniecki, 1927; Vertovec, 2002). As such, by drawing on the data gathered from participants’ life stories, I suggest that the migration of academics is almost entirely a networked (and networking) practice. At the macro level, multi-lateral ties between countries, HE systems and institutions can comprise a ground for their international mobility and migration (Giorgi & Raffini, 2015; Siekierski et al., 2018; Tremblay, 2005). Ayse’s story is a good example of this:

*I was working as a secretary in a teachers’ union in my country. One day, I was surfing on the Internet and saw this UK Chevening Scholarship. I was having a really tough period in my life. I mean I broke up from my boyfriend and some other private issues… I was looking for ways to leave the country. So, I just wanted to have a go! I didn’t expect, seriously, but I got it!*

Similar to Ayse’s story, many participants in the sample stated that their mobility started with an international scholarship. Some participants who are from *Iraq, Algeria* and *Mexico* stated that their local governments provided scholarship to them to pursue their postgraduate studies abroad. After that, they decided to stay in Britain. Sometimes governments require international students to return to their countries of origin and perform compulsory work for the government, which creates a different temporal context (see, section 6.2.2. on temporal liminality and ‘waiting). In addition to the scholarship programs of national governments, several participants in the sample such as *Olivia* and *Manjula* stated that they came to the UK through Commonwealth Scholarships.

At the level of individuals, personal networks can permeate nearly all stages of migration, from deciding to migrate to returning home. Many academics who participated in this research stated that their pre-migration networking activities in Britain were significant in their decision to apply to British universities. The migration story of *Ali,* a Middle-Eastern lecturer,is a good example of this process.

Ali: *When I decided to work abroad… my first choice was the UK.*

Mucahit: *Can I ask you the reason why you…?*

*Ali: To be honest, I don’t know why. I’ve been to University of Oxford, as a visiting scholar. But it was a really short-term visit… Plus, it was many times ago. But I don’t know, I always feel this, you know, inexplicable emotional connection to the UK.*

In the same vein, some participants stated that their previous visits to Britain (academic, social, cultural and touristic visits) influenced their decisions to accept the job offers coming from British universities. This is in line with the ‘path dependency’ thesis in the academic migration literature underscoring the significance of previous mobility experiences on academics’ migration decisions (Czaika & Toma, 2015).

Moreover, I found that the significance of participants’ networks with their supervisors are key in their migration decisions. *Claire* a European background researcher stated that while she was doing her masters in her country of origin, her supervisors encouraged her to complete PhD studies in an English-speaking country. In a similar vein, *Nadezdha* stated that s:

*I did my master in [a country in Europe, not her country of origin]. I had a British supervisor her name was… She had a great influence on me… and my life in general. After I finished my masters, she said that you should do your PhD in Britain. She forwarded my proposal to her friends and contacts, so we found this … [the British university she is working for now] in the end.*

Thus, international scholarships, supervisors’ contacts, collaborations in projects, and even publications with academic staff who are in Britain, can shape migration and mobility of academics. Following the application and getting a job offer from a university, academics can also rely on their networks in deciding whether or not to migrate. At this stage, migrant academics can get advice from their contacts who have worked in Britain, perhaps even at the same university. For instance, *Anna* recalled her ambivalence about whether to accept her job offer as follows:

*We had two friends who have come to Scotland, worked at the same university. We asked them, you know… How is the university, I mean the city like in terms of living… And they said “oh it’s a beautiful city. That is a prestigious university. People are friendly. You’d be absolutely out of mind to not try for that job, you should do it”. Then, I asked my mentor in \*\*\* [previous university], she also said that I should go for it.*

Academics at this stage required different types of information: they wanted to know about the city and local places – this knowledge can be obtained from various resources. They also needed knowledge to help them decide about the university, the department and the academic culture in Britain. This a specific sort of experiential knowledge that only academics and migrants who have been to or worked at the specific university can provide. Academics tended to get information about both of these topics from various contacts. Thus, participants actively made use of their pre-migration ties to inform their international migration and mobility decisions. This finding provides empirical evidence to the recent discussions and developments in the academic migration literature on the role of inter-personal networks in initiating migration (De Moortel et al., 2022; Vaccario et al., 2020).

After migration, participants continued networking in both British academia and international spaces. These ties can be transformed into various benefits. In this section, the scientific networks of migrant academics are presented in two parts. First, it is shown that migrant academics’ contacts with people working in the same department/university has a functional role in their adjustment process into Britain. Second, I present academics’ local and transnational scientific networking strategies as a specific form of migrant capital.

### **8.1.1. Departmental Ties for Adjusting to a New Life**

One of the very first environments that a migrant academic encounters is the work place – the university department. Generally, initial post-migration ties are established among departmental colleagues. Most participants tended to exclude these ties from personal, emotional and intimate spheres. However, these ties are critical in terms of the social and professional survival of academics in a newly settled foreign land. Migrant academics generally use these ties to adjust into a new working environment and local life. In this section, the function of departmental contacts in the adjustment processes of the participants is presented.

#### 8.1.1.1. Agents for adjustment, information and sense of continuity: The functions of departmental networks

In many cases, participants underwent a period of adjustment to their new city and working environment. Ties woven at the university and department are critical in this adjustment process. In this sense, the departmental ties of migrant academics appear to have the characteristics of what Granovetter (1973) calls weak ties. According to him, while strong ties are essential for social support and solidarity (Granovetter, 1973; Kahn & Antonucci, 1980), weak ties comprise bases for the flow of information, opportunities and meeting new people. In a similar vein, the function of departmental ties can be divided into ties that serve as support mechanisms for initial adjustment processes to a specific locality and information channels for smooth entry into British academia.

Departmental scientific ties provide information that can help academics experience a smooth adjustment process. For instance, departmental colleagues can provide information about legal processes, the university and the department. Many academics were informed by their colleagues about their settlement procedures such as collecting the BRP (Biometric Residence Permit) card, changing the official address and registering with the local police. It should be noted that nearly all academics interviewed found the institutional support offered by universities to be inadequate, which also increased their reliance on their departmental ties. For instance, *Khalil*, a North African academic, said that he did not know he had to register with the local police authority within the first week of his arrival in Britain. He did not receive any reminder or information from his school about this legal process. Migrant academics in his department helped him with this. Similarly, *Anna* said she ‘*got all the information about the visa process from colleagues’,* since the university did not provide any support and guidance on the issue.

Additionally, there were many instances when departmental contacts helped academics adjust to everyday life issues. For example, some participants cited getting information about the basics of local life such as cinemas, pubs, transportation and second-hand shopping. *Tuba* said she asked her colleagues for places where she could buy a duvet set on her first day in the department. *Ahmad* a Middle Eastern post-doctoral researcher, said:

*I didn’t know… until one of my colleagues in the department said that “uhm there is a masjid [*mosque*] very close to our department”.*

Similarly, academics learn the basics of finding cheap flights, restaurants and cafes, shopping markets and selling national and cultural goods and products generally through colleague channels. Departments can also be the places to learn the basics of building a network and developing social capital in the British academy through being introduced to other academic staff in the department or at the university. During the completion of sociogram maps, many participants stated that their initial ties were generally forged by their colleagues.

The functional value of departmental scientific networks in terms of migrants’ adjustment processes is particularly significant for the migrants’ social networks literature, which portrays co-ethnic ties as one of the most used ways for developing social capital and adjusting to a new country (Boyd, 1989; Village et al., 2017; Wimmer, 2004). However, this research contributes to the literature by showing that not all types of migrants rely on their co-ethnic ties to cope with initial struggles and adjust to life in a newly-settled place. As presented above, resources for initial adjustment and introduction processes generally come from a set of departmental ties which take the form of ethnically heterogeneous congregations.

For academics who completed their initial adjustment to Britain and the British academic culture, these networks maintain their functional roles in different forms. One of the most cited functions of these networks is that they serve as information channels. Many academics pointed out that they maintained their relationships with their colleagues in the department so that they could stay aware of ‘*things in the department*’. This could include formal processes such as announcements and procedures or being part of the informal flow and exchange of information, as *Li Na,* an Asian background academic, said: they serve for *‘getting the gossip around*’.

Finally, for the majority, ties in the department create a sense of continuity, implying that the individual is not alone in the face of structural and institutional forces such as the university, the academic system and the migration regime. For instance, *Baram*, a 44-year-old senior lecturer who had worked in Britain for more than 25 years, defined her ties at the university as ‘*mental companions*’ against legal issues. The companionship, she stressed, arose from the feeling of being part of the same system. Similarly, *Daphne*, a European academic, said:

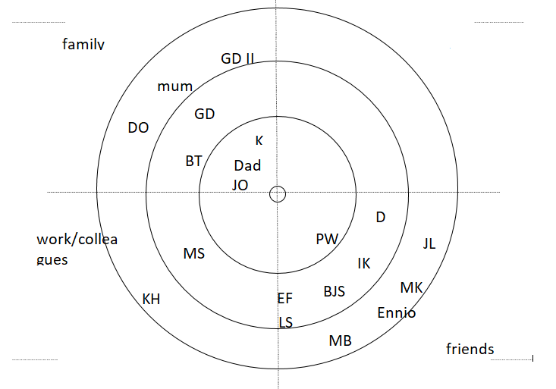
*So, you need someone to really rely on. And that's why you… basically have a couple of friends in the department just to make sure that you're on the same page with everyone else.*

Although she stressed that she is not good at making friends due to her personality traits, she also emphasised the significance of her ties in the department and generally considered them as significant for the initial adjustment process as information channels and for creating a sense of continuity. This research extends our knowledge of the migrant networks by contributing to the studies showing that departmental ties are critical in overcoming the initial adjustment process of migration. Studies focussing on migrants’ social network often used Putnam’s (2000) conceptions on bridging and bonding ties - while the former refers social relationships with contrasting social identity the latter means social ties and interactions with similar social identity (Patulny & Svendsen, 2007; Putnam, 2000). However, the findings of this research also contribute to the calls for the need to go beyond the bridging and bonding in explaining migrants’ networked relationships. This duality can lead to an understanding that sees ethnicity and religion as the primary boundaries of migrants’ ties (Hickman et al., 2012; Ryan, 2011). As the findings in this section shows some migrant academics tend to weave their initial ties in their working environments; i.e., the department. In this regard, Ryan’s (2011b) suggestion of using horizontal and vertical ties in distinguishing different types of social and professional ties which describe ties with people in similar different social statues and employment conditions seems relevant here. The social lives of academic who participated in this research can be explained by more horizontal networks since they tend to forge ties between individuals of similar academic and employment status.

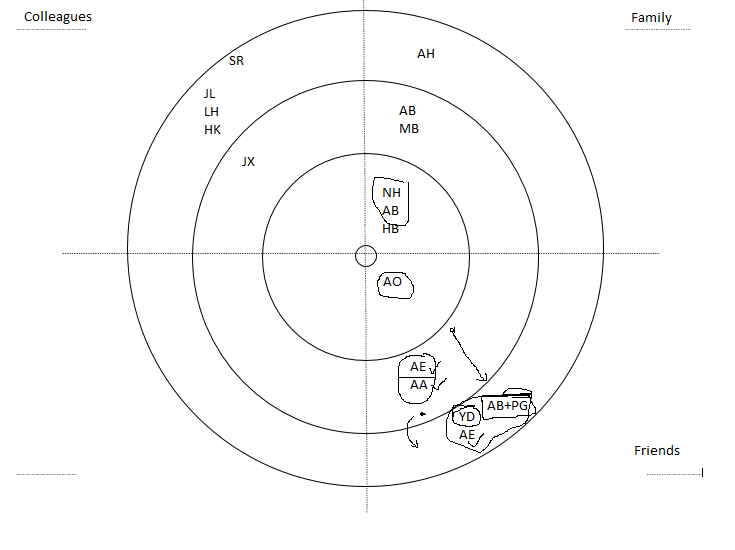
#### 8.1.1.2. Separation of departmental ties from other domains

However, as mentioned above, many academics tend to separate departmental ties from other social, cultural and family realms. In other words, there is a salient emphasis of participants on excluding departmental ties from emotional, personal and intimate realms. Some academics gave examples of social activities with departmental ties such as meeting up in a café or pub; however, these activities also have functional values. Most academics do not see their colleagues as their ‘friends’; more importantly, they do not regard their department as a place for making *friends*, which is value-laden category for many academics, as described below. As *Ju,* a Chinese background lecturer, said: ‘*you can be colleagues but not friends*’. She added that *‘always some distance is needed in the department’.* This has several underpinning reasons arising from the professional, social and employment conditions of academics.

First, many academics approach departmental scientific ties as a set of professional networks for special academic purposes. Accordingly, while filling in sociogram maps, the majority did not ascribe a quadrant for ‘departmental colleagues’. The ‘general colleagues’ quadrants were generally composed of people who academics do not share a locality/department with. Most participants who had colleagues’ quadrants in their sociogram maps did not write any initials in the inner circle (see figures 13 and 14 below).



Sociogram 6: Ego-centric Network Map of a Participant



Sociogram 7: Ego-centric Network Map of a Participant

This means that according to most participants, among the alternatives – the other actors in the life of ego (the focal person) – the initials in the work and colleagues quadrant were not usually put in the closest circles. This signifies a clear line between scientific ties and other social, familial and emotional relationships. Scientific social ties are generally regarded as professional networks that should be excluded from intimate and emotional connections.

Secondly, regarding the socio-demographical factors, the age cohort of academics in the department is influential. Many participants compared their postgraduate education periods with conditions of working; for instance, like *Emre* withhis Middle Eastern background, many participants pointed out that making friends was easier during their postgraduate education when the age cohort of students was similar and individuals could easily find areas of common interest . However, in departments where the age range of academics is wider, many relatively young migrant academics said they had problems finding common ground with their colleagues. Additionally, stages in different life domains such as family and migration can also influence the process. For instance, a 35-year-old European lecturer, *Oscar*, defined his relationship with his colleagues as follows:

*we are not at the same stage in life… I am not the youngest one… but many of them are married and have children. Once… I kind of attended their conversations, they were talking about buying strollers. You know… like, “I found cheaper at blah blah…” After work, they go back to take care of the children and I don't… so that means that the differences at the department restrict a lot of the possibilities…*

Migrant academics who are not at the same life-stage as the majority in the department can easily lose their sense of continuity. For instance, *Jenna*, a 31-year-old South Asian academic, described herself as ‘*an anomaly*’ compared to her colleagues since she did not have an established relationship with a long-term partner and children. This reflects how the professional networking practices of highly skilled migrants depend on creating a sense of commonality and shared interest (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2016) and similar stages in their life course progression (Kõu et al., 2015). In addition to age and life-stages, some participants also emphasised factors related to gender, world views and ideological differences. Such factors can lead to fewer close ties forged in the working environment, which reflects the significance of commonality in weaving personal networks in the workplace (Grabher et al., 2006).

Finally, changing labour conditions in British academia can push academics away from forging close ties within their department. Participants stated that departments in the faculties of science and engineering especially turn into somewhat ‘*company-like entities’*. That is, the organisation of departments, personnel and projects becomes tightly-structured on the basis of hierarchies (Storme et al., 2017), which influences academics’ chances to socialise in the department. For instance, *Claire,* a European background participant, said:

*So when I first came here… I found people calling their project coordinator as ‘boss’! I mean, this was really…. I mean… weird for me… as someone coming from a different academic convention.*

Similarly, *Ju,* a Chinese background postdoctoral researcher, stressed how hard it was to ‘*make friends in higher* [academic] *ranks’.* Additionally, the neoliberal higher education system reduces job security and creates a competitive atmosphere whereby colleagues tend to see each other as competitors (Bamberger et al., 2019; Huppatz et al., 2018; Radice, 2013). Thus, some academics are reluctant to forge close and strong ties with their colleagues as they think that this closeness might be used against them. For instance, *Emre,* a Middle Eastern background research fellow, underlined this as follows:

*But you always have to… have your guard up in that. In the next departmental meeting, you might be looking weak and there might be some kind of disagreement over something. So you can't be completely naked in front of them. Because there was always some kind of conflict of interest… For instance, we had an exam board, you know, our internal postgraduate board today… And sometimes, you know, things get a bit heated, as in any workplace. I can’t imagine looking weak on the board… in the eyes of them, you know what I mean…*

Therefore, professional and socio-demographic factors and the changing labour conditions arising from neoliberal HE can also be influences on why departmental ties with colleagues are only restricted to functional purposes and do not yield strong ties in social, cultural and emotional domains.

## 8.1.2. Local and Transnational Scientific Networks

Many academics who participated in the research had (or aim to have) a wide set of academic ties when working in Britain and the rest of the world. Academics’ transnational scientific ties are wide and diverse. Academics who did their postgraduate education in different countries tended to have scientific ties scattered around the world. Furthermore, academic activities such as conferences, seminars and summer schools are tools for building transnational scientific ties. Some participants said that they gave significance to actively using social media in order to develop scientific networks around the world. For example, *Anna, Ayse, Tuba* and *Li Na* said that they used their Twitter and Slack accounts to build scientific ties. These transnational academic ties grant academics access to job opportunities, collaborative projects, conferences, academic excursions and recognition (Sanders et al., 2002). These findings corroborate with the academic migration literature which extensively shows the links between networking practices and the career progression of academics (Ackers, 2008; Coey et al., 2013). However, this research contributes to this strand of literature by showing that local and transnational family relationships are taken into consideration when transnational scientific ties are forged. As such, I show in this section that participants’ scientific networking strategies are also entrenched in and influenced by their local and transnational family relationships.

In relation to local scientific ties based in Britain, academics are active in weaving new ties. They tend to develop networks by attending conferences, seminars, guest lectures, lab meetings, summer schools and industry meetings. For an academic, the British HE system is eminently suitable for building a large scientific network (Bamberger et al., 2019; Harris, 2012; Way et al., 2019). Many migrant academics I interviewed, such as *Dimitris, Benjamin, Veronica* and *Antonio*, underlined how they know the majority of senior academics working in Britain on their research area. Therefore, a form of scientific network based on the field of expertise is observed. Additionally, many academics’ ties carry the character of diasporic scientific networks (Ackers, 2010; Ackers & Gill, 2008b). These networks are composed of ties with fellow migrant academics from the same countries of origin. Thus, many academics I interviewed were members of national and transnational professional associations such the British Sociological Association, the National Academy of Sciences and SRUK (Spanish Researchers in the UK). There is an intersection with the desire for academic opportunities and to be able to visit home and spend time with family members. A Turkish background academic said that thanks to his Turkish academic contacts based in London, he arranged a visiting professor position in Turkey. Therefore, although transnational family relationships literature acknowledges how migrants use various resources for enabling family visits (Baldassar et al., 2007a), this research enhances that knowledge by showing that, in the contexts of academics, the local diasporic scientific ties woven in the country of settlement can also be used for transnational family relationship purposes.

Second, many academics have active scientific ties in the transnational arena as well. During the construction of the sociograms, many participants said they had so many acquaintances in British academia. Some even asked if there is a limit on the number of acquaintances that could be placed in the outer circles. Others said that if they wrote the names of their acquaintances, it would take too long to complete the map. Detailed readings of the sociograms show that scientific ties across national borders are multiple, wide and diverse. Some transnational scientific ties naturally occur as a result of their previous migration and mobility experiences. That is, the majority of participants state that they had wide scientific networks in their countries of origin. Again, these scientific ties are key to arranging short-term academic activities. A Colombian background academic said she undertook her fieldwork in Colombia thanks to her contacts. Similarly, an Indian academic pointed out that she had arranged a research conference in Delhi so that she could also visit her parents.

Furthermore, this research explored that participants’ strategic uses of their transnational scientific ties based in the home country relates to their plans and possibilities of a return migration – having scientific ties in the country of origin means that that there is a possibility of return migration (Remennick, 2021). One Turkish participant stated that:

*I am in close contact with some universities in Ankara [capital city of Turkey]. I mean, I know most of the people working on \*\*\* [her area of expertise]. Sometimes, doing collaborative work, sometimes I help them in their research. I see these things like an investment to future… I don’t want to be unemployed when I’m back, although I don’t have a plan of returning… for now… but who knows?*

An Israeli background academic said that it was ‘*impossible*’ for him to return since he does not have ‘*anyone that could give the position*’ in Israel. Some academics argued that as they continue to live in Britain, their scientific ties in home countries get weaker. A French participant was in France during the time of the interview, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. She said she decided not to return to Britain and instead tried to find a position in France, suggesting that her ties might be useful in finding a job in France when she returns to live close to her family. In a similar vein, one post-doctoral research who is from India stated that she tried to engage with fieldwork and some teaching activities in India:

*I am generally doing my fieldwork in India. That is part of my job, my works focussing on India. For me, it is very important to build a career in India as well. This is my plan, actually, I will return there and live with my grandma again. I have been spending my annual leaves doing some teaching at the University of \*\*\* for several years.*

Apart from these Turkish and Indian participants, academics who were from Italy and China also stated that they try to build active academic networks in their countries of origin so that they can make use of these networks in case of a return migration. Usually, the return migration is associated with a caring need of either an elderly parent or children (see section 7.3.).

In the transnational family literature, we see evidence of utilisation of family and kinship ties for a possible return (see, Reynolds, 2010). However, this research shows utilisation of a professional/scientific network for a possible family obligation. This constitutes one of the unique contributions to the migration literature. First, it illustrates a strategic use of professional and academic networks for a possible family obligation (caring need). Second, it confirms the relevance of shifting our gaze to migrants’ wider networked relationships in order to understand transnational family and kinship ties (Bilecen & Faist, 2015; Ryan, 2016; Ryan et al., 2022). This research shows that participants’ family obligations and motivations can permeate in their professional/academic networking practices. Their lives are composed of intertwined networks involving various ties interwoven between social, familial, professional and emotional spheres.

## 8.2. Multiple Localities and Migrant Academics’ Social Relationships

Many academics tend to have multiple, sparse/dense social ties with people surrounding their local environment. As illustrated above, migrant academics’ local ties are not ethnically defined; rather a set of various subjective factors shapes the local network structures of many academics. This section presents the findings related to local networks of academics in three areas. First, it is shown that participants tend to perceive people living in Britain as difficult to access and adjust to. Factors influencing why participants have problems in forging ties with native people living in Britain are presented in detail. The second section focuses on the relationship between migrant academics and local diasporas in Britain. It is shown that migrant academics tend to have complicated relations with their diasporas. Although many participants make active use of practical and material resources for diasporas, such as places of worship and markets, they do not prefer to forge social and personal ties within the diaspora for various reasons. I call this process as semi-permeable networking behaviour which brings about intriguing implications regarding migration and diasporas in the countries of settlement. The final section presents how migrant academics socialise and create new local ties based in Britain through some ideal types of academics.

### **8.2.1. How to make friends with the British?**

All migrant academics have particular perceptions about local British people. However, these perceptions are positioned on a wide spectrum ranging from the positive to negative. While few academics feel confident in forging ties with local British people, many find them difficult to be friends with. Some academics generally opt for building networks with members of other migrant groups, assuming that they will not be successful in making friends with the local people. There are different underlying factors in this line of thought. This section describes the dynamics of language, cultural differences and cities that academics live in as the factors shaping academics’ ability to make friends with British people.

#### 8.2.1.1. “You are always less empowered”: Language Skills and Local Social Ties

One of the most cited factors in the difficulty of befriending the British is the issue of language. Many academics said that they do not have problems with academic English, but they do not tend to feel confident in local so-called British English. A German participant gave an example from his initial experiences:

*I came to Manchester. I was confused, because I didn't understand the English they spoke. And I couldn't understand the bus driver. I was literally lost! You know, my English is proficient and have not had any issues in understanding but only in England native speakers, especially in Manchester… which was a bit grim.*

Being able to communicate smoothly with networks in the workplace or everyday life is a significant indicator of confidence for many academics (Pherali, 2011). Having communication problems in social interactions, academia and everyday life negatively influences not just their self-confidence but also their success and progress in different domains of life. For instance, an Italian research fellow who had been in Britain for more than a decade described this as:

*There's always that thing… when you are in a meeting, you know, especially if it is a meeting where there's mostly British people… And I think… what I've been suffering most when I moved here is that there is always something that you miss out in the communication. So obviously, you're always less empowered… even in one meeting… and the fact that you speak with a bit more of an accent destroys whatever you might be saying… people will not listen to you in the same way. But it is not… I mean, these don’t show your intelligence, right?*

Indeed, for many academics, accent is a particular code of identity that distinguishes migrants from non-migrants. *Benjamin, a professor* who had been in Britain for nearly 23 years, said: ‘*you have an accent so you’re a migrant, whatever you do, it will not change*…’ Some participants stated that they get negative reactions in their country of origin since they speak their original language with ‘*an English accent*’. A Hungarian participant said that her father ‘*gets pissed off’* when she talks with an accent*,* while *Gemma*, an Australian academic, said that her friends ‘*makes fun of’* her British accentwhen she speaks with them. Another German academic mentioned his integration problems, when he was back in Germany, arising from him speaking German with a British accent. Therefore, accents may be significant in terms of socialising and communicating with the local public (Kayaalp, 2016). Feeling inadequate and less proficient about language has a negative influence on migrant academics’ local social ties. This is also related to the feelings of liminality that were often cited by migrants. As in the case of *Bella* outlined above, many participants feel that they have to struggle with understanding that equates speaking with an accent and in a less fluent manner with being less intelligent.

Language-skills are still considered a form of social capital that shapes participation in everyday life processes among highly educated academics as well (Fuentes, 2020; Kayaalp, 2016). This is an interesting finding for the migration literature that focuses on the integration and adjustment of migrants to the countries of settlement. Although language-related issues are frequently cited (Carella et al., 2020; Giordano, 2010; Mazzucato, 2008), findings related to the language and socialisation issues from the context of ‘highly-skilled and educated’ migrant academics are unusual contributions for that strand of the literature (see Cohen-Bokek & Davidovitch, 2014; Föbker & Imani, 2017; Geurts et al., 2021).

#### 8.2.1.2. Cultural differences

In addition to language skills, some participants emphasise cultural differences between academics and the British cultural codes regarding socialisation practices. For instance, *Daphne*, who was from a Mediterranean country, stressed that the culture of social life in Britain is different from hers:

*Well, you have to schedule everything two weeks in advance… even going to the cinema, once we wanted to go to this cinema… but I was not sure. I find it to be culturally hard for me as a Mediterranean kind of person. I mean, it kind of puts me off… Because, you know like “who knows what is gonna happen in two weeks?”*

*Daphne*, along with some other academics, described British citizens as difficult to access due to being ‘*cold’*. Similarly, *Ludovica*, a European background academic, said that when she greets her colleagues in the morning, the response is not always said ‘*with a smiling face*’. Therefore, cultural differences related to temporal organisations of time and routines can also reveal the differences that migrant academics experience when they socialise in Britain, which constitutes a significant contribution to the literature on migrant academics and their adjustment processes.

#### 8.2.1.3. Cities as the determinants of socialisation practices

Finally, it should be noted that the city in which academics live can also shape their perceptions and socialisation practices. Academics in bigger cities such as London, Manchester and Birmingham mentioned their cultural diversity and socio-cultural activities. They sometimes complained about the cost of living in these cities especially for those holding precarious fixed-term-contracts such as *Ayse, Daphne* and *Manjula.* Meanwhile, participants in small cities such as Loughborough, Plymouth and Bath have problems finding socialisation possibilities with like-minded people.

Overall, making friends with British citizens, according to many migrant academics, is a complicated process depending on a variety of factors. Also, it should be underlined that forging ties with local people is a dynamic process (Green & Myatt, 2011). This finding corroborates the call for a holistic approach in understanding the adjustment process of academics into British life (Maadad & Tight, 2014). Migrant academics are not alone in considering British people ‘cold’ and difficult to make contact with as researchers from different contexts have found similar results (Ryan & Mulholland, 2014; Wessendorf & Phillimore, 2019). However, in contrast to Pherali (2011), there is not enough evidence to suggest that migrant academics’ adjustment processes and abilities to forge local social ties vary between EU and non-EU background academics. As presented above, some EU background academics also feel themselves ‘less confident’ in using the language and interacting with the local culture, which again stresses the multi-faceted nature of interacting with local people.

### **8.2.2. The Semi-Permeable Ties with the Local Diaspora**

In the migration literature, diasporic networks were considered as a resource for improving migrant social capital (Portes, 1998; Portes et al., 1999). However, it is also showed that the literature tends to idealise ‘the cooperative nature of certain ethnic minority groups’ (Zontini, 2004c, p. 8). Thus, ethnic and diasporic networks cannot be seen either negative or positive for the social capital of migrants (Zontini, 2010; Zontini & Reynolds, 2007). In this section, I present findings related to the participants’ networking practices with their co-nationals residing in Britain.

However, their relationships with existing diasporas are complicated. I call their relationships with the existing diaspora as ‘semi-permeable ties’. That is, on the one hand, migrant academics tend to have few strong social ties with the diaspora. Some academics even try to disidentify themselves from the diaspora through various strategies. On the other hand, they generally benefit from the sources and materials provided through the diaspora infrastructure. Thus, the migrant academics who participated in this research had semi-permeable ties with the diaspora in their locality. Considering the sensitivity of the topic and issues of identifiability, I do not use pseudonyms in this section – instead I present participants’ stories using their nationalities.

Britain’s population is so diverse that nearly every migrant academic from any part of the world can find someone else from that country (Vertovec, 2006, 2007). Participants from countries such as India, Pakistan, Poland and Bangladesh especially report that a large and active diaspora exists in nearly all British cities. Nearly all migrant academics’ remarks and sociogram maps showed that they do not tend to have social and personal ties with the existing diaspora in their cities. One of the most cited reasons was the differences in education levels and lifestyles between them and diaspora members. One Indian participant summarised it thus:

*Oh, they are worse than the people in India. I guess you have the same issue with the Turks here, right? Because I’m not a sociologist but it’s the same with all diasporas… I mean… when they come here, they stick to their traditional culture more… And then become more traditional and ignorant!*

In a similar vein, some participants suggested that the diaspora in their local environment became a source of socio-cultural pressure that threatened their lifestyles. One academic from Iran reported that his initial efforts to make contact with the diaspora resulted in frustration since people constantly asked ‘*silly questions’* about her ‘*clothes, hair, pendants and food*’. Now, ‘*I sometimes say that I’m from Spain… or Italy when I see…*’ and tries to disidentify herself as a way of escaping contact. For various reasons, many academics keep a distance from the existing diaspora in their local environment.

However, despite this sort of negative conditioning and positioning, many academics benefit from resources from the diaspora. For example, aChinese academicexplained how she sends money to her country of origin through a web application designed by her fellow citizens living in the UK. Similarly, two Turkish academics emphasised how they access Turkish cuisine while dining out. Moreover, an Iraqi academic and one from Greece stressed that they go to the mosques and churches of their fellow Iraqi and Greek migrants in Britain. Many academics made use of these ‘opportunities’, and they did not tend to forge personal and social ties with diaspora members, they actively made use of the facilities provided by them.

The semi-permeable diasporic networking practices of academics corroborates the theory that diasporic existence reduces life costs, access to national/cultural goods and economic and practical resources (Carrington et al., 1996; Pink, 2016). Thus, diasporas serve as a sort of ‘invisible nation’ that provides national/cultural resources that can make migrants feel at home (Beine et al., 2011, p. 31). However, this finding competes with the diaspora and social/human capital hypothesis in which immigrants rely on their diasporic ties and then translate these ties into social and economic benefits such as job offers and career opportunities (Beine et al., 2011; Ben-Rafael, 2010).

Instead, the social ties of academics between colleagues, friends and family members have a subjective nature that goes beyond group and ethnicity-based definitions. As described throughout this chapter, academics’ individual biographies embed them in a particular networking context in which their ties are translatable into social and economic benefits and managed by individual portfolios rather than co-ethnic diasporic relations. Therefore, the understanding that diasporas provide social and human capital through which migrants can improve their life standards (Mckenzie & Rapoport, 2007; Munshi, 2003) does not seem to apply to the context of the migrant academics I interviewed. This finding is also consistent with recent studies that illustrate that skilled migrants’ networking strategies are managed by individual portfolios and are less reliant upon co-ethnic diasporic ties (Ferguson et al., 2016; Georgalou, 2021; Oldac & Fancourt, 2021).

### **8.2.3. Social Life in Britain? Migrant Academics’ Socialisation and Local Friendship Networks**

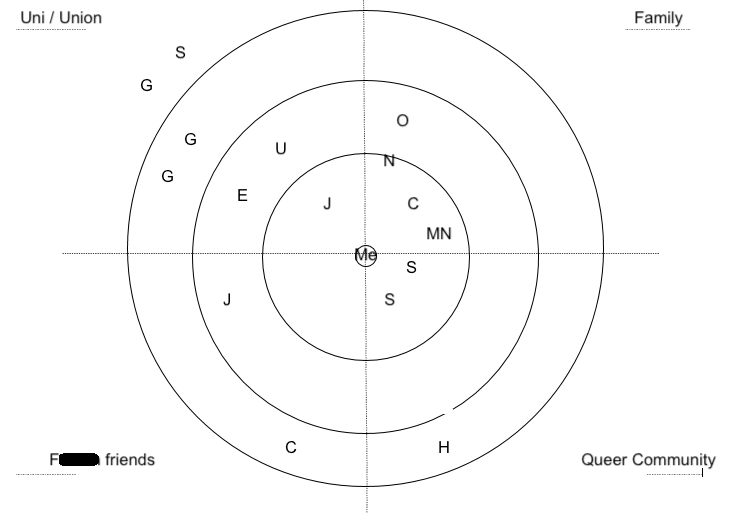
It has been demonstrated so far that participants tend to consider socialising with the non-migrant British community difficult. In addition, they tend to have few social, cultural, and emotional connections with the existing migrant diasporas while they exploit material and practical resources supplied through diasporic channels. However, this research finds that many academics make friends, are involved in everyday sociability and activate a range of social networks in their local areas to varying degrees. There are a number of factors determining with whom and the degree to which academics socialise in their immediate circles. However, analysing the sociogram maps of participants, there were some notable patterns of participants’ methods of socialisation in Britain. Analysing the sociogram notes against the interview data, I created a typology of participants’ socialisation types in Britain. In terms of everyday sociability, this research finds four types of academics: activist; family-oriented; work-oriented; and hobbyist academics.

#### 8.2.3.1. Activist migrant academics

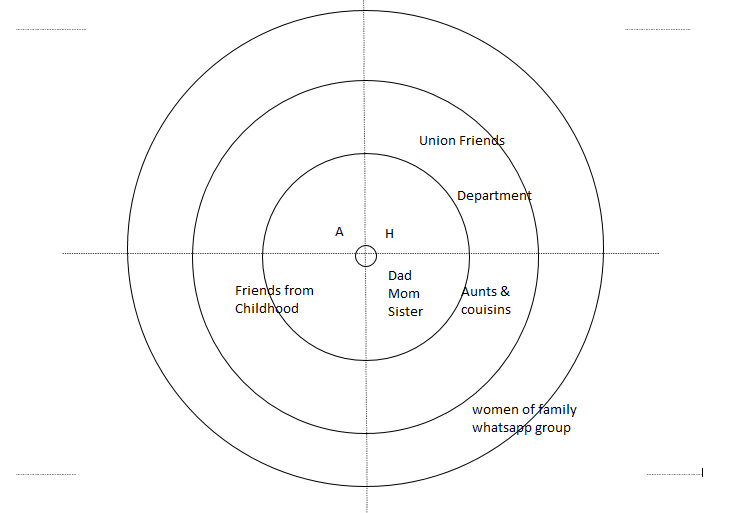
As the name suggests, the activist academic has higher levels of participation in the political and social matters of Britain. Their sparsely-knit ties are based in ‘activities’ that are usually translatable into different benefits. The types of activism that participants usually engage in are diverse. Some stated that they actively attend political party gatherings, while others engaged with environmental activism such as climate change and protecting wildlife. In addition, many academics participated in activities championing the rights of women, the LGBTQ+ community, refugees and asylum seekers. Many participants actively take part in political activism around inequalities in the British HE system. Many academics state that they had taken part in strikes, picket lines and marches across different parts of Britain.

At this point it should be noted that I recruited some of the participants through the UCU (Universities and College Union). Although not all participants were approached by this channel, they account for a notable share of the sample size. Therefore, the prevalence of the political activist academics in the sample can be explained by the research recruiting participants through contacts initiated by UCU members. Thus, some of the findings of this research may portray academics as particularly interested in political participation and eager to talk about the suffering they had experienced. Although this research does not make a claim for a representative sample and generalisability, it is significant to remember that the political context of the research is partly shaped by its recruitment strategies.

Through these various channels, many activist academics socialise with their fellow activists *i.e.*, the other actors in the life of the focal person. In some sociogram maps, one of the quadrants was named after the type of activism such as ‘the Union’ or ‘UCU’ (see figures 15 and 16 below).



Sociogram 8: Ego-centric Network Map of a Participant



Sociogram 9: Ego-centric Network Map of a Participant

The resources and strength of these ties can be understood from *Baram*’s remarks:

*These are kind of like comrades, you know… from the \*\*\** [the name of the organisation]. *So I don't need to see them every day… But they are significant… We decided to have an International Women's Day dinner before the lockdown and we knew the lockdown would come and we said… we have to see each other before we can see each other for a long time…But it's not like… we don't talk about personal stuff, but it's really… they're very kind of, you know, wonderful, intelligent women who just give me a lot of positive energy while other people are draining me.*

She said that while they did not meet regularly or talk about personal issues, these ties were significant as they gave her ‘*positive energy*’. While they were not tightly knit homogenous ties, they provided resources, skills and outcomes for migrants. Many activist academics had a wide array of relationships arising from their activities, ranging from close to distant relationships. Therefore, activism in the country of settlement creates not only a sense of motivation and commitment for political participation (Ipek, 2018), but also a space for the sociability of migrant academics.

#### 8.2.3.2. Family-oriented migrant academics

Thisgroup ofacademics tends to socialise with their partner (or other immediate family members). This group arose from my follow-up questions, which aimed at understanding details of alters i.e., the other actors in the life of ego (the focal person) placed on participants’ sociogram maps. In some contexts, when I asked the participant about their relationship with a particular alter, some academics said the alter was a mutual friend with their partner. Indeed, in some contexts, participants said that their networked relationships were notably similar to those of their partners.

One of the most cited factors behind this phenomenon is that some participants tend to socialise with their partners. *Khalil*, a Northern African academic stated that during his stay in the UK, he always socialised with his wife. Similarly, *Tuba*, a Middle Eastern post-doctoral researcher, said that her and her boyfriend’s social circles in Britain were ‘*nearly copied’* since they ‘*do* *everything together’.* These networks might be in the form of triadic (involving one alter and two core members who are partners) ties of which the core or periphery is sparsely knitted. Since in many cases, one of the partners has the primary role (and the other partner is involved in the relationship later), the boundaries of relationships are clear-cut, and manoeuvrability (between roles) is generally low. Therefore, getting divorced or breaking up leads to isolation and loss of resources for some individuals.

It should be noted that some factors can push academics to socialise as a couple. For instance, many migrant academics feel responsible for the sociability of their partners when they are with them in Britain. In the absence of a separate social networking space for their partners, academics follow a path of socialising together. It should be noted that it is a preferred way of relating for some couples, but for others tend to feel more obliged to socialise with their couples due to social, cultural and everyday support and socialisation offered by institutions.

#### 8.2.3.3. Work-oriented migrant academics

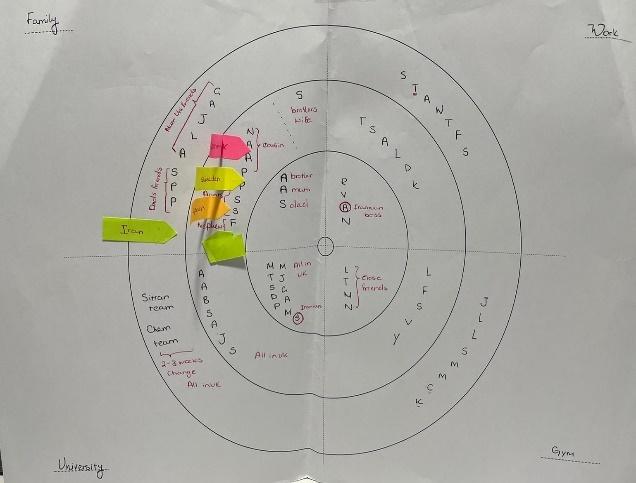
This type of academic tends to forge ties which are pertinent to their work (generally in their field of expertise). As stated above, instead of forging ties in the same department or university, academics generally prefer forging social ties with academics in the national space (i.e., the British academy). Nearly all academics have contacts and relationships with other academics in Britain who work in the same area. These networks are generally composed of ties transformed from initial academic collaborations and companionship to friendship and social ties over the course of time. Therefore, initially formal scientific networks somehow mutate into a more social set of networks consisting of generally dyadic and multiplex (existing in different contexts) relationships. For instance, *Jacob* stated that:

*I can say that… I have these three people: O, H and A. We’ve known each other for, like, ages. Now O is in a different place… But with H and A… we doing pretty much everything together…*

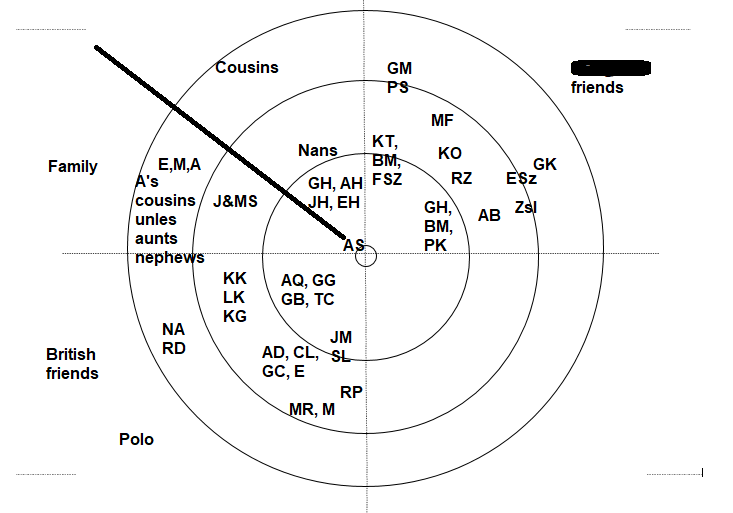
Some academics said that they went on holiday, camping, on picnics and to the cinema with their work-related social networks. Therefore, work oriented migrant academics tend to socialise within their professional networks. However, although a minority, a group of participants such as *Alan* and *Jazmin* said that they deliberately socialised outside academia. They associate having social ties outside the academy with the notion of separating work and life. Contrarily, work-oriented academics consider that having social ties rooted in academia yields benefits from both formal and informal networks.

#### 8.2.3.4. Hobbyist migrant academics

Many academics were engaged in different hobbies in their social lives. Academics’ hobbies are a relatively neglected topic not just in academic migration literature but also in HE literature (although see Harris, 2012; Siddiquee et al., 2016). However, this research finds that the majority of migrant academics had at least one hobby. Participants allocated time, effort, and money to socialise through these activities. Generally, academics allocated one of the four quadrants of the sociogram maps to their hobbies, which generally include running, hiking, gym, and music (see, Figure 17 and 18 below).



Sociogram 10: Ego-centric Network Map of a Participant



Sociogram 11: Ego-centric Network Map of a Participant

The range of hobbies that migrant academics engage in depends on the city or area where they live. For instance, academics in Sheffield, York, and Derby – areas renowned for their mountainous and natural areas – cited hiking and jogging as their hobby activities while academics living in bigger cities referred to indoor hobbies.

Hobby networks are not easily translatable into economic and professional benefits. However, these hobby networks generally have two functions for academics: first, they offer migrant academics a space for socialisation. Academics often find ready networks when they pursue their hobbies. Therefore, engaging with a hobby can be an effective strategy for many academics to forge new ties in the country of settlement, that are not necessarily related to their work. An Eastern European research fellow who had been engaging in polo observed:

*I think the good side… by the time you get to post in the university, you've got your friends… I kind of had a strategy for that. So, the reason why I started bike polo… I realised, when I started this sport that… I was in the \*\*\*\*\* the team and I knew that… It was quite a good close-knit community across the country. So, I thought, wherever I end up, I should be able to meet people through this and that's exactly what happened.*

Therefore, hobbies can sometimes provide a social network that is available across Britain. They fill the gap between academics and their interest areas. In the sense of social networks, hobbies serve the function of brokerage and fill the structural holes between participants’ interest areas and social networks (Burt, 1992).

The second function of engaging in hobbies is that these activities refresh and recreate participants, helping them to experience the world outside academia. Many academics like *Antonia, Ayse, Betty* and *Daphne* said they often experienced mental tiredness and wanted to move away from their social and professional concerns. When I asked about their daily routines, some academics said they played games like *Candy Crush* on their mobile phones to *free* their minds and ‘*forget the mental stress’* of the day (*Betty*, female European background). Hobbies can be significant for the well-being of participants since they serve as a form of recreation and refreshing activities for migrant academics.

However, many hobbyist academics struggle to allocate time for their hobbies since the neoliberal conditions in British HE and the general working regime in Britain often precludes them from making time for their hobbies. Nearly all academics reported that they did not have a good work-life balance (for detailed discussion, see Chapter 6). The employment context (characterised by precarious contracts, stiff competition, unstable financial resources and too-flexible schedules blurring the boundaries between work and life) combined with the migration context (fraught with restrictive policies, exhaustive procedure and paperwork) means that migrant academics struggle to find a different life domain (other than work or family) in which they can socialise and find resources and skills in their social lives (Huppatz et al., 2018; Ivancheva et al., 2019; Lopes & Dewan, 2014; Rosa, 2021). Despite these circumstances, as mentioned earlier, many academics engage with hobbies although they often sacrifice other parts of their lives to do so.

Overall, the typology above and the patterns of migrant academics’ everyday sociability provide some significant implications regarding the research area. However, before moving to this discussion, two points should be noted. First, the typology above is far from being generalisable to all migrant academics considering how individual portfolios are critical in shaping wider networked relationships. However, what this analysis aims to achieve is to provide rich insights regarding how migrant academics, as a diverse highly-skilled migrant group in Britain, socialise and make friends in their country of settlement (Gill & Bialski, 2011; Ryan et al., 2015; Scott, 2007). Second, as with nearly all social network structures, migrant academics’ ties are dynamic. These networks of relationships evolve over time and have a history based in the biographies of migrants (Bidart & Lavenu, 2005). They are constantly under construction and open to changes in relation to life events (Snijders, 2011). Although capturing social network data through sociograms and embedded qualitative interviews is beneficial in terms of delving into the roots and histories of relationships in the long-run (Hogan et al., 2020; Ryan, 2021; Tubaro, et.al., 2016), the collected data remains inadequate to capture the wider dynamism of social networks (Conway, 2014). Therefore, the socialisation patterns of academics should be considered together with the dynamism of social networks.

These findings provide insights into the local social lives of highly-skilled migrants (academics) in Britain. According to the *sociabilities* paradigm, migrants can be involved in processes related to social support, help, protection, shared interests and yield the benefits of pleasure, satisfaction, and emotional closeness with actors in the local environment due to the ‘mutual sense of being human’ (Glick-Schiller & Çağlar, 2016, p. 19). These in-depth analyses regarding the everyday sociability of migrant academics is key to understanding how highly-skilled migrants make friends in their home countries; experience cultures of togetherness and otherness; engage with a range of local and urban encounters; and present themselves and participate in processes (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2016; Ryan, 2015). As shown above, migrant academics’ social ties are generally diverse and sparsely-connected, heterophilous and multiplex (existing in more than one context) yet they involve various sources and skills (Foth & Hearn, 2007; Rainie and Wellman, 2012; Wellman et al., 2003). These connections show the importance of common interest areas - what Glick-Schiller and Caglar (2016) call ‘human commonality’- considering that one of the major triggering points to forge social ties is to bridge and broker shared interest areas (Burt, 2005).

Second, migrant academics’ social connections forged in Britain cast light on how their relationships are locally embedded. In this regard, the concept of *embeddedness* stresses that social relations are not isolated from environmental and ambient factors (Granovetter, 1973). In the context of migrants, *embeddedness* suggests the rootedness of social relations in both local and transnational spaces (Korinek et al., 2005). In this vein, regarding their local social relations, migrant academics enjoy ‘different degrees of embeddedness’ (Ryan, 2018, p. 237) in different domains and sets of networks in Britain. Although embeddedness signifies a process rather than a stable condition (Wessendorf & Phillimore, 2019) and the degrees of embeddedness depend highly on a variety of factors (Ryan & Mulholland, 2015), one dynamic is particularly significant: the spaces of living – the cities and urban areas that migrant academics reside in shape the structure, boundaries and diversity of social networks. This research contributes to the literature by confirming the importance of considering migrants’ social networks in multi-scalar power hierarchies in analysing migratory experiences at local, national, regional and transnational levels (Schiller & Çağlar, 2016).

## 8.3. The Typologies and Compositions of Transnational Networked Relationships

Taking a broader approach to the networked relationships of migrant academics, this section provides details about how migrants manage varied local and transnational ties, and the position of transnational social ties in their wider sets of relationships. Analysing the personal social network maps (sociograms) of participants, this research finds that migrant academics have diverse, heterogenous, multiple and far-flung networks that connect their relationships between (not just the countries of origin and settlement but also) nodes (actors) located in different parts of the world. In addition, these networks operate at multiple levels according to the characteristics of each edge (e.g., relationship). In terms of the closeness and strength, this research finds three types of transnational networks operating in multiple levels: core, primary, and secondary networks. It is shown that the types of social structure, social interaction, boundaries and the content at each of these levels of networking channels is different. In the same vein, this section is divided into three sub-sections describing how the core, central and peripheral networks of academics operate in the transnational field differently, providing different resources, support, material, skills, and knowledge.

### **8.3.1. Core Networks**

Migrant academics tend to have strong relationships with a few alters i.e., the other actors in the life of ego (the focal person) who might be located in different parts of the world. The core relationships can include generally dyadic ties between the academic and immediate family members such as their partner, mother and father or close friends (sometimes referred as ‘*best friends’*; ‘*bffs’* or ‘*besties’*). In terms of interpersonal interactions, the mutual awareness of each node (actor) of the edge (relationship) is high. That is, academics and their core alters (significant others) tend to be highly aware of each other’s lives. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the widespread use of communication technologies is key to constituting a sense of ‘ambient awareness’ for members of transnational families (Madianou, 2016). For instance, *Alan, Anna* and *Eva* emphasised that they were kept updated about the issues in the lives of their family and close friends. *Ayse* said that her friends ‘get offended’ when she does not update information about her life. Thus, we can note the mutual awareness of academics’ significant others in the core networks. Academics are generally open and transparent with this group and do not tend to apply any control and censoring mechanisms while communicating. Academics’ contact with the core ties are frequent and are generally available to the core. For example, *Kwame*, an African background academic whose core relationships are composed of his immediate family members (partner and two children), proudly stressed that he only responds to the calls of his family during work hours.

Furthermore, another distinctive feature of core ties is the shared and mutual sense of history in these relationships. Core relationships generally have a long historical background in the personal biographies of migrants and non-migrants. This reflects the significance of the shared biographies in our social relationships with others (Smart, 2007). Academics’ individual biographies and their time spent with their closest alters such as partners, siblings and parents or friends are an example of this. Additionally, a sense of shared future is also significant in describing the relationships at the core. *Anna*,a 45-year-old American academic, provided one of the best examples regarding the sense of a shared future when she explained the initials she used in the first circle of the ‘*friends’* quadrants in the sociogram:

*You know, these are people who I have considered buying a house together with and retiring with…*

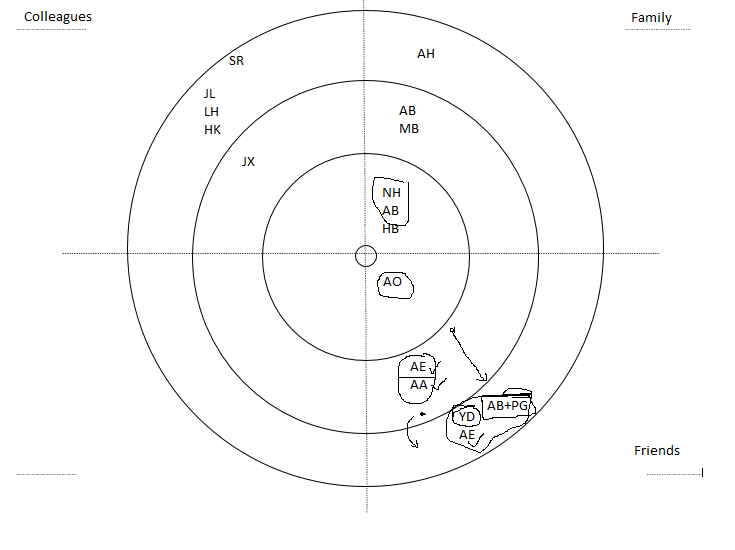
Regarding the content of these ties, it could be said that transnational social support, care and solidarity are the major functions. As detailed in Chapter 7, regarding care and emotional care, while many academics turns to their ‘best friends’ for more practical advice and support, core ties with family have a more ontological and symbolic character (see section 7.2.1).

### **8.3.2. Primary Networks**

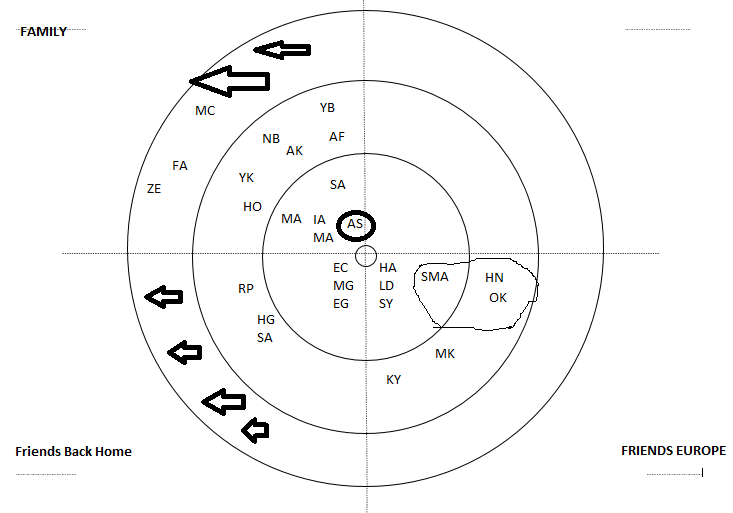
Compared to core relationships, ties in primary relationships are generally greater in number and broader in range, yet they are generally weaker and more loosely structured. The central ties can include a wide variety of relationships including childhood friends, relatives, kinship members and some fellow academics with whom participants collaborate and work. Information diffused through these ties are moderately censored and the availability of nodes (other actors) is partially restricted. For instance, *Emre*, a Middle Eastern migrant academic, stressed the significance of not talking about his personal issues to his friends and colleagues.

A sense of shared history and future is still prevalent in these types of ties. However, these ties are generally in a dormant state; thus, the awareness between ties and frequency of the tie activation in these edges are moderate since many academics tend to make contact on particular special occasions. For example, *Ju,* a 32year-old Asian lecturer, stressed that she usually video calls and sends money (a cultural tradition of birthday celebration) when one of her cousins and friends celebrates their birthday. Therefore, in this group, ties are not in the core, but relationships are still primary. The ties waiting in a dormant state can be activated when it is needed. Another example is the scientific academic ties based in countries of origin. As detailed above, some participants keep these ties alive in case they need to return to their home country for different reasons e.g., family caring needs or employment conditions.

The primary relationships category has the most transitive character regarding mobility of ties between networks. Some primary relationships are composed of ties that were formerly at the core. Some academics drew arrows on the sociograms to indicate how a particular relationship changed over the course of time (see Figures 19 and 20 below).



Sociogram 12: Ego-centric Network Map of a Participant



Sociogram 13: Ego-centric Network Map of a Participant

One of the destabilisers in a relationship is migration itself. Academics stated that some of their closest ties before migration became secondary and less significant, although they were still important. This shows both how pre-migration social networks change with the influence of migration and mobility (Bolíbar et al., 2015) and the relevance of distances on transnational social relationships (Baldassar et al., 2007; Muller, 2009; Ryan et al., 2015). On the contrary, some specific ties can be strengthened through migration. For instance, European academic *Dimitris* completed his postgraduate education in Britain then worked in his home country for more than a decade. During this time, he kept in touch with scientific and personal contacts in Britain. Then he moved to Britain with his family and reactivated his personal and scientific contacts there.

As emphasised so far, the primary ties’ distinctive function is to support and create sociality and social exchanges with the alters around the world. They are generally frozen yet become activated in need. *Khalil,* for instance, a North African academic,statedthat hischildhood friend usually picked him up from the airport when he returned to his home country. Similarly, *Antonio* said that he visits his relatives and neighbours whenever he visits his parents in his country of origin. While not being so strict, a sense of hierarchy and clear boundaries exist in the primary relationships. Social roles, performances, expectations and responsibilities are more or less defined. Thus, primary relationships are composed of various alters that are usually dormant but when activated they generally serve a purpose of sociality and active operation of a particular local and transnational relationship.

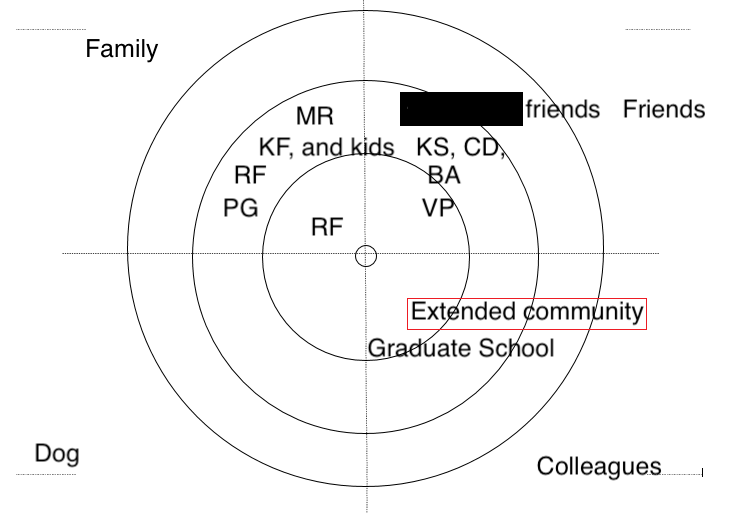
### **8.3.3. Secondary Networks**

The ties at the secondary zone of academics’ wider networked relationships are by far the biggest. This group includes a wide array of individuals from various groups. As stated at the beginning of the chapter, when being an academic and having a migrant background combine they form a particular – if not unique – social networking context. In terms of the interpersonal interactions, in secondary ties participants have little awareness regarding personal lives. Information is generally censored or limited to special purposes. The availability of actors for interaction generally takes place upon request and the personal information exchanged between nodes is largely limited. In these secondary ties, the sense of shared history or imagined future is low. In this regard, academics’ networks of networks (e.g., friends of friends), acquaintances in their home country, friends in third countries, and local weak ties are examples of peripheral relationships.

As opposed to the hierarchical structuring of the core and primary relationships, secondary ties are more amorphous in structure and they are generally easier to enter and quit. Thus, secondary relationships can include weak and bridging ties (Putnam, 2000), in the understanding of Granovetter (1973), who stresses that the importance of weak ties is to create bridges and shorter paths. These peripheral ties among family and friends usually bridge relationships to others.

As for the scientific peripheral ties, as detailed above (see section 8.1.2), academics tend to have connections with other academics around the world via digital social networking tools such as Twitter, Slack, Academia and ResearchGate. For instance, *Anna* placed her Twitter community in the sociogram map (Figure 21 below) and explained the reasons why it was important for her:

*I mean, it sounds silly, but the truth is, these are people I see on Twitter every day. I have never met face-to-face… But you know there's like a shadow network of scholars. They're not always the same people that you want to talk to professionally. These are good people who are academics. You know, I think they’re not like right at the centre of my life, but quite close. I would help them to get jobs if I can.*



Sociogram 14: Ego-centric Network Map of Anna

As *Anna* stressed, these ties can yield professional benefits such as the possibility of job opportunities, collaboration ideas, chances of academic visits and excursions. Additionally, professional knowledge of different types flows through peripheral ties. A computer engineering academic in the research sample noted how he keeps in touch with his friends both in the US and Canada and gets to know the latest topics in the area. Similarly, a linguist academic said he usually takes part in discussions related to his field of expertise in online forums such as Quora and Reddit. This reflects how ‘knowledge’ itself is transnationally transferred through both academics staff mobility and the use of communication technologies (Ackers, 2005; Ackers & Gill, 2008a; Coey, 2018; Trippl, 2013).

However, secondary ties not only include networks providing information and opportunities, rather they can also provide specialized social and professional support – which is not generally ascribed to weak and bridging ties (Granovetter, 1973; Maher & Cawley, 2015; Ryan, 2011a). For instance, *Anna* stressed the social support dimension flowing through her secondary online networks:

*…especially in the UK, that’s another bit of this place… that it’s obsessed with some kind of impact agenda… but people have to have social relationships. So here, I have this extended community on social media… I think of some of my colleagues saying like “oh look that \*\*\* [her nationality] girl, she’s networking; she’s selling herself”. But, actually no, they offer the kind of advice around things like misogyny, racism, inequality… conversations that can never be had especially here face-to-face with all these* [air-quoting] *‘polite people’.*

Therefore, these secondary relationships might also include ties carrying social support, which reflects the specialized support of alters (Rainie and Wellman, 2012; Wellman, 2002; Wellman & Wortley, 1990).

To summarise, a typology of networks of academics composed of core, primary and secondary relationships have been introduced. The panorama described above has significant implications regarding the existing literature: in terms of social networking practices, migrant academics can appear as the mobile ‘networked individuals’ (Rainie and Wellman, 2012) whose networks are characterised by relational aspects of personal portfolios and choices instead of structural forces such as group dynamics. This can compete with the findings of research portraying migrants acting with groups and communities which are generally ethnically defined and developing social capital through these communal and group ties (Boyd, 1989; Chamberlain, 1999; Hurtado-de-Mendoza et al., 2014).

## 8.4. Conclusion

As shown throughout this chapter, migrant academics’ networked relationships can be characterised by three types of relationships: scientific, local, and transnational. First, academics’ diverse scientific ties both within the scope of Britain and around the world (section 8.1.) comprises a basis for understanding the position of family and friendships ties in the transnational space. Migrant academics tend to have less strong ties with both local British people and members of the diaspora in their cities of living. However, migrant academics can engage in various types of relationships that tie them to local communities. Being politically active, creating social portfolios based in workplaces or with life partners, and engaging with a hobby are some of the ways that migrant academics interact with their local surroundings. Finally, the chapter showed that transnational relationships of migrant academics operate in at least three levels: core, central, and peripheral. Through these different levels academics develop both strong and weak transnational ties with family, friends, relatives and acquaintances. Exploring the variety of transnational ties and the levels that these relationships maintain provides a nuanced understanding of transnational social ties. Thus, the *transnational social fields* of migrant academics (Lubbers et al., 2020; Voigt-Graf, 2005; Waters, 2001) can involve exchanges of social support, solidarity and care, information and various resources such as experiences and skills, opportunities such as job offers and collaborative projects and ideas at levels of countries, institutions, universities, families and individuals.

# CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

The objective of this final chapter is to conclude the thesis by clarifying the main findings of the research with regard to the four research questions and discussing the original contributions of this thesis and their wider implications and significance for the existing literature. This chapter is broken down into three sections. First, I provide a summary of findings in relation to the main questions of the research. Second, I discuss the research implications in terms of policy and practical outcomes. In this section, I discuss how these findings are of significance for the existing literature. Then, there is the theoretical/conceptual implications of this research project to the literature. Finally, I present the limitations of the research and address how future research can contribute to the existing knowledge.

## 9.2. Revisiting the Research Rationale and Questions

In this section, I briefly revisit the aim of the research and reiterate the answers to the research questions presented in Chapter 1. This research was undertaken to understand the family and kinship relationships that are maintained across national borders in the context of academic staff migrating to Britain. Inspired by the ‘family practices’ approach in the sociology of family (Morgan, 2011), the research had a specific focus on the practices that aim to maintain relationships between the members of family and kin. Such a focus enabled this research to understand how certain ties with family and kin are negotiated, navigated and maintained even in the contexts of highly mobile migrant academics. Rather than examining these transnational relationships at face value and isolated from other structural, social, familial and personal factors, it acknowledges that transnational family relationships do not operate in a vacuum and are not insulated from the dynamics influencing how these relationships are experienced and navigated (Ryan et al., 2015). At this point, drawing on the knowledge on the structural features of the British HE system and migration regime (Ackers & Gill, 2008b; Kilkey & Merla, 2014; Kim, 2009b), this research created a particular -if not unique- institutional ground for the analyses of the data about migrant academics’ transnational family relationships. Situating the agencies engaging with transnational family relationships in their social, structural, cultural and personal embeddedness was of paramount significance (Kilkey & Merla, 2014). The research has a particular focus on analysing these transnational ties in the wider networked relationships of participants. Such a focus has proven valuable while considering the scientific, personal, and diasporic ties of migrant academics at the local, national and transnational levels.

1. *How do spatiotemporal dynamics shape the ways migrant academics maintain their family relationships from afar?*

This research question was answered by focusing separately on spatiality and temporality. In this regard, I summarise the answer of to this question into two points.

1. *Spatial Dynamics*

The Chapter 5 presented the issue of space and spatiality on transnational family relationships of academics by focussing three major dimensions. First, I showed that geographical distance and physical closeness is a critical factor in the migration and transnational family relationships of the academics who participated in this research (see, section 5.1.1). I showed that migrant academics also take the nearness of Britain to their home countries into consideration when making long-term migration decisions. This is a significant finding since distances in the context of relationships and highly mobile and ‘highly-skilled’ migrants are rarely considered (Beaverstock, 1994, 2005; Mavroudi & Warren, 2013; Scott, 2006). Furthermore, as an original contribution to the scholarship, this research showed that some academics deliberately choose their homes in Britain so that they can visit their family and kin easily – thus, renting homes close to airports is a significant finding stressing the persistence and significance of family visits and corporeal presence (see, section 5.1.2).

Second, focusing on the physical mobility of academics, I showed that how their levels of mobility both inside Britain and international mobility influence their local and transnational family relationships. In consistent with the HE literature (Ackers & Gill, 2008b; Teichler, 2004), migrant academics who participated in this research tend to see physical mobility (both international and within Britain) as an indicator of academic and professional excellence; and a tool for personal development and academic career progression (see, section 5.2.2). However, although how academic mobility deepen some existing racial and gender inequalities is discussed in the literature (Bhopal, 2014; Bhopal & Henderson, 2021; Gerhards et al., 2018), the findings of this research draw attention to a different dimension of academic mobility; that is, the influence of high levels of physical academic mobility on the local and transnational family relationships. I showed that while mobility is often pursed for academic career progression, some participants felt forced to be mobile, which had serious implications on their local and transnational family relationships (see, section 5.2.2). Showing how being continuously physically mobile negatively affects both the socialisation and well-being of local family members and transnational family relationships enlarges the knowledge on academic mobility found in the existing literature.

Finally, I showed that migrant academics’ transnational relationships do not only occur between Britain and their home countries (see, section 5.3.1). Rather, they are multinational, which creates practical difficulties, for example in terms of arranging visits.

Spatiotemporal factors and considerations play a determining role in the emergence and maintenance of transnational family and kinship relationships and frequency and reliance on these relationships. This strategic spatial thinking is also found to cover the choices of cities and universities in Britain. Migrant academics tend to have wide and geographically scattered networks of transnational family and kinship relationships. The multi-national and locational facets of these relationships can bring about some issues of practicality in performing family practices such as family visits (Morgan, 2011) (see section 5.3.).

1. *Temporal Dynamics*

Chapter Six demonstrated how migrant academics’ lives and relationships are firmly grounded in issues of time and temporality. Again, as a significant addition to the transnational family literature, this research shows that some migrant academics pay particular attention to visiting their family and kin at special times such as for religious festivals. Such a spatial focus should be considered together with temporal embeddedness. As such, this research finds that some transnational family practices (Morgan, 2011) need to be performed – and displayed, in a sense (Finch, 2007) – at particular times, such as through shared religious, familial and personal values (see section 6.1.1).

Similarly, I enlarged the literature on transnational family communication by showing that migrants can have problems in adapting to different daily rhythms and may not feel themselves mentally ready to communicate with their family and kinship members due to the influence of time zones. A second key findings is seen in the intersection of two institutional factors – the British migration regime and the neoliberal HE system in Britain – and how they create uncertainty, instability and unpredictability in the lives of the migrant academic precariat. The concept of migrant academic precariat is one of the key findings of this research contributing to the literature. By this term, I indicate that some group of academics have to deal with the challenges of not just the difficult employment conditions such as fixed term contracts and low wages but high workload but also their legal statuses migration status, right to work and residence. Thus, the already problematic situation of academics is exacerbated by the influences of local migration regime. This finding is particularly significant in showing how institutional factors shape migration experiences and the transnational family relationships of migrants (Kilkey & Merla, 2014). Finally, this research found that time is the most necessary resource for migrant academics to maintain their relationships using examples of time scarcity issues.

1. *How and under the influence of which factors do migrant academics provide and receive care from family and kin?*

Migrant academics who participated in this research project tended to engage in a wide variety of caring practices. As with all other migrant groups, academics tend to both provide and receive care and emotional support from their family and kin (Masselot, 2011). A number of factors were found to shape the caring arrangements of academics in this research. First, it is imperative to acknowledge the caring expectations and obligations of migrant academics in local family relationships (see section 7.1). Sometimes caring responsibilities of children living with local migrant families are met by the transnational mobility of some other family members due to affordability issues in relation to nurseries (see sections 7.1.1. and 7.1.2.). Gender (see section 7.1.3), employment conditions e.g., work life balance (see section 7.1.4) and cultural differences regarding caring arrangements and obligations were found to be influential dynamics. Furthermore, it is found that emotional support and care are exchanged between friendship ties most often while the transnational ties between immediate family members are also maintained at the symbolic level. Finally, a novel moral obligation to reciprocate the financial care provided by parents was found among many participants since they tend to return the financial aid of their immediate family members during their education period by sending financial remittances to their left-behind family members even if the latter do not need or request it (see section, 7.3.2). Thus, participants engage with transnational caring practices in ways that are particular to the contexts of migrant academics and these practices are dependent on various factors.

1. *What is the position of transnational family networks in migrant academics’ wider networked relationships such as local families, neighbourhood relations and scientific and/or diasporic networks?*

Transnational family and kinship ties tend to be at the centre of migrant academics’ wider networked relationships. This research proved the necessity of looking at networked biographies of academics in order to understand their transnational family and kinship ties (Bilecen et al., 2018; Ryan et al., 2022). First of all, it is shown that migrant academics who participated in this research tended to have very large and varied ties at multiple levels. One of the reasons of this is the professional ties woven both at the local and international arena. Migration of academics, as illustrated in chapter eight (see section 8.1.) is both a networking and networked practice. Academics pre-migratory ties and personal experiences are found to be influential in shaping their migration decisions. In addition, migrant academics participating in this research were found considerably active in building local scientific networks based in Britain. Second, this research also had specific focus on academics’ local non-scientific ties. It is shown that participants usually have the tendency to disidentify themselves from the rest of their diasporas in Britain; however, they actively make use of diasporic infrastructures and practical resources. Furthermore, based on participants’ social lives in Britain, I made a classification of four types of migrant academics; the activist; family oriented; work oriented and hobbyist academic. Although these types are far from being generalisable, they can significant information about the ways participants weave social ties and build and networks in Britain. Finally, in a similar vein, focussing on the networked relationships of academics in transnational arena, I showed that there are three types of networks. While core networks usually are composed of family members, close friends, the primary networks of migrant academics are usually in the form of acquaintances. Finally, the secondary networks, usually in the form of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973), tend to be scientific ties based in different countries. These ties can yield professional benefits, job opportunities in international market and career progression to migrant academics. However, as illustrated, there are no clear lines between professional and familial ties. It is shown that many participants keep their scientific ties based in their countries of origin alive ( or start to build ties in these countries) in case they have the need to return to their countries of origin, usually when their parents get older and need practical, hands-on care. This constitutes a remarkable contribution to the transnational family literature emphasising the persistence and resilience of family ties and obligations (Kilkey & Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2016; Zontini, 2007)

1. *How do conditions caused by the outbreak of global Covid-19 pandemic affect migrant academics’ local and transnational family relationships?*

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the transnational family relationships of migrant academics in a negative way. As shown in section 7.2.2., participants experienced the global pandemic as a crisis of care in their transnational family relationships. I analysed the influences of global pandemic on transnational family relationships of migrant academics with the conceptual tool of ‘unsettling events’ developed by Kilkey and Ryan (2020). The crisis deeply impacted both family relationships and the mobility trajectories of most academics I spoke to. As shown, some participants returned to their home countries and lived temporarily with their immediate family members, which shows the reliance on family and kinship relationships in home countries, which can be still seen as a sort of ‘haven’ (Lasch, 1976). An increase in the reliance of transnational family and kin ties was evidenced in that many participants underlined the ‘checking culture’ and frequent contact between their transnational consanguineal, affinal and kinship ties. Concerns and anxieties regarding employment contracts, visa and residence issues, financial problems and accommodation issues were on the minds of many academics during this period. Thus, considering the changes in family relationships, formations and the mobility trajectories of migrant academics and grave concerns and anxieties in the social relationships of academics, the Covid-19 pandemic and national responses to it (e.g., travel restrictions and social distancing rules) negatively impacted participants, deeply unsettled the family and personal relationships of academics that had been maintained from afar.

## 9.3. Theoretical Implications on Key Concepts

In this section, I briefly present how the findings of the project relate to wider discussions of the major concepts used in this research. First, there is a discussion of spatiotemporality and transnational family relationships. Then, I focus on this research findings’ implications on understanding family relationships in general. After that, I focus on institutional dynamics in shaping transnational family relationships. I argue that one of the factors that distinguish the context of migrant academics from others is their embeddedness in institutional factors. I discuss the wider conceptual influences of the context of migrant academics in Britain which is characterised by both a restrictive migration regime and neoliberal HE system. Finally, there is a discussion of this research findings’ implications of understanding social network and migrant transnationalism in general.

### **9.3.1. Spatio-temporality in Transnational Family Relationships**

The discussions of spatio-temporality in this research have timely implications for the transnational family relationships literature. This research has provided empirical evidence of transnational family relationships of migrants who are highly mobile yet also temporally conditioned. Regarding their mobility, as shown in section 5.2., the migration and mobility trajectories of academics who participated in this research cannot be analysed within the existing vocabularies of traditional settler migration (Basch et al., 1994; Glick-Schiller et al., 1992). As stated in the literature review (see, 3.3.), academic staff working at HE institutions tend to engage in various academic activities that require physical mobility such as changing institutions; attending academic conferences and short term excursions. Some studies even stress that the aero-mobilities of academics have reached a point that threatens global environment (Higham et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2019). Similarly, some academics stated that they tend to change their institutions and cities of living frequently due to reasons of personal. In a such mobility context, in many cases, migration is not a one-time rupture in the personal biographies of academics. Nor are traditional terms such as border-crossing and settling in a place sufficient for categorising these migrants (see section 5.2.). Instead, such migrants are always on the move, while their mobility trajectories and migratory experiences are also defined within various temporal structures and time frames. Despite having high levels of physical mobility and a so-called privileged status, migrant academics can experience disjuncture and discontinuities, waiting, immobility, temporariness and temporal precarity over the course of their lives (see section 6.2). Therefore, this research makes a critical contribution to the recent spatiotemporal turn in migration studies by showing the transnational family relationships of academics.

This spatiotemporal turn aims at analysing the increasing physical mobility of migrants within various temporal structures and time frames (Baas & Yeoh, 2019; Moreau & Robertson, 2019; Robertson, 2021). For instance, in order to analyse the spatiotemporal dimensions of migratory experiences, Robertson (2021) proposes the concept of ‘*chronomobilites’* to investigate ‘the disjunctures, velocities, synchronizations and rhythms of everyday mobile lives and the meanings they entail’ (p. 10). Such a spatiotemporal focus is of paramount significance in analysing various family relationships in the lives of temporally heterogeneous contemporary migrants. In this regard, migrant academics are neither an exception nor a marginal group whose experiences and relationships are uninfluenced by temporal structures and frames. Apart from migrant academics (Kim et al., 2021; Wang, 2020), recent studies in migration literature include mobile youth (Harris et al., 2020), domestic workers (Cojocaru, 2020), temporary visa holders and undocumented migrants (Merla & Smit, 2020; Stevens, 2019), English teachers (Collins & Shubin, 2015) and IT professionals (Axelsson, 2017) to name but a few.

However, such an emphasis on analysing the temporally heterogenous family ties of migrants in a multi-directional and multilocational transnational setting has not yet been adequately addressed both the transnational family and HE literature. Much of the migration literature envisages time and temporality in an objective and materialistic sense, ‘that is, how migrants “share” time and organise “care time” across transnational space” (Robertson, 2021, p. 29). Similarly, much of the HE literature conceptualises academics’ migration as bi-directional; migrating from one country to another, of which consequences are generally creating brain gain or brain drain (Giousmpasaglou & Koniordos, 2017; Hussain, 2015; Tremblay, 2005). However, this research shows that migrant academics tend to have multi-locational mobility patterns and social networks scattered around different parts of the world (see, Chapter 8). Therefore, this research’s original contribution to the literature also lies in its focus on analysing transnational family relationships in terms of disjunctures and discontinuities in individual biographies, temporal liminality, and precarity under the influence of national time regimes, syncing and desyncing in maintaining family relationships.

### **9.3.2. Understanding Family Relationships**

The critical implications of this research to the understanding of family and family relationships are twofold. First, regarding the conceptualisation of families and family relationships, this research showed how individuals exert agency to manage and maintain their ‘floating ties’ (Wilding, 2014) with family and kinship members scattered across various parts of the world. As shown in Chapters Six and Seven, transnational family relationships are always experienced on ground that is firmly embedded in time and space. Within this regime of physical mobility influenced by multiple temporal structures and time regimes, both the idea of ‘family’ and its practices are also constantly on the move. Thus, migrant academics’ families are always ‘in motion’ since they are also ‘ebbing and flowing through time and space’ (Murray et al., 2019) alongside migrants themselves.

Second, against the backdrop of such a focus on individual agency, kinning of friendship ties, multi-local, multi-national, floating and fluid family ties and relationships, this research shows that caring practices can still serve as a sort of anchoring mechanism for these far-flung multi-national family ties. The notion of multi-locality and fragmented family notions and ties are stressed in the literature, for example in patchwork families (Holmes, 2010; Schier, 2016). However, this research contributes to this strand of the literature by showing that even in multi-local, temporally heterogeneous, flexible, fluid families, floating family ties are reliant upon exchanges of care and emotional support. Therefore, the persistence of local and transnational family relationships in the lives of migrant academics participated in this research can be a good example of the concept of social anchoring developed by Grzymala-Kazlowska (2016). According to her, social anchoring signifies a ‘process of finding significant references and grounded points which enable migrants to restore their socio-psychological stability in new life settings and establish their (subjective and objective) footholds in a receiving society’ (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016, p. 12). Despite their levels of mobility, migrant academics tend to seek security and stability which can be found in a variety of resources from national identity to local social networks and family relationships. Although these anchors are seemingly related to the receiving society, they can also be active in transnational spaces. Gryzmala-Kazlowska writes about the simultaneity of anchors in her study investigating the Polish migrants in the UK as to signify ‘tangible, cognitive or virtual anchors crossing state borders’ (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2018, p. 13). Thus, it is safe to argue that local and transnational family relationships, obligations and experiences can act as social anchoring mechanisms in the lives of migrant academics. The persistence of family relationships (both local and transnational) in the context of highly-skilled and more liquid -in the sense of geographical mobility (see Engbersen, 2018)- is a finding that is of paramount significance for both the sociology of family and migration literature.

### **9.3.3. Institutional Factors in Migration and Transnational Family Relationships**

The findings of this research also show how migrants’ transnational family relationships are situated at the intersection of various institutional factors (Kilkey & Merla, 2014). Although academics’ migratory experiences and transnational family relationships are shaped by various dynamics, the particular institutional factors that characterise the context of migrant academics in Britain are composed of the combination of the British migration regime and its HE system. This constitutes a significant finding since it shows that nation-states and their apparatuses still play a determining role, even in contexts of so-called highly-skilled migrants (see Jacobs, 2020). The migration regime in Britain is frequently considered in terms of its restrictive migration regulations, with the effects of Brexit and the so-called hostile environment (Kilkey, 2017; Lulle et al., 2019; Portes, 2016). Most migrant academics do not have access to the public funds designed for British citizens (Benton, et.al., 2022). Moreover, conditions of migrant academics’ lives under highly-restrictive migration regimes are impacted by the influence of the neoliberal, market-driven, outcome-oriented British HE system (Keefe & Courtois, 2019; Maisuria & Cole, 2017; Radice, 2013; Taberner, 2018). The British HE regime creates another dimension of the institutional and structural dynamics shaping the transnational family relationships of academics. The HE regime in Britain is under the influences of neoliberalism and new managerialism (Maisuria & Cole, 2017; Tight, 2019). This environment is characterised by market and profit driven and outcome oriented, ‘McDonaldised universities’ (Cruickshank, 2016; Vita & Case, 2003, p. 383). It is frequently reported that many academics need to deal with the issues of high level of workload but low salaries (Kreber & Hounsell, 2014); psychological problems such as stress and anxiety (Darabi et al., 2017), anti-immigration and the hostile environment discourses especially after Brexit (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021; Marini, 2018b), gender and racial inequalities both in academic career progression and employment conditions of academics (Arday, 2022; Fletcher et al., 2007; Pilkington, 2013). Therefore, in addition to be influenced by a restrictive migration regime, migrant academics also find themselves in an employment context that has many inherent issues and inequality. As a unique contribution, this thesis showed that the collision and combination of these two institutional forces can permeate in not just their employment conditions and professional lives but also their family lives both local and transnational.

As such, their local and transnational family relationships are fundamentally influenced by such a situatedness of their lives in the institutional contexts (see section 6.2.). Moreover, these regulations vary between those academics with or without an EU background. The most salient example of this is seen in the story of non-EU post-doctoral researchers who have only 14 days after their contract finish to find a new job and apply for a new visa (see section 6.2.2). EU background academics still have a more privileged status despite the impact of Brexit (Luthra, 2021; Marini, 2018). This study therefore adds to arguments that the migration literature needs to go beyond the ‘migrant’ and ‘non-migrant’ dichotomy and acknowledge various intermediate forms of migrant (Kilkey, 2017).

### **9.3.4. Social Networks and Migrant Transnationalism**

This research also has conceptual implications regarding understanding the role of migrants’ social networks and family relationships. Recent developments in the literature have drawn attention to this topic and put social networks ‘at the heart of migration studies’ (Ryan et al., 2022, p. 1). However, the role of social networks has not been adequately studied within the context of transnational family relationships. As this research shows, the social networks of migrants and their family relationships are deeply entrenched with each other. A focus on networked migrants is required to overcome the issue of ‘methodological individualism’ (Coleman, 1964, cited in Ryan et al., 2022) by showing that migrants do not ‘act randomly with respect to one another’ (Ryan et al., 2022, p. 1). This research shows that migrants do not only have transnational family ties, rather these ties are embedded in their networked relationships at multiple levels. It also illustrates that each component in the wider networked relationships of migrant academics sit in relation to each other. It is nearly impossible to isolate the transnational family ties of participants from other ties, such as local scientific ties. As shown in sections 8.1. and 8.3., some academics mobilise their scientific ties in Britain for particular transnational family practices. Or in other contexts, we see that some scientific ties in the home country are maintained and kept dormant for possible future use in case of a return migration. Therefore, this research provides a timely example of the significance of investigating the transnational family relationships of migrants in isolation from their wider networked relations and local and transnational embeddedness.

## 9.4. Practical Implications

Apart from its theoretical/conceptual significance, this research has implications concerning the practical side of the migration and family relationships of academic staff. In this section, I present the practical implications and recommendations of this research findings’ concerning British migration regime; the HE system and universities.

First, regarding the British migration regime, the findings of this research showed that the familial and personal dimensions of academics should be considered more in the UK regulations and policy papers. Improving the short-term and long-term mobility of academic staff has become at the top of the agenda of the national and international bodies. A recent OECD report (2022), for instance, stresses that academic mobility is a prerequisite for knowledge creation in the contemporary era by urging governments to launch programs for the mobility of researchers. In this regard, aiming to attract more highly-skilled migrants, the UK Government, in 2021, declared to ‘drive reforms to improve high-skilled migration routes for innovators and entrepreneurs and top talent looking to build careers in the UK’ (Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2021, p. 34). The same year, the UK Science Minister said that the Government had a vision to ‘make the UK a global science superpower’ (Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2021, p. 4). However, neither in the policy objectives nor mobility projects, issues around family and personal relationships of migrant academics are not considered enough (Ackers, 2010). As such, academics’ and their dependants’ visa problems tend to be still at the top of the list of migrant academics’ challenges. For example, this research found that migrant academics have difficulties in bringing their family and kin members for their children’s care as the UK Home Office does not recognise the unpaid care in the visa applications (see, section 7.1.2). The existence of unpaid care provided by and kinship members should be recognised and regarded as a practice in specific family cultures in visa applications.

In a similar vein, the UK migration regime should consider easing the visa processes of migrant academics and their family and kinship members. Due to the restrictive nature of the UK migration regimes, many academics participated in this research, especially non-European background academics (see, Section, 6.2.), reported ‘everyday bordering’ practices being exposed to such as too much paperwork and surveillance (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018). Additionally, the UK Government should consider reducing the cost of family reunification visas of academics’ families. According to a report, as of 2019, one migrant academic having three family members have to pay more than £12000 upfront visa costs to bring their family members to the UK, which excludes the sponsor’s expenses such as sponsorship certificate and ancillary costs (Royal Society, 2019). The UK has one the most expensive skilled worker visa in the world. In 2021, the Royal Society compared the costs of UK visas with similar visa categories of thirty different countries which were labelled as ‘the leading science nations’ such as Germany and USA. The UK Skilled Worker Visa was found 790 % more expensive ‘than the mean total upfront costs for skilled workers across all other leading science nations’ (Royal Society, 2021, p. 4). Therefore, issues of paperwork, surveillance and affordability of migrant academics’ and their family members’ visas should be addressed by the regulators of the UK migration regime.

Second, as for the practical implications for the British HE system, this research provides recommendations and policy implications. First it is clear that the British HE system should create more equal opportunities and inclusion in the academic career progression of academic staff by addressing the existing inequalities and challenges that some migrant academics have. For instance, as this research shows, some migrant academic mothers tend to have disadvantaged positions regarding career progression. In some contexts, they have to deal with both demands of academia and the obligations and expectations coming from their local families and transnational families. As the section 6.3.2. shows, juggling between overlapping expectations, some migrant academic mothers who provide care (both in situ and from afar) stresses how difficult to conduct research and publish papers for them. Considering the British HE system’ reliance on the neoliberal market-driven performance metrics such as quantitative publication records, it is no surprise that many migrant academic mothers lag behind from their fellow academics and even withdraw from their academic careers (Ackers, 2005; Raddon, 2002; Toepell, 2003). Thus, the HE systems should promote more equal opportunities to include disadvantaged groups of migrant academics.

Also, the equality and diversity policies should involve the transnational familial obligations of migrant academics. While the caring relationships in academics’ local and immediate families are widely discussed in the HE literature (Henderson & Moreau, 2020; Huppatz et al., 2018; Ledin et al., 2007), this research showed that migrant academics can also have transnational caring obligations. They can (or be expected to) provide and receive different types of care from afar. The British HE system should acknowledge and develop policy frameworks for these transnational caring obligations. For example, the HE system can allow their migrant academic staff to be more flexible with academic calendar. As the section 6.1.2. shows that some migrant academic staff give particular attention to some particular time periods such as seasons, festivals and national/religious holidays. It is found that return visits to left behind families during these particular times such as Ramadan, Easter or Diwali can enable migrant academic staff to re-synchronise their lives and maintain a semblance of continuity in their sense of transnational family relationships. Enabling migrant academics to engage with transnational family activities such as short-term visits during these periods and recognising these diverse temporal structures and cultural time frames should be of priority for the diverse British HE system.

Finally, universities should also address the family related issues of migrant academic staff in their equality, diversity and inclusion policies. Universities should provide enough support and guidance to their migrant academic staff against the issues they might face. Many academics participated in this research found the universities’ guidance on visa processes inadequate and in some cases, misguiding (see, section 6.2.2). A more comprehensive support mechanisms regarding visa processes of migrant academic staff is required. Also, universities can provide support and guidance regarding housing to migrant academic staff who want to live close to airports or train stations (see, 5.1.2). Similarly, universities should consider providing more support to migrant academic families in the forms of nurseries and paid care facilities since many academics especially who lack financial stability found these options unaffordable (see, section 7.1.1). Furthermore, more psychological support and counselling should be provided to migrant academics who are experiencing stress and anxiety due to having precarious contracts and financial problems. Thus, overall, the British migration regime, its HE system and universities should take these necessary steps to address the existing inequalities and promote the inclusion of migrant academic staff from diverse social and familial background.

9.5. Limitations

As with nearly all social science research projects, this research also has some limitations. One of the main limitations of the research is that its focus on understanding the influences of Covid-19 and the following processes remains narrow. As shown in chapter seven, (see, section 7.2.2), the global pandemic created an unprecedented context for migrants and their transnational family relationships. As noted in the methodology chapter, the collection of some of the data for this research took place before the pandemic. Then, after a process of ‘waiting’, I restarted data collection; in the new research procedure, I redesigned the research so that it could capture the influences of the contextual changes arising from Covid-19 on transnational family relationships. However, since the pandemic was still going on and its effects on these family relationships were not clear, the data related to this research question remained limited.

## 9.6. Further Research

By utilising life-story interviewing technique, this research provided deep and rich data about the family and kinship relationships of migrant academics in Britain. It has become one of the first empirical attempts focussing on the transnational familial relationships of academic staff migrated to the UK.

Although this research has shed light on the family relationships of migrant academics in Britain, more research in this context of academic migration and mobility is required. There is a clear need for investigating the contexts of so-called highly skilled migrants in the transnational family relationship since the literature is overly dominated by labour migrants (Bryceson et al., 2001; Ryan & Mulholland, 2014). As it is emphasised in the literature review (see chapter 2), there is still need for further research in the context of so-called highly-skilled migrants’ transnational family and kinship relationships (Ryan et al., 2015). The academic migration literature also tends to overlook the context of academic staff due to the overconcentration of studies focusing on international student mobility (Teichler, 2015). Thus, studies comparing the lives and relationships of migrant academics in different contexts are needed. A special focus on some groups of migrant academics such as the migrant academic precariat and their migratory experiences and family relationships are also needed. Exploring the transnational and local family relationships of the migrant precariat will shed light on how family relationships are navigated and maintained in highly capricious, dynamic and uncertain fashion of migration and employment conditions (Robertson, 2021b). Qualitative research techniques such as ethnography and focus groups can cast light on how relationships are maintained in these settings.

# 10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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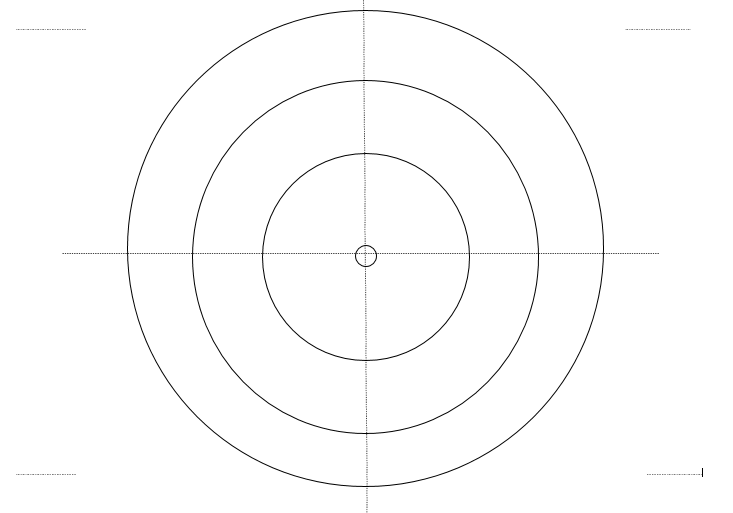
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# 11. APPENDICES

Appendix A : Sociogram Map Example



Appendix B: Invitation Mail to Individuals

Dear Name Surname,

I am Mucahit Aydemir, a PhD student in the Sociological Studies Department at the University of Sheffield. Within the scope of my PhD research project, I am trying to explore how academics who migrated to Britain maintain/negotiate their social and familial relationships across national borders.  
  
For this research, I need participants (academics) who have migrated to the UK for the purpose of work and been working at a university in Britain as an academic at least one year. I am conducting online life-story interviews. That is, if you agree to participate, you will be asked questions about your education, migration, family and professional/academic history. The interviews usually last approximately one hour. Although I am usually conducting interviews through Skype, other VOIP platforms can also suit me fine.  
  
Regarding the time of the interview, since I think that you are busy nowadays (as with nearly all other academics), we can make the conversation whenever you are available. It can be in the weekdays at any time or even at the weekend. It would suffice if we can just arrange a proper time for you. Therefore, the time of the online interview can be totally in accordance with your schedule.  
  
I would be grateful to if you help me and can allocate approximately one hour for talking about academic migration and family relationships across borders. I would like to thank you in advance.  
  
All the ethical procedure related to privacy and confidentiality of research participants are applied throughout the research project. This research has been approved by the University of Sheffield’s Ethics Review Committee administered by the Sociological Studies Department. I am always happy to provide further details and documents if you have any queries.  
  
  
I am looking forward to hearing from you  
Kind Regards  
Mucahit Aydemir  
Sociological Studies  
University of Sheffield

Appendix C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

Research Title: **Transnational Family and Kinship Relationships of Migrant Academics in Britain**

Dear Participant,

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. Before you decide on whether you want to take part in this research project, it is important for you to understand the research being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

**What is the purpose of the research?**

This research is a part of my PhD research project which aims to investigate how academics who have migrated to Britain negotiate their family relationships across national borders.

**Why I have been chosen?**

This research project is designed to conduct interviews with non-UK national academic staff who work at universities in Britain at least one-year. Therefore, you have been chosen since you meet the abovementioned prerequisites for participating to this research project.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be able to keep a copy of this information sheet and you should indicate your agreement via signing the consent form. You can still withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reasons.

**What will happen to me if I take part?**

Since this research adopts the life-story interviewing technique, you will be asked questions about your family and kinship relationships in relation to your migration, education and professional history. In addition to this, you will be asked to fill out a map by the initials of the names of important actors in your life.

**What do I have to?**

Please answer the questions asked to you during the interview session and try to fill out the sociogram in accordance with your everyday experiences. You can leave any questions unanswered without giving any reason.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

Participating in the research is not anticipated to cause you and disadvantages or discomfort. However, you may not want to talk about some possible topics of the interview. Before the interview, you will be briefed about the structure of the interview, please indicate if there is any point that you do not want to talk about. Additionally, if you feel any discomfort or distress during the interview, you can stop the conversation immediately and/or withdraw from the research project. If you withdraw from the research, your collected data up to that moment will be destroyed.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Although there are not immediate benefits for those participating, this research will have an impact in revealing how the family and kinship relationships of migrant academics in Britain are negotiated across national borders.

**Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

All the information that I collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Only the researcher will have access the data of this research. You will not be able to be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications. Your university, institution, department and any other details will also not be identified or identifiable. The consent form you signed will be shredded after scanned. Any data collected about you in the interviews will be filed and stored in encrypted file in a password-protected computer. All the identifiable data will be destroyed after the research project is completed.

**Will I be recorded, and will the recorded media be used?**

The interviews will be audio recorded by an encrypted audio recorder in order to protect the authenticity of what you have said. The recorded media is not going to be used anywhere. The audio records will be immediately transferred to an encrypted file in a password protected computer. Then, the audio records will be deleted from the digital recorder. As soon as the audio records are transcribed into texts, all the audio files will be destroyed from the password-protected computer as well.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The results of this study will be written up in my PhD thesis. I may present the results in academic conferences or publish in peer-reviewed academic journals. I may also include direct quotes from the interviews we have had together. However, they will not be identifiable and I will refer to what you said by using a pretend name. If you wish to be given a copy of the findings resulting from the research, please ask me directly or through the contact details below.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research project is as a part of the researcher’s doctoral education in the Sociological Studies Department at the University of Sheffield. It is a self-funded project by the researcher (Mücahit Aydemir).

**Who is ethically reviewed the project?**

This research has been subjected to the ethical review and approved by the University of Sheffield’s ethics review panel, through the Sociological Studies Department.

**Contact for Further Information**

*Researcher:*

Mücahit Aydemir, PhD Student Sociological Studies the University of Sheffield; 7748172018; [maydemir1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:maydemir1@sheffield.ac.uk)

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Louise Ryan, Prof. Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield; 0114 222 641; [louise.ryan@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:louise.ryan@sheffield.ac.uk)

Majella Kilkey, Dr., Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield; 0114 222 6459;

[m.kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:m.kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk)

Appendix D: CONSENT FORM

**Transnational**

**Family Relationships of Migrant Academics in Britain**

**Consent Form**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Please tick the appropriate boxes*** | | | | **Yes** | **No** |
| **Taking Part in the Project** | | | |  |  |
| I have read and understood the project information sheet and the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.) | | | |  |  |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | | | |  |  |
| I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include being interviewed and being audio recorded. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw. | | | |  |  |
| **How my information will be used during and after the project** | | | |  |  |
| I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project. | | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, journal articles and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this. | | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that only the researcher (Mücahit Aydemir) and his supervisors whose details given below will have access to this data. | | | |  |  |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | | | |
| Name of participant | Signature | Date | | | |
|  |  |  | | | |
| Name of Researcher | Signature | Date | | | |

**Contact for Further Information**

*Researcher:*

Mücahit Aydemir, PhD Student Sociological Studies the University of Sheffield; 7748172018; [maydemir1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:maydemir1@sheffield.ac.uk)

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Majella Kilkey, Dr., Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield; 0114 222 6459;

[m.kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:m.kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk)

Appendix E**: INVITATION EMAIL to ORGANIZATIONS**

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am Mucahit Aydemir, a PhD researcher in the Sociological Studies Dept. at the University of Sheffield. I am conducting a research project which aims to understand how academics who migrated to Britain maintain their family relationships at a distance. Within the scope of this research project, I am conducting interviews with international academics in Britain.

For this research, I need participants (academics) who migrated to Britain from Japan. I found your organisation on the Internet. After getting ethical approval from the University of Sheffield, I and my supervisors thought that your organisation (name of the organisation) could help me reach out to potential participants (academics) whose background is Japan. I have prepared a recruitment email draft which explains the research and suggests academics to contact with me if they are interested in the research. I circulate the email through universities’ research voluntary email lists.

I would be pleased if you can help me circulating the recruitment email through your email lists or databases. As I mentioned, the email explains the research and just suggests contacting me if they are interested.

You can find the recruitment email draft attached to this email. Additionally, I am also sending the Participant Information Sheet of the research project. All the ethical procedures related to privacy and confidentiality of research participants are applied throughout the research project. I am happy to provide further detail about the research project if needed.

I would be grateful if you accept helping me.

Many Thanks in advance,

Looking forward to hearing from you

Kind Regards,

Mucahit Aydemir

PhD Researcher, Sociological Studies

The University of Sheffield

Appendix F: ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER



Appendix G**: ETHICAL PROCEDURE FOR THE CONDUCT OF SOCIOGRAM**

**THE ETHICAL APPLICATION FOR THE USE OF THE EGO-CENTRIC NETWORK MAP AS**

**EMBEDDED IN QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS**

This document is designed for explaining the ethical dimension of using sociogram a visualisation technique. That is, the PhD research project that I undertake investigates the transnational family and kinship relationships of migrant academics in Britain through qualitative interviews. Considering that using the ego-centric network mapping (also known as targeted sociogram) technique will enrich the data (elaborated in ‘The Rationale’ section A1), I would like to use the ego-centric network mapping technique as embedded in qualitative interviews. Within this document, I will illustrate how any potential ethical issues related to this technique will be addressed.

**A. General Overview: The Ego-Centric Network Map**

This research will use the ego-centric network map i.e. target sociogram technique embedded in life story qualitative interviews. Although I will discuss the procedure later in detail, to give a general overview of the method; the ego-centric network mapping technique is a paper-based network mapping tool in which there are four (or more) concentric circles. The quadrants are named in relation to the research phenomenon such as family, university and local networks. The participant is asked to place just the initials of the names on the circles in relation to his/her degree of closeness. In this section, I will present the reasons why I would like to add this technique to the existing data collection method. Then, after presenting how this tool will be used, I will show how the potential ethical issues related to the usage of this technique will be addressed.

**1. The Rationale**

The main reason for using this technique in the research project is to enrich the data about the transnational family relationships of migrant academics in Britain. The benefit of using this technique in this research project has two dimensions: epistemological and methodological dimensions.

First, it will help explore how transnational family networks are experienced/embedded in the everyday lives of migrant academics. As it is highlighted in the transnational family relationships literature, the family networks across national borders are characterised by relationality and subjectivity (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Kilkey & Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2016; Wilding, 2006). That is to say, one cannot generalise the reliance and intensity of transnational family networks among other social networks. The literature on the migration of academics emphasises the different types of networks such as diasporic and scientific networks (Ackers & Gill, 2008). Thus, by using the ego-centric network map technique, this research project will explore how transnational family networks are positioned in the lives of migrant academics in Britain among their other social relationships.

Moreover, the qualitative ego-centric network map’s potential on exploring/understanding migrants’ social networks such as family and kinship relationship has long been appreciated in the literature. For example, some preliminary ethnographic studies (Barnes, 1954; Bott, 1957; Mitchell, 1969) employed ego-centric network mapping technique to explore how different kinship relationships are structured in different contexts. Similarly, Hollstein (2002) used this technique for understanding the social networks of the elderly; Ryan et.al. (2014) utilised it in order to understand how social relationships of highly-skilled migrants in London are created, sustained and changed over time; Bilecen & Faist (2015) for exploring the transnational knowledge transfer networks of doctoral students and finally Altissimo (2016) used this method of analysis for exploring the lifeworlds of international students (see also Tubaro,et al., 2016). According to McCarty et al., (2007) who compare different social network mapping and visualisation techniques: ‘if the research topic is fundamentally interpersonal (such as influences on migration choices or political opinion) then the personal network visualization provides a perspective on these topics that cannot be gained otherwise’ (p. 159). Therefore, one of the main reasons of adding this research instrument to the data collection method of this research stems from the ability of the introduced technique of understanding/exploring the research phenomenon in a more comprehensive way.

Secondly, on the methodological dimension, the use of ego-centric network mapping technique will grant this research to generate richer data. The research employing this technique emphasises that visualisation enables participants to structure and analyse the actors in their personal social networks. According to Tubaro et. al., (2016) visualising the social networks through the use of ego-centric network maps embedded in qualitative interviews:

…gives participants a more global view of their relationships and the social contexts they are embedded in, a view that would not emerge spontaneously from just describing their relationships in interviews, or adding names of contacts to a list in a questionnaire (p.3).

Moreover, unlike the quantitative computer-based network maps, this technique focusses on the meanings, interpretations of network relationships rather than merely on the connections between dyadic relationships (Altissimo, 2016). As Ryan et al., (2014) argue that ‘one advantage of paper diagrams, in contrast to post-hoc software-based representations, is that they are completed by the participants during the interview; adding to the richness of data collected’. Additionally, since participants are allowed to draw arrows (to show, for example, mobilities) or change the place of the sticky note will help illustrate the dynamism in the networked transnational family relationships of migrant academics (Altissimo, 2016). Researchers using this technique state that although the completion of the map generally takes 15-20 mins, participants usually go back to the map they filled to show and refer specific important actors in their lives. Thus, using the ego-centric network map will have the potential to enrich the data collected by qualitative life-story interviews by visualising the dynamics transnational family relationships of migrant academics in Britain.

**2. The Procedure**

To mention the ego-centric network mapping procedure that this research will pursue briefly, four concentric circles will be printed in a A3 format paper, the core referring to the ego (the interviewee, as the focal person) while the other concentric circles refer to the alters i.e. actors in the life of the focal person. The interviewee will be asked to place just the initials of the names of the important actors/ people in her/his life by using sticky notes.

The four quadrants will not be given any specific names referring to different life-domains. According to the reflections of Ryan et al., (2014) who gave specific names to the four quadrants (as; family, friends, work and neighbourhood), using pre-set and strict names to the life-domains can play a ‘restrictive’ role. Due to this reason, participants will be asked to name the quadrants in accordance with their life domains. However, since I do not want to make the process more complicated and difficult to understand (Ryan et al., (2014) note that even some highly-skilled migrants had some difficulties in comprehending the procedure), I will give an example naming of the quadrants (as the family, diasporic, scientific and local networks) and let the participant to name the quadrants in accordance with her/his important life-domains.

The sticky notes will be in four different colours. The reason of this is that the participant can group the relationships within a specific life-domains. In addition to this, using sticky notes (rather than pen and pencils) gives the participant the chance of moving the initials of the names between different circles instead of striking through letters. Additionally, the participant will be allowed to draw arrows to illustrate the geographical mobility or connection between relationships. Such a strategy will provide ‘enough subjectivity and standardisation at the same time for the interviewee to depict their network quite freely’ (Altissimo, 2016, p. 3).

I will explain the map clearly and ask the participant whether she/he has any questions. Then, I will give the participant enough time to think and fill out the map. According to Ryan’s (2016) experiences, the completion of the ego-centric maps generally takes 15-20 mins. After completion, the participant will be asked to give a brief explanation of actors (as initials of names) in the map and I will ask probing questions for exploring the meaning and interpretations ascribed to specific networks such as family, scientific, diasporic and local networks. Finally, the participant will be told that she/he can go back to map to add, change or illustrate an event at any time during the interview (Tubaro et al., 2016). In the case of conducting the interviews through Skype or any other VOIP, the same process applied to the consent forms will be used. That is, the draft of the ego-centric network map will be sent to the participant through email and the participant will be asked to fill the map in accordance with the guide above. After that, the participant will be asked to send the scanned version of the ego-centric network map. The scanned ego-centric network maps will be stored in a password-protected and computer.

For the analysis, Ryan’s (2016) two-phased integrated method in which the narrative analysis of the interview transcript and the analysis of images and drawings in the ego-centric network map are analysed will be used. As Tubaro et al., (2016) emphasise that ‘the joint analysis of visuals and narratives offers a systematized, holistic view of relationships, and provides more comprehensive and far-reaching insight than conventional qualitative methods’ (p.2).

**3. Informed Consent, Data Confidentiality and Anonymity**

As aforementioned, the ego-centric network mapping technique will be applied to the same sample group as embedded and as a part (approximately 15-20 mins) of the life-story interviewing technique. All the ethical principles articulated in policy documents (GDPR 2018; UoS 2018) and detailed in my previous application form will be adopted during the data collection process of the ego-centric network mapping too.

Consent: The informed consent of the participants will be obtained from all participants. Before the interviews, participants will be given the information sheets and consent forms. All participants will be given enough time to read carefully both documents and be ensured that they can ask questions about the research. They will be asked to keep the information sheets in case of a need arise for contacting. For face-to-face interviews, participants’ written consents will be obtained by asking them to sign the consent form before the interview –if they agree with the terms in the forms. The participants who take part in this research through Skype will be asked to send the signed and scanned consent form before the interviews. The information sheets and consent forms are in line with the new GDPR legislation recently provided by the University. They will be reassured that their personal details such as names, numbers, email address, their universities and departments will not be identifiable by no means, and their words can be quoted by using a pretend name in a PhD thesis or an article in a peer-review academic journal.

Additionally, through the information sheet, participants will be informed about the purpose of using the ego-centric network map; what the technique involves and who will have access to the data and where it will be held. Additionally, the participants will be reassured that their participation in the research is entirely voluntary and they can withdraw at any time without providing any reason and that their data will be destroyed if they wish. They will also be provided with a verbal overview immediately prior to the use of ego-centric network mapping process embedded in the life-story interviewing technique.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: The anonymity and the confidentiality of the data generated from the ego-centric network maps will be strictly protected throughout this task too. Participants will be allowed to write only the initials of the names of actors/alters. Additionally, although it is not anticipated, participants might give proper nouns to the quadrants/life-domains. In order to secure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant and the alters, there will be a process of checking and anonymising any identifiable data appearing on the map. After this process, the map will be able to be published in any documents. However, it is less likely to publish all the network maps in the publications since, the ego-centric networks maps, in essence, do not mean a lot without the meanings and interpretations ascribed to different kinds of social networks. Since the ego-centric network maps would seem a mere cluster of letters without the narrative, it is more likely to publish my narrative analysis and interpretations generated from the map (Altissimo, 2016). Nonetheless, in case of publishing an ego-centric network map, as elaborated above, there will not be any identifiable data on it.

Any Potential Harm:

Although using the ego-centric network mapping technique as embedded in qualitative interviews does not involve any direct potential harm to participants, it is of paramount importance to secure the safety and wellbeing of the participant and the researcher (Participant and Researcher Safety and Well-Being Policy’ (No.3) of the University of Sheffield). The participants will be reassured that they can leave filling out the ego-centric network map without giving any reason or withdraw from taking part in the research at any time. If they want to withdraw from the research their collected data up to that moment will be destroyed from all resources.

If a participant shows distress during completing the map, firstly, I will take appropriate steps to manage the immediate situation such as offering a break, or withdrawal from the research. If a serious issue which I am not qualified enough to offer assistance arises, I will refer the participant to receive professional support. Firstly, universities provide health service to their staff. I will have contact details of the psychological/mental support or counselling at the university of each participant prior to the interview taking place. The University of Sheffield has a special unit under the Human Resources dept. for ensuring the mental well-being of the International staff. Moreover, the university offers health-line which is open 24/7 and online referral system regarding the mental well-being of its staff. Moreover, the university (HR. Dept) also provides legal support for the international academic staff. Thus, I will investigate the institutional legal/mental/social and psychological support and counselling services and will refer the participants if it is needed. Furthermore, the national non-profit organisations also provide these kinds of support such as ‘Migrant Help UK’; JCWT (Joint Council for the Welfare of Migrants) and Praxis UK and University; University College Union (UCU) and Higher Education Academy (HEA). Thus, in case of the absence of the institutional support detailed above, the participant who has shown distress will be referred to the organisations listed above in order to receive professional psychological help.

**4. Data Storage and Security**

**T**he completed ego-centric network maps will be scanned after the interviews. The scanned versions of the ego-centric network maps will be stored within a different password-protected file (named ENM-MA-2020 referring to ‘Ego-Centric Network Maps conducted by Mucahit Aydemir in 2020) in the password-protected computer. The scanned ego-centric network maps generated from Skype interviews will also be stored in the same file. The hard-copy forms of the ego-centric network maps will be stored my private locker in the PGR office of the Sociological Studies Dept. After scanning all the maps, I will back up the data through the Google Drive service provided me by the University of Sheffield mail services. After that, I will destroy the hard copy forms of the maps by using a shredder.

My supervisors will be able to access only the anonymised versions of the maps. However, the non-anonymised maps will only be accessible to the researcher. After the anonymisation period, as stated above, any identifiable data on the maps will be removed. After six years, all the anonymised and interpreted data collected from this study will be destroyed in full compliance with the Information Commissioner’s Office’s guidance on ‘Deleting Personal Data’ (2018). In this regard, the data will be deleted from devices, services and servers.

Appendix H**: ETHICAL TRAINING RECORD**



Appendix I: QUESTIONNAIRE

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS OF MIGRANT ACADEMIC STAFF in BRITAIN**

* Thank you for agreeing to take in part in the research
* Introducing who I am and what the research project is about
* Going through the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form
* Giving the participant the opportunity to ask any questions

**PARTICIPANT CODE:**

* + 1. **Academic/Professional/Employment Biography**
       1. Could you tell me about your professional history? When did you become an academic staff?
          1. Where have you worked as an academic staff?

Only in the UK?

Country of Origin?

Other country……….?

1. What is your current academic position?

Postdoctoral Research/Teaching Assistantship

Assistant or Associate Lecturer

Senior Lecturer or Reader

Associate Professor

Professor

Dean

1. What is your contract type?

Full-Time Open Ended

Full-Time Fixed Term

Part-Time Open-Ended

Part-Time Fixed Term

Other

1. What is your annual income level?

≤ £19,999

£ 20,000 – £39,000

40,000–59,999

 ≥£60,000

**ii. Migration Biography**

1. Can you tell me how have you ended up here in Britain?
   1. Can you remember when did you first come to Britain?
2. Can I ask you why did you leave your home country?
   1. What was your main motivation for coming to Britain?

**iii. Personal/Family Information**

1. What is your nationality?
   * 1. Do you hold British citizenship?
        + 1. If yes, when did you get citizenship?
2. How old are you?

25-39

40-55

55-Plus

1. What is your marital status?

Single never-married

Married

Not Married but cohabiting

Long-term boy/girl-friend not cohabitating

Separated/Divorced

Other (pls. note what): …………………………….

1. Do you have any children?
   1. If yes; how many?

1

2

3

More: ……………

1. How old are your children?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Age*  *Number of Children* | 0-3 | 4-7 | 8-11 | 12-15 | 15-18 | 18Plus |
| 1. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| More … |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. How old are your parents?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Below 45 | 46-54 | 55-64 | 65-74 | 75-85 | 85Plus | Passed  Away |
| Mother |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Father |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

* 1. Do they have any chronic disease or need continuous care?

1. **Location of Family Members**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Spouse or Partner | Children | Parents | Grandparents | Significant Others |
| In UK living together |  |  |  |  |  |
| In UK but in another town |  |  |  |  |  |
| In the same town but not together |  |  |  |  |  |
| Living in the Home Country |  |  |  |  |  |
| Living in Another Country (Note) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other Arrangement |  |  |  |  |  |

Appendix J**: TOPIC GUIDE**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS OF MIGRANT ACADEMIC STAFF in BRITAIN**

* Thank you for agreeing to take in part in the research
* Introducing who I am and what the research project is about
* Going through the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form
* Giving the participant the opportunity to ask any questions

**PARTICIPANT CODE:**

1. Your Social Life
   1. How would you describe your social life here?
   2. Covid-19 Crisis and Social Life
      1. Lockdown Process and Socialisation Practices of Participants
   3. In general, who are the important actors in your life?
      1. Introducing and filling out the ego-centric network map
         1. Probing ‘the significant persons’ in the participants’ lives in light of the sociogram map
2. **Transnational Family/Care Practices**
3. Family Care
   1. [Based on Q10 in the questionnaire] Childcare Arrangements
      1. [Based on Q10] the type of caring practices to the left behind children
      2. Any shifts around childcaring arrangements over the course of time
      3. [Based on Q8] nurseries and professional services
         1. Probe care delegation
      4. [Based on Q9] the division of domestic labour around childcaring
         1. [Based on Q3 and Q2] Probe questions around gender and time management
   2. Caring Arrangement to Elderly Parents
      1. [Based on Q10] types of caring practices between parents and migrants
      2. The use of professional services for the care of left behind parents
         1. [Based on Q4 and Q3] Probe impacts of professional services on financial situation
         2. Probe care delegation
      3. [Based on Q3 and Q2] Probe questions around gender and time management
      4. The changes in the caring arrangements over time
   3. Receiving Care
      1. [Based on Q10] types of care received from family relationships
         1. Probe financial, emotional and social support and care
      2. [Based on Q9] from whom care is received most
      3. When the participants feel the need to receive care most
         1. Probe Covid-19 and the ensuing lockdown period
   4. [Based on Q13] Family Visits
      1. Frequency to visit
         1. Enough or not?
            1. Alternative ways to visit family
            2. Visits of family and kin to Britain
      2. Any obligations, expectations during family visits
         1. Probing Gifts
      3. [Based on Q3 and Q4] Visits’ impacts on Financial Status
      4. Family Visits and Migratory Regulations
         1. Any limits of absence days in the UK, probing permanent residence permit [based on Q7]
4. Communication
   1. Ways of Communication
      1. [Based on Q13] which mediums for which family members
   2. The feeling when you communicate with [based on above]
      1. Probe cultural differences, expectations
      2. [Based on Q1 and Q2] Probe distances and migration
   3. The changes in communication preference over the course of time
   4. The advantages and drawbacks of the preferred communication medium
      1. Probe Time Allocation [by considering Q3 and Q2]
5. Financial Remittances
   1. Tailor a question about financial remittances and personal financial situations based on answers to the Q4, Q3 and Q2
      1. Ways of sending and receiving money (prb., WesternUnion, moneygram etc)
   2. Covid-19 and the financial situation
      1. Probe employment security based on Q3
      2. Probe financial support during the lockdown process based on Q4
   3. Sending and Receiving Material (gifts, heirlooms etc)
      1. Probe cultural differences based on Q7
6. **Gender and Generational Differences**
7. The cultural and familial understanding you were brought up
   1. Probing the local and cultural influences on gender norms
8. (Gendered) Expectations of the left-behind family members?
   1. Differences understandings of gender and family life between you and family members
   2. Probe normative family life timeline progression (e.g., getting married and having baby) based on the answers of Q8, Q9 and Q10.
9. Gender in academia [based on Q2, Q3 and Q5]
   1. Any gendered differences in academia career
      1. Probe intersection of gender with other differences e.g., race, ethnicity and age
         1. Probing the migration regimes in Britain and the hostile environment
   2. Issues around childcare and academic career progression
      1. [based on Q10 and Q11] and time management
   3. [Based on Q9] the division of labour in domestic environments
10. **Changes**
11. [Based on Q5 and Q6] Changes in family relationships during participants’ stay in Britain?
    1. Can you identify a specific turning point which changed your relationships dramatically?
12. Specific shifts [Based on Q5]
    1. Describing two periods (in life that you feel the need for contacting with your family most and the least)?
13. **Migration and Mobility Rights**
14. Perceptions towards migration and mobility rights of Britain?
    1. Differences between European background and non-EU background [based on Q5 and Q7]
15. Previous experiences with the Home Office and British Migration Regime in general
    1. Probe family reunification, dependant visas based on
    2. The visa process and participants experiences
       1. Probe differences between EU and non-EU academics based on Q7
       2. Comparing migration regulations with your previous experiences based on Q5
    3. Getting any institutional support from the university?
       1. Brexit and its effects on their perceptions of British migration regime
       2. Covid-19 and its impacts on your job and migration statuses
          1. Probe ILR and citizenship experiences plans
    4. Left-behind family members’ perceptions of British migration regime
       1. Family reunification plans and experiences [based on Q13]
16. **Future Plans**
17. What are your future plans?
18. Is there anything about that you would like to tell me about, that we haven’t already talked about?

1. The term ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ is a condition imposed by the British migration regime on visas for the purposes of work, family and study. It restricts migrants’ access to welfare, income and housing benefits provided by governmental/public funds (see Askola, 2016; Benton et al., 2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The term APS refers to Academic Pay Spine range. For the purposes of analysis, HESA divides the annual salary ranges of contracted academic staff into six different ranges starting from £19612 and below to £62728 and more (for all the APS range, see the Table 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The term Arab Spring refers to a series of anti-government protests and political uprisings happening in multiple Arab states during 2010s. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gender, rather than being an intrinsic trait of individuals, is a psychologically embedded social construct that actively appears in everyday human contact. Candace West and Don Zimmerman coined the phrase ‘doing gender’ in their 1987 paper *Gender and Society*. This study claims that an individual's performance is meant to establish gendered behaviour as naturally occurring (West & Zimmerman, 1987). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)