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This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

Fragile dreams:

exploring narratives of support, widowhood, & caring in later life migration

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Abstract

My ethnographic work in the Costa del Sol region of Spain explores the complex social relationships that constitute and shape the daily lives of older British migrants. Through individual narratives and ethnographic encounters, I show how the often aspired to 'migration dream' is more fragile than anticipated. I examine how social relationships – friendships, acquaintanceships, family and others – shape how these older migrants manage unanticipated changes and challenges such as widowhood. By paying attention to how older migrants create, develop, transform and confront their relationships, I show how they are a central feature of both their experiences of later life and their migration dream. I show how older British migrants value and practice various forms of informal social and emotional support, help, and caring.

Through my ascribed role as an adopted granddaughter, my research explores the importance of friendships *between* older people as they decide how and who to ask for help in different contexts. I also address the absence of widowhood within human geography through my multi-dimensional conceptualisation of this process, showing how it can be transformative for social relationships. I consider how the emotionally and socially complex questions of where to die and how to manage the presence of death shape these relationships. Moreover, I build towards understanding the caring community within which these migrants situate themselves. My thesis contributes to understanding how older migrants navigate social relationships, both proximately and transnationally. Moreover, through my empirical contributions I develop new understandings about how these migrants negotiate and contend with experiences that have traditionally received limited attention across human geography.

Lay Summary

Based in the Costa del Sol region of Spain, my thesis explores the everyday experiences of older British migrants living there. I focus upon understanding how these migrants deal with unexpected challenges, and the fragility of their migration 'dream'. I explore the role of social relationships - friendships, acquaintanceship, and family - in shaping how these older migrants negotiate challenges such as widowhood, and the presence of death within their later lives. Through the adopted granddaughter role that my participants gave me, I focus on the different forms of social and emotional support and caring that these older British migrants provide one another. I develop a conceptualisation of widowhood; a concept that has been under-researched within human geography. I also consider why the Costa del Sol can be a place where these older British migrants choose to *live* and *die*.

Keywords:

death, migration, ageing/later life, widowhood, narratives, caring

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Declaration of originality

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that I have not submitted this work for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

I have published parts of this research within the following journal article: Miller, R.G. (2019): (Un)settling home during the Brexit process, *Population, Space and Place*, 25, 2203, https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2203.

Signed: *RGMiller*

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Chapter 1

Complicating the migration dream

Tucked behind Benalmádena-Arroyo de la Miel's bustling main street, I enter the plaza through a grand entrance archway. I see the sign welcoming visitors to 'Plaza España'. As the mid-morning sun travels higher in the sky, almost every

Figure 1: Photograph of Plaza España/'Fountain Square'

outdoor cafe table is occupied. I search for a free seat, settle outside one of the four cafes in the plaza, and order. As I wait for my coffee, I hear the different accents of fellow café-goers. People from Yorkshire, Liverpool, Essex, Scotland, Wales, and other parts of the UK populated this plaza. A sea of older, white, British people enjoying the morning sunshine. As I look around, I find it difficult to distinguish between who lived in this coastal town in southern Spain, and who were tourists. Laughter coming from a group of nine older British people captures my attention. Dressed in bright colours, prescription sunglasses, and practical sunhats, this group had re-arranged the tables to enable face-to-face conversations. Their conversation and laughter mix with the sounds of teaspoons making contact with coffee saucers, the soothing sound of the plaza's bubbling fountain, and the scraping of chairs against the paving as people come and go. Someone is telling a story of when they found themselves locked in the Mercadona supermarket toilet. Others are talking about their TV schedules:

Coronation Street, Holby City, The Chase. They are discussing the merits of each programme in turn. Over the course of their conversations they paused to place their orders with the young Spanish waitress, speaking in English and a little broken Spanish. People said their goodbyes after about an hour: "see you tomorrow - same time same place". One person said "I do love our coffees in Fountain Square".

Figure 2: Plaza España/'Fountain Square'

My encounter with Plaza España and the older British people who spent their mornings socialising there highlights some of the well-known tropes and stereotypes attached to older British migrants living in southern Europe (see O'Reilly 2000). They had colonised a space – renaming and identifying it in English as 'Fountain Square' (see figures 1 and 2 above). Older British migrants and tourists alike drank coffees and beers in the sunshine; a practice associated with perceptions of Spain offering a slow and 'carefree' lifestyle to these older, privileged, migrants (see O'Reilly 2000; Oliver 2008). Through their mundane conversations about television, their limited Spanish, and their shared cultural

norms and practices, there is a collective performing of their 'Britishness' as they understand it. Such a performance is situated within, and shaped by, their Spanish migration context. Together, these practices are symbolic of the migration dream that my participants often spoke of; they wanted to enjoy an active, alfresco, life in the Costa del Sol among likeminded peers. However, as I explore, unexpected challenges can disrupt and transform these older British migrants' fulfilment of their later life migration dreams. Tracing these fragile dreams – of which these 'carefree' coffee mornings are a part – provides an opportunity to understand how older British migrants manage these changes and challenges in their daily lives.

Placing Older British Migrants: The Costa del Sol as a migration destination

The Costa del Sol region is popular with British lifestyle migrants[1], seasonal migrants, and tourists (see Benson and O'Reilly 2009; O'Reilly 2000; King et al. 2000). The popularity of this location with British people was partially informed by the rise of package holidays in the 1970s (O'Reilly 2000), and their tourist gaze

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[1] Lifestyle migrants are often relatively affluent and relatively privileged individuals whose migration is motivated by "the search for a better way of life" (Benson and O'Reilly 2016:21). Benson and O'Reilly (2016) argue lifestyle migration should be utilised as a broader "analytical framework for understanding some forms of migration and how these feature within identity-making, and moral considerations over how to live".

(Urry 1990). Moreover, understandings of this region's relative proximity to the UK, favourable climate, comparatively low cost of living, inexpensive housing, and freedom of movement as citizens of the European Union (King et al. 2000; O'Reilly 2000) were all often-cited factors in why British migrants chose this Spanish region. The Costa del Sol (see figure 3 below), like other Spanish coastal areas, is also populated by northern European migrants from countries such as Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Germany. However, the largest single population of migrants remains British people (O'Reilly, 2017).

Figure 3: map of the Costa del Sol region. My research predominantly focused upon Benalmádena and surrounding areas.

It is estimated over 750,000 British people live in this sunny and temperate region (O'Reilly 2017). However, estimating this population is notoriously difficult due to transient migrant populations and their limited registration of residency with local municipalities (King et al. 2000; O'Reilly 2000, 2017). Despite this, it is acknowledged that a significant proportion of these British migrants in Spain are over sixty years old (Hall and Hardill 2014), resulting in wide-ranging research about this population there (see Giner-Monfort, Hall and Betty 2016; Oliver 2008,

2017). Such research includes, but is not limited to, exploration of how class interacts with the lifestyle migration aspirations of British migrants (Oliver and O'Reilly 2010); the importance of volunteering among older British migrants (Haas 2013); the paradox of having simultaneously more and less time as an older migrant (Oliver 2008); and the role of the perceived British community for migrants living in the Costa del Sol (O'Reilly 2000; Oliver 2017). Moreover, within their edited volume *Practising the Good Life*, Torkington, David and Sardinha (2015:2) explore how migrants construct and experience lifestyle migration; their search for a 'better' way of life. However, across this wide-ranging research there is limited focus on how older British migrants *collectively* respond to, manage, and deal with the events, experiences, and changes that threaten their carefully constructed later life migration dreams (see Oliver 2008, 2017 for exceptions).

In the Costa del Sol there are a plethora of social clubs and activity groups available. Many of these are aimed at attracting older British migrants. These groups played a role in the daily lives of many of the participants I researched with. As Ron, whose narrative I engage with later, describes of the local English language newspaper:

> there is a *whole page* of organisations, so we looked through it and chose ones that we might have an interest in. We joined some of them um one or two we stayed with for about a year, uh but then realised that other things had come along that we preferred to we just gradually backed out of those, uh but for anybody sort of coming out here, there's a mass-I mean there's hardly an interest that you won't find a group.

As visible here, for British migrants volunteering and attending social groups are an important aspect of their identities (Haas 2013). Moreover, in reference to older British migrants living in southern Spain, Oliver et al. (2018:447) note:

> the vast majority in this site were white and middle-class...and their common experiences of migration and retirement within the same site provided foundations for intense social contact.

My research explores the dynamics *within* these social groups, the relationships *between* those who attended regularly (see figure 4 below), and the *places* where these encounters and interactions frequently occurred.

Figure 4: photograph of Louise and Ginny in conversation at an Arroyo-based social club.

While acknowledging migration is a process rather than a one-off event (Benson and O'Reilly 2016), I argue it is important to consider individuals' relationship to place in choosing their migration destination in later life. As I explore through my methodological discussion, most of my fieldwork was located within the Benalmádena[2] area; a place popular with older British migrants and the social groups targeted towards them.

Exploring individual challenges & changes: a particular geopolitical context

Often, the challenges and disruptions that older British migrants face within their migration dream are not initially visible. Rather, these migrants emphasise the countless positive parts of their migration experiences to anyone that asked (see Wallis 2017). As lifestyle migration scholars discuss in detail, lifestyle-motivated migrants use such discourses to justify, explain, and reiterate their successes within their search for a 'better' life (see Torkington et al. 2015; Oliver 2008; O'Reilly 2000). However, as existing research indicates, these privileged migrants face challenges and precarity within their migration context. Well-understood challenges that older British migrants face, include but are not limited to: language barriers and difficulties learning and understanding Spanish; complicated bureaucratic

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[2] Comprised of three parts, Benalmádena includes Benalmádena Costa, Benalmádena Arroyo de la Miel and Benalmádena Pueblo.

processes for becoming and remaining a resident; and limited access to appropriate care and support for vulnerable older migrants (see Torkington et al. 2015; Oliver 2017; O'Reilly 2017; Hall and Hardill 2016). Return migration scholarship has also provided nuanced understandings about why older British migrants return to their country of origin, citing social changes, health decline, and the ageing process (Giner-Monfort et al. 2016; Hall and Hardill 2016).

My research is shaped by this work that problematises popular perceptions of an uncomplicated, care-free, retirement in the sunshine of the Costa del Sol. While lifestyle migration and transnational migration literature has identified and explored some of the negative or difficult aspects of later life migration, less is understood about how older British migrants deal with unexpected difficulties while continuing to position themselves towards the Costa del Sol. I present three under-researched challenges for older British migrants; digital difficulties and being unable to fulfil expectations around communication; the process of widowhood; and the presence and proximity of death within their daily lives. In exploring these challenges, I provide insights into older British migrants' social and emotional lifeworlds (Buttimer 1976; Davidson et al. 2005).

When I arrived at my apartment in Benalmádena Arroyo de la Miel – my home for six months of fieldwork - one of the first things I did was to connect my laptop to the Wi-Fi network. There were numerous Wi-Fi connections available (see figure 5 below).
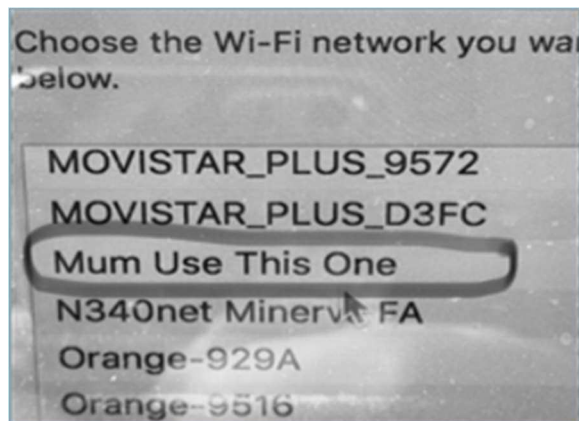
Figure 5: "Mum Use This One" Wi-Fi label provides instructions

Unsurprisingly, '*Mum Use This One'* caught my eye amongst the Wi-Fi names compiled of various numbers and letters. While I did not discover who '*Mum'* was, this public instruction represents the lack of proximate family for most older British migrants living in the Costa del Sol (Hall and Hardill 2016; Oliver 2008). Older British migrants – such as '*Mum'* in this context – experience difficulties and frustrations within their migration. Presented through individual participant narratives, I show how older British migrants' geographically distant and proximate social relationships shape how they deal with these unanticipated difficulties that occur as part of their later life migration. I explore how family relationships, friendships, and acquaintanceships not only influence older British migrants' initial migration but continue to shape their attempts to fulfil their migration dreams. As 'Mum Use This One' indicates, addressing the events and encounters that can challenge older migrants' easy, carefree, dream for their later life can can involve seeking and receiving ongoing

support and advice. I show how asking for and receiving such help and support is a central element of the various social relationships older British migrants enact and navigate within their migration context. Therefore, I move away from common understandings and conceptualisations of care and support for older people as something related to physical decline within the ageing process (see Hall and Hardill 2016; Bowlby 2011). Instead, I explore how the social and emotional caring that these migrants seek, provide, or reject configure how these migrants face, manage, or struggle with the fragility of their dreams *together*.

Substantial geopolitical and economic changes have also affected older British migrants' expectations and hopes of their migration. For example, the everyday economic consequences of the global financial crisis in 2008 have shaped migrants' experiences of living in the Costa del Sol (O'Reilly 2017; Oliver 2017). The implications of the financial crisis included unfavourable exchange rates, lower property values, and negative equity in property that resulted in British migrants in Spain finding their migration project unsustainable (Huete et al. 2013; O'Reilly 2017). Literature on return migration has cited the financial crisis as a series of events that encouraged, or required, British migrants to return to the UK (see Giner-Monfort et al. 2016; Huete et al. 2013; Oliver 2017). Likewise, the Brexit process marks a significant change, and potential for further change, that challenges older British migrants' sense of stability in their decision to live in another European Union country. While Brexit is not dealt with in detail

within this thesis, it is important to recognise that my fieldwork was conducted within the ongoing context of uncertainty for British migrants in Europe, with countless questions and concerns accompanying this geopolitical change. Conducted predominantly between the UK referendum on European Union membership in June 2016 and the invoking of Article 50 in late March 2017, my research was situated within a time of uncertainty. This time has been understood by geographers as a 'limbo' period (see Botterill and Burrell 2019). The opaque, complex, and uncertain Brexit process affected, and continues to affect, the lives and experiences of older British migrants living in the Costa del Sol (Miller 2019). This unprecedented geopolitical change has ongoing and myriad implications beyond the scope of this research. Further research could reflect upon how the Brexit process can reshape older British migrants' social relationships – building upon the attention that my thesis pays to exploring and tracing them within later life migration.

Older British migrants: exploring intersecting identities

I refer to participants through the descriptive categories of 'older British migrant'. I use three complex and overlapping identities that these individuals navigate and negotiate within their lives in Spain. My adoption of this description reflects its use within lifestyle migration literature as a means of critically engaging with, and rejecting, the category of 'expatriate' often associated with these privileged

migrants (see Kunz 2016; O'Reilly 2000). It is therefore important to explore these three intersecting identities in more detail. I now consider how my research engages with them while recognising the inherent limitations of using categories to describe the diverse experiences and characteristics of individual people.

Older: exploring age and ageing

I use 'older' to delineate between the experiences of *all* British migrants and those of advanced years. Such delineation is important in understanding and emphasising the specific challenges and concerns facing older migrants. To define 'older', I engage with Pain, Mowl and Talbot's (2000:378) definition as "those over state retirement age". However, this understanding has limitations particularly when researching with those who have retired early, but who understand themselves as 'older' within a community of 'older people'. Consequently, I pay close attention to the understanding that: "the meaning and impact of ageing are largely socially and economically constructed" although there are "fundamental biological processes" central to understanding ageing (Pain et al. 2000:378). By adopting a methodological approach that situates narratives at the centre of my research (see chapter 3), I am responding to Skinner et al.'s (2015:738) calls for geographies of ageing scholarship to understand "ageing persons as unique, relational beings within the context of their families and homes, or in relation to other persons in the community". Moreover, I draw upon scholarship that has identified the complexities

associated with the importance of place in later life (Rowles 1978), older people's experiences of grief and loss (Moss and Moss 2014) and the role of social relationships in constructing a sense of community among older British migrants in Spain (Haas 2013; Oliver 2017).

Therefore, my approach focuses on accounting for the nuances, contradictions, and messiness of individual experiences and attitudes towards ageing and being understood as 'older' (see Hockey and James 2003; Hopkins and Pain 2007). Reflecting this complexity, I understand 'older' to be a flexible category that can be negotiated, performed, or rejected, by individuals as they experience the ageing process at different rates and in different ways (Miller et al. 2016; Näre, Walsh and Baldassar 2017).

British: national identity in a migration context

For these older migrants, their 'British' identity is important within their daily practices, encounters and experiences within their everyday lives in Spain (O'Reilly 2000, 2017; Walsh 2012). There is a wealth of literature on British people who have become transnational migrants, explaining what it means to be British in such migration contexts (see for example: Ahmed 2012; Benson 2011; Torkington et al. 2015; Walsh 2006, 2012). While it is necessary to critically engage with national identity, the privileges attached to being a white British migrant, and these transnational migrants' conceptualisations of home, I do not intend to duplicate the

high-quality and varied scholarship that has explored these topics (see also Haas 2013; Oliver and O'Reilly 2010; Näre et al. 2017). However, is important to highlight and acknowledge that for most of the older British migrants I encountered – as has been visible within previous research – they have very limited engagement with Spanish people and communities in the Costa del Sol (Haas, 2013). There are several explanations for this lack of engagement that centre upon British migrants' unwillingness or lack of success in learning the Spanish language and the geographical separation of the British communities[3] (for example through the residential 'urbanisations' favoured by some British migrants) (see Oliver 2008; O'Reilly 2000). Overall my research experiences reflects Haas's (2013:1382) observations that:

> The day-to-day life of the people I observed occurred mostly within the British community. Contact with Spanish people is often wished for, but in effect is rare.

Conducting my research in what became the beginning of the Brexit process provides me with an opportunity to understand how Britishness is understood and enacted within a particular migration context, at a certain time (Anderson and Wilson 2017). As noted, although not a significant focus of my research it is important to highlight how the time and place of my fieldwork is inseparable from

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[3] Although beyond the scope of this project, conducting research on the temporalities of those living in the Costa del Sol – Spanish residents and British migrants – would be worthwhile to understand how particular spaces change during the day, and how this may limit meaningful interactions between older British migrants and Spanish residents.

this larger geopolitical context. Therefore, my ethnographic materials provide a grounded opportunity to explore how participants positioned themselves as British and as part of a sense of a British community of migrants. I also consider older British migrants' performance of their national identity alongside growing uncertainties around their futures in the Costa del Sol, and outside of the European Union.

Migrant: expatriate, lifestyle, transnational?

As alluded to above, my use of 'migrant' rejects the use of the problematic term 'expatriate' which has complex colonial histories and suggests an innate sense of privilege for transnational migrants in relation to indigenous populations (Kunz, 2016). However, it is crucial to note that the majority of those individuals I researched with referred to *themselves* as 'expatriates' or 'expats'. In identifying themselves this way, these migrants were distinguishing themselves from other migrants that they encountered within their daily lives, either personally or through media consumption. They described themselves as expatriates to emphasise their position as people living in Spain not akin to 'immigrants', economic migrants, or refugees. As Kunz (2016) identifies within her exploration of the term expatriate, this label is also often implicitly associated with whiteness. When I asked participants why they referred to themselves as 'expats', they were unaware of, or unwilling to engage with, the colonial histories, privilege, and entitlement embedded within the term.

My use of 'migrant' also reflects the categorisation of older British migrants as 'lifestyle migrants'; relatively privileged migrants who have been motivated by a desire for a 'better' lifestyle (Benson and O'Reilly 2009b., 2016, 2018). There has been significant scholarly attention paid to understanding the diverse motivations, experiences, and patterns of migration in later life from the UK to southern European countries, including France and Spain (Benson 2011; O'Reilly 2000; Oliver 2008). Moving from 'retirement migrants' as the dominant framing for older Northern European migrants (see King, Warnes and Williams 2000), lifestyle migration scholars have applied more qualitative, grounded, approaches to understanding these migrants' lives (see Benson and Osbaldiston 2016). As Wallis (2017:19) acknowledges:

> Lifestyle is an amorphous term representing an aesthetically influenced way of meeting pragmatic needs, such as food, shelter and clothing, as well as less-tangible constructs including aspirations, imaginings and identity.

Lifestyle migration literature examines the privilege associated with this way of classifying migrants. For example, Oliver et al. (2018:449) suggest such migration in later life requires "the economic means to migrate" alongside the "demonstration of certain cultural attributes to be able to fit in at certain sites with others sharing that space". As such, the privileges embedded within lifestyle migration are central to how I engage with and understand participants' stories throughout (see Benson and O'Reilly, 2009; Oliver and O'Reilly, 2010). Likewise, the 'migration dream' is itself inseparable from participants' position and privilege. Older British

migrants' attempts to fulfil their dreams cannot be separated from their economic resources, political and social status, and more (Oliver and O'Reilly, 2010). My rejection of the term 'expatriate' or 'expat' within my thesis is my editorial decision; a power that researchers must be reflective of (Ali 2015; Cook and Crang 2007). Consequently, I choose not to attribute privilege or status to one form of migrants over another through the language I use (Kunz 2016). This approach has been adopted by transnational migration scholars in recent years (see for example Walsh 2012; Baldassar 2008, 2013) and is more sensitive to the power and inequalities between different migrants than using *'expats'* throughout.

In using the term 'migrant' to describe participants I situate my research within human geography work on transnational migration and within interdisciplinary research on inherently privileged lifestyle migration. However, like other transnational migration scholars, I acknowledge and emphasise the heterogeneity of older British migrants (see Hall and Hardill, 2016; Oliver and O'Reilly, 2016). I emphasise this awareness through my use of individual narratives as a tool for demonstrating the messy, complex, and sometimes contradictory nature of personal experiences and identities.

Identities-in-common: intersections of older British migrant

My use of 'older British migrant' reflects the intersection of these different aspects of my participants' identities-in-common. These were performed on an ongoing, daily, basis with some elements being emphasised to a larger or lesser extent depending on the individual and their circumstances. As Hopkins (2017:1) suggests: "intersectionality is not only about multiple identities but is about relationality, social context, power relations, complexity, social justice and equalities". For example, some older migrants emphasise a sense of shared British identity among their social groups and organisations to foster and develop a broader sense of belonging (see Haas 2017; O'Reilly 2000). Moreover, other migrants that I encountered rejected the idea of being described as being 'older'. As such, I acknowledge the diverse identifications of older British migrants such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, dis/ability and more; highlighting these intersections within participants' narratives (see also Walsh and Näre's 2016 edited volume). In paying attention to participant's intersecting identities, I am answering Sampaio, King and Walsh's (2018) explicit calls for further research that consider the nexus between ageing and migration; accounting for the "entwined trajectories" of this relationship (see King et al., 2016:182).

Fragile Dreams: exploring challenges and changes experienced by older British migrants

For older British migrants, their migration dream is comprised of complicated aspirations and hopes constructed and reshaped over many years of holidays, conversations, and daydreaming. Oliver and O'Reilly (2010:50) frame these dreams as an individual's "self-realisation project" that centre upon lifestyle migrants' "attempts to turn their backs on the rat-race and downsize for a more simple and worthwhile life". For these older migrants, their individual migration dreams involve a shared aspiration to experience a 'better' and more 'carefree' life grounded in the temperate climate of the Costa del Sol (Torkington et al. 2015). Many of the older British migrants that I researched with emphasised their desire to live a sun-filled, outdoor, life that was both filled with opportunities and activities while also facilitating a slower pace of life (see also Oliver, 2008). As demonstrated within my opening vignette, practices such as drinking coffee in the sunshine alongside peers each day was emphasised as a significant aspect of their collective attempt to fulfil their individual migration dreams.

However, Holmes and Burrows (2012:117) focus on the dreams that remain unfulfilled; that do not live up to expectations or the realisation that "no dream lasts forever". Like the concept of an 'ideal home' (see Clarke, 2001), migration dreams involve an ongoing search that can never be fully realised (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009b). Despite this, these dreams continue to guide migrants as they experience, make decisions

about, and create plans for their migration. While Oliver and O'Reilly consider these dreams through a Bourdieusian analytical lens, and Holmes and Burrows (2012) explore 'disappointed dreams' for return migrants, I focus upon how older British migrants' dreams can shatter or unravel. Therefore, I explore how they confront inconvenient, unimaginable, and often inevitable challenges that can emerge within their later life migration.

While I focus upon the fragility of their migration dreams, I challenge the broader perceptions and discourses of frailty and fragility that often surround older people (Skinner et al. 2015). Through my attention to older British migrants' everyday experiences, I demonstrate how later life migration can be both "liberating and empowering" (King et al. 2016:187), despite unexpected and difficult circumstances. For some of those sitting enjoying their regular coffee and conversation in Plaza España with their proximate peers, this mundane activity is a fulfilment of part of their migration dream. Paying attention to these mundane yet meaningful encounters, I argue that social relationships – of friends, family, and acquaintances - play a significant role in shaping how older British migrants attempt to fulfil their dream(s). My argument builds upon Oliver's (2017:175) assertion that for older British migrants living in Spain:

> it is no exaggeration to say that peers and friends were hugely important in the migrants' lives and 'looking out for others' was a central motto of migrants.

However, as I explore, these social relationships can also complicate older migrants' aspirations for their futures. Family and friends can threaten and unsettle older British migrants' dream of continuing to experience their later life in the Costa del Sol. For example, encounters and interaction can raise previously unconsidered questions of *what next?* and *where to die?* Conversely, they can also *assist* older British migrants in keeping their dreams afloat as challenging conditions require them to reimagine what it is or could be. I demonstrate this through exploring how older British migrants both practice and value the informal social and emotional support, help, and caring that they receive (and provide others with) as they attempt to realise their dreams through their daily lives.

My focus on why older British migrants *stay* when confronted with unanticipated challenges in their later life migration is a contrast to transnational migration research that considers how and why migrants *return* (see Giner-Monfort et al. 2016). Therefore, my overarching aim is to explore the **role that social relationships play in how older British migrants navigate specific challenges and changes within their daily lives in the Costa del Sol.** Three questions, informed by my ethnographic approach, guide my research:

i. *What implications does the process of asking for help have for older British migrants' proximate and distant relationships?*

ii. *How do older British migrants negotiate widowhood, and what role do social relationships play in shaping their experiences of this process?*

iii. *How does the presence of death in the daily lives of older migrants shape their relationships with friends, family, and others?*

My positioning as an adopted granddaughter within social clubs, explored within **chapter 3**, has informed how I explore these questions; emphasising how social relationships are central to my thesis. Through the narratives co-produced with participants, I show how these older migrants enact their social relationships through the practices, norms, interactions and encounters of their daily lives. My thesis aims to reflect richness and complexity of participants' lives and migration experiences. Moreover, I move away from exploring themes through a series of "disembodied quotations" (Back 2007:17). Instead, my narrative approach provides insights into the tensions, expectations, and support that older British migrants experience within the social relationships that shape their migration. Likewise, I use narratives to examine these migrants' *individual* and *shared* experiences.

Chapter 2 situates my empirical research within the context of existing literatures. This review particularly focuses upon widowhood as a previously neglected and under-researched topic within both human geography and the interdisciplinary work of lifestyle migration. **Using widowhood as a lens,** my review of literature traces, develops, and contributes to, work across geographies of ageing, geographies of death, geographies of home, and lifestyle migration scholarship.

Chapter 3 provides an in-depth discussion and justification of my **methodological approach**. I provide insights into how my ascribed role of 'adopted granddaughter' raised unexpected issues of positionality, power, ethics and reciprocal work within my ethnographic research. I also detail the use of my narrative interview and writing approaches; a central element of my thesis.

Chapter 4 explores how older British migrants **navigate familial relationships and friendships through their 'failure' to use their digital devices**. Through this focus, I present understandings of their social relationships in how they ask for help, how proximity shapes this process, and how shared frustrations and challenges can shape older migrants' proximate relationships. I consider the questions of *who* and *how* to ask for help. This discussion is centred on how digital 'disasters', 'failures', and the process of learning can be significant in shaping social relationships and the roles that individuals perform within them.

Chapter 5 engages with the concept of **widowhood in later life migration**. I argue that widowhood is a process that can shape, transform, and challenge social relationships. Widowhood is significant in how older British migrants understand their identities, home, and migration project. Through the encounters with widowed peers and the presence of loss and grief among older British migrants, death is a

significant aspect of their lives. As such, by exploring the experiences of widowhood in later life, human geographers can develop stronger understandings about the challenges experienced within later life migration, and how individuals manage and respond to them.

Chapter 6 focuses on care and caring practices in the context of older British migrants' **time-left-to-live**. I explore how the presence and proximity of death within this community shapes their social relationships and how they are enacted. Through a series of narratives and ethnographic encounters I show how individuals (re)orientate themselves towards living and *dying* in the Costa del Sol; arguing that the care and support provided by others is influential in shaping such decisions. By considering the *whereness* of death, I explore the centrality of this place, and the social relationships within it, for these older individuals.

Chapter 7 presents my **concluding thoughts**, drawing together my empirical and theoretical contributions to human geography, and my recommendations for future research.

As is common with ethnographic research, my doctoral project changed significantly from its inception to completion (Crang and Cook, 2007). I initially planned to predominantly focus upon how older British migrants

use digital media within their daily lives; seeking to address a gap in human geography about the relationship between older migrants and new communication technologies. However, as became apparent through my ethnographic fieldwork, there were more pressing and equally under-researched challenges within participants' lives. My thesis reflects the presence of care, friendship, death and loss that were unexpectedly visible in the lives of the older British migrants that I encountered. My change in research focus reflects the importance of paying close attention to the everyday details, social norms and practices, and experiences of participants. In particular, it highlights how adopting a flexible and iterative approach to ethnographic research can allow themes to emerge that the researcher had not previously considered while planning their research[4].

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[4] Likewise, my research also responded to the result of the UK's referendum on membership of the European Union ('Brexit'). However, I chose to publish my empirical work relating to that geopolitical event separately (see Miller, 2019).

Chapter 2

Exploring widowhood in later life migration

My literature review engages with a diverse range of scholarship through focus on one particular topic: widowhood. This topic came to the fore during my ethnographic fieldwork and provides a range of insights into how older British migrants experience later life in their migration context. By using this topic as my central focus, I journey through a range of social science scholarship to situate my empirical and conceptual contributions. I identify experiences of later life, such as widowhood, which are under-researched: both in migration research and human geography (see also Chambers 2005). Using this gap as a starting point, I locate my conceptual contribution to understanding widowhood within this literature review. As chapter 5 explores, I argue for a more complex and nuanced understanding of widowhood; conceptualising it as an ongoing multi-dimensional process that involves the intersection of widowhood as simultaneously status, experience and an emotional orientation. I also introduce literature that is used within my other empirical discussions (chapters 4 and 6), establishing a theoretical foundation for my research.

I now focus upon one aspect of life that some participants had not anticipated or considered in seeking to fulfil their migration dream.

Through my detailed exploration of widowhood, I consider how my research addresses significant gaps within this under-researched area within human geography. Moreover, I introduce related literatures that help not only to understand these older British migrants' experiences of widowhood, but also other themes that appeared regularly throughout my ethnographic research. These themes include, but are not limited to, the centrality of social relationships, death as a prominent concern and consideration, and the complex emotional geographies navigated within individuals' migration projects.

Exploring existing understandings of widowhood

Definitions of widowhood: a brief introduction

Within western societies, widowhood is defined in relation to marital status: "the marital status that a man or woman gains once his or her spouse has died" (Bennett 2008: 438). It is also defined as "the state or period of being a widow or widower" (*Oxford Dictionaries Online* 2018). However, these definitions do not capture the complexities of widowhood and how individuals experience and negotiate it daily.

Widowhood as a descriptor

Across the social sciences, the terms widow(er) and widowed are employed as convenient labels to describe participants who have outlived their spouse (Buitelaar 1995). The uncritical use of this descriptor is visible throughout research within human geography. For example, within emerging geographies of death research, the use of 'widow(er)' remains unquestioned and unexplored within the context of understanding death, dying, and the places inseparable from these processes (see Maddrell and Sidaway 2010; Maddrell 2016).

Similarly, lifestyle migration scholarship often uses 'widowed' or 'widow(er)' uncritically. For example, within Ahmed's (2012) and Oliver's (2008) seminal works on older British lifestyle migrants and their experiences of growing older in Spain, there is minimal attention paid to participants' status as widow(er)s and their negotiation of widowhood. Instead, scholars use widow(er) to denote the participant's circumstances as someone ageing alone, or 'single', within the context of their lifestyle migration project (Ahmed 2012; Hall and Hardill 2016). The unquestioned use of these labels indicates a set of assumptions about 'widowed' as self-explanatory, uncomplicated, and, in scholarship about older people, as an unsurprising component of older age.

The use of widowed and widowe(er) as descriptive labels is also problematic as there is minimal engagement with how individuals shape and experience this social category. Rarely are the complexities of what it means to be widowed and to negotiate widowhood explored within human geography (for exceptions, see Bhatti 2006; Valentine 1999). Unlike critical engagement with class, race, gender, and sexuality as complex and intersecting categories that individuals perform and negotiate (Valentine 2007), geographers have so far neglected widowhood. Moreover, by describing someone as a 'widow(er)' researchers impose a way of seeing individuals, positioning their marital status as central to their senses of self. Chapter 5 complicates this descriptive label by developing a conceptualisation of widowhood that challenges the bounded understanding that social scientists often reproduce. As my empirical chapters explore, this label is engaged with or actively avoided by individuals. More broadly, I argue that widowhood is an ongoing process within which different dimensions interact and intersect to shape widowed individuals' experiences of later life migration.

Looking at social science scholarship more broadly, widowhood has long been a topic of enquiry for social anthropologists, social gerontologists, psychologists, and social policy scholars. The work produced within these disciplines has provided varied understandings, and omissions, of widowhood. Skinner, Andrews and Cutchin's (2018) edited volume

entitled *Geographical Gerontology* brings social gerontology research into direct conversation with geographies of ageing work. The detailed engagement between the two research areas is innovative and provides exciting opportunities for interdisciplinary critique, comment and collaboration on ageing-based research. However, there was only a fleeting mention of widowhood; a surprising omission based on widowhood as a common occurrence for married people as they grow older (Chambers 2005).

However, as the work of social anthropologist Sarah Lamb (2001) indicates, it is important to consider how particular social and cultural contexts shape widowhood. Lamb's (2001) work focuses upon widowed women in West Bengal, India and provides understandings of their experiences within a specific religious and social context. Through life stories, Lamb explores how widowed women represent themselves; using storytelling to provide a "critical commentary on widowhood" (2001: 20). These commentaries centre on what these widowed women understood as the unjust treatment of widows within their society through the expectations, practices, and perceptions associated with these women who no longer held status as a married woman (Lamb 2001). One interaction with a participant - Kayera Bou – exemplifies this self-reflection and 'critical commentary': "We're still human after all!" she said of widows. "After our husbands die, are we no longer human?" (Lamb

2001:21). Although Lamb's research context is markedly different from researching older British migrants – religiously, socially and culturally – this anthropological work is useful in understanding how widowhood can be understood as a status that must be negotiated by individuals within their particular environment. By looking at how widowhood is negotiated by older British migrants, my research builds upon Lamb's emphasis on life stories as a way of engaging with a difficult and emotional topic. By using a narrative approach, I explore how social relationships, place, and emotions play significant roles in how these migrants negotiate widowhood on an ongoing basis.

By exploring the concept of widowhood beyond its use as a descriptor in chapter 5, I argue against a rigid, one-dimensional understanding of widowhood. Instead, I present a processual and multi-dimensional conceptualisation (Marcus and Saka 2006; Anderson et al. 2012). I align myself with assemblage theory as a theoretical approach that engages with process to understand interactions, practices and relationships within diverse social, political, economic and material contexts. This alignment provides an opportunity to understand the complexities and relationships, practices and processes of older British migrants' daily lives. Moreover, as assemblage theory places emphasis upon the importance of process it rejects top-down, structural, ontologies. Instead this approach "permits

the researcher to speak of emergence, heterogeneity, the decentred"
(Marcus and Saka 2006:101).

Widowhood in later life

While research on ageing is a growing area of interest for scholars, particularly in the broader western societal context of ageing populations (Näre, Walsh and Baldassar, 2017), there remains limited focus on widowhood. While some research does exist on this topic, much of it focuses on the negative consequences often associated with this significant life event (Chambers 2005). For example, within social gerontology research has often focused on understanding widowhood in relation to care practices, vulnerabilities, and state intervention (see Jivraj et al. 2015; Moss and Moss 2015). Likewise, loneliness among widowed people is a popular area of enquiry within this discipline (see for example King et al. 2020 on mitigating loneliness among widows). While such research is important, it can paint a consistent picture of widowed individuals as passively experiencing loss, stress, and isolation. This familiar understanding of widowhood can influence both how individuals define themselves, and how others understand them.

Geographies of ageing and emotional geographies scholarship have sought to challenge the "externally imposed social identities" often

associated with older people through classifications such as 'the elderly' and 'old age pensioners (OAPs)' (Hockey et al. 2005:137). This work challenges how western societies understand and position older people. It also highlights the implications of these imposed identities for the individual, social relations, and for the spaces and places they encounter (Kelleher 2001; Skinner et al. 2017; Rowles 1978). In researching the experiences of older people, certain methodological approaches can be a useful means of challenging these externally imposed narratives. For example, as Näre, Walsh and Baldassar (2017:520) argue:

> life story and narrative interview methodologies are shown to be especially helpful in exploring the transformations associated with ageing, perhaps since they afford people a reflective space in which they can themselves describe the changes they have experienced or anticipate.

I therefore use narrative interviews as a means of emphasising the voices of older migrants. This approach allows the re-telling of stories of challenges – such as widowhood – that they must respond to and manage within their migration context in later life.

In this context, I argue that geographers should pay more attention to questioning and contesting the ways that widow(er) is an "externally imposed social identity" that shapes how individuals experience widowhood in later life (Hockey et al. 2005:137). This thesis provides

insights into the complex and ever-changing process of widowhood, in part defined as a social identity, that individuals negotiate daily. My focus also reflects an awareness that while there is increasing human geography focus on older people's narratives to understand their identities (Hörschelmann, 2011), relationships to place and home (Rowles 1978; Walsh and Näre 2016), and experiences of grandparenting (see Tarrant 2010, 2015, 2016), there has been limited narrative research conducted on the experiences of widowhood among older people.

Experiences of widowhood: invisible and gendered

From a demographic perspective, widowhood is predominantly experienced by people in later life (Chambers 2005). For these older people, women are approximately three times more likely to experience widowhood than men, and as such "widowhood has been labeled a primarily female phenomenon" (Michael et al. 2003). Mirroring this demographic trend, many of the social clubs in the Costa del Sol popular with older British migrants have a high rate of female attendees, with few men in attendance at any one time. As such, narratives from three migrant women negotiating this process in later life inform my conceptualisation of widowhood. In focusing on their narratives, I am following Anya Ahmed's (2012, 2013, 2015) call for more research that makes visible the lives and stories of older women; an often neglected

group within social research. Likewise, as Chambers (2005:233) argues, narratives are:

> a useful tool which re-conceptualise, analyse and understand older widows' lives within a feminist lifecourse perspective.

By using the term 'widowhood' rather than 'widow' or 'widower' I seek to move away from identities and assumptions imposed upon individuals. I do not define women in my thesis through their relationships to others – wife, mother, sister, daughter and so on (Buitelaar 1995). Instead, I engage with widowhood as a process, and experience, that individuals negotiate within their daily lives (see also Martin-Matthews 2011). Through my exploration of individual narratives, I show how some participants saw widowhood as something they *experienced*, not necessarily something that they *were.*

In addition to implications for identity, the label of 'widow' can shape the societal status held by women. Returing to Lamb (2001), she details how widows in West Bengal in India construct their own stories to explain their lives in response to external perceptions about them. For Kayera Bou, the societal norm that widows dressed modestly in white with no jewellery or adornments, ate a vegetarian diet that mostly consisted of rice, and did not speak to men outwith the family context shaped her experiences of

widowhood. These social norms are an extreme example of the societal expectations and restrictions imposed upon women in the event of the death of their husband. Likewise, there are societal expectations, perceptions and norms that shape how western women negotiate widowhood. My thesis explores how widowed older British migrants navigate the expectations, perceptions, and social norms attached to the dominant concept of widowhood. Therefore, I am acutely aware of the gendered dimensions of the experiences of those negotiating widowhood, with an emphasis upon this understanding woven through my re-telling of participant narratives throughout my thesis.

Within this research, the participants presented within the discussion of widowhood in Chapter 5 were married. As such, the loss of their spouse also marked a shift in marital status. Although not addressed within this thesis, further research could explore how older people who are not married to their romantic partner experience their death, and its potential implications for their identity, social context, and more. Moreover, the narratives I present are from of heterosexual women whose spouse has died (see also Chambers 2005). Further research could also explore how LGBTQ individuals negotiate the death of a life partner or spouse and their subsequent experiences of widowhood. Likewise, although women often experience widowhood it is also important to explore the experiences of men who are negotiating widowhood. Following Anna

Tarrant's (2010, 2015, 2016) research on the experience of men as grandfathers, future work on widowhood could exclusively consider men's experiences of this process and how it may have distinct characteristics or dimensions. While I do not explore these topics in detail here, there is significant room to expand and explore different dimensions of widowhood through further human geography research.

My research creates an opportunity to explore widowhood by focusing on the experiences of older widows; a population that is significant, but under-researched within human geography. Chapter 5 challenges some of the perceptions and assumptions surrounding widowhood for older migrants. These assumptions are often based on the idea that the loss of a partner is an inevitability for older people (Chambers 2005). As such, widowhood may have traditionally received less academic attention due to the familiarity or ordinariness of this event within individuals' later life.

Geographies of death: exploring where to die

While death is central for individuals negotiating widowhood, it is also a presence within the lives of older British migrants more broadly. Within their call for an expansion of a sociology of death, dying and bereavement, Thompson et al. (2016: 173) make the important point

that "dying, death and bereavement do not occur in a social vacuum".

This understanding is woven throughout geographies of death

scholarship. Necrogeography, also referred to as the study of

deathscapes, is defined as:

> inquiry into spaces associated with the mourning, management, and remembrance of death, dying, and the dead, of humans as well as animals, particularly how these are physically and symbolically constructed, negotiated, and sometimes contested (Muzaini 2017:1).

This work attends to the complex material, emotional, political, social and

spatial dimensions of death and dying (see Maddrell 2013, 2016; Hunter,

2016; Young and Light, 2013). Within this area, scholars have considered

the materialisation of memory and absence-presence (Madrell and

Sidaway 2010), the social and political dimensions of where cemeteries

are located (Nash 2018), death rituals (Kong 2012), amongst other varied

topics. As Maddrell (2013:503) writes:

> Death is an everyday reality. It comes to each of us in due course and we experience the deaths of those around us with varying degrees of impact, depending upon our relation to them.

This inevitable life event is one that has traditionally been under-

researched within human geography. Addressing this gap, geographies of

death is a burgeoning area of literature (see Maddrell 2013, 2016;

Maddrell and Sidaway 2010). Through their attention to space and place they provide conceptual contributions that emphasise the importance of *geography* in understanding death and dying. This importance is reflected through my discussion in chapter 6 on the question of *where to die*. By looking at how participants position themselves in relation to this question, I explore an area with limited existing human geography research. As such, in focusing on how these older people understand their time-left-to-live (Oliver 2008), I explore how participants understand their own mortality to develop what I term the *whereness* of death.

Mortality involves an awareness that we will all die at some point in the future – our lives are finite (Oliver 2008; Buse 2010). Older people may have a stronger sense of both finite time and their own mortality based on their life stage – they are living in their later years (Buse 2010). Within chapter 6 I explore how experiences and awareness of mortality shapes the daily lives of the older British migrants that I researched with across the Costa del Sol. To do this, I draw upon geographies of death research to understand how awareness, challenges, proximity, and uncertainty relating to death shapes *how* and *where* these older British migrants experience later life within a particular social and geographical context. I pay particular attention to the familial relationships and friendships and how they shape individuals' understandings and experiences of the presence of death within their daily lives.

Positioning widowhood: exploring geographies of death

To return to widowhood as a central element of this thesis, it is particularly notable that this topic is absent within existing geographies of death scholarship. My in-depth discussion in chapter 5 presents an opportunity to provide a conceptual contribution that explores this complex process that older migrants negotiate on an ongoing basis. To develop my contribution, I draw from the wealth of research from geographies of death that examines how death and dying are temporally, emotionally, politically and spatially complex (see for example Nash 2018; Romanillos 2015). In particular, I draw upon Avril Maddrell's (2013, 2016) research on the materialities, and geographies, of memorials and sites of mourning and memory. Maddrell argues for an understanding of death and grief that considers not only it as an *event*, but how it manifests itself *through* people's experiences, emotions, and through the things and places that evoke memories, or become collectively or individually memorialised. Building upon this work, I explore the experiences, emotions, social dimensions, and geographies of widowhood as experienced by those older British migrants I researched.

My empirical research on both widowhood in later life and the complexities around the question of *where to die* also engages with Maddrell's (2016) theoretical work on 'mapping grief'. Maddrell

(2016:170) argues for understandings of death, grief and experiences of bereavement to account for their "new and shifting emotional-affective geographies" by paying attention to the places, spaces, and contexts of bereaved individuals. In considering how grief is experienced, Maddrell argues that, for someone who is mourning: "bereavement results not only in changed personal identity and status, but can produce a whole new set of emotional topographies, mobilities and moorings" (Maddrell 2016:170) My exploration of widowhood focuses upon older British migrants who have experienced these complex and often unexpected shifts. Interestingly, lifestyle migration has not explored these common and personally significant shifts, despite researching a wide range of other challenges that British migrants of various ages experience within their migration (see Torkington et al. 2015; Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Ahmed and Hall 2016). As such, my research brings into conversation two established areas of research; transnational lifestyle migration and geographies of death scholarship.

Using Maddrell's geographies of death work as a starting point, I focus on widowhood as a complex process of grief, loss and bereavement. The narratives within chapter 5 explore the experiences of individuals whose spouse died prior to their migration and those whose spouse died during their migration to the Costa del Sol. In doing so, I pay close attention to their changing identities, challenged or re-imagined mobilities, and

emotional topographies that Maddrell argues are central to mapping grief. Specifically, I explore widowhood as involving an intersection between the status, set of experiences, and emotional orientation that individuals must respond to. For these migrants, they must do so throughout their daily lives as migrants; as visible through the multi-faceted social, emotional, practical, economic[5] and geographical dimensions of their everyday experiences.

Understanding the central role of social relationships: widowhood as a lens

Geographies of ageing work on relational, intergenerational, intersectional understandings of ageing often considers the centrality of social relationships for older individuals (Ahmed and Hall 2016; Hardill 2009; Tarrant 2016). Existing social science literature has explored how individual experiences of widowhood can be shaped considerably by their social networks and the support that may be offered, denied, or withdrawn (Miller et al. 2004; Moss and Moss 2014). As my empirical chapters explore, widowhood is inseparable from the range of diverse social relationships created, maintained, and developed by those older British migrants negotiating it.

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[5] Although important to note, I do not deal with the economic consequences of widowhood in significant detail within this thesis. Further research could consider this topic in more detail

Paying attention to friendships

Friendships have received far less attention than familial relationships within human geography. Notable exceptions include the work of Sophie Bowlby (2011) and Tim Bunnell et al. (2012) who both call for geographers to explore friendships as relationships that are important in "particular time-space settings" (Bunnell et al. 2012: 491). Bowlby (2011:607) defines friendship as:

> a voluntary relationship between two or more people, which can be severed at will by any party. Friendships can range from relationships that are close and emotionally intense to those that might be described as fleeting and emotionally limited.

The varied and potentially fragile nature of friendships are particularly evident among those older British migrants I encountered. For example, the transient nature of their community, the potential for return migration, rapid and significant health deterioration, and the death of friends shapes the social context within which these migrants experience their later life in the Costa del Sol (see O'Reilly 2000, 2007; Oliver 2017; Hall and Hardill 2016). As Spencer and Pahl (2006:59) note, friends are understood as people who:

offer each other practical help, or give emotional support, sharing in each other's highs and lows, and friends are often defined as people who can confide in one another, who know each other's secrets.

Therefore, paying attention to the importance of participants' proximate friendships in this context contributes to understanding how they negotiate their migration experiences *together*.

Considering friendship through a geographical lens, Bunnell et al. (2012:490) argue that: "friendship is a means through which people across the world maintain intimate social relations both proximate and at a distance". Through my empirical material, I explore how friendships are enacted, maintained, and developed amongst older British people who have migrated to the Costa del Sol. I consider how their specific time-space context shapes their proximate relationships in friendships and acquaintanceships. Exploring experiences of widowhood for participants provides an exciting opportunity to understand how changes within their individual circumstances can shape how they relate to fellow older British migrants, and how their peers relate to them. Relationships *between* older people remains an under-researched and overlooked area within human geography. As Skinner et al. (2015:784) argue, there is room within geography to further explore the "emotional value, quality, and nature of male and female friendships in later life".

My focus on friendships, and social relationships more broadly, seeks to contribute to existing understandings while developing conceptual contributions on how we understand widowhood within geography. Chapter 5 explores how negotiating the process of widowhood has the potential to transform, reshape, and breakdown relationships. For example, friendships can determine how an individual is *expected* to behave in line with the social norms within the British community in Spain (Oliver 2008; Haas 2013).

As Bowlby's (2011) article on friendship, co-presence and care outlines, informal care is part of these relationships. Understanding caring as something that "can involve both practical and emotional care, often simultaneously" (Bowlby 2011:606). Building upon Bowlby's work, I argue that the care and support provided through friendships are central in understanding how individuals negotiate widowhood. I highlight the social and emotional dimensions that can shape how individuals negotiate this process. I engage with Bowlby's work on care and caring across each of my empirical chapters; considering how older British migrants navigate various social relationships daily as part of their migration project (see Bowlby 2011; Bowlby and McKie 2019). Examples include exploring *how* and *who* these migrants ask for help with their digital devices (chapter 4), and how attendees of a specific social club support one another in a context of grief, loss and death (chapter 6).

My research presents empirical materials that highlight the nuanced and complex ways that older British migrants support and care for one another in the context of unexpected challenges within their daily lives. In doing so, I build upon Oliver's (2017:177) analysis that:

> the voluntary groups and friends most often helped 'scaffold' individuals through various practical and supportive acts, rather than engaged in physical or intimate social care.

By looking at such social interactions and encounters I can provide new and in-depth understandings of the role of proximate friendships in how and why older British migrants may orientate themselves towards the Costa del Sol in their later life. Likewise, while the centrality of friendships is emphasised throughout my thesis, it is also important to understand these social relationships relative to participants' relationships with their often-distant families.

Examining familial relationships: widowhood in migration

Turning to familial relationships, Gill Valentine (2008) persuasively argues that geographers must pay more attention to the diverse and changing conceptualisation of the 'family' as part of her broader call for

geographies of intimacy. She argues that, unlike sociological work; "the 'family' in its widest sense is a peculiar absent presence in the discipline of geography" (Valentine 2008: 2102). Within this, Valentine cites other forms of familial relationship - between adult children and their parents, and between grandchildren and grandparents - as candidates for further research within geography. More recently, Tarrant's relationality-focused work has attended to the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren (Tarrant, 2010, 2015, 2016).

Within this thesis, I adopt a broad conceptualisation of family and families that encompasses the complexity and multiplicity of these intimate relationships (Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards, 2011). Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards (2011:5) note the complex emotional dimensions of family life that may involve experiences of paradoxical emotions:

> family experiences may be equivocal and shifting, involving deep paradoxes around such issues as power and love, or care and oppression, and the related feelings may hold much ambivalence.

By accounting for the messy, complex, emotional, political, and power within familial relations I am following scholarship that argues that the families are a contested set of dynamics that encompasses a wide range of experiences and interactions (Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards, 2011).

My research focuses on the intimate familial relationships between parents and children, and grandparents and grandchildren alongside the relationships between friends (discussed further below). However, I also position the marital relationships of participants as *family*. As Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards note, couples as a form of family move from:

> the family of origin to create a new family of affinity, acquiring a new set of family and kin relationships.

Scholars have explored the pervasive nature of the couple as an aspiration and social norm in detail. For example, as Roseneil and Crowhurst (2020:4) argue within *The Tenacity of the Couple Norm*:

> Being part of a couple is widely seen and felt to be an achievement, a stabilizing status characteristic of adulthood, indicative of moral responsibility and bestowing full membership of the community. To be outside the couple-form is, in many ways, to be outside, or at least on the margins of, society.

As I explore within chapter 5, the loss of a spouse – in the context of widowhood – makes visible participants' experiences of being socially repositioned following the death of their spouse. The cultural and social emphasis upon coupledom and the understanding of love as "the basis for a personal fulfilment" likely to inform and shape changes to social status

in response to an individual becoming widowed (Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards, 2011:41).

Considering families in the context of widowhood, Moss and Moss (2014:98) argue that research on widowhood would "be enriched by placing widowhood in a family context". Such exploration can provide opportunities to understand the dynamic and influential social relations of family, including couples as family, and how they interact with individuals' experiences of widowhood. Alongside the importance of friendship, my research shows that family is a significant consideration for older British migrants within their transnational context. For example, in my methodology discussion I demonstrate how participants enacted familiar family dynamics and norms through my ascribed role of 'adopted granddaughter'. Therefore, I explore how existing scholarship has understood the, often geographically distant, relationships between migrants and their families.

Focusing on migration, Holmes and Burrows (2012) provide insights into the emotionally complex nature of relationships between migrants and their families; citing familial obligations as a central reason for return migration. They focus upon the role of emotional reflexivity within the decisions that these migrants make, often shaped by familial obligations and expectations alongside other emotion-laden factors. Their work shows

how migrants' relations with their families can be emotionally complex, potentially fraught, and can require active navigation (see also Holmes, 2010). Older British migrants also enact such emotional reflexivity as they attempt to navigate both their (fragile) migration dream alongside the expectations and desires of their family (see William's story in chapter 6).

Overall, relationships between older people and their families remain a limited area of enquiry within geography. Throughout my thesis I consider how older British migrants perform some of their familial relationships at a geographical distance. I also explore what the maintaining, straining, or undoing of these relationships reveal about their lives in the Costa del Sol. Throughout my thesis I address questions of *how* and *why* these migrants navigate their familial relationships. I explore these questions by considering what happens when technological expectations are unmet (chapter 4), how and where older British migrants negotiate widowhood (chapter 5), and how these migrants decide where to die (chapter 6). Through participants' narratives, I address an under-researched area within migration scholarship: how individuals enact their familial relationships when the migrants in question are *older* people rather than *younger* people.

To better understand this focus, it is important to consider the work of transnational migration scholars on geographically distant familial

relationships and how individuals navigate them. For example, Loretta Baldassar's (2008, 2013, 2014) extensive empirical work on care and caring from a distance has highlighted the complexities, emotions, and challenges associated with caring for distant older relatives by those who have migrated to another country. Baldassar's work on guilt, 'crisis' care and transnational co-presence has shaped how migration scholars understand different forms and practices of care across space and time. By contrast, my focus is upon a less common, and under-researched, direction of migration with the older people as migrants. I position older people as the central focus – as active migrants - rather than seen only in relation to their families (see Skinner et al. 2015; Tarrant 2010). By separating older individuals from the familial relationships that often defined them, I answer Skinner at al.'s (2015) calls for geographies of ageing research that focuses on *older people* in a more nuanced, sensitive, and in-depth way.

Exploring the experiences of older British migrants not only emphasises their narratives – stories that remain limited within geographical scholarship – but it also challenges perceptions of older people as more dependent, less mobile, and prisoners of their environments (see seminal work by Rowles 1978 that challenges these perceptions). By considering widowhood as a complex and ongoing process, I am continuing to challenge perceptions about what a widowed person in their later life

should do, feel, or be. Moreover, widowhood becomes a lens through which power, emotional dimensions and individual identities within which familial relationships become more visible as older migrants navigate them at a geographical distance. For example, within chapter 5 I explore how some older British migrants manage familial expectations of return after being widowed while living in the Costa del Sol.

Exploring how family and friendships interact

While I have highlighted the importance of considering both families and friendships within the lives of older British migrants, it is also important to explore the overlaps and interactions of these types of intimate relations. As my research examines, the transnational context within which older British migrants are navigating their later lives creates an opportunity to understand how distant familial relationships are managed alongside understandings how proximate friendships with fellow migrants are established and valued in particular ways.

While geographers are paying more attention to the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren (see Anna Tarrant's work for example), my research provides an opportunity to understand the relationships between friends who are also grandparents to their respective, often geographically distant, grandchildren. In paying attention to these

friendships, it is possible to understand the boundaries of their shared experiences as well as their varying intimate relationships with their kin. As Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards (2011:107) note:

> The strength of relationships between grandparents and their own children is often identified as determining the quality of grandparent-grandchild relationships, highlighting how relationships across three generations are mediated by or derived from parent-child relationships.

This understanding is particularly poignant and has varying consequences for older British migrants as they seek to navigate these relationships across time and space as transnational migrants. As I will explore, older British migrants can, and often do, seek emotional support from their proximate friends regarding the challenges associated with maintaining and/or strengthening their relationships with their grandchildren. In this context, the interactions between familial relationships and the development and maintenance of proximate friendship with peers must be understood as overlapping and intertwined. Likewise, as mentioned earlier, the expectations and obligations associated with familial relations – particularly in this transnational context – are also navigated by individuals with the support and empathy of proximate friends who experience similar tensions between familial relations and their lives in the Costa del Sol.

Moreover, conceptualising the couple as a familial relation provides an opportunity to understand interactions between family and friends. For example, as Spencer and Pahl (2006:91) note:

> Being part of a couple provides an opportunity to make new friends. The new couple may adopt some of each other's friends, developing an intimate friendship of their own, or, alternatively forming a simple fun friendship, accepting that the original friends will have a closer relationship...As a couple, people also make new friends together, often with other couples.

Here, and within my empirical narratives, it is possible to see how family and friendships are closely intertwined as one form of intimate relations informs another - as couples become friends with other couples. The interactions between familial relations and friendships for older British migrants as explored throughout my empirical chapters demonstrate how these intimate relations shape how these migrants understand and experience their later life migration.

Understanding social relationships: considering material cultures

Social relationships are inseparable from the material cultures within people's daily lives (Miller and Sinanan, 2014). This embeddedness is, I argue, an important part of understanding individuals' negotiation of widowhood on an ongoing, daily, basis. For example, as Hockey, Penhale

and Sibley's (2005) research demonstrated: "how intimately the practicalities of shopping and socialising, cooking and cleaning, were bound up with the emotional transition of bereavement" (Hockey et al. 2005: 136). Moreover, they argue that human geographers have neglected experiences of bereavement, and the role of material cultures within these experiences. Although published fifteen years ago, this acknowledgment remains salient. Therefore, my focus on how older British migrants understand, experience, and negotiate widowhood considers the intertwined material, emotional, and social dimensions of bereavement in later life.

Exploring widowhood in part through a material cultures lens provides an opportunity to understand how emotionally and socially complex experiences associated with the death of a spouse are inseparable from the 'things' and 'stuff' that constitute individuals' daily lives (Miller, 2010). While it is not my central focus, chapter 5 does explore some of the material cultures that shape some participants' understandings of widowhood; through the objects they keep, discard, or reposition within their lives in the Costa del Sol without their spouse. As Miller (2010: 99) succinctly argues, "people create themselves through the medium of stuff". Richardson (2014:61) explores how "'continuing bonds' may be sustained after later life spousal bereavement, focusing particularly on the themes of place, objects, embodiment and the senses". Through her

empirical research Richardson (2014:72) demonstrates how "social and sensory connections can be made with a deceased spouse through an embodied relationship with materialities such as clothing, photographs and furniture". Consequently, I explore some of the material cultures present within the lives of widowed participants; understanding widowhood as a process that is inseparable from the materialities that individuals encounter, attach meaning to, and discard. While material cultures are not my central focus or conceptual contribution, I argue here that they are central in understanding how individuals navigate the multitude of changes associated with the death of a spouse and, in some cases, how individuals are required or chose to re-create their sense of self in response to these changes.

My research also engages with material cultures scholarship on the growing popularity of digital media, such as webcams, instant messaging, and emails, as a form of communication across time and space (see for example Longhurst 2013, 2016; Madianou and Miller 2012a.). As King-O'Riain (2015:271) argues that the relationships within transnational families are often "focused on separation and distance and the technology, such as email, as used intermittently to store emotion across time zones". However, as she demonstrates, webcam technologies can instead allow for *transconnectivity* and *emotional streaming*; two concepts that centre on her identification of "a set of social relations, practices or

experiences" that differ from other kinds of communication over distance (King-O'Riain 2015:271). She argues that families are co-embedded within their different localities through real-time visual communication such as is possible through use of skype. Similarly, both Baldassar (2008) and Longhurst (2013, 2016) have explored how individuals' familial relationships are navigated through use of their digital devices. These works explore the emotional geographies of caring practices enacted through various forms of digital media (see also Madianou and Miller 2012b.). While these understandings are salient and useful in thinking about digital media use as something that producing emotional and social relations, chapter 4 considers what happens when older migrants cannot achieve such expected transnational connections. My focus reflects the limited focus within human geography and other social sciences upon what happens when things *go wrong*. By exploring digital media in this context, I am particularly focused upon how disruptions to digital forms of communication and connection can provide insights about older British migrants' social relationships and how they enact them. Specifically, I consider how, who and why older British migrants *ask for help* when they encounter a problem with their digital device.

Woven throughout my thesis are themes of familial relationships, friendships, social support, and care. As I have outlined here, it is important to consider the material cultures of individuals' daily lives; both

in the context of widowhood, and within their migration projects more broadly. Within the penultimate section of this review, I move towards considering more about the *geographies* of widowhood. By exploring the concepts of place and home, I outline how these transnational older migrants cannot separate the social, emotional and practical challenges associated with widowhood that they face from their geographies.

Geographies of widowhood: exploring place and home

Migration destinations are often carefully chosen through reconnaissance trips, previous holidays, or familial recommendations (Benson 2011; O'Reilly 2000; Oliver 2008). The importance of both place and the concept of home cannot be underestimated for migrants such as older British migrants (Walsh, 2006, 2012; Walsh and Näre 2016). By considering these concepts in turn, I explore how both concepts have been engaged with previously and how my research develops conceptual contributions about the role of place and home for older migrants experiencing widowhood. In doing so, my research responds to calls from Valentine (2008) and Skinner et al. (2015), for geographies of intimacy and of ageing work to be grounded in place(s).

Locating place: widowhood and where to die

While the concept of place is a fundamental concern within human geography (Creswell 2014). Geographers have yet to explore it as something that is equally important to how we understand widowhood. As Cloutier-Fisher and Harvey (2009: 253) argue:

> through ongoing negotiations and transactions between people and their environment, our 'being in place' is a constantly evolving process across time and space.

For older migrants experiencing widowhood, their change in marital status can also transform how they understand their place within their perceived community, but also how they understand the familiar and unfamiliar places that they encounter as they negotiate widowhood. For example, social clubs have been understood to play a significant role in constructing a British 'community' and collective sense of belonging in Spain (Anderson 1983; Betty and Cahill 1999; Haas 2013; O'Reilly 2000, 2017; O'Reilly and Olsson 2017; Oliver 2008, 2017). These social clubs, as with the other aspects of life valued by these older British migrants, are inseparable from the places and spaces that they encounter within their daily lives in the Costa del Sol. However, through the negotiation of widowhood, individuals may experience a transformation of both their place *within* these social clubs, and also a different understanding of the places that they had previously understood in relation to their deceased spouse.

More broadly, place is a concept that is central to older transnational migrants as

they have chosen to live in Spain not as a "mere position on a migration

trajectory but a *final destination*" (O'Reilly 2007:5, emphasis added). As Rowles'

(1978) seminal work argues, older people are not necessarily 'prisoners of

space'; challenging dominant perceptions about how older people engaged with

the spaces and places around them. By focusing on older *migrants* I build upon

Rowles' rejection of the traditional perception that older people's relationships to

place are defined by limited mobility, deteriorating health, and 'smaller' places

(Rowles 1978). By contrast, I am exploring the experiences and understandings

of a population who are often defined by their transience and mobility as

transnational migrants in their later life (O'Reilly 2000; Oliver 2017; Giner-

Monfort et al. 2016). In doing so, I draw upon geographical conceptualisations of

ageing that see ageing as a relational process that is inseparable from the places

and spaces within which ageing is understood and experienced (Hopkins and

Pain 2007; Skinner et al. 2015). Place is, Degnen (2016:1645) argues, a

"significant source of meaning throughout the lifecourse". In particular, they

explore how place attachment – "the emotional sense of deep connection with

particular places" – is a complex process that is "collective, relational and

embodied…caught up and experienced via social memory practices and

sensorial, bodily knowledge" (Degnen 2016:1645). To understand how older

British migrants living in the Costa del Sol understand the places and spaces that

they encounter and inhabit, I draw upon these understandings of the embodied,

emotional and relational nature of both place *and* of growing older. The

importance of place is made particularly visible in chapter 6 within which I

explore where, how, and why participants chose to grow older, and potentially

die, in the Costa del Sol. In doing so, I encounter the concept of home.

Understandings the importance of home: later life and widowhood

As a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear, the home is invested with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life.

Blunt and Varely (2004:3)

This quote demonstrates the complex, emotional, and meaningful nature of the concept of home. Of interest to my research, transnational migration work in geography presents home as a concept that is both central to migrants' experiences, can shape their sense of self, and their relationships to specific places (Walsh 2006; Walsh and Näre 2016). In this context, home is understood as a process that involves multiple scales, material and imaginative forms, and is imbued with power relations[6] (see Blunt and Dowling 2006; Mallet 2004; Brickell 2012a., 2012b). Home is an important concept, and space,

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[6] For migrants, access to other countries through visa applications and citizenship applications demonstrates this complexity. The granting or denial of such access determines in part whether a migrant can make somewhere 'home' (Gilmartin and Migge, 2016; Giner-Monfort et al., 2016). For older British migrants, their relative privilege as EU citizens, limits the barriers they face in seeking to develop their conceptualization of home as attached to the Costa del Sol region of Spain[6].

within which migrants navigate significant life events (such as widowhood), and external changes (such as the Brexit process). Like the process of widowhood, the concept of home is an inherently geographical concept that is shaped by and invoked through material cultures (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Miller 2001). Home is also a concept that is part of larger questions about identity, belonging, community, social relationships and more for individuals. Home is also temporally fluid, as Ahmed et al (2003:9, original emphasis) explore:

> …being at home and the work of home-building is intimately bound up with the *idea* of home: the idea of place (or places) in the past and of *this* place in the future.

For older migrants, I argue that the temporalities and geographies of home play a significant role in how they navigate their later years in the Costa del Sol. For example, in chapter 6 I explore how participants position themselves in responses to the question of where to *die*. In considering this question in their context of their life-left-to-live, these migrants use their present and future senses of home to orientate themselves towards a particular place as they continue to grow older (Ahmed et al. 2003; Oliver 2017, Walsh and Näre 2016). Moreover, the *idea* of home as attached to a migration destination are often influential in how migrants understand their experiences (see for example Torkington 2012; Gilmartin and Migge 2016). For Huber and O'Reilly (2004:300) they argue that there is an understanding of home that "lies somewhere between the individual

and the collective". Their concept – *heimat* - is constituted within communities through "a functioning network" of social relations, and individuals' "solid links with the home of origin" (2004; 348). Through such networks, older migrants can create a sense of home and belonging that encapsulates both their personal sense of home and the community that they engage with.

While not always directly in conversation with home scholarship, my empirical research explores how older British migrants experience and manage their social relationships while also emphasising their sense of community and belonging; concepts that relate to geographies of home scholarship. Moreover, Chapter 5 explores some of the spaces of widowhood; considering the material dimensions of home in living alone after the death of a spouse; the social spaces that become more or less welcoming; and the places of significance that shape whether an individual continues their migration context in the context of (often unexpected) widowhood. My ethnographic approach reflects the importance of paying close attention to the temporality and geographies of place and home. By doing so, I can better understand how these older British migrants experience their later life migration through the places they frequent, speak of, and feel attached to (see Ahmed et al. 2003; Torkington 2012; Woube 2017; Rowles 1978).

Grief, loss, and consolation: the complex emotional dimensions of widowhood

Within their influential editorial, Davidson and Milligan (2004:524) bring emotions to the fore within geography, arguing that they have:

> tangible effects on our surroundings and can shape the very nature and experience of our being-in-the-world. Emotions can clearly alter the way the world is for us, affecting our sense of time as well as space. Our sense of who and what we are is continually (re)shaped by how we feel.

As such, emotions must be central within my development of a conceptual contribution to understanding widowhood. In particular, chapter 5 will engage with Parr, Philo and Burns' (2005) chapter within the *Emotional Geographies* edited volume which explores the concept of 'an emotional terrain' upon which individuals interact and experience different aspects of daily life. By engaging with such work to understand widowhood as a complex and ongoing process, I move beyond the common, limited, emotional tropes and expectations attached to those who have become widowed. While I discuss grief, bereavement, sadness, loss for widowed older British migrants, I also explore other emotions – joy, guilt, disappointment, hope, consolation, support, relief and more. In doing so, I explore how the emotion-laden hopes, expectations, and joint futures that older British migrants created with their spouse are undone, unmade,

and ruptured in the context their spouse's death (see Baxter and Brickell 2014 on unmaking home).

To understand more about the emotional dimensions of widowhood for participants, attention must also be paid to the experiences of older people. In particular, it is useful to draw upon Milligan et al's (2005) work on the interaction between ageing and emotions. They argue that the "lived experience of older age and emotions is a fluid process" that is "complex and multifaceted" (Milligan et al. 2005:50). In considering this complex interplay between ageing and emotions my empirical analysis can provide nuanced understandings about how older British migrants navigate widowhood as a life event, a status, an ongoing experience, and an emotional orientation. For example, within chapter 5 I demonstrate how some of the emotional dimensions of widowhood can shape the social relationships and sense of community that older British migrants foster and perform within their daily lives in the Costa del Sol. I explore how the social and emotional dimensions of widowhood can involve specific forms of caring work within this migration context; where friends are proximate and may have shared understandings and experiences that family may not (see Baldassar 2008; Bowlby 2012).

Emotions are a central part of understanding widowhood as a complex process; they are also emphasised throughout my other empirical chapters. In considering challenges faced by older British migrants I consider the experiences

of these privileged migrants from a different perspective. In looking at the emotional dimensions of challenges or perceived 'failures' within individuals' migration projects I develop new understandings of how social relationships help individuals make sense of their ongoing migration. Moreover, throughout each of empirical chapters, place is a central theme as particular places and social contexts can provide the opportunity for emotions to be explored and expressed by individuals; while other places discourage that in favour of practical forms of care or support (as explored in relation to asking for help through the University of the Third Age in chapter 4).

(Retirement) communities, widowhood, and later life

So far, I have presented a diverse set of themes and topics that intersect with the experiences of widowhood within later life. Another such theme is that of 'community'. Migration scholars, alongside countless other social scientists, have explored and critiqued the concept of 'community' (see Ahmed 2012; Cloutier-Fisher and Harvey 2009; Huber and O'Reilly 2004). However, it is a concept that is regularly called upon as a concept that: "defines where and with whom one identifies and/or feels they feel they belong", encapsulating various geographic, ecological, or socio-cultural contexts (Cloutier-Fisher and Harvey 2009:248). However, throughout this thesis I challenge how the continued use of the broad and

multifarious concept of 'community' often subsumes the detail and experience of a range of intimate social relations (see Oliver 2017; Oliver et al. 2018; O'Reilly 2000, 2017).

My emphasis on social relationships – such as friendships between older British migrants – provides an opportunity to look in-depth at how these migrants value, understand, and navigate these relationships within their experiences of later life migration. With this challenge, I do not seek to dismiss the concept of community entirely. Rather, by researching within the context of a privileged, yet liminal, self-identified 'community' (O'Reilly 2000; Oliver 2017), I contribute to understandings of the role of social networks and relationships - considering how individuals comprehend and navigate challenges and changes with their fellow older migrants. As chapter 6 explores, my research also acknowledges the significant role that social relationships play in shaping individuals' understandings of home and belonging – concepts often tied to community - as they experience later life as a migrant (Huber and O'Reilly 2004; Oliver 2017). In doing so, I provide insights into the nuances and complexities of these relationships, such as friendships, that can orientate these migrants towards a particular place and the social context located there.

Florida's retirement communities are a prominent example of how older

people understand and attempt to enact community within a specific geographical and social context. Within these purpose-built communities (see figure 6), there is an emphasis upon homogeneity across race, socio-economic background, and of relevance to this thesis – upon permanent residents who are married, with both spouses living (van den Hoonaard 2002).

Figure 6: Photograph of a retirement community in Florida

According to van den Hoonard (2002) married residents perceived widows as a threat to their powerful sense of community. Such a conceptualisation of community relies upon a sense of belonging that centred on same-ness, rather than difference, as reflected by their emphasis on couple-based activities. Within these settings, widows "reported that they had been shocked and disappointed by the treatment

they received from their married friends who 'dropped them like a hot potato" (van den Hoonaard 2002:60). These communities can "create an invisible social boundary that puts marginal residents on the outside"; these marginal residents also included "snowbirds[7]" and "newcomers" (van den Hoonaard 2002:50). Such boundaries, my thesis argues, are both present and challenged among older British migrants (see also O'Reilly 2000; Oliver 2017).

The British 'community' based in the Costa del Sol is akin to what Cloutier-Fisher and Harvey (2009:250) describe as "a geographically demarcated space or place but was also equally likely to emphasise a social dimension capturing notions of connection, social-insideness and togetherness". Likewise, the lifestyle migration scholar Anya Ahmed supports this geographical and social notion of community among British migrants. She argues that: "retired British women in Spain construct belonging through being linked to the dynamics of a complex social system of relationships and interactions" (Ahmed 2012:96. As my thesis explores, this "complex social system" is one that can be disrupted and reshaped for the individual in the context of widowhood (Ahmed 2012: 96); a process that is experienced within particular geographies. Chapter 5 explores how individuals navigate widowhood within a social context

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[7] 'Snowbirds' are temporary migrants who are described as such due to their travel patterns from north to south seasonally, seeking to spend the winter months in a warmer climate such as within Florida (van den Hoonard, 2002).

that has common and collective experiences of grief and loss; experiences that shape their relationships with their proximate peers and their sense of belonging. Reflecting this, my narrative approach situates participants' stories within the social world within which they experience the loss of their spouse, and the ongoing negotiation of a new status, identity, and emotional orientation (see Bold, 2012; Degnen, 2005).

However, it is also important to consider the critiques of community as a catch-all term. For example, Miranda Joseph's (2002:viii) *Against the Romance of Community* urges caution when engaging with the concept of community. She suggests that: "community is almost always invoked as an unequivocal good, an indicator of a high-quality life, a life of human understanding, caring, selflessness, belonging". However, she argues that commonalities through the umbrella of community are instead constituted through "practices of production and consumption" (Joseph, 2002:ix). Reflecting such critiques, I focus upon the intimate social relationships between older British migrants to avoid invoking broad concepts such as community as an explanatory concept.

Concluding thoughts: widowhood as a lens

Although a relatively common occurrence for older people, there has been limited attention paid within human geography to how they experience

the death of their spouse. My research seeks to address the relative invisibility of this life experience across various geographies including ageing and death. As has been explored, widowhood is a complex and multifaceted term, reflecting the complexities associated with a significant life event. In experiencing the death of a spouse, individuals also face a series of potential health, financial and social implications of becoming widowhood – alongside an identity-transforming change in marital status. My predominant focus on widowhood with this literature review has allowed me to explore some of these implications in relation to the themes that emerged from my ethnographic fieldwork with older British migrants living in the Costa del Sol, Spain. I have situated my argument that widowhood must be understood as an ongoing process that is shaped by, and can transform, social relationships. I also argue that place and geography can play an important role in migrants' experiences of widowhood. Moreover, I have identified and brought into conversation work from several bodies of literature; exploring scholarship on death, ageing, social relationships, care, place, home, emotions, and more. I have highlighted and situated the central themes that run throughout my thesis, including; social relationships, emotions, death, place, care and support. While each empirical chapter considers different stories with different overarching arguments, the range of literature discussed within this chapter are present across the thesis. Drawing upon this literature, I explore how older British migrants value and practice various forms of

informal social and emotional support, help, and caring that informs how they attempt to fulfil their (fragile) migration dreams.

I now present and justify my methodological approach. Within chapter 3, I place emphasis on my positionality as an 'adopted granddaughter' for participants. This reflexive discussion provides insights into the value of my narrative approach alongside some of the challenges and insights of conducting ethnographic research with older British migrants.

Chapter 3

Navigating the ascribed role of 'adopted granddaughter' in ethnographic fieldwork

Helen got the attention of the group by exclaiming: "look everyone, it's our adopted granddaughter Rebekah! You all remember her, don't you? She's the wee Scottish girl who came to the group last year!"

Field note extract, September 2016

I had not anticipated the role many participants ascribed to me in 2015[8]; a role that was still part of how they understood me when I returned to Arroyo de la Miel in 2016. Within this chapter I detail how I performed, developed, and navigated the role of adopted granddaughter within my ethnographic research. I consider how this positioning shaped how I related to participants and how I understood how these migrants relate to one another. As Coffey (1999:47) suggests, fieldwork is "relational, emotional, and a process of personal negotiation". Adopting this understanding of research, I use my ascribed role to explore my fieldwork context, methodology, positionality, ethical considerations, and the challenges I experienced. I contribute to methodological reflections on the researcher's position (see Ali 2015; Billo and Hiemstra 2013; Davis

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[8] I had previously attended various clubs as part of my Masters fieldwork.

1996); developing understandings around how forms of care, emotional work, and *adoption* can require navigation within ethnographic research. However, before exploring the different dimensions of my adopted granddaughter role in depth, it is first necessary to consider 'the field' that shapes my ethnographic research.

In conducting my ethnographic research across a total duration of 8 months – split across numerous visits and differing lengths of stay – I encountered and interacted with over a hundred older British migrants across the Costa del Sol region. Some of these encounters were fleeting: a quick conversation at the train station, exchanging directions, or a brief hello between acquaintances. The narratives presented throughout my thesis reflect some of the more in-depth relationships that I build with older British migrants; many of whom I interviewed about their experiences of growing older in the Costa del Sol[9]. As I will expand upon later, I interviewed 30 participants using semi-structured informal and narrative-focused interviews. Of these individuals, this thesis includes 9 detailed narratives constructed from these interviews alongside ethnographic encounters as detailed within my field notes. I have carefully chosen these narratives to both: show the individual stories, experiences, and social and emotional life of participants, while also

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[9] These participants were recruited through my attendance at an array of social groups and activities; using snowballing as my central participant-gathering technique.

highlighting the shared experiences, challenges, and life events of their peers. My approach reflects the ethnographic tradition of providing in-depth and rich details about individuals' lives to provide wider insights into central theoretical or conceptual questions of (see for example Rowles 1979; Duneier 2001)[10].

The Costa del Sol as a 'field'?

Older British migrants living in the Costa del Sol continue to receive significant media, popular culture, and academic attention. Stories about this population often focus on the perceived 'bubble' or 'little Britain' created and experienced by British 'expats' (Fechter 2007; O'Reilly 2000). Likewise, collectively imagined geographies of the Costa del Sol position this region as a distinct place that is both distant *and* familiar for the British migrants who migrate there (Cairns 2013; O'Reilly 2000; Oliver 2008). While this framing of British migrants in Spain has been extensively critiqued, the various forms of attention focused on this migrant population in this region has constructed and established an identifiable 'field' (see Oliver 2008, 2017; O'Reilly 2000, 2007, 2017). Importantly, how this 'field' is (re)configured is inseparable from the power and privilege attached to this migrant group (Cairns 2013). For example, during the so-called Brexit process,

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[10] My use of a narrative approach is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

the construction of Costa del Sol as a 'field' has become more visible and more fragile. This shifting geopolitical context has resulted in the continued, and increased, attention paid to this liminal migration population; a population who have a range of privileges as British passport holders, predominantly white migrants, and as English-language speakers (O'Reilly 2000).

While a constructed field appears neatly bounded by geography and a migrant population here, it is also vital to engage with feminist critiques of the concept of 'the field' within social research. Feminist geographers have been vocal in critiquing the concept of a temporally bounded and distant 'field' within social research (see Cuomo and Massaro 2016; Rose 1993). As Sharp and Dowler (2011:148) argue:

> The fieldwork tradition in geography has conventionally worked to produce a sense of the field as something fixed and bounded and a separate space from that of the researcher.

Instead, feminist geographers have highlighted "the complex and entangled nature of the different spaces of research" (Sharp and Dowler 2011:148). Consequently, my understanding of a 'field' was not bounded by the geography of the Costa del Sol region, nor temporally bounded by my 'fieldwork period'. Instead, I maintained my research relationships with participants, continuing to develop them

transnationally via semi-regular email and webcam conversations. My office space, the cafes I wrote in, and my home are also the 'field' from which I worked, developed ideas, and sought to communicate the narratives of the participants that I researched with. In doing so, I reject traditional academic framing of the field as somewhere that is exclusively 'away'; geographically and temporally bounded (see Sharp and Dowler 2011). Such a rejection has parallels with the transnational nature of the relationship that some older British migrants have with the Costa del Sol and the UK.

My ethnographic research in the Costa del Sol involved fieldwork visits of varying lengths, spanning eight months; conducted over four years. Each visit involved spending as much time as possible in the social groups that participants frequented, such as The Arroyo Seniors' Club (see Haas 2013; see Appendix B). Following each encounter and activity, I recorded detailed field notes (figure 7; Appendix H), attempting to represent what I had seen, heard, smelt, and felt during that day (Crang and Cook 2007).
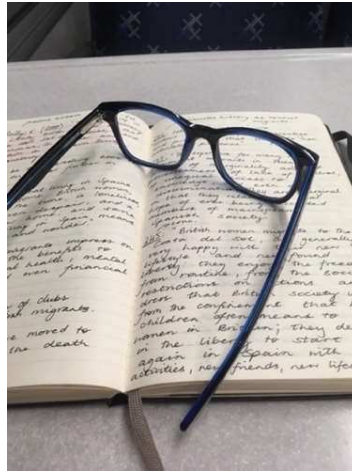
Figure 7: photograph of my handwritten fieldnotes

By paying attention to the 'everyday' – the banal, mundane and ordinary – lives of older British migrants, I lived in an apartment that was situated close to Bonanza Square in Benalmádena-Arroyo de la Miel. Populated by British-owned bars, cafés, and shops, Bonanza Square is often bustling with British migrants and tourists. Familiar discourses about this well-known, often 'notorious', area often centred on understandings of it as a "*British resort*" or "*Brit central*" (see figure 8.1 and 8.2.).

Figure 8.1 and 8.2: The Wine Bar near Bonanza Square – a popular bar among British migrants, with my apartment block visible behind

Participants often shared stories about friends and acquaintances who lived, or used to live, in my apartment block and surrounding area. These stories frame Bonanza Square and surrounding areas as central places for British migrants, rather than identifying them as Spanish places (see figure 8.3 below).

Figure 8.3: Photograph of Bonanza Square; a popular area with British migrants

My limited familiarity with the Costa del Sol provided a starting point for conversations with strangers, as well as an opportunity to strengthen emerging research relationships through seeking and receiving advice from participants. Like the migrants that told me of how they had encountered the Costa del Sol through holidaying to initially gain knowledge of the area, I also searched online for advice and knowledge, visited the local tourist information, read English

language newspapers, attended social groups, and made acquaintances (Urry 1990). By following their practices and developing a connection with the places and people I was researching with, I understood more about some of the meaningful parts of their lives in Spain: both within the region, and socially. For example, the attention that I pay to the presence of grief and support among older British migrants reflects the places and experiences that participants told me about, invited me to, and shared with me as an unfamiliar stranger and latterly as an adopted granddaughter.

Within one of my many encounters with different social groups, I also became aware of how social media played a role within some older British migrants' social lives:

I saw the group gathered together sitting around a set of joined up tables on the cafe's large terrace. Some of them looked uncertain when I approached. I could see from their expressions that they were wondering who I was, and what I was going to say to them. I double-checked that I had approached the right group by asking: 'is this the church group coffee morning?'. One lady, Donna, stood up and walked round the table to meet me. She responded, "it certainly is! Can I help you?". I explained that I was conducting research, and that I had been to their church

service the Sunday before. Donna ushered me to sit down next to Arthur;

a long-term parishioner.

When the cheesecake that Lewis had ordered arrived, I said, "that looks

lovely!" as I tried to make conversation. Arthur dug his fork into the

cheesecake, picked it up and moved it towards my mouth. I was

surprised, my cheeks becoming increasingly pink. I told him that he did

not need to share his dessert. Donna had observed our interaction, and

said "go on Rebekah, I'll take a photo!". Caught off-guard by the

enthusiasm from Donna, Arthur, and others at this church coffee morning

group I accepted the cheesecake from Arthur.

Figure 9.1 and 9.2: Lewis, the cheesecake, and me.

The next Sunday, I arrived at the church fifteen minutes before the

service began. I had hoped to chat to people before the service began.

A lady joined my row, sat next to me, and struck up conversation. She

told me that I looked familiar. As our conversation continued,

discussing her life in Spain and her involvement in the church, she said

once again "you really do look very familiar". It was only moments

before the service started and the first hymn began that she said "Oh I

know! You're the cheesecake girl. The one from Facebook. Aren't you?".

I was confused by this question and it took me a moment to make

sense of what she was asking me. I asked her what specifically she was

referring to, and she told me: "Donna put up a picture of a young

woman eating cheesecake from Arthur's fork. That was you wasn't it?".

She then showed me the picture posted on the church's official

Facebook page. There were ten 'likes' and two comments, one of which

said, "today at [café]...yield not to temptation".

From a methodological perspective, this encounter provided

opportunities to reflect upon how I navigated some of the more

unexpected and revealing encounters within my fieldwork (Coffey

1999). I became well-known and accepted as 'one of the group'

following this cheesecake encounter and subsequent interactions with

these church-goers. This encounter informed how people within this

social context saw me; unexpectedly granting me access through an

encounter that they thought was humorous and unusual within their

weekly coffee mornings. This uncomfortable and embarrassing

interaction also emphasised to me the embodied nature of fieldwork

(Coffey 1999). Moreover, such an encounter was revealing about how older British migrants may engage with the social groups and organisations within their daily lives. My experience of social media use in this context provided me with an awareness of this element of some participants' social lives. Such an awareness is interesting in the context of my empirical discussion in chapter 4 around asking for help with digital problems and difficulties.

Through time spent at different social groups and gatherings among older British migrants, participants accepted me as a British migrant who *lived* in the Costa del Sol rather than a visiting tourist. This distinction is particularly important in the context of a transient migrant population that is familiar with welcoming, and saying goodbye, to friends and family, including their grandchildren. Living there, rather than just visiting, undoubtedly shaped my status as an adopted granddaughter among participants. My ethnographic research and encounters with participants were inseparable from the places and spaces that they frequented within their everyday lives. My ethnographic approach therefore accounts for the importance of place for older British migrants in how they experience and understand their lives in the Costa del Sol; as reflected throughout the narratives that I present throughout my thesis.

Becoming an adopted granddaughter

Helen, the matriarchal and enthusiastic coordinator of the Arroyo Seniors' Club branch, welcomed me back after an absence of over a year (see fieldnote extract above). Her energetic welcome reflects the way she greeted all returnees: with warmth and sincerity. By way of brief context, The Seniors' Club is a voluntary organisation with a remit to assist and advise older English-speaking populations in the Costa del Sol region. Although not exclusively for British migrants in Spain, the Club is predominantly comprised of British volunteers and attendees. Each branch of the Club is unique, run independently of one another, and located in areas of high concentrations of, predominantly white, British migrants. Consequently, they provide differing levels of assistance depending on the prevailing needs of their members and their access to resources. This Club is open to seasonal migrants, tourists, and permanent migrants and membership is flexible based on the transience of these populations (O'Reilly 2000; Oliver 2008). Both attendees and volunteers were aged between sixty and ninety-five years old. My focus on this popular social club, and others like it, reflects the emphasis that older British migrants I spoke with placed upon groups and social activities within their lives in the Costa del Sol (see Haas 2013; Oliver 2017). Figure 10 below shows one of the Seniors' Club coffee mornings underway; a busy and popular social activity for attendees.

My initial encounters with The Seniors' Club were characterised by

some level of suspicion and confusion: who was this unfamiliar younger

person asking to join a social group that was exclusively for older

Figure 10: A Seniors' Club coffee morning

people. The distinct absence of other younger people was stark and

only highlighted my presence there as someone who was visibly *out of*

place. However, I established familiarity and trust through the help and

care I provided to participants, for example through assisting them with

their digital difficulties, I was accepted.

I moved from 'visitor' to 'friend', later becoming 'adopted

granddaughter'. Through my regular attendance in these groups, how

these migrants 'placed' me changed. I became a well-known presence,

often encouraged to fulfil a role that their grandchildren would during visits. I explore examples of this in chapter 4 through narratives of fixing, helping, and learning with participants. My role as an adopted granddaughter is central to my research as I gained access to participants' lives through building strong relationships and friendships; they shared their stories, understandings, and feelings with me during the time we spent together.

I overheard two club attendees discuss me, saying: "*she has adopted us all*". This reciprocal sense of adoption unexpectedly framed my research relationships around the recognisable familial roles of grandparent and grandchild. This sense of a reciprocal relationship between myself and individuals was important in developing trust; a key part of my ethnographic approach, granting me access to difficult conversations and stories about navigating widowhood, loss and death. As such, my ascribed role of an 'adopted granddaughter' and my relationships with participants permeate the narratives and encounters presented throughout my thesis. Becoming an *adopted* granddaughter involved navigating the expectations around ongoing and lasting relationships with participants as "…adoption is associated with permanence" (Leinaweaver and van Wichelen 2015:503).

By visiting the Costa del Sol several times between 2015 and 2018 participants understood me as part of the group – a permanent

granddaughter-figure within the group who would visit when I could. By 'adopting' me, I was aware of the implicit meanings, responsibilities, and obligations attached to my ascribed granddaughter status. My role as an adopted granddaughter therefore raises ethical questions and responsibilities that I navigated and negotiated throughout my research (see also Oliver 2008; Haas 2013; Liong 2014). I explore these questions later in this chapter, reflecting upon how and when these considerations emerged during my research.

Grounded within the context of the Brexit referendum and its immediate aftermath, my ethnographic research also involved participating in and observing the interest, sympathy, and critique that older British migrants navigated through their countless discussions about the EU referendum. While I asked questions, including those about Brexit, my status as an adopted granddaughter informed how others positioned me – as a familiar *insider*, rather than an unknown *outsider* (see Cuomo and Massaro 2016). Interestingly, the context of the Brexit referendum also required me to navigate difficult, emotional, and often tense discussions about this geopolitical issue. As Knowles (2006) reflects, antagonistic and challenging research relationships can provide deeper insights and the research must embrace them. She argues that social researchers should "be more open about whom you interview" and to "make sure you include people who make you

uncomfortable" (Knowles, 2006:399). While I do not focus upon Brexit within this thesis, it is important to acknowledge how the tense and emotion-laden conversations about Brexit that I observed and participated in played a role in shaping the relationships that I had with participants, such as attendees at the Seniors' Club. By listening to and discussing perspectives that made me feel uncomfortable – such as anti-immigration rhetoric – I sought to understand the broader perspectives and experiences of those I was researching with.

Performing the adopted granddaughter role

I walked group members to their cars or bus stop, giving them my arm for support and stability; I ordered coffees; provided cushions to make their seats more comfortable; I attended lunches and social events with attendees and more. My experiences of interacting, supporting, and helping Seniors' Club attendees shaped how they positioned me as a granddaughter-figure who enacted different caring practices; practically, socially and emotionally. Moreover, by enacting these practices I was performing this my ascribed adopted granddaughter role. This role shaped the depth of the relationships that I built and maintained with participants. As Batty (2020:14) argues:

building rapport and connections, being friendly and empathetic enables a good relationship with participants to be developed but conversely presents emotional challenges when ending the study.

On multiple occasions, Seniors' Club attendees actively took responsibility *for* me. They ensured that I was comfortable in the environment by explaining what activities they were engaging in and sought to 'look after' me by inviting me to other events that they attended regularly. As Wiederhold (2014:13) notes, "common barriers for outsider researchers...[include] building familiarity with local places and achieving a sense of immediacy and connection with participants". In taking *responsibility* for me, participants would provide advice, support, and guidance as I became familiar with the area and the practices that older British migrants engaged with. Participants invited me for dinners, lunches, cups of tea, to sit on a bench for a chat, for drinks, to parties, book clubs and more. Their care and concern for me created and facilitated opportunities for me to spend considerable time with participants; asking them questions and listening to their stories. Such care was attributable to my granddaughter status, rather than my overt role as a researcher. Likewise, through my adopted granddaughter role, and as a younger person (see figure 11), participants saw me as inexperienced and this became an opportunity for participants to 'teach' me about the aspects of their life that were important to them. They shared their stories, advice and knowledge – akin to how many of them engaged with their own grandchildren (Tarrant, 2010). My meaningful

relationships with participants are inseparable from my research ethics. Questions emerged of obligations, duty, and latterly about how to leave 'the field'.

Figure 11: photograph of me during research, aged twenty-four

Participants responded to my willingness to learn from them; I welcomed their stories as I sought to understand their lives as older British migrants within my research. I listened attentively, asked follow-up questions, and was enthusiastic about learning more about their lives. Helen told me that attendees[11] enjoyed having someone to tell their stories to. She explained that their families and friends were not always attentive or interested.

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[11] Although emphasised within the Arroyo Seniors' Club, my adopted granddaughter role was one that I, sometimes subconsciously, performed within other activity groups that I attended.

Within this context, my attentiveness provided numerous opportunities for conversations about what it was like to grow older in a migration context, experiences of retirement in relation to working life, the social dimensions of life as an older British migrant in Spain and more.

In performing the role of an 'adopted granddaughter', I felt comfortable expressing some of my negative feelings associated with having (temporally) migrated. Such openness and honesty with participants contributed to strengthening relationships as we could share reflections or advice about some of the challenges associated with migration – a contrast to the often-positive discourses about fulfilling the dream of migrating in later life (see Torkington et al. 2015). Various participants would enact a grandparental role by offering support and providing care in the form of listening, sharing reflections on their experiences, and in some cases offer a hug. My vulnerability within these research relationships helped me to develop strong relationships with participants and facilitate in-depth discussions about challenging and emotional topics like homesickness, loss and grief (see also Henry 2012).

My experience of being geographically distant from my grandparents and family while experiencing a bereavement also shaped the relationships that I developed with participants as their 'adopted granddaughter'. These discussions reflect Herbert's (2000:552) argument about a "need for

sufficient empathy to enable the research to see how the social world is understood and made meaningful by its members". My approach emphasised empathy and strong relationships build upon mutual trust. Consequently, I carefully navigated the power dynamics of researcher-participant relationships, and my ethical responsibilities as a researcher were ever-present, shaping how I engaged with participants (Ali 2015; Dery 2020).

Researcher-participant or (adopted) grandparent-grandchild?

Ethnographic research relies upon the relationships that researchers build and perform with participants over time. As Hall (2009:264) notes: "as participant(s) and researcher develop a relationship, access may be granted to areas and interactions that were previously restricted". My ascribed role as an adopted granddaughter represented the trust and fondness that participants had developed for me during my time in the Costa del Sol. I identified myself as a doctoral researcher within all encounters: regardless of brevity (see Appendix D information sheet). By being forthcoming with my research role within these interactions, I presented opportunities for individuals to opt out of conversations and interactions with me. However, my position as an adopted granddaughter was often emphasised by participants, with my doctoral researcher position rarely acknowledged or commented on. Reflecting upon this

positioning – away from academic researcher and towards granddaughter – participants placed me in a familiar social role that they had encountered and performed; a contrast to the unfamiliarity of the academic researcher role that I presented to them.

At twenty-four years old, attendees identified and commented upon similarities between their grandchildren and me; both in age and stage of life. Most of the older British migrants that I encountered had children, and of them, the majority had grandchildren, and some had great-grandchildren. As such, the role of grandparent, or wise elder, was familiar to many of my participants. My presence also provided an opportunity for some of these older migrants to perform familiar grandparental practices of care, concern, and teaching in a context where visits from their own grandchildren were sporadic. My ascribed role therefore informed my understandings of how participants navigated the complex emotions tied to their migration project and their geographically distant families (see also Oliver 2008; Torkington et al. 2015). It also revealed some of the emotional and practical dimensions of being a grandparent from a distance, and how participants enacted and sustained these relationships. I discuss these distant relationships in more detail within chapter 4, as I explore how attempts to communicate through digital devices can shape the grandparent-grandchild roles and relationships. From a methodological perspective, the familiarity and trust that I had developed with participants created space to discuss topics that were emotionally challenging, such as tension within familial relationships, death, widowhood, loss and home. My adopted

granddaughter positioning undoubtedly shaped my research and the

depth of the narratives presented within this thesis.

Grandparent-grandchild dynamics were particularly visible when

participants refused to let me take the bus to their house to meet for a

follow-up interview:

> *We have been talking re meeting you. Miles is concerned that you have to travel by bus.*

Extract from email correspondence, November 2016

I had previously travelled via bus and train for an hour to meet Martha

and Miles for our first interview. However, they expressed concern and

responsibility for me and were adamant that the follow-up encounter

would occur nearer my accommodation. This familial-style concern

highlighted their power in terms of how and where they should meet. My

experiences echo what Hall (2014: 2180) details about her participants'

"sense of responsibility formed part of a reciprocal care and concern that

served to strengthen my intimacy with the families". Another example

comes from Martha and Miles' expression of concern that I was lonely and

invited me to visit them socially any time. Such an invitation was a

surprise as I had interpreted our interactions as predominantly focused on

understanding their lives within my research context, rather than as a social visit due to my perceived lack of social connections in the Costa del Sol. I had not anticipated that participants would frame me in this way within my extensive pre-fieldwork preparations. Through the encounters I had, where I performed the role of adopted granddaughter alongside my role as a researcher, I became increasingly aware of the nature of ethics as an ongoing process – rather than a series of tick boxes on an ethics form (Cloke et al. 2000). While I researched how to conduct interviews with older people – preparing myself to take breaks, provide easy-read information sheets and consent forms to ensure informed consent, and be led by the participant in terms of pace and volume of questions, I had not anticipated the ethical dimensions that I would be required to navigate as an ascribed adopted granddaughter. My role here encouraged me to reflect on the power dynamics of research relationships alongside my positionality within each research encounter.

As a young woman investigating the everyday lives of older people, I was also aware that how my participants saw me had implications for the conversations we had and did not have. For example, participants understood discussions about sex and dating to be inappropriate for me to listen to. This power dynamic has, undoubtedly, shaped participants' narratives, and what they felt was appropriate for me to know. As Dery (2020) argues:

both researcher and participants are subjects with agency and power at specific times during the fieldwork. Such agency and power are both strategic and discursive positions that are constantly (re)negotiated on an ongoing basis.

It is important to consider how my role has shaped the co-construction of the narratives presented within this thesis. As visible through my adopted granddaughter role, some of the traditionally identified power hierarchies between 'researcher' and 'researched' are disrupted and challenged. For example, by perceiving themselves as grandparental figures, participants 'taught' me about their life in Spain, advice on how to live, and how to (and how not to) grow old. Examples include being told to *"stay out of the sun and use moisturizing cream to stop wrinkles making you look old!", "your health is everything – look after your body", "grow old gracefully",* and *"do what you love!"*. Participants gave this advice with a quiet assumption that I would follow it; learning from their experiences. This advice provided insights into the power dynamics of grandparent-grandchild relationships. In this case, grandparent figures provide, often unsolicited, advice to a young and an inexperienced grandchild figure. In terms of my research, these relationship dynamics were useful as I was interested in learning about individuals' narratives and experiences; I was a captive audience for their advice and stories. However, this form of relationship had power dynamics that I had not anticipated, and that required active negotiation.

Perceptions, positioning, and power: a revealing role

Challenging perceptions and expectations

> *Encouraged by the people sitting around me at this coffee morning, I bought two raffle tickets. My number was called! The prizes were a choice of a box of chocolate, a box of biscuits or a bottle of white wine. I chose the bottle of wine. My choice created a ripple of discussion and what came across as mild moral outrage. Comments about my choice included "oh young people today!" and "are you even old enough to drink?!".*

Fieldwork diary extract, December 2016

Within his methodological discussion about becoming a son-figure within research, Liong (2014) identifies that his participants placed certain expectations upon him; expectations that centre on a performance of masculinity. Likewise, in this encounter participants expected me to behave as a respectful and well-behaved young woman; expectations that I challenged with my choice of wine. Informed by participants' reactions, my actions had revealed perceptions about how I, as a young woman, should behave in front of 'grandparent' figures. Consequently, I began to reflect on what I understood to be the expected, or desired, attributes of a granddaughter. I thought about how I behave with my own grandparents and other older relatives, and how I performed this learned behaviour around participants. I was polite, respectful, had good manners, and didn't say anything that would be 'inappropriate'. In

choosing the bottle of wine and transgressing participants' expectations, I became acutely aware of how participants shaped the encounters that we had, and the ways that I inhabited the role that they had positioned me within. This revealing encounter made me reflect upon how this positioning actively shaped my research; through how and what participants told me, how they behaved around me, and how they interpreted my presence.

As visible in this encounter, participants' 'placing' of me also involved challenging the traditionally understood power hierarchy of powerful researcher and less powerful participant. Power, feminist geographers have argued, can manifest itself unequally in a research relationship through gender, race, class, and nationality (see Ali 2015; Dery 2020). There is significant writing about research processes as at risk of creating unequal power relationships through researchers' exploitation and extraction of participants' knowledge (see Ali 2015). Writing on how age can create these unequal power relations – not necessarily weighted towards the researcher – is less available within human geography. Kaspar and Landolt (2016:108) explain that "researchers often find themselves in a dependent position owning to their need to produce meaningful data and are thus far from powerful". Participants positioned me as a learning grandchild in relation to knowledgeable grandparents.

Participants' performance of a grandparental role involved sharing knowledge, alongside a sense of responsibility, concern, and care for proximate younger people, such as me. Moreover, for some, being a grandparent can also involve giving 'treats' or gifts (see Tarrant 2010). This practice often manifested itself through participants refusing to let me pay for meals or coffees (see also Liong 2014 for similar experiences). I was uncomfortable with these offers, and insistence that they pay, as I had expected to buy participants their coffee when they had given me their time during an interview. However, as my research progressed it became clear that for many of those participants who insisted that they paid, questioned my choice of wine, or insisted on a transportation alternative were enacting their 'grandparental duty', as they saw it. From an ethical standpoint, I felt that it was important to continue to offer to pay for these coffees and meals – to make clear that I was not taking advantage of them. However, when they inevitably refused my offers, despite my insistence, I accepted and acknowledged how these small interactions indicated how these older migrants performed their role of grandparent. These situations also required ongoing ethical negotiation. Transgressing expectations with the wine provides an example of where I become aware of the expectations of participants, and the boundaries that I navigated. In this context, I experienced and navigated relations and obligations that extend beyond those traditionally developed when doing research.

Relating and connecting through my adopted granddaughter role

Enacting The Art of Listening

My relationships with participants, developed through my performed adopted granddaughter role, undoubtedly shaped the in-depth and personal nature of my co-constructed interviews with participants (see Appendix C). Prior to interviewing participants, I spent time learning about individuals' lives in the Costa del Sol through our day-to-day interactions and informal conversations. My ascribed granddaughter position enabled the extended time that participants were often willing to spend with me. By listening carefully to the experiences that they described within our ethnographic encounters, our interviews often began from a point of some familiarity with one another. I incorporated Les Back's (2007) calls for social researchers to enact the 'art of listening' to expand understandings of the social worlds around us within my methodological approach.

Consequently, I pay "attention to the fragments, the voices and stories that are otherwise passed over or ignored" (Back 2007:1). For example, conversations with participants often involved listening to how much they missed their grandchildren, and how they liked to 'treat' them whenever they came to visit them in the Costa del Sol. When participants bought me coffee,

they enacted these same practices. Like grandchildren often experience, these treats often involved implicit expectations and obligations that I would visit again, listen to their stories, and ask about their lives in Spain. As a researcher who was interested in learning about their lives for my research, I navigated these expectations and obligations, identifying the importance of these reciprocal research relationships and how they unexpectedly involved recognisable familial roles.

Over my various fieldwork trips to the Costa del Sol, I conducted 30 narrative interviews[12] with older British migrants (see Appendix E: consent form). Each interview was unique and distinctive; reflecting how individuals told me their stories (Degnen 2005). This participant-led approach provided individuals with an opportunity to relay and reflect upon their experiences, expectations, emotions amongst other things on *their own terms* (Bold 2012). Based on this approach, I conducted interviews within participants' homes where possible. Home-based interviews and home tours[13] ensured that participants could share the

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[12] My narrative approach will be discussed further with reference to how I analysed the various types of information gathered, and how it has been presented within this thesis.

[13] My use of home tours coupled with interviews in the home is informed by material cultures scholarship and their methodological approach to understanding people's stories within the context of their 'places' and among their belongings (see Miller 2001). With participants' permission, I took photographs of the items and spaces that they identified as meaningful.

places and experiences that were most meaningful to them (see figure 12).

Figure 12: Linda showing me the view from her window and explaining her favourite local places

Each interview situation presented different challenges. In some interviews, participants had a carefully constructed narrative within which they presented a version of their self and appeared to have rehearsed 'their story' (Bold 2012). In other cases, participants felt uncomfortable and unfamiliar with the narrative participant-led interview and requested that I ask them questions that they could directly respond to (see Appendix F: interview schedule). In some of these instances, the participants only provided short answers and chose not to elaborate when prompted. Although initially frustrated and disappointed by encounters that did not encourage allow for in-depth discussions and sharing, I started to better understand how moments where participants did not respond to my questions within the semi-formal interview setting can guide research (see Knowles 2006). As Back (2007) argues, such attention involves not only what is said, but also what goes *unsaid*. An

example of this was visible in Seniors' Club discussions about death; some participated while others refused – a tense interaction discussed further in chapter 6. The often-unspoken presence of death within the lives of these older British migrants became a central theme within this research – a theme identified by paying attention to *silences* as well as what participants presented.

By understanding research as an iterative and co-constructed process (see Holstein and Guibrum 2003; Crang and Cook 2007), it was crucial that I followed Back's calls to *listen* closely and attentively to those I spoke with. My encounters with Margaret and Rosemary, two Church of Scotland attendees, demonstrates my approach. After six weeks of speaking with them after church, they told me of their experiences of widowhood and how they had shaped their lives in the Costa del Sol. Initially unexpected, this topic emerged organically from our ethnographic encounters and our subsequent interviews and their stories feature in chapter 5 on widowhood. By taking time to build my relationships with participants – as indicated through my adopted granddaughter role – I established an empathetic approach focused on actively listening (see Evans 2012). I provided an environment within which participants felt comfortable in sharing their stories with me over months, various social and research encounters, and through a series of more formal audio-recorded interviews that were later transcribed (see Appendix G:

transcript extract). Likewise, I often suggested the participant's home as a location for the interview to empower participants within the interview process; attempting to address and re-balance the researcher-participant power relations (Ali 2015; Dery 2020).

Discussing death: emotional work and ethical boundaries

The meaningful nature of my relationships with participants, and how we related to one another, was visible through the deaths of members of the groups I attended. Over the course of my fieldwork in Spain three older British migrants that I had researched with died. Although I was aware that this could happen, the reality, and my own emotional response, was unexpected:

> *I had a really bad day on Monday. Someone I met through research died and his memorial was on Monday, had an interview with a funeral director, and found out that a couple of other people I had met within a particular group were at death's door. I wasn't in a good place yesterday to do anything research related...it's odd because I don't know these people well, but when they are part of my everyday life here, and my research, it is emotionally challenging.*

> Correspondence with PhD colleague, October 2016

As demonstrated through this message to my PhD friend, my ascribed

adopted granddaughter role did not always result in close relationships with all participants. However, participants had invited me into their wider community of older British migrants. My participation in this had encouraged me to develop emotional connections to those I encountered within this context, even if just brief and fleeting encounters. Here, I sought emotional support from a friend who had similar experience within their doctoral research. During my fieldwork I identified the need for support from my supervisors, family and friends as I dealt with difficult issues and stories while being geographically distant from my usual social and support networks. As Kumar and Cavallaro (2018:657) argue:

> it is essential for researchers conducting emotionally demanding research to engage in self-care to avoid researcher fatigue and negative impact on participants, themselves, and their research and to aid in knowledge creation.

At the time, the conversations I had about my research within these networks felt necessary to help me process and deal with the stories that participants shared[14]. However, on reflection, these conversations are also a significant part of fieldwork – of working through what these stories mean, their importance, and how I represent them within this thesis (see Browne 2003).

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[14] As per ethical guidelines, I anonymised the stories that I shared as part of these conversations.

I struggled to interpret my feelings of grief for participants and acquaintances that had died. However, as Winmark (2016:9) argues, researchers must seek to understand how their own life course and experiences are inseparable from discussions with participants', and how "emotions and expressions guide our research". I felt conflicted; as a researcher and a relative stranger to those group attendees that I didn't speak to in-depth I was not sure if I had a right to grieve for them (see Rowles 1978 on grieving for participants). In a helpful response to my complex feelings, an academic colleague Dr Stephanie Mulrine provided helpful advice that shaped my research in this context:

...this sort of work is not without its emotional challenges when dealing with end-of-life and grief. First and foremost, I would say that regardless of others opinions you entitled to your emotional reaction. As you say, you are involved and you spend considerable time with these people. Loss is still loss. Allow yourself to take whatever time you need to grieve (if even only in a small way). Don't disenfranchise your response.

This type of research and work, whilst very important, comes with risks to the emotional wellbeing of the researcher which are rarely adequately addressed or planned for. I would suggest having someone you feel you can trust, will maintain confidentiality and who will not minimise or trivialise your experience and feelings, that you can debrief to. If you feel comfortable this might be a supervisor, a peer or friend. But I know from my own experience that this is not always possible, and so you might also want to consider approaching your university counselling service, who I have found to be really excellent in my experience...it is very difficult to navigate what can feel like the boundary between personal responses and conducting professional research.

Extract from our email correspondence, October 2016

While I drew upon Steph's advice, participants also encouraged me to attend memorials, share in moments of grief, and to talk about the deceased with their friends and families. The reciprocal and trust-based nature of my relationships with participants was visible through our shared experiences of the death of three older British migrants during my time in Spain (see also Henry 2012 on grief in fieldwork). Since my last trip to Spain, three participants have died. I have shared my grief with those participants that I had developed these relationships with during my time living in the Costa del Sol; demonstrating the ongoing nature of my adopted granddaughter role.

Alongside my feelings of grief for participants who had died, during my fieldwork process I also lost my maternal grandmother and paternal grandfather. With these losses, I found it difficult to separate my research from my personal life. In the immediate days after the death of my grandmother, I was unable to attend my various coffee mornings and ethnographic activities as encountering older migrants, who saw me as a granddaughter figure, was too painful in the context of the loss of my own grandmother. Prior to my own bereavement I had found it challenging to leave the stories I had heard in interviews and research interactions behind at the end of the day. Stories of severe ill health, loss, and death had become part of my daily life as an ethnographer. The emotional repercussions of this became particularly apparent when I found myself struggling to negotiate my

simultaneous roles as a researcher, an 'adopted granddaughter' in Spain and as a daughter and granddaughter in the UK. My attempts to separate my experiences of grief from my research was, however, a false and unattainable aim (Billo and Hiemstra 2013). My feelings of grief and experiences of bereavement are ongoing and ever-present within my research (Maddrell 2016). This presence of grief informed the questions that I asked participants and the additional care I took in actively listening to stories around challenges and losses (Back 2007).

The reciprocal nature of my relationships with participants was also evident in their support and comforting practices following my bereavements. They offered their condolences, enquired about my well-being, and often invited me to spend time with them outside of activity groups or semi-formal interview contexts. Through our research relationships, "work and life come to be entangled in the embodied, situational, relational practice that constitutes ethnographic fieldwork" (Cerwonka and Maliki 2007:6). I did, however, find it necessary to pause my fieldwork in the context of my losses and the emotional toll of experiencing grief alongside my participants. This break, with support from friends, family, and my supervisors, provided me with an opportunity to continue to undertake fieldwork in the context of difficult emotional work. Upon return to Spain, I found that my experiences shaped my research in the latter part of my fieldwork. I had developed a stronger, and more personal, sense of empathy that strengthened

my relationships with participants, and helped to identify and ask questions that

I had previously not considered. As Diphoorn (2012:203) argues:

> emotional experiences are not obstructive and detached experiences from the more objective analytical data, but when reflected upon, they are illuminating and interconnected to other data that we regard as knowledge.

My own experiences coupled with my understanding of ethnography as an "iterative-inductive" process (O'Reilly 2005: 27), ensured that I remained flexible and responsive to emerging themes within my research encounters. As such, I identified the under-researched importance of the presence of death, loss, and grief in shaping how older British migrants understand and experience their migration 'project' within the Costa del Sol. My exploration of such topics is attentive to the inherently emotional process of research, and of being empathetic within a research context (Evans 2012).

Interviewing couples: absent partners

She twisted her wedding ring as she spoke. It was an unconscious gesture, but I noticed that she only did it when she talked about life before her husband died. Their life together. Sitting in her colourful clothes, large jewellery, and smiling face, this small gesture suggested a story behind what she was telling me about her exciting and vibrant life in Spain.

Field note extract, November 2017

My research involved conducting interviews where individuals were simultaneously absent and present (Maddrell 2013). In the context of widowhood, widowed participants spoke regularly and in detail about their deceased spouse. Often, they described their story in relation to their life with their spouse, and their experiences since their death. In these situations, participants' narratives of migration and life in the Costa del Sol were formed, in part, around their loss and grief. As Denzin (2001:25) argues:

> The interview is an active text, a site where meaning is created and performed. When performed, the interview text creates the world, giving the world its situated meaningfulness.

This understanding is particularly visible within the context of interviews with participants, and their absent partners. Through the interview and the construction of their narrative, participants relived memories, demonstrated their love and sense of loss, and shared their understandings of what life with their spouse was like.

The narratives I present in Chapters 5 and 6 explore how participants understand their lives in the Costa del Sol alongside absent-present deceased spouses. These narratives provide an opportunity to understand how participants navigate complex feelings, experiences, and social relationships after a spouse has died. Within this context, my role as an adopted granddaughter-figure was often well-established by participants that I interviewed. Within these relationships and our countless

interactions, I employed an empathic and thoughtful research approach. For example, I was aware that asking questions about experiences of widowhood required sensitivity, compassion and care in my research approach (Evans 2012).

Embracing messiness: analysing & writing participant narratives

As Law and Urry (2005) suggests, social researchers must acknowledge and address the messiness of life within their research. Embracing this messiness presents challenges about how to present the stories, experiences, attitudes, emotions, identities, and relationships that constituted participants' everyday life (Law, 2004; Billo and Hiemstra, 2013). To address this, I adopted a focus upon in-depth narrative through my interview style, analysis approach, and in how I present my empirical materials within this thesis. Narratives can come in the form of a life story, or a recollection (Hunter 2010). The researcher has an editorial role in re-telling these stories (Ahmed 2012, 2013). As Smith (2016:135) succinctly highlights:

> One of the key challenges in research is to carry the intimacy and context of the field onto the written page.

Acknowledging the tensions between researchers' power, participant experience, and the process of constructing of an academic argument, I examine my positionality throughout my thesis. The adopted granddaughter role provides a useful means to do this; exploring the intimacy and limitations of my research and my relationships with participants (Smith 2016).

My narrative approach draws upon material cultures scholarship which uses specific objects to tell individual stories (Miller 2008; Walsh 2006a). Likewise, the genres of ethnographic writing and storytelling within social science research inform my narrative approach. For example, Graham Rowles (1978) effectively employs individual narratives to explore how older people engage with space; using their experiences and stories to challenge popular perceptions of limits and bounded places. Likewise, Mitchell Duneier's (2001) use of individual participants narratives within *Sidewalk* provides a window into the rich social urban context of booksellers on the streets of New York. My use of narratives also draws from Moen's (2006:60) awareness that:

> As individuals are telling their stories, they are not isolated and independent of their context. On the contrary, it is important to remember that the individual in question is irreducibly connected to her or his social, cultural and institutional setting (Wertsch, 1991). Narratives, therefore, capture both the individual and the context.

As mentioned within my introduction, my narrative approach seeks to be sensitive to the power relations embedded within the term 'expat' or 'expatriate' (Walsh 2012). Instead, I seek to rebalance this unequal power through framing the narratives of participants as *older British migrants*. However, more importantly, I focus upon individual participants; pushing forward their story rather than speaking to a homogenous category of migrants.

The narratives I present include interwoven ethnographic accounts and observations alongside individual semi-formal transcribed interviews (see Appendices F & G). My narrative approach reflects the importance of listening to individuals' stories as a way of coping and comprehending loss (Bennet and Vidal-Hall 2000). For example, As Bennet and Vidal-Hall (2000) discuss in their analysis of 'death narratives', narratives are an important way for bereaved people to understand their loss, and their new circumstances. I have engaged with narrative analysis that involves analysing data "within their social, cultural and historical context from many different perspectives", thus discouraging a search for a grand, overarching, narrative (Hunter 2010:47). Narrative analysis focuses upon participant experiences through the stories they produce, while imbedding these within the participants' social and cultural context, temporality and diverse geographies (Silverman 2011; Cihodariu 2012). By presenting nine rich and detailed narratives across my three empirical chapters, my

research provides insights into individual lived experiences by painting vivid portraits of the participants that I researched with. Moreover, my narratives explore themes and experiences, such as loss, often shared by older British migrants. My thesis approach attends to themes and experiences of older migrants that have been under-represented within human geography research (see King-O'Riain 2015; Tarrant 2010).

With my use of an ethnographic and narrative approach, I recognise the potential limitations with regards to demonstrating the diversity of experience and backgrounds of the older British migrants that I encountered across my fieldwork. However, my carefully chosen narratives have captured shared experiences and often discussed challenges, dreams, and life events that I encountered throughout my time spent with older British migrants in the Costa del Sol. Where I have focused upon the experiences of a specific group (e.g., women's experiences of widowhood within chapter 5) I have highlighted the limitations of doing so; emphasising the value of future research to explore other experiences of this process. I acknowledge that this thesis cannot and does not intend to present the experiences of all older British migrants. Rather, following the ethnographic and narrative traditions, I seek to draw out common themes across participants' narratives to provide insights into the complex and messy social and emotional worlds of older British migrants living in Spain.

Unmaking the role of adopted granddaughter?

Latterly, my fieldwork experiences had involved several goodbyes, both in my research and personal life. I enacted these goodbyes in several ways; through hugs and kind words, and more permanently through memorials and funerals. Discussion of my imminent departure disrupted the position that I had established within various social groups. When I said I was leaving permanently a U3A member[15] told me, in a joking manner: *"well I'm going to stop talking to you and find someone else to talk to then"*. This response to my departure was within a context where friends and acquaintances were often transient; coming and going seasonally or in response to changes in circumstances. As afore mentioned, and developed further later, this community also experience departures relating to mortality and the death of their friends, acquaintances and spouses – experiences that are increasingly common as they age. My experiences of saying goodbye reveal the centrality of loss and goodbyes within the lives of older British migrants living in the Costa del Sol.

Having read about the potential for guilty feelings or an emotional response about leaving (Billo and Hiemstra 2013; Liong 2015), I had tried

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[15] The U3A or University of the Third Age was a social group that I attended during my research. A further introduction is provided in chapter 4.

to prepare myself for saying my goodbyes. However, when the moment came, I had tears in my eyes. One comment from Helen continues to ring in my ears: *"Thank you for all you've done. I mean it. Thank you".* Helen wanted me to know that attendees valued my presence within the Club. In saying goodbye with no set plans to return I had assumed that I would *unmake* my role as an adopted granddaughter (Hall 2014). However, as I walked away, I heard someone in the group say *"she's part of this group now. I hope she comes back"*. It appeared that my role as an adopted granddaughter would extend beyond my departure. When I said goodbye to participants in April 2017, our farewells felt final. I was not sure when, or if, I would see participants again. However, in May 2018 I returned to the Costa del Sol to conduct follow up interviews and additional research. Upon my arrival, I found out that Helen had returned to the UK due to severe ill health, two of the regular members of the Seniors' Club had died suddenly, and John had become the coordinator of the group. Moreover, other groups that I had attended had disbanded due to limited numbers or lack of volunteers. By encountering these changes, a year later, I could better understand the stories that participants told me of change, transformation, and the loss within their daily lives. My return trip also demonstrates how ethnographic research can be a particularly useful method for understanding the complex and emotion-laden experiences of a transient migrant community (see Oliver 2008, 2017).

By visiting and spending time with some of the participants that I had developed strong relationships with, I also felt as if I was fulfilling my *duty* as an adopted granddaughter. This sense of duty and/or obligation demonstrates the depth of my relationships with participants as I sought to continue with the care, trust, reciprocity and emotional work that had characterised my relationships with various participants. Through my semi-regular correspondence, I have maintained these relationships since my departure from the Costa del Sol in 2017. Through my ongoing contact with the group my adopted granddaughter role has transformed into one that continues. This approach reflects my ethical commitment to reassuring participants that their "trust and participation in the research are respected and rewarded" (Given 2008:483). Participants had *adopted* into their group, rather than encouraging me to *adapt* and attend as a perpetual visitor.

Examining my adopted granddaughter role

My unexpected ascribed role as an 'adopted granddaughter' became something that I embodied, felt, performed, and challenged during my fieldwork. Through fostering this role, I developed familiar and trusting relationships with participants; allowing for a sense of intimacy and openness that could have been difficult to establish otherwise. I have shown how my ascribed role has shaped my understanding of some of the

practices, experiences, and perceptions of the older British migrants that I encountered within my research. My own experiences of grief and bereavement also highlight the importance of considering the emotional geographies of fieldwork – providing an example of how my feelings led to deeper understandings of the presence of grief and loss among older British migrants. By exploring my adopted granddaughter role as a methodological tool, I have also introduced some of the central themes within this thesis; caring, support and the importance of social relationships. Turning to my empirical chapters, I explore how these themes have emerged, and how they interact within the daily lives of older British migrants living in the Costa del Sol.

Chapter 4

Asking for help with digital difficulties: exploring social relationships and emotional experiences

As I walked amongst the Arroyo[16] Seniors' Club group to find a seat in the sunshine, Louise grabbed my sleeve:

> *could you be a dear and have a look at my phone for me? I thought I was doing so well but today I can't seem to see it at all. I think there's something wrong with the brightness.*

I said I'd be happy to look at it and drew up a chair. I looked at her phone – a brand of smart phone I had never seen before – and began by pressing the settings option. The brightness was at the highest level. Using my hand to shield from the sun, I could see the screen clearly. Had Louise's eyesight deteriorated? Was that an explanation for why she thought the phone wasn't working properly? As I turned to explain that it was as bright as it would allow, I noticed that she was wearing thick, prescription sunglasses: "Do you normally wear sunglasses when

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[16] Benalmádena-Arroyo de la Miel is known as 'Arroyo' by many of the older British migrants that I encountered

you look at your phone?", I asked. "Oh no! I never do. Hold on!! Is that

why I can't see it?!", she replied. Louise proceeded to take off her

sunglasses and shade the phone as I had – reducing the glare from the

sun. When she looked at her phone again, she said "it's perfectly

bright! I'm a silly old woman...thank you for looking at it for me".

While this encounter raises interesting questions about how older

British migrants like Louise do or do not engage with digital devices[17], it

also presents an opportunity to consider *who* and *how* older British

migrants ask for help. This chapter will focus on the process and

experiences of asking for help within this older migrant population. I

use a focus on digital devices to explore how individuals ask for help

from family, friends, and peers within their life in the Costa del Sol. In

asking for my help, Louise expresses her frustration by telling me: "*I*

thought I was doing so well". With her awareness of her own limited

knowledge Louise did not interpret her need to ask for help as an

'inadequacy' but a necessity.

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[17] In this instance, Louise initially tried to navigate the peculiar materialities of her digital device. However, unlike paper in sunlight, the screen of Louise's smartphone was less visible – less bright, and her use of sunglasses made it harder still to see her phone screen.

Louise's approach to seeking help seemed easy and relaxed; she was familiar with asking for assistance with her phone. However, as Bohns and Flynn (2010:402) argue:

> Asking for help can be awkward and uncomfortable. Even a minor request can invite rejection, expose inadequacies, and make a help-seeker feel shy, embarrassed, and self-conscious.

Louise had chosen to ask someone – in this case me as the group's ascribed adopted granddaughter – who may be both *willing* and *able* to help her. Identifying someone who was likely to help was part of Louise's way of limiting the discomfort and awkwardness that Bohns and Flynn (2010) identify as undesirable consequences of asking. Louise's opening phrase of "*could you be a dear"* is simultaneously a term of endearment and a request of help. She invokes her grandparental position; emphasising the obligation and expectation that characterised many of my relationships with the older British migrants at the Arroyo Seniors' Club. This was particularly evident in Louise's gesture of grabbing my sleeve – a familiar and decisive request for attention and assistance. By assisting Louise with her phone, I was enacting a caring practice that a grandchild may have fulfilled if they were nearby[18]. However, like some of the grandchildren who help their

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[18] As Caroline's story later in this chapter explores, older British migrants did request ongoing help from their grandchildren with various digital devices; relying upon this help during their visits.

migrant grandparents, I had a limited understanding of digital devices. Louise assumed that my youth would guarantee that I was broadly knowledgeable about digital technologies. While I was aware that I could provide Louise, and other older British migrants, with assistance in the basic functions of their phones or tablet devices, I was not an expert. In this encounter, the disconnection between how Louise perceives me and the help that I could realistically provide shows how intergenerational expectations are a central part of asking for help.

Within this group there was a collective lack of knowledge and experience about how to fix digital devices if they stopped working. Instead, the members each required support from outside of their social group to identify and address any problems that they encountered. This was not to suggest that there was no use of devices. Many attendees used their devices regularly. However, this use ceased if something went *wrong*. As such, the challenge that Louise faces is familiar within the context of the group. There was limited understanding of how to fix 'broken' devices among the group more broadly. So, individuals within the Seniors' Club 'muddle through' until their families visit and help. Here, older British migrants' desire and expectations to use their devices to communicate with one another, and their families, do not align with their experiences of trying to use them. Within such a transnational migration context, digitally facilitated

communication can "mediate emotions over time and space" (Longhurst 2016:120). However, as Louise's story indicates, the use of digital devices may not be as smooth or unproblematic as anticipated by those older migrants attempting to use them.

After removing her sunglasses, Louise had chastised herself: "*I'm a silly old woman*". She reprimanded herself for not realising what the problem was, and for asking for help for something that was not broken. Louise's self-chastisement raises questions about the emotional implications of being unable to use, or fix, a digital device. Louise references her age as an explanation for her mistake - not only is she a "*silly*" woman for not realising the effect of her sunglasses upon her ability to see the phone screen, but she is an "*old woman*". This passing comment is a common discourse among the older people I researched with. It indicates a frustration with their age, as linked to their identities and perceived 'failures' as they grow older – with failing health and changing bodies as a prominent discourse (see Lloyd et al. 2014 on 'failing health'). Geographical and sociological literature on use of digital devices in later life emphasises that individuals' experiences of "technology use [are] embedded within constructions and experiences of ageing bodies" (Buse 2010:987). Moreover, such experiences are inseparable from individuals' social contexts (Madianou and Miller 2012a., 2012b.); as particularly evident following 'failure'. Although

Louise chastised herself, her friends and acquaintances did not participate. Instead, they were empathetic and compassionate in a context where they had both done similar things and sought help to rectify it.

Louise's setback had temporarily disrupted her continued communication with family, friends, and organising her busy social life in the Costa del Sol. However, it also strengthened her relationships with her peers through their collective experiences of a variety of digital difficulties, of asking for help as older migrants with no geographically proximate family, and of the emotional consequences of experiences of perceived failure. During this banal and everyday encounter Louise and other Seniors' Club members also laughed – with Louise - about her mistake. Their collective laughter indicated that Louise was not the only older person in the group to have made a "*silly*" mistake with their digital device. Again, through their shared laughter it was possible to see how this social group supported one another by drawing upon their collective experiences of failure and mistakes. By contrast, I did not laugh alongside other members as I did not share the same experiences.

As this encounter demonstrates, focusing on individual experiences of digital difficulties can provide broader insights into *how* and *why* older

British migrants ask for help. This chapter explores how both geographically proximate and distant social relationships are shaped *by* and *through* unexpected difficulties that older British migrants face when attempting to use digital technologies within their daily lives. By exploring how older British migrants ask for help in diverse ways, I am reflecting the significant familial expectations placed upon individuals to learn and use their digital devices on an ongoing basis. These expectations were linked to their geographical distance as transnational migrants (see Baldassar 2008).

My focus on asking, receiving, and the limits of help is central to this chapter's exploration of social relationships. Asking for help can be challenging, emotionally complex; bound up with unfulfilled expectations, frustration and disappointment. However, asking for help can also inform the strengthening – rather than straining – of new and existing relationships (see Bohns and Flynn 2010). I explore how the unexpected and complex social dimensions are inseparable from these migrants' use of their various digital devices. As such, I argue that digital difficulties can provide insights into the friendships, familial relationships, and social group contexts through which older British migrants may seek and receive help. In attending to this theme, I present narratives that detail formal and informal sources of help; shared experiences of perceived failure; and familial exchanges of gifts

and knowledge for technical support. In tracing these social relations, I

show how older British migrants seek and receive various forms of

social and emotional support, that in turn shapes their migration

experiences.

Digital difficulties: a window into understanding social relationships

In discussing 'digital difficulties', I refer to a broad range of challenges

that individuals faced relating to both their digital devices, and digital

media applications (see Madianou and Miller 2012b. on polymedia).

Within this chapter, difficulties with digital *devices* are the use of mobile

phones (including smart phones) and connecting a printer to a tablet

device. Individuals' challenges with digital *media* include sending text

messages, using social media applications and webcam programmes. As

Coleman (2010:489) argues:

> ...the fact that digital media culturally matters is undeniable but showing
> how, where, and why it matters is necessary to push against peculiarly
> narrow presumptions about the universality of digital experiences.

Here, 'digital difficulties' encompasses older British migrants' challenges

with digital devices and digital media. By using 'digital difficulties' in this

way, I account for the diversity of experiences in using digital media and devices, that Coleman calls for.

Transnational migration scholars have paid increasing attention to how migrants enacting of familial roles, emotional work, practical care and assistance, and obligations across time and space is often mediated through their digital devices (see Longhurst 2016; King O'Riain 2015; Madianou and Miller 2012). As Baldassar (2013:83) argues; "the exchange of communication involved in 'keeping in touch' and 'staying in contact' produces co-presence across distance". Such communication helps to navigate and manage the "guilty feelings" associated with transnational relationships (Baldassar 2013). However, what is less present within migration literature is an exploration of difficulties as a *primary focus* in understanding these transnational relationships. As such, I focus on how older British migrants' social relations and emotional lives are shaped within this context of digital challenges (see Bondi 2005 on emotional life). As such, I move away from the focus upon how social relations are maintained or adapted by transnational migrants through their use of their digital devices.

Building upon Ahmed's (2004:10) argument that "objects are saturated with affect", Sawchuk and Crow (2012:502) argue that devices, such as cellular phones, can become "a magnet for understanding not only

personal and social tension, but connection and disconnection". This tension is particularly visible within transnational relationships as research by Baldassar (2014), Longhurst (2016) and Madianou and Miller (2012b), amongst others, indicates. Across this literature, there is an emphasis on connectivity as central to maintaining and developing a variety of geographically distant social relationships. For example, King-O'Riain (2015: 257) argues for understanding these communication technologies as creating spaces of *transconnectivity* that allow individuals to be:

> simultaneously practicing belonging across significant temporal and geographic distances through ongoing technological practices (King-O'Riain, 2013), which help them to create and maintain emotional connection.

However, there is limited work on what happens when the connection does not work or goes *wrong*. To address this gap, I ask - what do individuals' experiences of digital difficulties tell us about how social relationships are navigated, developed, and challenged in this migration context? I explore the complex social and emotional implications of being unable to 'connect' or create these spaces of *transconnectivity* through which relationships are negotiated and maintained (King-O'Riain 2015). In this context, I also explore how experiences of digital difficulties shape how older British migrants seek help to successfully 'keep in touch' with family and friends living elsewhere (Baldassar 2013). In considering *who*, *how*, *where*, *when* and *why* individuals seek help with their digital

difficulties, I provide insights into an under-explored area of research that will contribute to the nexus of transnational migration, digital media, and social relationships scholarship (see Longhurst 2016; Madianou and Miller 2012a.; Miller and Sinanan 2014). Building upon this understanding, I consider the support and help that older British migrants seek and provide within the context of the Costa del Sol branch of the University of the Third Age (U3A).

Peer support and help: sharing knowledge in the U3A

The U3A is an activity group that models itself on higher education institutions and is comprised of individuals who are retired and semi-retired from formal work. The U3A offers its members a supportive learning environment in their later years. Structured around two semesters per year this organisation provides weekly lectures, language classes, skills-based workshops and other non-academic opportunities (Formosa 2010). The Costa del Sol branch that I attended as an 'honorary member' had over four hundred members in 2016/17 (U3A Newsletter, January 2018).

Within this organisation, older individuals share their knowledge, skills, and working life experience to provide a rich and diverse learning

environment for their peers. For example, members with skills and expertise in an area – such as knitting, teaching Spanish, or Art History – lead groups and provide regular lectures. Several members of this organisation often told me that they often spent every day of the week attending a U3A activity, lecture, class or trip[19]. With its emphasis on knowledge and expertise sharing (Formosa 2010), the U3A is a place where members also seek informal help, support, advice, and guidance from their peers. Importantly, U3A committee members make it clear that their organisation cannot and will not provide formal care, guidance or assistance with health, mobility, or financial issues[20]. Yet, members seek and receive help with their digital devices both formally and informally within the U3A context.

'An Introduction to Computers and Computing' with "The Computer Guy"

When I asked the current president about how digital devices were used within the U3A, he directed me towards Lewis to discuss his 'computer club'. Across this Fuengirola-based organisation, Lewis has a reputation for his wide-reaching knowledge about digital problems and is known

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[19] The various available activities are available to members for thirty euros per semester.

[20] U3A members who require practical, bodily or formalised care and support are directed towards explicitly care-orientated organisations (such as Seniors' Clubs across the Costa del Sol).

among his peers as "*The Computer Guy*". With his background in engineering and series of computer-based hobbies, Lewis became *the* person for his peers to go to with their digital and technological problems. Lewis detailed the range of problems his friends and peers ask him to help with; from malfunctioning digital hearing aids to computer viruses.

Through helping his peers, Lewis became increasingly aware that many had limited understanding of their devices. To adopt a brief analogy, the older British migrants asking Lewis for help were akin to car drivers. They know how to drive a car but cannot fix the car if it breaks. Meanwhile, Lewis is like a mechanic: able to troubleshoot and fix their problems. In this context, Lewis' performance of his ascribed role as 'The Computer Guy' within the U3A positions him as a knowledgeable member who can help develop their limited digital knowledge, skills, and understandings. Lewis' ascribed role has been developed through the collective awareness that U3A volunteers often have 'expertise' on particular topics or skills. Lewis' role in helping fellow U3A members with digital difficulties became more formal in 2014 when he created a 'computer club' after over ten years of actively participating in the smooth running of the U3A.

Lewis' formal U3A computer club created a designated time and place for U3A members to learn about and request help for their digital devices. However, Lewis spent most of the allotted time presenting PowerPoint slides entitled "*An Introduction to Computers and Computing*". Attendees

described Lewis as being "*in lecturer mode*". This formal approach was a distinct contrast to the informal help he would provide his peers during coffee or in fleeting moments between U3A activities. Such support had shaped his relationships with his peers and his status within the U3A. However, within the 'computer club', attendees were requested to follow the syllabus; asking questions relating to it rather than their own devices. He lectured about a particular device function or programme regardless of the problems or digital literacy of those in attendance. Here, Lewis sought to establish authority in his expertise about digital devices and emphasised his role as the 'teacher' within this club, rather than a peer providing others with support. Lewis sought to strengthen his 'Computer Guy' role within this particular social context. He emphasised his skills, experience, and relative expertise in relation to his inexperienced peers.

For attendees, many of whom had encountered digital difficulties, there was a desire to improve their understandings of how to use their devices. Moreover, there was enthusiasm from attendees about the prospect of available, proximate, help. Such enthusiasm must be understood in the context of the reliance of many older British migrants, such as Louise earlier, upon distant family or friends to assist them infrequently with their digital difficulties. However, Lewis' approach to running the U3A computer club was at odds with the expectations and requirements of those who attended it. For example, Corinne and Chris had attended for

one semester. When I met them – one year later - they expressed their

disappointment when they found Lewis' approach was "*above our heads*"

and "*a bit too complicated*". Interestingly, they explained that after each

session they felt *less* confident about their knowledge of how their devices

worked. Chris told me:

> *Lewis is a great guy. He just knows so much about computers and so on. But really it's all more technical than we can all understand*.

For these attendees, they were looking for a 'how to' class that would

help them to understand how to use their laptop and iPad in more detail.

However, their feedback was that Lewis' computer club was "*pitched too

high*" and was "*beyond us*". Within Lewis' computer club, he has provided

advanced information about digital devices. For attendees this information

is incomprehensible based on their limited digital understanding or

experience. Instead, they required and requested less technical

knowledge, and more instruction regarding basic functions of their

devices; for what Corinne described as her desire for a "*very very basic

class*".

This situation is an example of where older British migrants' desire to

learn and to seek help with their devices becomes focused on one source

of available help. As Chambers (2015:105) argues, friends can play a

"key role in the lives of older people by providing emotional support and practical forms of assistance once typically offered by family members". For these older migrants, Lewis is both a friend and a source of 'expertise' relative to their limited knowledge about their digital devices. Lewis' reputation and how others seek support from him provides an opportunity to understand how unsuccessful attempts to meet expectations of help can result in unanticipated emotional consequences. For those who attended Lewis' computer club, there was frustration and disappointment as they felt more confused and less confident with their digital devices than they had previously. The differing expectations between Lewis and 'computer club' attendees resulted in decreasing numbers of attendees, ending permanently after only one year.

Providing help and trying to "keep up"

Lewis' experiences with his computer club provides insights into the challenges of learning and teaching digital skills among this community. Limited and varied levels of digital literacy and understanding present a challenge to any formal club or class teaching digital skills. Moreover, Lewis acknowledges the limitations of his own digital knowledge:

> *technology is moving so fast. I can't keep up with it. I mean I have basic skills and I can do more than the average older person. But I'm falling behind with it all these days.*

Here, Lewis initially compares himself to other older people – "*the average older person*". Such a comparison re-emphasises his 'expertise' in dealing with digital difficulties among the community of older British migrants within which he lives and socialises. However, he is also aware that his role as "*The Computer Guy*" is potentially unstable and uncertain. With the ongoing and rapid development of technology, Lewis is aware that he must undertake significant work to "*keep up*" and feel confident in his role. The implicit suggestion here is that another, younger, retiree with more up-to-date knowledge of technology could assume Lewis' carefully crafted and performed role within the U3A. By no longer working to maintain his knowledge, specifically around the digital devices that many of his peers attempt to use, Lewis is aware that he will become unable to help peers when they ask for help with new, and unfamiliar, devices or technologies. By deciding not to actively "*keep up*", Lewis is encountering some of the concerns that other participants voiced to me about their fear of "*failing behind*" as they grow older. While participants often discussed this in relation to their families or societal changes, this concept is particularly visible in relation to the development of new and increasingly ubiquitous technologies. Technologies that many older British migrants struggled to use consistently and 'successfully'.

Despite his concerns about 'falling behind', Lewis continues to maintain

and perform his role in the context of his peers comparably limited digital

knowledge, understanding, and experience. Therefore, although Lewis is

not actively developing knowledge about updating technologies, nor

running his computer club, he can assist others informally with the *"basic*

problems" that they continue to present to him on a weekly basis. With

his ability to address some problems, Lewis can continue to help others in

his community; providing assistance where familial support and care may

be distant and/or infrequent. As both Louise's and Lewis' stories have

shown so far, *what* and *why* these migrants seek help is shaped by the

limited collective digital knowledge of older British migrants. More

importantly, *who*, *how*, and *where* they ask for help is often shaped by

availability and by identifying potentially helpful individuals or

organisations. These stories reflect the importance of organisations such

as the U3A and the Seniors' Club within many older British migrants' lives

(Oliver 2017; Haas 2013). They also demonstrate how shared experience,

expectations, and reciprocity are central to the process of asking for help

from proximate, willing, and knowledgeable individuals.

Familial support with digital difficulties can also be requested by those

older British migrants who have social networks beyond their lives in the

Costa del Sol. However, as the remainder of this chapter explores, these

migrants may encounter problems with this form of support. For example,

there may be limits to the regularity with which family can assist, or limited understanding of terminology that family use to explain how to fix a problem. The next two narratives presented – Ron then Caroline – show how these older British migrants seek help from their families. These social dynamics can be tense, emotion-filled, and involve a desire to succeed.

Ron's story: Receiving his first smartphone

When Ron's son upgraded his smartphone to a new model, he offered to give Ron his old phone as a gift. Initially, Ron declined and was unconvinced that he would know how to use it, or why it would be of any benefit for him to do so. Ron had retired from his role as a social worker in the context of increasing technological changes within his workplace. He found that he had decreasing patience for learning new programmes as he got closer to retirement age. His relationship with technology within a work context had not been a straightforward one; he could see the benefits of using computers and tablets. However, it took him twice as long to type details out using his two index fingers than it did to scribble down notes with pen and paper as he spoke to people. However, each time Ron's son visited he expounded the benefits of a smartphone to him; the ease of getting in touch, the photos that could be sent, the navigation tools, and many more

possibilities. For weeks, Ron explained that he had dismissed his son's

conversations about this phone; he was happy using his "*coal-powered*

phone" - a small Nokia mobile phone. He did not feel equipped with the

knowledge or skills to use a touch-screen smartphone. When he

expressed his concerns, his son told him that it was "*intuitive to use*"

and "*easy*".

After numerous conversations with his son, Ron felt *obliged* to try the

smartphone. Ron had acknowledged that using this phone seemed

important to his son; he did not want to disappoint him or cause *yet*

another argument about Ron's stubbornness or unwillingness to try

something new. As Baldassar (2008) notes in her discussion of caring

from a distance, obligation is shaped by love and familial expectations

(see also Miller 1998). Ron told me:

> *My son kept insisting that I had a smart phone you know, get into this*
> *century, so they bought me one, eh, so not to offend him I tried using*
> *it, it was ridiculous, I find the little tiny areas for the alphabet so*
> *small...*

Ron had acknowledged immediately that the materiality of the phone

was not suitable for him. He felt that the alphabet on the smartphone

was too small, resulting in him wearing his reading glasses when using

it[21], and feeling frustrated as evident in his description of using it as "*ridiculous*". Ron's frustration was partially a response to his difficulties in accessing the various features of the phone that his son had enthusiastically described during his numerous attempts to convince him to use it. Ron also felt pressure to meet his son's expectations – and his frustration was also partly directed at how challenging he found it to do so.

Despite his initial immediate frustrations, Ron persevered in learning to use his newly acquired smartphone. His aim of "*keeping in touch with my friends here and in the UK*" more easily informed his determination. This motivation echoed his sociable manner. Ron's sociability was evident during the U3A meetings where he spent a significant amount of time during weekly activities talking to friends, acquaintances, and new members. Ron describes himself as a *"very sociable person. I love talking...I'll talk to anyone"*. These countless conversations would occasionally involve Ron using his *"social worker listening skills"* to provide time and emotional support to fellow migrants. He felt that, if he could use the smartphone, it might provide another way for him to strengthen his friendships and relationships with others, both nearby

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[21] At the point of receiving the phone as a gift, he was unaware that the alphabet can be enlarged as a function of the phone

and transnationally. For Ron, the smartphone was a tool that had *potential* in terms of maintaining and developing his reputation as a sociable, chatty, and his emotionally supportive character. However, Ron's experience of using the smartphone did not meet his, or his son's, expectations.

"It's easy Dad": learning & meeting expectations

When I asked Ron about using his smartphone, his brow furrowed, and a look of anguish and disappointment flashed across his face. After a moment, he told me more about his experience of learning to use the phone, with his son as his teacher:

> *…when I was first given it my son went its really easy dad, I'll sit with you, so he said I'll just show you the basics an hour and a half later he's still going on and I'm going look, most of that's gone in one ear and out the other, so just teach me what I need, the real basics you know, sending messages and things like that. I wasn't apping at all then, I'm not great on that stuff…*

Initially, Ron's son – who lived in Malaga[22] - spent hours teaching Ron how to use the device. Step by step, he showed him how to do each

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[22] As noted within the introduction, for most older British migrants that I encountered their family was not proximate (see also O'Reilly, 2000; Oliver, 2008, 2017). However, it is important to

function, gave the phone to Ron and encouraged him to repeat his movements. These hours of teaching and learning were both useful and provided Ron with time with his son. However, two days later when Ron could not remember how to send a text message, he called his son using his landline number to ask him to recap the instructions. Ron explained that his son replied: "*it's easy Dad…just unlock your phone, press the button that looks like an envelope, type what you want, and press send*". Ron felt that his son's explanation was too brief, his tone was dismissive, and he still struggled to understand the instructions. His son's regular description of the smartphone as something "*easy*" created an environment within which Ron felt incapable, "*useless*", and left behind as he struggled to use the device. Ron felt that his son was not acknowledging how challenging he found it; he felt like he was failing by being unable to complete this "*easy*" task on the smartphone. Ron's experience echoes some of the concerns that Lewis and others voiced about *falling behind*, or no longer being able to keep up as they grew older. Here, Ron felt unable to meet his son's expectations that he could 'keep up' with the new communication technology his son had given him.

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recognise that where help *is* proximate – such as in Ron's context – migrants' families may not provide help willingly, accessibly, or at all.

The significant support and guidance that Ron had required with his smartphone had affected his relationship with his son. Ron had initially enjoyed the time that they spent together through teaching and learning. The smartphone was a reason for them to be in regular contact and was a shared interest. However, Ron felt that his regular questions – initially answered with enthusiasm by his son – had become an annoyance. Ron began to detect his son's impatience through the brief and dismissive instructions he would give when asked to repeat directions he had previously provided. Ron therefore felt less inclined to ask his son for regular assistance, for fear of placing strain on their relationship. In seeking to please his son through using a smartphone, Ron felt that his need for support and help had become an unexpected nuisance.

The experience of learning how to use a smartphone, a gift, highlights a significant difference between his son's expectations and Ron's ability to learn about and use the device. His son had anticipated that Ron would, after receiving instructions, be able to use his new phone immediately to communicate with friends and family. However, Ron told me that he found it difficult to retain information and learn new skills. It became apparent through their interactions that Ron's son had limited patience to provide the help that Ron needed; compounding his sense that he was being a nuisance or burden with his numerous

questions. As such, Ron's experience of learning how to use a smartphone provides insights into how differing expectations and abilities can result in relationships shifting and experiencing unexpected social challenges and tensions.

Autocorrect mishaps: maintaining and repairing relationships

Ron's fear of doing the wrong thing, making "*silly*" mistakes, and experiencing reputational damage shaped both his relationship with his smartphone and his feelings about making regular requests for help. As Ahmed (2014:8) writes:

> Fear shapes the surfaces of bodies in relation to objects. Emotions are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of 'towardness' or 'awayness' in relation to such objects.

Several undesirable experiences, through which his fears were realised, motivated Ron to permanently stop using his device. He described the first of two unexpected 'incidents':

> *…I think my fingers were getting near these little areas and picking up the wrong letters and I was, I sent some really embarrassing texts to people.*

When I asked if he could explain more about the "*embarrassing texts*"

he was referring to, Ron only expanded a little:

> *I got a couple of texts from somebody and I replied, uh I won't go into the details, I don't think that'd be appropriate [laughs].*

Ron was unwilling to talk further about the details, only that "*it was just ridiculous and awful*". Ron's unwillingness to discuss this experience of using his phone in detail suggests that it is a painful and emotionally difficult memory. It was an embarrassing experience.

Ron's emphasis on his identity and reputation as a sociable person was, he felt, threatened by the unintended outcome of a text exchange with an acquaintance. Ron laughed nervously, blushing at the memory of this "*ridiculous*" event. Later in our interview discussion, Ron returned to this story and explained "*the incident*" in more detail. After responding to a text someone had sent, the response he received was unexpected as it highlighted the inappropriate nature of Ron's mis-typed or autocorrected text. Ron explained:

> *I got quite a surprise text back saying: "what on earth are you talking to me like that for?!" And swear words had come up, really awful swear words and uh I hadn't meant that at all [laughs nervously].*

Ron was afraid that other friends and acquaintances would hear of the inappropriate message he sent. Ron's lack of familiarity with the smartphone touchscreen keyboard and the autocorrect function had resulted in him sending message content he did not intend. Although I did not find out the exact content of the messages, the implication was that it was rude or inappropriate and was out of character for Ron. As Bunnell et al. (2012:499) write:

> Friendship reminds us that affecting and being affected is indeed emotional labour, requiring the production and reproduction, for example, of mutual trust, reciprocal care and fondness.

For Ron, he curates and values highly his reputation as sociable and reliable amongst his friends. He perceived his mistaken message was a threat to his friends and acquaintances.

Two weeks after *"the incident"*, Ron had also accidentally sent his teenage granddaughter texts that he was embarrassed about and felt were inappropriate. Through his retelling of this story, Ron blushed, laughed nervously and told me that he was "*useless*". Ron's embodied emotional responses here demonstrate how:

the body is a site of feeling and experience. These experiences and feelings are socially embedded, but they are localisable in the body, and relationships between bodies" (Pile 2010:11).

In contrast to his visible sense of shame, Ron told me that his granddaughter had "*laughed them off*". In this context, Ron's granddaughter may have been more familiar with so-called 'autocorrect fails', where the autocorrect feature changes the intended meaning of the message. By contrast, like Ron, his peers may have less understanding and instead taken his inappropriate message at face value; causing social embarrassment and potentially reputational damage. Although his granddaughter's response to Ron's unintended message was one of laughter, Ron was aware of the potential harm that his accidental inappropriate messages may cause within his family. His recent memories of, and feelings about, sending similarly inappropriate and unintended messages to an acquaintance were also very present in his mind. Ron's concern and uncertainty around his smartphone were contrary to his confident and self-assured manner that came across when he spoke of his social relationships, his work as a social worker, or his life as a migrant in the Costa del Sol. The sense of shame that Ron continued to feel about his message mistakes had made him feel less confident in his ability to use the phone. More significantly, Ron became hesitant and increasingly unwilling to respond to family's continuing request for communication via his smartphone;

for texts, pictures, news and more. This unwillingness was something that his son saw as stubbornness, and as ungrateful.

Following these incidents, Ron stopped using his smartphone completely. When I asked what he had done with it, looking relieved, he told me *"I binned it".* Through further conversation he later explained that it lives at the back of a drawer; "*out of sight, out of mind*". This desire to remove the smartphone from his everyday life was predominantly shaped by Ron's understanding of the device as potentially dangerous to both his relationship with his son, and his social reputation. These two aspects of his life were ones that he placed significant value upon, and felt that his failing attempts to use the phone were changing his relatively uncomplicated retirement experiences in the Costa del Sol. Through Ron's negative experiences, he became acutely aware of what he understood to be the 'dangers' of smartphones. Ron was adamant that he would not face such embarrassment again; embarrassment that was still very present in his nervous laughter in his retelling of his experiences. Likewise, Ron was concerned that any future mishaps could shape how others saw him. He understood his 'incorrect' use of his phone as something that could, unintentionally, damage the carefully constructed and maintained social relationships that shaped his life among other older British migrants in the Costa del Sol.

Ron's use of his phone required emotional *repair* work. Following both autocorrect "*incidents*", Ron apologised to the recipients of his messages. He felt that it was important to visit both his acquaintance and his granddaughter in person to apologise. Ron wanted to clarify that his "*inappropriate*" messages were unintended, and clearly out of character for him. He also sought to explain that he had limited knowledge of how to use his smartphone; a means of explaining the messages that he was embarrassed about sending. Ron's experience of 'failing' to use his smartphone in the way he, or his son, intended had complex emotional consequences. Ron had faced uncertainty around using the device; he was unsure that he would be able to or that it would be a useful addition to his life. He had felt frustration and disappointment at his struggle to learn at the pace that his son expected. Latterly, Ron had also felt acute embarrassment in response to the "incidents" detailed above.

"I'm a digital dinosaur": managing social expectations

Throughout our research encounters, Ron would often begin by explaining this or reminded me with comments like: "*oh I'm useless, I am useless*" and "*I'm useless, absolutely useless*". Ron's comments position himself as someone who is not only unfamiliar with the

technology, but who has tried and *failed* to use them. This rhetoric that

centered on his 'uselessness' was often discussed in relation to his

"*digital dinosaur*" self-description. The term 'dinosaur' has connotations

of being older, ancient, relics and possibly irrelevant in the

contemporary world. It also conjures images of a heavy-footed

approach. By describing himself this way, Ron sought to manage his

family's and friends' expectations, many of whom were frequent users

of various digital devices. By referring to himself as a "*dinosaur*" his

family would understand that he was neither willing nor able to use his

smartphone. Likewise, within the context of the U3A activities that he

facilitated, Ron made clear that he would not be using a smartphone or

computer. Instead, he would tell fellow members:

> *Phone me. Or I'll phone you. Don't expect a response if you text or
> whatever...I might be able to an email once in a while.*

Ron's approach here makes clear that no requests should be made of

him to engage with digital ways of working or communication. Ron

avoids future problems by limiting the likelihood that other older British

migrants would communicate with him using text messages and emails

through a smartphone. Instead, he prefers to maintain and perform his

reputation as a sociable person through face-to-face interaction or

mediated through his "*coal powered*" mobile phone. Drawing on his

"*digital dinosaur*" narrative, Ron would tell his peers that he felt "*too*

old" for the new communication technologies that he had engaged, and subsequently disengaged, with. Ron appears to be attempting to actively control his narrative here; placing blame upon his age, rather than any personal incompetence or lack of digital skills. This discourse echoes Louise's exclamation that she is was a "*silly old woman*" for not recognising her sunglasses as a difficulty in using her phone. Moreover, Ron's new narrative tool of being a *"digital dinosaur"* underplays his negative experiences and the emotional consequences of his 'failure' to use a device that his son repeatedly told him was "*easy*" to use. As such, Ron has reshaped how he wants his peers and family to perceive him, and how he expects to enact their social relationships– without mediation through digital devices. Interestingly, after Ron refuses to use his smartphone following his negative experiences, his son does not persist in encouraging him to use it. This conflict avoidance is, Watson et al. (2018) argue, employed as a form of emotional labour. Instead, they both acknowledge that it is impossible to persuade Ron, and if his son pushed him to re-engage with using a smartphone, they recognised that this would cause unwanted further strain that would affect their relationship. Instead, they rely upon less regular phone calls and face-to-face visits. They reached this new understanding following their shared negotiations, emotional repair work, and by resetting one another's expectations around staying in touch (Baldassar 2013).

By contrast, Ron spoke often of his wife Ruby's use of her smartphone, iPad, and laptop for an array of everyday tasks. He spoke proudly of her success in what he refers to as "*apping*" – his term for her use of various digital media applications. Over time, Ruby had become responsible for the online administrative work of their daily lives. This included responding to emails, completing and submitting online forms for utilities and residents permits, booking holidays, and more[23]. Moreover, Ruby had become the main point of contact for their family and those friends that used digital media. Many of Ron's contact – particularly with family members – had become facilitated by Ruby and her digital devices. Their children and grandchildren would send messages, videos, and photographs to Ruby and Ron via WhatsApp. Ron could only respond by dictating his reply to Ruby. He no longer felt guilty for being unable to reply to text messages or not knowing how to answer a webcam call. Instead, he was content to rely on Ruby to show him these things each day. Ron's communication and maintenance of social relationships has therefore become mediated through his spouse's greater, although limited, technological knowledge, willingness, and ability to use a smartphone regularly. Ron's experiences and the reconfiguration of Ruby's role provide insights into how older individuals' desire to use digital devices to build and maintain social relationships can be difficult to achieve. It can involve

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[23] Footnote about digital exclusion – signpost to this

unanticipated challenges socially, emotionally, and reputationally.

Building upon this focus on familial relationships as a source of help with digital difficulties, I turn to Caroline's story and her relationship with her grandchildren.

Caroline's Story: help, reciprocation, and lemon curd

Caroline's Lemon Curd Recipe:

- 6-8 oz sugar *(put 6 oz in first and taste later to see if you want more)*
- 2 - 3 eggs *(I only used 2 large eggs last time and it was ok but you might like it a bit thicker)*
- Zest of 2 of my large lemons *(Use scraper for this)*
- Juice of these 2 lemons.
- 4 oz butter.

Put all ingredients, except eggs, into a double saucepan or basin over hot water, stir from time to time until butter and sugar have melted.

Add the well beaten eggs and continue cooking, stirring, until the mixture coats the back of a wooden spoon.

Pour in jars and seal immediately.

Caroline shared her lemon curd recipe with me during my first visit to her little villa near Marbella. She gave me four large lemons from the enormous fruit-filled tree in her front garden; carefully picking the ripest ones. I took the recipe (above) and the lemons (see figure 13.1) and made four jars of bright yellow lemon curd (see figure 13.2 below). During my attempt to follow Caroline's recipe, I called her to ask advice

about what to do when the curd didn't seem to be thickening as it should. She told me: "*just keep stirring Rebekah! It'll get there*". Once the curd had cooled, I called her to thank her for her recipe, the lemons, and her guidance. She explained she had taught her grandchildren the same recipe recently. "*It's my pleasure – makes me feel useful*", she told me.

Caroline's experience of teaching her grandchildren - and me - how to make lemon curd, demonstrates her emphasis on reciprocity when she asks for help. Although incongruent, drawing parallels between Caroline's lemon curd-making and her use of her digital devices provides interesting insights into her relationships with others.

Figures 13.1 and 13.2: lemons from Caroline's lemon tree & lemon curd that I made following Caroline's recipe

A 'recipe' for fixing digital difficulties

During my second visit, Caroline told me that her iPad-printer connection had stopped working "*for no reason*". She asked me to look at it, explaining that her grandchildren would usually do it for her but that their next visit wasn't due for several months. Her printer application required a software update. With her permission, I tapped 'agree' on the iPad to conduct the update, checking that it was working again. Caroline told me that "*you young folk always make it look so easy! I've been trying to work it out for a week already*". Once I confirmed that it was working as it should, Caroline told me that she wanted to know exactly what I had done to fix her "*broken*" printer and iPad. She said: "*write down the instructions in a way I can understand. Really really simple".* As I wrote down the step-by-step, plain English, instructions that Caroline requested, she brought out a folder filled with slips of paper. One by one she showed me the detailed instructions that her grandchildren had written out for her; each for a different application or device. These instructions included small drawings of the symbols and markers that Caroline would need to press when she worked through the instructions.

Following this approach, I drew the symbols that she would need to press if her printer application required a further update in the future. I was following the approach created by Caroline's grandchildren; enacted each time one of them visited her. While I wrote out the

instructions, Caroline continued explaining that her grandchildren were a "*Godsend*", and that she regularly "*saved up*" her queries about her digital devices, awaiting a visiting grandchild. Caroline's grandchildren used their knowledge of what she would relate to; using a means of communicating instructions and guidance that would be familiar to Caroline.

Caroline's request for simple and clear instructions felt familiar to the lemon curd recipe that she had given me. Like her 'famous' lemon curd recipe that she taught her grandchildren, the instructions I wrote out would be a step-by-step 'recipe' that detailed the 'ingredients' required. This format was one that was familiar to Caroline, and one that she felt able to make sense of. However, unlike a lemon curd recipe, digital devices may not follow a linear step-by-step format. Instead, what may have worked previously may no longer work, for example if a familiar application has updated and the location of the symbol or 'button' for writing a new message has moved or changed. As such, to use a digital device 'successfully', a basic understanding of the shifting and developing nature of the technology is necessary.

In making lemon curd there is technical language the maker must understand to be successful. Such language may include straining, whisking, beating, and sifting. Therefore, as with using digital devices,

an individual requires technical knowledge and skill to make something
like lemon curd. Likewise, to *fix* something - whether a batch of lemon
curd that has curdled, or a digital device requiring a software update –
individuals must have some level of technical knowledge. These
parallels provided Caroline with a framework through which she could
ask for help from her grandchildren about her digital difficulties; as I
had called her to ask about why my curd was not thickening as
expected. By sharing their respective kinds of knowledge, Caroline felt
their reciprocity could be an equalising influence within her relationship
with her grandchildren. For example, by developing one another's skills
and by 'troubleshooting' with imperfect lemon curd or 'broken'
technologies.

Seeking to reciprocate

Caroline was adamant her requests for her grandchildren's help would
be part of a reciprocal relationship – they would help her with her
digital devices[24], and she would teach them skills she had developed
over her lifetime. She told me:

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[24] It is important to note that Caroline's requests for help directed towards her grandchildren were only related to her digital devices. Caroline was adamant that any practical care-related help would be sought elsewhere. For example, she was a member of a local Seniors' Club branch - *"the Old Age whatnot"* as she referred to it - and had previously asked them for transport to hospital appointments among other things (see also Hall and Hardill, 2016; Oliver, 2017).

> *Oh I teach them too you know! I gave one grandchild my 'famous' lemon curd recipe, I tell them all stories about their parents when they were children. Oh yes…I teach them some Spanish too sometimes.*

Lemon curd, crocheting, speaking Spanish, how to manage money were some of the numerous and varied skills Caroline sought to share. This desire to share her skills and knowledge echoes Lloyd et al.'s (2014:14) observation that seeking help is often met with a desire to reciprocate:

> Reciprocity was also an important element in participants' accounts of help and support...The majority talked in more general ways about what they were able to give their families and friends, which included advice, financial help and accommodation.

Their relationship was also one of praise and positive reinforcement in both directions; emotional labour used to strengthen their relationships during face-to-face visits. Caroline would praise her grandchildren when their baking or cooking skills improved under her watchful eye – her 'job' as their grandmother (see also Tarrant 2010; Sawchuk and Crow 2012). Meanwhile, Caroline's grandchildren would *"always tell me how well they think I'm doing"* with using her digital devices. As Tarrant (2010:195) notes, for some grandparents:

> intergenerational learning from the children to the grandparents is facilitated through a shared interest in technology, which acts to strengthen intergenerational connectedness in the family, across space.

This strengthening process is visible in how Caroline's grandchildren provided her with support and praise about her level of digital know-how while simultaneously fixing the problems she encountered on her devices. However, despite her best intentions to reciprocate her grandchildren's assistance, Caroline found they did not always want to, or have time to, learn the skill(s) that she offered to teach them. During their visits, Caroline explained her grandchildren would be *"out gallivanting here, there and everywhere"*. Here, Caroline's grandchildren's holiday plans during their visits to her in the Costa del Sol complicated and limited her expectations of reciprocity.

At the same time, she is aware that without their help with her digital difficulties, she would be unable to remain connected to them to the extent that she, and they, prefer (King-O'Riain 2015). As such, during visits from her grandchildren the balance Caroline seeks to strike between their various forms of knowledge and skill sharing often remains unachieved; something she feels disappointed in but has limited control over. Caroline's navigation of different expectations and priorities here is inseparable from the grandparent-grandchild relationship they navigate together. Within this, Caroline seeks to share in moments of connection through shared tasks that can recognise the

various kinds of expertise and know-how within this intergenerational,

familial, relationship (Tarrant 2010).

Infrequently available help

Although help was available via her family, Caroline was aware of the limitations of relying upon assistance from her family. She was also acutely aware of the consequences of when her devices 'broke' and her grandchildren were not able to visit and 'fix' them for her for months. Caroline's ability to use her smartphone and iPad provide a direct line of communication with her grandchildren. She is also particularly aware her grandchildren prefer to send messages, photos, Facetime, or email her, rather than call. Caroline's own use of 'polymedia' was shaped by her grandchildren's communication preferences (Madianou and Miller 2012a.), and she was willing to *try* and use the formats they felt most comfortable with. As Madianou and Miller (2012a.: 88) argue:

> In contemporary transnational relationships with high access to technologies of communication, the choice and use of media is itself 'a major communicative act'...providing potential new sources.

In this case, the communicative act is guided by Caroline's grandchildren, with the expectation she will both learn to use their favourite apps, and also use them appropriately on an ongoing basis. However, as is visible in Caroline's request for my help during an interview, this is not always achieved as expected.

For Caroline, the help her grandchildren provide her with in maintaining their connections via digital devices is crucial in maintaining her familial ties transnationally (King-O'Riain 2015). Her relationships with her family had become difficult and tense following her permanent migration to Spain. Caroline's migration to the Costa del Sol with her partner had been a contested issue within her family; resulting in their estrangement. However, after her partner's death in 2002, Caroline attempted to *"mend broken bridges"* with her children. However, she explained they were unreceptive to her reconciliation attempts. When I met her, Caroline had just turned eighty years old. Her three grandchildren were all in their late teens and early twenties and contacted Caroline directly; bypassing their respective parents. They visited her every year. Figure 14 below shows the photographs of her grandchildren adorning the shelves of her villa.
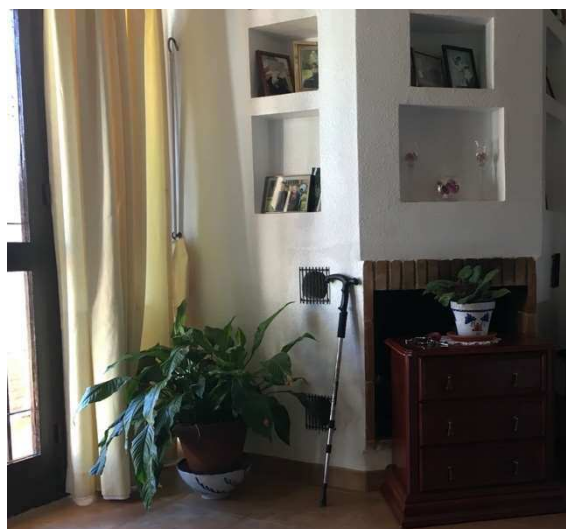
Figure 14: Photographs of Caroline's grandchildren on each shelf.

Caroline explained that she felt *"like I have a different grandchild with me every month"* and *"they all just love staying with their Grandma"*. Therefore, when she *"gets stuck"* with her device, she feels both physically and emotionally distant from her grandchildren; something she told me is "*to be avoided at all costs*". As Baldassar (2015) writes about, keeping in touch – regardless of medium – is a central dimension of maintaining transnational relationships. As Baldassar (2015:88) notes, with the increasing presence and availability of digital media:

> the capacity to be in touch when and as often as one chooses eliminates any acceptable excuse not to be in frequent contact and therefore, failure to be in touch can be judged as poor caregiving or poor kin behaviour.

To extend this concept to apply to Caroline's context; she feels the difficulties she encounters with her digital devices occasionally create a situation where she is unable to maintain her regular communication with her grandchildren – communication which she treasures. Caroline's experiences, and fear of being unable to connect, are in part linked to a fear of missing out. She was concerned that she would not be able to hear about her grandchildren's latest experiences, events, grades, and so on. In her role as a grandmother, Caroline wished to support her grandchildren by celebrating their successes and providing emotional care when required. Without a 'direct link' to them through digital communication technologies, Caroline felt disconnected from their everyday lives. As Chambers (2015:190) argues:

analyses of intimate practices and care can help us to recognise the complex intersections between private, familial and intimate spheres of life and public...spheres of society.

Caroline's story provides a window into some of these intimate practices by considering the emotional process of asking for help through her transnational familial relationships. Through Caroline's story I have sought to move beyond understanding the importance of staying in touch for transnational familial relationships as Baldassar (2013) does, towards thinking about the implications of needing help to do so. This help is emotionally complex, may involve expectations or desire of reciprocity, and can involve tensions for the relationship when it is absent.

Trying, failing and asking for help

Asking for help often occurs after individuals have *tried* and *'failed'* to resolve the digital difficulty they have encountered. I have explored the unanticipated challenges and ongoing help and support required to use these technologies, and how 'failure' to use them shapes older British migrants' social relationships. In presenting four distinctive narratives, I have provided insights into some of people and places that older British migrants seek help with their digital difficulties. I have examined how these migrants enact their social relationships, and how the process of asking for and receiving help shape these relations. As explored within

Ron's story, it can also involve significant amounts of practical and social *repair* work. Moreover, I explored what happens when social expectations remain unmet, reputations are threatened, the emotional consequences of digital activities going *wrong*, and the limits and boundaries of available help.

I now build upon my central focus on understanding how unexpected challenges shape the social relationships that older British migrants value. I examine how individuals understand and negotiate the process of widowhood in their later life migration.

Chapter 5

"*Us sad types should really stick together*": exploring widowhood as a status, experience, and emotional orientation

Nancy told her friend George he should come to the Costa del Sol on holiday. They had both become widowed in 2016[25]. In trying to convince him, she said *"us sad types should really stick together!".* Although a flippant remark, Nancy's statement highlights how she and her peers understood widowhood; a status or 'type' of person that defines an individual through loss and emotion and that may require support. Although not exclusively experienced by older people, the likelihood of becoming widowed increases dramatically for those later in life (Michael et al. 2003; Hockey et al. 2005; *Skinner* et al. 2017). The death of a spouse is a significant, and potentially traumatic, life event that shapes individuals' ongoing negotiation of widowhood (see Miller et al. 2004; Morris and Thomas 2005). Likewise, as Ong et al. (2010, 653) discuss, "few life events affect adults more than the death of a spouse or life partner". Despite the likelihood that many older people will experience widowhood, and the significance of this life event, there has been limited

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[25] During my fieldwork period in the Costa del Sol

research conducted on this topic within human geography[26] (see existing work by Hockey et al. 2005; Maddrell 2013, 2016; Skinner et al. 2017). My research addresses this gap by investigating how a population of older migrants understand, experience and negotiate widowhood. I develop conceptual contributions to human geography scholarship on ageing and death. Moreover, by considering how individuals negotiate this process daily, I also challenge perceptions and stereotypical representations of what it is to be widowed in later life[27] (Age UK, 2018; Hockey et al. 2005).

Within this chapter I identify and discuss three overlapping dimensions of the complex and ongoing process of widowhood; as a status, a set of experiences, and as an emotional orientation (see figure 15 below).

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[26] Widowhood has received some limited attention from lifestyle migration scholars (see Ahmed and Hall, 2016; Oliver, 2008, 2011). However, these discussions do not consider how widowhood is understood by those who experience it in depth.

[27] Understanding widowhood as experienced by older people is also relevant in the wider context of ageing western populations (Goodman, 2010).

Widowhood as status

Widowhood
as
experience

Widowhood
as an
emotional
orientation
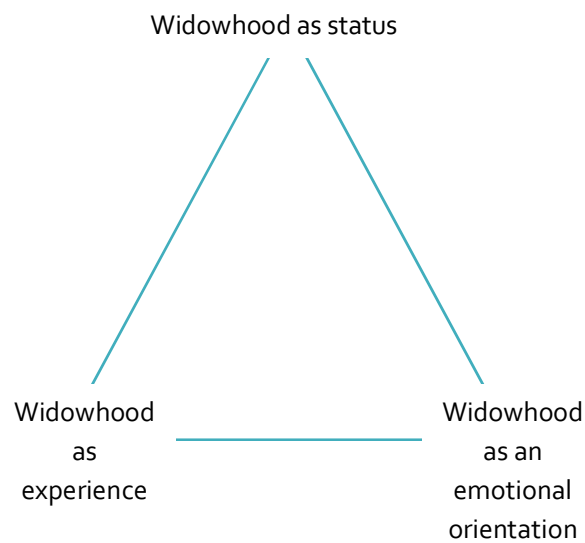
Figure 15: illustration of the three overlapping and interconnected dimensions of the ongoing process of widowhood

Widowed older British migrants negotiate these interconnected dimensions within their social and emotional landscape of grief and loss, consolation and support. For older British migrants who have been widowed, 'sticking together' encourages opportunities for social support that are informed by the experiences of their peers. As I explore through three narratives of older migrants navigating widowhood, social relationships shape, and are shaped by, this ongoing and transformative process. This is reflected in part by Nancy and George's awareness of both their emotional orientation towards loss and being 'sad types', as well as their emphasis on supporting one another in their experiences of widowhood. Crucially, I argue that widowhood is also a process grounded

in, and shaped by, widowed individuals' specific geographies of place and home (Hopkins & Pain 2007; Hardill 2009; Skinner et al. 2015).

Introducing the narratives

Meeting Rosemary and Margaret

Rosemary and Margaret were sheltering from the sun under the table's large umbrella, drinking coffee in the Tahiti cocktail bar. This was "their spot" after the church service they attended each Sunday. To me, this location felt at odds with the Church of Scotland building[28]*. When they saw me looking for a place to sit, they invited me to 'their' table and told me a little about themselves. They explained they had both been members of this church for over ten years. Each week they went to the service together, then for coffee at the Tahiti bar, then for a lunch of tapas, then they travelled to Benalmádena to attend a Songs of Praise service in the evening.*

Figure 16: Tahiti Cocktail Bar in Fuengirola

Field diary extract, October 2016

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[28] I initially wondered if the cocktail bar was contradictory and incompatible with the church as an institution, and the activities it encouraged and discouraged. However, it became clear that despite its emphasis on 'cheap cocktails', this bar catered to thirty or more older British churchgoers each Sunday; providing tea, coffee and biscuits. This was akin to the Church of Scotland coffee mornings I was familiar with.

The Tahiti cocktail bar was one of various places Rosemary and Margaret regularly visited (see figure 16 above). It was a place that neither had visited with their respective husbands, but it had now become a site of significance within their weekly Sunday routine. Through their active membership of the Church of Scotland in Fuengirola and their other regular shared activities, Rosemary and Margaret had developed a meaningful friendship. Through my countless conversations with them it was clear their shared experiences of losing a spouse had strengthened their friendship - albeit in different circumstances and at various times.

Rosemary: realising a joint dream, alone?

Rosemary has joined every walking group available in her local area. Her training shoes are well-worn, and her sunhat and long shorts are a staple of her day-to-day wardrobe. When I met her, she had just celebrated her seventieth birthday on a walking group trip to the Sierra Nevada mountains in Andalucía. She had been living in the Costa del Sol for just over fifteen years. When describing her life in Spain, Rosemary's emphasis was on her active lifestyle. Her weeks often involved attending two walking groups, playing table tennis with the U3A, attending Church of Scotland services, coffee mornings, bible study and more. Her *"quiet day"* each Sunday spent with Margaret is a contrast to her otherwise busy weekly schedule with clubs and social activities across the Costa del Sol.

Born and raised in Kent, Rosemary had a successful career as a dressmaker. She and her husband Robert had often spoken, and dreamed, of moving to Spain once their two sons were older. They planned to retire at sixty years old, sell their family home in Kent, and relocate to the Costa del Sol permanently. When they turned fifty-five, they took a month-long extended holiday and lived in Torremolinos, a town near Malaga. Rosemary explained they both felt it would be "*like a dream come true*" to live in there permanently. However, they never realised their joint dream. Robert died in 1998, two days after his fifty-eighth birthday. Encouraged by her children, Rosemary decided to migrate to Spain, alone, in 2000. Throughout countless conversations Rosemary was adamant being a widow was not a significant part of her identity; and she sought to downplay this element of her narrative within her migration context. She had met Margaret soon after her arrival in the Costa del Sol. Their friendship became a significant part of her life there. Their shared experiences of widowhood and their separate ways of understanding and negotiating this process in later life has played a significant role in shaping their friendship over many years.

Margaret: starting from scratch

Margaret described herself as a nervous and unconfident person. She explained: "*I used to be more confident. I feel like I've lost it a bit over*

the years". She told me she wished she was more outgoing, like her friend Rosemary. Through informal conversations over a series of encounters Margaret told me about her life in the UK. She and her husband Malcolm had lived in Oxfordshire throughout their married life. Margaret was, at Malcolm's suggestion, a housewife and primary caregiver for their two children. Margaret understood Malcolm to be the *"decision maker in the family"*. For example, Malcolm decided they would buy an apartment near Fuengirola – a place that became their annual summer holiday destination since 1974. Margaret explained that Malcolm *"wanted to come here and retire...so he retired early and we came out so..."*. However, Margaret was hesitant about moving to Spain permanently. She explained that she underplayed her own feelings and reservations about growing older in Spain. Despite her quiet concerns, they migrated to Los Boliches permanently in 1985.

Margaret met Rosemary through the Church of Scotland in Fuengirola in late 2000 and they soon became good friends. However, apart from her friendship with Rosemary, Malcolm's preferences had determined most of Margaret's friendships and activities in the Costa del Sol. Therefore, when Malcolm died in 2005, Margaret felt she almost had to "*start from scratch*" with her life in Spain by considering what she enjoyed and valued. While initially unsure about answering my questions about her life since Malcolm's death, Margaret was quiet and tearful when she told me about

her loss. Malcom's clothes hung in their shared wardrobe, his golf trophies sat on a shelf in the living room, his favourite pictures hung on the wall (see figure 17 below).

Figure 17: Margaret's wall remains decorated with Malcom's choice of paintings and pictures

For Margaret, Malcom's absence remained very present within the materialities surrounding her in their apartment. She still felt married; a stark difference from Rosemary's approach to starting anew in the Costa del Sol. Margaret navigated the intense grief she felt over ten years after her husband's death with the possibilities of her new friendships, hobbies within her daily life in the Costa del Sol. Her face became brighter and she smiled as she detailed the activities, holidays, and friendships she has experienced in recent years. Like her, most of her friends and peers have also been widowed in their later life.

Nancy: navigating unexpected changes

Nancy and Neil sat next to each other at the Arroyo Seniors' Club meeting. As I sat down, Neil gave me a warm smile and asked where I was from. Nancy added, "you look a little young to be sitting with us!". We chatted for most the two-hour coffee morning. Neil told me that his "memory is failing him" and that it "takes longer than it used to say what I want to say". When he went to the toilet, Nancy explained that he'd recently been diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's, coupled with heart failure. An unexpected diagnosis, Nancy said. When Neil returned from the bathroom he whispered to Nancy "I'm feeling quite tired. Let's go home?".

Field diary extract, June 2016

Prior to migration to the Costa del Sol, Nancy and Neil had lived in various parts of England. They had moved ten times since their marriage in 1978. These moves, or "*new challenges*" as they described them, were determined by Neil's work opportunities as a mechanical engineer. In each new location, Nancy remade a home for her family. In 2013, Nancy and Neil retired and decided their next "*new challenge*" should be further afield. With their family's support, they sold their house in Kent and bought a villa with a garden in Arroyo de la Miel. Together, they developed relationships with other older British migrants in various clubs, including Arroyo's Seniors' Club. They were a well-liked couple within the clubs they attended. My field diary extract above demonstrates their readiness to welcome new members and attendees to these groups, quickly making people feel at ease.

Their active social life began to change with Neil's diagnosis and deteriorating health. Nancy and Neil started to shape their life around Neil's capabilities and reducing energy levels. Together, they established new patterns and daily practices, adjusting to unexpected changes as they occurred. Nancy responded to Neil's deteriorating memory and increasing care needs. In May 2017 Neil injured himself during a fall and was hospitalised. Nancy visited him twice daily and encouraged their many friends to do the same. Neil died four weeks after his admission to hospital. Neil's death was unforeseen and a significant shock for Nancy, and for the community that he was well-known within. Nancy did not know where to begin with her new marital status of 'widow'; a status imbued with complex feelings of guilt, grief, and relief. Nancy's experiences of care and loss prior to Neil's death were powerful in shaping how she understood and negotiated the new term of 'widow' that others ascribed to her (see also Martin Matthews, 2011. Alongside this new and unexpected societal status, Nancy found herself in a situation where their shared later life migration expectations and plans could never be realised.

Rosemary, Margaret and Nancy[29] are all over sixty-five years old, active members of social groups, and have no family living in Spain. These

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[29] Although focused exclusively on the experiences of women who have been widowed here, this thesis also engages with other widower's stories. For example, William's narrative in chapter 6

shared characteristics reflect some of the defining features of migrants
motivated by the search for a 'better' life, as identified by lifestyle
migration scholars (see Benson and O'Reilly 2016). Their migration
context, with a lack of proximity to their family, provides a context where
they are each negotiating widowhood in the company of their friends and
peers, rather than amongst family (see also Ahmed and Hall 2016).

Widowhood as an ongoing *process*?

Bennet (2008, 438) defines widowhood as referring to "an ongoing and
frequently long-term state which has both social and personal
consequences and meanings". Understanding widowhood as a 'state'
focuses on the experience or *condition* of the individual following the
death of their spouse (*Merriam Webster Dictionary online* 2020).
Widowhood is also defined as a 'period', suggesting that it is a temporally
defined time – with a clear beginning and end - within which an individual
experiences widowhood (*Merriam Webster Dictionary online* 2020)[30]. An

highlights his experiences of widowhood in relation to how he navigates the presence of death
within a community of older British migrants.

[30] This definition is linked to understandings of life as being constituted of 'life stages' e.g. 'third
age' (Hall and Hardill, 2016). Such understandings have been heavily critiqued for suggesting a form
of linearity of life experiences (Hopkins and Pain 2007; Tarrant 2010). This theoretical approach has
been replaced in favour of a life course model that understands life as more fluid and unpredictable
(Pain et al. 2010).

alternative understanding is that individuals experience a *transition* into widowhood (Silverstein and Giarrusso 2010). As Martin-Matthews (2011:340) argues, widowhood is:

> a process of transition, progressing from the illness to the death of a spouse and related events involving burial and mourning, grieving, and reconstruction of one's social world that follow.

Such an understanding captures both gradual changes and the immediate change when individuals experience the death of their spouse. However, seeing widowhood as something that people transition into is potentially problematic as it suggests there is a final 'destination' or an ability to 'complete' a transition from spouse to widow. To suggest that widowhood could end – that one could leave one fixed state for another – is to disregard the way that widowhood is a messy and complex process that individuals negotiate daily through their experiences, memories and emotions. As visible in Nancy's experiences detailed below, this process may begin before the death of a spouse.

Nancy and Neil's relationship had always involved 'banter' with one another. On one occasion, Neil expressed concerns about his health and Nancy's increasingly care-oriented role within their relationship. Nancy immediately responded to Neil, telling him: "*I'm still your wife – I can still tell you to stop feeling sorry for yourself!*". However, as Neil's health

deteriorated further Nancy negotiated changes in his mobility, memory, and within their ordinary conversations and interactions (Shuter et al. 2014). Neil's physiological changes challenged Nancy's understanding of their marriage as their 'banter' stopped, Neil struggled to recognise the friends and acquaintances they encountered regularly in Arroyo, and latterly occasionally forgot her name. Neil's deteriorating health and memory demonstrate other forms of loss that individuals in later life can experience (Shuter et al. 2014; Perry and O'Connor 2002). Nancy and Neil both felt that at sixty-five years old, they were *"cheated"* out of their *"golden years"* as their plans for their life in Spain changed with Neil's health diagnosis. This response demonstrates their shared sense of loss and grief at the life they anticipated sharing together in their later years.

Although Neil's death was *"a shock"*, Nancy also experienced feelings of loss and grief for him, and for their marriage, in the months leading up to his death. Scholarship on the experiences of Alzheimer's and those who encounter it provide understandings of this transition of gradual loss and change (Martin-Matthews 2011; Shuter et al. 2014). Doka (1999) argues for the concept of 'disenfranchised grief', defined as:

> the grief experienced by those who incur a loss that is not, or cannot be, openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported. Isolated in bereavement, it can be much more difficult to mourn and reactions are often complicated (Doka 1999: 37).

Although still physically present, Nancy understood Neil to be *"slipping away"* as he became less familiar with the things and people that constituted his life**.** This form of grief, as distinct from other forms of socially accepted grief such as the death of a partner, is visible within Nancy's daily experiences of caring for Neil, while witnessing his slow deterioration.

Neil's death in 2017 marked the end of Nancy's caring work. She experienced complicated feelings of relief, and guilt, about the loss of her husband (Maddrell 2016; Hockey et al. 2005). Consequently, Nancy's simultaneous complex emotional responses of grief and loss, relief and guilt shaped her initial experiences of widowhood. Nancy's experiences prior to Neil's death shaped how she understood her new status as a widow; particularly in relation to the complex interplay of her identities as both a wife and carer to a spouse who latterly struggled to recognise her. With Neil's death, Nancy became a widow; a status that did not account for how her life and spousal relationship changed significantly in Neil's final months. During the time before Neil died, Nancy felt as though she was losing him already and was in the process of grieving this loss ahead of his death. Understandings of widowhood as a temporally bounded 'period' or 'state' - defined in relation to marital status - do not consider these past experiences and emotional responses that inform and shape an individual's understandings and experiences of widowhood. As Nancy's

experience of widowhood shows, widowhood is not bound by temporality – as a 'period' that begins with the death of a spouse. Instead, Nancy's sense of loss and grief prior to Neil's death shaped, and continues to shape, how she negotiates widowhood. By understanding widowhood as a process, it is possible to better account for the relationships, experiences, and individual circumstances prior to a spouses' death. In doing so, we can understand more about how these emotionally challenging contexts shape how it *feels* to become a widow (Davidson et al. 2005). For example, Nancy's shifting understanding of their marriage complicates understandings of widowhood as a temporally bounded status that only begins or becomes applicable with the *death* of a spouse. In response to their changing relationship, Nancy grieved the loss of the husband she knew, and the loss of their imagined future together in Spain. Nancy's negotiation of grief and loss prior to Neil's death, represents an example of the potential to *feel* widowed, without a widowed status. Nancy's experiences of 'disenfranchised grief' coupled with her caring work within their relationship shaped how she felt in the immediacy after Neil's death (Doka 1999).

There is not a single existing conceptualisation of widowhood that convincingly captures its complexity; emotionally, temporally, and experientially. As such, I argue that widowhood must be understood as an ongoing *process* to better capture its messiness, nuances, and disorder.

As visible within Nancy's story, widowhood is a process that takes into account both the event of death, the experiences prior to death that shape widowhood, and how individuals negotiate it daily following a spouse's death.

Spouse to widow: navigating shifting marital status

Being widowed involves receiving a new marital status; moving from husband or wife to 'widowed' with the death of a spouse. As Martin-Matthews (2011:340) writes: "the status of widowhood is given to an individual who has not remarried following the death of his or her spouse". This status change from a spouse to being widowed has significant social consequences[31] for how individuals understand their social status, and how their social relationships are enacted. Within her work on older British women living in Spain, Ahmed (2012:102) notes:

> Those who were married talked about marriage as embodying some kind of social norm, with the implication that not being married was somehow deviant or unusual. Talk of women without husbands generally positioned them as 'other'.

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[31] This status also has economic and legal implications for the individual, particularly as older individuals may have increasingly limited social and financial resources available (Moss and Moss, 2014). The reduction in income based on the loss or changes to a deceased spouse's pension is a meaningful change that often reshapes the remaining spouse's lifestyle (Streeter, 2019).

This quote demonstrates the significance that marital status has within a similar migrant context to the one that is explored within this thesis. The positioning of those without husbands as 'other' in the context that Ahmed describes is also visible to some extent for those older British women whose husbands have died. The status of widow is one that is distinctive from those who have never married or have been divorced. Individuals have limited choice and agency in determining their marital status in the context of widowhood. It is symbolic and denotes marriage – a socially acceptable status – and one that ended 'naturally'. The morality attached to marital status within this community is one that is complex and rooted in traditional social constructions of marriage as a symbol of 'success'. However, with the death of their partner, there was a repositioning of these women within the groups that they attended. Widowed individuals were no longer part of a couple. Instead, they must negotiate their new widowed identity and social status. For example, when Nancy's husband died, she repositioned herself within the Arroyo Seniors' Club to sit with other widowed women. Their shared experience of widowhood was a source of comfort for Nancy, as was the support and sympathy that they offered. Moreover, Nancy physically repositioned herself within the Seniors' Club to avoid sitting with couples; as she and her husband often did[32]. While potentially not as restrictive as the example discussed in chapter 2 on Florida's retirement communities, the shifting status from wife to widow can be transformative

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[32] I explore Nancy's repositioning within the Arroyo Seniors' Club later in this chapter.

for social relationships and how individuals position themselves, or are positioned, within their existing social context.

Individuals can challenge the shift in marital status after their spouse's death. With Malcolm's death, Margaret negotiated her changing identity from wife to widow. However, through her ongoing negotiation of widowhood, she rejected the concept that their marriage ended. Instead, Margaret continued to *feel* married although she was experiencing it alone following Malcolm's death. Margaret's understanding of her continued relationship with Malcolm relates to what Maddrell (2013:508) terms "absence-presence". Maddrell (2013:508) argues that it "acknowledges death, but also the continued 'presence' of the relationship". Within her work, she discusses how someone's absence can become tangible – and can become a form of presence as a result. The term "absence-presence" is used to "emphasize the dynamic relationality of the two intersecting but apparently oppositional terms" (Maddrell 2013: 508). For Margaret, her husband's death did not constitute the end of their marriage. Instead, she sought to keep his memory, and presence, visible within her daily life, explaining: *"he's still my husband. I'm still his wife"*. For Margaret, her identity as a wife remained at the forefront of her identity.

By contrast, Rosemary had a complicated relationship with her positioning as a 'widow'. On the two-year anniversary of Robert's death, her sons told Rosemary:

> *Mum, we love you. We are worried about you. But we think you need to go and have a new adventure. Go to Spain like you and Dad planned*.

Her family's involvement in reshaping her migration project was in response to her ongoing experiences of grief and loss. Initially, Rosemary felt that moving to Spain without Robert was a form of betrayal and that she did not have the confidence to migrate alone. However, Rosemary and her family reshaped her migration project; instead of living in Spain permanently, she was determined to have *"one foot in the UK...just in case"*. This hesitancy was partly based on her awareness that if her health deteriorated, she would prefer to be closer to her family[33]. Consequently, in 2000, she sold their family home as planned, investing in both a Spanish apartment and in a UK property within a residential complex for older people. However, Rosemary focused most of her time, finances, and emotional connections on fulfilling her dream to live in the Costa del Sol.

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[33] As chapter 6 explores, older British migrants often have to navigate questions of care and proximity to family as part of their migration project (see also Hall and Hardill, 2016)

Rosemary actively sought to remake her life, identities, and home in Spain. She told me: "*I miss my husband of course I do and the life we had together, but this is totally different*". She sought to separate this "*new life*" from her shared experiences with her husband, and the future plans they constructed together. Rosemary limited the belongings she migrated with. She sold most of her belongings and stored the remainder in her son's garage in the UK. This approach to her belongings was motivated by her desire to have a "*no hassle, no clutter home*". Rosemary's minimalist aim for her home was partially informed by the complex logistical and emotional process of sorting through, ranking them into their sense of value and importance to her, and transporting her remaining belongings to Spain (see Miller 2001; Walsh 2006 on material cultures). Moreover, Rosemary explained that:

> *...because we didn't come here together now there are friends that we've made that have come out here as a couple and bought a place, then they've either died or something's happened eh that must be something else. Whereas in a way this was ALL a new life when I came here.*

Rosemary's emotional detachment and physical distancing of herself from previously meaningful material possessions demonstrates a way of managing her grief, emotions, and the simultaneous 'absence-presence' of her deceased spouse (Maddrell 2013).Through Rosemary's relationship to her material possessions, it is possible to see how a shift in marital status can be enacted through individuals' belongings (Miller 2001).

Rosemary also sought to challenge and reject many of the labels that others regularly used to describe and define her: mother, wife, worker. She felt that with the death of her husband and her retirement from work she wanted to be *"free of the shackles of being something to everyone"*. Instead, she explained that she loved her family and was close to them, but that her sons were *"grown men"* and it was her time to *"be myself, just myself".* This comment suggests that she saw her roles as mother, wife and worker as filled with responsibility and forms of labour and did not adequately reflect her sense of self; a sense that she sought to develop within her life in the Costa del Sol in her later years[34]. As such, Rosemary would rarely discuss her marital status with the friends she made in Spain. Her approach is an example of her desire to avoid being understood as a grieving, bereft and lonely widow-figure who should behave in accordance with norms associated with widows; norms that were visibly gendered in nature (see Jacobs-Lawson et al. 2004). Rosemary told me that to reject the expectations of how she should behave as a widow in her migration context:

> *you have to work at it. It doesn't just come to you...you have to decide that you want to go out there and do things you know.*

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[34] Although not discussed here, older British migrants may experience shame and guilt relating to their geographical distance from their family, often shaped by familial perceptions and expectations of their migration. Chapter 6 explores these tensions in more detail.

Rosemary's experiences of being widowed in the UK also shaped her understanding of these social norms, and her desire to reject them. Rosemary felt that it was *"not so easy to be a widow, an active widow, in England"*. Instead, she felt that there were expectations around how she should experience her widowhood, and being active, outgoing, and happy to be alone were not understood as appropriate. When asked why this might be, Rosemary dismissed my question with a wave of her hand and said, *"oh I don't want to analyse it"*. This response highlighted that this was a painful subject and one that she did not want to dwell on, reflect upon, or analyse in detail. However, by actively rejecting her identity as a wife, and a widow, in her new circumstances, Rosemary was disrupting the common tropes and perceptions that she has encountered throughout her life of what a widow *should* or *could* be.

Importantly, Rosemary did not want to constantly be defined by the loss of her husband, by his absence. However, Robert was present *because* of his absence. In Rosemary's daily life without him, she felt her husband's absence-presence within the apartment he never visited, and in the experiences that they would never share (Maddrell 2013). This absence-presence was present *alongside* Rosemary's active attempts to manage her grief, and her attempts to create a "*new life*" in Spain. Rosemary's experiences of Robert's absence-presence within her life in Spain also involved a temporal dimension:

> *I feel most lonely at night...well in the evenings really. I miss Robert the most when I'm sitting at home alone after a busy day out. I just want to tell him all about my day.*

Certain times of the day – the evening in this case – elicited her memories, emotions, regrets, and reflections. In the quote above, Rosemary acknowledges that she was unable to completely compartmentalise or separate her life with Robert from her life without him. Rosemary's negotiation of her marital statuses and her sense of self demonstrates the complexity and messiness of the process of widowhood.

Widowhood as a status: tensions and negotiations

So far, I have focused upon how older British migrants live with, and challenge, the status of 'widow'. As is clear from my participant narratives, widowhood is a socially constructed status that individuals negotiate on an ongoing basis within their daily lives. Like other difficult and potentially traumatic life events such as the death of a sibling or child (Maddrell 2016) or divorce (McDonald-Kenworthy 2012), widowhood is experienced as a transformative process that can reshape individuals' identities, homes, and can produce "ontological insecurities" (Bhatti 2006: 322); challenging or threatening the way that individuals understand the world around them. Rosemary's and Margaret's experiences demonstrate how individuals can adopt, negotiate and reject this label. I have

demonstrated some of the ways that individuals navigate and acknowledge their shift in marital status, and how this may differ from the norms that they previously enacted within their social context. This tension provides insights into the various approaches and attitudes that individuals have towards grieving, remembering, and 'carrying on'. Moreover, contrary to the temporal boundaries traditionally associated with widowhood, Rosemary's and Margaret's stories demonstrate how the marital status of 'widowed' is a complex emotion-laden process that individuals actively negotiate. Through Margaret, Rosemary and Nancy's narratives, I have argued that widowhood is a status that individuals must negotiate. I have explored how individuals can reject, challenge, or adhere to norms and expectations around widowhood. By conceptualising widowhood as a status, I have shown how individuals must navigate this dimension in relation to their sense of self, their relationship to their lost spouse, and the social relationships that inform how they experience widowhood.

Widowhood is also an emotion-laden, identity-shaping, experience that individuals must negotiate on an ongoing basis. My conceptualisation of widowhood is as an experience, drawing from participants' reflections, encounters and stories. This dimension of the complex and ongoing process of widowhood has the potential to transform older British migrants' social relationships.

"*What now*?" Negotiating experiences of widowhood

Nancy described her pain when Neil died: *"my heart shattered into pieces. I felt like I couldn't breathe. What is my life without him next to me?".* Nancy's grief manifested itself through her embodied emotional and physical pain (Bondi 2005; Maddrell 2010, 2016). Neil's death left his empty armchair next to hers. They would not spend any more evenings sitting in their chairs, holding hands as they watched television. His presence had been a central part of her life since they met. The physical space that he had taken up was now empty; something that Nancy found particularly difficult to comprehend. Experiencing Neil's death had a profound effect upon how Nancy understood her life, and her future. She told me that when Neil died, she asked herself "*what now*?". She had not anticipated being without her husband. In the days after Neil's death, Nancy told her family:

> We'd always deal with big changes together. It's almost ironic that the one change I really want to talk about with Neil is the only one I can't. He's gone and I only want to talk to him about it.

Following Neil's death, for the first time in years Nancy alone was required to decide what to eat, who to see, how to spend her days and where to be each day. Nancy's experience of widowhood involved a reimagination of where and what her daily life and her future would look

like, without her husband alongside her. With her question of *"what now?",* Nancy is reflecting upon how her life is shaped by loss, influencing how she experiences and negotiates the process of widowhood daily.

In conceptualising *widowhood as experience*, I situate this work within the phenomenological tradition within some human geography scholarship. In paying attention to how older British migrants negotiate the complex process of widowhood, I draw on Buttimer (1976:281) to suggest that their "experiences are construed" through their lifeworld(s); a concept that takes into account both the physical spaces, meaningful places, and social worlds of the individual. As Buttimer (1976:281) describes:

> the notion of lifeworld connotes essentially the prereflective, taken-for-granted dimensions of experience, the unquestioned meanings, and routinized determinants of behaviour.

Within the context of my research, my focus upon the experiential dimension of widowhood is informed by phenomenological theory; pushing forward the messy and complex nature of individual embodied experience and the lifeworlds that shape it (see Ash and Simpson, 2016).

In conceptualising *widowhood as experience*, I also pay close attention to

the shifting temporalities and geographical experience in how individuals negotiate this process (see Rowles 1978). For example, Nancy mourned the death of her husband alongside the sense of home that they carefully constructed together. As Ahmed et al. (2003:9) argue: "Making home is about *creating* both pasts and futures through inhabiting the grounds of the present". For Nancy, her home was inseparable from her memories of their life together, the places that they frequented and attached meaning to, and the future they planned within their later life. Miller (2001:15) writes:

> If home is where the heart is, then it is also where it is broken, torn, made whole in the flux of relationships, social and material.

By conceptualising widowhood as experience, I can make visible the social, emotional, material, spatial, and temporal dimensions that individuals must negotiate on an ongoing basis. In Nancy's reimagining of her concept of home, for example, she experiences simultaneous reflections about her shared past while also questioning her future as a solo migrant negotiating widowhood within her daily life in the Costa del Sol (see Brickell 2012b on nostalgia).

Experiencing bereavement: a temporally bounded period?

After Robert's death, Rosemary's motivation to socialise, go on holiday and walk decreased dramatically. For over two years, Rosemary remained withdrawn from the social activities and hobbies that she previously enjoyed. She spent increasing time at home watching television alone, refusing social invitations where possible. During this time, Rosemary also refused to discuss her future – a future that no longer included her husband. In particular, she was adamant that her family not ask her about their joint plan to migrate to Spain to grow older together in a warmer climate. Rosemary's experiences of grief after Robert's death resulted in an uncharacteristic lack of motivation and enthusiasm about her day-to-day life and future. Rosemary's described herself during this period as a *"shell of my former self"*. These experiences shaped Rosemary's narrative as described above; she places emphasis on moving forwards rather than dwelling upon her ongoing loss and the grief that she negotiates daily. In the months after Robert's death, Rosemary's detachment and disinterest in her previous hobbies and activities would be understood as the 'period of bereavement' following Miller et al.'s (2004) understanding. They argue that it is a period of intense grief and a *"crisis stage"*; often immediately after the event of death (Miller et al. 2004:161)*.* As Rosemary's experiences indicate, bereavement is a significant dimension of the process of widowhood. Rather than a distinct

and temporally bounded period, experiences of bereavement are ongoing

and require negotiation immediately after a spouse's death, when

individuals least expect it, and often daily.

Bereavement as a concept is useful in understanding the complexities of

individuals' experiences of loss, their complicated feelings felt after the

death of a spouse, and the loss or change of individuals' sense of self in

response to this significant life event (Richardson 2014). Often, a

distinction is drawn within social gerontology scholarship between the

ongoing state of widowhood and a 'period of bereavement' (Bennet 2005;

Moss and Moss 2014). However, the temporal boundaries of this 'period'

place expectations and pressures upon individuals to *leave* the period of

bereavement in favour of another stage or period; one that may involve

less public or visible displays and experiences of grief. As Maddrell

(2016:172) writes:

> various models of bereavement have been devised which centre on the
> temporali-ties of grief and mourning and which are often predicated on an
> implicit assumption of an ideal, often linear, route to 'recovery'.

However, years after her husband's death, Rosemary explains to me that

she avoids *"talking or thinking about it too much. It makes me feel too*

sad and my heart breaks all over again". This avoidance is a means of

managing her memories, and the emotions present within her ongoing,

intense, and significant grief (see Henry 2012; Hockey et al. 2005). This management of her feelings through avoiding "*talking or thinking about it*" reveals the ongoing nature of bereavement. For Rosemary, the intensity and crisis of her bereavement goes beyond a bounded and distinct temporal period. Instead, this overwhelming grief is always present and possible, and is therefore something that Rosemary actively manages as she experiences tensions between her past and present senses in relation to widowhood.

After Malcolm's death, Rosemary supported Margaret as she grieved, adjusted to her life as a widow, and became an older British migrant who lived alone. The months following his death were described by Rosemary as Margaret's "*difficult time*". Rosemary explained that Margaret's mental wellbeing had changed; she stopped eating properly, cleaning her house, ironing clothes, and would often go for days without leaving her apartment. During this time, Rosemary became a regular visitor, bringing food, spend time cleaning her apartment, and encouraging her to join her for short walks. For Rosemary and Margaret, they experienced bereavement in similar ways through their withdrawal from their previous daily routines and places. Their daily lives and practices were upended, undone, and sometimes unrecognisable following the death of their respective spouses. The understanding of a widow as withdrawn is often a dominant one within Western popular culture and discourses (Stockton

2015). This conflation between intense feelings and experiences of grief and bereavement and widowhood have created a perception of widows as inactive and invisible in society. By conceptualising widowhood as a multi-dimensional and ongoing process that includes - but is not solely defined by grief and bereavement - it is possible to make visible the tensions and messiness of how older British migrants experience this process within their later life.

Margaret's experiences of bereavement immediately after her husband's death were a painful reminder for Rosemary of her experiences of grief after her husband's death fifteen years prior. When explaining this period in her own life to me, she described it as a "*fog of grief that you just can't see a way out of*". For Rosemary, she was determined to support Margaret during this time: "*I wanted to help guide her through the fog - as best I could anyway*". However, initially, Margaret rejected Rosemary's offers of support. Rosemary was surprised, but explained that:

> *it is such a difficult thing to go through. Margaret was just angry at the world; she was sad, and I think she just needed some time to mourn privately*.

This quote demonstrates how Rosemary empathises with Margaret's experiences, alongside how grief, sadness and depression are often described in this context of loss. For Rosemary, the emotional labour of

grieving with, and supporting Margaret was inseparable from her own experiences of bereavement following Robert's death. When Margaret's husband died, Rosemary had been negotiating widowhood for over ten years. Irrespective of the time since her husband's death, the memories of his death and her experiences of intense bereavement in the first two years after his death were painful and had the potential for her "*heart [to] break all over again*". Rosemary's experience of unexpected and overwhelming emotion demonstrates the ongoing nature of widowhood and the grief that shapes experiences of this process. Through her relationships with others – like Margaret – who had similar experiences, Rosemary found comfort in their collective navigation of the peaks and troughs, twists and turns of experiences of grief and bereavement that others negotiate within the process of widowhood.

Four months after Malcolm's death, Margaret told Rosemary that she "*has to just get on with life*", and she began to accept Rosemary's invitations to coffee, lunch, and local outings. Margaret began to plan holidays, trips, and visits to the UK. Her re-entry into spaces and places that she previously encountered with her husband demonstrates how widowhood can transform individuals' relationships to place, as well as to other people. In Margaret's negotiation of widowhood, her geographical and social contexts play a significant role in how she understands the world around her as a widowed person. By declaring that she would "*just have*

to get on with life", Margaret is also demonstrating how she actively manages and negotiates her ongoing experiences of bereavement and grief. Margaret is not suggesting an end to her grief here, instead this assertion is a way of demonstrating to herself, and her friends, that she will remake her daily life without her husband. Rather than marking the end of a 'period of bereavement', this discourse is part of her daily negotiation of her grief and bereavement as a widowed person. Margaret is acknowledging that grief and bereavement will continue to shape her experiences; widowhood is part of how she understands and navigates the places, emotions, experiences and relationships that constitute her daily life. Moreover, as Rowles (1978) suggests, considering how individuals encounter and experience place is fundamental to understanding older people's geographical experience more broadly.

As I have explored, to understand bereavement as something neatly temporally bounded is to underplay the ways that individuals negotiate grief and bereavement in an active and ongoing way. Moreover, understanding bereavement as a 'period' does not account for how this intense grief and 'crisis' can occur without warning, years after the death of a loved one. By understanding widowhood as an ongoing process, I argue that experiences of bereavement occur beyond this traditionally understood 'crisis stage' in the immediacy after a death. In considering experiences of bereavement, I have also shown how individuals negotiate

a different status alongside their experiences of widowhood. These dimensions are therefore both grounded in place and inseparable from the social relationships within older British migrants' daily lives.

Widowhood as experience: a 'right' and 'wrong' way to be a widow?

How friends and peers in the UK expected her to behave as a widow influenced Rosemary's initial experiences of widowhood. She felt it was *"not so easy to be...an active widow, in England"*. The dominant social norms and expectations of widowed people as passive and withdrawn shaped Rosemary's initial experiences of negotiating widowhood in the UK. Rosemary found that she was less accepted in social settings as a single woman than she was in the company of her husband. On one occasion shortly after her husband's death, a friend told Rosemary that she "*ought not to be so cheerful...you're a widow after all*". Her proximate peers saw her happy and outgoing persona as incompatible with her status as a widow. Unlike Rosemary herself, her friends had expectations and perceptions about how should behave. There was a sense that she should be demure, quiet, and visibly mournful in the context of her status as a widow. Rosemary's migration to Spain, and her downplaying of this new and unwelcomed status, involved rejecting such attitudes in favour of fulfilling her active later life migration dream. For her, this dream focused upon her hobby of walking within social groups of likeminded peers who

would not focus upon her marital status.

Rosemary's close friend Margaret adheres to such expectations and perceptions. Margaret had strong feelings about what she believes is acceptable behaviour for a widow. How her friends acted following their death of their respective spouses informed how Margaret performed her own widowed positioning. Margaret explained that some of her friends "*failed to cope*" – becoming overwhelmed by their grief. Others, like Rosemary, appeared to focus on changing everything about their life in attempts, seeking to make it unrecognisable from what they shared with their husband. Margaret also knew widows who started dating again, exclaiming: "*imagine that! At their age!!*". When Margaret experienced the death of her husband, these observations, in part, informed her understanding of "*what kind of widow*" she would be. She did not want to follow what she understood as others' hedonistic or thrill-seeking practices. She explained:

> *I don't understand these older women, like me, dye their hair bright colours, wear clothes that are just too young for them, and tell the world they are single and free! Where is their respect? For their husband? Or themselves?*

Margaret strongly felt that these behaviours did not align with her norms and expectations; of what it meant to *experience* widowhood. Rather,

they were disrespectful and demonstrated immorality through their visible lifestyle and attitude changes accompanying their shifting status, and identities, from wife to widow. By observing other older British migrants as they performed their widowed status the *wrong* way, Margaret developed her own understanding of what her experiences of widowhood should be. Her desire to be a dignified widow was firmly rooted in her sense of what a wife should be, how they should behave; much of which centred around a sense of respect and loyalty to their husband. As such, Margaret's expectation of what widowhood should be for herself, and for others is rooted in a gendered notion of marriage and gender roles that is, at least in part, formed by her social and religious contexts (Davidson 2001). This is particularly notable in relation to Buitelaar's (1995) acknowledgement that for *widowers* there are often fewer expectations surrounding behaviour, and that men experiencing widowhood were often more likely to remarry in later life. Margaret's status as an active member of the Church of Scotland also informed her performance and negotiation of the process of widowhood. Her religiosity and moral attitudes towards marriage were important in how she experienced and conceptualised widowhood. Her understandings centred on her continued identity as a wife, and as a member of a marital bond – despite her husband's death.

Like Margaret, Rosemary had a strong relationship to the Church of Scotland; a place where socialising as a widowed person was ordinary and

welcomed. Rosemary subscribes to similar moral guidance that shapes how she experiences and performs widowhood. However, Rosemary feels that her migration context involves fewer restrictions associated with the status of 'widow' – despite her friend's narrower understanding of how to be a widow. Rosemary felt comfortable in this place where people would not enquire about your marital status. Her peers respected her attempts to avoid widowhood as the dominant defining feature of her lives and identities.

Margaret and Rosemary negotiate their respective experiences and understandings of widowhood within a supportive Church of Scotland social and emotional context. Here, many of their peers have also been widowed, or they know others who are widowed. Through their weekly coffee mornings in The Tahiti Bar, their conversations in the corridors of the Church building, and the friendship that extends beyond the buildings they associated with the Church of Scotland, Rosemary and Margaret's experiences of widowhood are shaped by the places and people that they encounter in the Costa del Sol.

Transformative potential of widowhood: changing relationships

As I have shown so far, individuals do not experience widowhood in isolation. Instead, individuals are reliant on their social relationships,

within particular social and emotional landscapes, to support and guide them as they experience the aftermath of their spouse's death[35]. For example, Nancy found that her interactions with the Arroyo Seniors' Club had changed since Neil's death. She was no longer part of a married couple. Instead, she had joined what Neil used to jokingly refer to as the *"old widow's club"*; a visible sub-group within the Club often sitting together each week. Prior to Neil's death, Club attendees understood them as an interesting and charismatic couple. Attendees often complimented Neil for his *"handsome looks"*, or his *"excellent conversation"*. Neil would respond with equally flirtatious remarks – much to the amusement of Nancy. They established close friendships, particularly with the other couples in the group. However, when Neil died, Nancy felt out of place as a single person in the company of the couples they had been close with. Instead, she found herself choosing to sit with the widowed ladies who congregated at the end of the row of tables each week:

> *I feel like I belong there...I mean...we're all part of what Neil would call an 'old widows club', but I feel comfortable here. We support each other.*

[35] Social networks are important in the context of ageing and the implications of ageing alone upon health and individual life expectancy (see Bowling, 2008).

Nancy's self-identification as a member of an "*old widows club*" after Neil's death reflects her awareness that she was no longer part of a married couple. Within her new context, and with her new status, Nancy consequently sought and welcomed the support of others who were experiencing widowhood alongside her. Nancy found the company of these widowed women was relaxing and cathartic as they had a shared understanding of the experience of widowhood (see figures 18.1 and 18.2). Their conversations were full of empathy, without making Nancy feel pitied or like an outsider. By contrast, Nancy found that she had to "*put on a brave face*" in the company of her married friends – actively working to maintain a cheery disposition and visible interest in their conversation. She also found they were often unsure of what to say to Nancy, how to behave, or the topics of conversation they should avoid for fear of causing her unintended pain or discomfort.

Figures 18.1 and 18.2: photographs of widowed women sitting together within the Seniors' Club

Within the company of other widowed British migrants, Nancy found no pressure or expectation for her to be cheerful, or *"brave"*. Instead, they were happy to listen to her, or let her sit quietly in their company. These quiet forms of support were informed by their shared experiences, not only as widows, but as migrants who were now negotiating their migration 'dream' in Spain alone, in their later years. However, although Nancy appreciated the support and care provided by the widowed members of the Seniors' Club, she also found that she was significantly younger than most of them. Nancy turned sixty-six shortly after Neil's death. Most of the other widows she knew were in their eighties. Nancy felt she was widowed before her time. She had expected more time with her husband before becoming part of this *"old widow's club"*. Neil's use of this label for these women reflected his understanding that all they did was gossip and 'dwell' on their grief as widows together. Such an understanding was unsympathetic, rooted in his limited engagement with them within the context of the Seniors' Club. Rather, he and Nancy socialised with fellow couples who sat together – at the opposite end of the long Arroyo Seniors' Club coffee morning table. Since Neil's unexpected death, Nancy sat with fellow widowed peers each week. Her experiences of widowhood had transformed her physical and social repositioning within the Seniors' Club.

As Nancy sought support and became closer to widowed members, she simultaneously distanced herself from other members; particularly those within married couples. She found the conversations with her previous, married, friends to be wearisome as they, and she, tried to navigate conversation topics that would not cause responses of discomfort, or sympathy. As a recipient of this well-meaning sympathy, Nancy felt different from those married couples within the group; no longer one of them. She felt defined by her loss as her peers looked at her sympathetically, tentatively speaking to her with a soft tone of voice with fear of upsetting her. By contrast, Nancy found that her encounters with other widows required less energy and active negotiation from her. In the company of other widows, Nancy felt relaxed in the knowledge that they had shared experiences and understandings of negotiating the process of widowhood. They also had no expectation that widowhood needed to be the centre of every conversation.

For Rosemary and Margaret, their shared experience of widowhood also transformed their relationship; resulting in a closer friendship and an unanticipated mutual reliance on one another. Rosemary became friends with Margaret and Malcolm when she first arrived in the Costa del Sol, two years after Robert's death. For years, until Malcolm's death, they spent considerable time together each week. They shared meals, accompanied each other to church, and attended social gatherings

together. After Malcolm's death, Rosemary used her own experiences of grief and bereavement to support Margaret as she navigated the months following her loss. In spending time with Margaret during this time, Rosemary felt that she was being useful, supportive and a *"good friend"*. Although she emphasised addressing Margaret's *need* for this friendship and support, Rosemary's support is a response to the limited support that she received as a widow in the UK, fifteen years prior.

By understanding widowhood as an ongoing process, it is possible to see how Rosemary's past experiences as a widow shape her current understanding of how to negotiate widowhood both for herself and as visible in the support, she provides her friend Margaret. Through their shared experiences, Rosemary and Margaret's relationship became stronger and they became more reliant upon one another for emotional support and friendship. Through their shared experiences of widowhood, their relationship transformed and became founded upon a powerful sense of intimacy with another. This intimacy was visible through the holidays they shared, their walking, the stories they shared, and their informal commitment to be there when the other person needed support and care.

Negotiating widowhood, navigating an 'emotional terrain'?

Emotions are central to how these older British migrants understand, experience and enact widowhood. As a status and as experience, widowhood is inseparable from emotions and emotional responses. As I have indicated throughout this chapter, widowed individuals negotiate a plethora of emotions including, but not limited to loss, grief, distress, heartbreak, guilt, relief, joy, stress, love, or hatred. As Maddrell (2016, 170) argues, grief can create "new and shifting emotional-affective geographies" for those in mourning. These embodied emotions are a central part of how individuals experience and make sense of widowhood (Bondi, 2005). As I explore it, widowhood is an emotional orientation. It does not only *elicit* emotions from individuals. Instead, it also *orientates* individuals, shaping how they understand and encounter their daily lives. This orientation also shapes how they make sense of their lifeworld (Buttimer 1976), how they engage with others, and how they experience and negotiate being widowed. I draw upon the work of Sara Ahmed (2006:1) who argues that: "if we know where we are when we turn this way or that way, then we are orientated. We have our bearings". As such, I explore how widowhood emotionally orientates these older British migrants, exploring how they find their "bearings" following the death of their spouse.

To understand widowhood as an emotional orientation, it is important to firstly consider the emotional and social context within which older British migrants negotiate widowhood. Parr et al.'s (2005: 96) concept of the "emotional terrain" within which emotions are "socially placed" is particularly useful for understanding this context. Their conceptual framing explores how a specific context – communities within the Scottish Highlands - can shape how individuals discuss, experience and navigate their emotions (Parr et al., 2005)[36]. For widowed older British migrants, their emotional terrain is significant in how they understand and negotiate the potentially turbulent and volatile process of widowhood both collectively, and as individuals. For example, the Arroyo Seniors' Club was a group that Nancy strongly associated with her husband Neil through the time they spent socialising and laughing with their peers there. Over their countless visits to the Club, they developed friendships and a shared emotional attachment to Arroyo and the people that they encountered within the group there.

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[36] Through their discussion of emotional geographies in the Scottish Highlands, they discuss mental health and "(non)display of emotions" in this context of religion, and norms around "non-speaking of emotions" (2005, 98). By locating the social norms and practices around displaying, and not displaying, emotions for people who live in the Scottish Highlands and Islands these authors emphasise the importance of place; an importance reflected in my discussion here.

When Neil died, Nancy received unanticipated support and condolences that she found both touching and overwhelming[37]. There is a collective awareness among Club attendees that they are all experiencing their migration as part of an older population; they are growing older together. As such, the support they provide is informed by their awareness of their increased likelihood of experiencing death, dying, and loss. Here, these older migrants are navigating the 'paradoxes of ageing'; they simultaneously have access to both more *and* less time (Oliver 2008:1). Understanding this paradox provides an opportunity to understand the emotionally-charged nature of migration 'projects'; the expectations and hopes attached to them and the negative emotional responses when the 'dream' is not, or cannot be, fulfilled (see O'Reilly 2000; Oliver 2008). Moreover, the presence of death within this social context – through loss of group members, widowhood, and stories of death in the community – shapes how individuals understand and negotiate widowhood.

I argue that there is an emotional terrain of grief and loss, consolation and support visible within the Arroyo Seniors' Club. This terrain becomes more visible through Nancy's experiences of loss and how Club members offer support, reflect upon their similar experiences, and have a shared

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[37] The care and support within this community as they navigate the presence of death are explored further within chapter 6.

awareness of the presence of death amongst this community of older migrants[38]. This emotional terrain is also shaped by shared experiences of disappointment, failure, and guilt as responses to the challenges encountered through attempting to fulfil imagined migration 'dreams' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Oliver 2008; Torkington et al. 2015). There is an underlying tension between individuals' planned migration projects and the processes of ageing in later life that are often inseparable from deteriorating health, increasing dependency, and eventual death (Oliver 2008; Hall and Hardill 2016). As demonstrated through Margaret's, Nancy's, and Rosemary's stories, their migration projects became, in part, about contending with death and loss within their experiences of widowhood. None of them anticipated experiencing migration in later life alone, as widowed people. For them, they have constituted their lifestyle migration projects through these experiences. Negotiating widowhood consequently involves living a different version of their lives in Spain than the ones they had envisioned, or in Nancy's and Margaret's cases experienced with their husbands previously. Through my discussion of their narratives thus far, consolation and support have emerged as crucial elements of the emotional terrain through which they negotiate the process of widowhood on both an individual and collective basis.

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[38] Chapter 6 explores the ways that this Club navigates the presence of death, and how it shapes their caring practices

When considering the emotional terrain of death and loss, consolation and support, it is crucial to explore the role of place within how older British migrants experience widowhood. For Nancy, the bar terrace in Arroyo where she and Neil joined the club's Monday coffee morning had become a place of significance in the aftermath of his death. She began to associate this meaningful place with grief, loss, and new relationships as her status shifted from wife to widow. The Monday meetings on the bar terrace marked her transformation from being part of a couple to being alone. As such, the complex emotional terrain of both grief and loss, of uplift, support and consolation discussed here can be geographically located. Within the heterogeneous population of older British migrants living in the Costa del Sol, social groups play a significant role within the everyday practices of these lifestyle migrants (see Haas 2013; Torkington 2015). Older British migrants can develop attachment to the places where groups are located – places where emotions are experienced and enacted. They can become places of belonging and personal significance that shapes the way individuals develop and perform their various social relationships. As Maddrell (2016, 170) suggests, place is central in understanding experiences of grief:

> Places that have or take on meaning in relation to the dead can therefore act as a catalyst, evoking grief, memories, sadness and comfort – or an unpredictable combination thereof.

The geographies of this emotional terrain are important in this context; these migrants have chosen to locate themselves within Arroyo – and within a particular social group - in the latter years of their lives[39]. Nancy's own experience of loss and grief is informed by her peers' experiences here as they have encountered death, loss, and bereavement; stories that they share with her through their Seniors' Club encounters. Her experiences of widowhood are shaped by this complex emotional terrain that is ever-present and underlies her daily life and lives of her peers (Parr et al. 2005). As such, my conceptualisation of widowhood - as a status, experience, and an emotional orientation – is produced, performed, and constantly negotiated within this complex, often place-based, emotional *terrain*.

Widowhood and emotions: navigating loss, new opportunities, and guilty feelings

With the death of a spouse, individuals often face a multitude of decisions and questions about their future alone, their identity, and, for older British migrants, about their continued lifestyle migration project (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). These questions and decisions are understood and

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[39] This is explored further in chapter 6.

navigated through the *emotional orientation* of widowhood. Rosemary's story provides an example of how she negotiates widowhood through complex emotions and in relation to opportunities that may occur for the remaining spouse. Rosemary's migration to Spain was shaped by her plans with Robert to move there when they retired. While their joint plans were never realised, Rosemary's family supported her in remaking these plans alone. Her decision to migrate alone was significant as it demonstrated her acknowledgement and acceptance that she had to make decisions about her own future – decisions she always discussed with Robert, often ending in a compromise for both.

Through her new 'stage' of life, and her active attempts to have new experiences acted as a way for her to focus on her future and her desire to live an active and interesting life as she grew older. However, despite her emphasis on this form of 'new' life, Rosemary's experiences within her life in the Costa del Sol are imbued with nostalgic memories, unfulfilled dreams, myriad emotions including guilt and grief. They were a painful reminder to Rosemary that she would never be able to share them with Robert. For example, Rosemary's apartment was a place within which Robert was both absent, and had never visited, while being constantly present through Rosemary's memories, and her feelings of grief and loss during moments within which she reflects upon her *"new life"* without him. These feelings relate to her inability to share these new experiences

with her husband. Such feelings are difficult to manage as death and loss involve a shift in power; rendering the living spouse unable to *do* anything about their sense of isolation and loss in the context of their spouse's death. By actively rejecting her widowed status, Rosemary appears to be trying to regain control over the narrative of death, loss, and widowhood that others may attach to her. At the same time, Rosemary's negotiation of widowhood is inseparable from her feelings of disappointment, powerlessness, and grief at the absence of her husband. This context demonstrates how widowhood is an emotional orientation that is messy, contradictory and undoubtedly shapes how individuals understand their future without their spouse.

In the months following her husband's death, Nancy told me that she found herself navigating simultaneous feelings of relief and a powerful sense of guilt. Her sense of relief was closely tied to her realisation that she no longer had the emotional, financial, and physical burden of being a full-time carer to her husband. Without fulfilling caring responsibilities, Nancy felt a shift in her daily life in the Costa del Sol. No longer did she have to cancel or leave social events early. She could walk to places rather than relying on the bus or taxis. She could go shopping without arranging a carer to keep Neil company while she was away. However, Nancy felt guilty for this sense of relief – feelings closely tied to her sense of grief and loss. These complex and entangled emotions undoubtedly

shaped how Nancy understood her experiences as someone who had been recently widowed. She found it difficult to enjoy herself without also feeling guilty about doing so without her husband. These complicated feelings orientate Nancy towards other widowed migrants who understand the complexity and emotional contradictions of widowhood.

Nancy's story provides insights into how the emotional orientation of widowhood can also be a shared, and jointly negotiated experience. During my visit to the Seniors' Club in May 2018, Nancy told me that she was hosting her friend George in her apartment for a month. George had been their accountant for over thirty years and had been *"promoted to friend"*. George's wife, a close friend of Nancy and Neil, died eighteen months previously and George was struggling to adjust to a life without her. Nancy invited George to visit the Costa del Sol and *"keep me company"*, she told him *"us sad types should really stick together!"*. By conceptualising widowhood as an emotional orientation, it is also possible to understanding how friendships can be transformed as widowed people re-orientate themselves after the death of their spouse. This transformation is visible within Nancy's strengthening friendship with George. Nancy and George's relationship provides an opportunity to understand how shared experience and understanding can shape the emotional geographies of widowhood. George's visit to Spain involved activities that Nancy associated with holidaying; she entered *"holiday*

mode" and enjoyed *"being a tourist again"*. Significantly, Nancy's previous experiences of being a tourist in the Costa del Sol had been in the company of Neil – they visited the area on holiday prior to migrating together permanently. George's company and the touristic practices that they engaged with provided Nancy with an opportunity to laugh, smile, and feel excited about their plans. They could also share in their experiences of loss, while building upon their existing friendship. Nancy was visibly giddy and excited when she told the Seniors' Club about their busy week *"rediscovering"* the area. The transformation within their friendship was a pleasant and welcome surprise for both. Such transformation is also visible through Rosemary's and Margaret's increasing intimacy as shaped by their shared experiences of widowhood in later life.

Through their shared understandings of the experiences of loss, sadness, and overwhelming grief with the death of their spouses they both talked and were silent together. This companionship, understood by Nancy as a positive thing marked by contentment and happiness in George's presence, was inseparable from her grief. Moments of happiness were tinged with sadness that Neil could not share in their experiences. She felt guilt that she was enjoying herself only six months after his death. Nancy also felt concerned about George's departure and her return to everyday life, and particularly to *"long evenings with no one to talk to"*. George's

departure was another form of loss for Nancy – a loss that while likely to be temporary in nature was tightly bound with her relationship to her deceased husband and her negotiation of widowhood in the months following his death. This form of loss demonstrates how emotions can shape and be shaped by the daily experience of widowhood and the presence of her friend.

Nancy's complex feelings are informed by her loss, and her ongoing negotiation of being a widow with little control over how and when she encountered feelings of grief and bereavement. Likewise, her experiences, perceptions and expectations of widowhood shaped both how she felt, and how she made sense of her feelings and emotions. As Ahmed (2006:1) argues, being orientated involves finding one's *bearings.* For Nancy, her negotiation of widowhood involves re-orientating herself as she faces unexpected, complex and contradictory feelings in attempts to find her bearings as a widowed woman, a migrant, and someone surrounded by peers with similar experiences of loss. Widowhood as an emotional orientation is visible in how she rejects traditional expectations about what being a widow should involve. Instead, her understanding of widowhood is intertwined with her migration project; the excitement about new opportunities mixed with guilt and regret that she cannot share it with her husband.

"Only *just* coping"

Prior to Malcolm's death, Margaret explained that she wondered about what it would be like to live without him. She explained that she once thought:

> *oh, I felt terrible for thinking this! But when Malcolm was still alive, I thought that without him I could do all these different things. I could go here and there without worrying about getting home to make dinner for us. But do you know what Rebekah? It's not like that...I miss him every single moment. I'm only just coping really.*

Margaret's sense of *"only just coping"* is present within her daily life, over fifteen years after Malcolm's death. This temporality is significant as it demonstrates the way that bereavement, and grief, are not bounded by time and instead have the power to shape individuals' lives years after the loss of their spouse. Margaret's expectations about how it would feel to be widowed, understanding her potential freedoms and new opportunities outwith her marital and domestic responsibilities, had elicited guilt since Malcolm's death. These expectations were rooted in her role within their marriage, as a homemaker and primary care giver in relation to Malcolm's role as the "*decision maker*". These performed roles were gendered and constructed in relation to Margaret's and Malcolm's expectations about their marriage. Margaret's performance of her status as a widow also reflects these gendered positions through her feelings that she should continue to respect her husband and his beliefs and rules,

even after his death. However, despite her expectations, Margaret found that her experiences of widowhood were more complex; she simultaneously enjoyed new hobbies, friendships, and daily activities while also feeling that she was *"only just coping"* in her life without her husband.

Malcolm's death became a central part of Margaret's life. Since experiencing his loss she orientated her life towards her grief; ensuring his continued presence within the decisions she made and her experiences (see Maddrell 2013 on absence-presence). Margaret's home material cultures reflect this orientation through her maintenance of her apartment as it was prior to Malcolm's death. The idea that Margaret is 'coping' suggests a simultaneous experience of carrying on and keeping up appearances while also being unable to be content in life as she had been with her shared experiences with her husband. Coping therefore suggests that she is *getting by* within the circumstances, through her enactment of widowhood within her daily life. This understanding suggests that coping takes active effort and may be a stressful ongoing experience requiring emotional management. Underlying this idea is that the *failure* to cope is possible.

As mentioned earlier, Margaret observed her widowed friends fail to cope as visible in their rapidly deteriorating health, their need for significant

familial care and support, and through some people's return to the UK in response to their spouses' death (see Giner-Monfort et al. 2016 on return migration). Margaret understood this failure to cope to be a character weakness and undesirable actions, or lack of actions, for a widow. Margaret's understanding of herself as only *just* coping reveals the nature of widowhood as an emotional orientation through which individuals negotiate their loss and grief on an ongoing basis.

Widowhood as an emotional orientation?

Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as 'who' or 'what' we direct our energy and attention toward.

Ahmed (2006:2)

The complex emotions present within each of the narratives reflects the way that the status and experiences of widowhood *orientates* individuals. As the quote above from Sara Ahmed's (2006) seminal book *Queer Phenomenology* suggests, to be emotionally orientated shapes how individuals encounter the world around them, and how they interact and understand the people, spaces, places, and things within their lives. As demonstrated within this section in widowhood feelings of grief, bereavement, loss, anger, relief, guilt, happiness, contentment, and others overlap to shape and transform individuals' sense of self, their

daily lives, social interactions and social relationships. Widowhood

therefore re-orientates those individuals experiencing it. In becoming

widowed, individuals must negotiate complex and overlapping emotions in

the context of social norms and perceptions, familial expectations,

changing relationships and ongoing complex feelings of grief. For these

older British migrants, widowhood as an emotional orientation is also

bound up with their experiences of their hopeful and aspirational

migration 'project' that may have been created with their spouse or

enacted after their death through their absence-presence (Maddrell

2013).

As individuals they understand their lifeworld through their experiences of

widowhood (Buttimer 1976). As I have demonstrated through the

narratives presented, widowed people are also required to navigate a

complex set of, often contradictory, emotions. These emotions are not

only experienced and negotiated during the immediate time after a

spouse's death, or what has been understood as a period of bereavement,

but it is ongoing and a process through which these responses can re-

emerge and change over time, and in response to different social and

geographical contexts. The *where* of being a widow is inseparable from

the social and emotional terrain of the widowhood process. Together,

these dimensions interact in creating a landscape that older British

migrants negotiating widowhood traverse within their day-to-day lives in

the Costa del Sol. As such, I argue that understanding widowhood as an

emotional orientation involves conceptualising it as a dynamic, rather than static and unchanging, process. As such, I am addressing Davidson et al's (2005:3) calls for emotional geographies scholarships to: "attempt to understand emotion – experientially and conceptually – in terms of its socio-spatial mediation and articulation". I have sought to do this, while also paying attention to how individual negotiation of its different dimensions over time - as a status, experience, and as an emotional orientation – constitute what widowhood is for them.

As I have demonstrated through Rosemary's, Margaret's and Nancy's narratives, the emotional *orientation* of widowhood is understood through, and experienced within, the context of a particular emotional *terrain*. Among these older British migrants, they experience widowhood through an emotional terrain of grief and loss, consolation and support. This distinctive emotional terrain exists within the context of an older population, regular deaths and the grief that underlies and transforms the social relationships of those within this heterogeneous 'community'. This is an important yet underacknowledged part of the experiences of older migrants living in the Costa del Sol. As I have argued, to better understand the emotional orientation of widowed older British migrants it is imperative that geographers acknowledge and explore this context further.

Widowhood: an ongoing and multidimensional process

Becoming widowed is a significant life event that can involve experiences of rupture and transformation for the remaining spouse within their daily life. By exploring older British migrants' experiences of widowhood, I have considered how individuals negotiate what it means to be widowed. I have argued that it is an ongoing process that is comprised of three intersecting dimensions; widowhood as a status, widowhood as experience, and widowhood as an emotional orientation. The narratives I present demonstrate how the widowed *status* can shift how others see them, and how they understand themselves. I have explored my participants' complex feelings and experiences around this status; considering how they reject, embrace and manage it on an ongoing basis. I have also argued for widowhood to be conceptualised *as experience*. By focusing on the experiential dimensions of this process, I have demonstrated how negotiating widowhood is emotionally complex and transformative for proximate social relationships, such as friendships. I also argue that widowhood is an *emotional orientation*. Through this conceptualisation, I have shown that it does not only elicit emotions from individuals. Rather, it also orientates individuals; shaping how they understand and encounter their lifeworld (Buttimer 1976). Moreover, I have shown how widowhood as an emotional orientation is inseparable from how individuals interact and engage with their peers, friends and family.

Older British migrants experiencing widowhood are doing so alongside their peers; many of who are also widowed. As such, I have paid close attention to the daily lives of older British migrants who are negotiating widowhood in the context of their social worlds and the places they inhabit and encounter (Miller et al. 2004; Rowles 1978; Moss and Moss 2014). I have provided insights into how older migrants navigate their social relations while simultaneously experiencing changes to their personal identities, and to the migration dream that influences their lives in the Costa del Sol.

Through the narratives of Rosemary, Margaret, and Nancy, I have advocated for understanding widowhood in relation to the emotional and social *terrain* of grief and loss, consolation and care experienced by these older British migrants (see Parr et al., 2005). This terrain is, in part, grounded in place(s). For these older British migrants, the Costa del Sol is a meaningful place for those who chose to grow older there, amongst peers with comparable experiences, and at a similar time in their lives[40]. The places frequented by individuals negotiating widowhood are important in understanding their everyday lives; their perceptions, expectations, hopes and dreams, and moral attitudes that they navigate

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[40] This understanding of the Costa del Sol as a 'final destination' is discussed further within chapter 6 (see Oliver 2008, 2017).

as part of their later life migration in the Costa del Sol. The relationship between place and experiences of widowhood is also visible through how these older British migrants position their lives in the Costa del Sol in relation to their ongoing comparisons with how they perceived widowhood to be in the UK. Although considering widowhood in migration, within a specific emotional terrain, geographers can apply my conceptual framework to better understanding older people's experiences of widowhood more broadly.

My final empirical chapter explores how older British migrants enact and experience informal caring and support within a social group where death is both present and proximate. I show how tensions, questions, and challenges that emerge within this social and emotional context inform where older British migrants choose to live and *die*.

Chapter 6

Caring in time-left-to-live: exploring support, friendship, and the *whereness* of death

Albert is an occasional visitor to the Arroyo Seniors' Club branch[41]. He is also one of the founding members of a British football fan club based in a small pub nearby. Albert regularly arranged for the fans to travel to support the local football team: *Málaga Club de Fútbol* (Málaga CF). When Albert returned to the UK after his seventy-year-old brother died, he arrived at his house to find "*a massive…I mean massive…bunch of flowers from the lads*". This gesture from his fellow club members was an act of care that extended beyond their meetings and trips as an Arroyo-based club. When he returned to his first club meeting after his brother's death, members met Albert with hugs, nods, smiles, pats on the back, and questions about how he was doing. I witnessed how Albert received these small gestures. He thanked his friends and peers, expressing his gratitude that they were thinking of him.

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[41] As mentioned in chapter 3, the Seniors' Club is both a social club and a voluntary organisation that cares for older British migrants. Here I predominantly focus on the informal ways that members care for one another.

Albert, his fellow fan club members, and his acquaintances from the Arroyo Seniors' Club[42] live within a context where they negotiate the often unpredictable and unexpected nature of death. Although the social and emotional support that members offered Albert is not unique to this context, the regularity with which these older migrants share similar experiences of loss undoubtedly shape how they experience their later life in Arroyo[43]. For example, four days after Albert returned to the group, another member - John - experienced the death of his wife. The group mobilised once again. They surrounded John with kind words, warm gestures, and offers of practical and emotional support. Through the brief retelling of these encounters, I have begun to paint a picture of how these migrants understand themselves as belonging to a social and emotional context, embedded within meaningful places, within which caring practices are a fundamental part (see Oliver, 2017). As these interactions indicate, experiences of death are a familiar and ordinary aspect of life for older British migrants.

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[42] Although I have focused on one social club – using this as a basis for understanding a community of older British migrants – many of the experiences and discussions within this group were echoed through my interviews and observations across my fieldwork.

[43] As noted earlier, 'Arroyo' is used by older British migrants as a shorthand for Benalmádena-Arroyo de la Miel

Exploring death and caring in a migration context

This chapter explores two questions. I first ask; *how does the presence of death shape the social and emotional context that older British migrants navigate?* I focus on death as part of later life – shaping individuals' present as well as their futures. My focus on "life's end" rather than "death's beginning" reflects the limited attention that geographers pay to how older people, both individually and collectively, respond to and manage the presence of dying and death within their daily lives (Goodwin-Hawkins and Dawson 2018: 269). An important exception is the work of Caroline Oliver (2017:173) who argues that adopting the:

> Heideggerian notion of 'being-toward death' is helpful in understanding the migrants' actual actions to help people 'get by' and providing meaning to those engaged in these practices.

Here, Oliver's research explores the 'tapestry' of care that older British migrants in Spain construct to 'get by' within their continued migration project. Oliver (2017:177) notes that peer care work among older British migrants in Spain was "supportive or auxiliary but rarely extended to direct physical home care". Within the context of her argument, this 'supportive' care was a valued yet minimal contribution to the caring requirements and circumstances of these migrants. However, I argue that this 'supportive' care is in fact central to how these older British migrants understand and experience their migration in later life. As such, I focus

explicitly on social and emotional caring, rather than practical forms of care, including end-of-life care (see Gunaratnam 2013; Oliver 2017; Bowlby and McKie 2019).

To explore this fragile context of proximate care and 'getting by', it is important to attend to the significance of friendship for older British migrants. The role of friendship within later life migration is an area that has remained broadly overlooked within human geography. In acknowledging this dearth of research, Bowlby (2011:606) argues that friendship is "a source of care and support in many people's everyday lives", and as such requires more exploration. As such, I look at how friendships, alongside other proximate and distant social relationships, shape how older British migrants navigate death within their ongoing – and potentially fragile - migration dream. Through a series of encounters, interactions, and individual narratives from the Arroyo Seniors' Club, I consider how these migrants enact caring through friendships, by acquaintances, and within other social relationships. Such relationships, I argue, shape how older British migrants may orientate themselves towards a particular social and emotional context embedded within a meaningful place. As I argue, the question of where to die undoubtedly shapes how individuals orientate themselves within their later life migration context (see Oliver and O'Reilly 2010; Oliver 2017).

For the older British migrants that I encountered within the Arroyo Seniors' Club, their experiences of navigating the unavoidable presence and proximity of death occur within a spatially and temporally bounded informal caringscape (Bowlby, 2012). As Bowlby (2012:533) writes, informal caringscapes are: "social/relational activity embedded in notions of obligations and reciprocity", as "an embodied activity", and as involving "processes that connect across time and space". Reflecting this understanding, I argue that the unavoidable presence of death shapes the landscape of informal caring that older British migrants value within their daily lives. As Bowlby and McKie (2019: 2111) highlight, 'spaces of care' are "particular locales which involve sometimes complex, contested, and emotionally intense social meanings". Such spaces, including social groups for older people, are important when understanding the "caring exchanges and encounters" that that form and inform individual and collective caringscapes (Bowlby 2012:2114). As I explore, this specific caringscape – and the social relationships within it – shape both these older people's later life migration experiences and where they hope to spend their remaining time-left-to-live.

Therefore, my second question explores: *how do older British migrants decide where to die*[44]*?* By asking this, I draw upon Yasmin Gunaratnam's eloquent and insightful work which explores questions of home and belonging alongside '*who am I?*' and '*how did I get here?*' for migrants experiencing end-of-life care. I draw upon Gunaratnam's (2013:22) call for scholars to pay more attention to the "geo-social politics from below" that individual migrant narratives make visible. Narratives that are sensitive to these difficult and complex questions. By exploring the day-to-day choices, considerations, and experiences that older British migrants navigate in response to the question of where to live the rest of their life I am attending to this call (see also Oliver, 2008).

My focus on this question also reflects a desire to explore the geographies of death beyond the existing literature on the materialities of memorialisation, remembrance, and the *matter* of death (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010; Hockey et al. 2010). Following the work of Goodwin-Hawkins and Dawson (2018: 269) on ethnographic perspectives of death, I adopt their understanding of death as a *process* where "the boundaries of life and death are culturally ambiguous". Death is a complex process

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[44] This is question is based in privilege; whether mobility, financially or otherwise. The lifestyle migrants who have chosen to migrate to Spain often, but not always, have social and financial capital that facilitates their initial migration, and shapes their experiences of a lifestyle that they envisioned in their later lives (see Oliver and O'Reilly 2010; Torkington et al. 2015).

that individuals navigate, rather than a singular event or moment (Goodwin-Hawkins and Dawson, 2018). By paying attention to what I term the *whereness* of death, I consider the importance of place, exploring how older British migrants' experiences of care, support, and belonging, shape their understandings of Arroyo as a place to experience their time-left-to-live (Oliver 2008).

By exploring these two interrelated questions, I argue that these migrants' social and emotional context is situated within a specific temporally and spatially located caringscape. Such a landscape of informal caring in turn shapes a sense of belonging to a *caring community* central to participants' later life migration and their attempt to fulfil their migration dream.

Navigating death discussions: care and support through 'morbid' conversations

During a Tuesday coffee morning, Helen – the club co-ordinator - told the Seniors' Club about an older British man who was found long after he had died: "no one found his body for weeks". When he died, his balcony door

was wide open. When he was eventually found, birds had eaten parts of his body.

This story began a conversation about death and dying in Spain. There were jokes and comments made about making sure you always close your windows before bed, about how the green parrots in Arroyo are pretty but they might be "*after you*", and that the story sounded like Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*. The story that Helen shared, and the reaction it received, demonstrates the light-hearted tone and dark humour through which attendees often spoke about death. The relaxed nature of these conversations demonstrates how these migrants navigate death as a proximate and normal occurrence.

I initially felt uncomfortable with the light tone of many of their conversations about death; it seemed incompatible with the seriousness of the topic. As a visitor, I was surprised by the frankness and frequency of conversations about death. There were countless questions posed around the topic:

Who had died?

How had they died?

What will happen to their body?

How would group members prefer to die?

What do they want their funeral to be like?

Did they think their family will follow all their wishes?

Over my time in the Seniors' Club it became clear that death appeared regularly, often weekly, in their conversations. They discussed death in a comparable way to how they shared grandchildren's achievements, plans for the week ahead, or the latest BBC television programme. In this context, death talk is simultaneously ordinary and *extra*-ordinary. It is ordinary as it is a conversation topic akin to other mundane and usual topics; discussed by attendees in an informal, casual, and often humorous way. It is simultaneously *extra*-ordinary as these conversations highlight the embeddedness of mortality, grief and bereavement in a way that may not be the case amongst younger migrant communities. Importantly, the Seniors' Club provides a place for these older migrants to have these discussions about death in a way that they feel reflects their experiences of it. With an average age of eighty-years-old, attendees, were aware that they were nearing the end of their lives. As Oliver (2012:114) argues: "choosing to live among older peers' forces people to contemplate

the inevitability of physical deterioration and death", as reflected within their regular death-related discussions. However, such contemplation provides opportunities for Club attendees to support one another both socially and emotionally through their shared understandings and stories.

By contrast, in other social contexts – such as amongst their family – others interpret the ordinariness of their conversations about death as morbid or undesirable. My own surprise and discomfort at the casual way Club attendees discussed death and dying demonstrates this potential interpretation. However, although these older migrants must contemplate death, they manage these discussions carefully, for example by using humour as a tool to shape their collective responses. These conversations demonstrate how these older migrants enact small acts of care for one another. They provide a place to explore and collectively navigate this often-present topic without feeling that it is socially unwelcome. How they manage these discussions also helps to protect each other from death becoming *too* dominant as a concern within their weekly social coffee mornings, or within their daily lives more generally.

My presence within the Senior Club provided insights into how these older people positioned death-related conversations as unsuitable for younger people. I would often be aware of their response to my presence within conversations about memorials, dying Seniors' Club members, or about

where and how members would like to die. After noticing my presence during these conversations each week, Lily[45] told me: "*you're too young to be thinking about all this*". Here, Lily seeks to protect me from considering death as a proximate and ordinary concern in the same way that she and her peers navigate within their daily lives. Lily is monitoring and diverting the conversation away from death, for my benefit as a younger, granddaughter-figure. Lily draws a distinction between different life stages and when it is appropriate to think about death within daily life. By contrast, for the older British migrants who engaged with light-hearted and humour-filled conversations about death, they did so in the company of other older people. Doing so removes the perception and expectation that they should avoid 'morbid' topics and 'protect' younger people from thinking about death. This desire to shield the younger people they encounter – like friends and family - is a form of care that they enact through the distinction they draw between when, where, and with whom that death can feature as an ordinary conversation topic.

Not thinking about "*it*": understanding one another

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[45] A regular member of the Seniors' Club who will be introduced in more detail later in this chapter

Death is a regular topic of conversation, concern, and individual reflection within this particular social milieu. However, not all older migrants in this social club engaged with group discussions about it. Throughout Helen's story, and the light-hearted jovial conversation that followed, Hilda – a regular club member – shook her head continuously. As the group started talking about how they would choose to die, Hilda exclaimed: "*oh, I don't want to think about it!*". She proceeded to stand up, squeeze between the red plastic tables, and walk towards the other end of the group. There, she joined other members who were engaged in a conversation about something else; something unrelated to death.

For Hilda and others who do not want to talk about "*it*", they sit elsewhere in the sun, enjoying their coffees, and focusing on their *present* (Oliver 2008). Their focus on their present, rather than upon the inevitable, proximate, yet unknown temporality, of death reflects a desire to focus on enjoying their remaining years without feeling constantly in the metaphorical shadow of death. Their rejection of contemplating either the gruesome story or death as a relevant topic within their daily lives, also demonstrates the deeply private and personal nature of the topic of death – one that they may only discuss with family and close friends, if at all (Elmir et al. 2011). By orientating themselves towards their present in Arroyo, these Club attendees are striving to achieve their desired retirement experiences in the Costa del Sol; emphasising a carefree life

with limited concerns and responsibilities (Oliver, 2008)[46]. For Hilda and others, they interpret this topic as a threat to their desired lifestyle in the sunshine, among their peers, in their later years. Such a topic also presents an unwelcome reminder of the fragility of their migration 'dream', and the impossibility of fulfilling it as imagined (see also Torkington et al. 2015).

While Seniors' Club attendees regularly discuss death, those who engage in these discussions also respect the decision of those who reject them. They do not question individuals' feelings of distaste about such conversations. On some occasions they show their understanding by changing the conversation topic. However, they do not often end their exchanges on behalf of those who don't want to partake. Instead, in these instances there is a physical separation of those who do not want to participate from those who engage, listen, or observe. By moving to the other side of the table when death becomes a conversation topic, individuals such as Hilda find company among the other members who find death to be an unpleasant, insensitive, personal, or private topic. Hilda's response and the physical separation of group members demonstrates how this group navigate death as a presence in different, sometimes contrasting, ways. This navigation can, in this case, involve a

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[46] However, as Torkington *et al.*, (2015) explore, the expectations of transnational lifestyle migrants (such as older British migrants) are often incompatible with their experiences of migration.

shared understanding of these differences, and a willingness to respect these contrasting approaches. This social navigating provides an example of how friendships between attendees can involve difficult conversations and divergent expectations yet remain an important and resilient source of support and care (see Bowlby 2011).

Through attendees' humour, and understanding, respect and consideration around the topic of death it is possible to understand more about the social dynamics and caring practices of this group. However, while attendees enact caring practices through understanding different perspectives, there are also limits to how accommodating the group is to individuals' aversion to death discussions. Although the navigation of these responses can be both complex and challenging for the group, shared experience and context locates these migrants within a sense of being part of a social context that *cares*. As William's and Lily's stories show later, these club attendees feel that they belong amongst other older migrants; even when they may disagree and challenge one another. As I now explore, These complex social dynamics are also visible through encounters with visitors who try, and fail, to discuss death within Arroyo's Seniors' Club.

Collective rejections: the funeral director

One Tuesday morning in October, Helen walked up to the group and introduced Ralph:

> *now, I know we don't want to be thinking about funerals...but Ralph's here to tell us about his work as a funeral director. He's got lots of information on the options we have available to us.*

Ralph's presence received mixed responses. Prior to his arrival, there had already been conversations about the recent death of Grace - one of the Club regulars. Lily was talking about the funeral: "it was lovely, so fitting for her. But my goodness I feel sad about it all". It seemed as if Ralph's visit was poorly timed as the group felt the loss of Grace acutely that day. Despite trying to engage others, Helen was the only person to talk to Ralph about funerals and funeral planning. The other Club members smiled, said hello, and swiftly turned back to their conversations.

This encounter between the group and Ralph demonstrates how the Seniors' Club manages unwelcome visitors. In this situation, Ralph is a salesman trying to sell funeral care plans; he is akin to a double-glazing window or timeshares salesperson. His presence as a salesperson is a dominant reason for the group's polite rejection of his approach. However, his interaction with the group also provides interesting insights

into how this group collectively navigate death. This visit by a funeral director is one of many representations of death that the Seniors' Club encounter. Ralph's role is a personification of death; his profession exclusively dealing with the end of life. Ralph's presence is also an interruption of coffees and conversations in the sunshine, an uninvited interruption that encouraged these peers to talk and think about death.

Regardless of individuals' strong ties to the group, it is important for attendees to follow the group's social norms. Seniors' Club attendees should only talk about death when there is a collective, unspoken, agreement that such a topic is both *appropriate* and *relevant*. Through my adopted granddaughter role, I observed and participated in the group's practices and norms around death; navigating *when*, *how*, and *why* they discussed it. Unlike those visitors and 'outsiders' who found that attendees refused to accept their discussions about death, my ascribed role, and my status as a researcher, provided me with approval from Club members to ask questions about death. However, even with these permissions, I could only ask questions about death in instances where these conversations were already occurring. For example, it was clear that those attending an average coffee morning each week would not welcome questions or discussion about death alongside their *café con leche* (coffee) or small *cerveza* (beer) (see figure 19 below).

Death is not a readily invited topic. Instead, these older British migrants had to *respond* to the process of death; as part of the fabric of their daily lives. By *responding* to death, these migrants navigated its presence by emphasising the importance of caring for one another. This brief encounter shows how strong and cherished relationships can afford club attendees with the 'permission' and ability to discuss death. It also demonstrates how these older people reject death discussions when their social norms around the topic of death are not adhered to; whether by visitors or Club attendees.

Figure 19: photograph of Seniors'' Club attendees: coffee, beer, and conversation during the weekly Arroyo Seniors'' Club coffee morning, March 2017

"Nothing to apologise for": compassion and emotional support

At fifty-five-years-old, other Seniors'' Club attendees told Joanne that she was 'such a young thing!'. Each week, she wheeled her eighty-four-year-old Dad down the hill from their newly renovated café to the Seniors'' Club coffee morning. Gradually, over several months, Joanne's Dad became increasingly confused, disorientated, and less responsive. With each weekly coffee morning, Joanne would ask for advice from Club members; help with shopping, recommendations for good translators and care providers, and more. Within this group Joanne would also seek out a listening ear from whoever sat near her during the coffee morning. These conversations provided a space to talk about how difficult it was to see her Dad's deterioration, and how she managed his health changes. One morning Helen – the Arroyo Seniors'' Club Co-ordinator – told the group that Joanne's Dad, Roy, had died. A week after Roy's death, the Club gave Joanne a bunch of flowers, and a card filled with kind messages, condolences, and the offer of more support from group members. When she received these gifts, Joanne began crying and then apologised for her tearful response. Club attendees told her "you've nothing to apologise for!" and "let it out dear – it is really the best thing to do". Joanne invited the members of the Seniors'' Club to join her family at their café nearby to celebrate and remember her Dad's life. All those in attendance at the

Club coffee morning that day told Joanne that they would be at the memorial.

The vignette above demonstrates how these older British migrants support one another within the context of their social group. They responded to Joanne's grief with compassion, advice and by communicating their willingness to support her in her experiences of grief and loss. These older British migrants are well-versed in providing consolation and advice around death. Their own experiences of grief and loss within later life informed the advice they shared with Joanne. Their willingness to share advice and offer support is also a clear example of how they enacted their friendships with one another with compassion and patience (see also Bowlby 2011).

Although those who attend the Seniors'' Club, like older British migrants more broadly, do not universally experience the loss of close friends, family, or a spouse, death and grief are present within the social context that they are part of. As Oliver (2010: 110) argues:

> Retirement migrants in Spain claim a particular vision of time as finally 'theirs'. It is a time for living in the present and contrasts with their previous time-bound working lives. This liminal temporality, which seems to diminish the significance of ageing, is disrupted, however, by the high visibility of ageing and death in such a community.

As indicated within earlier stories, the presence of death is visible within this social context. Moreover, as Oliver (2010) suggests, older migrants negotiate death daily; through conversations, attending memorials, unexpected visitors, and through individual and collective grief. So far, this chapter has shown the informal caring practices that are so commonly shared and experienced among friends and acquaintances within this social context. Through difficult stories, unexpected events, unwelcome encounters I have provided insights into the dynamics of some of the social relationships between Club attendees. As noted earlier, death is a significant part of these migrants' daily lives. By exploring how older migrants collectively navigated death, I have shown how they care and perform caring practices within this context. I also explored how death shapes this social context, and the social norms enacted within it. Bowlby's (2012) observation that social relationships are significant in shaping different forms of care exchanges is pertinent to the examples of care and support that are visible through the light-hearted conversations and the cautious approach that the group takes in response to the unwanted sales pitch from a funeral director.

Within the two narratives that follow, I expand upon my understanding of how the presence and proximity of death shape how older British migrants enact and experience informal caring within their complex and various social relationships. William's and Lily's stories have a shared

characteristic: their awareness of their mortality as a prominent concern that visibly shapes their futures within the Costa del Sol. As two individuals over eighty years old, they are in the later stages of their life course (Hardill 2009). Like many of their younger migrant counterparts, Lily and William both moved to Spain with the understanding that they would grow older in Arroyo. Their respective decisions to migrate to Arroyo were, in part, shaped by the knowledge that they would spend their later years in the company of other older British people as part of their search for a 'better life' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Torkington et al. 2015). However, their experiences of ageing involve unexpected challenges and changing circumstances through which death, dying, and mortality have become more prominent in their lives. Such changes make visible the fragility of the migration 'dream' that they both strive towards. For both William and Lily, their sense of belonging to a distinctive community that *cares* – within the Arroyo Seniors'' Club – is very influential in their respective response of the question of *where to die*.

Caring peers: stories of support: introducing Lily

Lily takes pride in her appearance. She is a petite woman with tightly permed hair and immaculately applied make up. A string of pearls hangs around her neck. Her floral raincoat is easily recognisable, worn regardless of the weather: "*to keep my old thin skin warm!*", she

explains. She enjoys the compliments that her friends give her about her dress sense and how well-presented she looks. Lily has lived in her apartment in Arroyo on a part-time basis since the mid-1980s. Each year she would split her time between her apartment in Arroyo and her residence in Kent, England. Initially, moving back and forward twice a year was exciting and interesting. However, as Lily grew older, she questioned whether she should continue her bi-annual migration. In 2001, as she was approaching her eightieth birthday, Lily decided to live in one location permanently: Benalmádena-Arroyo de la Miel. She explained that she had "*nothing to lose*" by moving to Arroyo permanently. When I asked what she meant, she explained that the breakdown in her relationship with her daughter, and their eventual estrangement left her with few connections in the UK. She described her life in the UK in unenthusiastic terms: as "*smaller*", with limited activities for older people in her town, an uninspiring cold and wet climate, and a cost of living that placed strain upon her limited financial resources.

By contrast, within Arroyo Lily had a series of favourite locations for dining out, reading her book or newspaper, and for watching the "*comings and goings*" of others in the town. She regularly visited British run *Birdie's*, *Lucy's*, and *Finn's* bars. She walked daily on her favourite route: down the hill to the beach, along the beach, and back up the hill through the local park. On these strolls, Lily would meet a variety of

British people; tourists, acquaintances, familiar faces, friends, and business owners. I would often see her deep in conversations with people on the streets of Arroyo. Lily's busy social life is almost exclusively based around fellow older British migrants, and she is well-known for knowing 'everyone'. Lily often wanders through Arroyo on her way to a social event, for her daily walk, or returning to her small apartment in the centre of the town. Through these encounters with the places that she liked to frequent; Lily firmly located her sense of home in Arroyo. She would often talk of how she didn't want to live anywhere else in the world. The centrality of Lily's social relationships within Arroyo show that friendships are both geographically situated, and "can help nourish understanding of the complex geographies of human lives" (Bunnell et al. 2012:504). In this context, Lily's various social relationships provide insights into how she understands her transnational migrant positioning in relation to others, what she values about her life in Arroyo, and how her peers position her.

On her ninety-fifth birthday in 2016, Lily became the oldest, and longest attending, member of the Arroyo Seniors'' Club branch. She was rarely absent from the Tuesday coffee mornings. When she was absent, everybody noticed. When she would return, attendees would tell her how much they missed her. "*It's never the same without you*", Helen would tell her. Lily was well known for her informal caring, emotional, and

supportive work within the group. When others were absent due to illness, she would go and visit them, often taking them a small 'get well' gift. Through these practices she felt useful, valued by those who received her visits, and importantly that she belonged. Lily's relationships with fellow British migrants are particularly important to her in the context of her limited relationship with her daughter following their estrangement. For Lily, the Seniors'' Club was akin to a family that she cared for, occasionally argued with, and one that she placed significant importance upon. With her emphasis on knowing and being known within what she saw as a British community, Lily was very vocal about wanting to remain in Arroyo for the rest of her life. She wanted to *die* in Spain, no matter what.

Seeking assurances about her future: Lily's Arroyo

Each week at the Seniors' Club coffee mornings, Lily never seems to sit still for long. She distributes coffees while sharing the biscuits that she produces from her handbag. Towards the end of the gathering, she moves around the table to talk to everyone in turn, asking fellow members if they would like to join her for lunch on Friday, and notes those who will attend. Lily often helps her younger, less mobile, peers to find a seat, or escorts them to the bus stop at the end of the coffee morning. As Oliver (2010:114) argues, for older British migrants living in

Spain: "age was not seen as a barrier, but those people who maintained active and mobile lifestyles into late old age were congratulated". Such congratulations were particularly visible when Lily turned ninety in 2011. Helen told me that when Lily turned ninety, she invited local newspaper representatives to report on her birthday. Lily was one of the oldest British migrants living in Arroyo at that time. According to Helen, when two middle-aged journalists arrived, neither of them could believe that Lily was ninety. In her bright and distinctive floral raincoat, the newspaper representatives commented that they "*wanted to be like Lily when they were ninety*".

Although active and independent herself, Lily's peers' experiences of health deterioration and ageing shaped her social context. Her care for her peers was both regular and informal in nature. Some of Lily's friends and acquaintances had serious long-term health conditions, others were experiencing rapidly deteriorating health, and many had mobility issues (see Hall and Hardill 2016; Oliver 2010). Lily often commented on this, reflecting upon how sad it is to see people "*going downhill*". In witnessing these changes that her peers experienced, Lily was acutely aware of the fragility of life, and how her own health, mobility, and independence shapes her life in Arroyo. Over the course of my fieldwork in the Seniors' Club:

Alan broke his arm after a fall (see figure 20)

Isa slipped on her front step and injured her back

Judith twisted her knee as she fell in the supermarket

Hyacinth became increasingly reliant on her wheelchair

Helen became severely ill with pneumonia

William received a cancer diagnosis

Figure 20: Alan with his arm in a cast, sitting next to his friend Hilda enjoying coffee in the sunshine, July 2016

Although requiring mobility aides, medical treatment, and to take extra time and care with their previously everyday tasks, these individuals remained in Arroyo, and at Seniors' Club – all trying to stay as long as

possible. There was often a determination among these individuals to stay among other older British migrants; their resolve echoes Lily's own feelings. However, each of these individuals who experienced significant physical and mobility changes had financial resources that allow them to pay for formal practical care (see also Oliver 2017; Hall and Hardill 2016). They also had significant support from their families in the UK. Such support came in the form of more regular visits, requesting practical and formal support from the Seniors' Club[47], remote care through arranging shopping to delivered via the supermarket's website, and more. For Lily, she has neither close familial relationships nor financial resources to support her in the event of a fall and significant injury. However, for Lily, she underplayed the practical and logistical concerns of any future changes in favour of emphasising how happy her life in Arroyo is, and how she feels at home among her friends and peers.

Lily also felt that other older British migrants in Arroyo will look after her in the future. Her response to Helen's story about the undiscovered dead body demonstrates this. Lily sought confirmation that her friends and peers will continue to support her throughout her later life. Lily explained that she didn't have any concerns about her death going unnoticed in the

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[47] As mentioned in chapter 3, the Seniors' Club offers formal, practical, care through their volunteer service. However, this chapter focuses on the informal social and emotional care that attendees provide for one another.

same way. She told Helen, and those sitting around her, *"you'd look after me. I know you'd check on me if you didn't see me out and about in Arroyo"*. Lily's statement demonstrates her trust in her social network; she trusts that when she dies someone will notice her absence. She knows they will care for her body appropriately after death – they would not let the birds find her first. Lily is aware that when she doesn't attend the Seniors' Club, or any of the other clubs she frequents, she often receives phone calls from fellow members. Lily tells me: *"I like how they ring just to check in"*. Lily appreciates these phone calls and the concern from fellow British migrants as it makes her feel safe from becoming forgotten, ignored, or abandoned. My fieldnotes below demonstrate this care work:

> *Helen said "where is Karen? I want to know why she isn't here and hasn't been since we moved locations". Death or illness for members is always a concern, and Helen takes note of who is present and absent each week.*

Field diary extract, September 2016

This visible care and concern shape Lily's feelings that she lives, and belongs, within a distinctive community of older British migrants. Within the Seniors' Club, there is a shared understanding between these migrants that they will comfort and support one another; doing what they

can to look after each other in life, and in death. This is particularly important for those older migrants, like Lily, who do not have any proximate family. As such, the Seniors' Club provides a place for attendees to ask for informal help and support and volunteers and peers actively encourage them to do so (see also Oliver 2017).

For Lily, her home is grounded in the town of Arroyo, is inseparable from her active and independent lifestyle, and is contingent upon her sense of belonging within a community of older British migrants that she interacts with daily. Despite the encounters with death, dying, and witnessing the process of her peers "*going downhill*", Lily continues to orientate herself towards Arroyo. Her peers and friends' assurances and confirmation of their continued friendship and care within her *present* shapes her choice to live permanently in this town. Likewise, their willingness to respond to any different *future* caring needs influences Lily's awareness that if she were also to go "*downhill*" her peers would look after her.

Singing and dancing: introducing William

"*Oh, there he is!*" Helen said as William approached the Seniors' Club on a sunny Tuesday morning. He takes slow and precise steps as he headed to join them. He focuses on the floor, avoiding cracks and uneven paving. When William arrives at the tables, he takes a moment to catch his

breath. As he nears, I can see that his limbs are swollen: a visible consequence of his heart failure. Helen welcomed him and took his coffee order. "*The usual?",* she asks. He nods and gradually lowers himself into a red plastic chair. As he sits down, he starts to sing "*oh what a beautiful morning*", conducting the chorus of members who joined him with his two index fingers. The group was smiling and laughing as the song came to a close. Helen walked over with William's coffee, and placed it down in front of him. Conversations began again, and William joined the discussion of those sitting across from him. Through these conversations, William often offers and seeks advice, shares his stories, asks questions, and tells jokes. He appreciates these mornings spent sitting amongst his peers; he feels well-looked after, and like he belongs.

William permanently migrated to the Costa del Sol with his wife Susan in 2001. They had an active social life with various hobbies and activities. For over ten years, their financial stability, good health, and support from their family in the UK informed their plans to live permanently in Arroyo and the experiences associated with that decision. They structured their weeks around their various groups; the Seniors' Club, tea dancing group, and bowls practice. William's dress sense reflects this active outdoor lifestyle; he always wears short sleeved shirts with smart shorts, white socks and white training shoes. An outfit appropriate for any event or activity. Together, William and Susan established daily rituals such as

breakfast on their balcony, and afternoon coffee at the Marina. These routines provided feelings of contentment and comfort within their everyday life in the Costa del Sol: "*it was their home*". In early 2015, Susan received a cancer diagnosis. She died later that year. Susan's illness and the event of her death led to a transformation of William's understanding of his life in Spain. He told me that he spent considerable time establishing a life there alone following her death; something that he never anticipated doing[48].

When I met him, William was contemplating his future in Arroyo following his own potentially fatal cancer diagnosis. He was clear that he wanted to "*fight to stay*". William's family voiced concern about him continuing to live in Arroyo by himself. They also expressed a desire for William to have a closer relationship with his four grandchildren beyond his infrequent visits to the UK. However, through conversations with his peers, William made it clear that he does not want to return to Yorkshire. William often tells his family and his friends: "*I'm British, but my home is here*". With this statement, William indicates the transnational tension he is experiencing between his British identity and his home that he firmly positions in Arroyo. For him, Arroyo is a meaningful place where he feels

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[48] William's experience of widowhood introduced here can be understood through the conceptual lens that I argued for in chapter 5: widowhood as a complex and multi-dimensional ongoing process to be negotiated by individuals within their social context.

like he belongs among older British migrants who support one another. As a multi-dimensional concept, home is embedded in place and within particular social contexts, experiences, emotions, memories, and nostalgia (see Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Moreover, William's statement echoes Degnen's (2016:1645) argument that individuals' attachment to place is "a collective, relational and embodied process, caught up and experienced via social memory practices and sensorial, bodily knowledge". However, despite his strong attachment, William cannot make a definitive decision to die in Arroyo. Instead, he must navigate his familial expectations and tensions. Likewise, unexpected questions had arisen since his potentially fatal cancer diagnosis. William does not navigate these tensions alone, but instead relies on the advice, support, and care of his peers within the Seniors' Club.

Wiggling hips and making jokes: care and affection as gendered

When William arrives at the Seniors' Club, attendees often greet him with cheers and affectionate comments from the female members of the group. William played up to this warm, over-the-top, greeting by bowing or wiggling his hips. He was well-known within the Club as a sociable and funny man. Helen described him as someone that would "*talk to anyone about anything*". William's joviality was infectious; when he arrived, the Club buzzed with conversation and laughter - smiles visible on the faces

of members. Through his laughter-filled interactions, William was attempting to create a context within which his life in Arroyo reflected the carefree, sun-filled days that he anticipated when he migrated there (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). His role as the 'joker' was well-received by the women in the Club; they enjoyed his emphasis on fun within the coffee mornings each week.

Each week William would tell the group that he needed a dance partner, someone to iron his shirts, and cook his dinner. He would ask each female member in turn if they would help him. They rejected him each time. He would say "*I'll try again next week*"; repeating these interactions during the next coffee morning. The women he asked would shake their heads and refer to him as a "*cheeky chappy*", while most remained adamant that they were "*done looking after men*"[49]. These requests where not only aimed at the older women who attended the Seniors' Club. William also asked me on several occasions to: "*come and help him with his ironing*" and told me "*you look like you know how to iron*". I politely declined. I, and other members, affectionately laughed off William's requests. However, through his jokes and requests, William is reproducing social and gender norms present in this group. The gendered nature of caring

[49] Most of the women in regular attendance at the Seniors' Club are widowed or single. There are few men, and of those who attend most are married. The men who become widowed receive a lot of attention from the women in the group.

within this group is particularly visible through the emotional work that these women do to support their male peers (Longhurst 2016). As Helen explained, group attendees accepted that widowed men "*needed a bit more help*" following the loss of their spouse. The women often compliment these men: "*oh you have lovely eyes*", "*you look so dapper in that jumper*", and "*it is so good to have a man around to talk to*" are all comments aimed at single or widowed men that I heard during Seniors' Club coffee mornings. In this context, where older women looked after and sought the company of single older men, William received substantial and ongoing emotional support. On several occasions, after rejecting William's proposal female attendees would invite him to sit down next to them and tell them about how he was getting on, and how he was feeling.

The older women in the Club often enacted forms of emotional labour through regularly listening, providing advice, and support for William. These caring practices for their friend are part of a desire to prevent him from '*going downhill*' in the same way they witnessed others experience. As Bunnell et al. (2012: 499) note within their exploration of friendship as a relationship embedded with affect:

> friendship reminds us that affecting and being affected is indeed emotional labour, requiring the production and reproduction, for example, of mutual trust, reciprocal care and fondness.

In this social context, there is a gendering of emotional labour as the women reproduce expectations that they will provide care and support to William. However, although the women of the group provided emotional support through listening to William's challenges, they also remained firm that they were "*done looking after men*". This assertion was particularly in relation to William's 'joking' requests for practical and domestic assistance. By drawing boundaries between the emotional work that they enacted and the domestic labour that they would not, these women were demonstrating that they did not want to spend their later years caring for men. Their firm assertions were responses to their experiences of caring for their husbands. They did not wish to re-enact the gendered work previously ascribed to them within their marriages.

It is important to note that although he faces regular rejection from women within the group, they value William for his contribution to conversations, the support that he offers others, and his role within their Arroyo-based community. For example, when William told the group that he was going to the UK for a short trip to visit his family, Helen, the co-ordinator, told him: "*What will the women do without you?! They miss you when you're not here".* Helen's comment shows how women in the Club considered the male attendees important in shaping the group dynamics. Helen's comment also provides insights into the gender roles enacted within the group. Helen's rhetorical questions highlights to

William that other attendees would feel his absence, they would miss him, and that they collectively appreciate his positive demeanour. These sentiments are important in understanding how William navigates his strong feelings of belonging in this context.

William's performance of his 'joker' role within the Arroyo Seniors' Club social context reveals the gendered nature of caring within this perceived community (Longhurst, 2016). Here, William seeks and receives support, experiences compliments and affection, and his cheerful nature is valued by his peers. Within this community, the women have 'accepted' an ascribed caregiving role, particularly in relation to widowed men. However, they have communicated firm boundaries of how they enact this care, and what it looks like. For example, although these women ask William how he is, offering emotional support their care does not extend to domestic duties; despite his requests. Through exploring how William is understood within the Club – both as a joker and as someone seeking care and companionship – I have provided insights into the social dynamics of this Club, how the relationships within it are enacted to prevent William '*going downhill'*, and the highly gendered nature of the care that is embedded within this social context.

This section has explored Lily's and William's experiences of caring and support within their perceived Arroyo-based community. Through these

stories, I have shown how the presence of death shapes the social and emotional context that older British migrants experience; answering the first of my two questions within this chapter. I have shown the small ways that these migrants enact caring daily within this temporally and spatially bounded caringscape (see Bowlby and McKie, 2019).These forms of caring are responses to the presence of death; a presence that older British migrants must respond to within their daily lives. Importantly, I have shown how social and emotional forms of care are not simply 'supportive' (Oliver 2017) but are central to how and why these older migrants position themselves towards Arroyo. Through exploring Lily's and William's narratives further, I show how the centrality of care embedded within the fabric of their perceived community shapes older British migrants' responses to the question of *where should I die?*

Exploring caring, friendship, and the 'whereness' of death

"*I will live and die in Spain*": exploring Lily's certainties

Lily and I sat together and ate the lunch that Joanne provided for her father's memorial event. Lily initiated a conversation about how she thought it was wonderful that Joanne's father could die in Arroyo. She continued, explaining that she was certain of one thing: "*I will live and die*

in Spain". Lily's statement here represents a major decision that older British migrants must make; will their *life* in Spain end with their *death* in Spain? Importantly, Lily's reference to 'Spain' refers to Arroyo specifically. Throughout our conversations, spanning over six months, Lily spoke rarely of other parts of the country. She seldom visited places outside of the Costa del Sol. Instead, her life was rooted within this region, and Arroyo in particular. As Degnen (2016:1645) writes:

> place attachment, or the emotional sense of deep connection with particular places that people experience, is a significant source of meaning throughout the lifecourse.

Lily's statement demonstrates the importance of place within her later life; reflecting her active decision to migrate permanently to Arroyo in her eighties. Lily's strong attachment sits in contrast to Oliver's (2017) argument that for older British migrants in Spain:

> even the most embedded individuals had a transnational sensibility that might ground them in the locality only tenuously.

By contrast, Lily's sense of place within Arroyo suggests that despite her transnational migration status, she actively re-orientated herself towards Arroyo as where she would spend her time-left-to-live (Oliver, 2008). For Lily, Arroyo is a meaningful place for her that is dynamic and ever-

changing. Helen once tried to estimate how many people Lily knew in Arroyo: "*it's got to be well over a hundred. She knows everyone does our Lily*". Lily's strong social network of fellow older British migrants, including within the Seniors' Club, plays a significant role in justifying her decision to experience the later years of her life in this specific migration context. However, as Oliver (2017: 173) argues, older British migrants living in Spain are negotiating "contingent and fragile social constellations", shaped by return migration and the death of their peers (Giner-Monfort et al., 2016; Hall and Hardill, 2016). Lily's awareness and negotiation of the transient British community within Spain shapes her understanding of Arroyo as a place of new – white British – faces alongside familiar ones (Haas 2013; Oliver 2017; Oliver and O'Reilly 2010). Her understanding of home is both grounded in Arroyo and flexible in response to changing circumstances around her.

Lily was well-known for introducing new, younger-older people to the Seniors' Club as she sought to prevent numbers of attendees from dwindling in the context of the deaths and departures of existing members. Lily's determination to remain in Arroyo provides her with motivation and a desire to help maintain and contribute to her sense of being part of an active and strong social network. Lily's complex understanding of place and where she belongs supports the academic critiques levelled at traditional conceptualisations of older people's

attachment to home and place as static and unchanging (Rowles 1978; Blunt and Dowling 2006).

Lily's attitude and experiences sit in contrast to common discourses about the loneliness faced by older people (Age UK 2018). For Lily, Arroyo provides a place, a home, and a social context that can mitigate her concerns about loneliness in her later life. As Bunnell et al. (2012) argue, geographers have paid minimal attention to friendships as a form of relationship that are significant in shaping the lives and experiences of individuals. They suggest that: "friendships are forged, sustained and dissolved in and through networks, while also variously opening and foreclosing human spatial possibilities" (Bunnell et al. 2012: 503). The proximate friendships that Lily values – set within her broader social context and sense of community – shape her sense of Britishness, while minimising focus from other aspects such as her advancing age. Lily's weekly activities in Arroyo involve purposefully surrounding herself with like-minded older British migrants; orientating herself towards a community that strengthens and shapes her British identity. Arroyo is a place that provides an opportunity to enact a performance of Britishness through celebratory events (see figure 21 below).

Figure 21: Photograph of St George's Cross flags decorating the St George's Day event in Benalmádena-Arroyo de la Miel in 2016

Lily often spends time in Bonanza Square – an area of Arroyo that is popular with British migrants and tourists alike. Lily constructs *her* Arroyo through her encounters with fellow British people, sitting outside on the terraces of British bars and cafes. As such, Lily's conceptualisation of Arroyo as her home are inseparable from her sense of belonging among these other British migrants. She places significant value and importance upon these relationships as they provide an opportunity for her to enact her individual sense of Britishness as a migrant, living amongst other migrants, in Spain. Of those that Lily engages with, the vast majority are older. Her encounters with others who are chronologically older situate her within a social context that de-emphasises age; she is amongst people who do not see her age as the defining feature of her identity.

Lily's limited social and emotional ties to the UK also shape her interpretation of her future. Lily will not contemplate returning to the UK: "*I don't know it anymore. It's not the England I left. I don't know anyone either*". Having lived in Arroyo for many years without returning to England regularly, her physical separation shaped Lily's sense of home, belonging and powerful sense of place. Lily's estrangement from her daughter and the death of most of her friends and family in the UK were also significant in shaping her orientation towards her continued life in the Costa del Sol. Lily's circumstances have created a situation where she can make definitive claims about her future without input from friends or family in the UK. By not navigating familial concerns or expectations, Lily feels as though she controls her own decisions; emphasising her independence and autonomy, rather than the perceptions of dependence and helplessness often associated with older people (Milligan et al., 2005; Miller et al., 2014). This control is in contrast with her feelings that some of her peers in the UK are "*just sitting waiting for death*" – something that Lily was adamant she would not do.

Within Arroyo, Lily has a distinct perspective regarding death – rather than passively "*waiting*" for it, she is active and emphasising living in Arroyo through her daily interactions, encounters, and experiences there. By telling her peers that she *will* live and die in Spain, Lily is reclaiming some control over her death. Her decision about where to die provides

her with a sense of stability and certainty within her remaining life. By making this decision while relatively healthy and mobile, Lily is preventing future uncertainty about whether she should return to her country of origin if she becomes severely unwell or unable to care for herself. As Morris and Thomas (2005:23) note in their work on end-of-life care, individuals' preference for their place of final care and death: "were strongly coloured by emotional and social landscape". As such, Lily's context where many older British migrants return to the UK in response to ill health, financial concerns, or following the death of a spouse (Oliver 2010; Giner-Monfort et al. 2016) shaped her vocal preference to remain. She witnessed many of her friends and acquaintances return to the UK in these circumstances. She told me she couldn't foresee a situation where she would do the same. For Lily, despite her awareness that returning to the UK may provide alleviation from concerns about future vulnerability and care needs, it would not fulfil her desire to remain at *home*.

Lily's story shows how influential the *whereness* of death can be for older migrants' daily lives, and futures. By focusing on the importance of place when considering the question of *where to die* I am drawing upon understandings within human geography of place as "*made up of relations'* between bodies, objects and spaces" (see Bowlby and McKie 2019:532 original emphasis). Such relations are evident in the way that Lily conceptualises the place that she chooses to spend her remaining life

within; a place to eventually die. Lily has built up significant emotional attachment to Arroyo over her many years there – it is a place that she *chose* to grow older in. She knows many of her neighbours in her apartment block. She knows the quickest way to get to the Arroyo Seniors' Club. She follows the rhythms of Arroyo; knowing not to go shopping during the *siesta* (rest) part of the day or knowing when to join her friends in sitting having coffee in 'Fountain Square'[50]. She orientates herself towards friends and acquaintances who share her sense of Britishness; performing it through their daily practices. Lily's understanding of Arroyo as home is embedded with her memories and experiences – both affirming and distressing - that she has shared with friends there. As such, spending her remaining years anywhere other than Arroyo is an unwelcome idea. She swiftly rejects it if questioned by her peers. The informal support that Lily receives from fellow Club attendees informs and shapes her powerful sense of belonging within Arroyo. She knows that her friends and peers will not forget her; they will not leave her to the birds.

Through Lily's story, it has been possible to understand the value she attaches to the place and *her* community within it, and why Lily orientates herself towards Arroyo. An interesting omission from these discussions is

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[50] Described within the opening vignette of the thesis introduction

the practical and material dimensions of what happens *after* her death, for example questions of where she should be buried (see Maddrell and Sidaway 2010 on geographies of death). This omission is central to Lily's firm focus on Arroyo as the *only place* in the world she can consider being – both in life and in death. This caring community that supports her, gives her a sense of purpose, and ensures that she is 'looked after' as she grows older reinforces her orientation towards this place. For Lily, she has witnessed the departure of her friends and peers but remains adamant that her decision to remain in Arroyo is final. This finality reflects her awareness that death is unavoidable, but she can maintain some control over where she lives the rest of her life.

An uncertain future: concern, comfort and clashes

Ten days after his eighty-second birthday William received a diagnosis of lung cancer and heart failure. This serious news came as a surprise to him and his family. The week after his life-threatening diagnosis, William told me: *"I thought I got life right and then something else happens".* Although this news had the potential to transform how he understood his life in Spain, William told his friends that this diagnosis was not going to change anything. In similar circumstances, other older British migrants that William knew had chosen to return to the UK to receive health care through the NHS. However, William was determined to remain. He

expressed his wish to receive treatment in the local hospital and maintain his life and home in Arroyo. Following this diagnosis, William's home, sense of belonging, and sense of stability within his life in Arroyo is challenged; his future there had become uncertain.

Shortly after his diagnosis, William's son and daughter-in-law paid his ticket to return to the UK for a visit. They asked him to "*come home?*" on a permanent basis. They wanted him to receive treatment through the NHS, but more importantly they wanted him to be closer so that they could play an active role in caring for him. By moving to Yorkshire, they could care for him daily, rather than through limited visits to his villa in Arroyo. William declined their offer and returned to Spain. As William's chemotherapy treatment progressed in Arroyo, his family continued to attempt to convince him to return to the UK. His family's perception was that he would receive better care through the NHS (Oliver 2017; Hall and Hardill 2016)[51]. They argued this, alongside explaining that William would be close to family who could help him in his recovery. William continued to decline their offer.

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[51] This is a common narrative among older British migrants who return to the UK for medical treatment (Hall and Hardill 2016).

Each week William would tell the Seniors' Club "*the latest*" from his family. He would say: "*the latest is that...*" and detail the new reason they have found for him to return to the UK permanently:

> *...they think it would be good for me to spend more time with my grandchildren.*
>
> *...if I go back to the UK, I won't have to cook and clean for myself.*
>
> *...if I have a fall, here there's no one to help me. In Yorkshire, I'd be living with my family.*
>
> *...If I stay here, who will take me to my cancer treatment in the hospital?*
>
> *...they're worried about Brexit and what happens to my healthcare rights here once we leave the EU.*

This list of reasons that William's family provide for his return to the UK are an indication of the care and concern they have about him growing older. Some weeks William would relay these comments to others at the Seniors' Club; brushing them off in his usual light-hearted manner. Other weeks, William would seek their advice, particularly when his family have communicated their concern about his health and care as it became an immediate concern. His peers comfort him by listening to him, sharing their own experiences, and offering to spend more time with him outside of the Seniors' Club context. The support that his friends and peers provided him with is central to his attempts to resist his family's calls for him to return 'home' as he faces the potential of "*going downhill*" due to his health changes. William felt that his peers understood his predicament and the challenges he faces as an older migrant who ageing abroad. For

William, this opportunity to laugh, or seek advice and support, from his friends and peers is important in shaping how he responded to his family. With a strong feeling of being part of a community of older British migrants who are navigating similar issues, William feels justified in his decision to remain in Arroyo. Through these encounters the strong social and emotional support that he receives through the Arroyo Seniors' Club is visible, as demonstrated within this chapter. William does not want to lose this support, or his home in Arroyo, if he were to agree to return to the UK.

As Baldassar (2014:391) notes, in situations where family members are severely ill, transnational migrants are required to be physically co-present to:

> deliver hands-on care and intimate emotional support for the sick family member. It is a time when distant kin feel they need 'to be there', including for their own sense of well-being.

As noted earlier, William's situation differs from those that Baldassar writes about: where younger migrants care for their older relatives who remain 'at home', in their country of origin. Caring for an older migrant who decided to migrate in later life presents different challenges to those who have migrated and return to support their older relative. Here, the older person – William – is the migrant. His ill health, status as a widowed

person, and advancing years, creates a context where his family must care from a distance through travelling to him, rather than back to their country of origin. This situation – of the older family member being the migrant – places strains upon the family members who care for them: through love and/or obligation. I have shown how William values the *social* and *emotional* caring practices enacted by his friends and peers within the Arroyo Seniors' Club. His family's reasons for returning to the UK do not recognise this care and its importance to William. Instead, practical care concerns are their primary focus. As this chapter has demonstrated so far, the social and emotional care within this community are central to shaping both William's and Lily's orientation towards it in their later life.

Through our conversations, William did not reflect upon how his family felt about his continued life as a migrant in Arroyo. Instead, he positioned his family as caring but also as an irritation and a disruptive presence that prevented him from "*just getting on with things*" within his life in Arroyo. This understanding is visible in his dismissive tone when talking about his family's "*latest*" idea for why he should return to the UK. The arguments that they put forward were interpreted by William as partly through love, concern, and care but predominantly as a sign that his life in Arroyo was under threat, and the decision to remain there may not only be solely his. For example, William would often respond to his family by telling them:

"you're being daft – I'm fine out here!", indicating that he finds his children's concern to be unfounded and overprotective. Although he seeks to ignore them, these concerns have become part of William's life in Arroyo, shaping his migration experiences.

William interprets his family's persistence regarding both his illness and his life-left-to-live in a way that positions their concern as more important than his desire to remain in Arroyo. However, for William, the prospect of returning to the UK would signify the end of his experiences of living a life in a place he loves, independently of his family. With this push-and-pull interactions, William's familial relationships include a layer of emotional tension about his future; tension that requires navigation within every conversation they have. William feels the strain and pressure of his family's concerns and suggestions within his daily life in Arroyo. He feels guilty when he dismisses their concerns to tell them "*I'm fine*". However, William's strong friendships, sense of home, and emotional ties to Arroyo persist as significant in shaping his sense of self – as a joker, and as a part of a community. Thus, William's desire to stay in Spain is inseparable from his fears about what his life, and sense of self, would feel like under the care and watch of his family in Yorkshire as he receives cancer treatment.

William must navigate the tensions between his family and his friendships, between Arroyo and Yorkshire, and between his independence and being a burden. These tensions are occurring within the complex context of his cancer diagnosis, other health concerns, his advancing age, and his experiences of widowhood. These various aspects of his life become emphasised through his geographical distance from his family; they want him to be proximate to provide care. However, William is unwilling to relinquish his migration context – his home in Arroyo – for his family to care for him in Yorkshire. This reconfiguring of William's relationship with his family in the context of migration in later life provides insights into how older migrants navigate their expectations and experiences alongside those of family. This required navigation can create uncertainty for older migrants about their present, and their future.

As Bowlby (2012:2104) argues, transnational care can "illuminate the ways in which the two geographical scales of proximate and distant relationships intersect and relate to one another". These relationships are often complex and involve negotiating tensions, emotions, and expectations (Ahmed 2012; Madianou and Miller 2012b; Baldassar 2013). William's story makes visible the complex ways that older transnational migrants enact and negotiate their peer and familial relationships across time and space. William's story also shows how the proximity of death can emphasis what the individual values, and how these values can

disrupt expectations about what happens when an older migrant faces challenges such as deteriorating health. As such, for William, where to die is not a clear-cut decision.

Fighting to stay 'at home': tensions, expectations and fading dreams

In a moment of frankness and without his usual 'cheeky' demeanour, William told Seniors' Club members: "*I don't want to go. If I go, I don't know if I will ever come back to Spain".* William's concerns about leaving his home in Arroyo are linked to, and shaped by, his fears and uncertainty about his future. William had a powerful sense that to return to Yorkshire would mark the end of his time in Arroyo: an understanding that was informed by the list of reasons that his family provided him with in their attempts to persuade him to return. As Chambers (2015) notes:

> the family remains a crucial source of support to older people when there are particular needs such as household tasks, help when ill, and talking over emotional problems.

However, for William family support was not his central priority. Instead, he told me on several occasions that he would "*fight to stay*" in Arroyo. This '*fight'* was not only against his family's expectation of return, it was

also against his ill health and the consequential acute sense of his own mortality.

As in Lily's case, William's uncertainty about time left to live shapes the significance he attaches to decisions about where to live, and eventually die. William's awareness that his return to the UK would be a final return informs his visible determination to continue living in Arroyo. His health, his age, and his family's expectations about how his future will look shapes his sense of finality. The future that his family imagines for him in Yorkshire involves practical care and support. While William understands his family to be well-meaning, he feels that his independence and autonomy is under threat. In this context, William's own desires are secondary to the practicalities surrounding care and treatment for his ageing body, and his for his potentially fatal illness. Holmes and Burrow's (2012:108) discussion about emotional reflexivity provides insights into the emotional push and pull that William is engaged in as he responds to his family:

> people often need to rely on their emotions to guide their deliberations, actions and relationships in the face of a plethora of options, and of often conflicting information and advice (Holmes, 2010). This emotional reflexivity is an embodied and cognitive process of interpreting and acting on one's own and others' feelings in shaping one's life. It is a mode of reflexivity in which relations to others are central.

For William, the tension between his desire for continued autonomy within his life in the Costa del Sol and his family's concern requires active emotional reflexivity as he must reimagine what his future might involve, and where he might be.

By refusing to *"come home"* to the UK, William was actively protecting and maintaining *his* sense of home. The back-and-forth negotiations that William experiences following his family's comments and concerns demonstrates how the support, and sometimes lack of support, that he receives from his family shapes his life in Arroyo. Their love, care, and concern for William creates a set of circumstances where he alone cannot determine what happens next. Instead, he is experiencing ongoing negotiations with his family about where he will experience his future, and his remaining life. Such negotiations have resulted in emotional strain for William as he is required to make a decision about where he would choose to die – the *whereness* of his death. He identifies two dominant options. Firstly, he could live and die among his friends and in the home that he has created in Arroyo. Alternatively, he could return to Yorkshire to live and die among his family. William's sense of belonging in Arroyo, within its caring social context, shapes his perspectives on *how* and *where* he wishes to experience his remaining life. As visible through his conversations with me, friends, and peers within the Seniors' Club, William's preference is to remain amongst his peers, in the home that he

and his wife established within Arroyo. However, William's remaining time in Arroyo and his decision about where to die are complicated by his health challenges and his family's expectations.

Complicating where to die

Despite Lily's conviction that she will live *and die* in the Costa del Sol, she faces uncertainties around her reducing income and the effects of this upon what she values about her life in Arroyo. During a Seniors' Club meeting in July 2016, Lily approached Helen, the Seniors' Club co-ordinator, explaining that she was struggling to afford her life in Spain. She lost over 20% of her monthly pension income due to the sharp drop in the exchange rate in the weeks following the EU referendum. Lily sought Helen's advice about how to manage her shifting finances. Following their conversation, Lily joined me to sit at the table and explained her predicament:

> *what we get is all we have. It's not like we can go and work a few more hours. It's a different amount every month. Some months are much harder than others.*

As Lily spoke, I could see other Seniors' Club members sitting around us nodding their heads in agreement and understanding. Like many of her peers, Lily was reliant solely on her state pension and with this limited

income and rising living costs in Spain in recent years, she found her life in Spain to be increasingly expensive. Lifestyle migration scholars have identified these circumstances as increasingly common among older British migrants (see O'Reilly 2017), and a regular topic of conversation among Seniors' Club attendees. For Lily, the financial changes that she was experiencing had raised questions about how her experiences of continuing to grow older in Arroyo may be different from what she anticipated when she asserted that there was no question that she would die there.

The financial changes that Lily was experiencing affected her social practices; activities and encounters that characterise her life in Arroyo. For her, the support, company, and friendship that she valued often occurred in the places she met her peers. Lunch or dinner in a British-run restaurant had been an almost daily occurrence based on its affordability: "*it's cheap as chips*", Lily explained. However, Lily had to readjust her social practices based on her fluctuating and decreasing income. Lily dined out less each week, cancelled her bowling membership, and struggled to pay for the Seniors' Club summer party. With fewer opportunities to join her friends for lunches or dinners, Lily felt disappointed that she could not sustain her active social life; a central part of her life in Arroyo. By declining numerous formal and informal events with her peers due to her unexpected financial context, Lily voiced

concerns that she would stop receiving invitations: "*it's really hard to plan anything*" she told me when I asked about how she was navigating these financial changes. Although Lily's peers offered words of support, she still felt increasingly distant from them based on a slow and gradual change in her interactions with some of her peers. She hadn't shared in the jokes and stories during lunches. She couldn't talk about what she planned to buy in the British supermarket in Gibraltar. She was not able to discuss upcoming holiday plans over dinner. As Haas (2013:1383) notes within his research: "the day-to-day life of the people I observed occurred mostly within the British community." In this context, Lily's change in financial resources has begun to reshape her daily life while quietly challenging her powerful sense of belonging to this community.

These challenges to Lily's sense of stability and certainty provides insights into her assumptions and expectations about what the rest of her life in Arroyo would involve. It shows the importance that she attaches to this place and the social encounters, interactions, conversations and shared experiences that shape her understanding of Arroyo. Moreover, through the social and emotional consequences of her changing income it is possible to understand how she understood her life in Spain; as shaped not only by *living* among her peers, but also by her *active participation* in a British community (Haas 2013; Hall and Hardill 2016; Oliver 2017). The unexpected changes to her income therefore destabilised and challenged

Lily's expectations of that she would continue her daily activities within *her* community in Arroyo undisturbed. Although Lily did not interpret her financial challenges as affecting her decision to *"live and die"* in Arroyo, reductions in financial resources are cited as a common reason[52] for return migration among older British people (see Giner-Monfort et al. 2016). Although Lily maintains that she will continue to live in Arroyo, these financial changes have transformed what her life there involves. When thinking about how older British migrants navigate the question of *where to die*, we must acknowledge how shifting circumstances – whether financial or otherwise - can unsettle and create uncertainty for individuals who had been adamant that they would remain in their migration context for the remainder of their lives.

Conceptualising the *whereness* of death

The second question I posed within this chapter was: *how do older British migrants decide where to die?* As Rowles (1978:189) argues, to understand an older person's geographical experience: "it is necessary to merge action, orientation, feeling and fantasy". As such, I have explored the complexities of how and why individuals orientate themselves towards a place or places as they contemplate their own mortality and the

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[52] Other common reasons include death of a spouse/partner, decline in health, and being unable to shop amongst others (Giner-Monfort et al., 2016).

inevitability of their death. In what I refer to as the *whereness* of death, I have taken into account the specific spatialities, temporalities, caringscape and broader social and migration contexts that shape William and Lily's orientations towards Arroyo. As Rowles (1978) also writes, "orientation involves both conscious and implicit awareness" and is a fundamental part of an individual's geographical experience. In this migration context the question of *where to die* is especially pertinent. For these older British migrants, their context provides a situation where changing circumstances in later life – such as deteriorating health – may result in a question of whether to stay in their migration context, or to return to their country of origin (see Giner-Monfort et al. 2016). Within return migration scholarship, there is a focus on how challenges and changing circumstances shape transnational migrants' decisions to return to their country of origin. By contrast, this chapter has focused on *how* and *why* older British migrants navigate similar challenges *within* their migration context as they continue to age.

This relationship between the importance of place and *where to die* for these migrants is complex and multifaceted. As explored, older British migrants may be simultaneously navigating their idea of home, a strong emotional attachment to Arroyo, familial expectations or pressures, and a sense of belonging within a community of fellow older British migrants. It is therefore important not to underestimate the centrality of place and

geography in understanding how these older British migrants relate to the question of where to *live* until they *die* (Degnen 2016). For William and Lily, Arroyo represents a social context of care and support, grief and loss. As my earlier discussion outlines, the presence and proximity of death shapes this complex social and emotional caringscape and older British migrants' subsequent sense of belonging to a community that *cares* (see Bowlby 2012). However, as this chapter's opening story of caring towards Albert after his brother's death, this care is not necessarily geographically *bounded*. Instead, it is transnational in nature as the caring community enacts its norms beyond the context of their social gatherings in Arroyo. The question of *where to die* therefore reaches far beyond the practicalities and materialities associated with the process of death (see Maddrell and Sidaway 2010; Hockey et al. 2010). Instead, I have shown how various geographies - social, emotional, caring, home, questions of identity – inform their individual responses.

It is also important to consider how temporalities shape the *whereness* of death. For example, when Lily permanently migrated to the Costa del Sol at the age of eighty, she did so with an awareness of her own mortality; as someone in the later years of their life. For William, Lily, and their peers in Arroyo they are chronologically older and have an acute awareness of limited – and unknown – time left to live (Oliver 2008; 2017). Their awareness of what Oliver (2008) refers to as 'time-left-to-

live' undoubtedly encourages the question of where to die, but it also informs what these older migrants' value within the latter years of their lives. While beyond the scope of this research, it would be interesting to explore how the aspects of life in Arroyo valued by these older migrants may differ from other, younger, migrants.

Where to die? Towards a caring community

Death is a prominent part of these older British migrants' lives. It has the potential to unravel the later life migration dreams that these older migrants have carefully constructed. By exploring the complex and nuanced ways they engage with and respond to death's presence, I have shown how ongoing peer caring and support can shape how they respond to this proximate concern.

As I have shown through my exploration of Arroyo Seniors' Club, I have provided insights into the myriad examples of caring through the comfort these older British migrants provide and receive from one another. Such ongoing social and emotional informal caring is visible through their regular, often mundane, interactions. Examples include how these older migrants: collectively experience grief when a member dies, provide support through listening, and affirm their decisions to migrate and stay in Arroyo. Therefore, I have argued that caring is part of the *fabric* of the

perceived community that Lily and William position themselves towards. Likewise, I have examined the importance of social relationships in this active (re)positioning. I have focused on proximate peer-to-peer friendships as relationships *between* older people have traditionally received limited attention within human geography. Geographers must not underestimate the significance of such relationships within transnational migration contexts as they play a significant role in shaping individual migrants' ongoing attempts to fulfil their migration dreams.

My focus on death has also provided understandings of *why* these older British migrants orientate themselves towards spending their later life in Arroyo. Through considering '*why'*, I have explored how death and caring are tightly bound together within this geographically and temporally located sense of community. For the older British migrants who form part of the Seniors' Club in Arroyo, they feel that they belong within a community of likeminded friends and peers who share similar experiences. I argue that this caring community has shaped these individuals' later life; informing where they *want* to die.

The question of *where to die* reveals what it is to *live* in such a community that cares; located in a meaningful place. Through their daily experiences both William and Lily have constructed a version of 'Arroyo' that they have strong emotional attachments to, value, and understand

as home (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). As older migrants living among their peers, William and Lily both experience ageing, and other experiences associated with their life stage, with others who share similar attitudes, perspectives, experiences, and perceptions. As mortality becomes a more pressing consideration, these social relationships become a source of support, care, and empathy in a context where new challenges and questions arise about whether continuing to live in Arroyo is desirable, feasible, or irresponsible.

I have explored how these older British migrants locate themselves within, and position themselves towards, a specific place. They understand Arroyo as *home* and as a meaningful place central to who they are, and where they feel part of a community that cares. I draw upon the concept of community with caution; by drawing upon individual narratives I am careful not to subsume the detail and experiences of a range of intimate social relationships within this broad concept. For example, I have demonstrated how attendees understand the Arroyo Seniors' Club as a space for disagreements and variance in attitudes and perspectives. A pertinent example of this is visible in how this *caring community* collectively manage and respond to death by moving away from serious death-related discussions, towards joviality. As such, I have explored some of the reciprocal – although not limitless – emotional care and supportive acts within this community of migrants. Through my focus

upon informal social and emotional caring between friends and acquaintances within this migrant community, I have explored the *whereness* of death for a population of older migrants for whom death is part of their present, and an inevitability of their future. How these older British migrants relate to, value, and understand their place within this caring community shapes their experiences of remaining in Arroyo until they die. Likewise, this caring that older British migrants' peers provide one another is critical to how they respond to and manage the fragility of their migration dreams.

Chapter 7

Navigating fragile dreams together

My ascribed role of adopted granddaughter is a methodological tool that has played a key role in shaping the narratives presented. By positioning me as a granddaughter figure, participants were inadvertently challenging the problematic power dynamics often present within research (see Dery 2020). My relationships with participants went beyond a transactional approach, where the powerful researcher gathers stories and leaves the field (see Cuomo and Massaro 2016). Instead, my relationships with participants involved an unexpected shift in power where I was the recipient of unsolicited grandparental advice, concern, treats, and where I transgressed their expectations of me. Embodying my adopted granddaughter role, I spent time with participants listening to their stories and building trust and rapport.

My ethnographic approach informed Helen's recognition that I had become a valued presence within the Seniors' Club, alongside other social groups that I attended. This dynamic posed interesting questions and ethical quandaries about researchers' obligations and ongoing involvement as part of the research process. For example, it was clear that my relationships with participants would continue beyond my fieldwork 'period'; we adopted one another – a role that included a sense

of familial-type duty to keep in touch that extended beyond traditional temporally and spatially bounded fieldwork relationships.

For participants, our existing knowledge of one another through the in-depth relationships we built together over time undoubtedly informed our interview encounters. For example, our co-constructed interviews often involved the exploration of difficult topics and emotionally challenging stories that may have been shallower without our established adopted grandparent-grandchild relationship. Likewise, my experiences of loss and grief within fieldwork – both relating to my family and to the death of participants – informed my empathetic and sensitive approach to researching these topics. Moreover, in experiencing and sharing in some of the grief that participants experienced with the departure or death of friends and acquaintances, I could better understand some of their experiences of change, transformation and loss within their migration context. As an adopted granddaughter-figure, I was also able to explore participants' understandings and expectations of their own, geographically distant, grandchildren and the relationships they had with them. My own experiences as a migrant, a grandchild, of grief, and as an adopted granddaughter intersected with my role as a researcher; shaping the conversations that I had with participants and the narratives I present.

Beyond my reflexivity in exploring my adopted granddaughter role, I have contributed to understanding what research with older people can or

should involve. I have shown how researching with older people as a relatively young person can raise ethical questions about obligation and care. A familial sense of duty also emerged as an unexpected feeling that I had to negotiate beyond my embodied researcher role. Researchers in similar positions should be mindful of how such positioning can shape their research as well as their relationships to participants as friends, or even an adopted family. However, as I reflect upon, such positioning can require researchers to carefully consider the power dynamics, expectations, and relationship boundaries that emerge. Moreover, my ascribed adopted granddaughter role also demonstrates how research relationships should also seek to be reciprocal and founded on trust and openness; an approach that feminist geographers have long argued for (see Cuomo and Massaro 2016).

My thesis and the stories I retell demonstrates how enacting this approach can lead to meaningful relationships with participants that in turn result in the co-creation of rich materials that explored difficult and emotional topics such as grief. My meaningful relationships with participants extended beyond my fieldwork; my adopted granddaughter status was not bounded by that particular time period. Such a role is a privilege, but I also urge researchers to consider whether they can or will maintain contact with their participants (as I have) when they embark on building these relationships that centre on their research as motivation.

"This is the life, isn't it?": enacting the dream

During slow and easy coffee mornings in Plaza España, I sometimes heard older British migrants ask no one in particular: "this is the life, isn't it?". Rhetorical questions like this provided me with a sense of the migration dream that they sought to fulfil in their later life. Such a dream included companionship, enjoying cheap coffee and readily available conversation, and having nowhere that they needed to be (see Oliver 2008). This question also encouraged me to reflect upon the ongoing nature of these dreams; about how they were always becoming, and never fully realised (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Bhatti 2006). Most importantly, I recognised that such dreams are fragile. There could be countless reasons why they might shatter, break, or swerve away from the anticipated to take on a new shape (see for example Hall and Hardill 2016; Oliver 2017). Through a series of individual narratives, I have shown how older British migrants experience and contend with the unsettling, threatening, and unravelling of their dreams within their daily lives in Spain. I have provided insights into how these migrants deal with such fragility; showing how they confront and handle emerging and unexpected challenges together within their migration context.

Described in my thesis opening, Plaza España is a place where older British migrants build and maintain their friendships and acquaintanceships each day. As they left, they would often tell their

peers: "see you tomorrow - same time, same place". Throughout my fieldwork, I observed countless regular, mundane, everyday social encounters between older British migrants. Such interactions are significant for many of the migrants. For example, Arroyo Seniors' Club attendees often describe this social club, and their friendships created and maintained there, as a meaningful part of their lives in Spain. Many plan their schedules around the weekly coffee morning and other Club events. These migrants value the company of their peers, friendships with fellow British migrants, their sense of belonging to a perceived community, and the sun warming them each morning as they sit outside together. In moments of enjoying each other's company in the sunshine, it appears as if these older British migrants are fulfilling what Benson and O'Reilly (2009) identify as their search for a 'better' and 'carefree' life.

Academic research often emphasises the outcome of return migration in response to myriad challenges that can threaten or unmake older migrants' migration dreams (see Hall and Hardill 2016; Giner-Monfort et al. 2016). To return is, as Holmes and Burrows (2012) indicate, an emotionally complex decision that involves acknowledging that the individuals' will never fulfil their migration dream as imagined. Individuals may understand return migration as the 'abandonment', loss, or disappointment of this long-held and carefully constructed dream (Holmes and Burrows 2012; Giner-Monfort et al. 2016). By contrast, I have focused upon what happens when – despite their fears about "going

downhill" – individuals make an active choice to remain in their migration context.

Through my narrative approach, I have explored why they might make this decision. I have focused on understanding more about the social dynamics and relationships that shape my participants' daily lives. Using narratives enabled me to ground older British migrants' experiences, aspirations, and understandings within their personal histories, migration status, places, emotions, social relationships, and broader social context (see Bold 2012). I have effectively woven together ethnographic encounters with interview extracts to provide a detailed portrait of participants; reflecting the messiness of their lives in the Costa del Sol. I have demonstrated throughout how individual narratives speak to wider themes that transcend these older British migrants' experiences (Ahmed 2014; Bold 2012). Moreover, the themes I explored through individual narratives were often visible within the lives of many of those older British migrants that I encountered. My approach has facilitated my sensitive and nuanced exploration of emotionally complex themes such as loss, death, consolation and support in migration that reach beyond the participant narratives I present. My research therefore speaks to Gunaratnam's (2013:22) call for scholars to explore "geo-social politics from below" that individual migrant narratives make visible.

Fragility in later migration: exploring how older British migrants respond to and manage it

Within my thesis, I examined three aspects of older British migrants' lives in the Costa del Sol that make visible the fragility of their migration dream. However, such fragility is uneven in its power and potential consequences. Death has the power to end individuals' dreams in the most final of ways. Experiencing the death of a spouse, or friends and peers within a proximate community, can shatter, transform or unravel an individuals' understandings of how and why they continue to live in the Costa del Sol in their later life. While less severe and overwhelming, digital difficulties and the resulting failure to connect make older British migrants question how they can successfully enact their geographically distant transnational relationships. To fail to connect also highlights the weight of familial expectations that can be present within their lives, shaping how they attempt to fulfil their later life migration dream. Through these three examples of what can make older British migrants' dreams more fragile than they anticipated, I provide important insights into how they respond to and manage it within their later lives in the Costa del Sol.

Firstly, in exploring older British migrants' experiences of asking for help – specifically with their digital devices – I have shown how the emotional consequences of unmet expectations, mistakes, and 'failure', can shape older British migrants' proximate and distant social relationships. I show

how asking for help is not necessarily a straightforward action. Instead, complex emotion permeates this process. It requires older British migrants to be active and careful in considering who, how, when, and where to make their request for assistance. For Ron, his series of "ridiculous incidents" and his son's frustration informed his rejection of digital communication as part of his migration experience. Such a rejection sat in direct contrast to his aspirations and expectations of building upon his reputation as a socially engaged person through use of unfamiliar technologies. For Caroline, her requests for help from her grandchildren demonstrated her emphasis upon reciprocity within their relationship. Moreover, it showed how by asking for help with her digital devices she created space to strengthen their geographically distant relationship and maintain her familial ties. However, Caroline's story also indicates how tensions and strains within their relationship can emerge because of her reliance upon their help to maintain their ability to 'stay-in-touch' (Baldassar 2013).

Through these stories, older migrants' must adjust their expectations about successfully 'connecting' with distant family and friends via their digital devices. Such a 'failure' to connect makes visible the proximate help available, and the limits of this support. These older British migrants value available help as a form of caring, actions and practices that shape their understandings of what living in the Costa del Sol on a day-to-day basis means to them.

Secondly, I have examined how these older migrants both acknowledge and navigate the unanticipated fragility of the migration dream that motivated their initial migration to Spain. For Nancy and Margaret, becoming widowed required a shift in how they imagined their future. They could no longer continue to fulfil the same migration dream that they constructed with their respective husbands. Instead, they both adjusted their lives in the Costa del Sol; placing more emphasis on their proximate friendships and the support that they provided them. Likewise, Rosemary's migration to the Costa del Sol after her husband's death provides insights into how migration dreams are reimagined to reflect a new marital context; experiencing later life migration while negotiating the process of widowhood. While becoming widowed as an older migrant has the potential to unmake their migration project, I have shown how individuals – with the help and support of others – can reorientate and reposition themselves.

Widowhood can involve the reimagining of individuals' later life migration dream - a remaking that fights against any expectations of return and of shattering their dreams. This discussion has shown how friendships between older migrants are powerful in encouraging individuals experiencing widowhood to remain living in the Costa del Sol. I have challenged discourses around the fragility and passivity often associated with widowhood - for example through the retirement migration emphasis

on return, to show how older British migrants can experience both the unravelling of one dream, and the remaking of another.

Thirdly, I show how some Arroyo Seniors' Club attendees refused to think or speak about death as a proximate and present concern within their lives. Such rejection sits in direct contrast with those in the Club who joked and laughed about the same topic. While not peculiar to older British migrants, the proximity and presence of death within this social context shaped the emotional terrain and caringscape within which they encountered one another. By navigating death together as an unavoidable part of later life migration, the older British migrants attending the Arroyo Seniors' Club demonstrate how embedded caring and support are within their perceived sense of community. For example, for both William and Lily this Club provided a place to receive confirmation that their peers value and care about them, that they were not a burden, and that others would notice their absence.

The Arroyo Seniors' Club also provided a place where death could be responded to by individuals in different ways. Loss, grief, and the presence of death were unavoidable within this group, yet they could choose not to let it define them and their daily encounters. The ways that Club attendees respected each other's' boundaries in relation to discussing death demonstrated the various forms – large and small – of support and caring that they enacted towards one another. These stories of death and care, coupled with other thesis narratives, show how older

British migrants living in the Costa del Sol value the collective and individual support and care that their peers provide. Such social and emotional caring work is one of the central elements of both William's and Lily's attachment to Arroyo as a place to live the remainder of their life within.

Within each narrative, I demonstrated how unmet expectations, unexpected events, and unanticipated conversations can transform older British migrants' migration dreams. I have shown how these migrants' social relationships are significant in shaping the ways that they respond to the unsettling, threatening and unravelling of their migration dreams within their daily lives. Proximate friendships and distant familial relationships shape how they continue to orientate themselves towards the Costa del Sol; whether they continue their later life migration dream anew. One central example of this is present within William's story of dealing with his deteriorating health, his family's expectations, and the unyielding support of his proximate friends and peers in the Costa del Sol. Through this focus, I address the understated and under-researched role of social relationships for older migrants across existing transnational migration literature.

Examining help and vulnerabilities in later life

I have adopted a relational understanding of ageing to understand the diverse ways that individuals understand what it means to be 'older' (see Skinner et al. 2015). By using a narrative approach, I have engaged with this understanding to demonstrate the heterogenous nature of 'older British migrants', their experiences, and their migration dreams. For example, by exploring participants' experiences of asking for help with digital difficulties I have moved away from more common understandings of older people asking for help with physical bodily care, vulnerabilities, or assistance after a fall (see Hall and Hardill 2016; Miller et al. 2016).

Instead, I have provided insights into an alternative understanding of how older people seek and receive help while maintaining their autonomy in their migration context. Caroline's story of seeking help while sharing her lemon curd making knowledge with me and her grandchildren provides insights into reciprocity as important within the process of asking for help. Moreover, Louise identified me as a source of help and support when she could not see her mobile phone screen clearly. When I provided this support, and she removed her sunglasses and chastised herself, the collective support provided by her peers became visible. These migrants are aware that asking for help can be awkward but necessary part of their lives as they grow older in a migration context. However, their collective laughter, emphasis upon reciprocity, and willingness to share stories of

their similar experiences ensured that Louise did not feel alone, nor out of place.

I also sought to disrupt common discourses about older people's vulnerabilities in later life by exploring how friendship between older migrants can provide social and emotional support to counteract such conceptualisations. Such ongoing support and caring shapes how individuals negotiate challenging and ongoing events and processes; as demonstrated through my exploration of widowhood. In this context, older British migrants – such as Margaret, Rosemary and Nancy – rely on one another to cope and get by in response to their shifting marital and social status following the death of their spouse. Likewise, for William, his ill health and his family's concerns for his wellbeing threatened his desire to remain living in Costa del Sol for the remainder of his life. Through his interactions with his peers in the Arroyo Seniors' Club, I showed how these pressing concerns are not something he navigates alone. By contrast, the similar experiences of his friends and acquaintances coupled with their shared attachment to Arroyo as a meaningful place that they have chosen to spend their time-left-to-live provided William with support that helped him to counter his family's expectations. Such proximate peer support shows how older British migrants, such as William, can be helped to continue fulfilling their ongoing migration dream as they grow older, when others may define them as becoming 'vulnerable' (see Hall and Hardill 2016).

Friendships between older people: support, caring, and limits

My thesis has explored friendships; a central dimension of older British migrants' lives in the Costa del Sol. The companionship, friendships, and sense of community that participants spoke of in the fondest terms are clearly a central element of their migration dream; what they want their life in the Costa del Sol to involve. While transnational migration literature has considered familial relationships across distance (see Baldassar 2013, 2014), there has been limited work on friendships enacted and navigated between older migrants. As such, I have shown how proximate friendships and acquaintanceships shape how and where these older migrants attempt to fulfil their respective migration dreams. Within Nancy's narrative of negotiating widowhood, I paid attention to her interactions with her peers through the Arroyo Seniors' Club and how her friendships there supported her in constructing a different understanding of what her life in the Costa del Sol looked like in her husband's absence.

My focus on these intimate relationships also moves beyond use of 'community' to explain social cohesion and sense of belonging for this population of older migrants (see Oliver 2008, 2017). I have shown the complex nature of these relationships through the lens of widowhood within chapter 5. For Margaret and Rosemary, their experiences of widowhood informed and transformed their friendship. Through shared experiences of loss and grief, and of attempting to 'get on with life', they

developed a stronger relationship that is fundamental to their respective experiences of later life migration in the Costa del Sol. Similarly, Nancy's negotiation of widowhood let to her repositioning herself within the social club that she previously attended regularly with her husband. Following his death, she re-positioned herself towards other older widowed women, and away from the married couples she previously socialised with. The support, care, and shared understanding that the other widowed women could provide her with, informed her re-orientation towards continuing to live in Arroyo. My focus on emotional and social caring, rather than formal and physical care for older people, provides insights into how support and caring practices can shape how older migrants continue to experience their later life migration. Such a focus has been under-researched in both human geography (see Bowlby 2011) and lifestyle migration scholarship (see Ahmed 2012; Oliver 2008, 2017).

Friendships are also central in shaping the specific caringscape that shapes how older British migrants experience their sense of belonging to a 'caring community'. In focusing on the role of friendship in this context, I contribute to geographies of death research by exploring the sociality of being towards death (Oliver 2017). My focus also extends the boundaries of existing geographies of death work by exploring the experiences of death for people in the latter part of their lives; in navigating their own mortality within their time-left-to-live. I have demonstrated how older British migrants manage the proximity and presence of death through

their social and emotional migration context. They do so within their perceived community of older peers – a community that cares, where encounters occur within an emotional terrain of grief and loss, support and consolation. I have demonstrated how informal social and emotional caring is central to these older British migrants' lives. This centrality is, I argue in chapter 6, influential for individuals' responses to the complex and emotional question of where to die. I have developed understandings of how the *whereness* of death is part of how older British migrants enact their later life migration dreams. Through this discussion, I attend to the geographies of this decision – the places, such as Arroyo, that individuals attach meaning and value to.

While I have explored the support and caring that these older British migrants provided for one another, I also recognise the boundaries present within these friendships and acquaintanceships. Such boundaries shape the support that these older migrants seek, provide, and receive from one another. For example, within chapter 4 participants' requests for help with their digital difficulties presented challenges for their proximate relationships, as demonstrated through the limits of Lewis' help as 'The Computer Guy', or through Ron's embarrassment at sending an acquaintance an autocorrected message in error. Likewise, within chapter 5 I showed how women negotiating widowhood found a collective awareness of the limits and boundaries of sympathy for their loss. They knew when and how to talk about loss within their ongoing daily lives.

Nancy valued this awareness and knowledge around navigating grief and loss, developing her friendships with these individuals as a result. Such encounters demonstrated the messiness, emotionality, and complexity of these social relationships and how older British migrants enact them daily. Further research should build upon my contributions to understanding the complex friendships and relationships between older people. Human geography has traditionally neglected such relationships (see Bowlby 2011). As such, my research buids upon the limited existing scholarship while acknowledging that there is more to understand about how these complex social relationships are enacted, experienced, and felt by older people.

Migration and staying in touch: expectations, support and strains

Recent transnational migration literature has placed emphasis on the ability for families to 'connect' over space and time; particularly through use of digital devices and technologies (e.g. Longhurst 2016). This process of asking for help in this context can shape these older migrants' familial relationships. As I explore in chapter 4 through Ron's relationship to his son and Caroline's relationship with her grandchildren, asking for help with digital difficulties can offer particular understandings about reciprocity, disappointment and other complex emotions, familial expectations, strains and tensions; all within a migration context. Through William's story in chapter 6 I further explore some of the

tensions and strains that older British migrants navigate within their familial relationships due to their later life migration choice. Through my focus upon familial relationships I provide a new perspective on transnational relationships. While migration scholars often focus upon the motivations and consequences of younger migrants (see Baldassar 2013, 2014), less is known about how social relationships are enacted, developed, navigated and challenged over time and space when older family members migrate. As I have shown, some older migrants – such as William in chapter 6 - must continually justify their choice to remain living as a migrant in the Costa del Sol to their families. While embedded in love and concern, older British migrants may interpret this justification as an ongoing "fight" to remain. By providing this perspective on these transnational familial relationships across time and space, I have shown how individuals' migration dream can become fragile through social relations; through the questions asked, the vocal expectations, and the conflicting emotions around obligation and duty of family.

Towards geographies of widowhood

I have problematised how geography employs the descriptor 'widow(er)' without critical engagement with this identity. I have argued that negotiating widowhood intersects with other features of an individual's identity, shaping how they and others position them within their broader social context. By engaging in-depth with the experiences of older

migrants who are negotiating widowhood, I have developed a new conceptualisation that human geographers can adopt in future references to 'widowed' participants. My conceptualisation positions widowhood as an ongoing and multi-dimensional process. The intersecting dimensions that I have identified and theorised involve seeing widowhood as: a status, experience and as an emotional orientation. In developing this conceptualisation through participant narratives, I have shown how these dimensions overlap and interact as widowed individuals negotiate this ongoing process. For example, Nancy's husband's deteriorating health prior to his death, and the complex emotions that she felt as she interacted with her visiting friend, informed her experiences and understandings of widowhood. Likewise, Rosemary's experience of widowhood was one that she sought to underplay within her later life migration. However, by supporting Margaret when her husband died, Rosemary had to respond to re-emerging grief and memories of the intense loss she felt immediately after her husband died.

Within each of the narratives presented, I show how widowhood has the power to transform individuals' social relationships, their sense of self, and their overarching migration dream. Widowhood as an ongoing process therefore involves simultaneous and multi-faceted moments of creating, remaking, and unmaking various aspects of an individual's life. Such negotiation is inseparable from the places that older British migrants negotiate and experience widowhood each day. In tracing participants'

meaningful places - imbued with emotions and memories – I have considered both how place matters in how individuals negotiate widowhood as an older migrant. For example, I have detailed how Rosemary encountered the Costa del Sol in a different context and with different expectations following the death of her husband and her migration without him. Likewise, I explored how widowhood changed how Margaret engaged with previously frequented places. Further research on widowhood must therefore account for the importance of place in how individuals understand and negotiate this process.

There is also an emotional landscape – a terrain – that widowed older migrants negotiate on a day-to-day basis. Arroyo Senior Club attendees must traverse the emotional terrain of grief and loss, consolation and support through their encounters and interactions with peers. Such terrain is also visible in chapter 6 in how Club attendees respond to and manage the presence of, and their proximity to, death. By exploring this emotional terrain in relation to the social context of older British migrants, I have demonstrated how the emotional geographies of these migrants shape their experiences of later life migration. For example, throughout my thesis I have shown how older British migrants' responses to death-related challenges - such as becoming widowed or grieving the loss of a peer - are emotion-laden experiences that have the power to transform their daily lives. While such experiences are common for older people more generally, my thesis has demonstrated how loss, guilt, and

consolation shape how individuals understand their migration dream as one that can shatter or disintegrate without warning.

I have developed a framework to understand widowhood, positioning it as an ongoing and multidimensional process through which we can better understand the emotional complexities, contradictions, expectations and experiences of becoming widowed in later life. Further research could also build upon my conceptualisation to consider the experiences of people who become widowed as a younger person; as Nancy described as "before [their] time". Such an understanding is based on a problematic perception that widowhood is an inevitability for older people, rather than a process that a spouse at any age can experience. I have suggested that the perceived inevitability of widowed people being almost exclusively older has informed the dearth of research on these experiences (see Ahmed 2012, 2013). My thesis also predominantly focuses on the experiences of widowed women. While this is a potential limitation of my research, I suggest that my thesis is a starting point in understanding widowhood as a life event, and an ongoing multi-dimensional process. I welcome further research on widowhood; a previously neglected area within human geography. Such research could draw upon my conceptualisations to explore the experiences of older men who have been widowed as no human geography research currently exists in this area.

Later life, death and migration in human geography

Death is inseparable from these older British migrants' migration experiences. While Oliver (2008) explores this in relation to the paradoxes of time that older migrants navigate, I have placed emphasis upon the social, emotional, and geographical dimensions of what it means to be aware of one's own mortality while also experiencing the deaths of peers. By concentrating on older British migrants' time-left-to-live, I have contributed to geographies of death scholarship; exploring how individuals perform and value their social relationships through their awareness that their futures involve death as a proximate inevitability (Oliver 2008). While I have focused on a specific population, place and time, my empirical and conceptual contributions to geographies of death also speak to the experiences of older people more broadly. Likewise, older people's experiences of negotiating widowhood demand further research that reaches beyond the migration context that I have examined.

Lily repeatedly told her peers: "*I will live and die in Spain*". This thesis has demonstrated how and why she, and other British migrants I encountered, could speak so certainly and with so much authority about the future. With an awareness of mortality and time-left-to-live, many of my participants spoke of what they valued within their life in the Costa del Sol. While they were often aware of the challenges they faced as an

older migrant (Oliver 2017; Hall and Hardill 2016), they were also reflective about how their proximate friendships provided them with an experience of later life that they would not find elsewhere. By tracing moments and actions of caring, support, companionship and consolation between older British migrants, I have provided a glimpse into these complex and meaningful social relationships present within their later life migration. Such friendships and the caring and support they offer taken on additional significance in a context where these migrants' family is often geographically distant. Likewise, William's story showed how support from friends and peers is particularly valuable for older British migrants when their family has a differing or contrasting attitude about the continuation of their later life migration project.

As I have traced throughout my thesis, for older British migrants their migration dreams are fragile; they can sink, unravel, or shatter without warning. However, the support and caring offered by their peers shows a determination to help one another keep their dreams afloat.

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Appendix A: Summary of narratives

Chapter 3: Navigating the ascribed role of 'adopted granddaughter' in ethnographic fieldwork

Helen – the Seniors' Club co-ordinator. A matriarchal figure who had turned 76 when I met her in 2017. Helen supports her peers through the organisation that she runs in Arroyo.

Chapter 4: Asking for help with digital difficulties: exploring social relationships and emotional experiences

Louise – an Arroyo Seniors Club member in her early 80s. She asked me for help with her mobile phone trouble. Her family visits her from the UK occasionally.

Ron – a 77-year-old, self-proclaimed 'digital dinosaur'. He lives in the Costa del Sol with his wife Ruby. Unlike many of his peers, his son and his family live proximately (near Malaga).

Lewis - 'The Computer Guy' in the U3A. Lewis early retired to the Costa del Sol (when he was 55) and has lived there for 10 years. He was 65 years old when I met him at the U3A in Fuengirola.

Caroline – an 80-year-old woman who has lived near Fuengirola for over 15 years. When I interviewed her, she emphasised both her lemon curd making skills and her ongoing digital difficulties.

Chapter 5: "Us sad types should stick together": exploring widowhood as a status, experience, and emotional orientation

Rosemary - migrated to the Costa del Sol when she turned 60 years old following her husband's death two years prior. When I met her, she had just turned 76 and had lived in the Costa del Sol for around 16 years. Close friend of Margaret.

Margaret – a regular Church of Scotland attendee with Rosemary. She remained in Spain after her husband's death. When I met Margaret, she was 77 years old and had lived in Spain for 15 years without her husband.

Nancy - "us sad types should stick together": encouraging her recently widowed friend to join her in Spain for a holiday. Her husband died during their time in the Costa del Sol. When I met her in 2016, Nancy was 65-years old.

Chapter 6: Caring in time-left-to-live: exploring support, friendship, and the *whereness* of death

Lily - one of the oldest Seniors' Club members at 95 years old (in 2016). She lives alone in the Costa del Sol, places value and emphasis upon her friendships and social life there and is adamant that she wants to live and die in Arroyo.

William – an 82 man who was negotiating widowhood since the death of his wife. He was well known for singing and dancing in the Seniors' Club. He made clear to his peers, and to me, that: "I'm British but my home is here". This statement was a memorable response to his family's desire for him to return to the UK due to significant health concerns.

Appendix B: Summary of groups attended during fieldwork

Group name	Sub-group attended	Location	Attendees	How I was understood
Seniors' Club	N/A	Arroyo de la Miel	12-25 members	Volunteer & 'Adopted Granddaughter'
Seniors' Club	Memoirs Group	Calahonda	40+ members	Visitor/participant
Age Concern	N/A	Fuengirola	30-40 members	Volunteer
University of the Third Age	Sunday coffee morning, lectures, table tennis	Fuengirola	200+ members (various activities & sub-groups)	Attendee/ participant
Scottish Country Dancing	N/A	Arroyo de la Miel	6 members	Participant/dancer
Royal British Legion	N/A	Arroyo de la Miel	15-20 members	Visitor/participant

Appendix C: Table of participants

Participant Name	Description	Narrative presented (Y/N)
Ron	See Appendix A: Summary of narratives	Yes
Louise		
Caroline		
Lewis		
Helen		
Nancy		
Neil		
Rosemary		
Margaret		
Lily		
William		
Martha	This married couple moved from North-West England to the Costa del Sol *campo* (countryside) in 2000. I mention them briefly in Chapter 2 as they were concerned for my safety. During their interview they detailed how they eagerly awaited every visit from their children and grandchildren. However, these visits were not regular.	Yes - briefly
Miles		
Joanna	Arroyo Seniors' Club member with her dad; local café owner in Bonanza Square. Mentioned in relation to the death of her father and the Club's support for her.	Yes – briefly
Charlie	In 2018, Charlie took over the role of Arroyo Seniors' Club co-ordinator following Helen's return to the UK. Charlie lives in Spain with his wife (Iona). In comparison to other older British migrants, they are considered 'young' retirees as they are both in their mid-50s.	No
Christine	79-year-old woman who moved to Benalmadena with her husband. When he died 15 years ago, she decided to remain in Spain. She is very active on social media.	No

Arthur	While not included in detail, Arthur is mentioned within this thesis via the 'cheesecake incident'. Arthur is a single man in his 70s who is very involved in a Benalmadena church group.	Yes - briefly
Linda Bob	This married couple in their late 60s was based in Benalmadena. They had experienced serious health challenges and their daily lives are shaped by health care appointments. They were members of the U3A. Linda's photograph is included in chapter 2.	No
John Julia	This married couple in their 70s became involved in a lobbying group for the rights and voices of older British migrants living in Spain following the EU referendum vote. They considered the Costa del Sol to be their home.	No
Theresa	Theresa was in her mid-50s and was based in an inland town near Malaga. She and her partner Carole had moved to the Costa del Sol in 2012. They said that they didn't have many gay friends within the British community, and that they did not tend to socialise with other British people. Instead, they both spoke fluent Spanish	No
Mary Martin	This married couple in their late 60s lived in the Costa del Sol on a part-time basis. They moved between their home in Wales and their villa in Fuengirola. They explained that they had 'the best of both worlds' and planned to continue travelling between places until they no longer could. They were regular attendees in the U3A	No
Robert Patricia	This married couple in their late 60s lived in the Costa del Sol on a part-time basis. Both have children from previous marriages as well as caring responsibilities for older parents based in the UK. As such, their time is organised by the needs of their families. However, they expressed a desire to remain in the Costa del Sol permanently if they could.	No

Appendix D: Research information sheet

Research project title: INVESTIGATING DIGITAL MEDIA & HOME FOR BRITISH PEOPLE LIVING IN THE COSTA DEL SOL, SPAIN

Research investigator: Rebekah Miller

Email Address: rebekahgmiller@gmail.com

Phone Number: +34602483565

Website: https://researchingdigitalmedia.wordpress.com

About the Project

My research is exploring how British people (over sixty years old) living in the Costa del Sol region of Spain use digital media. Digital media is becoming increasingly everyday. Digital media includes communication programmes such as Skype, FaceTime, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and others. However, we do not know much about how older British people living abroad use it. My principle aim is to understand how digital media has shaped the experiences, relationships, social networks and concept of 'home' of British people living in the Costa del Sol. I am also investigating how the EU referendum result has shaped British people's sense of home.

Who is responsible for the data collected in this study?

Rebekah Miller, a PhD researcher, is solely responsible for the data collected in this study. Rebekah will be working with her supervisory team (Dr. Dan Swanton and Dr. Eric Laurier) throughout this project. Their role is to offer advice and guidance to Rebekah within the research process.

This project will use the following methods:

In-depth interviews: these last approx. 1-2 hours and will be audio recorded and transcribed.

Participant observation: e.g. observing participants' use of digital media, and attending local events and social groups over a six-month period. This will include photography, and the recording of notes by the researcher.

Home tours: where participants guide the researcher through their home, explaining their concept of home/the importance of belongings they have.

Digital Skills Workshops: these video recorded workshops where participants can improve their digital media skills & discuss their use of digital media in their everyday lives.

The data collected in this research will be stored securely within encrypted folders. Only the researcher and her supervision team will have

access to this data. It will not be shared with other organisations. It will be stored for a maximum of ten years, and will be destroyed safely after this time. This research has been reviewed and passed by the School of GeoScience Ethic Committee on June 2016.

What is involved in the study?

Between September 2016 and April 2017, the methods (described above) will be used. Participants can be involved in one or more methods. The researcher may suggest follow up interviews – continued involvement is at the participant's discretion.

What are the risks involved in this study?

As far as possible your contribution will be kept confidential. Through use of pseudonyms and the removal of any identifying information, your research contribution will be anonymous. You have the right to remove any information or images during or after your research involvement.

What are the benefits for taking part in this study?

You will be contributing to limited understandings about the role that digital media plays in the everyday lives of British people living in the Costa del Sol. The research is expected to have been completed in 2018, and a summary of the PhD thesis will be available, alongside any publications created from this research.

What are your rights as a participant?

Taking part in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or subsequently cease participation at any time. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions asked within the research.

Will I receive any payment or monetary benefits?

You will receive no payment for your participation. The data will not be used by any member of the project team for commercial purposes. Therefore you should not expect any royalties or payments from the research project in the future.

For more information

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Edinburgh University Research Ethics Board. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

You can also contact Rebekah's supervisor:

Dr. Dan Swanton	Drummond Street
Room 2.28	Edinburgh
University of Edinburgh	EH8 9XP

Tel: +44 (0) 131 650 8164   E-mail: dan.swanton@ed.ac.uk

What if I have concerns about this research?

If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how it is being conducted, you can contact the Chair of the GeoScience Ethics Committee, University of Edinburgh, Drummond St, Edinburgh, EH8 9XP (or email at ethics@geos.ed.ac.uk).

Appendix E: Research consent form

Consent form for persons participating in the following research project: INVESTIGATING BRITISH MIGRANTS' USE OF DIGITAL MEDIA AND CONCEPT OF HOME IN THE COSTA DEL SOL, SPAIN

<u>Name of Participant</u>:

<u>Name of Researcher</u>:   Rebekah Miller

This interview will take between 1 and 2 hours. I don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following;

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced
- the transcript of the interview will be analysed by Rebekah Miller as research investigator
- access to the interview transcript will be limited to Rebekah Miller and academic colleagues and researchers with whom she might collaborate as part of the research process
- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized.
- the actual recording will be kept for a maximum of 10 years. It will be securely destroyed after this time.
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

All or part of the content of your interview may be used;

- In academic papers, policy papers or news articles
- On our website and in other media that we may produce such as spoken presentations
- In other feedback events
- In an archive of the project as noted above

By signing this form I agree that;

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
3. I have read the Information Sheet;
4. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
5. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

Participant signature: Date:
_____

Researcher signature: Date:
_____

Contact Information:

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Edinburgh University Research Ethics Board. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Rebekah Miller

Phone: +34602483565

Email: rebekahgmiller@gmail.com

You can also contact Rebekah's supervisor:

Dr. Dan Swanton

Email: dswanton@staffmail.ed.ac.uk

What if I have concerns about this research? If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how it is being conducted, you can contact the Chair of the GeoScience Ethics Committee, University of Edinburgh, Drummond St, Edinburgh, EH8 9XP (or email at ethics@geos.ed.ac.uk).

Appendix F: Interview schedule extract

What do you think I, a visitor, should know about your life in the Costa del Sol as a British person?

Where were you from in the UK?

What motivated your move out here?

   - If work; what work did you do?
   - When did you retire (if they did)?
How long have you lived in the Costa del Sol?

   - How much of the year do you live here?
Have you always lived in the same town/area/apartment/villa?

If not, what motivated your move elsewhere?

Do you own a smartphone, tablet (e.g. iPad), or laptop/computer?

if not, is it something you have been considering getting? If so, why?

How long have you been using this/these devices for?

Would you say that you are tech 'literate'?

What encouraged you to use these devices?

   - If grandchildren - why?
   - Do you communicate with them regularly?
How did you learn to use your phone/computer etc.?

Which functions of your phone/computer do you use (e.g. camera)?

Do you share your pictures with anyone?

   - How?
   - Why?
How do you keep in contact with close friends?

Do you use different modes of communication for contacting family members?

Do you use any of the following 'digital media' - webcam programmes (e.g. Skype/Facetime), Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, instant messenger, email, internet forums, meet-up sites or anything similar?

   - If yes to any/some/all - follow up questions: when & why did you start?
   - [did someone recommend it/them to you?]
   - how do you use them? (e.g. actively sending messages, passively scrolling through Facebook etc.)
   - how do you use each?

- Work through discussing how each application is used.
- why do you use them?

Are they important in your everyday life?

Who do you tend to communicate with through them?

If using webcam, how do you arrange when you will have the webcam conversation?

If they do not use one - why not? Is there a particular reason behind it?

Do you use the internet?

- How do you use it? (e.g. online shopping, information, socializing etc.)
- Are there few websites you use more than others?

Do you use the internet to find out about local activities/social networks?

- what kind of activities/networks?
- how often do you think you do this?

Do you have any examples of using the internet to arrange or attend social events?

- how else do you find out about local events (if you get involved)

What happens when your phone/computer/tablet device breaks down?

Are you a member of any British groups or societies?

- Would you have joined similar activities (etc.) in the UK?

Do you have friends from different age groups? Or are they of similar age to you?

How often do friends and family from the UK visit you?

Are you a member of any groups or clubs in the Costa del Sol?

- why did you join them?

Are there any bars or cafes that you frequent?

Do you keep in touch with UK news/cultural events etc.?

Do you have plans to move back to the UK?

Appendix G: Interview transcript extract

Interview with Rosemary, October 2016

[00:27:42.21] Participant: whatever stage you are in life something happens tragically, or unexpectedly shall we say and you find yourself in a whole new situation, it takes a while to get your head round it. But Margaret's been you know she's come through it very very well and we go on holiday together, we're going away at Christmas, and we went away last Christmas together, and um, yes its nice, yes it is. So in a case like that where our friends have lost their partners, and its more than one, I'm speaking of Margaret because she's the nearest but lots of our friends have lost A partner, some of them have found to go back to England at that point then

[00:28:28.20] Interviewer: right, is that sort of a turning point for some people?

[00:28:30.06] Participant: yes it is. Yes but those who have chosen to stay here, um they're surrounded by eh love really

[00:28:39.25] Interviewer: yes

[00:28:41.21] Participant: it is quite unique I think

[00:28:43.12] Interviewer: what about em, do you know of anyone who maybe lost a partner and then has found someone else in a romantic sense?

[00:28:52.13] Participant: ehh yes I have through the club um yes I suppose if I think about it that is possible yeah yeah. I haven't managed that myself because I don't know, I think I'm too active really you know I haven't done that myself. Although I have had a couple of gentlemen friends but I don't know. I don't really know what I want. Cause I think I've got everything. I'm careful to say that I've got everything, I miss my husband of course I do and the life we had together, but this is *totally* different.

[00:29:33.15] Interviewer: right yeah. And do you think that's helped you to have it as totally different?

[00:29:37.11] Participant: yes I think so, because we didn't come here together now there are friends that we've made that have come out here as a couple and bought a place, then they've either died or something's happened eh that must be something else. Whereas in a way this was ALL a new life when I came here

[00:30:02.01] Interviewer: right so you're kind of starting

[00:30:02.01] Participant: yes but if anybody'd have told me, we're talking seventeen years since my husband died, and I've had this apartment thirteen, so I've been out in Spain fifteen, I would never have believed the

life I've had since. But of course you have to work at it. It doesn't just come at you, you have to decide that you want to go out there and do things you know, and of course good health comes into it. I am blessed with very good health you know, cause once your health fails, I always wonder what will be for me then.

Appendix H: Fieldnote diary extract

Seniors' Club Coffee Morning, Monday (10.10.2016)

"As William moved to go back to the group another lady came in and William started to dance with her. She told him to stop because she has trouble breathing and couldn't catch a breath. I asked William if he could do the Gay Gordon's (he had been talking about Scottish Country Dancing). He said he could and started demonstrating in the bar by himself! He said – 'not bad for 82?!' In conversation later with William I learned he was from Yorkshire, and had moved to Spain full time in 2001 (although he & his wife had a holiday home in Spain for years previous to that). Some of family had also moved out – which encouraged their decision....His wife died last year and they had been together for 63 years. He said that he had been 'awfully sad' for a long time, they had been together a very long time. William is (as far as I know) one of 2 or 3 single men in the club. The majority are women, or are married to one of the woman in the club (e.g. Neil)".