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Published in:
Emotion, Space and Society

DOI:
[10.1016/j.emospa.2023.100967](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2023.100967)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2023

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Ernstberger, M., & Adaawen, S. (2023). A transnational family story: A narrative inquiry on the emotional and intergenerational notions of 'home'. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 48, Article 100967. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2023.100967>

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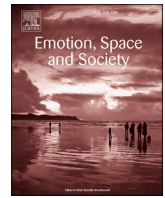
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A transnational family story: A narrative inquiry on the emotional and intergenerational notions of 'home'

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ARTICLE INFO

Handling editor: D Drozdowski

Keywords:

Home
Emotional migration
Family
Transnationalism
Insider research

ABSTRACT

At the core of migratory experiences lie key questions pertaining to one's emotional changing Self: the complexity of conflicting identities, feelings of (un)belonging, varying degrees of emotional place (un)attachment, and the fundamental (re)conceptualizations of 'home'. Though well-studied from various angles, 'home' as an emotional concept in the context of generational family migration research has many gains yet to be made. Through an in-depth study on three generations of one author's own family, this paper provides personal insight into the intergenerational and emotional dimensions of this topic. Unanimously, the findings demonstrate that notions of 'home' as where family is remain predominant, with ties to transnationally dispersed family members rendering 'home' as multiple. Places of familial heritage further remain central in conceptualizations of 'home' through a retention of cultural practices and values derived from familial homelands. Despite these cross-generational similarities, challenges and emotional uncertainties on the topic are seen to be increasingly prevalent in the youngest generation. Above all, interviewees' post-migration reflections demonstrate that such conceptualizations are intricate, relational and do not exist in an emotional vacuum.

1. Introduction

In our mobile world, it is becoming increasingly common to find families that are transnationally and geographically dispersed (Ahmed, 1999; Falicov, 2005; Bauman, 2011; Boccagni, 2014). Amid growing transnational living arrangements amongst families, it is increasingly common for families, and in particular, adult children to be living in countries other than that of their parents, grandparents and/or even great-grandparents (Wolf, 1997; Harutyunyan, 2012; Madianou, 2016). The latter case presents a situation in which multiple generations of one family are in a sense 'dislocated' from the land of ancestral, familial, or parental origin (Guo et al., 2018; Gupta, 2022).

This transnational family dynamic presents a different sort of contemporary family, in which the identities of family members are increasingly hybrid (see Goulbourne et al., 2009). Within that, feelings of place belonging become multiple and notions of 'home' are increasingly complex (Bauman, 2011; Mallman, 2019). These identity-home processes, embodied by the migrant-Self, are marked by intricate internal negotiations of identity, conflicting emotions and changing relations that manifest throughout the life-course (Ahmed, 1999; Falicov, 2005; Svašek, 2010). In effect, these configurations may be seen as

inherent to human mobility processes and in the maintenance of transnational relationships (see Baldassar, 2008).

Given the identity-Self-reflection process that often confronts migrants, Falicov (2005, p. 399) poses the question: "if home is where the heart is, and one's heart is with one's family, language, and country, what happens when your family, language, and culture occupy two different worlds?" This question evokes the uncertainty encompassing identity and belonging in a transnational family context. On the other hand, it raises further questions about what happens when 'home' and 'heart' occupy more than two worlds, or rather 'multiple worlds' (Ahmed, 1999). Within migrant families, the cumulative transmission of identities, places, and cultures across generations (and which younger generations may have no direct ties to) further adds to the complexity relating to notions of 'home' (Boccagni et al., 2021; Fathi, 2021).

The figurative constructions of 'home', belonging and the inherent emotions of human mobility processes have long drawn attention in scientific debates on transnational family arrangements and integration (Ryan, 2008; Gorman-Murray, 2009; Svašek, 2010). Theoretical and empirical insights point to the fact that these ongoing constructions are informed and shaped by several factors such as memories, culture, environment and social interactions, and with varying implications

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2023.100967>

Received 24 June 2022; Received in revised form 10 July 2023; Accepted 16 July 2023

Available online 26 July 2023

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(Zembylas, 2012; Rishbeth and Powell, 2013). They also highlight the efforts of migrants that are often couched in what is termed as ‘emotional labour’ in the quest to build and maintain functional relations across distance and in the new environments they find themselves in (Hochschild, 1983; Svašek, 2010; Wang, 2016).

On the other hand, the insights from existing studies also highlight the struggles of transnational migrants in maintaining familial relationships, identity and belonging as part of home-making processes (see Boccagni, 2014; Wang, 2016; Boccagni and Kusenbach, 2020; Fathi, 2021). In line with ongoing debates around the aforementioned themes, this paper is grounded on the notion that pre- and post-migratory processes, of which (re)conceptualizations of ‘home’ are fundamentally characterized by, are emotional processes (Falicov, 2005; Svašek, 2008; Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015; Campos-Delgado, 2019; Granek, 2017).

1.1. Understanding and problematizing emotional processes in migration research

The emotional dimensions of human mobility processes have increasingly been the focus of scientific research and debates (Ryan, 2008; Svašek, 2008, 2010). Whilst the problematization of emotions has been a challenge in academia and within migration research, the emotional and feminist turns in the field have emphasized the need to include human emotions in geographical discourses. This call is in part informed by the growing interest and attention to examinations on the unique relationships between place, identity and the emotional Self (Blunt, 2005; Bondi et al., 2007; Antonisch, 2010; Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015; Ross, 2017; Paterson and Larjos, 2020).

Previous studies conducted on perceptions of home and identity within migrant families have delved into various questions on the emotional and lived migrant experiences (Falicov, 2005; Mallman, 2019; Boccagni, 2022). The bulk of these studies, however, predominantly focus on first or second-generation (children of) migrants and rarely look at the entirety of an extended family nexus (Levitt, 2002; Baldassar, 2008; Fathi, 2021; Hannafin, 2016). Boccagni et al. (2021) in their study on the construction of home among Ecuadorian migrants, for example, indicate the differences in conceptualizations of home between younger, new migrants and older migrants who have stayed longer in the places of destination. Their study finds that the new and younger immigrants’ notions of ‘home’ transcend the familial dwelling to refer to the host country or country of residence (relational). Older migrants, on the other hand, seem to point more to place-based conceptions as home (ibid.). Similar insights from second generation returnee Irish migrants also reveal the shifting, reflexive constructions of home and belonging, and how these negotiations become part of the everyday life habitus (Hannafin, 2016). These studies thus highlight the emotional and physical attachment to place, which are partly shaped by the familial, socio-cultural and historical determinants over time.

This paper recognizes the contributions of these and many other studies on the intersections between transnational family practices, socio-cultural and emotional dynamics in home-making processes. Nonetheless, this paper seeks to contribute to ongoing debates by examining notions of ‘home’ from the perspective of transnational families where multiple generations are migrants. That is, where the children of migrants become adult migrants themselves, and how this shapes identity-home processes. By drawing on insights from different generations of migrants from the first author, it is envisaged that the discussion will further enrich understandings of culture, emotional constructions of home and belonging in the context of transnational migrant family practices (see Sandu, 2013; Castillo, 2014; Boccagni and Kusenbach, 2020; Boccagni, 2022).

1.2. Aim and focus of the paper

This paper positions itself within the field of (familial) ‘insider’ research. Drawing on familial (auto)ethnography, the first author—an

active, subjective player throughout the research process—explores the issues of home-making and belonging through the lens of her own familial experiences (Adams, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Adams and Manning, 2015; Ross, 2017). In effect, the insights for this paper are framed through the perspective of the first author, whose maternal family provides a unique case study in which all three living generations have embarked on transnational migratory moves and currently reside in countries other than that of their familial origin.

In examining the nuances of home and identity through a study on her own family, the overarching aim of this paper is to provide a deeper understanding of the intergenerational and emotional complexities that characterize the constructions of ‘home’ and ensuing negotiations of belonging. Based on the literature and research on personal experiences with migration, this paper thus investigates how, following a transnational move, notions of ‘home’ within one intergenerational migrant-family are (re)conceptualized, maintained and/or abandoned across the generations. To sufficiently delve into the issues of focus, the discussion of this paper is guided by the following research questions: a) how do the different members and generations in a migrant family define ‘home’? b) what are the existing emotions and feelings (certainty/uncertainty, affinity, and cultural ‘distance’) underpinning one’s ‘places of the past’ (i. e., place of birth, childhood, familial origin)? and c) how is the role of familial culture, ‘home’, and heritage (re-)enforced across migrant generations?

2. Theoretical framework

Defining ‘home’ has proven to be near impossible, differing by culture, language, context, and personal experience. Rapport and Dawson (1998, p. 9) conceptualize ‘home’ simply as “where one best knows oneself.” Whilst this definition leaves substantial room for interpretation, it sees an agreement with varying conceptualizations on ‘home’ as having a certain spatial dimension (Morse and Mudgett, 2017; Scharp et al., 2016; Boccagni and Vargas-Silva, 2020). Within that, ‘home’ is further conceptualized as symbolic, emotional and relational. Despite often being used synonymously, ‘home’ is above all not limited to the physical structure of a “house” (Morse and Mudgett, 2017). ‘Home’ can extend far beyond one’s physical dwelling and embody a node of multiplicities: between social relationships, the natural landscape or physical environment, and broader collective imaginations or memories (Morse and Mudgett, 2017; Fathi, 2021).

Following from this, ‘home’ is also seen to be described as an experiential ‘feeling’, where ‘home’ itself becomes synonymous with where one ‘feels-at-home’. This portrays ‘home’ as an inherently emotionally-loaded concept, entwined with feelings towards place belonging, place attachment and constructions of place meaning (Blunt and Dowling, 2022; Boccagni et al., 2021). In order to further unpack theorizations of ‘home’ within the context of this paper, the following subsections retrace the roots of ‘home’ in (familial) memory to how ‘home’ changes throughout the emotional transmigratory process.

2.1. ‘Home’, memory, and family

If ‘home’ is considered as having a spatial dimension, for the purposes of the discussion there is then a need to examine how inherent emotional attachments to spatialities may unfold. How we as humans define ourselves in relation to place is to a greater extent guided by our ‘geographies of the past’ (Jones, 2007). These are the places that we have been to that have left traces on our Selves, and that we maintain throughout the life course to become part of our ‘habitus’ (Jones, 2007; Hannafin, 2018; Belforda and Lahiri-Royb, 2019). The places internalized and ingrained in the subconscious as part of one’s childhood, for example, are some of the most fundamental in determining one’s current emotional landscapes (Jones, 2007). In the context of emotional landscapes within a family network, it is thus not only personal history, but also familial history and familial geographies of the past which form the

current emotional ties to place and ‘home’.

The extension of ‘home’ to a place of a broader collective, beyond oneself, is often distinguished into the concept of ‘homeland’. A purely mythical or imagined place, homeland is reliant upon a broader community to exist, propagated through the imagined collective memories of a nation or people (Steward, 2017; Boccagni, 2022). Ultimately, the importance of the role of community—and especially of family—in defining ‘home’, or the ‘where’ of homeland, is thus essential when further unpacking the concept. Arguably, this is especially important in migrant contexts, where displacement leads to increased reflexivity on aspects of place identity and belonging (Boccagni and Vargas-Silva, 2020; Hannafin, 2016). Familial memories and conceptualizations of ‘home’ and homeland are remembered, retold, passed over generations, and thus reinforced over time (Harutyunyan, 2012).

2.2. ‘Home’ away from home: emotional migration

Central to our emotional attachment to ‘home’ is the sense of security humans feel in knowing our place—both literally and figuratively (Rapport and Dawson, 1998; Jones, 2007). Following a migratory move away from home, one is not only dislocated spatially, but also temporally and inner-spatially (Kokanovic and Bozic-Vrbancic, 2015; Raffaeta, 2015). The recognition of inner-spatial dimensions to place and space acknowledges that not only do bodies inhabit place, but there exists a mutual relationship in which places, in turn, also inhabit the Self. Consequent longings for ‘home’ or ‘homesickness’, are thus as much for a past time as they are for a past place, or to be even more nuanced: a past Self in that place at that point in time (Ahmed, 1999; Morse and Mudgett, 2017). Decisions to leave the security of ‘home’ are then by default emotion-filled processes, threatening perceived security with change, often of the unknown (Kokanovic and Bozic-Vrbancic, 2015; Fathi, 2021).

On the other end of this emotional process, it is of interest to this paper how the carrying of one’s inner-spatially derived cultures and habits may contribute to new homemaking elsewhere, post-migration. The carrying of place-based practices with oneself, such as language, are key cultural elements often retained long after one’s initial spatial displacement (Falicov, 2005). The affinity that one then feels to a new foreign culture may provide an important emotional link for feeling (more) at home away from the homeland or country of origin (Boccagni and Vargas-Silva, 2020).

2.3. Familial and emotional transnationalism

The paradox in acquiring “transnational identities” (Belforda and Lahiri-Royb, 2019) is that transnational migrants acquire multiple homes and yet often claim no one *Home* (Ahmed, 1999; Brun and Fábos, 2015). This paradox sees the growing theory of an inner-spatial internalization of ‘home’ in the Self, to replace the physical land, locality, or residence of ‘home’ left behind (Ahmed, 1999; Bauman, 2011). This is most evident through a retainment of cultural practices; aspects of language, local mannerisms, and learned place-based habits (Falicov, 2005). The reinforcement of familial emotional ties to ancestral homelands through rituals and storytelling of past places is often an active process in families who have left the homeland (Levitt, 2002; Hannafin, 2016; Mallman, 2019). Through these processes, younger generations of migrant families may hold emotional ties to places that they have never been to or conceptualize ‘home’ as something irrevocably lost and faraway (Wolf, 1997; Levitt, 2002; Falicov, 2005). In some cases, children of migrant families may only “discover” home in later-life, through visits to ancestral or parental homelands where some recognize a strong sense of familiarity and belonging (Huang et al., 2013).

The concept of ‘emotional transnationalism’ thus encompasses all the emotional processes experienced by migrants, or children of migrants, towards places or nations elsewhere (Falicov, 2005). In this regard, migrants could be referred to as ‘emotional transmigrants,’ in the

sense that emotions towards places of the past are maintained throughout the migrant’s life-course (Mallman, 2019). Studies on second-generation perceptions of ‘home’ and belonging have made a key effort to bring questions of these conceptualizations to the forefront (Wolf, 1997; Levitt, 2002; Falicov, 2005; Mallman, 2019). However, the question remains as to how internalizations of ‘home’ embody themselves throughout migrant generations in which the familial place of origin becomes increasingly spatial and temporally distanced.

For this paper, the interest thus lies in how emotional transnational ties towards ‘home’ are not only cultivated in the Self, but within migrant families passed down over generations. While it is recognized that there are several dimensions to ‘home’, this paper limits its scope to examining how notions of this concept are specifically affected by emotional migratory processes: emotional migration, transnational dislocation, and the associated emotional transnationalism towards both places of the past and places of (current) residence. The discussion will be guided by these intersecting concepts to delve into overall conceptualizations of ‘home’ within such a generational migrant family network.

3. Research methods

The scope of this paper is rooted within postmodern, interpretivist and feminist paradigms. As such, the underlying beliefs informing this paper are that meaning is constructed, inherently subjective, emotional, and in need of being explored in-depth (Ellis, 2007; Ross, 2017). With this reasoning, this paper takes a cue from similar studies exploring ‘home’ and migration (see Kokanovic and Bozic-Vrbancic, 2015; Belforda and Lahiri-Royb, 2019; Mallman, 2019; Fathi, 2021; Boccagni, 2022), and has adopted a qualitative methodological approach through narrative inquiry with a thematic analysis. Narrative inquiry places emphasis on one-on-one storytelling interviews and the narration of life experiences through oral histories. In this way, interviewees are given the space to explore their life biographies at their own pace (Butina, 2015). This method allows for interviewees to recount key life events unhindered, while also verbally and/or non-verbally communicating emotional components of their reflections (Atkinson, 2011a; Butler--Kisber, 2019; Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk, 2007).

In contrast to most studies on migration and family, this paper examines the research topic through the lens of the first author’s familial experiences. Nevertheless, the first has refrained from placing herself in the focus of the analysis and of the research questions. The discussion in this paper is thus based on addressing the richness and merit of exploring interviewees’ notions of ‘home’ from an insider’s perspective (Adams, 2006; Ross, 2017).

For the data collection, semi-structured interviews with six family members were conducted within the period of April–May 2021. The chosen family members in this study consist of three generations of the maternal side of the first author’s family. All the chosen members have a personal and familial history in transnational migration with a common land of ancestral origin. These are: the first author’s maternal grandparents (G1), two of their adult children (first author’s mother and uncle, G2), and two of their mature grandchildren (first author’s sister and cousin, G3). A family tree visualizing the family relations as well as position of the first author within this network is shown in Fig. 1. For the purposes of this study and to ensure clarity in the discussion, these persons will be further referred to by their first name followed by which generation cohort they belong to (G1, G2, or G3).

A semi-structured interview guide covering three key topics was formulated to ensure comparability between responses while leaving the space for interviewees to lead onto different issues of interest relevant to conceptualizations of ‘home’. Each theme of focus was guided by the following guiding research questions: a) defining home, b) unpacking emotions towards places of the past, and c) exploring ways in which familial heritage is maintained across generations. Given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that interviewees were

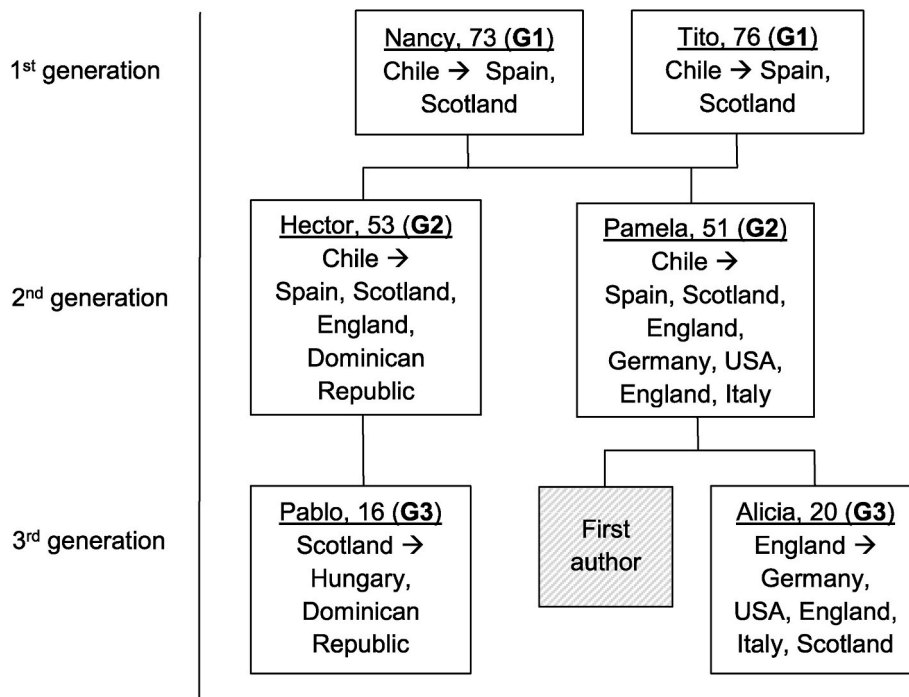


Fig. 1. Family tree listing name, age, generation cohort, and migration history of interview participants, with position of first author highlighted in gray (Authors' construct, 2023).

geographically dispersed, most interviews were conducted through on-line video-calling platforms (Madge, 2010; Lupton, 2020). Though there are downsides to interviewing online, such as the inability to read body language, which would have been present in real life (Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst, 2017). The fact that family relations have been predominantly maintained through online calls over the years helped to ensure a familiar setting in which both parties were comfortable. As the first author was at the time of the research residing within the same household with the mother and sister, these interviews were conducted in person, but at locations of their choosing.

In light of the varying cultural backgrounds of all family members, the language in which interviews were conducted was kept to what was most comfortable and familiar with interviewees. For example, interviews with grandparents, Nancy and Tito (G1), were conducted in Spanish. All remaining interviews (G2 and G3) were conducted in English. As all interviews and codes were consecutively analyzed in English, translated copies of the transcripts as well as English interview summaries were sent to Nancy and Tito (G1) respectively. This helped to ensure accurate representation of their accounts, especially taking into consideration subtle differences possibly missed throughout the translation process (see, for example, Given, 2012; Adams and Manning, 2015).

Following Dresing et al.'s (2015) "Manual (on) Transcription", all interviews were recorded with the consent of interviewees and transcribed verbatim. This allowed for analysis following a thematic analysis, in which key themes on notions of 'home' presented throughout the narrated life-migration stories were established. Drawing on insights from previous studies, axial coding was conducted to identify and connect deductive-inductive codes within each transcript. This allowed for the grouping of categories and identification of themes contributing to notions of 'home', namely: 'familial associations', 'personal associations', and 'emotional transnational ties'. Following the interviews, additional sub-codes contributing to these themes, such as 'knowledge of family history', 'language fluency', and 'desire to reconnect' were inductively established.

3.1. Ethical considerations and positionality

As the study was conducted within the context of the first author's own family, the interview process made use of advantage of being an insider to probe important past experiences, broach sensitive topics, and empathize with emotional responses that interviewees would perhaps not share with an 'outsider' (Given, 2012; Ross, 2017). Under these circumstances, however, several ethical considerations must be taken into account, and thus this study applies the guiding principles outlined by the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity: honesty, transparency, scrupulousness, independence, and responsibility (KNAW et al., 2018).

Three prominent issues related to these direct familial ties emerged throughout the research: the risk of participant identification, lack of confidentiality, and notions of obligation to participate in the research (Larossa et al., 1981; Given, 2012; Adams and Manning, 2015). To address these concerns, the issues of anonymity were made explicitly clear to all participants throughout the research process, as were reassurances that participation was voluntary, the choice of non-participation would not in any way influence pre-existing relationships, and participants could retract their data at any given point. As the first author of this paper will be named, anonymity of family members cannot be guaranteed and it was chosen to refrain from the usage of pseudonyms. This was decided in conjunction with family participants with active consent, and with encouragement for family members to see themselves as active participants in the research process. To aid in this process, participants were provided with summaries of their narrated accounts and the possibility to review their full transcripts post-interview. This was a key method in allowing family members to ensure accurate representation of their stories in this research (Atkinson, 2011a, 2011b). Explicit consent to the use of the data and the use of participants' first names was thus established three-fold: in discussion leading up to each individual interview, verbally upon commencement of each interview, and post-interview, once transcript summaries had been reviewed and verified. Furthermore, all participants had the opportunity to review how the information provided was used in the analysis and discussion of this paper. All these measures have greatly

contributed to addressing ethical concerns that may arise in the context of this study.

4. Family context: from Chile to Scotland, Italy, and DR

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

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

In 1999, Pamela (G2) had her first child (first author) in Scotland, and together with her German husband moved to England where they had their second child, Alicia (G3). They moved onwards to Germany in 2002, then to the USA in 2005. They lived in the USA for ten years before returning to Europe in 2015, settling in Italy soon after. Alicia (G3) is twenty years old at the time of interviewing and lives between Italy and Scotland, where she studies at university.

In 2005, Hector (G2) had his first child, Pablo (G3), also in Scotland. At age five and following the separation of his parents, Pablo (G3) moved from Scotland with his mother to Hungary. From then on, Hector (G2) met his current partner. They moved together to England and soon after relocated to the Dominican Republic (DR). Pablo (G3) is sixteen years old at the time of interviewing and often spends time between Hungary and the DR.

To this day, Nancy and Tito (G1) remain in Scotland, living as grandparents in close proximity to their other children and grandchildren.

5. Main findings: "home is ..."

Cross-generationally, the life stories presented throughout the interviews provided rich accounts on the experiences, emotions, and implications of moving across countries, both from personal and familial perspectives. This emotion was especially evident in interviewees' accounts of their life stories and childhood memories, and aligns to what Harutyunyan (2012) refers to as "transportation" to past places within memories. Throughout the interviews, the biggest difference remains that the place of common familial origin (in this case, Chile) becomes more spatially and temporally distant throughout the generations. Notwithstanding observable individualities between participants, a clear storyline emerges on how conceptualizations of 'home' can be traced back and across all living generations. With the backdrop of the life stories, migratory experiences, and subsequent reflections of interviewees, the findings presented in the following sections highlight the leading notions of 'home' within this family's generations.

5.1. 'Home' is family

Unanimously, the most explicit and recurring conceptualization of 'home' is that of being together with the direct family (partner, parents and/or (grand)children), mirroring the findings of similar studies conducted elsewhere (Boccagni et al., 2021; Boccagni and Vargas-Silva, 2020). The role of a close family unit in providing a safe and familiar space in which one feels the most comfortable is reflected in the explanation of Rapport and Dawson (1998, p. 9) that 'home' is "where one best knows oneself". In the context of migration, the insights gleaned from the interviews suggest that the role of family takes on a new

meaning of stability in the face of change. This is especially evident in Alicia's conceptions, where she intimated that:

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

This notion that 'home' is where the family is remains consistent from G1 (first generation) through to G3 (third generation). Irrespective of the specific locality in which the family resides, it may then be argued that the family itself cultivates a sense of belonging that makes the residence of the family 'home'. With the movement of the family, this locality of 'home' changes. As older generations pass away and newer generations are born, the focal location of the family geographically shifts. In this light, the passing away of "pillars of the family" (as termed by Pamela, G2) in Chile and the birth of grandchildren in Europe figuratively shifts the emotional ties towards where the main bulk of living family resides. This is especially seen to affect how 'home' is conceptualized by G1 (grandparents), who although did not necessarily foresee their move to Scotland in the 1980s as being a permanent one, today consider the country a sort of "surrogate mother" (Tito, G1) who they have grown with over time.

"Here [Scotland] where my, our, grandchildren are growing up, that is my home now. Ya? Now I can't go to Chile and leave them here. That would be extremely sad for us ... to go over there without being able to see them again. [....] Chile is very far away," (Tito, G1).

As the oldest living generation of the family, G1's emotional ties to their children and grandchildren, most of whom currently either live in Scotland or within Europe, further solidify their residence in Scotland as 'home.' Fewer ties to their Chilean land of origin as explained by Tito (G1) above, go hand in hand with newer ties developed in the 'new home' over time.

In almost all cases the location of the direct living family, and thus 'home', is expressed as synonymous with the places or countries of current residence of interviewees. This is especially the case for G3, who as the youngest cohort live in the same residence as their parents at the time of interviewing and feel the role of parental structures strongest. In cases where parents do live abroad, however, there is a keen transnational attachment to the place(s) of family abroad as well. Such is the case for Pamela (G2), who although lives in Italy, feels very much at home in Scotland.

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

Similarly, for Hector (G2) in the Dominican Republic, the choice of current residence was actively chosen as a "halfway" point between Europe and Chile, accessible to family from both sides of the world. This pull of the family abroad is again reflected by Pablo (G3), who noted that "I belong with family, and I belong where I love it." At the time of interviewing, Pablo was in the midst of planning a long-term trip to the Dominican Republic from Hungary. The pull and monumental role of family in conceptualizing 'home', as well as in shaping senses of belonging and transnational emotional place attachments, is a sentiment which thus permeates all generations of this family.

5.2. 'Home' is culture

One aspect in which the specific location (and country) of 'home' presents itself as very important is in being within a culture—more specifically, material culture—which shares a likeness to one's familial cultural practices, norms, behaviours and heritage(s). As evident from the narratives, Chilean traditions and family customs were actively

maintained across generations. This can be traced back to Tito and Nancy's (G1) strong enforcement of a Chilean identity over the years. As Tito (G1) explains:

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

Retention of these customs—ranging from the preparation of certain foods to religious practices, language and celebrations such as Chilean Independence Day—were cited in interviews across G1 to G3. For family members in G2, who grew up in a very Chilean household despite being in Scotland, this was made especially apparent. Here, importance was placed on conceptualizing 'home' as somewhere with established cultural practices closely associated with the society of the family's heritage (Chile) and within which they were brought up.

"(...) they say home can be where you lay your hat, and that can pretty much be anywhere. (...) But there's nothing like living in a society where—which is close to your own, the own society that you were brought up within" (Hector, G2).

For Hector (G2), a cultural society of this kind was actively sought by moving and settling in the Dominican Republic, a Latin American country with similar values, language, and culture of solidarity to the one he was raised within as a child. In line with these sentiments, Pamela (G2) echoes the role of shared cultural values, such as the importance of the family unit, as being fundamental to feeling more at 'home' in her current country of residence (Italy) than in previous countries. In places where there was a sense of cultural dissonance between broader (national) society and one's own cultural values, comparisons were often made to feeling like "a foreigner" and "a fish out of water" (Pamela, G2).

Similar feelings of the importance of belonging to a broader culture and national or societal values are equally prevalent through G3. Interestingly, however, G3's direct relationships with (national) culture, or which aspects of culture they relate to, are often made only in the context of the familial household. This may partly be attributed to cultural practices which have been passed down over generations and displaced from their original (national) context rather becoming subtly ingrained within the family's 'way of doing'. Although affiliations with the country of heritage of cultural practices are recognized, the importance is instead placed on the space of the familial house as a setting where various family cultures are able to merge and be practiced together. For Alicia (G3), for example, the roles of German or Scottish familial cultural practices and values were equally as important in the household as those from or associated with Chile.

"I think to an extent we were always more different than our family friends there [U.S.]. (...) Like, for example, 'Weisswurst' in Germany; we had that sometimes and our friends would be like "What the HELL is that white sausage?!" (laughing) "It looks so weird and disgusting!" But then you know they tried it and they were like "Okay that tastes really good," (laughing)" (Alicia, G3).

The merging of different cultural elements under one roof is thus much more prevalent in G3 than in other generations. In line with [Boccagni et al.'s \(2021\)](#) study, the family house as 'home' may be seen to be relational. As such, the familial residence as 'home' emerges as a unique site of specific transnational and multicultural linkages to places elsewhere.

5.3. 'Home' is (un)certain: language, longing, and belonging

Directly tied to the notion of 'home' within both culture and family is the crucial role of language ([Falicov, 2005](#)). In the context of this study, fluency in the language of common familial origin (in this case, Spanish) proved to be a main determinant in feeling like one belonged to the culture of familial heritage. Most notably, a lack of fluency in family language was noted by G3, who at times expressed mixed emotional

accounts on the effects of this on their lives. From feeling excluded and alienated from family interactions to feeling foreign in places recognized as familial homes, both G3 members express a clear longing-to-belong through language. Fluency in the family language as a way to sound authentic and to solidify one's own identity was recounted by Pablo (G3):

"I want to sound real, I want to sound valid. (...) I want to sound native you know, so that people take me seriously and not just like a tourist."

Language, in this sense, can be seen as a gateway to the notion of 'home', or rather, a potential means to identify and belong with. The lack of fluency in Spanish for members in G3 can, however, be more closely tied to the broader factor of knowledge (or the lack thereof) of the familial past. Interviews demonstrated that a lack of knowledge on certain aspects of familial history and a detachment from familial geographies of the past was most prevalent in G3, following the pattern of previous studies (see, for example, [Levitt, 2002](#)). This ambiguity of familial past and one's own identity has shown to lead to a broader uncertainty on the notion of 'home' itself. Equally important, however, are the myriad of other factors—outside of a generational context—which may contribute to such an increased uncertainty associated with G3, as alluded to by Pablo (G3):

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

Not only has G3 undertaken more migrations than previous generations, but their younger ages (in that much of their future life is still unwritten), as well as their increasingly hybrid national identities in comparison to older generations (Alicia: Chilean-German-British and Pablo: Chilean-Hungarian-British), also play important roles. Although their experiences of moving are overall spoken of fondly, the transnational emotional attachment to multiple places at times presents itself as a source of inner conflict.

"That's one side effect of being so diverse. (...) I feel like it's just too much for one person, sometimes ... Too much, identity? I don't know, like too much!" (Alicia, G3).

This dilemma of 'multiple homes', as similarly outlined by [Ahmed \(1999\)](#), and the uncertainty this causes to one's own identity has hereby shown itself to manifest in strong emotional sentiment, including the expression of varying degrees of confusion and frustration. The longing to fully belong to one culture, as in Pablo's (G3) desire of validation through language, closely mirrors Alicia's (G3) feeling of—at times—being overwhelmed by the presence of too many family cultures. The recognition of (past) familial language and knowledge of familial history as important tools for coping with and addressing uncertainties of 'home' can thus be seen as an active process in this family's youngest cohort.

6. Discussion

In line with discursive negotiations for belonging and identity in the context of migration and mobilities, the findings from this study demonstrate that places of the past indeed remain present and strongly influence one's current emotional landscapes and notions of 'home' ([Jones, 2007](#); [Belforda and Lahiri-Royb, 2019](#)). The influence of accumulated experiences is seen to align with [Hannafin's \(2016\)](#) explanations on how these dynamics become part of the migrant habitus over time. This is particularly evident in the inner-spatial retention of specific cultural practices or values derived from familial places of the past. An alignment or acceptance of these cultural practices within one's current

place (or country) of residence post-migration is then a fundamental determinant of whether one's current residence feels like 'home' or not (Richardson and Hwa Ng, 2019).

Importantly, within a migrant family such as the one studied in this paper, differences in how cultural practices are perceived and retained are seen to emerge across generations. Though all generations share a recognition for common familial pasts and heritages, the progressive inner-spatial accumulation of diverse cultural practices in younger generations suggests a difference on which practices remain important in shaping 'home' from G1 through to G3. Language fluency which diminishes across generations is, for instance, seen to decrease the pull of belonging to the ancestral homeland in G3. Equally, the increased plurality of present cultural practices in G3 adds to the complex pull of places perhaps not at all considered 'home' in G1 or G2. This takes into account the youngest generation's own migrations, the cultural practices derived from past generations and the added influence of growing up within an already multicultural familial household.

The central role of family then shows itself to be the most consistent factor across generations, irrespective of individual or generational differences, for determining the 'where' of 'home'. Parents, grandparents, siblings, and (mature) children are seen to remain a key focal point of emotional transnational ties. In light of the findings, it may be deduced that in conceptualizations of 'home', the roles of 'family' and 'culture' often go hand-in-hand. If 'home' is where one feels one may better practice closely-held customs, such as language, with family one may be presented a window into a group setting where this is possible. The transnationally dispersed natures of familial residences in a transnational migrant context thus emerge as sites of 'multiple homes'.

Elements of uncertainty in 'home' conceptualizations have been made evident across interviews, especially amongst the youngest G3 cohort. As a generation with increasingly layered transnational and multicultural identities, the findings align with similar insights by Levitt (2002), Falicov (2005), and Wolf (1997) on younger generation dynamics within migrant families. Faced with the most temporal distance to ancestral homes left behind in migration processes, this generation demonstrates how cultural distance to lands of familial origin may emerge, decreasing an affinity with places of the past and adding ambiguity to past 'homes'. However, the clearly expressed desire to reconnect with places of familial origin, most predominantly through language fluency, challenges the notion that feelings towards ancestral or familial homelands disappear over generations (Levitt, 2002). In contrast, feelings towards past places are retained, felt strongly, and in this youngest generation's case, vocalized both through the desire for reconnection to familial histories and the longing-to-belong to familial homes. This finding is particularly reflected by Hannafin (2016) and Huang et al. (2013) on the paths of second, third, and even fourth generation (children of) migrants who similarly feel strong attachments to such distanced places spatially left behind.

7. Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that notions of 'home' within a family network may be actively and similarly maintained across all living generations. Overall, the findings demonstrate that conceptualizations of 'home' over generations which have migrated remain centered around the two fundamental aspects of family and culture. Through defining 'home', establishing emotions towards places of the past and recounting the retainment of familial cultural practices and heritage, it is found that although the locale of 'home' can differ, 'home' as a feeling centered around family location, as well as an affinity to broader societal or national cultural values and practices remains consistent. Though this conclusion holds true irrespective of generational differences, it has been demonstrated how younger generations may face increased challenges or uncertainty in defining 'home', especially in light of a younger generation's increased plurality of cultural practices and increased transnational ties.

'Home' is ultimately shown to be an inextricably emotional concept, tied to notions of belonging, attachment, and identity. Associations with 'home' to expressions of love, gratitude, longing, nostalgia, and loss remain key indicators suggesting that 'home' is a topic held closely to the heart. In the context of transnational migration, in which 'home' is not necessarily stable or a given—particularly in younger generations—the emotional component to these elements can be felt especially strongly. The findings of this paper thus further complement ongoing calls for the inclusion of emotional and human responses within the field of migration research. In studying the topic of 'home', which very often crosses with aspects of culture and identity, such nuanced explorations could help provide deeper meanings and responses in designing appropriate responses for 'better' integration of migrants and social inclusion for all.

Declaration of competing interest

Primary author (Ernstberger) has personal family relation to the subject matter.

Acknowledgements

Our sincere and special thanks to the Faculty of Spatial Sciences of the University of Groningen for supporting and providing the resources for conducting this research.

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