Chapter One
Introduction

In late 2002, I flew from London Heathrow to Dubai to join the approximately 60,000 other British nationals living in the United Arab Emirates at the time (Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006). So, ‘Why Dubai?’, I was frequently asked, by academics and British migrants alike. My attempt to explain why I had chosen this city as the site of my fieldwork mixed convoluted justifications of an academic kind with confessions of searching the internet to find information about a region of which I had previously been completely ignorant. Yet, for someone intrigued by migrant subjectivities, temporarily relocating there made sense: Dubai was, shortly afterwards, acknowledged as among the ‘most global’ of cities with over one million ‘foreign born’ residents (Price & Benton-Short 2007). Large and diverse migrant populations, especially from south Asia, were already present by the millennium, yet academic engagement with migration to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, at least by those writing in English, was still extremely limited. The United Arab Emirates, and especially Dubai, were undergoing a period of rapid economic transformation, accompanied by a ‘super-fast urbanism’ (Bagaeen 2007), and were showcasing a new mode of globalisation that would be replicated across the region and that continues to resonate with transformations in city-building across the world (Elsheshtawy 2010). In 2002, then, Dubai was not yet the global city it is today, at least not in traditional terms, but it was a rapidly globalising city nonetheless (see Yeoh 1999). As such, Dubai was a productive site through which to explore transnational migrants’ ‘intimate subjectivities’ (Constable 2016; Mahdavi 2016) as they lived the global–local intersections of this newly unfolding postcolonial urbanity. Attention to the emplaced, embodied, and emotional production and negotiation of
intimacy, I will suggest, responds to wider calls to examine the ‘stickier’ moments of migrants’ everyday lives, illuminating the processes of reterritorialisation in transnational spaces (Jackson, Crang & Dwyer 2004).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is also a major destination for British migrants, equal in 10th place with Switzerland in terms of the number of UK nationals living abroad (Finch 2010). This is all the more remarkable since the nine countries that have more UK nationals living permanently abroad are either located within the European Union – where mobility for British nationals is at the time of writing still relatively straightforward (in the case of Spain, France, Ireland and Germany) – or are Anglophone former British settler colonies (Australia, USA, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa) where we might anticipate long-established patterns of migration to be maintained (see Finch 2010: 29). The British, and privileged migrants more generally, are frequently overlooked in mainstream policy and academic migration debates, especially in media discourses in the UK which almost entirely ignore out-migration. Most Britons resident in the UAE are living in Dubai or Abu Dhabi and are either there to work themselves or to accompany a spouse or parent. Indeed, the Kafala sponsorship system, discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, determines that residency in the UAE (as across the GCC countries more generally) is dependent on the sponsorship of an employer or a close family member.

It was only in the late 1960s that, following the discovery of oil and the political independence of the region, economic and infrastructural development started to bring Britons to live in what was, until independence in 1971, a British protectorate: the ‘Trucial States’ (Coles & Walsh 2010). Dubai’s emergence on the global stage as an ‘instant city’ (Bagaeen 2007) from 2000 onwards negates the much longer histories of the region, including the ongoing implications of British imperial involvement. The initial communities of British residents remained very small, for example, in 1968, the first census in Dubai recorded only 400 Britons a highly skilled professional migrant group consisting of a handful of advisors to the government, as well as the managerial level staff of banks and trading, shipping, and oil companies and a few teachers, health professionals, and town planners (Coles & Walsh 2010). By the mid-1980s, however, Findlay (1988) identified the Middle East, with the Gulf countries of notable significance, as emerging ahead of the Old Commonwealth countries as a destination for professional and managerial level migrants from the UK. Though British migrants in Dubai are hugely outnumbered by the much larger south Asian communities resident in the city, an analysis of this particular ‘postcolonial’ positionality, and their reproduction of privileged ‘expatriate’ subjectivities marked by nationality, class and race, is an important part of understanding Gulf subjectivities and global mobilities more broadly.

In contrast, the same question, ‘Why Dubai?’, when directed towards the British migrants I had temporarily relocated to interview, received rapid and seemingly straightforward replies: ‘It’s a tax-free sunshine.’ This response would
not be a surprise to anyone who has spent time with British migrants on a personal or research basis. The significance of both income and lifestyle in shaping global flows of privileged migration are well established in a wider interdisciplinary literature (e.g. Knowles & Harper 2009). Indeed, this literature has critically examined the relative privilege of this group as something that migration often amplifies, especially in terms of the racialisation of expatriate identities through whiteness (e.g. Leonard 2010). The phrase ‘tax-free sunshine’ also illuminates the economic diversification strategies that, at the time of my fieldwork in the early 2000s, were transforming Dubai into the global city it has become today. One of these centred on the provision of themed free-zones (for instance, Media City, Internet City, Education City, Healthcare City) set up to attract companies through the provision of economic incentives such as the allowance of tax-free salaries to be paid to expatriate employees (Davidson 2008). Dubai’s government has also actively sought to provide leisure and consumption opportunities to encourage a wealthy, highly skilled, and aspirational middle class to temporarily relocate from across the world. Arguably, Dubai has been hugely successful in this aim. Of course, its super-diversity is structured by massive inequalities and, as such, academics have critiqued its migrant labour regime (e.g. Buckley 2012; Davis 2005). From the perspective of British migrants, however, even non-graduates and those with a more modest skill set, ‘tax-free’ equates to more career opportunities and a higher disposable income than they could achieve at home, with the possibility of consuming an elite lifestyle. Meanwhile, highly skilled inter-company transfers and more traditional ‘expatriate packages’ in which accommodation, private healthcare, schooling and flights are added extras enable most families to move on the salary of one household member. This ‘lead’ migrant, whose career trajectory determines household mobility, is usually male so, for some couples at least, relocation to Dubai marks a shift from a more gender-neutral household structure based on the dual-career or dual-income strategies that have become increasingly common among middle-income couples in the UK.

Many of my interviewees suspected my interest in their lives had arisen from an ‘expat’ childhood, but I had never previously lived abroad. I was there to research their sense of home and belonging, prompted instead by questions about materialities and diaspora that had emerged, for me at least, from an academic curiosity fuelled by transformations in geography and cultural studies from the late 1990s. This book is still about those things, but it also departs massively from this primary objective of the fieldwork to consider the questions, narratives and observations that emerged unbidden during my fieldwork and invited me to explore their significance. Domesticity, transnationalism, belonging, home and identity, continue to be threads of analysis that run through this volume – they weave through the production of our intimate selves after all – but my focus is more directly on our geographies of the heart. Intimacy, highlighting personal relationships and the array of closer connections through which British migrants negotiate belonging in everyday life, turned out to dominate other people’s telling
of life in Dubai and my listening. I found myself increasingly exploring the textures of intimacy negotiated and enacted by British migrants in this particular spatial-temporal, and thoroughly transnational, urban site, but without a language for doing so.

Fortunately, geography, migration studies, and the wider social sciences have since been on their own theoretical journeys, providing me with the building blocks to more thoroughly explore these transnational geographies of the heart that I observed. With this analytical focus, I join a number of other scholars concerned with the embodied and emotional dimensions of mobilities (e.g. Bocagni & Baldassar 2015; Conradson & McKay 2007; Dunn 2009; Mai & King 2009) and with the links between globalisation and our intimate lives (e.g. Baldassar & Merla 2014; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2014; Padilla et al. 2007; Pratt & Rosner 2012). Accounts of migrants’ ‘intimate subjectivities’ more specifically have largely been conducted in contexts whereby the global commodification of intimacy is more overt – in domestic work, sex work and cross-border marriages, especially – illuminating the power relations involved in cross-cultural intimacies, the restrictions on migrant women’s reproductive rights arising from their marginalised status as contracted labour migrants, and the challenges of transnational family life (e.g. Constable 2009, 2016; Mahdavi 2016; Pratt 2012). Nonetheless, while I am focusing on freely established relationships from the perspective of relatively privileged migrants, questions of power and the impact of global work on the reproduction of migrants’ subjectivities remain important. In the analysis, I reveal the everyday efforts of the ‘doing’ of our intimate selves, with attention to how gender, class, nationality and race intersect. I argue that British migrants in Dubai enact intimate subjectivities marked by privilege (in terms of being middle class, white, and heterosexual), but also illuminate the diversity and instabilities of their social locations, the ambiguous impact of their migrant status, the ongoing work involved in the reconstitution of heteronormativity and the interplay of gendered subjectivities.

Existing literatures on intimate subjectivities have tended to privilege one kind of relationship, such as parenting or romance, and often, as a result, one kind of practice of intimacy (especially care). Here I depart from this emphasis to explore instead a range of interpersonal relationships that all inform migrants’ intimate subjectivities, including friendship, ‘community’, and couple relations (both marital and short-term sexual encounters). This is important because the meaning of each of these kinds of relationship is not entirely distinct, but also because our experiences of each kind of relationship are not emotionally separated from one another in everyday life. Put another way, an individual’s experience of couple or ‘love’ ties cannot be isolated from their enactment of friendship or family. Our understanding of the collective norms, shifts, and practices of each of these different kinds of personal relationships in migration thereby benefits from exploring the intersections of intimate subjectivities.

In this book, then, I examine migrants’ intimate subjectivities through ethnographic attention to different spaces, practices and accounts of intimacy in
the globalising city of Dubai. In doing so, I argue for the significance of geographies of intimacy: this is about an understanding of the spatialisation of intimate subjectivities and the importance of place in their ongoing constitution. I show how multiple sites of belonging work to shape our interpersonal relationships: bodies, homes, city spaces and transnational spaces. For example, the specific racialisation of the city helps to regulate intimacy, serving to entrench the significance of nationality in friendships and families; but these textures of intimacy are shaped also by transnational flows of people, objects and media, as well as by British migrants’ embodied performances of ‘expatriate’ subjectivities. Thereby, we see the significance of a geographical analysis in understanding this multiplicity in how intimacy is lived and imagined. Intimacy, I will argue, is one of the most significant, yet unacknowledged, discursive reference points in migrants’ narratives of their belonging and in their everyday navigation of a dialectic of home and migration.

**British Global Mobilities**

In their study of British migration (Finch 2010), the Institute of Public Policy Research estimated that some 5.6 million UK nationals were living outside the UK in 2008. This extraordinary statistic – equivalent to one in ten Britons – encompasses migrants of varying purpose and permanence, with diverse practices of settlement and mobility. A number of studies of British migration have been conducted and framed by a literature on highly skilled migration. For example, Beaverstock’s (1996, 2005) study of inter-company transferees in New York focused on highly skilled migrants relocating within and between financial transnational corporations. Beaverstock (2005: 246) identified these British residents as part of a transnational elite, ‘nomadic’ workers ‘whose ultimate international mobility meets the challenges of international business in globalisation’. Typically they were male (80%), married (60%) and were posted to New York for two years. Their career paths were often already international, however, with 40% having worked and lived in other financial centres for over a year, and with regular business travel maintaining these transnational connections (Beaverstock 2005). Their travel was highly privileged, with expatriate packages including adjusted salaries, generous housing allowances, business flights, relocation payments, and subsidies for school fees, health and personal insurance. These British migrants, like the scientists interviewed by Harvey (2008) in Boston’s pharmaceutical and biotechnology sector, are a valued part of the knowledge economy. Indeed, for Beaverstock (2011), ‘expatriation’ is an important process for world cities to secure ‘talented’ human capital and he positions British migration as part of this global process. In this way British migrants are figured as part of the ‘transnational capitalist class’ (Sklair 2000), defined by their global connections and mobilities, agents of a globalising world defined by movement.
(Highly) skilled migration is widely recognised as a strongly gendered process, with the accompanying spouse usually female (Coles & Fechter 2008; Hardill 1998; Hardill & MacDonald 1998; Kofman & Raghuram 2005).

This depiction of British migrants resonates with the professional occupation and privileged global status of many of the British residents I encountered in Dubai, but it is only part of the story. Existing studies of British migrants in global cities have consistently demonstrated that ‘expatriate communities’ are rarely homogenous and are increasingly stratified by class (as indicated by occupation, affluence, consumption practices and education), age, gender, marital status and length of stay (Knowles & Harper 2009; Leonard 2010; Scott 2006). Further evidence of this stratification is provided by ethnographic studies of ‘Western’ migrants (Farrer 2010; Fechter 2007). Such studies have focused mainly on cities in Asia, especially Hong Kong (Knowles & Harper 2009; Leonard 2010). In some cases, this research has shown that single working men and, increasingly, women disrupt the heteronormative picture of skilled ‘family’ migration, making the production of gendered migrant subjectivities more diverse (e.g. Fechter 2008; Willis & Yeoh 2008). Other research has shown that British migrants’ identities in global cities may be further differentiated by lifestyle factors (e.g. Knowles & Harper 2009; Scott 2007). While their perspective on the ‘good life’ may be constituted rather differently, their prioritisation of ‘lifestyle’ resonates with studies of Northern European migration to rural and coastal areas of Southern Europe (e.g. Benson 2010; King, Warnes & Williams 2000; Oliver 2008; O’Reilly 2000). For some, of course, these economic and lifestyle factors go hand in hand, intertwined in accounts of disposable income and class mobility, and Knowles and Harper (2009: 11) remind us that the recognition of lifestyle factors as significant need not lead to us deny that Britons are also migrating for work and/or a career: ‘Our use of lifestyle migration also acknowledges the inseparability of economic factors like income, and the quality of life it supports. In the global scheme of things, those who are already economically privileged are able to prioritise qualities beyond life’s financial elements.’

The role of mobility in the making of the middle-class self is explored more fully by Benson and O’Reilly (2009) in their articulation of the meaning of lifestyle migration. For them, lifestyle migration is ‘a search, a project, rather than an act, and it encompasses diverse destinations, desires and dreams’ (Benson and O’Reilly 2009: 610). As such, it is ‘necessarily comparative’ (ibid.: 610) and ‘part of their reflexive project of the self’ (ibid.: 615, drawing on Giddens). As Scott (2007: 1123) explained with reference to British migrants in Paris, mobility is ‘now a dominant feature of middle class reproduction’, such that not only migration itself but also the choice of location ‘can help to confer status by distinguishing them in a socio-geographical sense from other middle class groups’ (Scott 2007: 1124). Conradson and Latham’s (2005) notion of ‘middling transnationalism’ remains salient, then, in terms of describing the status of most British migrants, even while the heterogeneity of their backgrounds, motivations and
social locations are just beginning to be understood. In spite of their relatively privileged status in comparison with many other migrant workers in Dubai, British residents still do not have the right to apply for UAE citizenship. While some have recently gained access to a more permanent form of visa through property ownership or investment in business, most Britons gain residency in Dubai on a biannual basis through the sponsorship of their employer (or as a dependent on the visa of their spouse or parent). Indeed, the *Kafala* sponsorship system and its impact upon intimacies is discussed further in Chapter 3 and then traced through the book. At this point, however, it is relevant to highlight that one impact of their residence being tied to short-term contracts is that a sense of ‘temporariness’ often frames the experiences of Britons in the Gulf, irrespective of their actual length of residence. As a result, it is also useful and appropriate to consider the British through the theoretical lens of transnationalism, since they often continue to orientate their sense of belonging to the UK as well as Dubai. Routine ‘transnational practices’ (Vertovec 2001) such as property investments and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships with family and friends through annual visits and the use of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies), are therefore relevant to any analysis of their everyday lives. Nonetheless, their ‘emplacement’ in Dubai is also significant, as described in other recent explications of skilled migration (e.g. Meier 2014; Riemsdijk 2014; Ryan & Mulholland 2014). The relative privilege of British migrants in terms of being able to negotiate this mobility–settlement dialectic in terms that suit them is captured by the term ‘expatriate’. This is a term I further explore in the next section.

**Postcolonial Histories, Cities, Migrations**

Given the relative privilege of British migrants, an analysis of their intimate subjectivities might not seem especially useful or necessary. The location of this study – Dubai – would perhaps further discourage engaging in such an analysis, since of more urgent concern are the impacts of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries’ migration regimes on the human rights of low-income migrant workers, especially construction workers from south Asia (e.g. Human Rights Watch 2006), and questions about the environmental and social sustainability of the modes of urbanisation being produced (e.g. Davis 2005). Yet, the experiences of low- and middle-income south Asians across the GCC countries are now much better understood, resulting from a recent interdisciplinary literature on Gulf migration (e.g. Buckley 2012; Elshehtawy 2010; Gardner 2010; Kamrava & Babar 2009; Mahdavi 2016; Osella & Osella 2007; Vora 2013). A focus here on relatively affluent, or at least middle-class, migrants in the Gulf, especially those who are racialised through whiteness, complements and complicates this emerging literature. In this section, I make a case for selecting British migrants as my
foci for research on Dubai migrant subjectivities, by drawing on postcolonial theoretical perspectives. Scholars of postcolonial theory emphasise that the ‘post’ should not be used to refer to a specific historical moment, political status, or spatial context of formal decolonisation, rather that postcolonialism might be better understood as a productive set of critical approaches to colonialism and its legacies (Hall 1996). With this in mind, I suggest three reasons why we might be attentive to postcolonial perspectives: firstly, I provide a discussion, albeit brief, of Britain’s informal empire in the Gulf, 1820–1971, focusing on the ‘protectorate’ relationship with the ‘Trucial States’ (Onley 2005). Secondly, I consider the application of a ‘postcolonial cities’ (Yeoh 2001) perspective to Dubai, in order to acknowledge the traces of colonial ontologies of difference that shape the stratification of the globalising city through notions of race, ethnicity and nationality. Thirdly, I consider global British migration itself as one among many differently navigated ‘postcolonial migrations’ (Mains et al. 2013), looking at how ‘expatriate’ subjectivities are racialised through whiteness (Fechter & Walsh 2012; Knowles & Harper 2009; Leonard 2010). The empirical chapters provide evidence for the significance of all three perspectives in exploring intimacy in the globalising city of Dubai in the early to mid-2000s.

Firstly, then, a postcolonial perspective forces us to examine the production of Gulf subjectivities with an acknowledgement of the histories of this region. One of the main issues with much existing Western commentary on Dubai is the way it wipes away any acknowledgement of historical settlement on the Arabian peninsula. Consider, for instance, how Krane (2009) introduces the United Arab Emirates:

The Arabian Peninsula is a sun-hammered land of drifting sands and rubble wastes. Ranges of unnamed peaks slash across the landscape their sun-shattered rock sharp enough to cut skin. Salt flats shimmer in the moonlight night after night, untouched by humans for eternity… the United Arab Emirates sit on the southeastern corner of Arabia, the most desolate corner of a desolate land… History simply happened elsewhere… (Krane 2009: 3–5).

Locating this hyper-modern city firmly back in a ‘timeless’ desert is, arguably, a strategic representational move that allows ‘Western’ commentators and their audience to assume an ethnocentric superiority in their evaluative standpoint. The presumed complete lack of history in Dubai is an idea that circulates in global media and local ‘expatriate’ discourses alike, yet is disputed by scholarly analysis of the region, including archaeological and historical accounts of the pre-Islamic period, the Islamic period, and the tribal society through which the traditional economies, such as fishing and pearling, were organised (Heard-Bey 2001, 2004; see also Al Abed & Hellyer 2001). Had the region been empty desert, it would not have attracted the attention of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century: they were the first European imperial power to attempt to gain control of parts of what was then known in Europe as ‘Historic Oman’. Their motivation
was primarily commercial – to control the spice trade with this vital trading port between Africa, Asia and the European markets. As Heard-Bey (2004: 272) argues:

... it was not just a group of daring Portuguese adventurers who conquered the traditional trade emporia of the Gulf and parts of the Indian ocean; this was the result of carefully prepared strategy at the Court in Lisbon aimed at taking over by any means possible every sector of the very profitable trade between the Indian Ocean coasts and Europe.

Though the Portuguese were expelled from all the ports by the mid-seventeenth century, their presence created conflict with English and Dutch trading companies who wished to replace them, as well as with Persians trying to promote their sovereignty, such that a new Arab power was able to emerge: the Qawāsim (Heard-Bey 2004). The Qawāsim Sheikhs ruled from Ras al Khaimah over much of the northern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. British ships using the Strait of Hormuz refused to pay the tolls requested by the Qawāsim fleet, which responded with piracy (Onley 2005).

As a result, authorities in British India sent a naval expedition to impose an anti-piracy treaty on all the rulers and governors of the Coast of Oman and, from 1820, a Political Agent was headquartered on Qishm Island (Onley 2005), now a popular stopping point for tourist dhows. Onley (2005) describes how this post was amalgamated in the new role of Resident in the Persian Gulf who became responsible for Britain’s relations with the entire Gulf region, supported by a naval squadron to patrol the Gulf waters, and how, under this control from British India, a series of treaties or ‘Exclusive Agreements’ were imposed over the next 150 years (also signed by Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait). While imperial historians are divided as to whether they view the Gulf states as part of Britain’s formal or informal empire during this time (see Onley 2005), either way, British influence was maintained and the treaties served British economic and political interests. As Heard-Bey (2001: 117) explains:

The UAE never was a colony, but its forerunner, the ‘Trucial States’, was increasingly absorbed into the British orbit by a system of agreements which successive British governments, first in Delhi and then in London, deemed necessary in order to best pursue their particular objectives of the day.

In his life story, From Rags to Riches, Mohammed Al-Fahim (1995) is one of the few commentators to present an Emirati perspective on the historical British presence in this region. He described British imperialism as ‘unwanted domination’ (ibid.: 27), revealing how political events in Europe and colonial goals in Asia ‘had a deep and lasting impact on our development’. When the British destroyed the Qawāsim’s fleet of ships and imposed restrictions on the size of new ships, they also destroyed trading and seafaring capabilities, as well as the ship-building industry (Al-Fahim 1995: 37). Another treaty stopped the import and
export of arms, ‘completely disregarding the inhabitants’ need to be armed for defensive purposes, as well as for pride and prestige’ (ibid.: 35). In addition, concessions were imposed on the pearling industry, ensuring a monopoly for Indian merchants that led to decades of poverty in the region, long before the industry faced competition from Japanese cultured pearls (ibid.: 40–41).

From the 1930s, British policy towards the Trucial States became much more intrusive, in preparation for the operation of British oil company personnel, and the way in which the rulers dealt with domestic matters, such as intertribal strife, was more closely monitored (Heard-Bey 2001). In 1955, for example, the British, knowing the oil-producing potential of the Buraimi area at the intersection of Saudi Arabia, Oman and the UAE, violently cleared Saudi troops to ensure American oil companies would not secure the concession (Al-Fahim 1995: 62). Al-Fahim (1995: 73) describes the development of the oil industry as one of ‘mixed blessings’. Prior to independence, he argues:

The oil companies discouraged the locals from participating in any way other than as hired hands. The people who worked for the oil companies during the 1950s and early 1960s look back with bitterness rather than fondness on those early days. Many have since become prominent citizens; some are ministers or ambassadors, others are highly qualified people in their respective professions. The painful memories of their exploitation, however, linger on even today. While they may have forgiven, they can never forget (Al-Fahim 1995: 73).

While locals were employed as manual labourers, they were supervised by expatriates from India and neighbouring Arab countries (Syria, Lebanon and Palestine), such that: ‘The promise of the oil industry proved empty for Abu Dhabians, at least in the early stages. They were under-paid, treated poorly, denied opportunities and made to work in very harsh conditions’ (al-Fahim 1995: 76). In 1966, when Sheikh Zayed became the Ruler of Abu Dhabi, he began to renegotiate the concessions and push for an improvement in terms and conditions for employees (Al-Fahim 1995). Today, the government of Abu Dhabi holds the controlling interest in the Emirate’s oil industry.

For Stephenson (2013: 7), Dubai’s urban expansion since 2000, funded initially by oil-related income, the spectacular mega-projects that others scorn so readily, ‘not only stands as a representation of symbolic capital but also as a testimony to decolonisation, signifying ways in which Dubai (and the UAE) has moved towards an agenda of self-determination, political autonomy and economic freedom’. Kanna (2014) too sees echoes of Dubai’s historical position as a node in British imperial networks at play in its contemporary urbanscape, especially in its privatised leisure spaces predicated on exclusivism, and argues that:

Dubai elites – the ruling family above all, but also allies of the ruling family in the merchant class – drew upon British patronage and Western ideologies of free trade, consumption, and racial management to help produce, or (as Chopra might say) coproduce, urban space in post-independence Dubai (Kanna 2014, 606).
Kanna (2014: 607), influenced by Henri Lefebvre’s notion of space as a ‘palimpsest’ that ‘archives social struggles both past and present’, sees Dubai’s current role as a global leisure and tax-free haven as related to its history as a point of political stability in the region. Furthermore, he provides evidence from his interviews that Emiratis are, today, ambivalent towards this urbanisation, raising concerns about the disrespect of Emirati Muslim customs and their feelings of being ‘colonised’ and excluded from their own country by the presence of Europeans, including the ‘sensorial assault’ of immodest dress in shopping malls (ibid.: 612). His interlocutors described Europeans as coming from ‘al bilad ma bihad al-karama [countries without a sense of dignity],’ leading Kanna (2014: 612) to suggest there is ‘a tangible sense among both Emiratis and other non-Europeans of the presence of a neo-colonial hierarchy which privileges European and North Americans’.

In previous publications, most notably in a collaborative paper with Anne Coles (see Coles & Walsh 2010; also Walsh 2010, 2012), I have also argued that it is productive to examine contemporary Dubai using a postcolonial theoretical lens, particularly in terms of the negotiation of its everyday cultural politics and the production of racialised subjectivities. Brenda Yeoh draws together literature on postcolonial cities to identify that:

The postcolonial city traces continuity rather than disjuncture from its colonial predecessor in the nature and quality of social encounters, which are shot through with notions of ‘race’ and ‘culture’ as markers of difference and bases for interaction (Yeoh 2001: 460).

This certainly resonates with urban encounters in Dubai, as will become evident in Chapter 4. The incorporation of ‘colonial categories’ of difference and privilege (Yeoh 2001, drawing on Jacobs) is also evident within the urban fabric itself, through the government’s residential zoning policies, and with respect to the organisation of the labour market. Dubai’s labour market is strongly segmented, with the recruitment and employment of migrant labour occurring along distinctly nationalised, ethnicised and racialised lines (see, for example, Malecki & Ewers 2007). The legacies of empire globally, as well as the specific historical relationship between Britain and ‘the Trucial States’, means that, while they might dispute the allegations of their neo-colonial relationship with Dubai and instead highlight their vulnerabilities as non-citizens subject to the regulatory framework of the Kafala sponsorship system (see Chapter 4), contemporary British migrants are relatively privileged in their migrations to Dubai.

Finally, then, and linked to the above, an engagement with postcolonial theory is also relevant to this study because it examines one particular category of ‘postcolonial migrant’ (Mains et al. 2013): the privileged ‘expatriate’. As Alan Lester (2012: 7) argues, ‘expatriate’ migrants, ‘very often actively perform routines and rhythms inscribed through colonial practice’ and a number
of researchers across disciplines have explored how today’s ‘expatriate’ migrations draw on colonial histories in terms of the routes, discourses and narratives of their everyday lives (e.g. Conway & Leonard 2014; Cranston 2016; Fechter & Walsh 2010, 2012; Knowles 2005; Knowles & Harper 2009; Leonard 2010). Caroline Knowles (2005: 107) convincingly argued that we can find clues to the contemporary salience of empire in the global mobilities of today’s British migrants: ‘Empire survives as a feeling of choice and opportunity, (divergent) forms of entitlement, facilitated by a (racialised) geography of routes already carved out and traversed by others.’ Indeed, the baggage of Empire is even present in the very terminology of ‘expatriate’ and its usage.

Anne-Meike Fechter (Fechter 2007: 1; following Cohen) was among the first to engage critically with the use of ‘expatriate’ in both colloquial and scholarly contexts, identifying the distinctive application of this terminology to Westerners, in spite of its broader definition from the Latin of ‘a person who lives outside their native country,’ such that, ‘the majority of contemporary migrants who leave their countries to live elsewhere are typically not referred to as expatriates’. This seeming paradox can be explained by the connotations that this term carries with it in terms of the classed and racialised migrant subjectivities it evokes (Fechter & Walsh 2010). This is why Chapter 4 refers to the making of ‘expatriate’ subjectivities through spatialised urban life-worlds and discourses, but why I use the term ‘migrant’ to refer to my interlocutors throughout (see also Cranston 2016). It is important to note that many Britons do not think of themselves as either migrants or expatriates, and certainly wish to distance themselves from a ‘colonialist’ and ‘imperialist’ Britishness. Nevertheless, a postcolonial theoretical perspective is productive in encompassing those who are privileged by colonial legacies, since their movements and subjectivities are a vital part of understanding the racialisation of contemporary global cities.

In spite of the deconstruction of race as a social category, for a long time whiteness remained invisible, normative, unmarked, unnamed and, by extension, a non-racial or racially neutral category, until critical theories of whiteness were explicated (Frankenberg 1993). It is now widely understood that ‘race’ shapes the lives of those who are privileged by it, not just those whom it oppresses, and that mainstream spatiality is complicit with whiteness (Frankenberg 1993). Recently, the theorisation of ‘whiteness’ has been used to examine ‘postcolonial migrations’ in various countries, for example, Indonesia (Fechter 2005) and Hong Kong (Knowles 2005; Leonard 2008, 2010; Yeoh & Willis 2005). Fechter’s (2007) ethnography of Westerners in Indonesia, for example, revealed the significance of the marking of raced, classed, and nationalised boundaries in relation to the local community. Race, gender and nationality remain critical to my analysis of intimate subjectivities in this book. In the next section, I explain how this book is situated within a broader literature on transnational migrants’ subjectivities.
Theorising Transnationalism: From the Global to the Intimate

At the end of the 1990s, following a decade of analyses of globalisation that uncritically highlighted unbounded mobilities and processes of deterritorialisation, theorists of international migration began to call for micro-analyses that could capture the transnational practices ‘embodied in specific social relations established between specific people, situated in unequivocal localities, at historically determined times’ (Guarnizo & Smith 1998: 11). Within geography, for example, Kathryn Mitchell (1997a, 1997b) made an appeal against the increasingly abstract depictions of global flows, cautioning against a celebratory understanding of transnationalism as inherently transgressive and questioning the ‘hype of hybridity’. In a Special Issue of *Antipode* (Mitchell 1997b), she introduced four ‘transnational spatial ethnographies’ to locate the specificities of global processes and trace transnational flows through empirical material on ‘real’ bodies and ‘real’ geographies. A few years later, Yeoh, Willis and Fakhri (2003: 212) focused on the ‘edges’ of transnationalism to demonstrate that transnational identities ‘while fluid and flexible, are also at the same time grounded in particular places at particular times’. And geographers continued to explore the way in which transnational processes and spaces are ‘constituted through the dialectical relations of the grounded and flighty, the settled and the flowing, the sticky and the smooth’ (Jackson et al. 2004: 8).

Reflecting on these broader debates a decade later, Geraldine Pratt and Victoria Rosner (2012) outline their theoretical approach – the ‘global intimate’ – arguing that bringing the global and the intimate into a conceptual relationship can be seen as part of ‘a distinctively feminist’ response to these questions of transnational relations.3 The essays in their edited collection ‘explicitly adopt a method that involves disrupting the very idea of scale, by sliding between global and intimate, weaving together these two different modes of feminist thought’ (ibid.: 19). Pratt and Rosner (2012: 20) argue:

The intimate directs us to an ethical stance towards the world – namely, an approach that neither simplifies nor stereotypes but is attentive to specific histories and geographies. If we can guard against universalizing particular structures of intimacy and resist any facile connection between women and the intimate, we can find in the idea of the intimate a language and approach that can disrupt tendencies towards totalization that inevitably arise when we try to theorise on a planet-wide basis... By the same token, ‘thinking globally’ can provide a necessary counterweight to traditional analyses of intimacy by calling attention to the unintended consequences of failing to place the local setting in a broader context or refusing to look at the threads that connect intimate practices to a larger world.

For Pratt and Rosner (2012) then, ‘the intimate’ is a term that allows us to focus on the more personal dimensions of everyday life, by highlighting our bodies, senses,
emotions, affects, attachments, and the materiality of social existence. The rich theoretical possibilities of ‘grounding’ transnational relations through attention to the ‘global intimate’ (Pratt & Rosner 2012) and, as part of this, in analysing migrants’ intimate subjectivities as I do in this book, reflect broader theoretical shifts in how migration is understood in current literatures. In the remaining discussion of this section, then, I will argue that migration is already conceptualised through a trio of concepts that help us in this task, namely: emplacement, embodiment and emotion.

The global/local dialectic to which Pratt and Rosner (2012) draw attention is also at centre-stage in Michael Smith’s (2005: 237) account of ‘transnational urbanism’, an analysis of contemporary cities that captures ‘a sense of distanciated yet situated possibilities for constituting and reconstituting social relations’. His emphasis on translocalities as a way of thinking about ‘new modes of being-in-the-world’ (ibid.: 237) highlighted the way in which transnational flows work through local sites. This optic was taken up by Conradson and Latham (2005a: 228) who found the theoretical lens of transnational urbanism attractive precisely for its ‘creative incorporation of mobility and emplacement’ and the understanding of migrants’ everyday lives it therefore affords:

Whilst acknowledging the scope of contemporary global mobility, transnational urbanism is a concept that remains attentive to the continuing significance of place and locality. In this sense it may be seen as advancing those earlier critical impulses which found first-wave globalisation narratives to be insufficiently nuanced. It eschews accounts of individuals traversing a somehow frictionless world, endorsing instead research that details the emplaced corporealities of such movement (Conradson & Latham 2005a: 228).

Conradson and Latham (2005a: 228) go on to suggest that a focus on the everyday mundane practices involved in transnational mobility is especially productive in this respect, allowing researchers to explore how people negotiate transnational life-worlds and get a sense of the ‘texture of the globalising places we inhabit’. As they suggest:

Viewed from this quotidian angle, even the most hyper-mobile transnational elites are ordinary: they eat; they sleep; they have families who must be raised, educated and taught a set of values. They have friends to keep up with and relatives to honour. While such lives may be stressful and involve significant levels of dislocation, for those in the midst of these patterns of activity, this effort is arguably simply part of the taken-for-granted texture of daily existence. An investigation of the life-worlds of these mobile individuals, and the activities which constitute them, thus provides a useful counterpoint to the inflationary tendencies of some writings on globalisation (Conradson & Latham 2005, 228–289).

Within my own research, I have already contributed to these debates on emplacement by exploring how migrant belonging is constituted across and through the
dialectics of migration/home and mobility/settlement in terms of domestic belongings (e.g. Walsh 2006b). Here I extend these debates by exploring how the production of intimate subjectivities operates across these dialectics and informs the texture of everyday space in Dubai.

Alongside these concerns with everyday emplacement of transnationalism, it is possible to trace the emergence of a body of work on migration in which bodies come to the fore and migrants are understood as embodied subjects (see also Blunt 2008). Silvey (2005: 144) argues that feminist migration researchers have been at the forefront of these debates, producing research that ‘aims to identify and unpack the power relations embedded in, shaped through, and reinforced by migrants’ bodies in particular places and across space’. For Silvey (2005) this approach involves ‘reclaiming bodies as analytically central and as lived sites of power’ (ibid.: 144) and builds on broader feminist contributions theorising embodied subjectivities and the politicisation of identities more generally (ibid.: 142). Migration, then, is revealed as ‘a socially embedded process such that it reflects and reinforces social organization’ along multiple lines (Silvey 2005: 142). Indeed, feminist migration approaches tend now to examine gender subjectivities as co-produced through race, ethnicity and/or class (e.g. Anthias 2012; Batnitzky, McDowell & Dyer 2008), but with the primary focus on gender nonetheless. The ‘gender politics animating migration’ (Silvey 2005: 138) have most fully been elucidated in work on the feminisation of labour migration related to the ‘commodification of intimacy’ (Constable 2009; Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2003), especially domestic workers, sex workers and marriage migrants from Asia navigating the proximities and immobilities of transnational social spaces (e.g. Constable 2003, 2007, 2014; Mahdavi 2011, 2016; McKay 2007; Piper & Roces 2003; Pratt 2012). The language of intimate subjectivities has emerged within this literature, but has not yet been analysed in relation to more privileged migration from the global North or extended to encompass the spatialisation of interpersonal relationships of varying kinds (e.g. friendship and community). It is important to note also that work on migrants’ embodiment has not been limited to femininities and there are even some studies focusing on masculinity in the Gulf (see Johnson 2015; Osella & Osella 2000). Of relevance to my own focus on relatively privileged male migrants, the entrenchment of patriarchal social power through an increased economic status brought about by migration has been observed among the transnational business elite (Connell, cited in Shen 2008).

Alongside this gender-focused research, queer-theoretical perspectives have also significantly informed our understanding of migrants as embodied subjects (e.g. Fortier 2003; Gorman-Murray 2007, 2009; Knopp 2004; Luibhéid & Cantú 2005; Manalansan 2006). The ‘queer migration’ literature has mainly focused on non-heterosexuals, illuminating the mobilities of coming out, the desire to move to a gay neighbourhood or city, and migration for or away from a relationship. But, it might also encompass a range of non-heteronormative others, including straight migrants who are transgressing the norms of citizenship of family life.
transnational geographies of the heart (Manalansan 2006; Oswin 2010b). For Gorman-Murray (2009: 443–444), for example, ‘foregrounding the role of sexuality in migration demands focusing attention on the body itself as it moves through space’ and the ‘desirous and sensuous dimensions of relocation decisions.’

Finally, emotions have become a much more central and widely adopted framework in migration studies, evident in the recent publication of several special issues that consider various dimensions of the emotional life of migrants, including the emotion work involved in their employment and the management of relationships across transnational fields (e.g. Boccagni & Baldassar 2015; Conradson & McKay 2007; Mai & King 2009; Svašek 2010). Nicola Mai and Russell King (2009: 297), for example, suggested that the two mainstream research paradigms dominating migration studies were (still) implicitly pushing aside ‘the role of emotions, feelings and affect in the motivation and experience of migration’. They identified, firstly, an economic and sociological approach that focuses on the working lives of migrants and the costs and benefits of migration, and a second theoretical agenda, emerging from anthropology and cultural studies, that highlights the exploration of socio-cultural identities and encounters. As a result, they argued:

emotional relations are regarded as something apart from the economic or the geographic, as something essentially private, removed from the researcher’s gaze traditionally fixed on spatial mobility patterns, push-pull factors, the ‘laws’ of migration, the mobility transition, assimilation/integration and the cross-cultural encounter (Mai & King 2009: 297).

They advocate, then, for an ‘emotional turn’ in migration and mobility studies which explicitly places emotions at the heart of migration decision-making and behaviour through a focus on love and sexuality. For Mai and King, love and sexuality are concepts that should not be applied only to a distinctive set of migration experiences or to help us understand particular migrant identities but, rather, should be recognised as integral to our understanding of migration as an economic and political process.

To place intimacy at the centre of this analysis, therefore, does not mean that I overlook the economic and structural forces shaping and, indeed, regulating migrants’ lives as they participate in global work. Even among privileged and (highly) skilled lifestyle migrants, such as the British in Dubai, it becomes apparent from the empirical chapters later in this book that the emotional dimensions of their lives, including intimacies, are shaped by the materialities in which they are embedded. Sarah Lamb’s (2002) early intervention in the debates on transnational ageing highlighted the intimate everyday practices through which transnationalism is constituted. According to Lamb (2002: 300), similarly to Pratt and Rosner (2012), we need to recognise that transnationalism ‘involves not only the macro, depersonalised flows of global capital, mass media images and proliferating
technologies but also the “intimate”, lived everyday lives of particular people’. Lamb (2002) used the term ‘intimacy’ to signal the everyday embodied practices between kin, especially forms of expressing love between ageing parents and their children. She revealed how something as seemingly ‘trivial’ as making tea was entangled in the emotional negotiation of familial relationships across generations, as well as the changing meaning of practices in transnational life-worlds.

In arguing for the incorporation of emotions in an understanding of translocal subjectivities, David Conradson and Deidre McKay (2007) argue that it is necessary to start with an understanding of the self as a relational achievement. They argue:

From this perspective who we are derives in part from the multiple connections we have to other people, events and things, whether these are geographically close or distant, located in the present or past. This constellation of others may influence us in diverse ways, acting via physical encounter and somatic internalisation, in response to the power of images and narratives, and through the operation of memory and desire. The everyday mannerisms that characterise a person – their rhythms of speech, bodily comportment and taste preferences – are testament to such influences, while also highlighting the complex interplay between inheritance and environment. We can also observe that some events and relational connections have enduring impacts upon the self, such as the resonance of educational opportunity or perhaps the grief of a personal loss. Others touch us only fleetingly, however, and are quickly absorbed in the passing flow of life, seemingly forgotten (Conradson & McKay 2007: 167–168).

Thereby selfhood becomes ‘always a hybrid achievement, emerging out of a diverse range of connections’ (ibid.: 168). As such, Conradson and McKay (2007) are explicit in theorising the relationality of migrants’ subjectivities and I concur with their view that it is in through the transformation of people’s connections to others that international migration might reconfigure subjectivities:

Geographical mobility inevitably changes the relations we have with emplaced configurations of people and events, while at the same time bringing us into contact with new and different ecologies of place (Conradson 2005). For transnational migrants, the relational effects of mobility may be particularly significant. A person might choose, for example, to exchange a sense of community and reciprocity in a village setting for the economic opportunity yet relative anonymity of a major city. In the process, their selves will be shaped by new relations in the destination setting, as well as through the distance obtained from those that characterise the sending context. Mobility thus provides opportunities for new forms of subjectivity and emotion to emerge, whether broadly positive or negative (Sheller & Urry 2006) (Conradson & McKay 2007: 168).

In order to extend existing research on migrants’ subjectivities, in this book I build on the broader literatures on migration and transnationalism that I have
mapped above. My usage of the term ‘intimacy’ departs, however, from that of Pratt and Rosner (2012) who adopt it in bringing together authors focusing on bodies, households, emotions, affects, and materialities. Furthermore, in work invoking the terminology of intimate subjectivities, the focus has been primarily on the negotiation of work and either motherhood or marriage (e.g. Constable 2016; Mahdavi 2016). In contrast, sociological studies of personal life have at their heart the notion of an ‘intimacy of the self’ (Jamieson 1998) such that intimacy, in this book, is not used as a synonym for physical closeness, proximity, or sexual relationships. Instead, rather than sexual or couple relations, my focus will be inclusive of a broader range of personal relationships among communities, friends, and families as well. Chapter 2 further explores related literatures and my approach to intimacy, but first I outline the structure of the book.

Approaching Intimacy: The Structure of the Book

First, in Chapter 2, I review the extensive interdisciplinary literatures on intimacy and related concepts, setting out in much more detail the theoretical approach this book takes and why. Most notably, the second half of the chapter works to establish how the concept of ‘intimate subjectivities’ focuses attention on the spatialities of intimacy. I note that bodies remain important in understanding and analysing intimacy, since our experience of personal relationships is corporeal and emotional, and our enactment of them embodied and performative. For Jamieson (1998), one of the tasks is to evaluate whether intimacy exists in people’s personal lives. In contrast, I am concerned with exploring how the desire (or not) for something we might understand as ‘intimacy’ informs practices of everyday relational life and the way in which people talk about and negotiate their personal relationships. While Jamieson (1998: 8) recognises that ‘intimacy’ often privileges emotional disclosure at the expense of recognising ‘silent’ practices of loving, caring, affection, and sharing, she also stresses that close association and detailed cognitive knowledge of another are insufficient to ensure intimacy, since a degree of sympathy and empathy are key.

Chapter 3 then outlines the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) context, especially the economic transformation of Dubai, as well the methods for the study of British migrants, who they are, and includes a reflexive statement. One of the important contributions of Chapter 3 to understanding intimacy in the lives of British migrants is that it examines the Kafala sponsorship system which, as mentioned briefly earlier, determines their status in Dubai as non-citizens whose residence is temporary. While in practice many Britons live much longer in Dubai than they perhaps anticipated (the length of residence among interviewees ranged
between one and twenty-five years), this legislative environment nevertheless frames their settlement and the cultures of intimacy that emerge. Another significant aspect of everyday life in Dubai that is introduced and explored in Chapter 3 regards the racialised and classed social hierarchy. Again, the implications for British migrants’ intimate subjectivities can be traced throughout the empirical chapters.

Chapters 4–7 are the empirical chapters analysing, in turn, the partial separation of British migrants within the wider socio-spatial segregation of the city; the establishment of community organisations and friendship; sex, desire and romance; and family life. In more detail, the objectives of the empirical chapters are as follows. The first empirical chapter discusses the making of British ‘expatriate’ subjectivities in Dubai. I explore British migrants’ imaginaries of Dubai and Emirati culture, as well as their encounters with the national legislation and bureaucracy. It is important for later chapters to understand how British ‘expatriate’ subjectivities come to be marked as distinctive, as well as how racialised ontologies of difference help regulate the production of intimate subjectivities in everyday life in Dubai. British migrants rarely develop meaningful relationships with Emirati nationals beyond workplace collegiality, as a result of complex processes of national boundary making arising from both communities. Therefore, explicating how British migrants relate to citizens and other migrants as I do in Chapter 4 helps to explain the dominant focus of subsequent empirical chapters on relationships between British nationals or between Britons and a larger group of mainly white, Western migrants understood as ‘expatriates’. I suggest that the ‘expatriate’ lifestyle is distinctly spatialised in Dubai, taking place largely within privatised leisure spaces with particular implications for the regulation of intimacy. Such environments serve to exclude low-income migrant workers, limiting contact to client and work-based relationships. I do explore how some of these encounters play out, especially those taking place in what might be called ‘intimate’ spaces (the taxi, home, or nightclub, for example), but I argue that the establishment of British ‘expatriate’ subjectivities for the most part precludes intimacy emerging in these relations. Significantly, Jamieson (1998: 1) suggests that intimacy requires equality in the relationship in which it is to be enacted: ‘intimacy across genders, generations, classes and races can only take on this character if the participants can remove social barriers and transcend structural inequalities’. Arguably, the politicisation of intimacy acquires further significance and new meanings in the transnational spaces of Dubai which are characterised by diversity, segregation and shifting hierarchies. As such, this politicisation is key to my enquiry also.

Chapter 5 builds on the preceding discussion to examine more deeply the social lives of British migrants. I first explore the various types of voluntary community organisations (VCOs) that exist in Dubai and cater for British
migrants’ expressed desire to feel a sense of community and meet new people who are similar to them after relocating. Some of these clubs are highly exclusive, based on the nationality of their membership, while others are more implicitly racialised and classed spaces. The significance of intimacy in grounding migrants in their new city becomes apparent in this chapter, with experiences of old hobbies and new activities leading to the development of friendships among the participants. As such, in the second half of Chapter 5, I go on to explore the significance of friendship itself, identifying some of the transformations in friendship practices among British migrant residents as they negotiate settlement, however temporarily, in Dubai.

From the discussion of VCOs and friendship in Chapter 5, the distinctive lifestyles of single and married British migrants begin to emerge. Chapters 6 and 7 explore the intimate subjectivities of these two (internally heterogeneous) groups in turn. Chapter 6 focuses almost exclusively on single Britons, examining the night life and associated cultures of sex, desire, and romance. In the chapter, I show how straight British migrants enact new intimate subjectivities in Dubai, contesting not only the heteronormative couple relations of their peers in the UK and the married British migrants they encounter after relocation, but also contravening the UAEs Decency Laws. Geographies of displacement and the amplified social status of British migrants in Dubai appear to encourage gendered practices of sexuality and friendship to be performed through the night-time spaces of the globalising city.

The final empirical chapter focuses on family life, but maintains a critical approach to the work involved in constructing a heteronormative domestic home life. The chapter highlights how these British families, like those of other migrants (e.g. see Pratt 2012 on migrant domestic workers) are embedded in the broader political economy of global work. In the case of Britons in Dubai, this demands of them gendered relationships to work and home which can challenge the sense of equality experienced by married women. The chapter discusses the notion of ‘family time’, domestic homemaking as a family practice, the continued significance of relationships with adult children, and familial relationships with parents and siblings ‘left behind’, focusing on the way in which migration to Dubai necessitates the renegotiation of family ties and practices.

Overall, then, the book examines different kinds of personal relationships in distinct chapters, organised as we might anticipate from both existing academic theory and everyday life. However, having explored British migrants’ intimate subjectivities ethnographically, I am also able to draw attention to the moments when in practice, or discursively, different kinds of relationship inform each other. For example, in Chapter 5, interviewees describe how their friendships are informed by their couple relations, more specifically gendered parenting and working practices. The final chapter offers some concluding remarks on intimacy, focused especially on the spatialities of globalisation.
Notes

1 This figure comes from the first of two reports compiled by the Institute of Public Policy Research – *Brits Abroad* (Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006) and *Global Brit* (Finch 2010) – that provide the best statistical estimates currently available on the numbers and destinations of international British migrants. The authors of these studies readily admit that the IPPR figures are compromised by the difficulties in capturing this kind of quantitative data (e.g. Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006: 8). To get the best possible estimate they bring together several empirical sources, each incomplete in its coverage and with varying degrees of reliability. The International Passenger Survey, for example, is widely acknowledged to be of limited value since the sample is so small. The IPPR estimates of the numbers of Britons in the UAE, however, reveals some more specific limitations of this methodology for this particular geographical site. A more widely applicable problem with census data – that it is produced only once a decade and quickly becomes out of date – is magnified in the UAE where extremely rapid population increases were seen after the millennium, such that uprating the figures based on previous growth patterns still leaves the figures underestimating the likely numbers. The Department of Work and Pensions data on people receiving their pensions is also virtually irrelevant in the UAE because the British nationals there need to be of working age or accompanying their employed spouse/parent. The UAE was also not considered a high-risk country so the Britons I spoke with were very rarely registering with the British consulate. Finally, the Labour Force Survey captures returnees across the UK so might be more reliable for well-established expatriate destinations, but would not have registered the explosion in out-migration to Dubai until some years later. The actual number of Britons resident in the UAE during the period of this ethnographic study was, therefore, likely to be significantly higher than these figures would suggest and was estimated to be 100,000 by interviewees.

2 In exploring gendered identities, my understanding also draws on a large body of work in geography and beyond that approaches femininities and masculinities as plural, diverse and spatially contingent (e.g. Berg & Longhurst 2003; van Hoven & Hörschelmann 2005). Hopkins and Noble (2009: 815) reflect on a disciplinary move to provide more nuanced accounts of masculinities that embrace such spatial contingencies.

3 Pratt and Rosner’s (2012) appeal to consider the ‘specificity of processes in distinctive places’ through a dialectical notion of the intimate–global does, however, resonate with other critical projects not framed by feminism e.g. that of ‘global ethnography’ (Burawoy et al. 2000).

4 For some, this is framed in the language of affect, for others emotion, and some scholars incorporate both. For example, Kevin Dunn notes: ‘Transnationalism is about encounters between different bodies which leads to all kinds of intimacies and emotions, some that generate sharing and exchange and others which lead to tension, friction and even hostility and anger. And importantly these intimacies are visceral encounters; they trigger embodied and affective responses’ (Dunn 2009: 6). As I consider further in Chapter 2, affect and emotion are very different theoretical terms in the field of geography, but my own approach, informed by my methodological choices, highlights the emotional geographies of migrants’ intimate subjectivities.
As early as 2002, Russell King wrote of ‘love migrations’ as ‘an essential component of the “new map of migration” in Europe. King (2002) drew our attention to the way in which contemporary migrations were increasingly being explained with reference to individual and personal factors. While highlighting the ‘libidinal factor’ for students and tourists, he suggested that ‘love migration can probably be found in all types of migration’ and pointed to the transformation in technologies ‘shrinking Europe’ as increasing the chances of ‘transnational intimacy’ and ‘transnational love’ being maintained. In the European context, King understood major cities as being the principal nodes for an ‘intensification of cross-national personal contact, relationships, partnerships and marriages’, for here several important sociological factors – namely, the expansion of linguistic competence and ‘the expansion of “global experience” industries (tourism, travel, leisure, education, networking)’ – coalesced to ‘produce an expansion of individual transnational interfaces’ (99–100).