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Emplacing linked lives: A qualitative approach to understanding the co-evolution of residential mobility and place attachment formation over time

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Abstract

Despite growing interest in issues of residential mobility and place attachment in a globalised world, research within Environmental and Community psychology has tended to overlook the ways that interpersonal relations, and wider socio-political and economic structural factors inform place attachment formation amongst residentially mobile individuals. We address this gap drawing on the Human Geography concept of 'Linked Lives' (Coulter et al., *Progress in Human Geography*, 2016, 40(3), 352–374), to conceive the relocation decisions of residentially mobile individuals, and their place (non)attachment to the current residence place, as deeply intertwined with formative place experiences, interpersonal relations, and the structural contexts within which people live (Coulter et al., *Progress in Human Geography*, 2016, 40(3), 352–374). With the aim of deepening understanding of the co-evolution of residential mobility and place attachment, this paper presents narrative case studies of residents living in a town in Southwest England, with each resident indicating a different variety of people–place

relations to their current residence place. Findings indicate that moving intentions and consequent residential place attachment result from complex interactions over time between (a) formative place experiences and settlement identities, leading to preferred types of residence place; (b) interpersonal relations with significant others including family and community members that vary according to life stage events; and (c) structural forces, comprising cultural, economic, and political factors shaping people's lives. Future research could examine how structural changes arising from the COVID-19 pandemic are influencing residential mobilities and attachments to place.

KEYWORDS
interpersonal relations, linked lives, place attachment, residential mobility, structural conditions

1 | INTRODUCTION

Globalisation and increasing mobilities come in different forms (leisure, work-related, residential mobility, and international migration) and are having a growing impact on people's lives, including their attachments to places (Adey, 2006; Gustafson, 2014; Lewicka, 2011; Sheller & Urry, 2006). This has been a longstanding issue with some arguing that place attachments, 'the bonding that occurs between individuals and their meaningful environments' (Scannell & Gifford, 2010:1), will be inevitably loosened by heightened mobilities while others counter that such attachments remain important in contemporary societies. Understanding place attachments in an increasingly mobile world challenge conventional perspectives and understandings relating to fixed and bounded conceptions of place (Cresswell, 2001; Tuan, 1977). Arguably, a greater focus on understanding residential mobility and place attachment requires a more processual and temporally dynamic conception of place attachment than is often found in the literature (Devine-Wright, 2014; Di Masso et al., 2019; Giuliani, 2003).

Some environmental psychology scholarship has investigated the role of formative place experiences in shaping relocation decisions and place attachment formation. This research has highlighted stages of place attachment formation across the life course, extended from a child's (secure) base to the neighbourhood, and wider community (Hay, 1998), a developmental approach where place attachment in adulthood emerges from childhood place experiences (Morgan, 2010), and processes that inform the development of place attachments (biological, environmental, psychological, and sociocultural; Altman & Low, 2012). Furthermore, Feldman (1990) has shown that 'settlement identity' – attachment to a generalised place type (e.g., identifying as a 'City' person) – can influence the types of places people choose to relocate to (or away from) and form place attachments with in later life.

Drawing on a narrative methodology, this paper addresses a novel gap in the Environmental and Community psychology literature, bridging and supplementing research on formative place experiences, with the Human Geography concept of 'Linked Lives' (Coulter, van Ham, & Findlay, et al., 2016; Elder, 1994), comprising the negotiations and trade-offs that occur as part of a person's web of interpersonal ties (family, friends, and community); and structural conditions, comprising the economic, political, and socio-cultural forces within which people live (trends in employment, education, spatial planning, gender norms and inequalities, and transport policy; Batel, Castro, Devine-Wright, & Howarth, 2016; Coulter et al., 2016; Uzzell & Räthzel, 2009).

This paper argues that investigating the interplay amongst formative place experiences, Linked Lives, and structural conditions, helps us to better understand the co-evolution of voluntary relocation decisions and place (non) attachment formation amongst residentially mobile individuals over time. In doing so, this research problematises the non-relational and cross-sectional approach adopted in Environmental and Community psychology research to the study of residential mobility and place attachment. Furthermore, this research challenges the 'sedentarist' assumption in place attachment scholarship, where place attachment and residential mobility are deemed oppositional (Gustafson, 2014), and argues, in recognition of the 'mobilities turn' movement, for a more nuanced understanding of the mobility/attachment relationship (Di Masso et al., 2019).

1.1 | Place attachment and residential mobility in environmental and Community psychology

Place attachment is a concept that varies in intensity and sub-dimensions, encompassing a person or group's positive bond to place(s), and including effect, identity, and functional aspects (Giuliani, 2003; Hernandez, Hidalgo, & Ruiz, 2014). Within the Environmental Psychology literature, the concept has been shown to include a social sub-dimension, highlighting the relevance of interpersonal relations for place bonding (Kyle, Grafe, & Manning, 2005; Scopelliti & Tiberio, 2010). This encompasses attachments at both the community/group (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014) and interpersonal (neighbours, family, and friends) levels (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010; Scannell & Gifford, 2014).

Hummon (1992) employed a qualitative methodology to identify five varieties of relationships with the residence place, highlighting attachments based on the built environment and community relations. This typology has since been developed by scholars (Bailey, Devine-Wright, & Batel, 2016; Devine-Wright, 2013; Lewicka, 2011; Lewicka, 2014), with two types of attachment identified in empirical research: *traditional* attachment, referring to an unselfconscious taken-for-granted bond to the residence place with the lowest levels of residential mobility and *active* attachment, designating a reflective and self-conscious bond, and higher levels of residential mobility than traditionally attached individuals. A recent qualitative study (Bailey et al., 2016) found evidence that some individuals hold a hybrid attachment type, termed *traditional-active* attachment that is indicated by an unconscious bond with the locality alongside an interest in the goings-on of the place. Three types of non-attachment have also been identified: *place alienated*, referring to a dislike of one's residence place; *place relativity*, an ambivalent and conditionally accepting attitude; and *placelessness*, designating an absence of emotional association with place along with high levels of residential mobility. Interpersonal and community attachment feature in this typology, with scholarship proposing that strong place and interpersonal/community relations may work together to foster rootedness in place and vice versa (Bailey et al., 2016; Hummon, 1992; Lewicka, 2011; Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014). Throughout this paper, the term place attachment designates both attachment and non-attachment varieties.

In adopting a temporal and process-oriented approach, some Environmental and Community psychology scholarship has highlighted the role that formative place experiences play in informing residential mobility decisions and place attachment formation in adulthood (Bailey et al., 2016; Giuliani, 2003; Hay, 1998; Morgan, 2010). For example, the formation of place attachment has been examined at different life stages, highlighting the relevance of autobiographical insideness (the multitude of remembered and significant events that occurred in a place over time) in maintaining attachment to place amongst the elderly with low levels or an absence of residential mobility (Hay, 1998; Rowles, 1983). The work of Feldman (1990, 1996) highlights how the development of 'settlement identities' – psychological attachments with generalizable types of place (e.g., considering oneself to be a city or country type of person) – can inform future place attachment formation and residential mobility decisions, depending upon the level of congruence across settlement types and identities.

Di Masso et al. (2019) provide an insightful conceptual framework that categorises the main modes of interrelation between 'fixities' and 'flow' featured in place attachment research. The paper challenges the sedentarist assumption underpinning the mobility/attachment relationship, drawing on empirical research linked to the 'mobilities turn' to present and advocate different types of mobility-driven place attachments. The 'Fixity from Flow' mode of

interrelation, for example, posits that mobility between places may trigger a (positive) sense of fixity/place attachment when there is continuity across place types at a similar geographic scale, including shared features across places. This is apparent in research by Feldman (1990), where individuals moved to places reminiscent of their former home places, and research by Bailey et al. (2016), which showed that people's relocation decisions and attachments to their current residence place were embedded in settlement identities linked to patterns of residence across the life course.

1.2 | A relational understanding of residential mobility and place attachment: The role of linked lives and structural conditions

Whilst usefully bringing formative place experiences to the fore, the above research has had less to say about the supplementary roles of 'Linked Lives' (interpersonal relations) and structural conditions, in shaping the co-evolution of voluntary relocation decisions and place attachment formation. To address this gap, we draw on the concepts of 'Linked Lives' and structural conditions (and the relationality between these two concepts) that conceive of the relocation decisions of residentially mobile individuals, and their place attachment formation to the current residence place (i.e., different kinds of people-place relations), as deeply intertwined, not only with formative place (attachment) experiences, but with individuals' interpersonal relations, and the structural contexts within which they live (Coulter et al., 2016; Elder, 1994).

The Linked Lives concept proposes that individuals' residential (im)mobility choices and place attachment formation are shaped by and implicated in broader interpersonal networks, bonds and negotiations between people (e.g., friends, parents, family and neighbours, and the community), be it young couples negotiating the next move, parents who choose to stay in a place for the good of their children, retirees seeking to live closer to their families, or elderly people engaging in seasonal migration (McHugh & Mings, 1996). Some existing scholarship has, for example, investigated how the wider family context, including intergenerational transfers of wealth and parental expectations on their children, can influence residential choices (Mulder, 2007).

At the level of structural conditions, people's residential mobility decisions are shaped by socio-economic, political, and cultural contexts and processes. For example, the rise of commuter towns during the 1960/1970s in Britain saw a trend in residential relocation away from inner-city areas, the result of a decline in the UK's manufacturing industry and increases in automobile ownership (Crowley, Balaram, & Lee, 2012; Schettkat & Yocarini, 2006). Some scholarship points to the process of 'lifestyle migration', where individuals from more affluent countries have sufficient capital to be afforded the freedom to migrate on a temporary or seasonal basis to less affluent host destinations (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). Furthermore, the role of wider social gender norms and inequalities has also been shown to guide employment and residential relocation decisions (Battu, McDonald, & Zenou, 2007; Feijten & van Ham, 2010; Hanson, 2010; Wistanley, Thorns, & Perkins, 2002).

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, this research adopts a novel analytical perspective that combines the study of (formative) place attachment from environmental and community psychology, with the concepts of Linked Lives (interpersonal relations) and structural conditions (socio-cultural, economic, and political forces) from human geography scholarship. In doing so, this study seeks to better understand the interplay/relationality between these three processes, and their roles in shaping the co-evolution of relocation decisions and place attachment formation (different kinds of people–place relations) across the life course of residentially mobile individuals. Furthermore, this research seeks to problematise sendentarist notions of the mobility/attachment relationship, supporting the 'mobilities turn' by highlighting life-course trajectories where mobility-driven place attachments are apparent.

Given the identified literature gap, this study is guided by the following research question:

How do formative place experiences, Linked Lives, and structural conditions inform the co-evolution of future relocation decisions and residential place attachments?

2 | METHODS

Drawing from a wider study combining quantitative and qualitative methods, including an extensive series of semi-structured interviews ($n = 25$), a case study approach was adopted drawing on five narrative interviews. These elicited understandings of the relocation decisions and place attachment formation of individuals to the town of Nailsea (in Southwest England), in light of formative place experiences, networks of interpersonal ties, and structural forces (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010; Yin, 2014). This study is situated within a critical realist epistemological perspective, which acknowledges both the 'real' and the socially/biographically constructed nature of people–place relations, which can be suitably captured through the use of narrative interviews (Fletcher, 2016).

2.1 | Study context

The study was conducted in a small town in Southwest England. With a population of 17,649 people (UK Census Data, 2011), Nailsea is located in the predominantly rural county of Somerset, approximately 13 km from the City of Bristol and about 5 km from the coast. Formerly a village and glass-making centre, following substantial residential development and population growth in the 1960s and 1970s, Nailsea became a semi-rural commuter town for part of the community working in Bristol. Nailsea retains architectural features of its village and community past and remains surrounded by countryside and farmland (Nailsea Town Council, 2011; Nailsea Town History, 2020).

Similar to other UK towns that are proximate to large cities, Nailsea's growth resulted from a number of interrelated structural forces – urban flight associated with the decline in manufacturing industries; positive perceptions of rural living; enhanced mobility from increased automobile ownership; a rising service-based economy in former industrial cities – that fostered the development of commuter belt areas across parts of the United Kingdom, resulting in residential relocation away from inner City areas to commuter towns in the 1970s (Coelho, Ratnoo, & Dellepiane, 2017; Crowley et al., 2012; Schettkat & Yocarini, 2006).

2.2 | Sample

The study is based on an initial sample of 25 narrative interviews conducted as part of a broader investigation into the dynamics of place attachment across the life-course in 2013. A representative sample of the town's residents was recruited based on gender, age, and occupation (UK Census Data, mid-2011) using stratified random sampling (Bryman, 2008). Participants ($F = 13$; $M = 12$) ranged in age from 18 to 85 years. Occupational backgrounds included two university students, eight in permanent or temporary employment, one self-employed, 11 retirees, and three without employment. All interviews were conducted at people's households and lasted for 1–2 hr. Informed consent was sought and granted by each interviewee, and participant anonymity is guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms. Participants were thanked upon completion of the interview and given a financial honorarium. The sample was primarily recruited by approaching Nailsea residents in the street on different days, at different hours, and in different locations around the town. All interviews were conducted by the lead author.

2.3 | Method

Narrative interviews were used to reconstruct individuals' internal dialogues as they engage in an interpretative process when accounting for the role of 'objective' structural conditions, interpersonal networks, and 'life-place trajectories' – people's (changing) varieties of place (non)attachment across residence places and the life course – in guiding their residential mobility decisions (Frauley & Pearce, 2007).

A pre-interview 'place history grid' (an adaptation of Elliott's, 2005 'Life History Grid',) was employed to incite participants to think narratively about their experiences and feelings to past and present residence places, and encourage the identification of interpersonal and community relations, and structural conditions, informing their mobility choices and relationships to residence places. The grid included a temporal dimension probing different residence moves across the life span.

Drawing on pre-interview material, narrative interviews elicited discussion of residential experiences and varieties of people–place relations across the life-course. During each interview, participants were shown summarised descriptions of the five types of place relations developed by Lewicka (2011) and asked to select the variety that best matched how they related to Nailsea, its community of people, and the surrounding countryside. This micro-task was employed to assist participants in identifying more openly with an existing type of place (non)attachment but was used only as a confirmatory tool following prior elicitation. Each descriptor included a sentence relating to the strength and importance of interpersonal and community relations.

2.4 | Analytical procedure

Data analysis proceeded in three stages, following transcription of the audio recordings. First, thematic analysis (Bryman, 2008) was employed to identify varieties of people–place relations amongst the participants. Open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used to enable potentially novel place relations to emerge. Second, thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993, 2008) involved the elaboration of narrative accounts (or 'life-place trajectories') of participants' place relations over time, and established the influence of interpersonal and community relations, and structural conditions, on residential mobility and place (non)attachment formation. Third, five example cases were selected and taken forward for this study of 'Linked Lives.'

Several rationales informed the choice of these five cases. First, each case represented an individual who had relocated to Nailsea during adulthood. Second, each case highlights an informative range of formative place experiences, interpersonal/community relations, and structural factors influencing residential mobility over time. Third, each case represented a distinct variety of people–place relationships, allowing for analysis of place (non)attachment formation to Nailsea and its community of people. Due to the research interest in residential mobility, individuals in the sample who indicated the traditional variety of attachment, and who had never lived outside of the town ($n = 7$), were excluded from the analysis.

3 | RESULTS

In this section, each case is presented in turn, presenting a narrative analysis of how aspects of formative place attachment experiences, 'Linked Lives', and structural conditions play interrelated roles in shaping individuals' residential mobility decisions and consequent place (non)attachment to Nailsea.

3.1 | Traditional/active attachment to Nailsea: When a person moves away then returns to the family home and parenthood

3.1.1 | Summary

Jen grew up and lived in Nailsea until her early 20s, before moving away and living in two other towns in England. She returned to Nailsea 6 years ago with her partner and two children and is now in her early 30s. Jen narrated a life story combining formative place attachment to her hometown and interpersonal factors (a community support

network, a relationship breakdown resulting in detachment from a former residence place, and a desire for a stable place to bring up her children), to describe both her return and her attachment to Nailsea. For Jen, the influence of Linked Lives (interpersonal relations) was more prominent than that of structural conditions.

3.1.2 | Analysis

Born and raised in Nailsea, Jen developed an early attachment to the place, referring to Nailsea as her 'home', and a place she values for the presence of strong interpersonal and community ties. Jen is indicative of Gustafson's (2001) 'roots' theme, designating a place bond based on autobiographical insideness, relatively low residential mobility, and local social networks. Jen spoke about her formative connection to Nailsea, suggestive of phenomenological and sedentarist understandings of the home as a site of safety and familiarity (Dovey, 1985; Giuliani, 2003; Tuan, 1980):

> ...It's my family home, that's where I grew up and I've always wanted to come back...I lived there all my childhood, and that's where the connection is...this is my hometown, so this is what I class as home.

In her early 20s, Jen moved away from Nailsea to the nearby coastal town of Weston. Two years later, she moved to her then partner's hometown in Essex, East England, with her two young children. Following a relationship breakdown, and lacking a supportive local interpersonal network, Jen felt insufficiently secure in her ex-partner's home place and community, prompting her to 'come home' to Nailsea given the presence of an interpersonal support network of family and friends, and her desire to provide a stable place for her children to grow up (Chan & Ermisch, 2015; Laoire, 2007). This supports existing research that suggests residential mobility decisions are shaped by broader kinship and social ties (Mason, 2004):

> Although I was happy with my job and friends, I still felt like there was something missing and I was in the middle of a place I didn't really know, and away from home...I came back to be closer to family. I'd split up with my partner and I thought it was the right thing to do to be around family for the children, that's why we came back. It was a good thing, it was like coming home to what I know...I like the quality of life for the children here...they're settled.

When shown descriptors of Hummon (1992) and Lewicka's (2011) five varieties of people–place relations, Jen aligned with elements of both the traditional and the active attachment varieties:

> Jen: *Yes, the first one (Traditional attachment) I would say...the second one (Active attachment) I would lean slightly to maybe. The first one describes someone without much interest in the place, but there is quite a lot of history to Nailsea actually.*
>
> Interviewer: *Perhaps somewhere slightly between the two then?*
>
> Jen: *Yes, I would say that.*

Jen's attachment to Nailsea developed during her formative years and is predicated on strong autobiographical insideness, interpersonal/community ties ('traditional' facets of attachment), and fixity (mobility as disruptive and dependence on a fixed life space; Di Masso et al., 2019). This is combined with an interest in the goings-on of Nailsea and a conscious sense of the valued aspects the place affords her and her children ('active' facets of

attachment). Jen's hybrid attachment can be understood as stemming from competing place experiences across her life course, which allowed her to compare interpersonal and place-based aspects of Nailsea favourably compared to former residence places. These comparatively favourable aspects positively informed her decision to move back to Nailsea (Hummon, 1992), and to develop a hybrid variety of place attachment, comprising active, as well as traditional, attachment characteristics.

3.2 | Place alienation in Nailsea: When a person compromises place for interpersonal attachment

3.2.1 | Summary

Unmarried and without children, Mark is in his late 20s and lives in Nailsea with his partner. Having grown up and lived in a number of English cities, Mark moved to Nailsea 18 months prior to the interview, and is currently studying for a Master's Degree at the nearby University of Bristol. Mark's relocation to and sense of alienation from Nailsea can be understood by a combination of place, interpersonal, and structural factors: a settlement identity that values urban living; a personal relationship with a partner whose own formative place and interpersonal attachments brought her, and consequently him, to Nailsea; and nearby access to urban living and state-run higher education.

3.2.2 | Analysis

When describing his formative residential experiences, Mark described three cities in the midlands and north of England: he grew up in Derby (a small city in the English midlands), moved to Middlesbrough aged 7, (a larger city in Northern England), before leaving to study at the University of Manchester (a large city in North-West England):

> When I think of somewhere I really liked living, I think of somewhere like Manchester, I liked the atmosphere of the place, the architecture, the energy, and there were so many things to do.

Across his formative years, Mark came to value and identify with the 'energy' of City living, contrasting this negatively with the 'quiet life' of Nailsea, and suggesting discontinuity vis-à-vis Mark's formative settlement identity (Feldman, 1990):

> I don't feel rooted to Nailsea really...I don't see myself living here at this stage of my life...it might be nicer if you've got a family or if you want the quiet life because there's a lot of countryside around, but that's not where I want to be right now...I'd like to live somewhere like Bristol, a good place for socialising and going out. Other than the fact that my girlfriend's family base is here, I wouldn't see any reason to stay personally...Nailsea doesn't have much going for it...it's just dead.

Mark's decision to relocate to Nailsea, and his subsequent sense of alienation from it, can be understood as interwoven with the relationship with his partner, for whom relocating to Nailsea was the desired opportunity to reconnect with a place, community, and family base that she had grown up with and valued. This underlies how relocation decisions and place (non)attachment formation to current, or future, residence places, are negotiated by relationship partners within a backdrop of competing and divergent formative place experiences, preferences, and geographically located interpersonal family networks (Coulter, van Ham, & Feijten, 2012; Ferreira & Taylor, 2009):

> She's from here and her family run a shop here. She's always wanted to come back…although we lived together in Manchester for a while, I think she'd always wanted to come back here, to be closer to her family.

Whilst accommodating his partner's desire to return to her family home, there is, for Mark, a structural condition at play that informed his decision to relocate to Nailsea – the access he has to educational opportunities nearby. With a largely state-run education system in the United Kingdom, Mark's access to postgraduate study at Bristol University arguably informed his willingness to accept relocation to Nailsea.

3.3 | Active attachment: When relocation to Nailsea involves the interplay of formative place experiences, interpersonal ties, and structural issues

3.3.1 | Summary

Ceri was born in the coastal town of Swansea, south Wales. Now in her mid-40s, she moved to Nailsea 14 years ago aged 32 with her husband and two teenage children when her husband took up a new job in the area. She spent several years living in two larger English towns before moving to Nailsea. Ceri's narrative highlights the complex interplay between formative place, interpersonal, and structural dimensions in informing her relocation and active attachment to Nailsea. Ceri's relocation to Nailsea arose from formative place experiences living in coastal areas, interpersonal relations, including proximity to her family network and moving to a place that's considered to be good for children, and the structural event of her husband's job relocation.

3.3.2 | Analysis

During the interview, Ceri spoke fondly of her childhood home of Swansea. It was clear that spending time with her family walking along the beach had been a highlight of her upbringing. For Ceri, greater proximity to her childhood home and to nearby coastal areas represented valued interpersonal and formative place attachment experiences informing her relocation to Nailsea, with fixity in Nailsea stemming from a sense of continuity with past childhood and adolescent settlements of similar geographical scale and characteristics (Di Masso et al., 2019; Feldman, 1990):

> Being brought up in a very coastal area, it's always been something that's been important to me. When we decided we were moving (to Nailsea) because of my husband's job, we were excited that we'd be closer to the Southwest of England which is beautiful, and closer to my family.

Her rationale for moving to Nailsea, and reluctance to move away from the town, also stemmed from both her interpersonal and community ties in and around Nailsea (her network of friends, nearby family, and community relations), and the attention she pays to her children's rootedness, attachment needs, and well-being in the place, manifesting the 'Linked Lives' that go to influence residential mobility decisions (Coulter et al., 2016):

> I like living here. My children are very happy…they've made lots of friends, I've made friends … sometimes my children say wouldn't it be nice to live there (with Ceri's family base in South Wales), but I don't really think they'd want to move away from where they've grown up and established their roots (Nailsea). My husband is relatively happy in his job, so if you look at it from a family point of view, it's all very positive.

Ceri's move to Nailsea was also the result of her husband's job relocation, highlighting economic and political structural forces at play in informing job relocations, and the role of wider social gender norms and inequalities guiding employment and residential relocation (e.g., a married woman following a husband with arguably more expansive mobility and employment opportunities; Battu et al., 2007; Feijten & van Ham, 2010; Hanson, 2010; Wistanley et al., 2002).

When asked which of the five varieties she felt best represented her, Ceri identified herself as 'actively attached' to Nailsea (Lewicka, 2011). Ceri's active attachment is predicated on her involvement in community-based activities and proximity to a nearby family network, and given her prior residential mobility history, comparative awareness of the beauty of the surrounding countryside and coastal areas, and the family friendly nature of Nailsea.

> I go to a church in Nailsea, and I've been active in my children's school...I'm part of sport's clubs in Nailsea, so, you know, I feel integrated in the community fairly well.

3.4 | Place relativity: When living in Nailsea involves negotiation and trade-offs with one's life partner

3.4.1 | Summary

Nearing retirement, Maggie is in her early 60s and moved to Nailsea 12 years prior to the interview. She spent her childhood and adolescence living in urban settlements with her family in Southwest England and South Wales, areas she valued for their proximity to nature and countryside areas. As an adult, Maggie lived in a number of large towns and then moved to the city of Cardiff, Wales, with her husband. Maggie's life narrative can be understood as the interplay between formative place attachment experiences, interpersonal bonds, and structural forces – a place trajectory that values urban living and is incongruent with smaller, semi-rural settlement types (Feldman, 1990), and a personal relationship with a partner whose own attachments and job relocation brought her to Nailsea.

3.4.2 | Analysis

Given her formative place experiences in urban settings, Maggie was less motivated than her husband to move to Nailsea. Upon relocating to the town, Maggie missed the energy and excitement that came from city life and struggled to build an interpersonal base and community network, lacking the family and friendship ties that her husband has, and experiencing inconsistency in her settlement identity. She developed an ambivalent relationship to Nailsea (indicative of place relativity – Lewicka, 2011), appreciating the proximity to countryside, but missing the energy and social contact that comes from city life:

> I prefer a little bit more hustle and bustle, I think this is a lovely spot, there are some nice people, but it just does not do it for me, this sort of country life. If it were a place with more life and movement on the streets, I might feel more comfortable. (When asked to select from the list of people-place varieties): I'd say out of all of those I'd probably say that one (place relative).

After 24 years in their Cardiff home, Maggie's husband was made redundant. Their subsequent move to Nailsea resulted from both structural and interpersonal factors – her husband's job relocation to the area, and his desire to return to his own centre of attachment and family base. This demonstrates the role of interpersonal and wider socio-economic and political forces – increasing labour mobility and the development of 1970s

commuter towns (Coelho et al., 2017; Crowley et al., 2012; Schettkat & Yocarini, 2006) – in informing residential relocation decisions. This case further demonstrates the influence of 'ripple effects', where the moving desires of partners in couples interact to the condition where households relocate (Coulter et al., 2012; Coulter et al., 2016; Ferreira & Taylor, 2009):

> We came here because of my husband's work...he was made redundant, and I realised from things he said that actually he was really keen to come back to Somerset...his parents lived here, his brother lives here, and I hadn't realise how much he yearned to come back.

Maggie's move to Nailsea stemmed from her husband's job relocation, and his own formative place attachment experiences to Nailsea and interpersonal links with family in the town. Her own formative place experiences resulted in an ambivalent variety of place non-attachment to Nailsea.

3.5 | Placelessness: When choosing to live in Nailsea arises from pragmatism and the resolution of multiple interpersonal ties

3.5.1 | Summary

As a retiree, Patricia is in her mid-60s and has lived in Nailsea for 7 years, moving there with her husband at the age of 58. Patricia's narrative involved relocation to Nailsea arising from highly mobile and non-attached formative residential experiences, given her father's employment in the Royal Air Force and frequent residential relocations during her childhood. Furthermore, Patricia's relocation to Nailsea arose from her husband and children's preferences and beliefs, representing the most convenient and affordable resolution of multiple interpersonal ties, and highlighting the role of intra-family negotiation in informing voluntary residential (im)mobility (Coulter et al., 2016). Finally, we see the role of a structural condition – the historical evolution and development of rail and road networks, and enhanced access to more distant cities – that now connect Patricia and her husband, from Nailsea, to each of their four children (Haywood, 2012).

3.5.2 | Analysis

Having been conditioned by her frequent formative childhood relocations and a high degree of residential mobility, Patricia identified herself as 'placeless', both to Nailsea and to prior residence places generally, expressing greater interest in interpersonal than place attachments. This supports prior research that suggests placeless individuals tend to develop non-territorial identity formation and strong interpersonal bonds in places (Lewicka, 2011), aligning with the 'flow' mode of interrelation characterised by territorial disconnection extended in time (Di Masso et al., 2019):

> When I was a child we were moving every other year or so and I never spent long enough in a place to really get to know it, so I think that's probably why I don't feel compelled to invest much emotion in places...I don't consciously think about my residence...I think it's got to be this one (placeless - when asked to select from the list of people-place varieties) ... we could contemplate a move if that came up ... we hear people talking about downsizing or moving house and I think well I've moved house about twenty five or thirty times, it's no big deal!

Patricia has four children that were brought up in English boarding schools for most of their childhood and adolescent years. She attributed the decision to move to Nailsea in terms of access to transport infrastructure and

proximity with the web of interpersonal relations represented by each of her four children. Nailsea also represented a means of accommodating her husband's rural settlement identity ('Pete's a countryman really') and her own ability to easily access Bristol nearby:

> We have four children and we didn't want to live on top of one in case the others felt that was favouritism, so we chose Nailsea ... it's convenient, it has a station ... but also because it's rural I suppose, Pete's a country man really.

Patricia and Pete's relocation to Nailsea was judged suitable by their children given their growing seniority and the convenience of public services afforded to them. Patricia and Pete's residential mobility is thus highly relational, suggesting that placeless individuals, lacking a distinct place trajectory, may be more influenced by their interpersonal network(s):

> One of the things that sealed it for us was that all of our children and their families said, 'Yeah, this is the right place for you'. They could see that this was a good place for us, so on the whole we were happy really.

4 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to study addresses a novel gap in the Environmental and Community psychology literature, bridging and supplementing psychological research on formative place experiences with the Human Geography concept of 'Linked Lives' and structural conditions (Coulter et al., 2016; Elder, 1994). It argues that the interplay amongst formative place experiences, Linked Lives, and structural conditions, help us to better understand relocation decisions and place (non) attachment formation. Firstly, interviews suggest that formative place experiences lead to the development of particular settlement identities that are more or less congruent with other settlement types (Bailey et al., 2016; Feldman, 1990), informing individuals' relocation decisions and their place (non)attachment formation to Nailsea.

Second, interpersonal and community relations were heterogeneous across the cases and demonstrate that individuals' relocation decisions, and their subsequent place attachment, are also made within the context, and with consideration, of interpersonal networks (couples, family, friends, community; Coulter et al., 2016; Mason, 2004). Across the cases, relocation and place attachment to Nailsea arose from individuals accommodating the needs, desires, and life-place trajectories of their partners, the rootedness and well-being of their children, and from deep-set bonds with extended family, friends, and community, at times foregoing their own formative place attachment needs. The breaking of interpersonal bonds following relationship breakdowns was also shown to play a significant role in disrupting place attachment by removing interpersonal and community-based obligations to stay in a place, and opening up the potential to alternative residential mobility options and place (non)attachment formation to Nailsea (Chan & Ermisch, 2015).

Third, this study highlights the relevance of wider socio-economic and political processes in shaping relocation decisions and place (non)attachment to Nailsea. This was most clearly evidenced through employment opportunities, when married couples relocated to Nailsea given a husband's job relocation to nearby Bristol City, highlighting the role of broader social gender roles and inequalities in guiding residential relocation decisions (Battu et al., 2007; Feijten & van Ham, 2010; Hanson, 2010; Wistanley et al., 2002). These employment opportunities must be understood within a broader UK economic context where policies on economic development and spatial planning saw the growth of commuter town developments and the up-take of inner-city service sector jobs (Coelho et al., 2017; Crowley et al., 2012; Schettkat & Yocarini, 2006). Other structural processes evidenced included the availability of transport infrastructure networks (motorways and railways), enabling quicker access to more distant interpersonal networks, and educational opportunities (Higher Education institutions in Bristol), enabling one individual to accommodate an undesired relocation to Nailsea.

This paper demonstrates that investigating the interplay amongst formative place experiences and the two levels of Linked Lives, can help us to better understand the co-evolution of voluntary relocation decisions and place (non) attachment formation amongst residentially mobile individuals over time. Furthermore, this research problematises the 'sedentarist' assumption that place attachment is symptomatic of lower residential mobility and 'fixity' in place. This study contests this assumption, and shows that multiple 'life-place trajectories' exist where residential mobility and 'flow' are concomitant with place attachment formation and 'fixity' in place. This supports a recent paper by Di Masso et al. (2019) that critiques past research and presents different modes of interrelation between fixity and flow, highlighting the range of mobility-driven place attachments that can be evidenced in Environmental Psychology research as part of the 'mobilities turn'.

This study presents a number of limitations as well as avenues for future research. First, the rendering of structural conditions across the five study cases was comparatively under-explored by comparison to interpersonal/community relations (Linked Lives). Future research could investigate the ways in which residential mobility events and place attachment formation are informed by a wider array of structural forces (e.g., globalisation, gentrification, gender norms and inequalities, changes to house prices, and employment availability). Most notably, future research can investigate how structural changes arising from the COVID-19 pandemic are influencing residential mobilities and attachments to place (Devine-Wright et al., 2020). With this in mind, there is virtue in adopting a multidisciplinary approach combining Environmental and Community Psychology with disciplines such as political economy, spatial planning, and sociology.

Second, whilst the findings highlight the importance of interpersonal relationships in shaping residential mobility decisions, how partners reach decisions over residential relocation (e.g., negotiating and making trade-offs) could be explored further, for example using a joint interview method involving both partners. This would explore residential decision-making in an interpersonal research setting, connecting more explicitly to decision-making processes between partners, and to the role of (changing) social gender norms and inequalities in relocation choices.

In conclusion, this study addresses a novel gap in the Environmental and Community psychology literature, bridging and supplementing psychological research on formative place experiences with the Human Geography concept of 'Linked Lives' and structural conditions (Coulter et al., 2016; Elder, 1994). Importantly, this paper argues that investigating the interplay amongst these factors helps us to better understand not only what guides the relocation decisions of residentially mobile individuals but also the variety of place (non)attachment that they develop to current (or future) residence places. This problematises the assumption that in an increasingly globalised world, higher residential mobility leads to a weakening of place attachments, and shows that investigating the complex and dynamic interplay between these factors can enhance and deepen our understanding of the mobility/attachment relationship. Key findings on interpersonal negotiations, the impacts of relationship breakdown and structural change require further research to extend our understanding of the co-evolution of residential mobility and place attachment formation over time.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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