The Emotional Well-Being of

Low-Wage Migrant Workers in Dubai

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation research examines the impact of migration on the emotional

well-being of temporary, low-wage workers who migrate from the Global South to Dubai

in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Unlike previous research in the UAE, this study's

sample reflects a far broader diversity of nationalities and occupations, and focuses on

those earning in the lowest wage bracket. Their experiences revealed the systemic

attributes of precarity and the violent structures that perpetuate them.

My research addresses several substantive debates. I found that rather than

emigrating for rational reasons—as neoclassical theory of migration posits—the migrants

in my study tended to rationalize their reasons for emigrating through processes of

cognitive dissonance. Further, where previous scholarship has tended to conflate issues of

national, ethnic, and racial discrimination, I disentangle the processes that motivate

discriminatory behavior by showing how seemingly innocuous references to "nationality"

can be driven by a desire to hide racial prejudices, while at the same time, conflating all

as "racism" can reflect a simplistic analysis of the contributing factors. I show how past

historical structures of colonialism and slavery are manifest in current forms of structural

violence and how this violence is differentially experienced on the basis of nationality,

perceived racial differences, and/or ethnicity. Additionally, my research expands theories

related to the spatial dimension of discrimination. It examines how zones of

marginalization shape the experiences of low-wage migrant workers as they move

through or occupy these spaces. Marginalizing zones limit workers' access to the

sociality of the city and its institutional resources, which consequently increase their vulnerability.

Individual well-being is determined by stressful events that one encounters, by personal and external sources of resilience, and by perceptions of oneself and the stressful events. For the migrants in my study, their stressors were chronic, cumulative, and ambiguous, and while they brought with them a sufficient amount of personal resilience, it was often mitigated by non-compliance and lack of enforcement of UAE laws. The result was a state of well-being defined by isolation, fear, and despair.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the experiences of temporary low-wage migrant

workers who migrate from the Global South to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates

(UAE). It focuses on the processes of migration and their impact on the emotional well-

being of these low-wage workers. The aim is to better understand the lives of those

performing the most menial and lowest-paying jobs as well as the society that hosts them.

The study was motivated by the numerous unofficial accounts of suicidal behavior among

this population. These accounts represent a minority of workers; however, they are

indicative of the challenges low-wage migrant workers face and raise questions about the

immigration policies, how they impact low-wage workers, and the actors who

operationalize these policies. While the data for this study draws specifically on ten

months of extensive fieldwork and interviews, my prior ten years of living and working

in Dubai provide a strong foundation for understanding the circumstances migrant

workers face.

Unlike previous research, which focuses on only one migrant group, the

participants in this study represent a broad diversity of nationalities, occupations, and

employers, as well as those whose earnings are in the lowest-wage bracket of Dubai.

Research on temporary low-wage migrant workers in the UAE has tended to focus on

particular populations, for example, Indians (Clemens 2013), South Asians more

generally (Kathiravelu 2016), Bangladeshis (Rahman 2011), Filipinos (Parreñas and

Silvey 2016), Ugandans (Oliver and Malit Jr 2014), and Ethiopians (Pessoa, Harkness,

and Gardner 2014). Researchers have not, however, examined the experiences of low-

wage migrants across a broad range of nationalities. Further, unlike other studies, I focused on those in the lowest wage bracket. My final sample was composed of forty-four individuals earning an average of Dh1340 (US$365) per month. Studying this group is important because income is directly related to issues such as socioeconomic marginalization, residential segregation, quality of housing, and access to urban centers and their resources.

This research is driven by the desire to better understand the emotional well-being of this population. It explores the various factors that impact the individual and how. It asks: What are the practices, processes, and structures low-wage migrants encounter? What are the spaces they must navigate? What roles do family and the home country play? What are the beliefs and expectations imposed by self and others? What reduces or strengthens resilience? The experiences of my participants often reflected an endurance race. I wanted to know what made their lives so difficult and from where they got (or did not get) the stamina to persist. These questions are what this dissertation addresses.

The UAE Context

The UAE is unique for its high proportion of foreigners to nationals. Of the 232 million international migrants on the move, the UAE is host to an estimated eight million of them (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division 2013). It has the largest number of foreign migrants per capita in the world ("International Migrants by Country" 2016). Relative to the US where there are approximately seven foreigners for every one hundred citizens, in the UAE, there are 850

to 900 foreigners for every 100 citizens.[1] In addition, all foreigners who work in the country—regardless of profession and socio-economic level—are temporary. They come from all regions of the world, but the majority are low-income wage earners from South Asia, other Middle Eastern countries, Sub-Saharan Africa, Indonesia, and the Philippines. They are typically engaged in occupations such as construction, roadwork, cleaning, security, delivery, agriculture, domestic work, or sex work. The overall imbalance of nationals to non-nationals and the high proportion of lower-wage workers[2] magnifies experiences of exploitation and makes it a useful context for study.

Although all foreigners living in the country are "migrants," all are not equal. Conditions and experiences of migrants in the UAE are very much class and nationality-specific, reflecting the high level of stratification in the country. This stratification places nationals[3] at the top, followed by Gulf Arabs, racially white Westerners, and ending with black Africans.[4] Of the total number of temporary workers, more than fifty percent are employed in low-wage occupations ranging from laborer to service worker (De Bel-Air

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1. Non-citizens account for 85-90% of the UAE's total population (*The National* 2011). In the US, non-citizens account for 7% of the total population ("Population Distribution by Citizenship Status" 2017).

2. There are less well-off Emiratis and relatively poor ones, but none working in jobs that would earn Dh1500 (US$408) a month. UAE nationals without a high school certificate are to be paid no less than Dh3000 (US$816). The UAE is a very strong welfare state and nationals receive substantial government assistance. As a result, it should be understood that *all* references to "low-wage worker" *and* to "migrants" in general assumes that the individual is foreign and temporary. Further, the term guestworker—the term for temporary workers in other parts of the world—is used synonymously, and migrant could be a foreigner of any socio-economic level.

3. In the UAE, the term "Emirati," "national," and "local" are synonymously used. At times I might use "local Emirati" or "national Emirati" but this is only to emphasize the fact that an "Emirati" is a citizen.

4. Whether or not Gulf Arabs or Westerners—especially those from the US, UK, Australia, or New Zealand—rank "first" can depend on the profession. In academia, Westerns would be deemed most desirable, but it does not mean they would earn the most. Locals and Gulf Arabs likely would.

2015). The US also hosts a great number of low-wage temporary migrant workers; however, their overall proportion to the rest of society is quite small. It is a population that is fairly hidden. In the UAE, however, because of its size—900 foreigners for every 100 locals—, this population is quite visible.[5]

There are some who argue that Arab Gulf researchers have focused too much on issues of vulnerability, exploitation, and exclusion, and that doing so "risks missing or underplaying numerous, often unexpected, ways that non-citizens feel belonging" (Vora and Koch 2015, 542). I would agree that certain segments of the foreigner population— especially more affluent migrants who live more comfortable lives—do experience "forms of citizenship" (Vora 2013, 176) found in economic, consumer, and urban membership within the UAE. Also, certain populations, such as those from India who represent some of the largest migrant groups in Dubai, can feel a strong sense of social and cultural belonging within the larger framework of the UAE. However, for very low-wage migrants, participation and belonging in any form is often inaccessible. While academic research is needed on multiple fronts and in regard to diverse populations, including the poor as well as the wealthy, this dissertation is motivated by concerns of social justice and concern about how certain groups in society are marginalized and made vulnerable. Ahmed Kanna (Kanna 2011), in the preface to his book on Dubai, writes, "Focusing only on the favorable aspects of the ruling dynasties or privileging the viewpoints of the already privileged would be intellectually irresponsible" (xi). I would

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5. The UAE government is, however, slowly making this population more hidden. This is discussed in chapter five.

concur, and add that not giving significant attention to those who are most vulnerable would, too, be intellectually irresponsible.

Background

The UAE is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, ranked seventh in GDP per capita. The discovery of oil in the 1950s and high oil prices in the 70s led to the amassing of wealth and industrialization and an increased need for foreign workers. Migrant workers come from all regions of the world and are of all "skill" levels.[6] At one end of the spectrum is the much smaller segment of higher-waged foreigners. At the other is the much more predominate group of low-income wage earners. While high-wage professionals come from the Global North as well as the Global South, low-wage workers typically come from the regions of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, and from the countries of Indonesia and the Philippines. The lowest wage jobs are in construction, roadwork, cleaning, security, delivery, agriculture, domestic work, and sex work.[7]

Low-wage workers from the Global South are stigmatized by restrictions that, for example, prevent them from bringing their spouses or children (Babar 2013), or put them at risk of having their passports taken by their employers. These are very much class and

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6. A 2015 report shows that in 2009, from the total number foreign workers, almost eight percent were legislators, senior officials or managers and sixteen percent were professional (De Bel-Air 2015)

7. Women end up in sex work for a number of reasons. According to my participants, those from Africa may come on a visit visa in search for work. Unable to find work, they turn to sex work out of desperation. Other women, often domestic workers, abscond (run away from their employer) and become engaged in sex work so as to earn more money or they do so because of their irregular status. A Nigerian participant told me that she knows some women come to Dubai with the intention of doing sex work, and some do so with their mothers' consent. What I am less familiar with are women who were trafficked for sex work against their will. A Pakistani participant said that there are many Pakistani women who resort to sex work; however, she did not share further details. Sex trafficking is discussed further in chapter four.

nationality-specific conditions that do not have as great an impact on those in higher-

skilled, higher-paying positions.

My personal experience with the country began in 2002 when I migrated from

Istanbul, Turkey, to Dubai, UAE, to take up a position as an English language instructor

at Zayed University (ZU), a federal university named after the founder of the country.

The student body was composed solely of Emirati national women[8] and had only opened

four years prior to my arrival. The country is quite segmented between nationals and non-

nationals, so teaching national women was a great opportunity to engage with the local

population. It also provided a different vantage point from which to view the parallel

experiences of three distinct populations: low-wage migrant workers, more affluent

migrants[9] and Emirati nationals. Ten years later, I started my doctoral study. My ten

years of living and working in Dubai provided a strong foundation for understanding the

context and carrying out my ten months of intensive fieldwork and interviews.

History and Development of the UAE

The area that is today referred to as the UAE is at the eastern end of the Arabian

Peninsula. External influences on the region came from the Portuguese, Dutch, British,

Turks, Omani, Egyptians, and Wahabis. The British and Dutch fought over the region for

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8. Zayed University (ZU) has two campuses, one in Dubai and one in Abu Dhabi. When the university opened it served only national women. Eventually it began accepting international students who mostly came from other countries in the Gulf. Several years ago, it also began accepting male students; however, they have an adjoining, but separate campus.

9. The terms "expatriate" and "migrant" applies to all who travel to a foreign country to live and work. In the UAE, the term "expatriate" is typically reserved for anyone from the Global North or those who are affluent professional and highly-skilled workers from the Global South. "Migrant" in the UAE often refers to those from the Global South who perform "less-skilled," low-wage work. It is also common in the Gulf to distinguish between "blue-collar workers" and "white-collar workers." I prefer to use the term "migrant" and/or foreign workers for all foreigners working in the country. When referring to those migrants who are middle- and upper-class, I often use "affluent migrants" or "the more affluent migrant."

commercial purposes during the middle of the eighteenth century, and eventually the

Dutch acquiesced to the British. Britain was the ruler for one hundred and fifty

continuous years, from 1820 until early 1970s (Hay 1959).

In the late twentieth century, the British consolidated their control over the

Trucial States[10] (Abdulla 1985). They altered societal traditions so as to concentrate

power in a small select group of rulers (sheikhs) and kept populations separated to

prevent a stronger confederation; these forms of control led to uncommon hierarchies and

ethnic stratification (Heard-Bey 2005). The local rulers had little autonomy and the

British removed those who did not accommodate them. The British, as well, restricted

trade and retaliated violently when deemed necessary, at one point destroying an entire

fleet of vessels belonging to one of the central tribes along the Trucial Coast (Hay 1959).

Their aim over the region was to create "political dependency" (Abdulla 1985, 80).

Since the time that the Trucial States were colonized by the British, the ruling

elite of the UAE have been aligned with Western powers and global interests (Kanna

2010).[11] The discovery of petroleum in the 1920s and the increase in oil prices in the 70s

led to the amassing of wealth and industrialization unlike anywhere else in the world.

10. Prior to UAE independence, the British referred to the region as the Trucial States. The area was also known as the Pirate or Trucial Coast.

11. Whether or not British presence in the Trucial States should be defined as colonial is open to debate among scholars. Some say that within the Arab Gulf region, "modernizing without totally yielding to Western prototypes" led to "minimal social disruption" as the British had very little involvement in the lives of the people (Talhami 2004, 1). Thus, the indigenous population was able to maintain and preserve many traditional aspects of their life and of their conservative culture. Others argue that the British did have a dominating and lasting effect on the region though they never formally colonized any of the Arab Gulf states (Abdelkarim 1999). In contrast, Heard-Bey (2005), a historian who has likely written most extensively on the region, utilizes the terms "colonial" and "protectorate" when writing about the region (295). Franz Fanon (1963) states that the ultimate purpose of colonization is to meet the needs and desires of the colonizer; thus, the colonizers construct and dominate the colonized to meet their own ends. Framing the relationship between colonizer and colonized in this way, I would learn towards Fanon and contend that the UAE was colonized.

Building on its past historical experiences, the leaders of the region "espoused a radical version of free-trade ideology" (Kanna 2010, 122), particular and appropriate to the local context (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010; Buckley 2012; Kanna 2010; Sassen 1996). During this time, it went from a population of approximately 70,000 in 1959 to the approximately nine million that are present today. The UAE as a whole is still dependent on oil revenues. Dubai, however, has expanded its economy. Today the majority of its economy is based on tourism, trade, finance, and manufacturing. Many low-wage migrants are there to feed the "chronic labour demand" (D. S. Massey et al. 2005, 159) created by these industries. The UAE has fed this demand for labor by continuing a neo-colonial system of labor extraction initiated by the British during their rule. The British also established unequal systems of patronage that are still used to manage immigration today.

Importing Foreign Labor

The nationality of low-wage migrant labor has shifted dramatically since the country's inception. In the first half of the twentieth century, the majority of migrants were Arab. However, by the 1980s and 1990s, and at the start of the first Gulf War, the numbers were reduced and a trend towards recruiting Indians took over (Abdulla 1985; Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014; A. M. Gardner 2010b; D. S. Massey et al. 2005). This gradual switch happened for several reasons. One was due to the fear that ethnically similar Arabs would adapt better to Arab Muslim life in the UAE, and thus would be more persistent in their attempts to seek permanent settlement and social inclusion (A. M. Gardner 2010b; D. S. Massey et al. 2005). The UAE had no desire to assimilate low-wage migrants, whether or not they were from other Arab-Muslim countries or other

regions of the world. Another reason for the shift in nationality was due to the power of migrants to affect the politics of the state to which they have migrated (Zolberg 2006). Leaders in the Gulf feared that Arab migrants might cause political instability or demand political engagement (A. M. Gardner 2010b; Fargues 2011; D. S. Massey et al. 2005; Oishi 2005). Further, it was believed that non-Arabs would be less likely to complain and protest against unfair treatment and exploitative conditions (Fargues 2011; D. S. Massey et al. 2005; Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014). By shifting from a Muslim Arab work force "with a moral claim on justice," to non-Muslim, non-Arab workers, local governments could, according to Massey et al., "create a labour market in which open discriminatory practices could be more easily sustained" (147).

In many migrant-receiving countries, the aim is to attract permanent immigrants with a common ethnicity (Cornelius et al. 2004; Tsuda 2009, 1999). These populations are desired because it is presumed that they will most easily blend in and assimilate. In the UAE, the desire is to *avoid* attracting ethically similar immigrants.[12] It does not want to extend citizenship for political and instrumental reasons, which can be seen in who has access to resources and power (Bartram et al. 2014; A. M. Gardner 2010b). Maintaining diversity among immigrant nationalities reduces the potential for any one group to impact "ethnic balance and domestic politics," reducing the opportunity for solidarity which could potentially lead to political unrest (Oishi 2005, 50). Since the Arab Spring began in 2010 and the civil war in Syria in 2011, fears of Arab migrants and political instability have risen again.

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12. The exception to this is religion. Concerns about migrants center on their Arab-ness.

In addition to the UAE's unique imbalance of nationals to non-nationals, it is also unique in the granting of legal citizenship. In the UAE—regardless of whether they are low-wage or "highly-skilled" professionals—formal citizenship is not an option.[13] Those who sojourn to the region do not go with any expectations of gaining citizenship because it is rarely, if ever, granted (Arsenault 2013; Babar 2013; Bowman 2007; Gardner 2010). In the UAE, a blood connection to those deemed the Emirate's "original inhabitants" must often be proven (Arsenault 2013).[14] As a result, all foreigners to the region are guests (Ferris-Lay 2012; Ali 2010).[15] Yet, although all are temporary, there are, for example, many middle- and upper-class Indian families who have been in the UAE for decades, if not generations. They are in a sense "permanently temporary" (Vora 2013, 30).[16] This is a very particular condition for all foreigners living and working in the UAE, and one that creates a sense of vulnerability for most. What set my participants apart was the general precarity of their day-to-day lives.

Vulnerability & Precarity

Throughout my study, I found that the vast majority of my participants had been made vulnerable by the circumstances and conditions of their lives. This led me to

13. While it is technically possible to gain permanent residency, it requires large financial investments in property and expensive fees. This is probably why it is more common to hear that permanent residency is not possible.

14. Note that I was unable to find any other documentation that supported the necessity for a blood connection. The rarity of granting citizenship is, however, widely acknowledged.

15. Though all who come to the country have temporary guestworker status, their similarities end there. Low-wage workers, for example, face many forms of discrimination, from having their passport taken, to not being allowed to bring one's family, to being required to live in isolated camps set apart from the rest of society. This is addressed extensively in chapter three.

16. Similarly, Mahdavi (2016) uses the concept of "im/migration" to highlight the ambiguity that is experienced when one is permanently temporary as a result of inflexible citizenship laws (Kindle edition).

examine how vulnerability—and precarity—might work as analytical devices. Vulnerability is defined by the United Nations (2001) as "exposure to risk," and, though they acknowledge as others do that all people are subject to vulnerability, they stress that some are much more susceptible to and less capable of coping with its consequences. This can be seen most clearly in the economic-insecurity dimension of vulnerability, and the risk, poverty, oppression and exploitation that can often accompany it, leaving certain individuals and groups more susceptible to harm and injury (Bustamante 2002; Cole 2016; Fineman 2008, 2010; Kirby 2006; B. S. Turner 2006; United Nations 2001).

Though the terms vulnerability and precarity are quite similar and are often used interchangeably, examining the terms separately helps reveal their usefulness as analytical frameworks. Both address issues of uncertainty and instability that emerge from conditions that lie outside of oneself (Gilson 2014; Rodgers and Rodgers 1989; Waite et al. 2015). However, as analytical devices, the two terms slightly differ. Vulnerability is unequally distributed around the world and is experienced in vastly different ways. Focusing on the individual helps to expose those experiences and how they are differentiated (Waite 2009), and helps make visible the difficulty of transcending systems of disadvantage (Fineman 2010). Precarity, on the other hand, comes into play when we move beyond description of the individual and to analysis of groups and society, and of the precarious experiences that are produced by the labor market, other institutional structures, and larger global forces (Waite 2009). It draws attention to "the

political and institutional context in which the *production* of precarity occurs" (Waite 2009, 422; emphasis in original).[17]

While from an ethical and political perspective, the individual's experiences of vulnerability and how we interpret them are extremely important (Gilson 2014). The concept of precarity has an advantage as a political tool because it links conditions to politically induced global, national, and local structures to the vulnerability of the individual. As Paret and Gleeson (2016) explain, "[precarity] connects the micro and the macro, situating experiences of insecurity and vulnerability within historically and geographically specific contexts" (280). Political, economic, social, and gendered processes engage to create the conditions of precarity. These precarious living and working situations then create and reinforce individual vulnerability (Lewis et al. 2015). Thus, while broader structural, socio-economic systems target and create precarity for certain social groups, vulnerability is exacerbated and experienced by the individual (Blazek 2014; Butler 2006; Farmer 2004; Lewis et al. 2015; Schierup et al. 2015).

The living and working conditions temporary low-wage migrant workers face have been called the "quintessential incarnation of precarity" (Schierup and Jørgensen 2016, 949; see also Anderson 2010, Blazek 2015, Jorgensen 2016, Lewis et al. 2014, Paret et al. 2016, Strauss and McGrath 2017, Waite et al. 2015). This is because of the numerous precarious conditions that low-wage workers generally face. Understanding the lives of these workers requires an iterative exploration of the micro and macro. It requires moving back and forth between the two, examining the individual experience in light of

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17. Note that the concept of structural violence in the context of global neoliberalism is discussed in the following chapter.

broader national and international structures and processes while at the same time examining these broader structures in relation to historical events.

This study was driven by my interest in the lives of low-wage migrant workers and was guided by three overarching questions that addressed the processes and structures that impact the lives of low-wage migrant workers, the impact of these processes and structures on the individual, and the factors that lessen or strengthen resilience in dealing with challenging circumstances. What was revealed were multiple layers of vulnerability and powerlessness which, when examined more broadly, revealed the precarity that is built into the structures that impact their lives. Their experiences were individual, but they reflect structures that are common and prevalent to low-wage foreign migrant workers in the Gulf.

A focus on emotional well-being from a social justice perspective has not been explicitly addressed in prior research of the UAE. In addition, previous research has largely focused on migrant populations from specific regions or countries.[18] I build on this body of literature and extend it by focusing on a more diverse sample reflecting a wide range of different nationalities that all earn in the lowest wage bracket. My final sample was composed of forty-four individuals earning an average of Dh1340 (US$365) per month. They represent eleven countries and fifteen occupations, with typically only one working per employer. Among my sample were a few who were far less vulnerable

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18. Examples of the regions and countries addressed in the literature include South Asia (Hickey, Narendra, and Rainwater 2013; Jureidini 2014; Oishi 2005; Willoughby 2006) India (Breeding 2012; Clemens 2013; Kathiravelu 2016; Zachariah, Prakash, and Rajan 2004), Bangladesh (Rahman 2011), Pakistan (Marsden 2008), Indonesia (Irianto and Truong 2014) Sri Lanka (Michele Ruth Gamburd 2000), Philippines (Parreñas 2015; Parreñas and Silvey 2016), Uganda (Oliver and Malit Jr 2014), Ethiopia (Kuschminder 2016; Pessoa, Harkness, and Gardner 2014; Regt and Tafesse 2016), Kenya (Malit Jr. and Al Youha 2016).

than others, but, over all, what quickly became evident in the course of my fieldwork is that if a worker is earning in my designated wage bracket, that person is most likely quite vulnerable.

Dissertation Overview

The dissertation has seven substantive chapters, an introduction (chapter one), and a conclusion (chapter nine)**.** Chapter two addresses the research methodology. There are three areas that I discuss in greater depth. The first is locating participants. This was challenging because the UAE has become more hypervigilant in warding off any discussion that might present it unfavorably; as a result, extra sensitivity and precautions were taken during recruitment and interviews. The second issue I discuss in greater depth is my use of an interpreter and why using one was essential for this study. Finally, I address the responses my participants gave when asked, "How do you feel now?" at the end of the interview. This spoke to the isolation my participants experienced and the importance of the interview process, beyond the scope of simply gathering data.

Chapter three addresses the social, economic, and political circumstances, which created precarity in their lives back home and motivated migration. It focuses on events up until their arrival in Dubai. Some participants went beyond the pre-migration phase and spoke at length about their childhood and youth. These stories were helpful in understanding the choices individuals made and their ability to adapt to life in the UAE. The chapter also examines the literature on structural violence, vulnerability, and precarity, and the reasons for and impact of arriving on a visit visa versus an employment visa. One interesting finding that emerged in this chapter was the role of cognitive dissonance in driving one's decision to emigrate. Many of the participants in my study

knew the stories about working in the Arab Gulf, including extensive debt, being tricked

and ill treated, and being physically and sexually abused; however, this information did

not align with their desperate need for a job. So as to reduce this cognitive dissonance,

they focused on what they believed would be Dubai's great potential to change their

lives. They did not migrate for rational reasons, but rather, they rationalized their reasons

for migrating.

Chapters four through eight focus on my participants' experiences in the UAE

from the point of arrival. They examine the various processes, mechanisms, and obstacles

that created, heightened, or diminished their vulnerability in the UAE. The first half of

chapter four addresses the violent structures that are embedded in institutional structures,

focusing on the *kafala* (sponsorship) system and its role in increasing migrant precarity.

This system is the root of the country's immigration policies and grants citizens a

significant amount of responsibility and discretion for workers and thus results in migrant

experiences that are highly variable. For those who are the lowest paid—as were most of

my participants—the experience is often exploitative and dehumanizing. The second half

of this chapter focuses on how these various structures induce fear and the power this fear

has to discipline. The temporary and vulnerable circumstances in which most of my

participants found themselves, immobilized them psychologically and spatially,

contributing to greater vulnerability.

The kafala system and the labor policies that grew out of this system resulted in

migrants being differentially devalued. Chapter five addresses this and examines

discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, and ethnicity. For many of my

participants, the vulnerability that resulted from being differentiated on the basis of race,

ethnicity, or nationality—and hence subjugated to inferior positions within the social hierarchy and labor market—hindered their opportunities and impacted their security. An analysis of race, racism, hierarchies, and the power through which they operate are addressed throughout the chapter. These issues are extremely important in the UAE because it is a highly stratified country, beginning with nationals followed by Gulf Arabs, Westerners, other Arabs, South Asians, and ending with Black Africans.

An intersectional framework guides the analyses in both chapter five and six. It helps to reveal the multiple and overlapping factors that resulted in the oppression my participants experienced. Chapter six continues the focus on discrimination, but focuses specifically on how it is gendered and how the women in my study were impacted. The day-to-day experiences of these women reveal issues and events that were distinctly different from those encountered by men. Two of these were more isolated work environments and sexual harassment. The International Labor Organization's (ILO) indicators of forced labor are applied to their experiences.

The differential devaluation discussed in chapters five and six was also spatial. Chapter seven focuses on this spatial component. It explores the spaces and boundaries that marginalize and exclude migrants of lower socio-economic status. In the first section I define the meaning of borders, boundaries and the socio-spatial perspective, introduce the concept of zones of marginalization, and explore the processes of spatial segregation and exclusion. The next section considers the national borders and political boundaries my participants crossed, and the temporariness and uncertainty that resulted in them occupying liminal spaces. Subsequently, I examine the various types of accommodation occupied by low-wage migrant workers, focusing on their conditions and various

locations throughout the city. I then explore why these spaces operate as zones of marginalization and the extent to which my participants were able to transgress the boundaries of these zones. The final section of the chapter considers who is and is not able to cross the boundaries that encompass the marginalized zones and ends by advocating for more inclusivity.

Chapter eight considers the emotional well-being of my participants by focusing on the processes and factors that determined it. It describes how potentially stressful events or situations are made better or worse depending on what resources and resilience one has available, how one perceives the event or situation, and one's ability to use those resources. For many, the inability to positively influence their circumstances resulted in depression, which often manifested itself in suicidal thoughts.

Chapter nine, the concluding chapter, summarizes the main themes and findings, discusses the theoretical contributions the study makes, and its limitations. The focus of this dissertation is on the worker and the impact of attempting to live within the framework of certain policies and structures that are ultimately designed to exploit certain groups in society.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative methods to study the experiences of being a temporary low-wage migrant worker in Dubai and the impact of those experiences on the individual. The decision to limit the study to qualitative methods was driven by the belief that analyzing the individual story helps reveal the collective story (Charmaz 2017), and that contextualizing these stories in relation to systems and structures will help us to understand how precarity is produced (Camfield, Crivello, and Woodhead 2008; Paret 2016). This chapter discusses the criteria and process for participant selection, the challenges and benefits of using an interpreter while interviewing, the use of constructivist grounded theory for data analysis, and reflections of my own role in this study and its impact.

Overview of Study

Targeted data collection for this ethnographic study occurred over a ten-month period, from August 2015 through May 2016. It was carried out in Dubai for two key reasons. One is that the UAE—Dubai in particular—has the highest ratio of foreigner workers in the world. In addition, my ten years working in Dubai fueled my curiosity and desire to better understand the circumstances and dynamics centered around the extremely large number of low-wage migrant workers in the city. Finally, I know the context quite well. The study was built upon innumerable hours of informal observation and conversations that have been on-going since 2002 when I moved to the UAE to teach. This span of time proved useful, especially in regard to the UAE's context and culture. However, unexpected changes occurred while I was outside of the country

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between 2012 and 2015. The country has always been on guard of its reputation. While this has been the situation since I arrived there, while I was away it grew and continues to grow noticeably more vigilant in protecting its image.

Prior to returning to Dubai to carry out my research, I gained approval by the Instructional Review Boards (IRB) to conduct my research.[19] Once in Dubai, I inquired into the need for local official research approval in the UAE. An advisor to the Dubai Executive Council told me that it was not possible to get official permission because there was no entity from which to obtain it.[20] With the advisor, I spoke about the numerous accounts of suicide among this population, and he said the government was aware of the problem.[21] He strongly encouraged me to address issues of emotional well-being. At about this same time, I also had the opportunity to speak with a professor from Columbia University who was in the UAE as an educational consultant. He had experience carrying out fieldwork in difficult contexts and was knowledgeable about the UAE context. He suggested that I gain "local scientific sign-off" for my study. He explained that this is a form of secondary review and involves finding a local academic who would read and sign off on my protocols. I contacted a national I knew at a university in the UAE. She read, gave her approval, and provided a letter to verify.[22]

Although my focus was on emotional well-being, I found that among those in my study, the issues that determined a person's well-being and tendency towards suicidal

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19. IRB STUDY00000840; given March 26, 2014.

20. Conversation September 15, 2015.

21. Conversation September 10, 2015.

22. For issues of confidentiality and the protection of the individual, this letter cannot be included with the dissertation. It can be presented in person, but must be retained by the author.

thoughts held many similarities. At the heart of both is the need to reveal the various factors that impact the individual and how they do so. It requires asking: What are the practices, processes, and structures low-wage migrants encounter? What are the spaces they must navigate? What roles do family and the home country play? What are the beliefs and expectations imposed by self and others? What reduces or strengthens resilience? These questions guided my exploration.

Participant Selection

Because my goal was a very diverse selection of participants, I used a non probabilistic, purposive sampling approach. With this approach the goal is "theoretical saturation" (Bernard 2011; Guest, Bunce, and Johnson 2006; Weiss 1995), the rationale being that "when further inquiry will add little to the story," sampling should stop . The goal is to avoid unnecessary duplication of like cases. The greater the range achieved among cases, the more assurance we can have that the sample includes instances displaying greater variation.[23] The theoretical sampling I pursued was mainly in regards to occupation and country of origin.

The selection of participants was driven by three criteria. All participants had to be residing in the UAE, be non-national, and earn Dh1500 (US$408) or less a month. This is not a random amount. Other studies have either failed to delineate the conditions of "low-wage" or have utilized a relatively high wage in comparison to the lowest bracket. For example, one recent study on low-wage migrants in Dubai defined low-wage as those who did not earn the minimum required to sponsor one's family, Dh4000

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23. My sampling approach holds some similarities to that advocated by Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory approach simply because of the diversity I sought.

(US$1090) per month (Kathiravelu 2016). In addition, I found that there tends to be significant difference in the experiences of those who earn less than Dh1500 (US$408) and those who earn Dh2000 (US$545) or more.[24] These lowest of earners—especially those whose accommodation expenses must come out of this amount—tend to encounter greater barriers. Extremely low pay is often accompanied by exploitative conditions and an inability to send sufficient remittances home.

Two participants were clear outliers. They earned far higher salaries than the others in the study. I chose to keep them as part of the sample because they provide an important contrast to those who earned much less. Jean, a Filipina domestic worker, earned Dh3500 (US$953) a month including housing, and Rifat, a Bangladeshi personal driver, earned Dh5000 (US$1363) a month without housing. In chapter six, I focus on domestic work and compare the experiences of my participants who performed this work. Jean's experience is far different from those who earned much less. In chapter eight, I look specifically at the emotional well-being of participants. We find a clear relationship between salary, conditons, and emotional-wellbeing.[25]

Apart from these criteria, what drove my selection was diversity. The selection was neither random nor representative. The aim was to interview a wide variety of nationalities, occupations, and employers, in order to explore the heterogeneity of their experiences as well as their likenesses. Because I was seeking diversity, my sample is not

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24. There is neither a minimum wage nor any national data to contextualize these wage levels nationally. It is not known what percentage of the migrant population earn this amount; however, it is likely to be significant.

25. Comparing salaries is a bit challenging and inexact. Some participants were provided housing and meals, and others were not. The amounts I was told sometimes included the additional money they were provided for housing and meals, and at other times individuals did not provide that information.

proportionally representative of the low-wage migrant population. A break down of the

current population in the UAE would result in there being no African nationalities in my

study. In addition, although all South Asian nationalities and Filipinos would have been

represented in my sample, I would only have had one or two of each nationality (Snoj

2015).[26] The vast majority would have been Indian and Pakistani. Hence, with the aim of

heterogeneity, nationalities with small populations were targeted, too.

The Final Sample

I achieved a great deal of diversity in my sample (see Appendix A and B). Of my

forty-four participants, eighteen participants were from five different sub-Saharan

African countries, twenty-four were from five different South Asian countries, and two

were from the Philippines.[27] Men heavily dominate the UAE population. This is due to

the high number of low-wage workers who are unable to bring their families. In Dubai,

the ratio of women to men is three to seven ("Population Bulletin Emirate of Dubai

2015" 2016). The ratio in my sample was three to four. Again, I was seeking diversity,

not representativeness. The oldest participant was fifty-two and the youngest was twenty-

three. The average age was thirty-three. Filipinas on average were the oldest and the

African nationalities were the youngest. Ten of my participants had a grade five

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26. The UAE government does not publish data on the population by nationality. Thus, demographic data are estimates based on information from Embassies in the UAE. The five South Asian nationalities that are in my sample have a total population of approximately 5.1 million in the UAE and the Philippines has a total population of approximately half a million (Snoj 2015). Demographic data on the five African nationalities represented in my sample is even more difficult to come by. There are approximately 90,000 Ethiopians, 40,000 Kenyans, and 500 Ghanaians in the UAE (Snoj 2015). If we assume that Cameroon and Nigeria each have the same size populations in the UAE as Ethiopia, then the five African nationalities represented in my sample would account for approximately 310,000. This number is likely much lower. The UAE has indeed decreased its migrant labor populations from other Arab-Muslim nations. However, it does not appear to have replaced it with a balance of nationalities. See also "UAE Population by Nationality (2016).

27. See Appendix B for a break down by nationality.

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education or less; fourteen had a sixth grade education or beyond up to a high school certificate; and, twenty had more than a high school education. In terms of religion, there were twelve Muslims, ten Christian, five Hindus, and two Buddhists. The average salary was Dh1340 (US$365) per month. This average includes the two outliers discussed above. The lowest salary in the sample was Dh450 (US$123) a month (see Appendix B for nationalities, occupations, ages, and salaries of all participants).

The men in my study reflect a broader range of occupations than the women. This is due to the more limited employment opportunities for very low-wage migrant women. Many of the women were—or had been at some point—employed as domestic workers; other occupations included bus chaperons, hair stylists, and commercial cleaners. Men also worked as cleaners of all sort. The various cleaning jobs included window-washing, car washing, cleaning of labor camp accommodation. Cleaning jobs or any sort are very low-wage. Men were also employed as gardeners and shop deliverers. Overall, eighteen occupations were represented with no more than three working for any one employer.[28]

English language skills are another area in which my sample held a great deal of diversity. It is notable because it impacted my ability to locate participants—discussed in the next section—and whether or not I required an interpreter—discussed later in this chapter. I placed my participants' English skills into five categories: fluent/advanced,[29]

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28. Occupations where earning Dh1500 (US$408) or less would have been *unlikely* include sales clerk, gas station attendant, waiter, receptionist, secretaries, or taxi, bus and trailer truck drivers.

29. While there are differences between the language skill levels of "fluent" and "advanced," for the purpose of this study, the difference is not important. As a result, I use the terms interchangeably. In addition, my focus is only on spoken English, not the other skill areas.

intermediate, lower but workable,[30] quite low, and none. The majority of my participants

fell either in the highest category or the lowest (Appendix C provides a good visual

representation of the distribution of English language ability across my participants).

Many Americans expect migrant Indians to speak English. This is because the majority of

Indian migrants to the US are more highly educated (Zong and Batalova 2017). The UAE

also attracts highly educated Indian migrants; however, it attracts an even larger number

of less educated migrants who have very weak English skills. These migrants, like many

in my study, come to the UAE to work in low-wage jobs. Among my South Asian

participants, only one would be considered to be advanced or fluent in English. In

contrast, twelve of my African participants were fluent. Of the five Africans who did not

have advanced English skills, four were intermediate, and only one I considered to have

lower, but workable English ability. Apart from the one South Asian with advanced

English skills, only seven others had either intermediate or lower but workable language

skills. One of my Filipina participants had advanced English, and the other

intermediate.[31]

<center>Locating Participants</center>

Locating participants for the study was a challenge. The central cause of this was

due to my desire for a very diverse sample. I had to continually seek out new pathways

when I felt I had a sufficient number of individuals from one nationality, occupation,

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30. By "lower but workable" I mean that the individual's English language skills were fairly low, but they had a sufficient amount of English to engage in conversation. Overall, only five of my forty-four participants were in this category.

31. There were other interesting differences. All of my participants were either single or had a spouse in their home country. Any children were also in the home country. Eight women participants had children and eleven men had children. However, all of the women who had children were financially responsible for them.

and/or employer. The two other key reasons for my challenges were related to language and trust. The issue of language speaks for itself. My inability to communicate directly with many participants—especially low-wage workers from South Asia—required me to rely on others for recruitment.

A more relevant discussion is around the issue of trust. As I discussed earlier, the Dubai government is hypersensitive about its image and how it is represented in the media. Many workers in Dubai know about the sensational news reports out of Qatar concerning the construction for the World Cup to be hosted in 2020, and workers could get fired for speaking with journalists (Black 2015). This made potential participants hesitant to engage with me. In most cases, however, this occurred during the recruitment phase and I was told about it later. In one instance, my interpreter and I had gone together one evening to recruit and potentially interview. He had apparently convinced a man to come, but once in my car it was clear to me that the man was quite anxious and really did not want to be there. I smiled and told him he did not need to stay. The man left, and afterwards, my interpreter said the man was worried about the authorities finding out.

In addition, my identity as a white Westerner raised questions in the minds of potential participants. A few told me later that they had been concerned that I might be CID, undercover police. A young male Nigerian who was quite doubtful that I would even turn up for the interview said, "white people don't really want to talk to blacks." While these individuals were concerned about problems with authorities, this man was addressing issues of racism, which black Africans encountered frequently in Dubai. This is discussed at length in chapter four.

For these reasons, I was only able to recruit a small number of participants on my own. One was a Nigerian security guard at the university where I used to work and with whom I was able to speak to privately, another was an Ethiopian security guard whom I regularly saw on my morning dog walks, and the third was a young Indian man who delivered groceries in my neighborhood. Two of these men had university degrees and the third had two years of university experience. Otherwise, I used my personal networks, my interpreter, and previous participants to locate participants.

My own personal networks included friends and previous colleagues. Through these networks I interviewed ten participants, two African, one Filipina, and seven South Asians. All but two I was able to interview on my own. Of the seven South Asians, four were Pakistani women. Two I could interview one-on-one. One of these two was Wafa, a young nurse who had recently graduated from university and come to Dubai to join her mother. Wafa acted as the translator for her mother and for another woman who was a distant cousin.[32]

My Nepali interpreter, Tarun, was central to recruitment. Overall, he was able to connect me with fifteen individuals. He found two African participants whom I was able to interview one-on-one, but mainly, he was central to recruiting South Asian participants from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, countries where Hindi (or Urdu) is spoken. Sometimes Tarun would locate participants on his own and sometimes we went together. When he did it on his own, he would go hang out in parts of the city where he knew large

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32. Issues of honesty are often in question when a family member is the interpreter. I believe the women were quite forthright. One of them freely discussed the suicidal feelings she had experienced in Pakistan. Wafa's mother did not, but my engagement with her and the stories she shared showed that she was an emotionally and psychologically strong woman. While she was clearly poor and had had to struggle, her life experiences had not been nearly as harsh and trying as the cousin's had been.

groups of South Asians congregated on Fridays, the Muslim religious day and the day off

for many workers. Often areas where people congregated were near central bus stations.

Tarun would get to know the person, follow-up with one or more phone calls, maybe see

the individual again, and encourage him or her to be interviewed. Another approach was

for Tarun and I to drive to one of the labor camps on Friday afternoons. I would sit in the

car, and Tarun would search for potential participants. One place where he often found

success was at the ATM machines, which some workers had difficulty understanding.

Tarun would help them and then continue chatting with them. Sometimes we would

interview immediately and other times he would get their phone numbers and follow up

with some calls, eventually asking the individual to interview. Sometimes one of these

participants would connect Tarun to another potential participant. In general though, this

was not a successful method. Often the only individuals these participants knew were

others who worked for the same company and/or performed the same job. With my aim

for diversity, snowball sampling of this type was not so useful. Over the course of the ten

months that Tarun worked with me, he became quite gifted at gaining the trust of

strangers. However, while Tarun was excellent at locating participants and interpreting

for them, we discovered that having him interpret for an individual whom I had found

through a third party was not a good idea. Two unknown bodies—Tarun and mine—

understandably failed to gain their trust. Only one man was interviewed under such

circumstances. In most cases, Tarun's good relationship reflected positively on me.

My final approach to findings participants was through previous participants.

Sixteen participants were found this way. As I mentioned above though, snowball

sampling in the sense of participants connecting with others they knew was not always

successful because of their limited networks. As a result, several months into my field work I began paying Dh50 (US$13.50) for each individual a previous participant found, so long as she or he fit the parameters of my study and filled a gap in terms of nationality and occupation. Because of this need, if a prior participant was interested in helping, he or she had to actively recruit in ways similar to Tarun's. This necessitated time and energy, which I felt required compensation.

In all cases, when a potential participant was found through another person, I asked that this individual be the one to initiate contact. I did this because I did not want individuals to feel pressured into meeting me. In the context in which I was carrying out fieldwork, I felt this would be ethically wrong. I knew that some had concerns about the risk of participating in an interview. In addition, I believed that the socio-economic imbalance between low-wage workers and myself could make an individual feel pressured to interview. Once a potential participant made the first step and contacted me—typically through WhatsApp—, I took over responsibility for maintaining dialog. In some cases, an interview might be arranged immediately, and in others we would "chat" through WhatsApp for a few days while I answered questions about who I was and what I was seeking. For the vast majority of my participants, I believe potential participants only contacted me because of the trust they had in the person who had "recruited" them.

Remunerations

Participants were given Dh100 (US$27) for their participation. With this money, I also gave a small bag containing juice, fruit, and a granola bar. Remuneration in the amount of Dh100 (US$27) was suggested by a man whom I had hoped would assist as a interpreter, but could not. When I asked him how much he would recommend giving as

compensation, he quickly responded and said Dh100 (US$27). With this amount, he said, they can eat for ten days. (That would be US$2.70 a day, an amount that does not go far in Dubai and would rarely cover the cost of meat, fruits, or many vegetables.)

The Interviews

None of my interviews could be conducted where the participants lived because most were in accommodation shared with an average of ten others. In addition, I did not want my presence to be cause for any problems. Coffee shops or other venue could prove too noisy, too distracting, and not private enough. I needed to ensure that we were not be overheard. I also wanted to ensure there were no security cameras, which are quite prevalent throughout Dubai. As a result, almost all of the interviews were held in my car. This worked out quite well. Within the confines of my "mobile" office, I could better ensure that the interview took place in a risk free environment. After I picked up my participant, I drove us to a location where I felt sure we could proceed unobserved. Another reason the car worked well was because of the high temperatures in Dubai. The air-conditioned car kept my interviewee and myself comfortable. The most important benefit of being in the car was the cocooned environment it created that lent a feeling of protection. Interviews lasted between forty and ninety-five minutes and averaged sixty-five minutes. One outlier was 180 minutes long, but this took place over three consecutive days.

The Content and Style of Interview

The aim of my study is to better understand the experiences of temporary migrant workers earning in the lowest wage-bracket in Dubai, and the impact of those experiences on their emotional well-being. To better understand their lives in Dubai, I asked my

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participants to speak not only about these experiences, but also about life in their home

countries and the process of coming to Dubai (see Lee and Pratt 2013). This broader lens

helped me to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the various vulnerabilities my

participants encountered throughout their lives, and how these vulnerabilities may have

accumulated and "compounded" (Lewis et al. 2015, 58), and in so doing impacted their

well-being.

At the beginning of each interview, I explained the aim of the project, what the

interview would involve, that their anonymity and safety were my primary concerns, and

that I would pay them for the interview.[33] When Tarun my interpreter was present, the

participant and I sat in the front of my car. Tarun would sit in the backseat. Leaning

forward, he would be the voice that connected us. After gaining my participant's consent

to carry out the interview and record it, we would proceed.

There was certain content I wanted participants to address whether on their own

or through more targeted questions (see Appendix D for the complete interview

protocol). This included information about the home country (including where they were

from, their families, and communities), about the migration process (including how they

had learned about the UAE, their reasons for migrating, and who had assisted them with

funding their migration and acquiring a visit visa or employment visa), and about their

experiences in Dubai (including what their work and accommodation was like, what was

most challenging, and what motivated them to endure their circumstances). There were

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33. With my thirtieth interview, I also began telling them that I would not be able to help them
further financially. This was due to my twenty-ninth interviewee, a Filipina security guard, having texted
me the evening after the interview to say she needed a loan so that she could repay a debt. There was only
one more participant, a Nigerian man, who also asked for money. It was surprisingly few considering the
circumstances which most of my participants were in.

also specific aspects of emotional well-being that I wanted to explore. These topics included the interviewee's sources of stress, sources of emotional support, coping mechanisms, general emotional state, and self-appraisals about oneself and one's life.

At the beginning of the interview, I would say, "I would like to hear about where you come from, the process of coming here, and your experiences here. You can begin where you would like." [34] This allowed participants to freely speak and attend to those issues they felt most relevant, resulting in stories that were richer and which revealed the complexity of their lives (Camfield, Crivello, and Woodhead 2008). It also allowed content to emerge on its own, without prompting or prodding. After interviewees finished their story, I would then turn to a more semi-structured style of interviewing. For the more loquacious speakers, I waited and did not interrupt their narratives, asking the needed questions after they had finished. For those who were more reticent, I continually asked, prompting questions, encouraging them to say more. If this level of involvement was required, I would actively insert questions about well-being between those dealing with life experiences.

<center>Transcription of Interviews</center>

Immediately following each interview, I made field notes in scratch form, noting down the location of the interview and any challenges that had arose, such as the need to move the car halfway through the interview to avoid the sun or because I felt passerbys were paying too much attention to us. Later that day or the next morning, I elaborated on

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34. It took a few interviews before I was able to begin an interview in this way. At first I felt a need for great structure and control, and would ask them to start by telling me about their home country. Some did not want to do this because that was not what was most important to them. I learned fairly quickly that it was important to give the participant control over his or her story.

my field notes and began transcription. I carried out transcription myself because of the many different accents that could make comprehension a challenge. For interviews that required an interpreter, I transcribed only the English portions of the recording. Thus, the voices being transcribe were my interpreter's and my own. My interpreter was not able to be involved with transcription or with checking over the transcriptions due to the amount of time it would have required, and his own work schedule.

I attempted to involve participants in validation; however, their circumstances made this quite difficult. Half of my participants did not speak a sufficient amount of English, and even those who were fluent simply did not have the time. To those I knew could read, I always asked if they would like to see the transcript and if they could let me know if I had made in errors during transcription. I new there was the possibility of errors because of the strong and varied accents that my interviewees had. I also said they should feel free to add information if they remembered something else they might like to add. Most were happy to receive it and said that they enjoyed seeing their life written before them. None gave me critical feedback, but one man did write an additional two pages about a series of events that happened when he was quite young. The information was not really pertinent to my study, but I do believe it was cathartic for him to write it. In addition, quite a few of my English-speaking participants wanted to remain in contact with me. Many of them have very isolated lives in Dubai, and maintaining contact with me was their connection to the outside world. As they had shared their stories with me, I was also one of the few who knew their story and had shown empathy.

Using an Interpreter in the Interviewing Process

This study is unique in including a wide range of culturally distinct participants all of whom were performing jobs that earned extremely low-salaries. However, this uniqueness created challenges due to the various languages spoken. Rather than ignoring the challenges of interpreter-assisted interviews, as many studies do (Jones and Boyle 2011; Merry et al. 2011; Williamson et al. 2011), I address it here.

There are several reasons why researchers are disinclined to use interpreters. One is the potential for lost or sanitized meaning. This is due to an interpreter attempting to modify a response because he or she believes it either reflects his or her own country negatively or is concerned that the interviewee's response might be offensive to the interviewer. Lost meaning can also be the result of poorly skilled interpreters or interpreters working in a third language, which is neither the interviewer's or interpreter's first language. It can also be lost due to cultural misunderstandings. A final challenge that many have in using an interpreter is locating participants.

Without question, the interviews I carried out one-on-one without an interpreter were better. The conversations were more private and intimate; I was better able to respond empathically and use silence to communicate; I could be certain that the question was framed how I wanted; I was able to obtain greater depth; I could follow-up with participants after the interview if the participant was agreeable. The list could go on and on. Yet, while one-on-one interviews in my own language are ideal, restricting myself to this would have greatly impacted the type of study I carried out by limiting who I could interview and thus include. An exploratory study of this type in this setting has not been carried out. It has not been done for good reason, but those reasons and the fear that some

sort of standards would be forsaken if attempted simply results in loss of another kind. Researchers agree that if the aim is to better understand the diverse experiences and perspectives of migrants from different cultures and who speak different languages, an interpreter is crucial (Kosny et al. 2014; Merry et al. 2011). Following, I discuss some of the interpreter-related factors that I found to have a positive impact on an interview.

One important factor was having an interpreter who was familiar with the culture (Kapborg and Berterö 2002; Merry et al. 2011; Williamson et al. 2011). My interpreter Tarun was able to speak with individuals from Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Because he was Nepalese, he served as my cultural interpreter as well as my linguistic one. In addition, Tarun had experienced some of the hardships that my participants had endured. He had a university education, but like several of my participants, had come to Dubai to work in a job requiring far less education. He had lived in shared accommodation in the labor camps and, as a security guard, had worked outdoors in the heat.[35] Because Tarun had experienced in at least some small ways the systems and challenges that our participants had faced, he could often fill in the gaps and help me understand how certain systems worked. Tarun's own experiences gave him empathy for our participants and made him interested in and committed to the study.

Another key factor for successful interviews is to spend a sufficient amount of time preparing the interpreter prior to the interviews (Jones and Boyle 2011; Kosny et al. 2014; Williamson et al. 2011). One advantage to having a non-professional interpreter was his "trainability" and openness to advice. Prior to starting the interviewing process, I

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35. Tarun was lucky. An unexpected encounter with an Emirati man—who unbeknownst to Tarun was his employer—resulted in his promotion and opportunity to work in his field.

spoke extensively with Tarun about the aims of my research, the participants I was

seeking, what he should and not say to them when sussing out their suitability prior to

recruiting them, and the importance of not pressuring them to interview if they were

clearly uncomfortable with and feared the prospect. We also spoke about the interview

protocol, issues of consent, and how I wanted him to engage during the interview. In

addition, prior to the first interview, Tarun translated the interview guide so that we could

discuss concepts and terms to be sure we were both on the same page and to be sure that

they would be accessible to the participants. It was in many ways a learning experience

for the two of us, but because of his inexperience he was comfortable with our need to

shift gears at times and reconsider our approach.

Finally, building trust and rapport with participants is important (Merry et al.

2011). Because Tarun had the time, interest, and familiarity with my target population, he

was able to locate participants and build a relationship with them before we interviewed.

It was the trust they developed in him that enabled the interview. I would argue that

participants liked me because they liked him. The rapport and trust that Tarun build was,

for example, what allowed a young woman to admit to being sexually abused by her

employer.

I would, of course, not dismiss the advantages of a professional interpreter. There

were, however, some excellent advantages to having a non-professional. Tarun and I

spent a great deal of time together. As discussed earlier, his work allowed him to spend

Fridays helping me recruit participants. He stayed committed to assisting me throughout

the entire ten months of my fieldwork, and he personally felt compelled to continue until

we had reached our target. A professional translator would likely not have the time or inclination to engage in many of these ways.

<p align="center">Further Reflections on the Interviewing Process</p>

There are many factors that impact the success of an interview in terms of its richness and depth. They, of course, include the skill and personality of the interviewer and interpreter and the context within which one is attempting to carry out these interviews. But I also found that it could include the interviewees' level of education, how they had been socialized, and the opportunities they had had in their home country. The interviews I carried out one-on-one in English without an interpreter were usually with more educated participants. These individuals, regardless of their nationality, were competent in describing and elaborating, and as a result their interviews had much more depth.[36] Education, however, was not the only determinant. For example, the second interview I carried out was with Tarun my interpreter. It did not seem to go well. The interview was with Rashma, a Nepali woman with a high school education. The interview felt like pulling teeth. After transcribing it, I decided to request a second interview as I assumed that its quality was the result of my and/or my interpreter's yet-to-be-fully-developed interviewing skills or interpreting skills. But I do not believe it was due to either. The second interview with Rashma was much like the first. Throughout the two interviews I learned that Rashma was from a very, very poor family. The family appeared to have poor dynamics in terms of the emotional and psychological support it provided

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36. In Dubai, South Asians and Filipinos dominate among low-wage workers. As a result, there are many more of them and they often—though not always—have a stronger network of friends and are able to share accommodation with those friends. As a result, they have more people they can share their thoughts and concerns with. Africans, on the other hand, were often "the odd man out" in that they were the sole African in a room of Indians or Bangladeshis.

for one another, and it seemed like the family in general was very isolated from any broader community. I do not believe anyone had ever asked Rashma to talk about the events that occurred in her life, much less what she thought or felt. In contrast, there were some participants from South Asia who had very little formal education (grade four or five) and no English, yet who were very expressive and reflective. These many complex variables impacted the quality of the interview and also made it challenging to judge why some were richer than others.

Prior to beginning my interviews, I was uncertain what the impact these conversations would have on my participants. I knew that research has shown that the opportunity to speak at length about one's most difficult life experiences can improve mental well-being (Biddle et al. 2013; Smith, Poindexter, and Cukrowicz 2010; Jorm, Kelly, and Morgan 2007). These studies show that the interviewing experience can be cathartic and provide validation of one's experience (Biddle et al. 2013; Weiss 1995). My own uncertainty was quickly replaced with confidence. Beginning with the first interview, I learned that the impact of the interview was positive. At the end of each, I asked, "How do you feel now?" The responses were insightful, showing how much they needed to share their experiences. Words such as "glad," "better," "happy," fresh," and "free" were used to express the impact that our conversation had had. Many of them mentioned how helpful it was to be able to tell another about the pain they felt. Sophie, a Cameroonian woman, said, "[I'm] a little better. … I don't know. Somehow, talking about it. It's painful, but I really never had a chance to bring it out. … I just wanted to speak to somebody, bring it out." Muhammad, a Bangladeshi man, said—with a big smile on his face—that I reminded him of his mother. (I took this as a positive sign.)

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While almost all had expressed feelings showing that they felt affirmed and in a better emotional place than before we had spoken, one was not. Tarun translated a Bangladeshi man's thoughts, "Now he's feeling okay, but now he's worried about his family."[37] I took this as a negative sign of the impact. Fortunately, he was the only participant. For at least half of my participants, the simple invitation to speak was like opening the floodgates. The frustrations and sadness they contained inside and very often shared with no one else came flooding out. I explained to Gabriel, a twenty-six-year-old Nigerian man, what the study was about and gained his permission. He said, "I want to know where I am starting from; when I came to Dubai?" I said anywhere. From there, Gabriel spoke non-stop for four single-spaced lines of typed text.

Some participants said that the interview had given them hope. One young man said he had agreed to the interview because he had been told by a previous participant to do the interview because "She gives you encouragement." I never told interviewees that they deserved more, that they could surely get a better job, or that their luck would soon turn; yet, simply by being listened to—being there for them for those few minutes—they had felt encouraged.

<center>Informal Interviews & Conversations</center>

Beyond the interviews I held with my targeted population during my ten months of fieldwork, I had numerous other extended conversations. Early on, I was trying to determine whether the current political dynamics and tension I sensed around the

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37. This man had a very tormented soul, and sounded as such throughout the interview. He had convinced his father to sell their home so he could emigrate, and the home had been lost. While his response to having the interview was not fully positive, his interview went on for an hour and a half. Overall, I think the process was cathartic for him.

government and their concern for negative representation had indeed intensified. I spoke with a number of individuals whom I felt would have insight, including an advisor to the Dubai Executive Council, and a mix of university instructors, professors, deans, and a provost. They confirmed that the political climate in Dubai had shifted and that carrying out research would require some delicacy. Many presumed that I was being too cavalier about my fieldwork and the safety of my participants. However, after discussing the precautionary measures I was taking, they always concluded that I doing more than enough.

To learn more about the experiences of low-wage workers, I spoke with an individual who owned a factory and another who was the general manager for a construction company. I also met with a man who was psychiatrist and director of residency at a local hospital. I spoke at length with individuals who founded, ran, or simply volunteered for NGOs, which served low-wage workers. I attended a three-day workshop organized by a training center in Dubai on the issue of migrant rights and business ethics, and an educational workshop organized by this same training center and the government. In it, workers were taught about the laws and policies that were in place to assist workers.[38]

<div align="center">Participant Observation</div>

The years of living and working in Dubai prior to beginning my doctoral study provided extensive opportunities for observing and engaging with the local population and migrants of various socio-economic levels and for following the local news. Those

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38. Events such as these were extremely frustrating. Those providing the training knew that employers could easily circumvent these laws and policies, and that complaining could easily result in employees being terminated. Yet, they continued to tell workers to do so.

ten years provided a strong foundation for my ten months of fieldwork which included more purposeful participant observation.

My work with a local NGO was the main avenue for participant observation, as well as a way to better familiarize with my target population (Merry et al. 2011).[39] The NGO where I volunteered focused its attention on serving workers who lived in the labor camps. During my ten months of fieldwork, I was the main coordinator for organizing worker health checks. This involved planning, attending, and participating as a volunteer at theses events. While attending the events, I was able to do extensive observation and to see where they prepared their meals and ate, the inside of rooms, and the general conditions of their lives.

A good number of the men I met in those camps would have qualified to be participants in my study; however, I chose not to select participants from those locations where the NGO held events. Though the founder of the NGO had said it would be okay for to do so, and many there would have been suitable, I did not want to take the chance of bringing harm to the organization because of the government's potential angst in regards to this study. The chances of this happening were likely very small; however, as with all of the choices I made in carrying out my fieldwork, I chose to err on the side of caution.

The NGO events were a good opportunity for me to see how the labor camps were designed. Within a labor camp are hundreds of compounds. Each compound has

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39. Note, however, that by simply moving through daily life in Dubai one is able to observe the lives of low-wage workers. They are ubiquitous. Every apartment building has security and cleaners. There are low-wage cleaners, gardeners, shop deliverers, car washers, construction workers everywhere. All could very well have been earning wages similar to my participants.

multiple buildings for accommodation. A company typically owns or rents a compound and typically houses anywhere between three or four hundred to thousands of employees. Though I interviewed many who lived in labor camps, I did not visit them there. Entering a compound requires passing security. As a white woman, my presence would have been memorable. I did not want to draw attention to what I was doing or to the participants who had engaged with me.

On Fridays, I would also have extended periods of time to observe the common spaces within the labor camps. Tarun and I would visit one of the labor camps late in the afternoon. It was not uncommon for me to stay sitting in the car for a couple of hours at a time while I waited for him to seek out potential participants. From my car I could observe activities, such as the setting up of a small late afternoon market, and groups of men sitting around talking. In general, there was not a lot to occupy oneself with in these camps, apart from the company of others.

Other locations where I was able to observe low-wage migrants came when I accompanied participants to various locations in the city. This would include visits to Immigration, the Ministry of Labor, and country consulates, as well as social get-togethers. I maintained a quite lengthy in-person relationship with a group of six Pakistani women.[40] Two of them, Jasweer and her adult daughter Wafa, I saw regularly

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40. Quite by coincidence the women in the group were Christians, not Muslim as are the majority Pakistanis. I was introduced to one of the women's employers. The employer was Muslim and she employed two Pakistani women. One was Muslim and one was Christian; her name was Edna. On Fridays after church Edna met up with her church friends. The women invited me back to the room where one of them rented bed space. This woman, Jasweer, shared the room with Ghaziyah, a Pakistani Muslim woman. (Being able to share a room with only one other person is quite unusual and did not last long. Jasweer typically rented bed space in rooms with six to eight others.) Jasweer's daughter, Wafa, had recently graduated from nursing school and had come to Dubai to join her mother. Both Wafa and Ghaziyah spoke lower level but workable English and acted as interpreters within these group settings.

over the course of my fieldwork, and I visited them in the various rooms where they rented bed space. In about the span of a year, they moved rooms seven or eight times, continually in search of a more affordable or comfortable space. These social get-togethers provided excellent opportunities for observing and learning about their lives.

Data Analysis

My data was in the form of recorded interviews, memos, notes from observations, and WhatsApp exchanges that often continued after the interviews.[41] Interviews were between forty and ninety-five minutes and averaged sixty-five minutes. One outlier was 180 minutes long. Following each interview, I began to transcribe it the same day or the following. This was important because it informed how I approached subsequent interviews. After the first two interviews were transcribed I discussed them with a professor in Dubai who was familiar with the context and target population.

From the start I regularly reviewed transcripts searching for common themes, and memoing further about ideas I wanted to explore in future interviews. I did not, however, begin to do more formal coding until I received training in Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software in February 2016.[42] This occurred six months into my fieldwork. When I first began, the codes were very descriptive and topic oriented. After several transcripts, I felt I was not capturing the experiences of my participants. In May of that year I

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41. Pseudonyms were used with everyone and in all forms of documentation. Real names and contact information were saved in SecureSafe, a secure cloud storage service. In addition, to protect myself, I used a VPN when examining websites or emailing what might be seen by local authorities as questionable topics or trigger words.

42. Prior to using Atlas.ti, my coding consisted of reading and re-reading the transcripts and making notes about potential codes, categories, and emerging themes, and information that needed further explanation.

attended a qualitative research conference and was introduced to several approaches to

data analysis, including Kathy Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory method.[43]

Grounded theory is a method of analysis originally developed by Glaser and

Strauss in the 1960s in reaction to positivist quantitative research and the dominant hold

it had. In the 1990s, Strauss in collaboration with Corbin moved away from Glaser's

more rigid approach to analysis and to one that was looser and more pragmatic. In the

1990s, grounded theory took a constructivist turn. While maintaining Glaser and

Strauss's pragmatism and its iterative approach to analysis, the new conceptualization

was inherently more flexible and started from the position that "social reality is multiple,

processual, and constructed" (Charmaz 2014), a principle that guided has guided my

study from the beginning.

The key elements I took away from Charmaz's workshop were the need for an

iterative process that focused on processes, not descriptions. This meant looking at what

was happening and what people were doing. Constructivist grounded theory involves a

fairly deliberate process of initial coding followed by more focused coding. In essence, it

is moving from more concrete references to more abstract ones. Because I was using

Atlas.ti, I found that the easiest way to do this was to create two separate projects, one for

initial coding and one for focused coding. I did not do initial coding of all of the

transcripts. Rather, I carried out initial coding of four or five transcripts and then stopped

to reflect on the categories that were emerging and to synthesize codes that were

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43. Charmaz contends that theoretical sampling should be based on conceptual and theoretical development. My sample selection did not intentionally adhere to this approach. I only began exploring her work more deeply after my data was collected. However, while my selection of participants was not carried out with this in mind, the diversity I was attempting to capture in my sample and how I allowed previous interviews to guided future ones held similarities to her approach.

repetitive. I used Atlas.ti network views to create mind maps for sorting codes related to individual participants and thinking about categories and themes. Using the codes that had been synthesized from the first few transcripts, I then did an initial coding of four or five more transcripts, continually adding codes as needed. At that point I studied the codes more deliberately, again using Atlas.ti's network view to focus on the most frequent and/or significant codes, determining which made sense together and what categories they formed. I then started my second Atlas.ti project to carry out focused coding. I continued doing only focused coding on subsequent transcripts unless I encountered transcripts that had very different processes occurring, in which case I returned to the first Atlas.ti project and began with initial coding.

After completing the focused coding of all of the interviews, I reviewed each transcript, noting the experiences and themes that were most prominent and wrote a one- to two-page summary about that participant, including any pertinent quotes. I printed these out and physically cut them into small segments that I proceeded to sort. I sorted them into categories that I had already determined while also creating new categories and themes that had not yet emerged, synthesizing and re-grouping as needed. I went through the same with all of my memos. It is through this process that the chapters for my dissertation evolved.

Positionality & Reflexivity

My interest in pursuing doctoral study in justice studies and issues related to migration were driven by my experiences in the UAE. Yet, my desire to pursue research on low-wage migrant workers has always sat uncomfortably with me. It would have been easier to explore the white Western employers of domestic workers or the unique and odd

practices of racial and nationality-based discrimination that occur in Dubai. These would have been much more "comfortable" pursuits and I likely would have been a more suitable researcher in the eyes of many, but they dealt little with issues of social justice and marginalization. Further, they were not issues that drove me, and they certainly would not have driven me through the processes of doctoral study.

The cross-cultural interactions that took place with my target population pressed me to always be cognizant of my position as a white middle-aged American woman raised in an upper-middle class household. My goal was not to attempt to escape my outsider status or "otherness." That was impossible. Rather, my aim was to increase my status as an ally. However, while I know that an ally was important, after several interviews I learned that what was most needed was a confidant. The individuals I spoke to were in desperate need for such a person. One participant told me that he and others like him could not share their private—and what many felt were humiliating—lives with others. Whether driven by experience or assumptions, he would not tell others about his low-level work, pay, or where he was living because he believed it would be told to others and laughed about. This was not only among my more educated participants; those with little education did similarly. The result was that low-wage workers hide from family and friends in their home country and local friends the substantive aspects of their lives, the aspects that were the hardest to bear and endure. They knew that I would not laugh, tell anyone, or show judgment.

Listening closely to my participants' stories helped my participants feel that they were being heard and helped me notice when part of the story was not being told. For example, in my interview with Mercy, a thirty-two-year-old Nigerian woman, it became

apparent to me that she was skirting around the topic of sex work and/or sexual abuse. I could imagine that admitting to such involvement to anyone—much less a researcher of a different nationality—would have been incredibly difficult. I told Mercy that I knew there were a lot of women who come to Dubai and then cannot find work, that they become desperate, and feel like their only alternative is sex work, or that they are put into circumstances where their only option is to allow themselves to be sexually violated. I then asked her if she had had to face such a choice. The transcription of her response filled a page with single-spaced text. Mercy and I returned to the topic of sex work later, and I asked if she had ever met someone who had come to Dubai with the intention of working in the sex trade. She replied that she didn't like to associate with such people. I felt that she feared Nigerians looked bad to others. I said that I understood that life in Nigeria was incredibly hard, and that some had no alternative, and that, "desperation leads to desperate means." Again, this opened the door to her sharing.

In another example, it was my good fortune that Tarun my interpreter also strove to be a trustworthy ally and confidant. In our interview with Sunita, a young Nepali woman who was working as a domestic worker, she told us that she had been "tortured" and mentioned a couple of ways. I asked her if there were other ways they tortured her. She became very quiet and did not speak, staring out the front window of the car. Such silences make the story irrelevant. The details unneeded. In my head I had answered the question long before she did. She eventually spoke. Rape … on a weekly basis. Such moments of honesty would have been impossible with just any interpreter. Tarun showed an amazing amount of compassion for the young woman.

Overall, I was amazed by the amount of self-disclosure, driven by what I presumed was the need to "get it all out." I knew it was the intensity of their circumstances and suffering that resulted in an utter desperation to unburden themselves. In many ways, at the point of the interview, my position was as a nameless other who, as Yabani said, would not come back to haunt them with the stories they had told. Some confided in me *because of* the enormous racial, national, and social gap between us. With others, I bridged this gap through my desire to be there, to listen, and to not judge. I did not need to be an insider or lessen my otherness. I needed to be compassionate.

Conclusion

The substantive chapters of this dissertation follow my participants from their home countries and through the migration process of gaining entry and working in the UAE. I provide a descriptive account of their experiences and the factors that influenced them, and ground these experiences in current and historical events. The aim of this exploration is to better understand how my participants' experiences impacted their emotional well-being, and what factors aided or hindered their ability to flourish. The following chapter is the beginning of this journey. It focuses on their home country and the factors that motivated their migration to the UAE.

CHAPTER 3

VULNERABILITY: THE JOURNEY FROM HOME

When I was in Nepal, I didn't have enough money, and my parents were jobless, so I had lots of problems when I was in Nepal. I wanted to study, but I didn't have money. I stopped my education at that time. I couldn't study because of my sister. I had a responsibility to my younger sister. That's why I came here. I wanted to stay in Nepal, actually. But my sister still study so I need to give her money. Because of that I came here.[44]

Rashma, a 28-year-old Nepalese women

There is only one reason why I left Nigeria…. It is because of job. That is the only problem. My country is very okay…. We take fresh food, fresh vegetables, every time, fresh meat, but there is no money. That is the only problem. No jobs…. … You are free to build your own house, if you have money.

Yabani, a 30-year-old Nigerian man

Then husband was always very bad. Drinking, drinking, drinking so much. I was working so much. I can't work like that. That's why I came to Dubai. My mama and father only looking after my three children. That's why I came. My father just died now. My older girl big now. Any problem can happen. What to do? Take care of girl. Now I return to my home country.

Danjua, a 33-year-old Sri Lankan woman

The vulnerability my participants experienced did not begin in Dubai. It began in their home countries. It was the precarity of their lives that drove them to leave their families and friends in hope of something better. Some left home because they were unable to find work. Others left in hopes of finding better work so that their children or their siblings might go to school, so that a parent might be able to receive the medical treatment needed, so that they would not be destitute when they were no longer able to work. This is the first chapter of five that looks at vulnerability and its cumulative aspect.

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44. Tarun my interpreter translated for Rashma. He often did so using the third person. I have changed it to the first person.

Their vulnerability began in their home countries, and for most, their migration increased it.

This first chapter focuses on the factors that motivated my participants' emigration and the challenges they encountered in the process of migration up until their arrival in the UAE. It examines the hidden historical structures and systems that can violently impact the less powerful in society, propelling them to seek work elsewhere. Framing these structures and systems as violent brings attention to the harm that can result when certain groups are exploited to the advantage of the powerful. They are time and space specific, yet also historical in terms of their links to the past. Historical-structural processes also provide the foundation for explaining other factors that propelled my participants along the path to migration, such as the role of segmented markets, social networks, misperceptions, and deception. The chapter concludes with a discussion of emigration bans, and the desperation that drove my participants to circumvent such governmental obstacles.

Historical-Structural Processes

Almost all of the reasons that motivated my participants to emigrate are rooted, at least in part, in historically entrenched political-economic systems. The structural vulnerability and dislocation that individuals and groups experience begins with global macro-level forces which shape national institutions and local conditions. Identifying the roots of this structural violence and how it operates in the lives of migrants can reveal how structural violence works. This chapter begins with an overview of structural violence and then discusses it within the framework of the historical-structural approach to migration.

Structural Violence

Structural violence is a multifaceted concept that has been explained in a variety of ways. However, central to all has been a desire to expose the unjust systems that result in some groups being privileged and others oppressed. Johan Galtung coined the term "structural violence" in the late 1960s. In his book *Peace by Peaceful Means*, he explains that structural violence is the violence that occurs when wealth and power exploit or oppress others, and standards of justice are not upheld (Galtung 1986). This inequality and injustice is often the result of institutions. Elise Boulding, a contemporary of Galtung and fellow peace educator, defined structural violence as "the patterning of social institutions that results in violent oppression and injustice for victim sectors of society, whether locally, regionally, or globally" (2000, 161). As well as being institutional, structural violence is also global, historical, economic, political, and systemic. Philippe Bourgois (2004) captures these elements. He explains that structural violence is "[c]hronic, historically entrenched, political-economic oppression and social inequality, ranging from exploitative international terms of trade to abusive local working conditions and high infant morality rates" (426).

These explanations show the complexity of structural violence and the difficulty in explaining it. Structural violence is a condition as well as a cause and an effect of that condition. Its roots are both visible and invisible, as are its consequences. It is a "ubiquitous experience" (Quesada 2011, 390), observable among the multitudes, as well as individually. It is the process of creating oppression and injustice, and it is the oppression and injustice itself. It is both a conceptual tool and a condition to be interrogated. As a tool, structural violence can provide a framework for the analysis of

power (Gardner 2010), and of the mechanisms that create inequality. As a condition, it can be examined to reveal the social processes that structure and sustain increasing global disparities and human rights abuses (Farmer 2004). It can help us to understand how certain individuals and groups are made structurally vulnerable (Quesada, Hart, and Bourgois 2011).

A central feature of structural violence is that it is often invisible. Physical violence is direct violence. Its source and its target are both clearly identifiable. In contrast, when violence is structural, it is impersonal. The source and manner in which it manifests itself are often hidden. Galtung (1969) explains that while the perpetrator of direct physical violence is typically known, with structural violence the individual may or may not be known. The perpetrators are often not known because the violence is the result of unequal power built into structures (Galtung 1969), which in themselves are difficult to identify. Sociologist Cecilia Menjivar (2011) adds that the consequences of structural violence only becomes visible when talked about because it is through speaking and discussion that the violence becomes recognizable.

Yet, while we say that structural violence is hidden and invisible, this is typically because we do not interpret homelessness, poor health, hunger, poor housing, deportation, lack of health insurance, and poor pay as "violence." They are problems or issues to be addressed, but not the result of violence. Framing these "problems" as violence is an analytical device that works to emphasize the "avoidable" harm that comes from unjust systems (Farmer and Rylko-Bauer 2016). In all, structural violence is a way to look at the world and its interconnections and interdependencies. The political,

economic, and social structures that we create have implications. They grant power and comfort to some at the expense of others, often leaving them structurally vulnerable.

Historically Constituted Structures

The affluent often view an individual's economic circumstances as the result of one's own failings (or success) and independent of broader circumstance. Anthropologist and physician Paul Farmer (2005) explains that although individuals and families do indeed have agency, that agency is mitigated by external structures that determine the distribution of resources. Systems and structures are historically constituted. They are rooted in slavery, colonialism, and patriarchy—institutionalized systems that evolved with the "events" of direct violence (Galtung 1986). Galtung explains that over extended periods of time, direct violence "seeps down and sediments as massive structural violence" with some in the position of privilege and others without (Galtung 1986, 200). Galtung (1969) writes that he devised the idea of structural violence in response to the US's lack of awareness of the lasting impact of colonial inequality. Colonialism (and slavery) initiated the flow of human and raw resources from the poorest to the richest countries. These structures are behind the imposition of racial stratification found in much of the world today and are behind the unequal distribution of wealth (Farmer 2005). They are central to the processes that have "shap[ed] contemporary patterns of violence across the world" (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, 5) and have been maintained by corporations, banks, and lending institutions that control the economy (Menjívar 2011). The conditions of poverty have been systematically created and maintained, and play a significant role in labor migration and the perpetuation of precarity.

Migration within a Historical-Structural Framework

Labor migration is often thought to be a choice. However, like poverty, migration is quite often the consequence of historically derived macro-structures that limit choice through perpetuation of inequality. Although migration is typically used as a strategy to escape poverty, often it simply "perpetuates" what they were hoping to escape (Menjivar 2011, 53). These factors are central to the historical-structural theories of migration (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Khondker 2010; D. S. Massey et al. 2005; Sassen 1988; Glick Schiller 2009; Wise and Covarrubias 2009).

Wallerstein's analysis of the historical-structural factors that contribute to migration holds many similarities to Galtung's theory of conflict. Both of their analyses help to explain the neoliberal ideology that was behind the rapid increase in structural inequalities and the precarious conditions faced by low-wage workers globally (Beneria 2000; Benería, Deere, and Kabeer 2012; Menjívar 2011; Muñoz 2008; Parreñas 2008; Wise and Covarrubias 2009). This ideology was the impetus behind structural adjustment polices that were behind the rapid increase in structural inequalities and the precarious conditions faced by low-wage workers globally (Beneria 2000; Benería, Deere, and Kabeer 2012; Menjívar 2011; Muñoz 2008; Parreñas 2008; Wise and Covarrubias 2009). "Developing" countries were required to privatize, liberalize, and deregulate national industries, open borders to the flow of capital and goods, ease labor law restrictions, increase exportation, and make cuts in social spending (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014; Centeno and Cohen 2012; Muñoz 2008). The resulting poverty and lack of opportunities led to increases in international migration. The Arab Gulf has benefited

from these processes, and Dubai in particular has quite effectively integrated neoliberal capitalist systems into its policies (Buckley 2012; Harvey 2005; Springer 2010).

All of my participants were from countries that have had structural adjustment programs imposed on them by World Bank and International Monetary Funds. However, if asked about the source of the problems in their country, there is little knowledge of these programs and their impact on the political or economic problems in their home countries. Instead, blame was typically given to their respective governments, with corruption typically named as the chief culprit, especially by my African participants. Many of them held their governments responsible for their inability to find jobs. Nina, a twenty-eight-year-old woman from Cameroon, was about half way through her three-month visit visa when we met. Nina had a university degree in marketing. Cameroon, she said, "is a peaceful country. It's nice, but there are no jobs. You go to school, come out, and it is like you have not gone to school. […] Corruption has taken everything. … There's nothing in Cameroon. … You just go to school and then you come out and leave [the country] …" Broader factors that might have motivated this corruption were not mentioned. Similarly, when I asked Jean, a forty-five-year-old Filipina woman, if she thought that problems in her country were caused by international conditions, by outside powers, she said, "I don't think so." She continued,

> I think the problem is the government. And secondly is the population. It's a lot. And right now I'm looking… I'm a little bit scared [for] the Philippines, actually, because of the government. They are not focused for the poor people. What can they do for these poor people? And now if you see the news, the life is getting worse, worse, and worse. And the big problem right now in the Philippines is the drug. Of course, especially the drug mostly go to the high school life. For the new generation. And what happen to them if they do not finish the school for the study? I think people on the road doing naughty things because it's worse. And the

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people is using drug. They're not thinking the right. They're thinking how to make the money. For me right now it's going worse and worse. … And a lot of people is no job. And a lot of people is I don't know.[45]

Not only were the problems in her country due to her own government, she also appears to hold society responsible for the excessive increase in their population. She also blames drugs, but does hold a specific party responsible for them.

Migration Networks

In migration theory, social networks are the connections between would-be migrants wanting to go abroad and experienced migrants and potential employers (D. S. Massey et al. 2005). These migration networks are determined by the amount of social capital to which one has access. Factors determining this range from the country or region from which one comes to who one knows and the amount of resources to which that person has access. These factors are at least in part rooted in global structures that have determined who has greater or lesser access to networks.

Social capital is a type of resource and, like a financial resource, it can be traded for other forms of resources, such as cultural, human, and economic resources (Coleman 1988; de Haas 2010; D. L. Swartz 2013). Social capital is a relational resource that is defined by its function (Coleman 1988). One such function is the production of migrant networks (de Haas 2010). In this form, social capital is location-specific and can provide potential migrants access to information about the destination country and to others who can facilitate their migration (de Haas 2010; D. S. Massey et al. 2005). Potential migrants "draw upon" their social capital to access migration networks and the resources that these

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45. Jean's discourse is an interesting contrast to most of my participants'. Jean was the farthest outlier in my sample in terms of salary, and was quite happy with her situation. I see her relaxed, coherent speech as a sign of her good living and working conditions. She had no story that had to be told.

networks can provide (de Haas 2010). Doing so supposedly reduces the financial, psychological, or emotional cost of migration.[46]

Strong and Weak Networks

The strength of migrant networks can be examined in terms of the strength of the tie that a potential migrant has to a network. Network theorist and sociologist Mark Granovetter (1973) described a strong tie as one involving family and friends and a weak one as being composed of acquaintances. He explains that the strength of the migrant network tie is important because it can determined whether or not one is able to secure work with a good employer, as well as the mount of support a new migrant receives in the host country.

More recently, Kuschminder (2016) adapted this framework in her research on Ethiopian women who had worked in the Middle East as domestic workers. For the context of her study, she defined a strong tie as one in which the potential migrant knew about the network prior to ever migrating, trusted it, and was connected to it either through family or friendship. A weak tie existed if prior to the decision to migrate the individual had no relationship to the network, and as a result the relationship between the individual who migrated and the network ended once the individual arrived in the host country. Her aim was to compare the experiences of her participants to determine which tie they had used and whether one was more beneficial than the other. Kuschminder (2016) found that among the Ethiopian women in her study, strong or weak ties did not

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46. When considered from the perspective of the migrant who is providing the resources, Portes argues that the impact of social capital on migrant networks is not always positive; it can be negative for such reasons as being exclusionary, making excessive claims on group member, and requiring conformity [Portes; de Hass]. This study is focused on the migrant and her or his experience.

make that great of difference and that the women who had emigrated on strong ties or long duration still faced a great deal of uncertainty and did not necessarily have better outcomes.

Because my study on low-wage migrant workers in Dubai targeted individuals earning Dh1500 (US$408) or less a month, it is unsurprising that among the many factors that contributed to their experiences, the individuals (often in the guise of official or unofficial recruitment agents) who assisted them were the result of weak ties, both in strength and duration. Of my forty-four participants only nine had what might be considered strong networks of long duration. These individuals typically had family who had migrated to the UAE or who were still in the UAE. For two of these eight, the notion of a strong network begins to crumble when explored further. Rashma, a twenty-eight-year-old woman from Nepal, was brought to Dubai by a brother, with whom she was not close. Analyn, a forty-eight-year-old woman from the Philippines, was brought by her sister, who immediately departed back to the Philippines once Analyn had arrived. She appeared to have tricked Analyn into staying in her stead.

<center>Ability and Desire to Mobilize Resources</center>

Focusing solely on the strength of one's network tie in terms of strength and/or duration can ignore other factors that impact the effectiveness of these ties. Social capital, according to Bourdieu's original definition, had two distinct parts that according to de Haas are often forgotten in their application to migrant networks (de Haas 2010). One part, de Haas explains, is the assumption that the experienced migrants who are approached for information or assistance are in fact able to mobilize the resources that are needed by the potential migrant. The second part is that the experienced migrant has a

desire to assist the potential migrant. Having the capacity to assist and the interest in

doing so are both essential elements.

One of my participants demonstrated that a strong tie of long duration is not

always effective, and as Bourdieu wrote, the ability to mobilize resources is just as

important. Negasi, a thirty-year-old Ethiopian man, provided a good example and shows

the need for both to be met. I interviewed Negasi in about his fifth year of being in Dubai.

The previous year, he had brought his brother to Dubai so that he could find employment.

He said,

> My brother lost his job, [in Ethiopia]. I had to help my brother. I brought
> him here with a visit visa. We tried for one month to get him a job here. I
> paid for his house rent [bed space]. I spent almost 9 or 10,000 dirhams for
> him. I saved that money in crazy ways. […] He actually got a job. They
> interviewed him. They liked him. He's an accounting graduate and he's
> got a lot of experience. So in Spash [a clothing retail store] they gave [him
> a] five day [trial] to try him out. They like him. They said they'll give him
> visa, but he has to go [exit the country to get his visa][47]. His [visit] visa is
> already going to expire. I don't have money to send him. I don't even
> have… We suffered a lot to make him stay. I don't have money to send
> him and stay in a hotel. It's too much. So he had to go back [to Ethiopia].
> I'll try it another time. …

Negasi had no more money to give; his resources had run out. He had a strong, long-term

relationship with his brother, and he had a very strong desire to provide assistance.

However, without the needed financial capital he was unable to provide all of the funds

required.

In addition to Bourdieu's two-part definition of social capital showing the

importance of both the capacity and desire to help another, an additional element that

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47. The process of exiting the country for an employment visa is discussed later in the chapter.

seems to play a role in the success of migrant networks in the UAE is how they were

historically developed.

Historical Implications

Migrant networks are the meso-level structures that bridge the micro-level

elements of individual and family unit with macro-level analysis of globalization and its

relation to labor markets and inequalities (de Haas 2010; Castles and Miller 2009; Oishi

2005). Factors such as colonialism, occupation, and labor recruitment, according to

Castle Et al. (2014), "play a crucial role in the *initiation* of migration processes" (40).

After migration to the region has been established, meso-level social, cultural, and

economic structures then come into play and can become self-perpetuating (D. S. Massey

1990). The precedence for these self-perpetuating systems arise from historical patterns

of inequalities.

The UAE provides an interesting example of migrant networks dying out and

reemerging as a result of past historical-structural processes of migration. The

experiences of my participants showed that the availability of strong networks—in terms

of the strength of the relationship—was often tied to nationality and very likely to the

historical relationship between their home country and the UAE. The strength—or

weakness—of current social networks can be found in part in the UAE's experiences

with colonialism and slave trade. The first resulted in strong networks for Indians and

Pakistanis and the latter in weak networks for Africans.

During the colonial era, the British began importing indentured labor from India

and Pakistan to the Trucial States. Junaid Rana (2011) in his examination of migration,

race, and labor among Pakistanis, contends that the logic and conditions that undergird

today's system of migration from India and Pakistan to the UAE parallels this indentured period. Following this period, the migration pathway that had been established by the British continued. They played a significant role in establishing and maintaining a reserve of labor from this region and their strong networks.

In contrast, though the trans-Sahara slave trade lasted much longer,[48] it did not result in strong social networks for Africans in the UAE today. In the early part of the twentieth century, importing of slaves was greatly reduced as a result of global economic forces (which led to the collapse of the date and pearl industries) and the availability of new sources of slaves (which were cheaper and less risky to import from Baluchistan and Persia) (Hopper 2015). In addition, following increased oil wealth, leaders granted manumission (freedom) to many slaves, including those from Africa. Upon manumission, the Africans were often incorporated into families and slave trade from East Africa ended, severing the Gulf's relationship to Africa in terms of labor import and creating a greater need for workers from India and Pakistan. The impact of these earlier policy choices can be seen most clearly in the strong migration streams from India and Pakistan and weaker ones from Africa.[49]

This differentiation by nationality can be seen among my participants. For example, seven women specifically migrated to the UAE to work as live-in domestic workers. Prior to coming, three had strong social networks and four had weak networks. Of the three with strong networks, two were from Pakistan and one from the Philippines.

48. The "trans-Sahara" slave trade by Arab traders is said to have gone on for much longer than the Atlantic slave trade, with "possibly even larger numbers" [Lucas 2013, p1]

49. In contrast, the Philippines has no significant historical connections to the Arab Gulf. However, since they began migrating to the region in the 1970s, their networks have become quite strong and their status among others from the Global South quite high.

All three had personal connections with others living in the UAE or came with the family with whom they had already been working, In the UAE, the work conditions for these three women ranged from acceptable to very good. The strong networks through which these women came were capable of providing resources necessary for migration and to secure (what they deemed) acceptable employment.

The other four women came from Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Kenya. While Nepal and Sri Lanka have stronger and longer systems of migration than sub-Saharan Africa, they are far weaker than India and Pakistan's. These four women came through "official" agents, and their work conditions ranged from very difficult to abusive. These women lacked strong social networks to facilitate and provide resources for their migration as well as strong social networks of support that could be relied on within Dubai. Finally, unlike other studies that showed women having stronger personal networks (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Oishi 2005; Vlieger 2014), my study showed no strong gendering of networks. Equal numbers of men and women had—or did not have—access to strong networks. Networks were far more likely to differentiate on the basis of nationality, as was earning potential, which will be discussed in chapter five.

Many factors related to migrant networks had the potential to positively or negatively impact my participants. One was the strength of the network in terms of migration flows and its generally resiliency. Migrant networks from sub-Saharan Africa were quite weak due to being interrupted by the end of the slave trade and the time it took to evolve into "free" trade. Another is the network tie itself—who the entity is, its closeness to the potential migrant, the duration of the relationship, the ability to provide resources, and the interest in doing so. One other factor not discussed here is the human

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capital that a migrant held and the potential networks to which such capital might provide

access. For many, this was relatively little. This is touched on later in this chapter, and in

greater depth in chapter five.[50]

Economic Factors and Cognitive Dissonance

Central to economic theories of migration is the "push-pull" framework. This

framework focuses on the economic factors (as well as, for example, the environmental

and political factors) that "push" individuals to leave their countries, and the

corresponding "pull" of host countries who are in need of labor. Although economic

reasons played a significant role in motivating almost all of my participants to migrate,

theoretical assumptions about the benefits of migration and how it works as a motivator

of migration conflict with the experiences of my participants.

The push-pull model is the basis for the neoclassic theory of migration. This

theory sees migration as central to the development of countries in the Global South. As

workers migrate to the higher-wage countries, workers in the lower-wage countries

become scarce, causing wages to rise in these sending countries. In the higher-wage

countries, as more workers become available, wages decrease. It is presumed that, over

time, the flow of migration would have an equalizing effect between countries and reduce

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50. Coleman (1988) explains that human capital is the result of education, reading, and being brought up by well-educated parents. Social capital is relational. For migrants, it is having a relationship with someone in the network. For children, it is parents being available to them. The human capital of the well-educated parent only has value if it is paired with social capital, the relational availability of the parent for the child. If there is not social capital, then the human capital that the parents could potentially have supplied is squandered. Social capital, on the other hand, can compensate for a lack of human capital. Helen, an Indian woman who cleans for us once a month, was a good example of this. Helen had stopped school at the age of ten. When her own daughter was in school, she would bring her homework to Helen for help. Her daughter's education was in English, which Helen had a limited proficiency in. Helen would take her daughter's textbook to her friend who would both translate and explain the content to Helen. Helen would take notes in her local language and then return to her daughter and explain the homework to her. Helen traded her social capital for human capital so as to support her daughter.

the economic disparity between them. Research, however, has shown that a reduction in

economic disparity due to out-migration to be untrue (Castles, De Haas, and Miller 2015;

Glick Schiller 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Khondker 2010; D. S. Massey et al. 2005;

Sassen 1988; Wise and Covarrubias 2009). Further, critics of the push and pull of

economic and labor needs contend that the theory ignores how other factors interact and

explain migration (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014). These other factors, such as

deception and socio-political and socio-cultural factors, are discussed later in this chapter.

The neoclassic theory of migration also presumes that individual migrants are

rational, informed decision makers who have "perfect knowledge" of the economic

conditions in the destination country; it also contends that individual migrants are able to

calculate the cost-benefits of migration and are free to make and act upon their decisions

based on this knowledge (D. S. Massey et al. 2005). I did not find this to be true.

Ideally, everyone wants to be seen as rational, informed decision makers, but in

reality, this is often not the case. Rather than making decisions based on rational or

complete information, individuals will ignore certain information that is not in their

favor. Festinger (1962) referred to this process as "cognitive dissonance." Cognitive

dissonance is the mental discomfort we experience by trying to hold competing thoughts

in our mind (Tavris and Aronson 2008). These competing thoughts are unsettling. Thus,

our minds try to reduce this discomfort by rationalizing thoughts and/or behaviors so that

the two align, or so that the one that supports our desires prevails.

The concept of cognitive dissonance resonates frequently in the stories my

participants shared about why they decided to emigrate. Many felt desperate to improve

their conditions in their home countries.[51] They also had heard vague stories about the difficulties of working there, but this information did not align with their desperate need for a job and the stories of success. Their desperation drove them to rationalize away the risks that emigration involved in favor of its potential. They wanted to believe—wanted to be convinced. As a result, they allowed themselves to get "carried away." Sophie, a twenty-five-year-old Cameroonian woman said,

> When you stay back home, you see some people come back. They are from abroad. Or the people are back here and you see they are to like, their parents can get the TV screen, they are able to buy better furniture, take care of their parents. I'm like maybe I can come here and give a try.

Focusing on the positive stories—or the stories they presumed were positive—was one way my participants reduced cognitive dissonance. They focused on stories about individuals who "made it big" and "made it sound easy," and an image of the host country in which "people just dish up money." They focused on images that dazzled—not the Dubai with line upon line of men dressed in blue jump suits waiting to board buses without air conditioning after long days toiling in the sun with temperatures known to reach forty-five degrees centigrade and above and with humidity in the nineties. They also reduced dissonance by belief in themselves. Where others had failed, they believed they would success that their education, background, or personal traits would put them in a better position to succeed. (This is discussed in chapter eight.)

These attitudes and beliefs as well as a lack of strong networks resulted in my participants not being fully informed about the UAE or the process of migrating there. As

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51. Kuschminder (2016) found that women in Ethiopia were fully aware of the harsh living and working conditions in the Middle East before going. However, they chose to migrate in spite of them out of desperation.

a result, simply learning about Dubai and its potential for work, and/or learning that a visa is in fact easily accessible triggered their interest, and as de Haas (2010) writes, provided them with the "*aspiration* to migrate" (1593).[52]

Images that dazzle accumulate in the mind. Once one's mind has been sold and the decision has been made, the ability to reason logically is reduced. Perceptions and desperation intermingle, and one hears only that which will reinforce and confirm his or her bias. Confirmation bias is the tendency to selectively confirm pre-existing beliefs, in this case, the decision to emigrate. The role of cognitive dissonance in motivating migration contradicts neoclassical economic theory. Most of my participants' reasons for migrating were rooted (at least in part) in economic reasons. Cognitive dissonance simply reflects the more human side of decision-making and the role that emotions—especially desperation—play. My participants did not migrate for rational reasons—they rationalized their reasons for migrating.

Misconceptions and Deception

The tendency towards cognitive dissonance invites stories that affirm one's desires and needs, making one especially vulnerable to misconceptions and deception. Research has shown that international labor recruiters, future employers, and migrants themselves engage in widespread deception and various degrees of misinformation, reinforcing the processes of migration (A. M. Gardner 2012; Mahler 1995; Menjívar 2000; Tsuda 1999; Ullah 2016). Stories of deception were common among my participants, too, as were stories about the misconceptions they had held. These elements

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52. For example, without family living in the US, most if not all of my participants would be unable to get a tourist visa. In the UAE, this is not the case. Almost anyone can receive a tourist visa if they can gather or borrow the required funds.

resulted in choices and actions that more often than not increased the vulnerability of my participants. This section begins by discussing the association between social networks and the potential to hold misconceptions and/or be deceived. It then discusses the roots of various forms of misconceptions and deception.

Strong social networks link communities in the home country to communities in the host country. These networks explain why some migrants are better informed about the availability of jobs and pay, as well as being better informed about the living and working conditions in the host country. Access to social networks reveals why the Indians and Pakistanis in my study tended to know more about the UAE and/or Gulf and the conditions of working there. They are better informed because of friends and family members who have previously emigrated. Many grow up assuming that they too will emigrate or that it is, at the least, a potential path they might take. Almost all of my African participants, as well as several Nepalese and Bangladeshi participants, lacked strong social networks. As a result, they tended to have more misconceptions and be at greater risk of being deceived.[53]

<center>Misconceptions about the Ease of Finding Work</center>

Misconceptions also motivated many of my participants to emigrate. Participants spoke about observing the clothing and possessions of others in their community whom they knew had migrated to the Gulf. Inability to speak directly to these strangers (as a result of cultural restrictions on with whom one can engage) resulted in my participants assuming that jobs in these countries paid well. These observations were often reinforced

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53. There are, of course, many other complexities involved that determine the strength of one's networks. An Indian from, for example, a rural part of India where emigration is not common, will have networks that are just as weak as those from Cameroon.

by tourism advertisements in the media. They assumed that the lifestyles they observed were obtainable by anyone with an education, skills, and experience. Thoughts such as these were most common among my African participants. Mike, a thirty-six-year-old Nigerian man, and Nina, the twenty-eight-year-old Cameroonian, provide good examples of this. Mike's reason for coming to Dubai also explains his assumptions about his qualifications being transferable. He said:

> I was working as a bank official for the United Bank for Africa. [I have a] post-technic degree, a diploma. … 4 year degree, equivalent. In business administration. I can function as a (incomprehensible) I can work in administration, markets, I know all… That's what I did in Nigeria. So when I lost that job, I had to come to Dubai. Back home I [had been] looking for a job for almost 3 years. I could not get a job. Somebody introduced to me Dubai, UAE. There are a lot of opportunities there. Why sit at home being jobless. Come to Dubai. It was the year 2013. I fled to Dubai. So I came to Dubai with a three-month visit visa. So I'm getting to this place. It was a different level playing ground compared to my country.

I asked Mike what he meant by "a level playing ground," and he said, "Coming here I thought that I could just use my qualifications to apply for any job I like. [But,] it wasn't like that." Reasons for why Dubai is not a level playing field are discussed in chapter five.

Nina had a degree in marketing. She had observed others in her community. She said, "They left Cameroon, they came here, and they succeeded. They had their jobs, made their money, and came back to Cameroon." Not knowing any better she assumed— as one with a university degree would—that it would be possible to work in her field of study. Further, because Africans lacked access to official and well-networked recruitment agencies, they believed that they had a better chance of finding a suitable job if they were

able to engage with employers in person.[54] These misperceptions were often the result of taking at face value what they saw and failing to question and ask critical questions. When I asked Gabriel, a twenty-six-year-old university graduate from Nigeria, why he did not do better research before emigrating, he said, "You get carried away with the idea of going." This ties back to confirmation bias. Not only desperation, but also fantasies about a new life confirm one's choices.

In contrast to participants from Africa, those from Nepal or Bangladesh had similar weak social networks. They, however, only came on work visas. It may be that they knew they would be more vulnerable in Dubai because they were less formally educated and did not speak Arabic or English. Or, perhaps it was because no one told them to go on a visit visa.

<div style="text-align:center">Being Deceived about the Job and Conditions</div>

Misconceptions can arise because of what was sees and presumes about others' experiences and from what one sees in the media. It can also be due to deception. Overall, migration was more often motivated by deception, than by other forms of misconceptions. The two central culprits in spreading deception were agents and low-wage migrants themselves. As mentioned above, deception is a common tactic among unofficial agents. All of my participants had to engage with a recruitment agency, middleman or sub-agent of some form, regardless of whether they came on a visit or employment visa. Most often my participants would not know whether the agency they

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54. In their home countries, the Africans in my study lacked strong social networks, official recruitment agents, and agents representing specific companies, making it difficult—or impossible—to access good employment opportunities. As a result, they were more likely than other nationality groups in my study to arrive on a visit visa rather than an employment visa.

went to was official or whether the individual who was assisting them was a legitimate representative, a con artist, or a fairly honest person just trying to earn extra money. For those from small remote villages, the agent might be a local from the same village or even a neighbor with connections. My participants might refer to these individuals as "agents" or "middle-man" and it was only after further prying that I understood them to be a neighbor. Some of my participants did know they were dealing with unofficial agents; however, relying on them was necessary if they were from a remote region. The middle-man was needed to connect one with an official agency in the city and to assist with documentation. In the best circumstances, large companies send recruiters to cities, typically in India, Pakistan, and Nepal, to organize and hire for their specific company. None of my participants came through this route, though I did speak with employers who recruited in this way. These companies are typically larger, better run, and have better conditions. Hence, they were not the companies my participants worked for.

Just as my participants embraced their misconceptions about potential jobs and salaries, they seemed to gullibly trust the information that recruitment agents imparted. Similar to those who had misconceptions, it was those who lacked strong social networks that were most often deceived. Negasi, a thirty-year-old Ethiopian with a degree in English and a minor in history, said that his friends painted a rosy picture of Dubai, telling him "great things" and reinforcing his desire to come. One friend told him, "You can make money easily and the living conditions are good." Negasi said that men (like his "friends") come back from Dubai and want to be agents in hopes of earning extra money. They say what they need to in order to entice people to migrate. Abir, a forty-two-year-old man from Bangladesh with a fifth-grade education, was told by an agent,

who was a fellow villager, that he could work as a salesman in a supermarket. Upon arrival in Dubai, he discovered that he would be a construction worker.

The problem of misinformation is extremely prevalent and unrelenting because so many migrants—as well as other actors—engage in its perpetuation, including my participants. Their participation resulted in a vicious circle in which potential emigrants in their home countries remained ignorant of the realities and challenges many face in the UAE. The positive and negative aspects of this deception on the individual migrant and why my participants engaged in it are discussed in greater depth in chapter eight.

Socio-Political & Socio-Cultural Factors

Socio-economic factors were essential to motivating my participants to come to Dubai; however, as many scholars contend, such reasons are far from the only factors (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Michele Ruth Gamburd 2000; A. M. Gardner 2012; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Khondker 2010; Lutz 2010; D. S. Massey et al. 2005; D. S. Massey 2003; Oishi 2005; Parreñas 2008; Sassen 1988; Tsuda 1999). Gardner (2010, 2012) describes a complex scenario of diverse socio-political forces, including civil war, armed conflicts, risk of armed attacks, as well as issues of governmental corruption and access to electricity and water. As discussed earlier, many of my participants, too, spoke of governmental corruption. Others mentioned downsizing or factory closures due to scarce supplies and electricity cutoffs.

Additional factors were socio-cultural in nature. Ankit, a forty-eight-year-old man from Nepal, said that, in his country, societal attitudes and values were changing resulting in longer migrations. Parents could no longer count on their adult children to care for them in old age. This resulted in workers today needing to work later in life and hence

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stay overseas longer than their predecessors. Other reasons for migration were due to unchanging, inflexible societal attitudes. Toben, a thirty-five-year-old Nigerian man, wanted to live in a society where he could freely interact with women. Unfortunately, due to his socio-economic status, this freedom was pretty much inaccessible to him in Dubai, too. Similarly, Ghaziyah, a twenty-nine-year-old Pakistani woman, had a university degree. Her father had been in the navy and it sounded as if she had had a fairly well-to-do family and a comfortable life. I first met Ghaziyah with the group of other Pakistani women. Ghaziyah said she had come to Dubai in search of adventure and freedom. While she did find adventure, it was far from what she had hoped for and it included little freedom. In Dubai, she found herself living temporarily on the streets and being continuously and aggressively harassed by men.[55]

For all but Ghaziyah, the need to migrate was a complex layering of historical factors with economic, structural, and social ones. These accumulative vulnerabilities resulted in unstable, insecure, and precarious lives that subsequently motivated their emigration. For some, the desperation that drove their decisions to emigrate persisted despite their governments' attempt to prevent them. This is explored in the following, final section of this chapter.

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55. Interestingly, though the other Pakistani women were Christian, Ghaziyah was Muslim. At the time we first met, Ghaziyah was sharing a room with one of the other Pakistani women. However, when I met her to interview, it was in a room that she had moved into with a Pakistani man whom she said she was engaged to marry.

Emigration Bans

Entering the UAE is fairly easy for those from the Global South because visas are reasonably priced and easy to acquire.[56] Problems arise not because of the UAE, but because of sending countries, who create obstacles to emigrating. These sending countries will sometimes prohibit—through an emigration ban—certain groups from migrating to a particular host country. Globally, women who perform "unskilled" domestic work are most often targeted for these bans, reflecting the gendered nature of such policies and their social construction (Oishi 2005; van Naerssen and Asis 2015). (Pande 2014, 379).

Restrictions on the mobility of women can be interpreted in different ways. One is as a way for a country to protect its women from abuse. This gendered classification of domestic work sees these women as being less capable and more ignorant, and hence in need of "surveillance and protection" (Pande 2014, 379). Bans can also be seen as a way for governments to demonstrate their moral authority (Oishi 2005). Women who have limited formal education and want to emigrate for domestic work are prevented from doing so by their protector, the government (Kodoth 2016). Women, as a result, are dealt

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56. In the UAE, visit visas can be sponsored by family, hotels, and tour operators, are valid for thirty-day visa for Dh500 (US$135) or a ninety-day visa for Dh1000 (US$270). Nationalities requiring visit visa also require a Dh1000 deposit, refundable upon departure, and the purchase of a round-trip plane ticket. Some countries, such as Kenya, are also required to provide proof of sufficient funds for the duration of their stay in the UAE. The process for acquiring a work permit for the UAE is about the same whether one is applying for a job from outside of the UAE or from within. First, the UAE company, institution, or person who will be the sponsor (and who is typically also the employer) must provide a potential new employee with an offer letter signed by the employer and with a clear and comprehensive description of the terms and conditions. The offer letter must then be signed by the potential new hire. For new hires, who are in the "unskilled labor" category, a fingerprint must also be given with the signature (Bedirian 2015). This is then given to the Ministry of Labor for approval. After this the worker is allowed into the country. Upon arrival the worker signs his employment contract, which must mirror the terms and conditions of the offer letter. Contracts are typically for two years (Bedirian 2015; Kapur 2016).

the unequal burden of representing their country through the maintenance of their morality (Espiritu 2003; Guevarra 2006; Parreñas 2008).

State officials deem these bans worthwhile, even though evidence shows them to have limited effect and to lead to greater vulnerability (Kodoth 2016; Levine-Rasky 2011; Murray 2012; Oishi 2005). Individuals who are desperate for work circumvent these obstacles, which often results in greater vulnerability. Negasi, the thirty-year-old-man from Ethiopia, a country that somewhat uniquely bans low-wage workers of both genders, said that from what he had observed, emigration bans simply "open doors for more suffering."

Citizens who want to circumvent their government's emigration ban can easily do so by transiting through a third country. However, this often requires the use of unlicensed brokers, paying more exorbitant fees, entering on a visit visa and, specific to women, risking physical and/or sexual abuse. Then—assuming the migrants are lucky enough to have found jobs after arriving in the UAE—they must then exit the UAE in order to switch that visit visa to a work visa. Because of the home country ban, this visa change must be done in a third country. The closest and cheapest third country for this purpose is the Iranian island of Kish. Negasi explained that needing to exit and go to Kish resulted in "a lot of Ethiopians stranded in Kish" waiting for their employment visas to be processed, a wait that can last two to six months or more.[57]

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57. Other countries represented by my sample have or had travel bans to the UAE in the past, but they did not impact my participants. Kenya previously banned citizens from emigrating to the Gulf to do domestic work in 2012, and then lifted the ban in 2013 (Malit Jr. and Al Youha 2016). It did not impact the Kenyans I interviewed. My interviewees came prior to these restrictions. Bangladesh banned the emigration of women performing "unskilled" and "semi-skilled" labor in 1997, and ended the ban in 2003 (Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2013). This also did not impact my participants.

In my sample, only two nationalities were directly impacted by such emigration bans, those coming from Ethiopia (as discussed above) and Nepal. Nepal ended its 2012 travel ban on allowing domestic workers to emigrate to the UAE and reduced the restriction on age requirements from 30 to 20 (Ahmad 2015b). For the two Nepalese women I spoke to, Sunita and Maya, the removal of this ban came too late. They were in their mid-twenties when they came to the UAE and the ban was still in place. These women most likely entered on visit visas even though their agents, who were most likely unlicensed, had secured a specific job for them.[58] One of them, Sunita, described traveling to India with her agent, who then purchased her a round-trip ticket to Kenya, with a layover in Dubai.[59] Verté, an NGO that addresses exploitative labor practices, reported in 2012 that the Nepali emigration ban was increasing the number of women being trafficked. These two women certainly fell into this category. Neither of these women was trafficked for sex work, but the circumstances of their migration and the conditions of their forced labor mark them—and many of my participants—as trafficked, nonetheless. This is discussed in depth in chapter six.

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58. It was difficult to ascertain how the women exactly came or what their status was upon entry to the UAE. Typically one must exit the country to convert their visit visa to an employment one, but employers sometimes have other avenues they can take.

59. The logistics of this journey do not make the most sense. Sunita herself seemed a bit confused as to how the system had worked. She probably did enter on a visit visa, but she was not sure when or how she had acquired her Emirates ID card—the ID that shows that one is legally in the country—because she had never left the country to switch her visa to an employment one. It is now possible to pay a large sum to have this process taken care of within the UAE, but I do not believe this was possible when Sunita arrived. Her employers might have had the right connections—"*wasta*"—, but as they were middle-class, this seems unlikely, too.

Conclusion

While the factors that motivated my participants to emigrate align with much of the literature on the Arab Gulf, there were also findings that contradict or extend it. Consistent with previous research, historically entrenched political-economic systems were at least tangentially related to why most of my participants felt the need to migrate. This study did, however, make evident the disparity of networks based on historical patterns of migration, social capital, and national and racial identities. The findings from this study also put in question the neoclassic theory of migration that positions migrants as informed, knowledgeable decision makers. My participants were not motivated to emigrate for rational reasons. Rather, when faced with information that should have quelled their desire, they rationalized why emigrating was still the best option or they simply avoided seeking information that contradicted their decision.

In addition, as other studies show, economic circumstances were an essential factor, but far from the complete story. A wide range of sociopolitical and sociocultural factors also played important roles. Further, as studies on the Gulf and elsewhere show, misconceptions and deception were factors of emigration. The cognitive dissonance that drove my participants to rationalize away negative information about the Gulf and to uncritically hold misconceptions reduced their ability to scrutinize the information they were provided by deceptive recruiters and employers. Their misconceptions were often due to these deceptive tactics, but the media and enticing stories told by previous emigrants also fed them. Desperation was a central factor in motivating my participants' migration. Some left home with employment visa and contract in hand, and others left

with the belief that jobs could easily be found. The following chapters address the

enormous obstacles that most encountered.

CHAPTER 4

VULNERABILITY: LIFE IN DUBAI

THE *KAFALA* SYSTEM & FEAR

> Let me tell you something. We actually don't know about the law that
> much. We have no idea. You're scared. We don't have information. We
> don't have that time. If we were to work 8 hours, I would have time to
> research on these kinds of things. … Now I'm staying on this side of
> Dubai [in the labor camp] … just to know a little bit of this. Over here to
> get Wi-Fi, we just rent it. We can't put it on your laptop. And the
> information provided on the Internet, it's not complete. … For me, I was
> told that after one year you can do whatever [but that's not true].

<div align="right">Michael, a 32 year-old Kenyan man</div>

Vulnerability begets vulnerability and, as such, it is an accumulative process, the

result of precarious conditions building one on another. Though individually experienced,

it is the commonality of those experiences that reveal the precarity and inequality of

social systems. Because vulnerability is cumulative, this chapter and the following three

build on the previous chapter. They focus on my participants' experiences in the UAE

from the point of arrival. They examine various processes, mechanisms, and obstacles

that created, heightened, or diminished their vulnerability in the UAE. Structural violence

does not occur in isolation. Rather, it is part of interconnected systems that oppress and

disadvantage.

This chapter addresses two key contributors of vulnerability in the lives of my

participants, UAE labor laws and the fear they induce. The first half of the chapter

addresses UAE labor laws, including those laws that support the *kafala* (sponsorship)

system. This system grants an inordinate amount of control to the *kafeel* (sponsor) who is

often also the employer. In conjunction with other laws that are often quite ambiguous,

the system has the potential to empower or reinforce vulnerability. For the low-wage

migrant workers in my study, it was usually the later. The first half of the chapter focuses

on the violent structures that are embedded in institutional structures. They are intended

to disadvantage and create vulnerability. The second half of this chapter focuses on *how*

these structures induce fear. As Michael said at the beginning of this chapter, "We have

no idea. You're scared." Michael was referring to the immigration laws. Not

understanding them resulted in fear. This fear further increased their vulnerability. For

many of my participants, the power that employers possessed led to fear. This fear led to

docility, which in turn allowed exploitative structures to go unchecked. The production of

fear resulted in vulnerability, which led to an unending iterative cycle of fear and

vulnerability.

The System of *Kafala* and Immigration Labor Laws

The *kafala* (sponsorship) system is the backbone of immigrant policy in the UAE

and is the aspect of the Gulf migration regime that is addressed most extensively by

scholars (Ali 2010; Babar 2013; Fernandez 2013; Longva 1999; Mahdavi 2013; Sönmez

et al. 2011; Truong 2012; Vora 2013; Zachariah, Prakash, and Rajan 2003; Zahra

2015)[60]. All foreigners who are working in the country—regardless of socio-economic

standing and regardless of whether the individual was granted an employment visa in the

home country or after arriving on a visit visa in the UAE[61] –must be sponsored by an

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60. For additional discussions of the sponsorship system, see: Buckley 2012; Castles, Haas, and Miller 2014; Fernandez 2013; Gardner 2010b, 2014; Khalaf and Alkobaisi 1999; Malit and Naufal 2014; Massey et al. 2005; Migrant-Rights.Org 2015; Murray 2012; Sa 2004.

61. If one is working (legally) in the UAE, it should be assumed that he or she has an employment visa. It is "illegal" to work on a visit visa.

Emirati national directly or indirectly through a business/institution or placement agency.

These companies and agencies must be majority-owned by a national.[62]

The historical basis for the kafala system is uncertain. Some say that it evolved out of the tradition of requiring guests to have their safety and welfare guaranteed by a local (Fernandez 2013; D. S. Massey et al. 2005; Migrant-Rights.Org 2015; Zahra 2015). According to a specialist with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the aim—then as is now—was to make "it incumbent upon nationals to look after non-nationals" (Dickinson 2013). It is also possible that the *kafala* system is a remnant of British colonialism and the systems of control it established. Regardless of its historical roots, the *kafala* system's principles were incorporated into the UAE's labor laws. Those aspects of the law that are based on the *kafala* system blur the line between state and private control, and grant the sponsor a large degree of control over all aspect of a worker's life. The power granted to private citizens over those deemed "other" is reminiscent of the US a century ago. As John Matteson, a professor of English, stated, "Slavery [in the US] was a form of privatized law enforcement. . . . What [slavery] did was take a number of the powers that are typically reserved to the government—the power to discipline … the power over another person's life—and it conferred those powers on private individuals" (Edwards 2014). The resemblance between this and the powers that the *kafala* system imparts to its citizens is strikingly similar. Both reflect the essence of structural violence and the basis for what makes groups vulnerable.

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62. Emirati, national, and local are synonymous. A non-national is a foreigner, which is synonymous to migrant or guestworker. All foreigners working in the country are temporary migrants, regardless of their socio-economic status.

The *kafala* system is problematic because it obscures the role of the government and grants the *kafeel* (sponsor) an inordinate amount of power. First, the *kafala* system creates a structural system that hides the role of the government. This system delegates control and regulation of foreigners working in the country to Emiratis, who act as *kafeel*. The *kafeel* is in essence the "middleman" between government and foreign workers of all socio-economic levels (Fargues and De Bel-Air 2015). Further, the manager, supervisor, or boss figure—who is typically a foreign worker—acts as another middleman between lower-status foreign workers and the *kafeel*. As a result, the role of the government—and the role of Emiratis in general—becomes hidden through at least two layers of separation. It is the invisibility of this mechanism—a central feature of structural violence—that results in foreign workers blaming their foreign intermediaries for their exploitative conditions.

The *kafala* system is also problematic because of the power it grants the *kafeel*. Kathiravelu (2016), whose research focused on South Indians working in the UAE, contends that the *kafala* system results in migrants being "stripped of much of their agency" and unable to contest any mistreatment or abuse (71). This is not because the *kafeel* can make extensive legal decisions regarding foreign workers, but rather because the Ministry of Labor typically responds positively to requests made by the *kafeel*. The *kafeel* can legally terminate (fire) a foreign employee, but he or she can only *request* that an employee receive a temporary employment ban that forbids working anywhere in the UAE for six months or a year. Deportation and immigration bans are possible but less likely. This is because the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs

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(DNRD)—referred to by most as Immigration—deals with deportation and immigration bans, and they require more severe infractions, such as criminal activity.

The Ministry of Labor (MOL) handles termination and employment bans, which are the major concerns of migrants. If foreign workers have been terminated and/or given an employment ban, it does not mean they will be deported. The employer cannot force workers to leave the country. Rather, workers are granted a one-month grace period before they are expected to depart the country. During this one-month, individuals who have only been terminated can legally search for a new job. If they overstay the one-month grace period, they pay a fine. The fine is relatively inexpensive, but must be paid before one can receive a new employment contract or before he or she exits the country. It is not uncommon for workers to overstay their grace period by several months. Immigration is not concerned with why a worker's employment visa was cancelled or how long the person stayed in the country after the visa was cancelled; they simply want the fine paid.

UAE Labor Laws

Other aspects of UAE labor law apart from the *kafala* system are also problematic. Revisions to these laws in January 2017 provided some improvement but still left many of the former problems. One of these is the ambiguity of the law, which can leave even the experts unsure of its intent. Other difficulties are in relation to who can and cannot terminate their contracts and the assumption that employers and employees have equal bargaining power. Even with the changes, the outcome of many UAE labor laws is still the production of vulnerability and fear for low-wage workers, both by the regulations they create and by the ambiguity of those regulations.

Difficulty in understanding and correctly interpreting the law is not just a problem among the presumably less educated migrants. The ambiguous language used in official governmental decrees is problematic for legal experts. Recently on their website, a lawyer based in the UAE provided a fairly good explanation of new legislation. I emailed and asked him some additional questions. He wrote in response,

> In my four years here, I have found that one of the biggest—if not the biggest—challenge in being an adviser in the UAE is the lack of consistency in the application of the law and the ability of the relevant Authority/Department/Ministry to amend or even ignore parts of the law. I have some sympathy with the media because the reputable organisations try to report accurately, but it's not always possible to pin down what is the right answer. Sometimes it's the right answer one day and then wrong the next! I've even been given two different answers on the same day from two different Ministry officials! We always try to check the position twice or even three times through separate personnel before we advise clients because there is so much scope for differences in application of law or unannounced changes to the Ministry's requirements/policies.[63]

Other lawyers writing in Dubai newspaper columns also hint at the challenges associated with interpreting the law. In response to questions by readers, law columnists will write that "due to the ambiguity" of the law, they are not able to give better guidance or cannot give a conclusive answer. If lawyers have difficulty interpreting and applying the law, it will certainly be difficult for the layperson. This ambiguity in how laws are written led to confusion and fear, and resulted in inaction among many of my participants. Most preferred to err on the side of caution rather than chance the loss of their job.

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63. Email communication February 8, 2017.

The Ambiguity of "Skill Level"

A specific example of an ambiguous law is related to how employment visas are classified. In the UAE, workers are categorized by "skill level." Level 1 is the highest and 5 is the lowest. Workers who are level 1 should have a university degree or higher. They are considered professionals. Skill-level categories 4 and 5 are "unskilled." Official decrees, news outlets, and those who write commentary on the law use this terminology. Commentary on this topic typically refers to those in category 4 and 5 as being "unskilled labourers." The meaning appears quite straightforward. To qualify for skill level 1, a worker must have a university degree. As a result, low-wage workers who have a university degree assume that this includes them; regardless of the current work they are performing. These individuals reasonably assume they are not "unskilled labourers" because they have university degrees. However, this is not the case. One's actual qualifications—the education and experience foreign workers bring with them—are of no concern. Skill-level is a reflection of the work one has been hired to preform. It is an employment-based system, not a skill-based system.

The term "skill level" creates a great deal of confusion and angst among foreigners who are typically from the Global South and who are employed in low-wage jobs. This confusion can be "heard" in numerous online blogs. In these blogs, well educated foreign workers who signed contracts to perform low-wage labor ask repeatedly if certain rights and protections apply to them since they, too, have university degrees. For example, a Filipina woman who had not yet migrated to the UAE asked the following question in a public blog post,

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Hi, I'm from the Philippines and about to go to Dubai to work as an assistant teacher. In my contract, it stated that I belong to skill level 4 or 5. I'm a degree holder of bachelor in elementary education, but why is it that I belongs to this skill level worker?[64]

As the author apparently does not know that skill level is directly associated to pay. The minimum salary for those in Level 3 is Dh5000 (US$1361) a month. There is no minimum salary for skill levels 4 and 5. I would presume that the individual discussed here had been offered less than Dh5000. This person was lucky because she thought to raise this question before emigrating. More often, foreign workers are already in the UAE and locked into a contract before they become aware of the skill level distinction and its impact. Or, if they do know, they feel they have no choice but to accept the job. My participant Gabriel faced this choice.

Gabriel was a twenty-six-year-old Nigerian with a university degree in geology. He was working as a cleaner for Dh800 (US$218) a month when I met him. I interviewed Gabriel for a total of three hours. He is the one who, when we first met to interview, spoke non-stop for four single-spaced lines of typed text. The words flooded out of him in an often frantic and jumbled manner. When I met him, it was during his second sojourn to Dubai. The first time, all of his colleagues had been terminated (let go) from the catering company where he had previously worked. Prior to leaving the UAE after being terminated, Gabriel secured a job as a security guard. He then returned home to wait for his new "security" employment visa. After waiting three months, the visa came; however, it was a "cleaning" visa, not security. He agonized over what to do, but in the

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64. See http://emiratesdiary.com/uae-labour-law-2/skill-level-1-2-3-mol-uae-labour-law

end he accepted. He said, "I thought, … what will I do here [in Nigeria]?! … I've been home! When I got home, I saw the way people are struggling…"

New Legislations

In January 2016, the UAE ushered in new legislation regarding certain labor laws. The new legislation was seen to bring greater transparency to the labor laws and fairness to foreign workers. One of the new laws, Ministerial Resolution (MR) 766, addressed the conditions under which a foreign worker has the right to terminate his or her current work contract, and the right to acquire a new one to work for another employer. Previously, if foreign workers broke their contract, it was likely that they would also receive an employment ban (Bobker 2015). The new legislation ended the risk of an employment ban; however, the right was only given to groups of foreign workers reflected in certain "skill levels."

Confusion arose for many reasons. One was local newspaper headlines. The headlines were misleading for low-wage workers because they made it sound like the new changes were for everyone. For example, a *Gulf News* headline read: "Workers free to move between jobs, says ministry," and a *Khaleej Times* headline read: "Ban-free labour market in UAE from today."

Confusion was also due to the wording of the law. Resolution 766 gives several instances in which a worker can terminate the "employment relation" in order to get a new "work permit." One of these instances states,

> The two parties (worker and employer) *mutually consent* to terminating the contract during the course of its term, provided the worker has completed a period of no less than six months with the employer; the latter

provision is waived for workers *that qualify for* skill levels 1, 2 and 3, as per the ministry's classification[65] (MR 766; emphasis added).

The resolution states that after six months of employment, all foreign workers can terminate their contract if their employer agrees, and that the six-month provision is waived for those who "qualify for skill levels 1, 2 and 3" The resolution does not say that the provision is only for those who are *currently employed* in jobs classified as skills 1, 2 or 3 (i.e., the higher skilled). Foreign workers with high levels of education but working in low-wage jobs in the UAE reasonably presume that the law also applies to them. There does not appear to be any less confusion for those working in low-wage jobs.

MR 766 is also problematic in its assumption that workers have a balanced power relationship with their employers. The resolution states that with *mutual consent* workers—in this case, workers of all skill-levels—can terminate their contract. We might question if higher-wage workers hold such bargaining power with their employers, but certainly lower-wage workers would not. Gabriel, the one who felt he had no choice but to accept a cleaning visa, provides a good example of the weak bargaining power a low-wage worker has, even for someone who is highly educated.

Upon arriving back in Dubai and going to the company, Gabriel said that the man who was to be his boss was shocked and confused as to why a well educated person with excellent English skills would have taken a cleaning job. Over time, Gabriel's boss agreed that Gabriel should be allowed to pursue more appropriate employment opportunities and agreed to release him from his contract after he completed a year with the company. (The minimal requirement is only six months.) Gabriel continued working

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65. The resolution can be found at www.mohre.gov.ae/handlers /download.ashx?YXNzZXQ9ODgx.

as requested, and, in his time off, he interviewed and found a better job. On the day when

he was to receive his no-objection certificate (NOC) from the cleaning company, he was

told that they had decided not to let him go. His ability to speak English fluently and his

education were useful to the company. If an individual who is highly educated is unable

to persuade his employer to be compassionate, it is difficult to imagine that the majority

of low-wage workers who have much less education would be in a position to come to a

mutual agreement that is to their benefit.[66]

Another new piece of legislation at the start of 2016 was Ministerial Resolution

764. This resolution dealt with offer letters. Offer letters are a type of preliminary

contract in which the employer states the salary and benefits. Typically the employee

signs and agrees to the offer while still in his or her home country. Upon arriving in the

UAE, the worker is asked to sign a formal contract. The difficulty lies in employers

substituting contracts and inserting new terms once the new employee arrives in the

UAE. Quite a few of my participants suffered from the practice of contract substitution.

When they arrived in the UAE, they learned that the job conditions were far different

from what they expected, and often even the job was different. Below is an example of

how this can work.

Manish was a twenty-eight-year-old man from Nepal. When I met him, he had

been in the UAE for almost one year and was desperate to return home to his wife and

three daughters. In Nepal, Manish was recruited directly by an agent representing the

company for which he was currently working. Translating for Manish, Ujan, another

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66. These events happened several months after I interviewed Gabriel. He told me about the events through WhatsApp and when we would meet up too chat. These conversations were not recorded.

interpreter[67] who assisted me, said, "He doesn't know what work he is coming to, but the mediator, the guy who sent him told him that you are working inside the airport as a trolley person, and that you can get extra tips as well from the passengers, so in a month you can earn more that 2000 AED."

In a rush, prior to departing the airport in Nepal, the recruiter had Manish and fourteen other men who were destined for the same company sign their contracts. It was not until the men arrived in Dubai that they discovered that they had signed on to be building cleaners and that they would be paid Dh450 (US$123) a month. Upon learning this, they tried to complain to the company, who told them they would have to pay Dh1500 ($408)—more than three months salary—to be released from their contracts, and if they did so, they would "just kick you out from out camp [accommodation]." Being thrown out of one's accommodation would be a difficult prospect for most, but for those whose labor camp accommodation was outside of the city in the desert, who never had the opportunity to venture into the city, and who spoke little to no English, it must have seemed impossible.

MR 764 attempts to rectify the practice of contract substitution and now requires that a standard employment contract signed in the home country be used as the offer letter. The letter must then be submitted to the Ministry of Labor before they grant an entry permit for the employee. No changes are allowed to the final contract that they sign after arriving in the UAE. The goal is to "ensure that new employees do not relocate to the UAE on false promises" (Chaudhry 2016). With the new legislation, a quick signing

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67. Ujan was also a Nepalese man. He had wanted to be a interpreter but after one interview we decided that the location of his accommodation was too inconvenient and his work schedule was too unpredictable.

of the contract would no longer be possible. Employers have to submit the contract in order to obtain the work permit that allows foreign workers into the country. The new law is a step in the right direction. However, there are still those falling through the cracks.

Since my formal interviews ended in May 2016, I have maintained contact with several of my participants who continued to be informants.[68] One told me in February 2017 that he was hearing stories about how some employers were circumventing this new law by having offer letters and contracts forged with signatures and/or fingerprints.[69] Apparently the government was not checking to see if the signatures on the two contracts were consistent, or if they were even signed by the individual who was now the new employee. Some recently hired low-wage individuals working in the UAE had, he said, never even seen, much less signed, a contract. As a result, the outcome is not much different than when Manish had his contract substituted.

Overall, revisions to the labor laws were—according to the government and media—seen as bringing greater transparency and fairness to foreign workers. Nonetheless, the workers I spoke with were still encountering serious challenges. One of the biggest shortcomings, even for higher-wage workers, is the assumption that the power balance between employer and employee is sufficiently balanced to allow for fair negotiations and a mutual agreement. Further, the lack of true anonymity for those low-wage workers who are bold enough to submit a complaint is a severe limitation. Current law and policy, even with the new resolutions, still result in very precarious

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68. Because of their stronger language skills and for other cultural reasons, these participants have tended to be Africans.

69. Fingerprints are acceptable for skill level 4 and 5 jobs.

circumstances. As long as the policies that govern the existence of workers are designed to disempower and be ambiguous, and the structural systems that empower the *kafeel* and/or employer remain embedded in institutional structures and hidden from sight, then the violence that feeds structural vulnerability will persist.

The Production of Fear

There is a pattern in the perpetuation of vulnerability and fear, a circularity that is reinforced and repeated. My participants escaped the precarity of their lives in their home countries through migration. Once in the UAE, they feared being unable to earn and remit a sufficient amount for their families. Fear grew out of knowledge of their temporariness as a guestworker and potential for being terminated and temporarily banned. Once low-wage, temporary migrants are subjected to vulnerability, their fear—fear of losing their job, fear of being cheated out their wages, fear of not being able to support their families—causes them to remain in that situation instead of escaping it; thus making them more vulnerable. These fears led my participants to do everything they could to hold onto their jobs. While the vulnerability of their families back home may have been reduced, the vulnerability experienced by my participants in the UAE increased. It increased as employers took advantage of a system designed to induce not only precarity, but also complacency through fear.

The first half of the chapter addressed the structural injustices my participants faced. The second half considers how these injustices produced fear, increasing the vulnerability of my participants. First, it begins with a discussion of how migrant workers are disciplined by family members into persevering under exploitative conditions. It then discusses the role of being terminated and banned as a disciplinary mechanism in the

cultivation of fear, the processes of becoming "illegal" in the Gulf, and the impact of fear on the choices low-wage migrants make. The aim is to address the mechanisms that produce fear. The impact of these mechanisms on my participants is taken up in chapter eight.

Mechanisms for the Production of Fear

Structural violence is intentional harm whose source is unidentifiable or hidden. It is holds similarities to Foucault's (1977) concept of "disciplinary power." This power, as Foucault describes it, is an invisible structural mechanism designed to maintain inequality and to meet the aims of the wealthy and powerful. The government—and the various elements that disperse its power—train bodies to achieve its goal. This goal is the production of a labor force, which is achieved through disciplining of bodies to be submissive, docile, and complacent. When society is effectively trained, the "docile body" is normalized and produced automatically.

Among the low-wage migrant workers in my study, the disciplinary power of the state produced fear, which in turn produced docility. The state, however, remained hidden, allowing employers to act for them. I heard many examples of how employers attempted to discipline their employees. For example: If an employee challenged his or her employer, the employer would respond harshly to the individual so as to deter others from doing likewise. My participant Mike provided a good example of this. He was the thirty-six-year-old Nigerian man with a four-year diploma and seven years of banking experience. When I met Mike, he had just completed his contract working as a high-rise building window washer. A year previous to our interview, several of Mike's co-workers had not been paid for several months so they had gone to the Ministry of Labor to

complain. Mike said, "They went to Labor to complain. It is over one year now.… They [the Ministry of Labor and/or the courts] will call him [the employer]; he will not come. … So I have 3 staff [co-workers] who are overstaying for over one year now." They could not leave because they required an end of contract letter of no objection from the employer to be able to exit the country. Mike too had not been paid for the last five months of his contract; however, because of his co-workers' experiences, he had not complained to the Ministry of Labor. He had feared not being able to escape when his own contract concluded.

Emu, a twenty-four-year-old woman from Ethiopia, told a story similar to Mike's. She worked in a very small salon and earned Dh1000 (US$270) a month. The previous year one of her co-workers had gone to the Ministry of Labor to complain about non-payment of wages. Emu said,

> We afraid [of] her [the employer]. The one girl, when … she [the boss] didn't pay … she [the friend] went to Labor. Then she [the friend] told them [Labor]. She [the employer] didn't pay me. We don't have day off and something. They [Labor] call my boss. […] My boss call the police. She knows the police. They got her [my friend]. Then she go to prison. She didn't do anything. She [the boss] knows. She live here 20 years or something. She know everything. And then she [the friend] go back to Ethiopia. She didn't get any money… … It's too hard. …

Emu said that after this incident her employer told the remaining three workers that the same would happen to them if they complained. These threats and the examples made of co-workers immobilized the employees who remained—despite their excessive hours and workweeks, threats, and minimal wages. For both Emu and Mike, the impact of their employers' words and action resulted in fear and inaction, making them docile and complacent. Structural violence is found in the "disciplinary power" of the government.

Their mechanisms of oppression and marginalization work through the employers and often go unseen by the workers.

The *kafala* system is an excellent example of how unseen disciplinary power of the state manifests itself through the sponsor/employer, but the power of the state can also be perpetuated "diffusely" through a variety of other non-state actors, including recruiters, the media, one's family and friends, and the migrants themselves. Fernandez (2013) provides an analysis of migration intermediaries in facilitating the emigration of Ethiopians to the Middle East. She refers to the ways in which state power is manifested as a "decentered approach to regulation" (Fernandez 2013, 814). With this she means that regulations are not only operationalized through government action, but that, "regulation occurs within and between other social actors," too (816). She takes a decentered approach so that we are better able to "recognize and explain how regulation may be diffused through society" (816). Like Bourdieu and Foucault, her aim is to take the lens off the state, an entity that is often assumed to be the central regulator of policy, and re-focus it on the operations of others. Both Bourdieu and Foucault argue that power is dispersed not only by state institutions, but also by what Bourdieu would describe as more subtle, hidden forms of power—power whose origins are often misperceived (Swartz 2013). Foucault, similarly, would argue for the need to examine "a wide range of technologies of control" that go beyond the government (Fernandez 2013, 816).

Other actors who can operationalize and perpetuate the powers of an exploitative state include the family. Analyn, the forty-eight-year-old Filipina woman, whose sister had quickly departed Dubai once Analyn had arrived and signed a contract, was subjected to a family that seemed to exploit her. She said,

> Unfortunately, I do not want to stay here, but my mom, she tell me, 'If you will come back in Philippines, what you will do there? At your age, you cannot work in the office of anywhere. So you will come back for selling fish?' And then I tell okay as long as I am not disabled, I will not come back… Because no one will give her medicine. Because she has diabetes, and who will give food for my mom…

Analyn's mother used her ability to manipulate her daughter into doing what she wanted. Her mother's words could perhaps be interpreted less critically; however, the stories Analyn told about her past left little likelihood of this. When I asked Analyn what had had the greatest influence on her growing up, she told me about her experience of getting in a fight with another child. She said, "My mother tell to my enemy [another girl] that she is beautiful and I'm ugly; that's why she's [Analyn] fighting with you [the other girl]." Later, when Analyn was to marry, Analyn said while crying, "When I got married at twenty-one, she [her mother] didn't give me her blessing."

Analyn's mother attempted to manipulate her through guilt trips, but, more often, my participants created guilt on their own. Whether out of love, a fear of bringing shame on oneself, or both, these individuals were terrified of failing their families. Michael began this chapter talking about how immobilized he and others were by their situations and the fear this engendered. He was a thirty-two-year-old Kenyan man who had completed high school and attended (but not finished) technical college. He had a daughter, whose mother had left her, and, before deciding to emigrate, he had gotten remarried to a woman he was confident would love his daughter and care for his mother. Throughout his interview, Michael spoke several times about his fear of going back *with* nothing, *to* nothing. He said,

> When you're coming here, you've used all of your savings. … You've sold things because you're coming to make it big. So after a month I went

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back. After your time elapses [visit visa expires], you go back. And I went *back to nothing* [job-wise]. … So I went back to nothing. At the back of my mind I just told myself … I've seen some people making it. Because every person you meet, oh, you're going to make it! Don't worry.

Two sentences later, he said again, "I did not want to go back to my family *with nothing*."

Near to the end of the interview, he spoke of it again,

You *don't go back* after … after you fail here, after you think you've failed here, you *don't go back*. You don't go and expose yourself, like something has happened. You persevere.

I asked him why he could not go back. He said,

What do you go back to? You've taken all of their money. You've taken all of their savings. … You've taken your mom's savings. … You've taken all of your savings. … Whatever she had …

Among temporary low-wage workers in the UAE, the production of fear is quite easy. The inequities and oppression created by state actors are perpetuated knowingly and unknowingly by a variety of other actors ranging from the employer to the self. For Michael, it was the knowledge that one is failing not only oneself, but an entire family that has often borne the debt of migration (A. M. Gardner 2010a). It was the fear of going back *with* nothing, *to* nothing.

Temporariness as a Mechanism for Cultivating Fear

In the UAE, two specific mechanisms are commonly used by the state to cultivate fear and hence docility. They are temporariness and expendability. For my participants, knowledge of one's own temporariness was a significant cause of fear. Rosewarne (2012) contends that temporary migration is built on institutionalized structural inequalities that are inherent to the condition of temporariness. Dauvergne and Marsden (2012) agree. Building on Arendt (1998), they contend that temporary migrant work and its related

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programs are inherently unequal; thus, ideologically, temporariness produces relations of domination between worker and employer.

Domination according to Iris Young (1990) is a condition that results from individuals being unable to control both their actions and the conditions within which they act, and that a relation of domination is the unjust control of power over others. Among temporary guestworkers, it is the employer who dominates. This domination is structural because the control and power are institutionalized conditions (I. M. Young 1990). Workers—all of whom are temporary in the UAE regardless of their socio-economic level—know that they have been made docile and that they are temporary and disposable.[70] Negasi, my Ethiopian participant with a university degree, spoke of this impotency. He said,

> I cannot go back. I have nothing to go back to. … You know… That sometimes… You feel like talking… When you're upset in work… Like when you are treated unfairly, you cannot do anything about it. If they cancel you, so you go back and then you face a bigger problem than this…. and I just … … [his voice drifts off].

Expendability as a Mechanism for Cultivating Fear

In the UAE, termination from one's job often (but not always) coincides with a temporary six-month or one-year employment ban. This ban does not mandate that one must exit the country.[71] However, low-wage migrant workers cannot afford to stay in the UAE if they are not earning money. As a result, workers who are banned are left with two choices. They can either become irregular or they can exit the country. Irregular

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70. Middle-class professionals are not immune from the fear this creates.

71. The Ministry of Labor decides whether or not a worker should receive an employment ban. Immigration decides whether a worker should be deported. Labor and Immigration apparently store information on different databases resulting in each being unaware of the other's actions.

status is quite risky and typically results in a lifetime immigration ban. I had participants

who were willing to take that risk and others who were not. Those migrants who are

unwilling to take this risk must then exit the UAE. As a result, being terminated and

temporarily banned often have the same emotional and psychological impact as being

temporarily deported.[72]

The fear of being banned/deported prevents low-wage workers from complaining

about their working or living conditions. Being terminated and banned are not a direct

result of making a complaint. Doing so, by law, would not be allowed. Rather, an

employer/sponsor can, for example, terminate a foreign worker a month after the

complaint was made or not renew the individual's contract when it expires. Knowledge

of their employer's ability to do this arouses fear and complacency. Thus, it is not the

actual deportation—termination and ban—that disciplines: rather, it is the threat and

belief that one is viewed as expendable which works as a coercive and self-censoring

device (De Genova 2002; A. M. Gardner 2010b; Menjívar and Abrego 2012; Wicker

2010).[73]

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72. This also helps explain why my participants and many others often refer to "deportation" even though the actual penalty of deportation is unlikely if one has not performed an egregious act.

73. Deportation is used as a mechanism of control among undocumented migrants in the US (Bourgois 2009; De Genova 2013; Gonzalez 2013; Menjívar and Kanstroom 2013; Quesada 2011) and in Europe (Andrijasevic 2010; H. Castañeda 2010; Wicker 2010). It was also used as such among those in my study who were irregular. Similarly, deportation can also be used as a mechanism of control among migrants who have *regular*—but *temporary*—status. Studies to this effect can be found in the US (Benz-Rogers 2014; Hahamovitch 2013; Johnston 2010), in Europe (Bridget Anderson and Rogaly 2005), and—as has been well-documented—in the Arab Gulf (A. M. Gardner 2012; Irianto and Truong 2014; Kakande 2013; Mahdavi 2013; Malit and Naufal 2014; Truong 2012). Further, the *kafala* system is typically viewed by those in the West as a deviant system. However, it is not. The diversity and scale to which temporary foreign workers are used in the UAE sets it apart. However, tying low-wage temporary migrant workers to employers can also be found not only in the UAE, but also in the US (Apgar 2015; Bauder 2006; Benz-Rogers 2014; Delgado-Wise, Márquez, and Gaspar 2015; Hill 2011), Canada (Foster 2012; Hill 2011; Strauss and McGrath 2017; Valiani 2012); the UK (Bridget Anderson and Rogaly 2005; Scott 2015); and parts of Europe (Mannon et al. 2012; Pajnik 2012; Plewa 2013). Castle et al. (2015) argue that it is

The knowledge of one's temporariness and expendability was heightened for the Bangladeshi men in my study. The UAE government had an immigration ban on "unskilled" Bangladeshi migrants. Those who had jobs could stay, but they could not legally change employers, and no new hires were allowed to enter the country. These restrictions increased the exploitability of this population. If Bangladeshis are terminated, they either leave the country or stay with irregular status, and hope to find jobs where the employer will pay cash. My participant Sumon had been terminated several months before our interview. Tarun, my interpreter, translated for Sumon. He said,

> He [Sumon] has no visa, and he cannot go back to his country now. … … He is living in Dubai for the last 6 years. … … About 3 months ago his visa expired and his company did not renew. … … He was working with the same company the whole time. … … He has to renew it [the visa/contract] every two years, and the company charged him 3000 to renew the visa. … … 800 dirhams [was his salary being paid]. … … He renewed it twice. … … They were asking 3000 dirhams to renew the visa. He says he has no money. … … The second time he paid for the visa. … … Two years ago he went to Bangladesh and the company gave him the [round trip] ticket. And so after he came back, the company deducted the ticket expenses from his salary, and visa, too.

Sumon spent more than four months of his salary on the cost of the visa and flight ticket. When Sumon's contract expired three months prior to meeting us, his boss decided to let Sumon go. Over the last few years the economy has been contracting. However, state mechanisms make it quite easy for companies to grow or deplete their workforce, making it easy to respond to such changes.

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becoming more and more common for governments to revitalize old guestworker programs. They write, "governments everywhere seem to be looking back to the old guest worker model or the contract labour models used in Gulf oil economies and some Asian labour-importing countries, to introduce new systems of what is euphemistically labelled 'circular migration'" (2380).

The reasons why workers are unable to leave their employment are not always clear. Often it is a combination of reasons and actors—the result of lies told by employers that leave workers uncertain of their rights or fearing prison and/or deportation. Other times, it is laws that are ambiguous or too complex to be understood and followed, or laws that are simply not upheld and enforced. And still at other times, it seemed that participants were simply so overwhelmed by their circumstances that they were frozen into inaction. The reason for inaction—or what often looks like complacency by those on the outside—was driven by fear and a sense of disempowerment. Anderson and Rogaly stated, "The greater the hostility that migrant workers fear they may encounter, … the greater their vulnerability" (2005, 4). As the degree of my participants' fears increased over the prospect of becoming more vulnerable, their condition of vulnerability increased, too.

Conclusion

The *kafala* system has received the most attention by researchers on the Arab Gulf. Further discussion of it in this chapter had two purposes. On one level, I have hopefully framed and considered it and related issues in a way that can deepen understanding. Secondly, it provides the necessary foundation for understanding the chapters that follow.

While there is little new information that can be provided about the *kafala* system, there are aspects of it and its related immigration laws that needed further explanation. This included a discussion of the on-going ambiguity of UAE laws that perplexes not only low-wage workers, but also lawyers, and how this obscurity increases the structural violence that enables exploitation. The increased vulnerability that results is then further

heightened through temporary status and the power with which employers are granted to make workers expendable.

The focus of this chapter has also addressed the mechanisms and structures that cultivate fear. This (and an awareness of UAE laws) is foundational to examining how discriminatory processes work (chapters five and six) and how foreign workers are physically and psychologically marginalized (chapter seven). Explanations for how the current system of governance works provides the framework for understanding the impact of this system on my participants and their ability or inability to counter it (chapter eight). Finally, while the *kafala* is without question problematic, also important is the apparent difficulty the government has in enforcing laws that have been designed to prevent and protect worker exploitation and abuse. Better implementation is possible, and this is discussed in the conclusion.

CHAPTER 5

VULNERABILITY: LIFE IN DUBAI

RACE, ETHNICTY, & NATIONALITY

> First of all my name is Kendra. I'm 24 years old. I'm from Kenya. I
> came to seek green pastures in Dubai, specifically in Abu Dhabi, as a
> housekeeper through a recruitment agency. Something happens in these
> recruitment agencies. It's like a slave trade.

Focusing on the individual experiences of my participants helped expose the

violent structures that create precarity for temporary low-wage migrant workers. It

showed how labor laws and the *kafala* system oppress low-wage workers and that these

oppressions were somewhat uniformly experienced. Discriminatory practices, on the

other hand, were applied unevenly, resulting in a wide range of experiences among low-

wage workers. The various social categories—and potential areas for discrimination—

that constituted the experiences of low-wage workers included race/ethnicity, gender,

socio-economic status, religion, education, type of employment, migration status, and

nationality. For my participants, two aspects that stood out in particular were the often-

overlapping attributes of race, ethnicity, and/or nationality and the role of gender. These

two factors determined which jobs and salaries they could access, and defined their

working and living experiences. This chapter focuses on the role of race, ethnicity and

nationality. The following chapter addresses gender discrimination.

Regardless of whether the focus of analysis is on race, class, gender, or any other

aspect of identity, examining the experiences through an intersectional framework is

useful because it helps identify oppression and its related mechanisms, and shows how

institutional structures work to advantage some groups at the expense of others (Dill and

Zambrana 2009; Utt 2017; Yuval-Davis 2006). An intersectional framework reminds us that our various identities never exist alone; that they always function in relation to other aspects of identity. They work together in particular spaces and at particular times to either oppress or privilege. Focusing on the categories that are used to construct difference is important because it is on the basis of these categories that difference is used to justify oppression (D. S. Massey 2008; McDowell 2008). It can be argued that focusing on a single social dimension of identity as an analytical category of analysis takes the focus off other attributes and, in doing so, creates exclusion (Bauder 2006). I would agree that ignoring other dimensions of identity is problematic; yet, highlighting those aspects of identity that play prominently in a particular context is an indicator of their significance as mechanisms of oppression and makes them deserving of attention. For many of my participants, discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, and/or nationality were central to the structural violence they encountered. It reinforced and strengthened institutionalized systems of precarity, increasing their individual experiences of vulnerability.

This chapter focuses on nationality as a basis for discrimination and its relationship to racial and ethnic discrimination. In certain instances, I enclose "nationality" within quotation marks to signify how the word can in certain circumstances camouflage the presence of discriminatory attitudes towards race and ethnicity. I begin by discussing why nationality is so often and commonly referenced in the UAE, how these references might be masking other prejudices, and why it is difficult to identify them. I then examine the historical roots for discrimination in the UAE to see how this might inform contemporary understandings. Finally, I attempt to tease apart the

various overlapping discriminatory processes experienced in Dubai so that we might better understand the challenges they present and reveal why my South Asian participants perceived much less discrimination than my African ones.

Role of the Nation

Much of the literature on immigrants and discrimination focuses on the "nativist" attitudes of the "native" citizenry (Guia 2016; J. G. Young 2017). Nativism is applicable to countries that have extensive cultural diversity as a result of mass immigration together with historical experiences of nation-building (Guia 2016), two features common to the UAE. However, nativism also typically involves anti-immigrant discourses (Guia 2016). Such discourse is, of course, found in the UAE, but in far less amounts than in, for example, the US or Europe, often because of their concerns with permanent immigration. More importantly, while nativism might be seen as relevant to the local Emirati population, it does not explain the type of discrimination my participants experienced in the UAE. The attitudes of nationals are important for understanding the overall context and treatment of migrants, but they are less important to the day-to-day experiences of low-wage workers because they typically encounter few nationals. My participants' interactions were with those who were temporary foreigners like themselves.

I focus on nationality as one form of discrimination because of its link to nation. The term nation is used as a synonym for a country in several ways: as a bounded territory, as a political entity embodied in a state, and as a cultural entity (Loveman 1999). Among my participants, and likely among most foreigners in the UAE, making a connection to one's "nation" is not due to a sense of nationalist ideology. Rather, it reflects the need to be viewed by others, as well as oneself, as connected to a physical

place. Further, that place represents a cultural entity composed of such attributes as language, religion, and traditions (Loveman 1999), and in this sense can overlap with ethnic background. Connecting oneself to a nation provides a strong sense of identity (Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003), and is central to how low-wage foreign workers group themselves in the Arab Gulf (Rana 2011).

<center>"Nationality" as Identity</center>

Dubai is the temporary home to over two hundred nationalities, and many of the challenges low-wage workers encounter revolve around their national identity and how it is perceived. It is one of the most important—if not the most important—dimension of one's social identity, as well as the basis for discriminatory practices. In a society that hosts such a broad range of nationalities, discriminatory practices would be expected. Thus, in dealing with populations that earned the lowest wages in Dubai, it came as no surprise that participants in my study would bear the brunt of this discrimination.

In my initial interviews, I did not focus on discrimination. However, after about a third of the interviews had been completed, it began to emerge as a topic, and, subsequently, I began to pursue this line of inquiry.[74] Of the thirteen South Asians who either brought up issues related to discrimination or whom I specifically asked, only four said they faced discrimination. In contrast, of the fourteen Africans, thirteen said they encountered discrimination. Neither of the two Filipino women discussed it. That my participants faced discrimination was expected, but that so many *did not*, was quite surprising. Why had so few South Asians experienced discrimination, or rather, if they

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74. This approach is common in the constructivist approach to grounded theory. When new meaning and experiences emerge, we follow to either see where it might go or develop deeper into analysis (Charmaz 2014).

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had, why were so few *unaware* that they had? My ten plus years of living in Dubai had taught me that Indians—a nationality with whom I had interacted frequently in the university setting and with the other volunteers at NGO I assisted—faced a high degree of discrimination. Why did those in my study say they did not face it? While it is likely that more structural sources of discrimination would go unnoticed, were they also unaware of overt acts of discrimination? When I mentioned to professional Indians I knew that the Africans in my study encountered much more discrimination than the South Asians, why were their immediate reactions ones of cold annoyance?

To understand the various forms of discrimination in Dubai and attempt to make sense of them, one must gather an inordinate amount of information. Some of this information deals with knowing the social identity of those involved—where they were raised, what passport they held, where they had studied, what degree they had, what job they had, what salary they earned—, and other information deals with the specific context of the discriminatory act—where in Dubai the interaction took place, what style of clothing one had worn on that day, and, perhaps most importantly, who was interacting with whom. All of these factors come into play and are important in order to determine whether discrimination would be experienced, and if so whether it would be based on national identity, cultural identity, racial identity, socio-economic status, gender, religion, or some combination of the above.

Nationality Deemed Nondiscriminatory

Part of the challenge of identifying the prejudices that motivate discriminatory treatment is that some prejudices can hide beneath a discourse of "nationality." They can hide beneath it because references to nationality are deemed innocuous. One reason for

this is the common belief that governments should have the authority to decide who can and cannot enter their country. This practice legitimizes discrimination on the basis of nationality, and, as a result, nationality is often not *perceived* as discrimination in the same way as gender or race-based discrimination.

Further, in the UAE, it is commonplace for the media to include the nationality of relevant individuals in their news stories. For example, a review of articles in the crime section of a local newspaper provides the following illustrations.[75] "All [of] the four men are from African countries." "Five men and one woman [were] from Hong Kong…" "[Police] found the twenty-six-year-old Pakistani driver sitting in the back with the girl and kissing her." Locals, too, are included, as in the following: "four Emiratis convicted of traffic offences [are] to work as petrol station attendants and gardeners." The repetition with which UAE residents are informed about nationality develops the desire to know this harmless information, repeat it, and thus reinforce it further.

Finally, certain statements—which are oddly and unexpectedly factual—can mask prejudices, normalizing and making acceptable what is often biased or discriminatory information. For example, in the UAE, statements such as "Indian maids are more expensive than Sri Lankan ones" are factually correct. The information is based on the (recommended) minimum salary requirements determined by respective embassies. When statements such as these become commonplace, then comments such as, "Indians are far better maids than Sri Lankans" and "Nigerians are all a bunch of hustlers"[76] are

75. All examples are taken from the April 12, 2017, edition of the newspaper.

76. This statement is one that potential employers might make and which is meant to be derogatory. According to my African participants, Nigerians are least desired among sub-Saharan Africans. Interestingly, to Peter, a twenty-seven-year-old Nigerian man who lacked formal education, the ability to

easily incorporated into societal discourse and the prejudices they reflect go

unrecognized. Through the discourse of "nationality," foreigners and locals in Dubai lose

sight of what is considered discriminatory treatment in general, and even what would be

considered racist views. As a result of the muddled awareness this produces, the ability

(or even the need) to consider the specificity of "nationality" and how it is being used is

lost.

Conflating Nationality & "Race"

The above examples show how discourse around nationality can seem innocuous

and make it difficult for the layperson to determine whether someone is discriminating on

the basis of race or nationality [Howard]. Journalists, government officials, and scholars,

on the other hand, can lean to the opposite extreme when they conflate racism with

nationality. When this is done, with little explanation of why, they lose the opportunity to

examine what the actual prejudices are that motivate these two very different forms of

discrimination and what role history has played.

In the UAE, news sources and officials have been found to equate racial

discrimination with nationality. For example, referring to what a senior UAE labor

official had said, the *Gulf News* wrote that "Employers commit *racial* discrimination

when they offer jobs on the basis of race, nationality or any personal attributes" (Salama

2005, emphasis added). The official—or at least the journalist's interpretation of what the

official said—clearly sees discrimination on the basis of nationality to be a form of

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hustle was positive. When he said, "I think like a Nigerian…. I am a hustler," I asked what he meant by
that. He shared his positive interpretation, "A hustler is somebody that can find his way out. Like he can do
anything. He can aim at big money, maybe washing a car. He can see all these cars, and you tell me to
wash them in 3 hours. I can do it. In 3 hours I can do it, but pay me good money. [It means] you have in a
strength of working."

racism. More recently an article in *Middle East Eye* stated that Arab world is quite racist, though they [the UAE] deny it (Nashed 2017). The author wrote that the "racial hierarchy" of domestic workers placed Africans at the bottom and Filipinos at the top because of their lighter skin. In the author's view, too, all low-wage migrant workers were racialized in the Arab Gulf, and they are racialized on the basis of skin color.

Similar to the media, past studies on temporary low-wage migrant workers in the UAE and/or Arab Gulf has often conflated nationality and race (Aguilar Jr. 1999; A. M. Gardner 2010b; Silvey 2004; Truong 2012). These researchers contend that in regards to low-wage migrant workers, who were often South Asians and Filipinos in their studies, referencing nationality is often a way to mask racial prejudices and provide justification for hiring choices and salary amounts. This research seems to lack clear explanations as to when and why it is appropriate to label discrimination against low-wage workers as racist. In contrast, a study on the women who employ domestic workers in the US does explain how it arrived at such a conclusion.

Moras (2010) and Yeoh and Huang (2000) provide examples of how in the case of domestic workers, employers often reference nationality to avoid appearing racially discriminatory. Moras's (2010) research explores racial and ethnic relations. She argues that in the case of foreign domestic workers in the US, nationality is typically code for racial prejudice. She gives both historical evidence as well as an analysis of her interviewees' discourse. In interviews with white American women who employed women of color—mainly Latinas—and African American women who worked in their homes, she explored the dynamics of their relationship. Moras examined the very specific discourse used by her participants to determine that their use of nationality was

camouflage for racial discrimination. Moras, a white woman herself, found that the white employers were extremely reticent to talk about race. She contends, that in an attempt to hide what appeared as racist views, her interviewees used "cultural difference and national origin" as "markers of racial difference" and "preference" (241). A similar analysis seems to be lacking in Gulf scholarship. Yeoh and Huang DATE had similar findings. In their research on domestic workers in Singapore, they found that non-citizens are often treated in a way that "conflates notions of 'race' and nation'" (1153).

I found strong similarities in the UAE. In 2013, I carried out a small study[77] involving five American women in Dubai who worked outside of the home and employed domestic workers from the Global South. It is quite common in the UAE for white women from the Global North—as well as middle and upper-class women from the Global South—who work full time to employ fulltime live-in domestic help to both clean and take care of their children. In my interviews, I asked the women (who were the employers) if they preferred that their domestic workers were of a particular nationality. "AJ"[78] said,

> Well, my preference has always been, not always been, but over the years, I've come to prefer Filipina maids because they tend to have better English and they tend to just understand you better. There's sweeping generalizations and I almost am embarrassed to talk about them but Filipinos have a reputation for being more honest. And I just like them. Being more honest and cleaner which is really kind of, yea, I'm embarrassed to even say that, but, yeah…

"MK" another employer stated,

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77. This study was carried out in 2014 as part of a course for my doctoral degree. The study involved in-depth interviews with five American women. The interviews were carried out over Skype, recorded, and then transcribed.

78. I have used the initials of my participants in place of their names.

I definitely needed a Filipina because first of all they are very friendly and smiling and clean, but second of all, and I know this is going to sound very racist, so you can just, you know, make sure my names not on this. I really cannot stand the smell of Indian spices. It gives me a headache and I had an Indian woman that I was trying out before Mercy [her maid] and even she smelled like spice herself, you know she had that spicy smell and very different perfume.

While it is unclear whether AJ was aware of the racial undercurrents to her "sweeping generalizations," MK was fully aware that such comments were racist. Whether in the UAE, Singapore, or the US, it is clear that prejudiced views are being hidden—consciously or unconsciously—by references to nationality, an attribute deemed by many to be innocuous.

In the Gulf context, it may be that scholars and journalists see racism in the way it operates, and racialization as the marking of others as different, regardless of their physical characteristics and how they may be similar or different to the dominant groups (Aulette 2016; Grosfoguel 2016; Weiner 2012; Wimmer 2013). They might also contend that the attitudes, which they describe as racist, lead to discriminatory treatment of those deemed inferior, and that utilizing racial concepts carries greater weight and is more powerful than other descriptors. Audre Lorde states that racism is "the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (Lorde and Clarke 2007, 45). In the context of the UAE, one need only substitute nationality for race. The end result is the same: some are deemed inherently superior and others inferior. These views may be legitimate claims. However, since these scholars and journalists do not explain why all references to nationality should be understood as being rooted in racial prejudice, we are left to conjecture.

Further analysis can show us how people perceive racial differences as well as how they perceive references to nationality. From the examples given throughout this section, it is clear that knowledge and opinions run the full gamut, from those who are unaware that references to nationality carry with it any discriminatory prejudices whatsoever to those who contend that it is all driven by racial prejudices.

Historical Roots of Discriminatory Processes

The UAE's past experiences with colonialism and the slave trade can help explain how society is organized today and why certain nationalities are favored and others ill-treated. These roots inform today's hierarchies and are a fundamental axis for organizing society. The past also helps explain the complex and contradictory ideas about skin color today, why the focus is on nationality, and the bifurcation of society into national/non-national.

An Axis for Organizing Society

Ethnicity and perceived racial differences were both elements used to stratify populations during the period of colonization. Aulette (2016), a racism scholar, explains how colonial powers imposed systems and classifications onto foreign populations, which created the precedents for current stratification. She states that just as the colonial powers divvied up Africa into artificial states, they then divvied up the people within those states into artificial tribes that reflected their own ideas about how tribes should be structured. Tribalism in its present form was the result of colonial intervention (Lentz 2000 referenced in Aulette 2016; Nagel 1994). Prior to that, groups in the regions were characterized by their flexibility and mobility. Colonizers granted leaders from the

hierarchical tribal structures they created, granting them control over resources and

people, so as to add them in their rule.[79]

Tribal systems reflecting the British's desired hierarchical style likely did not

exist in the Trucial States either. Abdulla (1985), an Emirati political scientist, states that

the economy at that time prior to British involvement was based on "primitive, pastoral

subsistence" and "tribute-paying formations," and that "the UAE's pre-integration stage

of development was complex and cannot be reductionally described as tribal" (75). The

organizational structures put in place by British colonial powers are still in place today.

Power is consolidated—in the hands of only a few leaders—and hierarchies are steep.

British and American employers maintained the organizational structures put in

place by British colonial powers. They segregated and restricted interactions between

Indians and local Arabs, and paid wages that were systematically lower than that paid to

British and American workers (Heard-Bey 2005; D. S. Massey et al. 2005). With

independence, stratification altered with, of course, locals becoming the dominant power.

Rulers gave preference to hiring foreign Arab workers who shared similar language and

religion, rather than to Indian labor that the British and Americans preferred.[80]

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79. According to Aulette (2016), conflict arose when the people whom these tribal leaders were to rule over decided that observing this newly appointed leader was not in their best interests. This resulted in the leaders turning to force and corruption to gain control and to maintain their image. It also led to divisions, which the colonial powers exploited, and to the now too familiar reference to "interethnic" conflict and rivalries. Aulette explains, "These so-called tribes did not really exist, and the British were not meeting with legitimate leaders. But, the *myth of tribes* created a façade of legitimacy to their exploitation. The [British] concept of tribes, however, eventually became real, even in the eyes of the people who were supposedly members of one or another tribe. By the twentieth century, the idea of clear cut ethnic boundaries dividing people into identifiable tribes became real" (Aulette 2016, 59, emphasis added).

80. In the first half of the twentieth century, the majority of migrants were Arab. However, by the 1980s and 1990s, there was a shift towards Indians and other South Asians. As discussed in chapter one, this was primarily driven by political concerns.

The British institutionalized structures that essentialized the racial and ethnic difference between the dominant group and those below (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009; Fredrickson 2002) and, in the process, legitimated the use of power by those in control (Memmi 1965; D. Swartz 1998). Power grants agency and the ability to control one's circumstances. It is distributed through resources which result in individuals and groups either having their agency enhanced or constrained (Walter, Bourgois, and Margarita Loinaz 2004). Today, the UAE's method of dealing with its foreign population "echo" that performed by the British during their colonial presence; the British provided a "template" for handling foreign labor (A. M. Gardner 2010b, 48). This template along with the kafala system informed current stratification.

<center>Roots for Preferring Light Skin Color</center>

Racial discrimination on the basis of skin color likely has roots in the UAE's experience with African slave labor. Long before and throughout British presence in the Trucial States, African labor was brought to the Arab Gulf region through the slave trade.[81] This trade ended as a result of global economic forces, which made the cost of trade prohibitive.[82] Slaves were later trafficked from an alternate region, but this too ended with the increase in oil wealth in the early part of the twentieth century. At that

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81. It is estimated that the trans-Sahara slave trade began much earlier than the trans-Atlantic one, and that more Africans were trafficked through this route than across the Atlantic (Lucas 2014).

82. Some claim that the trans-Sahara trade to the Trucial States was brought about by the British (Heard-Bey 2005). Historian Matthew Hopper (2015) contends that it was due to global economic forces in the first quarter of the twentieth century. These forces, as referenced in chapter three, led to the collapse of the date and pearl industries in the Arab Gulf region, which in turn resulted in the decline of the African slave trade. The fall of the date industry was due to the mass amounts of date seedlings taken back to the US and cultivated. Japan out did them in the pearl industry. In addition, at the time of economic collapse, new sources of slaves became available from Baluchistan and Persia. Importing from these regions was less costly and risky than bringing labor from East Africa. These events challenge the popular myth that the British Royal Navy brought an end to slavery in the region. Rather, the British did little to stop the slave trade.

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time, leaders granted manumission (i.e., freedom) to many slaves, including those from

Africa. Upon manumission, former slaves would typically be incorporated into society

and took the family name of their former masters. In the UAE at that time, racial identity

was traditionally based on paternal descent rather than skin color. However, with time

and colonial occupation, skin color began to matter along with genealogy.[83] Hopper

(2015), a historian who focuses on the history of East Africa and the Arab Gulf, writes,

> While it is true that in the Gulf today one's racial identity is most often
> determined by that of one's father and grandfather rather than one's skin
> color, skin color *does* matter (or there would not be so many skin-
> lightening clinics in Dubai). Put simply, in the Gulf race matters alongside
> genealogy. […] the Arab identity contains an internal hierarchy that
> influences perceptions (Hopper 2015, 217; italics in original).[84]

Emiratis lay claim to their position of power and dominance through multiple

identities, which are then influenced to differing degrees by skin color. Emiratis believe

that as Arabs they are racially different from other groups, and—more importantly—that

as "Gulfies" (citizens from the Gulf), they see themselves as both racially and ethnically

different from other Middle Eastern Arabs. People from the Gulf can identify other

"Gulfies" by their physical appearance, and this perceived difference is tied to individual

families. There are also clear cultural and historical elements that set the Gulf apart from

other Middle Eastern countries. Those from the Gulf view themselves as above other

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83. Kowner and Demel (2014) contend that the preference for light skin may actually go back much further than the colonial era. It can be found in societies around the globe, even those that had limited contact to the West. Regardless, colonialism certainly reinforced attitudes about and preference for lighter skin.

84. The UAE government does not keep statistics on specific nationalities. See: http://original.fcsa.gov.ae/ Somewhat current estimates for a handful of African countries in the UAE can be found, but this data has limited use in creating a clearer picture of the reduction of Africans coming to the region in the early twentieth century during the economic collapse, and the more recent increase in the past twenty to thirty years. See: http://www.bq-magazine.com/economy/socioeconomics/2015/04/uae-population-by-nationality

Arabs because of their regional affiliation (to the Gulf) as well as their individual country affiliations.[85] The importance of these various elements—Arab Gulf racial identity and ethnicity, regional affiliation, Emirati nationality and ethnicity—varies, depending on the location, with whom one is interacting, as well as other aspects of identity, such as wealth and education.[86]

Skin color, as Hopper mentioned above, is also a component of an Emirati's perceived racial identity. In the UAE, the color line is quite context dependent. Within Emirati society there is a wide range of skin tones owing to the manumitted slaves who were incorporated into families and society. As compared with the US, the UAE has done well—at least on the surface—of integrating former slaves into society and providing economic opportunities.[87] (In the UAE, African-Emiratis do not make up the bulk of the poor as they do in the US, nor are they referred to as "African-Emiratis." This aspect of identity is not spoken about.) However, skin color is still important, and this can be seen in the hierarchies of eligible marriage partners (Hopper 2015). Outside of Emirati society, and in relation to non-nationals, Emirati nationals—regardless of their skin color—generally take precedence, resulting in the bifurcation of society and the emphasis on

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85. In the past, tribal ethnicity—based on familial ties—was a predominant attribute in determining status; however, the government has gone to great lengths to shift this to a focus on Emirati-ness. However, as of the mid-nineties, there was still a high degree of stratification along tribal and family lines, and based on the Emirate in which one resides (Sabban 1996).

86. The content for this paragraph is based on conversations with "Gulfies." Those I spoke with believe that most "Gulfies" would agree with the descriptions given. I might add that the region has its own hierarchies, with Saudi Arabia at the top, mainly because it is the center of Islam, followed by either Qatar or the UAE. However, this is likely in flux due to the current conflict in the Gulf, in which Qatar is being ostracized by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait. Oman and Bahrain are at the bottom of the hierarchy.

87. Hopper (2015) has suggested that it may have been the period of economic collapse of the date and pearl industry and the sense of shared experience of hardship and destitution that lessened the social gap between master and slave, allowing for easier incorporation into society.

nationality. So again, whether or not skin color—racially based discrimination—is factored into determining whether one's status is above or below another's depends on who is interacting with whom.

Contemporary Divisions

In the UAE today, overt references to either ethnicity or perceived racial identity are avoided through the discourse of nationality. At its most basic, the emphasis on nationality bifurcates society along national and non-national lines. Emirati citizenship ensures privilege and hierarchy. This is maintained through the *kafala* (sponsorship) system, which marks all foreigners in the country as temporary.[88] Those who migrate to the UAE do not go with any expectations of gaining citizenship because it is rarely, if ever, granted (Arsenault 2013; Babar 2013; A. M. Gardner 2010b). In the UAE, a blood connection to those deemed the Emirate's "original inhabitants" must often be proven.[89] Thus, except in rare cases, all foreigners to the region are guests (Ferris-Lay 2012; Ali 2010).[90]

Segmentation

Once bifurcated, the ranking of non-nationals places other Gulf Arabs at the top followed by white Westerners, especially those from Britain and the US, and next by

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88. Note, however, that temporary can go on for some time. There are some families who have been there for one or two generations. They are best described by Fargues (2011) as having "permanently temporary settlement" (280).

89. Note that I was unable to find any other documentation that supported the necessity for a blood connection. The rarity of granting citizenship is, however, widely acknowledged.

90. Though there are some similarities between all foreigners who come to work in the country, I do not want to suggest that a Westerner's experience comes even close to that of a low-wage migrate from a developing country. These individuals, for example, face many forms of discrimination, from having their passport taken, to not being allowed to bring one's family, to being required to live in isolated camps set apart from the rest of society.

other racially white Westerners. From there in descending order would be Arabs from other Middle Eastern countries, and then Filipinos, South Asians, and black Africans. There are a myriad of other factors that move one up or down the social hierarchical scale. They included perceived racial identity and gender, the country one migrated from as well as where one grew up, education, religion, and the socio-economic status one brings, and one's social status within the UAE. All of these are significant determinants of privilege and discriminatory treatment.

<div align="center">Anti-Discrimination Law</div>

In July 2015, the summer before I began my fieldwork, the *UAE 2015 Anti-Discrimination Law* went into effect. This law prohibited "all forms of discrimination on the basis of religion, belief, sect, faith, creed, race, colour or ethnic origin,"[91] and those who commit acts of discrimination are to be fined and/or imprisoned for up to five years (A. Marshall 2015). For low-wage workers, this law had the potential to reduce the discriminatory treatment they faced in the hiring process and on the job. While it does seem to have had a small impact, overall, for low-wage workers, it has been fairly insignificant. In discussing current forms of discrimination experienced by my participants, I consider how the choice of discourse used to talk about migrant nationalities creates both confusion and apathy towards those who are most exploited. I also consider how nationality-based discrimination has been able to flourish and the problems that arise when issues of nationality and racism are conflated. Through my participant stories and informant information, I attempt to tease apart the various

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91. Nationality is not addressed here, but then neither is it addressed by the EU's Race Equality Directive (Howard 2008; Wrench 2016)

prejudices that non-nationals encounter. As mentioned earlier, issues of gender-based discrimination and the particular ways in which women are made vulnerable are discussed in the following chapter.

<center>The Roots of Discriminatory Treatment</center>

It is useful to compare the discriminatory experiences of other social groups to my participants' situation to better understand the sources of their discriminatory treatment and their own attitudes towards others. Situating Emirati nationals provided a basis for understanding the positioning of non-nationals in general. The experiences of affluent South Asians and Blacks are useful points of comparison for understanding the differential forms of discrimination my participants encountered. To do this, I discuss the experiences of two academics living in Dubai, a British-Indian and an African-American.[92]

Selma was a university academic of Indian origin, but who was raised in the UK. I only met Selma once before she left the university and moved to India. However, we continued our discussion on the issue of discrimination through email. Selma is a good example of how, in Dubai, some identities supersede others. In relation to local Emiratis, who were her students, she found that they were more accepting of and curious about her once they discovered she had other "non-Indian connections," as Selma said. Her UK education was influential in such cases, but even more important was having grown up in the UK and having a British accent as a symbol of that. These experiences are not only in regard to the responses she would receive from nationals. Affluent migrants from the

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92. I do not include the name of the university where they worked so as to maintain their anonymity. Further, they were not my participants. They earned far too much.

<center>118</center>

Global North and Global South, as well as lower-wage workers from the Global South, regarded Selma similarly.[93] Selma would notice a change in attitude once she proved through speaking that she was "not one hundred percent Indian." Further, the clothing she wore—"Western clothes" or "Asian" as she stated—determined how she would be treated while shopping, that is, until she spoke.

It is challenging to suss out the prejudices that are at the root of such attitudes. On the one hand, the discrimination Selma experienced seemed to be based on nationality, and in others, on racism. Neha Vora (2013, 2008), in her research on middle-class Indians in Dubai, found similarly that her interviewees spoke at length about the "systematic discrimination and racial hierarchies" they faced by white Westerners in Dubai, which resulted in them working in jobs for which they were overqualified (2013, 118). In a footnote, Vora (2013) wrote, "While my [middle-class] informants did describe some experiences of racism from local Arabs and Arab immigrants, the majority of their focus when it came to racial consciousness was on their standing vis-à-vis whites" (404). Selma's own assessment was that if she were dealing with white Westerners, she felt it was her color and Indian features that elicited discriminatory treatment, but that their racially driven prejudice would lessen when her British upbringing was identified. Unknown is whether the improved opinions were nationality-based—being British rather than Indian—or the result of presumptions about her culture and ethnicity. "Race, ethnicity, and nationality are overlapping symbolic categories" (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009) that can make differentiation difficult and at times impossible. Again, where, when

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93. There are no lower-wage workers from the Global North working in the UAE.

and with whom one is interacting can result in very different experiences of discrimination.

Selma provided an Indian-British perspective. Steve's perspective drew on his experience as an African-American academic living in Dubai. I interviewed him one evening when he came to a going-away party for a mutual friend of ours. We took a break and spoke one-on-one in my office. His experience resembled Selma's in many ways. The central one was the assumption that Steve was from the African continent until he proved otherwise. Once he spoke and others heard his American accent, he gained more respect. He said, "I would get some credibility because of a blue passport."[94] Steve said he experienced some discrimination at his work at the university, but that he experienced more outside of work, likely because of casual attire and hairstyle. He said,

> I have experienced racism at work… but that's been my whole life, so, of course, for me, but outside of the university is where I experience it more overtly… Southeast Asians mostly… because my hair is locked…. "Bob Marley, come sing us a song." at the petro station. … It happens so much now… Somebody rolled up at [traffic light] and he rolls down his window, and he's like, 'What's up Bob Marley? You wanna go get some weed. And f--- some bitches?

The discrimination he encountered was driven by racial prejudice, and reflected the assumptions made about someone who is black and from the African continent. However, in Steve's case, prejudices about nationality countered, in part, the racial prejudice, earning him more respect and "credibility." Discrimination for both Selma and Steve was initially driven by how they looked.[95]

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94. This was quite different in the US. Steve said, "At home, everybody has that blue passport. So there's no status for me there. All I am is what people see, which is black."

95. Steve chose to view these experiences through a positive lens. At the end of our conversation, he said, "So they're just drawing on these stereotypes because they want to make meaningful connections. I

Discrimination Encountered by Participants

Discrimination did not impact my participants evenly. Different nationalities were subjected to different forms and levels of discrimination, and some groups seemed unaware of the discrimination they most certainly must have encountered. Apart from discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, and/or ethnicity, my participants also mentioned religion, occupation, and socio-economic status.

Sub-Saharan African Participants and Racism

At the beginning of my interviews, I would tell participants the general topics I would like them to talk about, and then ask them to start where they wanted. This was a useful way to begin an interview because those issues that emerged first revealed what was important from the speaker's perspective rather than mine. My participant Kendra provided the opening to this chapter. At our interview, they were the first words out of her mouth. She said,

> First of all my name is Kendra. I'm 24 years old. I'm from Kenyan. I came to seek green pastures in Dubai, specifically in Abu Dhabi, as a housekeeper through a recruitment agency. Something happens in these recruitment agencies. It's like a slave trade….

When asked to elaborate, she said,

> Slave trade … someone buys you from your country, and then when you come here, they sell you to a person who will employ you, take your visa, and all that… [… The recruitment office] is a hub establishment, service. So they are the ones that took me directly from Kenya. […] The madam [the Egyptian woman whose home she had worked in and who had developed financial difficulties] saw us like an investment so she decided to try to take us back to the office to see whether she could be

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think… I want to think of the positive in humanity. They want to make these connections to people, and they go about it [in not a great way]."

refunded the cash. […] That office was to look for another sponsor for us. … [96]

Kendra was not the only one to connect her experiences to slavery. Sophie, an African participant who worked in a hair salon in Deira, an older part of Dubai, stated, "You work there like a slave. I can put it like that." These women reveal the temporal connection between the centuries-long, sub-Saharan slave-trade era of the past and the present use and treatment of sub-Saharan Africans. I never asked either of these women if they knew about the slave-trade route to the Arab Gulf, but based on what other informants say, they likely would not have. Yet, in terms of the dehumanization of certain populations and the prejudiced attitudes that motivated it then and now, there is a clear continuity.

The Africans in my study perceived discrimination on the basis of their skin color, pan-sub-Saharan African identity (which they referred to as "African") and their nationality. Most importantly, they equated their African identity with their black skin color and believed others did likewise. They indicated so in the stories they told and defined it as so when I followed up with them later.[97] For example, my participant Brice, a twenty-nine-year-old Cameroonian man, discussed the racism he encountered in his

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96. Placement agencies can arrange visit visas or work visas for a group of women and bring them together at one time to the country. Employers may have already preselected their maid and will pick her up at the airport, or they may come to the agency's office and select a maid from there. Maya's employers had apparently preselected her. Kendra's employer picked her up from the agent's office though I do not know if her employer selected her there or had done so prior.

97. My African participants had the unequal and unfair advantage of being able to maintain contact with me after their interviews. My South Asian participants could not most often because they did not speak English. My interpreter had been incredibly kind with the time he gave to our interviews. In addition, near the end of our time together he had gotten a new job, which required much more time. It would have been unreasonable and insensitive of me to expect him to continue acting as an intermediary. In addition, while I could WhatsApp the Africans, My interpreter would have had to have phone conversations as many of the South Asian participants had limited literacy.

accommodation, which he shared with South Asians.[98] Of the eight individuals in a room, one would be African and the others South Asian, mostly Pakistani and Indian. Talking about those with whom he shared a room, Brice said, "So, the other guys, they're like treating us like… I don't know how to put it … 'Those black people, do this, do that.'" Sophie, also a Cameroonian, she said that the other Africans she would meet on the street shared similar stories of discrimination. She said, "each time you meet one or two Africans, they will tell you [that] at my job site they discriminate too much because I am black skin." Brice and Sophie (and those whom Sophie met on the street) all agreed that the discrimination they encountered was racially motivated.

In most of the transcripts from my interviews, the relationship between being African and being black was not made clear. However, because the Africans in my study spoke English fluently, I was able to remain in contact with those who wanted. This allowed me to ask follow-up questions when I needed. Gabra, an Ethiopian man whom I often saw on my dog walks and who became a participant in the study, looked at me puzzled when I asked him if he equated African with black. His response was, "Do whites live in Africa?" Based on other conversations with Gabra, I believe he knew that non-blacks lived in Africa. His focus was on those who are native to the region, and in this case, Africans are black. Thus, for Gabra, when he referenced "Africa," he was referring to Africans who are black.

Gabriel, the young Nigerian geologist, said that black Africans typically only refer to themselves as African, and that northern Africans, who often have lighter skin

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98. While some companies allow their employees to group themselves by nationality, Brice's employer distributed the seven African employees among different rooms.

and are Muslim, tend to relate to their Arab identities over their African ones. In Dubai, Gabriel said that it was clear to him that when others spoke about black they meant Africans until proven otherwise. This ties well to Jeffery's experiences as an African-American in Dubai. When others learned that he was not a "real" African, respect increased. These examples show that assuming "Africans" are black is a justifiable assumption, as is a pan-African identity.

A pan-African identity can be self-identification as well as an identity applied by others. I found that when it was self-identified, a pan-African was interpreted as positive. It connected them to a community that had encountered similar challenges. Similar to how connecting oneself to a country can provide a cultural identity (Loveman 1999), connecting oneself to a region (or continent) can provide similarly strong (and positive) conceptions of identity (Waters 2009), even if that community is imagined (Benedict Anderson 1998). In contrast, individuals and groups can "find their national differences obliterated" by such designations when the reference is made for discriminatory purposes (Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003).

In addition to the examples discussed above, other stories made it quite clear that reference to skin color was not a neutral description; they were driven by racial ideologies. Kendra had been a domestic worker before absconding. She said that her Egyptian boss would refer to her as *sowda*. This is an Arabic word that is equivalent to the derogatory n-word in English. Further, when I asked Brice why he thought he was discriminated against, he smacked his arm several times, indicating the color, and then said, "Before [earlier in our interview], I didn't want to put it straight forward, like racism. … When I talked about the people around me, I talked about segregation, right?

Basically, that's what I am talking about. …" And, Yabani, a Nigerian man, said, "most

people in this country, they don't even recognize black very well. They treat us

differently…" Yabani meant that Africans, in general, are overlooked and excluded.

Nina, a Cameroonian like Brice, spoke of the racial discrimination she encountered riding

on public transportation. Nina said, "Inside the bus. Inside the metro… if a Filipina is

sitting [next to you]—any of those white colors. Some of them get up, or some hold their

nose as if you are stinky." Gabra recently mentioned that his black identity was why he

was stopped by the police, and his Ethiopian identity was why he was taken to the police

station.[99] There were many more examples of the racism my African participants

endured, and many of these come in the stories I share further along in this chapter.

South Asian Participants and Racism

In contrast to the Africans in my study, the nationality-based discrimination that

three of my South Asian participants spoke about was likely tied to ethnicity. Two of

these participants were men from Bangladesh, but they did not know each other. Fardin

and Rohan had both been told by individuals from other South Asian countries that

people from Bangladesh "are not good." It is highly unlikely that this involved racial

discrimination. Rather, in this circumstance, if South Asians are denigrated by a fellow

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99. From what Gabra said, if there is a problem of some type, perhaps a small crime, and the police have reason to believe that it involved a particular African nationality, such as Ethiopian, they would stop every black man they see and check his ID for his nationality. If the person is Ethiopian, he is taken to the police station. "KPIs" are Key Performance Indicators. They are big in the country at the moment. For the police, meeting their KPIs likely involved arresting enough people. Gabra said that at the police station they would be finger printed and photographed and then forced to spend the night at the station sitting in chairs. They could leave the next morning, without ever being asked a question. This appears to occur mainly in Deira, an older neighborhood in Dubai. Gabra added that the week after the police picked him up, he was picked up again. He said he now avoids going to Deira. This is unfortunate because it is a neighborhood where many Ethiopians hang out. Not going there deprives him of social interaction and increases his isolation, topics Gabra speaks about in chapter eight.

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South Asian and if the focus is on the character of the person, then it is likely culturally or socially motivated. Also, although Bangladesh is composed of multiple ethnic groups, it appears that other South Asians tend to focus on the pan-ethnic Bangladeshi identity. In India this is different.

An Indian man in my study also spoke of issues related to ethnic discrimination. Pachai was from the Tamil Nadu state of India and the fifteen co-workers with whom he also lived were Malayali from the state of Kerala. Pachai spoke Tamil, Hindi, and workable English, but his co-workers spoke Malayalam and limited Hindi, which they apparently preferred not to use. In addition, Pachai was Buddhist and the others were Muslim, and Pachai was vegetarian and the Malayali were meat eaters. Pachai felt that none of his roommates was friendly toward him and that they treated him differently. Two other Indian informants (who were not participants) concurred and said that discrimination on the basis of regional cultural differences in India is quite common.

One of these informants was an Indian woman who came to our apartment once a week to clean for four hours.[100] Helen had been quite fortunate in comparison to my participants; however, she was still quite "poor." She was from Karnataka, the state just north of Kerala, in India. She said that from her experience Malayali (those from Kerala) tend to exclude non-Malayali from their groups. In Dubai, this is quite easy to do because

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100. Helen had been coming to our home for nearly ten years. We had a good relationship; however, following my return from Tempe where I completed the course work and comprehensive exams for my Ph.D., we became much closer. Since returning to Dubai, I worked at home and thus we saw each other each week. It is during this time she told me her story. Helen had left home at the age of ten to become a maid for a family who lived far from her family and who was abusive. At the age of twenty she married and came to Dubai with her husband who worked as a chauffer. In the thirty years Helen had been in Dubai, she developed a clientele composed, for the most part, of other Western academics. She was—according to her—quite lucky in this regard. In addition to being able to learn English, she felt it was rare for her to experience overt discriminatory treatment or abuse, though often I believe she did not recognize discriminatory treatment even when it sounded quite like it was so to me.

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the vast majority of Indians are from Kerala. The other informant was an Indian man who owned a small company in Dubai. Surresh said that discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, and class were all rampant in India.[101] Based on the description I gave him of my participants, what they had said, and my own analysis of it, Surresh agreed, along with Helen and Selma, that for the two Bangladeshis and one Indian who had experienced discrimination, ethnic discrimination appeared to be the central issue, not racism.

<center>Discrimination in the Hiring Process</center>

Most of my participants were hired prior to the *2015 Anti-Discrimination Law* being enacted. As a result, they discovered a great deal of discrimination in job advertisements. Almost at the beginning of my interview with Sophie, the Cameroonian woman who worked in a hair salon, said (without promoting),

> Back when I came it really is not easy for me looking for a job. First there is nationality discrimination. Like when you pick up a paper. They write there, We don't want Africans. We don't want this nationality. Finally, I got a salon job. … […] … Life is really, really difficult for us. And even if you try to move, looking for another job. Nationality is a very big barrier for us… […] Just for example, just buy a newspaper now. Like the *Gulf News* … looking for a job, it's written, only for Filipinos, no African required. Why?! Is it that we cannot do the same job. Of course we can do the same job and everything. But. It's very clear. Even when you see an advert and call, it's not for Africans. Even if you see an advert online, preferred Russians. Preferred this nationality. I never saw a job that is only for Africans! Preferred Africans. I've never seen it. Only we have a chance, stand a chance, when they say all nationalities are welcome. They never ever…

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101. As evidence of racial discrimination he explained that Indians from the northeastern part of India were often looked down upon because of their more eastern Asian look. He also explained that class was more important than skin color, but that within each socio-economic class, individuals were then ranked on the basis of their skin color, similar to the Emirati system.

<center>127</center>

As I mentioned, most of my participants found their jobs prior to the anti-discrimination law going into effect. However, as of May 2017, the law was appearing to have little effect. Job advertisements were still specifying their preferred nationality in the local newspapers. For example, a school requests teachers who are "Pakistani" only; a company wants a receptionist who is "Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan" only; security guards who are "Pakistan/India/Nepal," and a house cleaning company is seeking "Filipinos, Sri Lankans, Nepal." On this day, there is surprisingly a cleaning company that specifically requests "Female African Nationality" (*Khaleej Times* 2017). Typically, as Sophie pointed out, Africans are rarely if ever requested, and thus, the advertisements say, "Blacks need not apply." Maintaining the focus on nationality helps to reduce the implicit racism, which would result if reference to skin color were made.

Discrimination was not only linked to job advertisements. Gabriel, the young Nigerian geology graduate, told me about being discriminated against during an interview. At the interview, Gabriel sat at a desk with a secretary. On the desk was a voice communication system that allowed for a "blind" interview, with the interviewer in one room and the interviewee in another. An unseen man interviewed Gabriel through the intercom system. At the end, the man said that Gabriel was a good person for the job and that the job was his. A moment later Gabriel met the man. Gabriel said,

> The man came in and said, huh? … the man stared at me! I was shocked. I was, huh? The man stared at me… the reaction … was so alarming. Like, huh?? I stood up. I was shocked. He called the secretary and spoke with her. ... Then he came back and asked where I was from. … He said, I had an interview with you? I said, yes sir. … just now. ... He said, ohhh. Then he left. … … That happened to me twice.

This incident is clearly driven by racial discrimination not discrimination on the basis of nationality. The interviewer entered the room presumably to meet his new hire. However, at the sight of Gabriel, he recanted. Once Gabriel's skin color was observed, he was no longer deemed an acceptable person for the job.

In October 2017, five months after I first perused the job advertisements online and in local newspapers, I explored them again. The number of ads stating preferences for nationality had dropped noticeably. Further, it had become much more common to find news articles about the anti-discrimination law and how it was being implemented, or about companies being fined for discrimination (Maceda 2017; Nasir 2017). This did not appear to be the case for low-wage workers.

In May of 2017, Gabriel shared another very recent experience of being discriminated against in the hiring process. He had gone to the site of a company that was hiring. When the general manager walked into the room, he looked at the two dozen or so job applicants who had stood at his entry. He then turned to his secretary and in a loud, angry voice demanded to know why there were applicants from a short list of countries he rattled off. Gabriel and the other applicants, whose skin color was clearly of those countries, began to walk out. Soon, the other "acceptable" applicants followed, too. The GM stopped one whose features identified him as being "acceptable" and asked where he was from. When the applicant said he was from Egypt, the GM said he could stay. The Egyptian slowly shook his head and continued to walk out. Everyone left.

The first story Gabriel shared occurred before the anti-discrimination law came into effect and the second occurred two years after. The racial discrimination that undergirds both of them is the same. Gabriel's qualification and experiences were clearly

more than sufficient in the first example, but not enough to undo the racial prejudice of the employer. In the second, Gabriel was immediately dismissed on the basis of his color. Affluent migrants with financial means and social capital are better positioned to challenge such discriminatory systems and have their stories discussed in the local media; however, low-wage workers typically cannot. According to Gabriel, the Ministry of Labor only accepts complaints if one is employed. If one is unemployed and not working for an employer, one has no right to submit a complaint. More affluent migrants can open a court case, but low-wage workers lack the funds, time, and ability to access the needed resources.[102]

Although there are news reports of discrimination being reduced, other news sources state that incidences of discriminatory hiring practices are still prevalent (Maceda 2017; Nashed 2017; Nasir 2017). It is difficult to know the actual state of affairs. The second source listed above by Nashed is from an online news source that is currently banned in the UAE. Simply because an issue is not discussed in the local media, does not mean there is no problem. Continually discussing discriminatory hiring practices in the media would be highlighting the government's failure to uphold its laws. This form of overt critique by the media is often discouraged. The result is a law that is ineffectual due to a lack of awareness and/or acknowledgment of actual discriminatory acts.

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102. In a WhatsApp message to me on January 14, 2018, Gabriel wrote: "...my day was ruin by a single call i placed through to an employer and it weakened all my body system....i saw an advert online concerning some vacancies and i put a call through and she shouted at me saying i don't want africans and even further by saying why do i have to send my cv because she doesn't want africans ...the way and manner she reacted just feeling so bad .... i am so down each i receive those messages stating we don't want africans ...i received a lot of calls telling me that ....its kills a lot of things inside of me …"

Trust in the Locals

Only three of my participants spoke specifically about Emiratis in terms of discriminatory behavior. Two were advocates for the locals, and one was not. I include their stories because I believe they help exemplify how the *kafala* system is structured to shield and benefit locals. As I mentioned in chapter three, the *kafala* creates a structural system that inserts one or more intermediaries between workers and the *kafeel*. The structural violence that the *kafala* system creates allows the role of the national to be hidden from the worker. Other foreign workers in the role of supervisors and managers are instead blamed for exploitative living and working conditions.

Michael, the thirty-two-year-old Kenyan man discussed in the previous chapter, was working for a car-cleaning company when we met. A common system in the UAE is for middle-class migrants and locals to hire someone who works for a car-cleaning company to clean the outside of their car several times a week.[103] Car-wash work commences late in the afternoon when patrons return home from work with their cars and continues through much of the night. Michael's job often placed him near to the homes of locals. He began speaking about issues of discrimination on his own. He said,

> I prefer to deal with the locals more than anyone else. I don't think they discriminate … that much. They really don't. … People under [them], who have already made it, they're the worst. […] Let me say this… the people who discriminate against you are not from this place. The locals will never discriminate against you … [The locals will ask] 'Where is this company?! The way they are working you! Where are they?! Let me call your boss!'

I asked Michael if he thought the locals would fight for his rights, and he said,

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103. The more wealthy would not do this as they would have their own domestic staff who would clean their vehicles.

Big time, big time. … Those are the people you can confide in. There are those that are easy to talk to. … You tell them something [and they will support you.]

Michael was generally quite insightful and reflective. However, this comment reveals no understanding of the broader structures that operate. That he was hoodwinked spoke much about the system. It is the *kafala* system that led Negasi, a participant with a university degree, to say, "But still, they [the locals] have more humanity than these people [i.e., his supervisors]." The *kafala* system keeps locals above the fray, where they can maintain their anonymity.

In contrast to Michael and Negasi, Brice's personal experiences revealed locals to be as racially prejudiced as any other nationality. Brice was a security guard and he often provided security at a bar. Brice said,

One day I was in a bar [on duty as a security guard]. [There was an] Arab, local, one Indian. Billiards. They were playing and a problem broke out. I'm security so I had to come in. This local guy asks, 'Who are you?' Stuff like that. I said, 'I don't know, but you should respect me, I haven't disrespected you.' … The Indian guy said, 'You can't tell me such things' …. [The other guy said,] 'This guy [referring to Brice] is nothing; this black guy is shit. Forget about black people. They're shit.'

Brice, unlike many of my participants, was in a position where his job required him to confront others of more affluence. He did not necessarily view locals as any better or any worse.

In the minutia of day-to-day life, and especially in the lives of most of my participants, Emiratis were not part of the picture. Aside from those who might work for them in the capacity of domestic work, interactions between low-wage workers and their employer/*kafeel* are rare. Again, this is intentional and a design of the *kafala* system. As a

result, in the eyes of my participants, other foreign migrants who are their supervisors or managers were responsible for the exploitative conditions they experience.

Disparate Experiences

The stories of discrimination shared here are only a small sampling of those told. I heard stories about being pushed out of jobs, taken into police custody, being called stupid and dumb, and being treated dismissively, but they were all among my African participants. Only five South Asians addressed acts of discrimination, which were on the basis of socio-economic status and religion, in addition to the national and/or ethnic discrimination discussed earlier. I found it quite noteworthy that so few of my South Asian participants had spoken about experiences in which they faced discrimination. As discussed earlier, when I told educated Indians that far more of my black African participants experienced discrimination than my South Asians, their immediate reaction was annoyance and disagreement. The answer to this discrepancy was grounded in the intersection of social networks, racist ideologies, and labor market competition, and in the similarities and differences between the Dubai context and my participants' home countries, which impacted their perceptions of their experiences.

Social networks, as I discussed in chapter three, facilitate migration, and lack of effective ones result in certain groups being put at a disadvantage. In the case of my participants, Indians (in particular) benefited from the uninterrupted networks that formed during British rule, as well as from the end of the slave trade which put a stop on the movement of sub-Saharan Africans to the Arab Gulf. The end of slavery cut off the movement of people from the sub-Saharan region and reduced the information networks between there and the Arab Gulf. Also, in order to integrate as quickly as possible, those

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Africans who remained in the UAE after manumission quickly cut off association with their home countries. In contrast, because the flow of Indians was continuous and unbroken, strong networks developed, which provided educated Indians with more connections, information, and easier access to better quality jobs. Because educated Indians could access better jobs, there were proportionally fewer in my study. In contrast, educated Africans could not access such jobs. They lacked strong networks and good connections. They also arrived to a climate wrought with racist ideology.[104]

The data from my study on participant education levels supports this. In my sample, ten individuals had university degrees and ten had not gone beyond the fifth grade; the remainder was somewhat fairly well distributed between these poles. Thus, in my sample, the levels of education were somewhat evenly distributed. In contrast, the nationalities at each of these poles were quite unevenly distributed. Of the twenty individuals who had education beyond high school, fifteen were Africans. In contrast, of the ten who had not completed primary school, nine were South Asian. Among the Africans in my study, there were far more well educated participants than less educated ones; among the South Asians participants, there were far more less educated ones.

This is where social networks, education, English proficiency, and discriminatory processes intersect. The result is the inability to compete for jobs for which one is qualified.[105] Educated Indians who had obtained higher-level jobs and had strong English

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104. Educated Filipinos fall somewhere in between. Many are able to find jobs appropriate to their education, especially in nursing, but a good number also seem unable to do so. Jean, my Filipina domestic worker, had a university education; however, she came to Dubai already in this role. Analyn had only one year of university and worked as a security guard. Again, this is similar to the Africans in my study.

105. When qualifications are not recognized and job applicants feel they have no other choice than to accept jobs for which they are over-qualified (Bridget Anderson and Ruhs 2012), it is referred to as de-skilling (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014; Menjívar 2000). De-skilling can occur when there is a high

skills had strong social networks. Educated Africans had weak ones. Lacking effective

networks and competing in a climate where racial ideology—especially targeting black

Africans—is rampant resulted in well educated Africans competing for (and working

with) the same Dh1500 ($408) or less jobs as less-educated South Asians.

Further, those with whom one is in routine contact determine, in part, experiences

of discrimination. Educated Indians with strong English skills also faced de-skilling, but

this was because they often worked with and were in competition with white

Westerners.[106] This of course explains why the educated Indians I know spoke of the

extensive discrimination they encountered. This discrimination was likely motivated by

the perceived racial and national differences held by many white Westerners. Also, as

Selma, the Indian-British woman, explained, discrimination did not stop with white

Westerners; she faced it with other South Asians, too, that is, until she proved that she

was "different" in terms of being educated, affluent, and raised with the cultural customs

of the West.[107] Less educated Indians never competed with white Westerns. They

competed with Africans, whether educated or not. The low-wage Africans in my study

had not had the opportunity to compete with or work for white Westerners. Hence, the

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number of candidates for job openings, as well as when foreign applicants are deemed racially and culturally different. In the UAE, this involves attaching lower value to educational credentials from certain countries. In general, the ranking of credentials parallels the ranking of nationalities.

106. Again, as mentioned earlier, this supports the comment that Vora (2013)made concerning middle-class Indians comparing themselves "vis-à-vis whites" (404).

107. Of the five South Asians in my study with university degrees, their more limited English skills and young age had likely put them at a disadvantage in terms of employment. They did not compete with white Westerners or black Africans. Rather, they likely competed against other South Asians and Filipinos.

discrimination Africans encountered was most often by other low-wage migrants from the Global South.

The context in which my interviews with participants took place would also have played an important role in determining whether participants spoke of discrimination or not. Being able to interview one-on-one or in English was clearly an advantage. It was quite easy for me to know when my African participants were holding back because they did not want to say something they thought might be offensive. Noticing this, I could easily reduce the barriers and encourage them to speak freely. With the South Asian participants, I could not do this. Because I required an interpreter, it was more difficult for me to sense when information was being withheld. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the low-wage South Asians in my study typically did not encounter Westerners in their daily life. Their co-workers and supervisors were other South Asians or (non-Gulf) Arabs whose social class standing would often not have been much different. As a result, there is a strong possibility that in their day-to-day lives racial or even class discrimination was less frequently encountered.

Conclusion

Experiences of discrimination are a direct result of the inequality and "violence" built into the structures that conditioned the experiences of my participants. There are several ways in which this chapter contributes to substantive debates on discrimination. Unlike previous research in the UAE (or elsewhere), this chapter has provided a critical analysis of the processes involved in conflating race, ethnicity, and nationality. It has shown how seemingly innocuous references to "nationality" can be driven by a desire to

hide racial prejudices, while at the same time, conflating all as "racism" can reflect a simplistic analysis of the contributing factors.

Discrimination in the UAE today typically uses the discourse of "nationality" when differentiating between bodies. This hierarchical segmentation is the result of past historical processes. This chapter interrogated these strands of the past in order to reveal how, in the present, they have influenced attitudes toward nation, ethnicity, and race, resulting in segregated bodies and delimited options. Further, by having a sample composed of such diverse nationalities, knowledge regarding the unequal processes of discrimination among low-wage workers was furthered. The impact of discriminatory processes on my participants' experiences was seen in its most arduous forms during their search for jobs, a process that pre-determined their treatment and conditions, which they would likely endure for the remainder of their sojourn. The next chapter looks specifically at the role of gender in relationship to "nationality" and within the context of other social identities, and how it conditioned experiences unique to women.

CHAPTER 6

VULNERABILITY: LIFE IN DUBAI

GENDER

Why should my maid be allowed to go where she wants when I am
not?![108]

Emirati university student from a conservative family

Our social identities are multi-faceted and mutually constituted in that they cannot

be understood in isolation from one another, or apart from their spatial and temporal

locations (Collins 1998). This is not just in terms of current events and the spaces within

which we move, but includes and builds upon the past, as was discussed in the last

chapter. The past impacts the present which impacts and is impacted by the various

dimensions of social life. In this chapter, the same discriminatory factors discussed in the

last chapter carry over; however, here, attention shifts to women and the precarity of their

lives. Specific attention is given to the experiences of the women in my study because

their day-to-day experiences reveal issues and events that were distinctly different from

those encountered by men. The goal in this section is to maintain the use of an

intersectional lens that helps the reader to see how their experiences are co-constitutive.

If, as Glenn (2004) writes, "gender is racialized and race is gendered" (7) then

experiences resulting from labor migration are certainly both gendered and racialized, as

well as sexualized, classed, and inferiorized. Thus, while this section focuses on how the

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108. A student asked this question during a class I was teaching in approximately 2007. The
wording was likely a bit different, but the sentiment the same. We had been discussing domestic workers. I
very specifically note that she is from a conservative family. She and her family are not representative of
all, or even of most, Emirati families.

women in my study were gendered, it is mindful, too, of the many other inescapable variables that shaped their experiences.

In this chapter, we explore the roots of gendered migration and the concept of forced migration and its relevance to the seventeen women in my study.[109] It then introduces the International Labor Organization's (ILO) indicators of forced labor and applies them to the experiences of two women who were domestic workers. Using the ILO indicators provides a powerful external point of reference for gauging the level of structural vulnerability experienced by my participants. Finally, I show that while the indicators are revealing, they do not give the full picture. They do not always capture the precarity experienced by low-wage workers.

Roots of Gendered Migration

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a large increase in the number of women migrating, resulting in numbers comparable to men (Donato et al. 2006). This has led to migration being seen as a much more gendered occurrence than previously thought; thus, states Donato et al. (2006), simply comparing men and women is too limited in what it tells about "gender as a way of structuring power" (6). A gendered perspective of migration means that "the participants of globalization . . . are not generic human beings, but gendered individuals who are situated within social, political, and economic power relations and processes" (Freeman 2001 as cited in Trask 2014, 45). The researcher, working from a gendered perspective, aims to examine all aspects of migration through a

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109. Of the seventeen, nine were South Asian (three Nepalese, four Pakistani, and two Sri Lankan), six were African (two Cameroonian, one Ethiopian, two Kenyan, and one Nigerian), and two were Filipina.

gendered lens in order to understand how gender operates in daily life and how it is present structurally within institutions (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000).

Gendered hierarchies have global roots. Capitalism, globalization, and neoliberalism work through structural and everyday violence to reinforce the inequalities found in gender, poverty, development, and human rights. In poor countries, they push women to migrate while in rich countries they pull women from the poor countries (Parreñas 2008). These processes create gendered hierarchies, as well as racial and social hierarchies, which lead to unequal hierarchical relationships among the women (Parreñas 2008). Women, too, are gendered as feminine in their relegation to maternal roles. The devalorized work they perform (Sassen 1996) assists in the accumulation of wealth for dominant social groups, and growing inequality for migrant women and their families (Beneria 2009; Parreñas 2010). Understanding the experiences of migrant women requires understanding how they have been culturally constructed and how these constructions are both contextually and relationally dependent (Mayeda 2007).[110]

A gendered analysis is important because without it there is no recognition of the gendered distribution of labor and the discrimination that determines it. The distribution is seen in the narrow range of employment opportunities available to low-wage migrant women. The occupations available to the women in my study included domestic work (including work as a nanny),[111] hairstylist (trained and untrained), massage therapist, bus

110. Interestingly, Rosewarne (2012) writes that the systemic structural inequalities and the labor market disadvantages that frame the work that migrant women perform is invariably temporary due in part to the required and accepted condition of temporariness that institutionalizes the subordination of women. In the UAE—a context in which all low-wage work for both genders is temporary—it seems much more difficult to contend that temporary work is gendered.

111. Working as a nanny is usually seen as more respectable than cleaning, so regardless of whether their job focuses more on cleaning, employees (and some employers) prefer to use the term nanny.

nanny (i.e., school bus attendant), and commercial building cleaner. There was one

woman who was a security guard, but for the most part, this job typically falls within the

male domain.[112] It is deemed inappropriate for women. Fewer opportunities mean that

women often have higher competition for those jobs that are available (Bonacich,

Alimahomed, and Wilson 2008). As well, many of the occupations—such as in small hair

salons, massage salons, and especially domestic work—are in more isolated

environments, and this is central to why many of the women in my study were made

vulnerable. The conditions they faced were a result of the structural violence that framed

their experiences; these conditions illustrate many of the factors that are indicative of

forced labor and trafficking. Thus, examining forced labor and its parameters can provide

a point of reference for better understanding their experiences.

Forced Labor

In discussions about trafficking, it is often presumed that the individual has been

forcibly transferred against her or his will from their home country to a destination

country. This notion of a "trafficked" person usually conjures up images of women being

taken against their will to a destination country for commercial sexual exploitation. In

fact, it encompasses far more than that. Forced labor is an umbrella term that includes

force, fraud, or coercion in relation to sex *or* labor. Forced labor is also referred to as

"labor trafficking" and includes the use of psychological coercion, abuse of the legal

process, or deception to compel someone to work (United States 2016). This broader

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Thus, I will refer to nannies and house cleaners as domestic workers. In addition, many employers use the term "maid," and African women will refer to themselves as "house girl." I will generally use the term domestic worker, but will employ "maid" or "house girl" when appropriate.

112. Exceptions to this would be, for example, a university for women. Such settings do not exclude men, but do include women.

conceptualization of trafficking—which is in line with the ILO's and US's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report[113]—is frequently discussed in migrant research in the Arab Gulf (A. Gardner 2012; Fernandez 2013; Mahdavi 2016; Parreñas 2015; Renkiewicz 2016).[114]

<center>ILO Indicators of Forced Labor</center>

The ILO states that the two key features of forced labor are that it is "performed involuntarily and under the menace of any penalty." Again, this does not mean that they are physically forced against their will to leave their home country; rather, it means that one is induced with *false promises* to accept the job, and that mechanisms have been used to coerce one to do the work (ILO 2016).[115] The eleven indicators developed by the ILO can be useful to consider when reflecting on the experiences of my participants.[116] The eleven ILO indicators are:

1. Abuse of vulnerability[117]

2. Intimidation and threats

3. Withholding wages

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113. The TIP report gives five different types of trafficking, one of which is Forced Labor. The report and definition of force labor can be found here: https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2017/271112.htm

114. I would also add that even in regards to trafficking for sex work, it is presumed that this occurs against the will of the women involved. Again, this is often not the cause. Women are forced to migrate for sex work not by some external trafficker; rather, it is poverty that forces them.

115. The full definition of forced labor as defined by the ILO Forced labour Convention 1930 (No. 29) is "All work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily" (Art. 2 ILO C. 29). https://www.immigration.gov.tw/public/Data/6319464571.pdf

116. The ILO indicators for forced labor can be found here: https://www.immigration.gov.tw/public/Data/6319464571.pdf

117. This indicator refers to the dependency that results when a low-wage worker does not know, for example, the local language or the local laws. This lack of knowledge makes the individual vulnerable, and the employer uses this vulnerability to his or her advantage.

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4. Excessive overtime

5. Restriction of movement

6. Physical and sexual violence

7. Retention of identity documents

8. Abusive working and living conditions

9. Deception

10. Debt bondage

11. Isolation

Note that the indicators focus on the abuse, not the source of the abuse. Those who operationalize these factors could be anyone, the recruiter, the employer and/or *kafeel,* supervisor, or the government. This is why many scholars argue that the *kafala* system is structurally violent and must be ended. It places too much power into the hands of the *kafeel* and those who work for him or her. An intersectional analysis can reveal how institutional structures—like the *kafala* system—work to advantage some groups at the expense of others, and reveal the impact of these structures on the lives of those occupying marginalized positions (Dill and Zambrana 2009; Yuval-Davis 2006).

The ILO indicators act as a form of "clue" that forced labor may exist; the ILO states that "the presence of *a single indicator* in a given situation may in some cases imply the existence of forced labour" or in other cases it may require more indicators (SAP-FL 2012, 3; emphasis added). My aim in presenting the ILO definition of forced labor and indicators is not to formally establish whether or not my participants have been the "victims" of forced labor. Rather, it is to provide a broader perspective by situating their experiences within a framework that has been determined by recognizable and

known entities. This provides a point of reference from which to examine their experiences, so as to better understand them in regards of their severity and extent. At the same time, I also show how the indicators have their limitations in revealing a complete picture of migration and the precarities one can encounter.

Domestic Work

The low-wage jobs into which women from the Global South are funneled are fundamentally different from those men are funneled into. The individualized abuses that a woman can face while isolated in a home are qualitatively different from those experienced by, for example, a construction worker who lives and works in a well-populated collective environment. As discussed earlier, gender is socially constructed. It is because of how the lives of women have been constructed that there are far more women performing domestic labor. It is also the reason why far more women are confined to their workplace and sexually violated. Immigration policies reinforce these constructions and subsequently work to disadvantage low-wage migrant women from the Global South, putting them into jobs that de-valorize, isolate, and make them vulnerable (Altman and Pannell 2012; Sassen 1996).

Embedded in the system of domestic work is a hierarchical relationship between the affluent expat employer and her maid from the Global South. The two are unified by the need for each other and divided by their roles (Parreñas 2008). Differing social dimensions articulate the gap in the divide and are represented by those who perform the menial labor within the private home. Parreñas (2008) contends that it was during colonial rule in the Philippines that race and class became fused as indicators of proper womanhood, virtue, and morality, reflected in white women. The racial hierarchical

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organization of the labor system has global capitalism at the root of this hierarchical system that puts those who are deemed superior in roles of privilege and allows for the exploitation of those deemed inferior (Bonacich, Alimahomed, and Wilson 2008).

It is through economic liberalization that the perpetuation of inequalities has led to the commoditization of the migrant for domestic work and the need to perceive her as "other" (Kilkey, Perrons, and Plomien 2013; Farris 2012). This is a process. It is quite similar to the general process of commodification, but relies on a slightly different discourse (Lee and Pratt 2013). Liberal economic policies bring an increase in consumerism and the lifestyles that are related to this consumption. In order to obtain that lifestyle, there need to be certain groups whose job it is to serve this lifestyle. This requires relegating those from certain groups into the role of minion. To be able to do that, one must find cause to differentiate from them, creating an "us" and a "them," creating an outsider, creating an "other." "Otherness" speaks of subordination and exclusion (Mayeda 2007). It requires maintaining the difference that is necessary to seeing the "other" as alien, temporary, a carrier of disease, as desperate (Aguilar 1999). This allows the dominant group to atomize, isolate, and exclude without harming their conscience (Aguilar 1999). Gender, race, national origin, ethnicity, and social economic position are all signifiers that justify to the dominant group the societal position of those who serve. Hence, the liberal economy and the rise in needed domestic work are intimately linked (Kilkey 2013). Their link explains why domestic workers are perceived as commodities that are of economic use and why the occupation is one of the most precarious (Altman and Pannell 2012; Mahler 1995; Parreñas 2015; I. M. Young 1990).

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ILO Indicators & the Domestic Workers in my Study

The ILO indicators can be applied to all of my participants, regardless of the occupations or gender; however, here I focus on women and domestic work.[118] This line of work is the most readily available occupation for migrant women in Dubai, especially for those earning Dh1500 (US$408) or less a month. It is possible to find men working inside the home, but it is less common. Thus, laws may not be gendered, raced, classed, or based on nationality, nor written in gender-, race-, and nationality-neutral language. However, the occupation is "naturally" determined by gender, race, and nationality through social and cultural systems that segregate certain groups of women into certain lines of work. Viewed through an intersectional lens, we begin to see how the various dimensions of social life are mutually constituted.

Among my participants, six of the women were domestic workers when I met them, but a total of ten had at some point been engaged in this work. One, Jasweer, had not been a domestic worker for a quite a long time. Two of the former ten, Kendra and Danjua, had absconded from their employers prior to when I met them. Two, Maya and Sunita, would be considered indentured labor because either all of their pay or the majority of it was being withheld to pay back the recruiter and associated fees. Two of the ten, Lisha and Jilan, seemed to have acceptable jobs. By this I mean that they appeared to have been treated reasonably well and their conditions were reasonably good. And Jean, a fifty-year-old Filipina woman, appeared to love her job. In table 1, I have

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118. A study by Anderson and Rogaly (2005) applies a simplified adaptation of the ILO indicators. The aim of their study was to gain a better understanding of forced labor in the UK and how immigration impacted vulnerability. Their sample of forty-six men and women included cleaners, nurses, construction workers, home care workers, agricultural workers, and hotel workers, as well as those with regular and irregular status.

listed the seven women who were either working as domestic workers during my fieldwork, or had recently. I have also included two other women who were not part of my sample of forty-four. I did not include them as part of the forty-four because they were locked inside of their employers' apartments, and, because of this, I could not carry out full interviews. Yet, while I did not feel I should include them as part of the forty-four sample, what I did learn is relevant to this discussion.

Among the nine women listed in table 1 (see next page), there are an average of six forced labor indicators per woman. That is more than half of the indicators. Jean, the Filipina woman, had experienced none, and Sunita, a twenty-eight-year-old Nepalese woman, had experienced all eleven.[119] Noteworthy are the differences in salary shown in the bottom row of the table and their relationship to the number of indicators given. There is a correlation between the conditions of work and the amount one is paid. While remunerations are not always associated with work conditions, in this case they are. The better the pay, the better one is treated.

Participant Stories of Domestic Work

Many of the stories shared by the women who are listed in this table would aptly illustrate the challenges of being a woman working in low-wage jobs in Dubai. However, to illustrate and draw connections between the ILO indicators and the experiences of my participants, I focus on just two women who performed domestic work and who encountered intense hardship as a result of their employers and recruitment agents. I then contrast this to another woman whose hardships are not caught by any of the indicators.

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119. The women in the study did not speak specifically to these indicators. I determined them based on their descriptions of their experiences.

Table 1. Experiences of forced labor among domestic workers[120]

ILO Indicators	Saida[1]	Eunice[1]	Maya	Lisha	Sunita	Jilan	Kendra[2]	Danjua[2]	Jean[3]
1. Abuse of vulnerability	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
2. Intimidation & threats	Yes	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
3. Withholding wages	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
4. Excessive overtime	?	?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
5. Restriction of movement	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
6. Physical & sexual violence	No	Yes	N	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
7. Retention of identity documents	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	No
8. Abusive working & living conditions[121]	Yes	Yes	Yes	No[122]	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
9. Deception	Yes	?	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
10. Debt bondage	?	?	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
11. Isolation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Y/N	Yes	Y	No
Total Indicators	**7**	**6**	**9**	**4**	**11**	**2**	**9**	**6**	**0**
Mobility restricted	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	No
Salary	?	?	600	1600	600	1500	1000	800	3500

? = I am uncertain.

[1] Not part of my sample of forty-four. I was not able to meet the women in person.

[2] Escaped/absconded from their employers prior to meeting me.

[3] Those with higher salaries were included in the study as a point of contrast.

120. Those of my participants who performed domestic work for only a week or two or who were employed as such years prior to the interview were *not included* in this table.

121. According to UAE law, domestic works must be provided with adequate sleeping conditions.

122. According to UAE law, domestic works must be provided with adequate sleeping conditions.

The aim is to show the usefulness of the indicators, as well as the need to look beyond them.

<div align="center">Saida</div>

Saida was a Kenyan woman with a third grade education who was employed as a domestic worker. Saida was confined to the home of her employer. As a result, I never met Saida in person. I have included her story because it provides a good example of how an employer can isolate her employee, and how immigration policy, which is meant to protect foreign workers, can fail to do so. Tasha, another Kenyan domestic worker who was not in my study, introduced Saida to me. What I learned about Saida came from a telephone call involving Tasha, Saida, and me. Saida was able to receive calls; however, she was unable to make them because she had no credit on her phone.[123]

Saida's employer was Jordanian and lived on the second floor of an apartment building with her twenty-six-year-old daughter. She was paid 1000Dh ($267) a month. Saida slept on the employer's bedroom floor next to her bed. She and her daughter constantly shouted at Saida, and when they went to work, Saida was locked within their second-story apartment. If an emergency occurred, Saida had no way to call for an ambulance or the police. She had been communicating with Tasha through WhatsApp.[124] Saida wanted to be freed, and to return to Kenya.

Saida's circumstances are not that unusual. What makes her story interesting— and sheds light on the challenges domestic workers face and on the institutions that fail

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123. Having little to no phone credit available is typical among low-wage workers. They can often only afford to buy a small amount of credit at a time and it is quickly used up.

124. There are very inexpensive data packages that allow for WhatsApp and Facebook access, but do not otherwise provide Internet service.

them—was my visit to Immigration[125] and to the Kenyan Embassy on her behalf. At

Immigration there is a specific room for issues related to "Domestic Workers." When our

number was called, we went in. There were two officials present. Judging from the

traditional *abaya* (black cloak) and *shayla* (black headscarf) they wore, I presumed they

were both Emirati women. There were others in the room having a heated discussion. We

spoke with the official who was not engaged. I told her that we were there on Saida's

account. I explained to the Emirati official that Saida was being verbally abused, forced

to sleep on the floor, and locked in the apartment.

Retaining Passport: "We Have to Take It"

When I mentioned the employer had taken Saida's passport, the Immigration

official said that retaining the passport "was not a problem, we have to [take it]." The

"we" to whom she was referring were women, like herself, who had to employ domestic

workers. Clearly, if this is what government officials believe, and there is no concern by

officials for upholding the law, then implementation of those laws will be problematic.[126]

In September 2017, the UAE passed the "Domestic Labour Law."[127] One of the

entitlements stated in the laws is that employees are to be in possession of their passport

and other identification papers. Our discussion with the official was revealing. It was

already well-known that no one abided by the passport law, which had been put into

125. Immigration is formally named The General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs; however, it is referred to by most as Immigration.

126. Interestingly, Irianto and Truong (2014) note when domestic workers abscond (permanently leave their place of work), employers hand over the absconded employees' passports to the Immigration Office. Employers are not questioned about why they are in possession of the passport, even though there is a law prohibiting employers from doing this. Our visit to immigration confirmed this.

127. Information regarding this law can be found here: https://government.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/workers-safety-and-protection#passing-the-domestic-labour-law

effect as far back as 2003. However, I did not expect a government official to state quite so blatantly and without qualm that retaining passports was necessary.

Retaining a domestic worker's passport is not confined to the local population, but it is something that many affluent migrants also do, including white Western migrants. In the previous chapter, I referred to a small study I had carried out on Western white women in Dubai who work outside of the home and employ domestic workers from the Global South. It is quite common in the UAE for more affluent women who work full time to employ full-time, live-in domestic help to both clean and take care of their children. For many, nannies are needed simply as after-school daycare and hiring fulltime live-in help is often no more expensive than part-time help. For a Western woman who works full-time and who has children, *not* having a live-in domestic worker would be an exception.

One of the participants in the small study I had previously carried out[128] for my course was an American woman who taught at a local university. MK said she knew that retaining a passport was illegal, but that she chose to not "abide by that law." She said,

> I'm scared about how much freedom she has with [my daughter] . . .
> Also, there's lots of valuables laying around and god forbid she doesn't
> steal something, but maybe a friend does. What if she gets scared and
> runs. . . . I mean I don't know, anything can happen, you know, I just, it's
> just in my mind, you know? But . . . but having said that, you know, when
> we're out of the country or wherever, I give her the passport back, you
> know, I suppose she could easily steal everything in the house. But I give
> it back because god forbid her mother dies or something and she can't
> leave the country.

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128. In the previous chapter, I refer to this small study to talk about the way in which employers can use nationality to hide racial prejudices.

MK is clearly conflicted in her thinking. Her response seems to be more emotional than rational as she herself acknowledges when her actions and motives contradict each other. Reasons for withholding passports are usually a bit different from hers. A much more common reason given is that employer had paid too much to simply have the maid abscond. This is in reference to the fees which must be paid to sponsor[129] a domestic work. Employers are expected to cover these costs.[130] In terms of the ILO indicators, MK's infringement on her domestic workers rights was fairly mild. This, I presume, would not be considered "forced labor." Of the eleven indicators, this was the only one that any of the employers in this earlier study abused.

It is important to note that domestic workers are not the only ones to have their passports retained. Low-wage migrant men will often have their passport taken by their employer, too. For both, the purpose of retaining their passport is to help deter them from absconding in pursuit of a better paying job

Forced Confinement: "She Can Jump out the Window"

Once I realized that the Immigration officials would not ask for Tasha's or my personal identification, I began to challenge the official's responses. After a few minutes of debating back-and-forth about why telephoning or simply leaving the apartment were not possible, the official said with exasperation, "She can jump out the window!" My visit to Immigration with Tasha was enlightening; it showed there was no clear system in

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129. Foreigners are allowed to sponsor domestic workers (house staff) as long as their salary is 6000Dh a month or more.

130. According to a local newspaper, the visa costs about 5000Dh and a refundable deposit anywhere between 3000Dh and 10,000Dh is required by the sending country as a form of insurance should the individual be hurt or not paid. The sponsor much also cover health insurance, R/T airfare, basic living expenses, and a recruitment agency fee which often range between 5000Dh and 15,000Dh (Musa 2017). Some employers (illegally) force their employees to pay these fees.

place to deal with domestic workers who were isolated in their workplace, that Immigration officials were not always concerned with upholding the laws, and that there is little concern for the mental or physical well-being of the domestic worker (i.e., jumping from a window).

In the UAE, the issue of mobility—the freedom to come and go from the employer's home on one's own—is widely discussed in the literature, most often in regards to migrant domestic workers (Fernandez 2013; Fleury 2016; A. M. Gardner 2010b; Kodoth 2016; Mahdavi 2016; Irianto and Truong 2014). In addition to locked doors, confinement can be the result of threats that intimidate the employee. Such threats include telling the domestic worker that if she's caught on the streets alone, the police will arrest her or that some type of harm might come to her. These threats work to intimidate if the worker has little knowledge of UAE laws and speaks little English or Arabic.[131] The use of such threats is gendered. Employers do not try to scare men into thinking they will be arrested and sent to jail if found wandering on the streets. Men may feel confined because of the location of their accommodation, but they are never forcibly confined. Issues of physical isolation are discussed in depth in the next chapter.

For most Westerners, forced confinement would be one of the more egregious abuses. However, in the UAE, it is not. Isolation and confinement of domestic workers are not mentioned in law. There is, I believe, an important reason for this. If there were a

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131. Lisha, another domestic worker in my study, had only been in the country a few months when I met her. Her employers had been negligent in taking care of the formalities of sponsorship, which must be done for Lisha to be working legally. She said that they had told her that she could get arrested since she did not have the proper papers. At the end of her interview, I told her that she would not be in trouble if stopped by the police; however, her employers would be. I suggested that she let her employers know that she knew this. Soon after she WhatsApp-ed to tell me it worked. She now had a proper visa and identity card. While this is deception, it is not the deception which the ILO indicators are referring to. The ILO focus is on the false promises that are given about a job while still in their home country.

law stating that "maids" must be free to leave the workplace, i.e., the employer's home, then Emirati women would have to be granted the same entitlement. The UAE is quite progressive and women have many rights. There is absolutely no comparison between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, an issue that I am still asked about by Americans in the US. Yet, even though the country is quite liberal, it is still a patriarchal society and the government does its best not to interfere in family matters. As a result, it is not uncommon in quite conservative families to limit the mobility of one's daughters, meaning that a male family member must accompany them if they wish to go, for example, to a shopping mall. A student in one of my classes in Dubai stopped short our discussion about maids and the problem of confinement when she said, "Why should my maid be allowed to go where she wants when I'm not?" And that is the crux of the problem. An Emirati's maid cannot be given entitlements which an Emirati citizen is denied.

This is where the customs of the host country which are restrictive to citizens, too, present a bit of a conundrum (Aguilar Jr. 1999). Women—employer and employee—are equal in their oppression by neoliberalism, state policy, and male patriarchy, but unequal in their hierarchical relationship to each other, having the dual effect of uniting and dividing (Parreñas 2008). This duality impacts and aggravates the gulf between those who serve and those who are served (Sassen 1996), resulting in women who exploit other women.

Prior to leaving Immigration, the official told us whom we could contact at the Kenyan Consulate. A couple of days later, Tasha and I went to the consulate and were able to submit a report on behalf of Saida. Several days later, Saida's employer was

called and instructed to bring Saida to Immigration. The good news was that Saida was sent back to her home country as she had wanted. The bad news was that she was given a six-month employment ban.[132] This is bad because it is likely that Saida would want or need to return to Dubai for the same reason she had come in the first place—to earn money—though hopefully she would return much wiser. The additional bad news (which I learned a couple of weeks after this) was that the Kenyan Consulate official with whom Tasha and I had spoken, had begun making unofficial, unsolicited calls to Tasha.

Saida's experiences encompassed numerous ILO Indicators. No one physically forced Saida to go to the UAE; she had gone of her own free will. However, the conditions to which she was subjected in her job were clearly indicative of forced labor. I share one other domestic worker story. While Saida had "scored" a seven based on the eleven ILO indicators for forced labor, Sunita scored one hundred percent.

Sunita

Sunita was a twenty-eight-year-old Nepali woman from Nepal. When I met her, she was employed as a live-in domestic worker for a middle-class Indian family[133] who resided in an apartment complex. She had not wanted to come to Dubai, but following a

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132. As discussed in chapter four, employers can request that employees receive a temporary employment ban. It is often done so as to dissuade employees from quitting for the purpose of finding another job.

133. To remind the reader, if the individual or family is not identified as a local, national, or Emirati, then it should be presumed that they are foreign migrants. As migrants, they may have arrived three months prior or thirty years prior, or they may have even been born in the UAE. Regardless, they are still "temporary" foreigners, or "permanently temporary" as other scholars have written.

major earthquake in Nepal in 2015[134], she felt she had no choice. Her family needed the

financial help. Translating for Sunita, my interpreter Tarun said,

> Because of lack of money she couldn't continue her studies. … She didn't
> want to come to Dubai to work … but the massive earthquake last year.
> She lost everything. That is why she came to Dubai to work. […] She is
> working from 4 am to like twelve o'clock at night. … The agent said in
> Nepal you will earn good money, and now she is earning less, 600 a
> month. […]They [the employer] divide the money: half to agent [too pay
> her debt] and half to her [Saida]. … She sends all the money home. …
> And every 3 months she is allowed to go outside [one day, every three
> months] from 1 pm to 9 pm. [… Otherwise,] she is not allowed to leave
> the apartment.

Sunita came from an extremely poor family, and the agent she met in Nepal told

her she would "earn good money" and work in a "very good place" (9: deception).[135] To

come, she had to borrow money from the recruiter to pay for his service and the fees

associated with migration. Her employers in Dubai paid her Dh600 (US$163) a month,

half of which was retained by the employer (3: withholding wages) to pay the recruiter

(10: debt bondage). It is likely that part of the money that was being withheld from Sunita

was also to cover her visa and flight, expenses her employers—by law—are supposed to

cover. She worked from about four in the morning[136] until eleven or twelve at night (4:

excessive overtime), only received one day off every one to three months, and was unable

to use the phone in the apartment which her employers kept locked (11: isolation).

Limited freedom is intentional. It prevents employees from developing friendships and

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134. This earthquake had a magnitude of 7.8. Approximately 9,000 people were killed, and 22,000 injured.

135. The number in parenthesis refers to the eleven ILO indicators.

136. Domestic workers often begin work at extremely early hours of the morning. This is often due to children needing to be dressed, fed, and ready for school buses that begin their rounds very early in the morning. Her employers' children caught their bus at five am.

confidants with whom they might share information about their abusive conditions. These multiple restrictions forced Sunita to be dependent on her employers and, thus, to be more susceptible to vulnerability (1: abuse of vulnerability). When her employers went to work, they also locked her in the apartment (5: restriction of movement) and kept her passport (7: retention of identity documents).

I asked Sunita how often she spoke to her family and if she was honest to her family about her experience here. Again, translating, Tarun said,

> Sometimes she talks on the phone. … [She can talk to them] once in fifteen days or maybe once in a month. … They turn off the network while they are gone. […] Sometimes they [the employers] treat very bad. That kind of treatment she hides from her father. … She is not sharing the bad things to father or mother.

Wanting to know more about her "very bad" treatment, I returned to it again later in the interview. I asked Sunita what was most stressful about her job, Tarun translated, "They are torturing her each and every works [day]. … They are not letting her to eat at time … not giving enough food … she has separate food from the family." I asked if there were any other ways that they tortured her. Sunita became very quiet, and stared out the car window in front of her. After waiting briefly, I was about to move on when she spoke. Tarun translated, "sexual harassment." I asked if the man touched her inappropriately. "Yes, he is doing everything. … He is coming home at daytime [once a week and the wife does not know. …] He threatens her, if she is not going to do such things."

Sunita was forced to have sex with her employer (6: sexual violence), and he used threats to keep her from telling anyone (2: intimidation and threats). These were the "very bad" things she withheld from her family. I asked if she had a religion. Tarun translated,

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"No, she doesn't believe in religion now." One can hardly refute that Sunita was ill-treated and abused. However, the ILO indicators are useful because they provide a widely recognized external measure for comparing and gauging the severity of her ill-treatment.

Zero Indicators

The ILO indicators present some of the factors that can create vulnerability in the lives of low-wage migrant workers. Saida and Sunita's stories clearly exhibit this. The indicators are not, however, the complete story. They reveal the role that recruiters and employers play in creating vulnerability. However, many other aspects of the migration process are not captured. Other occupations can allow for much more independence and mobility, and thus there are many other avenues through which a woman can be exploited. The final story I present demonstrates some of these ways.

Mercy

Mercy was a thirty-two-year-old Nigerian woman trained in cosmetology. While in Dubai, she first worked while on a visit visa in a massage spa. It expired and she left the UAE and returned on a second visit visa, which was later converted to an employment visa after she found a job waitressing. Finally, when I met Mercy, she was on a second employment visa and working at a hair salon. In these various settings, she encountered minimal to no abuse by recruiters or employers. Yet, she had experienced extensive hardship and vulnerability due to UAE policies and due to her women co-workers and male compatriots.

In Dubai, Mercy never worked with other Africans. Rather, her co-workers were Filipina, Pakistani, and Indian. At the restaurant where she had found employment and

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gotten her first employment visa, Mercy contends that her co-workers conspired against

her to run her off. Mercy said,

> I think what happened was that… It is the Filipinos… because I am the
> only African. … Yeah, the Filipinos… You know... Where they are....they
> don't want another person…. They have to keep on fighting you... until
> they get rid of you… They keep complaining, keep saying things at my
> back, and it's not true.

Soon after Mercy lost this job, she ran out of savings. She had difficulty finding another

job, and no money to support herself. Someone she knew connected her with a

compatriot who had an apartment with extra space. She had understood that the Nigerian

man who rented the apartment was living there with his fiancé. Mercy's plan was to stay

there only briefly—until she was able to find another job. Upon arriving at the man's

apartment, she discovered no fiancé. She soon discovered that the man believed Mercy

should repay his kindness with sex. She said,

> So, the first night and second night, he did not disturb me. The third night,
> he kept disturbing me. That, ah, you know, I keep you in my room, this,
> this, this, and you're not paying because you don't have money, okay, for
> that reason, I want to have sex with you. I said what?! I said, I'm sorry, but
> no. He said, yes! Are you a virgin? I said, no, I am not a virgin but I don't
> want to do anything with you. He said, okay, if you don't want, you have to
> look for another place to stay, because I don't help people like you. He
> said, What is this?! Are you a baby?! You don't know this?! You don't
> know! I said, I'm sorry. I'm not that kind of person. He wanted to rape me,
> but thank God I'm strong. … I left that place. I kept on going from one
> place to another… Sometimes I slept outside of the metro… I can never
> allow… I will sleep outside…

Mercy's loss of her waitressing job due to what she perceived to be the racist

attitudes of her co-workers resulted in her being without money, destitute, and forced to

seek accommodation with a strange man, which put her in the precarious position of

potentially being raped. Why did the Nigerian man believe that he was entitled to expect

sex as compensation for the free accommodation she was receiving? Was this simply sexist entitlement driven by gendered sexist attitudes? Was it the result of a neoliberal environment in which all labor and most interactions are commodified and some form of "payment" expected? Was it the result of the dehumanization that can come when the other is perceived as being socially inferior or desperate? Or, was it her compatriot's engrained stereotypes of Nigerian women coming to Dubai to work in the sex industry—and becoming commodities—that resulted in him feeling entitled? And, if it is this, was this stereotype the result of internalized racism and, as Bourdieu writes, the misrecognition of what is legitimate, resulting in acceptance of this violence by the dominated? And if so, did this also include an internalized prejudice against his own compatriots?[137] Was this similar to the assumptions that the Kenyan Consulate official made in regards to Tasha? I do not have the answer.

There are times when one of Mercy's employers could have extended themselves and done more for Mercy by, for example, providing financial assistance in the form of a loan, more proactively dealing with co-worker infighting, and more critically responding to complaints employees made about Mercy. However, she suffered no ill-treatment from them in the forms described by the ILO indicators. Rather, other forces drove Mercy's vulnerability. The Nigerian man deceived Mercy by leading her to think she could stay in his apartment with no strings attached. He also threatened her in his attempts to sexually violate her. Further, UAE policies required Mercy to exit the UAE in order to switch her

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137. Nationality-based discrimination against one's own country was not unique to this situation. On other occasions, participants spoke about their distain for fellow nationals.

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visit visa to a work visa. This resulted in her acquiring greater debt and hardship as she had to borrow money to do so.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the experiences of my women participants in relation to the ILO indicators of forced labor. These indicators provide an internationally determined point of reference for examining the conditions and treatment of these women, an approach not previously taken with migrant workers in the Arab Gulf. These indicators could also be applied to the men in my study. They, too, experienced all but two of the indicators: physical and sexual violence, and physical isolation.[138] It is these two indicators that reveal the gendered impact of structural violence which exacerbated the women's structural vulnerability. In examining the experiences of my participants, the role that gender played in intensifying their vulnerability resulted in experiences that were distinctly different from the men in my study. Mercy and Sunita's experiences were not unique. Four other women—one-third of my women participants in all—encountered sexual violation or harassment.

This chapter also offers, through example, a more in-depth understanding of why laws that were designed to protect migrant workers often fail. While this can be due to the employers, recruiters, or the government, this chapter provided evidence of the role played by government officials. The need to rectify this is discussed in the conclusion.

This and the proceeding chapters have focused on societal divisions based on nationality, race, and ethnicity. The following chapter explores spatial divisions which

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138. Yet, it should be noted that although the men in my study did not experience enforced physical isolation, they did experience isolation in other forms. (This is discussed in chapter eight.)

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are mostly driven by socio-economic status. These forms of segregation are found in the spaces that privilege and exclude, and are determined by socio-economic status.

CHAPTER 7

BORDERS, BOUNDARIES, & ZONES OF MARGINALIZATION

As I parked my car, I noticed a police car stopped in front of the villa. The term "villa" is used loosely here. This building, like many in Deira, was an old, indistinguishable one-story villa that had been subdivided into multiple small rooms housing low-wage migrant workers who rented bed space. The room I was going to was the current accommodation for two Pakistani women whom I had met and interviewed early in my study. This about the seventh or eighth room they had lived in since I had met them. We had remained friends and would occasionally visit, and each time I needed to locate their new residence.

I walked past the police officers and through the gates into the villa. The room where Wafa and her mother Jasweer were currently renting bed space was small and windowless. It was the middle of the summer and the A/C was humming, going off occasionally due to the power cutting out. Soon after arriving, a CID officer—a police detective in street clothes—hammered on the door and barged in. He barked out a question at us. Uncertain as to whether I had misheard what sounded to be an offensive question, I said, "Excuse me, what did you say?" He repeated himself a bit slower, "Didn't you hear the f---ing?" (Apparently, a couple in a nearby room had been reported for their yelling and presumed abuse that had been going on.) To the CID officer, I replied, "Don't use that word. You're speaking to a group of women!" To which he roughly stated that there was no other appropriate word. As my local identification card had been taken with the others to be checked, I decided it was best if I did not respond.

Author's field notes July 16, 2016

While this was not the incident that sparked my interest in the spaces and boundaries low-wage migrant workers encounter, it was a personal experience that increased awareness and empathy for those who must daily occupy unwanted spaces and cross boundaries that society considers off limits. My indignant and somewhat imprudent response to the officer was a clear indication of the social position I held and the sense of entitlement that came with it. However, by crossing the invisible boundary and entering the space of low-wage workers, I had apparently waived my right to respect and decency.

The officer's vulgarity was a reflection of the inferiorizing and dehumanizing attitudes dealt to those who occupy the margins of society. My experience—brief as it was and shaded by my social status—was nevertheless a window into the discriminatory and often insulting processes faced daily by my participants. The incident helped me to consider more critically the spaces my participants inhabited and the challenges they experienced navigating through them and between them, and it prompted me to theorize about these spaces and boundaries.

Chapters five and six addressed how the low-wage migrant workers in my study were differentially devalued in the labor market, and focused on divisions created by nationality, race, and/or ethnicity. Differential devaluation was also spatial, presenting itself in the zones or spaces that privileged and excluded, and the borders and boundaries that acted as thresholds of invitation or barriers of exclusion in the lives of my participants. While this, too, includes division on the basis of nationality, race, and/or ethnicity, this chapter focuses on how society is divided by socio-economic level. Who is and is not Emirati is less important to this chapter. What is important is one's affluence and where that allows one to live, regardless of nationality.

As a whole, this chapter focuses on the spatial manifestation of structural violence and how it marginalizes. In the first section of this chapter, I define the meaning of borders and boundaries, and introduce the concept of zones of marginalization, and explore the processes of spatial segregation and exclusion. The next section considers the national borders and political boundaries my participants crossed, and the temporariness and uncertainty that resulted in them occupying liminal spaces. Subsequently, I examine the various types of accommodation occupied by low-wage migrant workers, why these

spaces operate as zones of marginalization, and the extent to which my participants were able to transgress the boundaries of these zones. The quality of the accommodation and its location typically intensified the vulnerability that my participants experienced as a result of their work, The final section of the chapter considers who is and is not able to cross the boundaries that encompass the marginalized zones that low-wage workers occupy and how this makes them vulnerable to exploitation, and ends by addressing the need for more inclusive zones.

Borders, Boundaries, and the Socio-Spatial Perspective

Borders and boundaries are both socially constructed, but function differently. "Borders," as used here, refers to the political boundaries of the nation state; these borders are imagined, yet have political and legal ramifications (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler 2002). The term border is also used, as it is used colloquially, for discussing the periphery of any bound space or object. While borders tend to clearly demarcate, boundaries are often less clear. I use boundaries legally, socially, and spatially. Boundaries are legal when they refer to a migrant's status in the host country. The boundaries of "legality" are typically quite clearly demarcated, but can also be fuzzy or ill-defined (Wimmer 2013) and flexible (Baker and Tsuda 2015). Social boundaries are present in individual and group relations. They are often situationally defined (Wimmer 2013) and can, for example, separate space on the basis of socio-economic status or gendered relations. Legal boundaries—as a reflection of group relations and status—are also social boundaries. In this chapter, however, I use legal boundaries when referring to the threshold of "legality" and "illegality" which migrants may cross within the host country.

Spatial boundaries make territorial distinctions or divisions. They can have a distinct materiality about them, such as the "hard" built boundaries of walls and limited entry points, or they can be less visible, composed of the natural environment and extreme climate. For example, one might live in a location absent of walls, gated entries, or other physical barriers; however, if that location is far from the city center, with the expanse of desert and heat in between, then the boundary is "hard" and the city inaccessible. Thus, an invisible boundary—such as the desert and heat—can be one of the hardest boundaries to cross.

In keeping with current conceptualizations in geography, space and the boundaries that delineate it are not simply territory with physical characteristics. Space is defined by relations, and because of this, space and social relations must be conceptualized together (Eade and Mele 2002; Harvey 1973; Lefebvre 1992; D. Massey 1994). To understand space, we must gain an understanding of the social processes involved. When the natural and/or built environment is conceptualized in relation to society and social relations, a socio-spatial perspective is taken. Focusing on the socio-spatial aspects of space—and the boundaries that are associated with it—means considering how social variables interact with "locational" or "spatial" factors and how these impact daily life; it considers the role of those who inhabit spaces and how they impact and are impacted by those spaces and give meaning to them (Gottdiener, Hutchison, and Ryan 2014).

A socio-spatial perspective is necessary because the "desire to exclude is communicated spatially" (Sibley 1995, 976). Those in power use difference and spatial control to marginalize those deemed inferior, excluding them from certain spaces (Lipsitz

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2007; Sibley 1995). Feelings and attitudes about those who have been constructed and defined as deviant are connected to how society and space are structured. This physical structuring of space (the material world) articulates the unspoken belief and rules about who is to be included and excluded. The power grants the ability to exclude others from certain spaces, and spaces and boundaries can provide an overt display of that power.

Zones of Marginalization

My participants' narratives described or hinted at these legal, social, and spatial boundaries and spaces. Their stories revealed how space and the relations that govern them often resulted in what I came to term *zones of marginalization*. Marginality is the "process of becoming peripheral" (Trudeau and McMorran 2011, 458), and is, according to Iris Young (1990), the facet of justice that is the most dangerous form of oppression. Marginality can occur when the dominant use their power to operationalize social stratification in the built environment (D. S. Massey 2008; Mitchell 2005; D. L. Swartz 2013; Wolf 1999). The socio-spatial conditions created by those in power result in spaces of exclusion and alienation that become naturalized and routinized in everyday life (Mitchell 2005; Sibley 1995). Deliberately placing low-wage migrants in specific zones marginalizes and alienates them from other social groups and allows for further exploitation.

Processes of Spatial Segregation and Exclusion

Various historical mechanisms have driven the desire for social and spatial stratification in Dubai. They are rooted in capitalist neoliberal discourses that have encouraged consumerism and a lifestyle based on consumption. This discourse places a high level of value on consumable goods and the lifestyles associated with it. These

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desires inevitably infiltrate the psyche and impact the values one has and thus impact the public discourse and perceptions. Those privileged in society—whether they are citizens or affluent foreigners—gain their consumer goods and occupy their privileged positions at the expense of low-wage migrant workers. It is only through their labor that the privileged can indulge in activities and maintain the lifestyle of their choosing (Bosniak 2008). Maintaining this privilege requires differential inclusion which, according to Espiritu (2003), is the desire to have low-wage migrants, but only for their subordinated status signified by the work they perform.

The other-ing and differentiating needed to perceive domestic workers as less deserving are also required outside of the home and throughout society as a whole. They form the basis for socially and spatially marginalizing certain groups so that the more affluent can maintain their privileged lifestyles. Butler (2011) refers to this "other" as the "abject," those denied recognition as subjects (See also Papastergiadis 2006; Sibley 1995). She explains that abjection is used to describe those who are relegated to "unlivable and uninhabitable zones of social life" (xiii). "Otherness" and "abjection" speak of subordination and exclusion.

Lipsitz (2007) in his analysis of racialized spaces in the US contends that the role of landscape architects should be to expose the discriminatory practices of race, place, and power that undergird the built environment. Again, space is relational: "The lived experience of race has a spatial dimension, and the lived experience of space has a racial dimension" (12). Therefore, spatial arrangements allow certain groups to have easier access to opportunities. The goal is to exclude those considered the deviant other from

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opportunities to participate in the sociality of the city, but near enough to support it and

serve it as needed (Lipsitz 2007; Sibley 1995).

Political Borders & Boundaries of "Illegality"

All collective boundaries, and their construction, involve the act of imagining.

State territorial borders are one of these. It is up to each country to "imagine" their

national borders and to determine who belongs and who does not belong within their

borders and why (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler 2002). The rules regulating whether or not

one is allowed to enter a foreign country—and thus be seen as belonging within that

country's borders—are imagined in different ways. Because of this, some country

borders are easier to cross than others and can thus be considered as softer and more

porous.

Unlike the US and many other countries in the Global North, in the UAE if

someone of low socio-economic status from the Global South is able to acquire the

necessary funds, it can be quite easy to enter the country. In this sense, the UAE border is

quite porous. All of my participants who entered on visit visas were able to legally

purchase their entry into the country.[139] The reasons for their migration to the UAE were

to a large degree, driven by economic and political conditions that marginalized them in

their own countries.[140] Thus, entering the UAE was their attempt to escape the zones of

marginalization that they occupied in their home country.

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139. There are migrants who attempt to enter the UAE illegally; however, none of my participants did. Issues regarding illegal entry are outside the scope of this paper.

140. See chapter three for a discussion of the economic and other factors that motivated their migration.

UAE immigration laws are in a sense somewhat more advantageous due to their being, might we say, "more democratic" in who they allow to enter. However, for my participants, the leniency of these laws and the apparent advantage of its permeable borders were often lost. While a very small number of my participants did escape the vulnerable conditions of their home country, the vast majority did not. The cost and debt acquired to come and search for work in the UAE, and the unscrupulous employers who took advantage of those on visit-visa status often hindered more than helped my participants.[141] A porous border, in this sense, was a double-edged sword: Crossing the border into the country was relatively easy; however, the ease with which they entered could easily be outweighed by the ease with which he or she could be exploited, either in the process of the migration or within the UAE. Most of my participants—those who came on visit visas as well as work visas—moved from a zone of marginalization within their home country to another one within the host country.

The political nature of the national border—where one's status and right to belong is first determined—can also be found in the legal boundaries within a country's interior. The remainder of this section explores the tenuous hold on "legality" which my participants had, and the ease with which their right to belong in the UAE could be taken away from them. It also describes the various ways my participants moved between the status of "illegality" to "legality" within the country.

The "Legal Liminality" of Temporariness and Uncertainty

For those of my participants with current visas, whether visit or employment, the loss of their "legal" status was a fear that loomed daily within their thoughts. It loomed

141. See chapter four for a discussion of these challenges.

there as a result of their precarious position within the country, one that left them constantly vulnerable to termination and deportation. Their status within the country, though technically legal, left them in what would best be described as a state of liminality.

The concept of liminality was developed by van Gennep ([1908] 1961) in his work on the rites of passage. The term became popularized in Turner's (1969) continued work on the rites of passage with his classic description of liminality as being "neither here nor there . . . betwixt and between" (95). For transnational migrants, especially for those who are temporary, the concept of liminality can describe their experience in the host country, an experience that can become transformative (Aguilar 1999; Lehmann 2014; Menjívar 2006; Tsuda 1999). The concept of liminality can also reflect a migrant's vulnerability to having their "legality" taken away from them. Menjivar (2006) uses the concept of "legal liminality" to describe the tenuous hold which some immigrants in the US have on "legality." She points out that although we typically think of only those migrants without authorization as being at risk of deportation, this is not always the case. She explains that there are migrants in the US who are not authorized to be there; however, they are granted a temporary stay on deportation. This stay allows them to "legally" remain in the US for a certain amount of time. These temporary stays, however, could go on indefinitely. While the chance to stay is desirable, the uncertainty that goes with this temporary, unstable state can lead to great anxiety. It is an "in-between" status that is not always clear and results in a "gray area" of ambiguity about one's life and future, making even those who are properly documented deportable because one never

knows if their stay—their reprieve from deportation—will be granted again (Menjívar 2006, 1002).

This was the experience for many of my participants. They were made liminal by their tenuousness (Menjívar 2006), their state of temporariness (Vosko, Preston, and Latham 2014), and their isolation and exclusion from mainstream society (Trudeau and McMorran 2011). Many of my participants believed, and evidence showed, that if they demanded unpaid wages or complained about their accommodation, and especially if they took their complaints to the Ministry of Labor, they risked termination and deportation. This inability to advocate for their rights combined with their temporary status, and the condition of being isolated and/or socially excluded within society produced a state of "liminal legality." These workers were "legally" present in the UAE, but were "liminally legal" because of their conditions. Their liminality left them straddling the legal boundary between "legality" and "illegality," trapped within the space that is in itself a zone of marginalization.

<center>Moving In and Out of "Legality"</center>

In the US, irregular status is viewed as "an existential condition" (Menjívar and Kanstroom 2013, 2). The government creates a class, or according to the Supreme Court in 1982, "a permanent caste of undocumented resident aliens" (Menjívar and Kanstroom 2013, 3). In Europe there are similar attitudes. Wicker (2010) states that in Switzerland, the "noncitizen" was constructed as "a counterpart to the citizen" (226). As in the US, undocumented workers in Switzerland occupy a new class, or caste. In the UAE, the perception of irregular migrants is not so harsh. In addition, it is not a permanent situation. Foreigners, including low-wage migrant workers can move back and forth

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across the boundaries of legality fairly easily. All of them entered with proper documentation.

The greatest leniency is shown for individuals who remain in the country after their employment contract (and its related permit) end. When a worker's employment visa ends or is cancelled (for any reason, including resignation and termination), he or she has a thirty-day grace period to stay in the country. After this, the worker has to pay a relatively small fine for overstaying. Immigration is not concerned with why the employment visa was cancelled or how long the person stayed in the country after the visa was cancelled; they simply want the individual to pay the fine. Once new employment is found—and assuming the previous employer did not request a ban—the worker pays the fine and moves back across the line of "illegality." For some, this movement is not possible, because the individual does not have the funds to pay the fine. Often, however, it can be afforded because the worker will be granted a salary advance from the new employer.[142] This is a relatively "soft" boundary in that one can fairly easily purchase the right to re-cross it.

In addition, although working briefly while on a visit visa is "illegal," it was not a problem for my participants. Twenty-three of my participants entered on a visit visa, and all but six of them worked "illegally" at some point. Doing so was fairly routine and none encountered any problems. Workers are often able to re-cross the boundary of

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142. The fees associated with overstaying visit visas and employment visas are handled somewhat differently. After one's visit visa ends, a thirty-day grace period is granted. During this grace period, a fine is paid. It is Dh200 ($54) for the first day one overstays, and Dh100 ($27) for each subsequent day. The fine must be paid at Immigration or the airport before departing. When an employment visa ends, one is given a thirty-day grace period during which one can search for a new job and apply for a new work visa. During this time, one will not be fined, face a ban, or be blacklisted from future entry, unless one is found illegally working. *After* the 30-day grace period ends, one must begin to pay a fine, Dh125 ($34) for the first day, and Dh25 ($7) for each subsequent day.

"illegality," moving themselves out of the zone of legal marginality and the uncertainty and precarity that accompany it. Where problems arose is when they overstayed their visit visas and continued working. Unlike those who *overstay* their employment visa, those in this situation have crossed a "hard" legal boundary. If caught, there is likely jail time, a fine, deportation, and an immigration ban. As a result, some will simply stay in the country and attempt working unofficially until they are caught or turn themselves in. For those who choose to enter this zone of legal marginality, the space they occupy becomes much smaller and fraught with danger. The boundaries between themselves and authorities are invisible and everywhere. As a result, they will confine themselves to spaces that are much smaller and less visible to avoid police or CID (undercover police) detection.

The penalties are not necessarily enforced. Peter, the Nigerian with irregular status, said that other Nigerians had told him that one does not always have to pay the fines or go to jail. Peter said,

> A Nigerian I spoke with told me again that if you have overstayed—and
> you have not been caught overstaying or caught working illegal—you can
> go to Immigration and turn yourself in. They will scan your eyes making
> you banned for life, and you can depart. There will be no fine and jail
> time. You will, of course, have to purchase your own airfare."

Peter said that he knew many who had departed in this way. Danjua, a Sri Lankan woman, had absconded and was currently working "illegally." Her Consulate had told her not to worry, that she could continue working if she wanted to. At the point that she wanted to go home, she should turn herself in. She would do a month in jail and then be sent home. While jail time is undesirable, the ability to stay and increase one's earnings before choosing to leave or being caught is an acceptable risk (Fargues and Shah 2017).

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On paper, for the most part, the rights of workers are being addressed. The problem is that sometimes the laws are not upheld. However, it also lies with migrants' lack of knowledge about any of the laws, the complexity of the processes and time involved, and the fear of doing the wrong thing. If my participants knew about the laws and procedures—knowledge that most did not have—their ability to logistically carry out the procedures was an immense challenge. To issue a complaint about one's employer, one had to go to the Ministry of Labor. Most of my participants worked twelve or more hours a day at least six days a week. If their day off was Friday—the Islamic holy day in the UAE—then the Ministry of Labor was closed. In addition, those who lived in labor camps were quite far from the Ministry of Labor and from their respective Consulates. Physical space and administrative challenges are hurdles many low wage migrants face. Accessing assistance was or seemed logistically impossible for many. Finally, as discussed in chapter four, the laws and procedures are extremely difficult to access and interpret. Even for professionals in the legal field, interpreting the exact meaning and processes required can be difficult.

All foreigners in the UAE can face the challenges above. However, middle and upper income earners are not exploited in as many ways due to their economic and social capital. Their employers know that their employees have the means to access and purchase information and assistance, and, consequently, the employer is more likely to respect contractual agreements. Low-wage migrant workers on the other hand face far more extensive structural challenges, including spatial and temporal challenges. Even those workers who have strong English or Arabic language skills and who feel they have

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a good enough understanding of UAE law and procedures face the challenges of physically accessing the necessary Ministries and of having the time needed to do so.

Further, though it may be easier to regain one's "legal" standing and it may seem that there are a great number of low-wage migrant workers willing to perpetuate their "illegal" situation, it does not mean that the potential of losing one's authorization to belong in the country had less of an emotional and psychological impact. Low-wage migrants in the UAE, like temporary guest-workers in other parts of the world, dread being "illegal." My participants seemed consumed—depending on their situation—with either avoiding or escaping such a status. The metaphorical border that separated and determined their status was invisible; however, it was an invisible presence whose weight was strongly felt. It was also a status that drastically altered their circumstances. As a result, like migrants in the US and Europe who knew they were outsiders in society and felt the need to protect themselves by being "as socially and culturally invisible as possible" (Wicker 2010, 240), my participants knew, too, that their position was always unstable. The ease with which the metaphorical boundary could follow them into the interior of the state and move over them, left many in an affective state of liminality.

Social Boundaries, Interactions, and Zones of Marginalization

> The first time I came to Dubai … I didn't see this part of Dubai, where I'm now living [Sonopur labor camps]… I didn't see this the first time I came. I was used to the life on the other side, like in Deira and Bur Dubai. … I tell these people here, go to the big Dubai. See. People are living happily. People are living like, yeah… … It's a social life. You need it!... in your system! You need to feel it. … Here… We are really in an enclosed space here. We're not allowed to be seen by the outside world. We're not to be seen… Outside there … you feel unsafe… … I need to go out there…

> Michael, a 30-year-old Kenyan man

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My thoughts about sociospatial boundaries and how they impact low-wage temporary migrant workers arose following my interview with Michael. His comments led me to think about the boundaries that divide; the zones in which one feels comfortable, freer; being inside, outside; the desire to escape to that other side. I began to theorize about the multiple zones workers encounter and move through on a daily basis, how they are reproduced and reinforced by society, and how they result in social division and increased precarity.

My participants either lived in shared accommodation in the older neighborhoods of the city, or lived in labor camps. There are two issues to consider when examining the accommodation in both these areas: the condition of the accommodation and its location. The actual accommodation, regardless of its location, had the potential to be of good or poor quality. For most of my participants, regardless of whether they lived in the older neighborhoods or in the labor camps, the condition of their accommodation was quite poor. What is quite different about the two areas—the older neighborhoods and the labor camps—is their actual location in relation to the city and the boundaries that enclose them. Some of the boundaries that divide these areas from surrounding ones are quite visible, others are fragmented, and still others are not apparent at all, but regardless they are generally understood by those who come in contact with them. The older neighborhoods are central (close to the city center) and in close proximity to each other. The labor camps, on the other hand, are spread out; some have boundaries that would be considered "soft" and easy to access, and others are "hard," being difficult to access.

This section of the chapter first examines the notion of shared accommodation and the challenges it presented. It then discusses the three spaces where my participants'

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accommodations were located: in the older neighborhoods, in the labor camps located in the city, and in the labor camps "in the desert." Finally, it specifically addresses exclusionary processes, considering the aims of those who wish to displace low-wage migrant workers to peripheral spaces, and why most low-wage migrant workers are unable to cross the boundaries that contain them, and why some can.
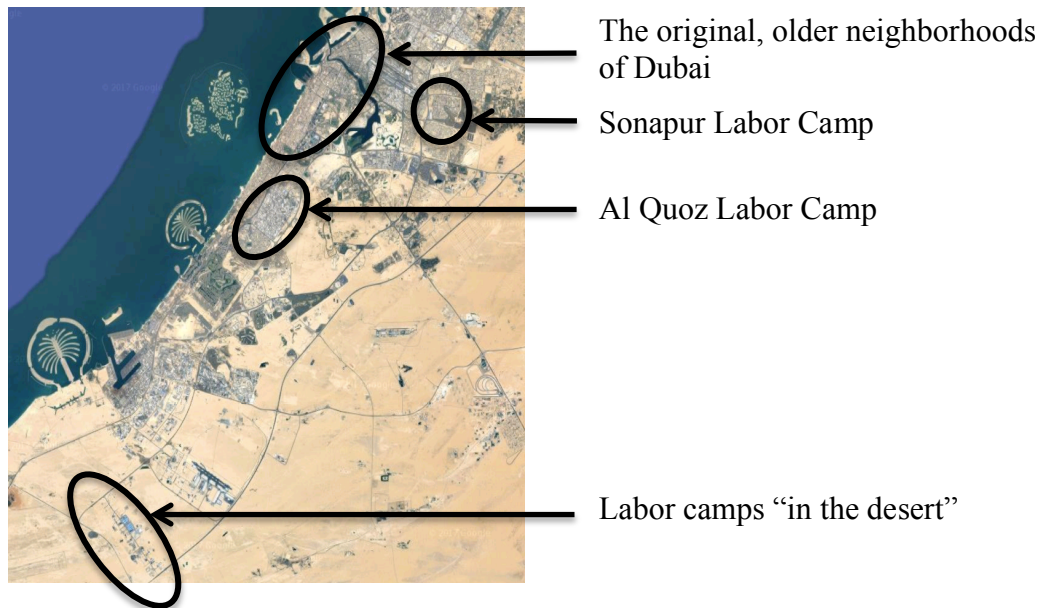
Figure 1. Overview of Dubai and surrounding areas.[143]

Shared Accommodation

When reference is made to "labor accommodation" in Dubai, it is typically referring to rooms within which four to twenty low-wage workers are allocated "bed space." Companies are required by law to provide accommodation for their employees. It can be the actual accommodation or a stipend that (in theory) covers the cost. My participants who found their own bed space typically paid about 500-700Dh ($136-190)

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143. All maps in this chapter are ©2017 Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO, Landsat / Copernicus, Map data ©2017 Google, United Arab Emirates

per month. These rooms are typically located in the older neighborhoods of Dubai or in

labor camps. Among my sample, twenty-three lived in in labor camps, and fourteen lived

in shared rooms in the older parts of the city. On average, my participants were in rooms

with approximately ten occupants. In these circumstances, the bed space would typically

be two- or three-tier bunk beds.[144] In some cases, there were not enough bunk beds for

the number of room occupants, or bed frames were not provided. When this happened,

mattresses would be used, filling the floor space at night.

The accommodation is one of the first spaces low-wage migrant workers

experience in Dubai, and for many it is the first zone of marginalization they

encountered. For my participants, what made these spaces marginalized zones were the

tight confinement of the rooms and the conditions and cleanliness of the facilities. An

important commonality between accommodation in the city and in the labor camps is that

the room and its facilities could be good quality or quite poor in either place. Being

assigned to one location over another did not dictate the quality or comfort of the space.

Adapting to a New Concept of Housing

> "Can you believe! . . Like one, two, three beds [high]. Like what kind of
> … I have never experienced this. Three beds! I'm like what kind of life is
> this?! … A minute later she again quietly asks, "What kind of life is this?"

> Sophie, a 25-year-old Cameroonian woman

Responses such as Sophie's were far from unique. Many of my participants

appeared shocked by this "kind of life." Sophie's emotive response is given to help the

reader understand that the low socio-economic level of my participants did not mean that

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144. I had participants whose employers had allocated them rooms which they would share with as few as three other workers and rooms they would share with as many as fifteen other workers.

they were any more experienced or more equipped to deal with such living experiences than others of greater means.

Regardless of whether their accommodation is in the city or in a labor camp, the rooms that low-wage migrant workers occupy hold many similarities. Entering a shared room for ten occupants, a common sight is two sets of bunk beds lining each of the two parallel walls, with another set at the end of the room. The leftover floor space in the middle of the room is the occupants' shared space, a space which could be as wide as the length of a bunk bed or much narrower. This space is where they socialize and in some cases where they are forced to cook their meals using a portable gas tank with a burner on top. Rooms often lack cupboard space. Clothes are hung at the end of a bunk or on hooks on the wall near their bed. Sheets and blankets were sometimes hung to separate beds or to create private space.

The impact of these spaces on my participants varied. Some expressed *annoyance* at the conditions, and others expressed *shock* at discovering what "accommodation" actually meant in the UAE.[145] The different reactions—annoyance versus shock— appeared to be drawn along lines of nationality, likely reflecting the value of networks between sending and host countries. My South Asian participants often expressed *annoyance* at the conditions. On the other hand, the reaction of my African participants was primarily *shock* at this new definition of accommodation and the expectation of how one should live. Half of my African participants had responses similar to Sophie's; they had not expected it. Brice, another Cameroonian, said,

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145. The issues domestic workers faced are addressed in chapter six.

I grew up in a harsh environment so I was used to hardship. … But,.. I never. … I went inside. I saw bunk beds, bunk beds, in this small confined room. I said, oh my god, I've arrived … in Dubai … the other side of Dubai.[146]

Gabriel, the twenty-six-year-old Nigerian man with a geology degree, shared a room with fifteen other men. He said,

In my room, I have 14 people. … 14! Yeah, 14! And that 14 I am talking about, they are just the people who work in the morning. … I have people who come at night. There was a guy on my bed!!! On. My. Bed! I was so crazy! I thought I'd better go home! How can I be sharing a bed?! Somebody will go; I will sleep in the morning. I have to go to work. Somebody will come and sleep in the night?! …Yeah! The other room 24! In a room! They have to... they have just the bunk, one, two three [stacked high] somebody is sleeping under… two people, two people! Yeah! Like that. I was like, sir, *how…*

Among my participants, issues apart from the physical arrangement of the accommodation and its conditions also arose. These revolved around social and cultural aspects of identity, including nationality/race, culture, education, religion, diet, and language. All of these elements could help those who must live together by creating opportunities for belonging (Sweet, Lee, and Escalante 2012), or make co-existence difficult. As discussed in chapter five, participants who were the "odd man out" in regards to their nationality, race, and/or ethnicity had a much more difficult time than those who were the majority. The intimacy of the room created and/or intensified the boundaries between occupants sharing a room and could result in further exclusions.

For the majority of my participants, including those who had roommates of the same nationality, it was a challenge to live in such an extremely intimate and confining

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146. There are many potential reasons why my African participants were shocked but South Asians were not. The most prominent cause likely ties back to having access to strong social transnational networks. The one Filipina who lived in shared accommodation only spoke about the other Filipinas she roomed with, not the space.

space with so many others; the many social and cultural differences, as well as the stress of their work and low pay, simply exacerbated differences and encouraged stereotyping of the "Other." The stress of their lives in some cases seemed to pull room occupants together, but in others—especially those where an occupant was the minority in terms of nationality—the stress of their lives increased the distance between.

The phenomenon of beds stacked one upon another in a tightly confining space, and terms such as "bed space" made previous conceptualizations lose meaning in this context. "Home" was never used by my participants to describe where they stayed. With the introduction of these new concepts, many found they were on the other side of a boundary that they had not known existed. This zone of marginalization can be considered marginalizing for several reasons. One was the unhealthy crowding and confinement of the space, where illness is easily spread. Another was the condition of the space. Many rooms and their facilities were quite dilapidated. They lacked sufficient cooling and/or had ceilings that leaked, and could be dirty and unhygienic if the occupants did not agree on issues of cleaning. Using portable propane tanks of gas was dangerous. Living in this environment impacted my participants emotionally and psychologically and is what likely heightened their sense of marginalization. The crowded confinement of the rooms resulted in occupants having very little personal space. This space, defined by the boundaries of their bed space, was the only territory they could feel was theirs to control.

In contrast, some of my participants were happy with their circumstances and found sharing a room could prove to be beneficial. Typically those who were happy only had three roommates. In two of the cases, the roommates were close friends from the

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same village in their country. In the third case, the woman was Sri Lankan and her three roommates were each from a different South Asian country. There could be benefits even in rooms that had too many occupants. If bonds could be created and high degrees of discord avoided, a communal style of life could allow for the sharing of information and the development of friendships and support networks. This helped them, emotionally, to reduce the marginalization created by the confined and dilapidated spaces they occupied.

Location of Accommodation

Low-wage migrant workers who are new to Dubai first must deal with the accommodations in which they must stay, and then with its location. Excluding my participants who worked in the homes of their employers, about half my remaining participants lived in older neighborhoods of the city and the other half lived in labor camps.[147] Accommodations in the city were almost always preferred due to their more central location. Labor camp accommodation in general tended to be in less accessible locations and to lack a sense of sociality. However, even among the labor camps, some were more central and others were quite far and isolated.

For my participants, the location of the accommodation played a crucial role in determining the level of their exclusion from mainstream life and their access to services. The more marginalized they were spatially, the more marginalized they were socially. Thus, zones of marginalization and the "soft" or "hard" boundaries that enclose it were both spatially and socially experienced.

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147. This chapter focuses only on those who lived in labor camps or in shared rooms. It does not address those who lived in the homes of their employers.

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What is important to keep in mind regarding both the labor camps and the older parts of Dubai is that the populations that reside in these spaces are almost exclusively foreign and low-income. In these neighborhoods, any presence of locals is marginal at best and, in the labor camps, nationals are nonexistent.[148] And finally, while I am focusing on the oldest most familiar neighborhoods of Dubai as well as the most familiar labor camps, these are far from the only ones. With ninety percent of the population foreign, of which fifty percent are low-wage, workers can be found in many sectors of the city, both centrally and in the periphery.

Nationals only make up about ten percent of Dubai's population, and in these two lower-income spaces that percentage is far less. It is not that there are no poor local families in the UAE; there are. However, they would be provided with subsidies from the government. Many locals like to live in Emirati majority neighborhoods, but not all. Some locals live in neighborhoods that are mostly populated with very affluent migrants, as well as neighborhoods where more middle or upper-middle class migrants live. In general, in discussions of space and neighborhoods it can be assumed that outside of the lower-income neighborhoods, the spaces that are referenced in this chapter are mixed neighborhoods, home to foreigners and locals, though predominantly foreigners. The concern in this chapter is less on the divisions between nationals and non-nationals, and more on the boundaries that divide the poor and the affluent.

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148. There is some economic diversity among low-income earners. In the camps, salaries likely range between 600Dh ($163) and 3000Dh ($817) a month. In the older neighborhoods of Dubai, the socio-economic level of migrant workers is more diverse. One will find pockets of more middle-class earners living in newer apartment buildings and townhouses. However, the oldest and inner-most areas of the neighborhoods being discussed are dominated by structures that are noticeably shabbier and dilapidated, and occupied by those likely earning between 1000-5000Dh ($272-1361).

Focusing on the location of accommodation is important because it is through spatial relationships that hierarchies are often enacted. This is, in part, because groups that are spatially contained can be more easily controlled. Similar to those who inhabit the ghettos within wealthy capitalist cities, those clustered within specific locations of Dubai can also be more easily be marginalized. Wacquant (2008) contends that "advance marginality tends to concentrate in well-identified, bounded, and increasingly isolated territories viewed by both outsiders and insiders as social purgatories, urban hellholes where only the refuse of society would accept to dwell" (125). Wacquant's focus is not on the quality and condition of these spaces. Rather, he is focusing on the socio-spatial aspects and the value placed on those who occupy them. The "social purgatory" for migrants in Dubai is to be excluded and marginalized from the "real" Dubai, the places where the affluent go.

Older Neighborhoods

Original historical settlements in Dubai developed around the Dubai Creek, a central feature of the city that divides the older areas of the city (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Left map is Dubai in 1984; right map is Dubai in 2017.

The oldest and most familiar neighborhoods in the city are within Deira, the older Al Fahidi district of Bur Dubai, Al Jaffiliya, and the older parts of Al Satwa (see figure 3).[149]

Al Satwa

Al Jaffiliya

Al Fahidi district in the
older part of Bur Dubai

Bur Dubai

Deira
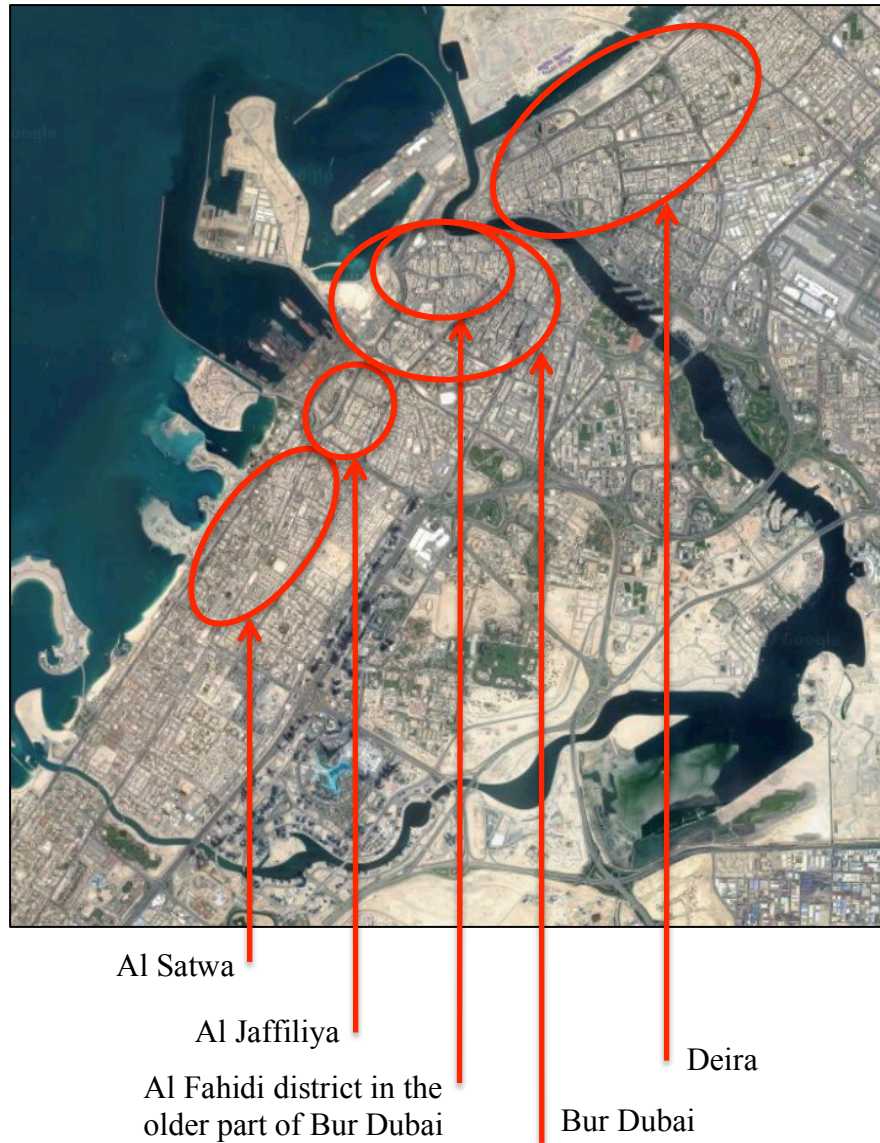
Figure 3. Map of Dubai showing older neighborhoods.

149. These are certainly not the only spaces "in the city" where low-wage migrant workers live. They are, however, in the oldest part of the city, and likely reflect the largest clusters of this population. Also, while the structures are generally old and occupants poor, there are newer structures interspersed.

Condition of the Accommodation

Accommodation in Deira and the Al Fahidi neighborhood in Bur Dubai are more often old three or four-story apartment buildings. In Al Jaffilya and Al Satwa, there are more old single-level villas. The structures are different, but the conditions are much the same. Nationals own but do not reside in these residential properties; rather, they subdivide the spaces and rent them out. The oldest and most dilapidated buildings are partitioned and filled with bunk beds. The bed space is rented to individuals, or in some cases a small company rents a room to accommodate its employees, as was the case for several of my participants. While some subdividing of residential properties is allowed, many of the spaces occupied by my participants had been illegally subdivided to accommodate more people than permissible. Rooms with ten to fifteen occupants may only have one rudimentary bathroom with a toilet, sink, and a small space with knee level tap and drain for bathing. Some rooms have a kitchens consisting of a small nook, with a portable gas tank below a counter and a single burner above. Other rooms have no additional space. These rooms might have gas tanks with attached burners in the middle of the room that are shared by all. Clean up is often in the bathroom. When looking at these villas from the street, one would never imagine the number of individuals residing inside. The occupants are in essence hidden away in plain view. While the government prohibits subdividing villas in this way, it is both easy to get away with by the owner and by the occupants, as well as easy for authorities to overlook these spaces. While helpful, especially for those who have irregular status, the substandard housing and crowding can make the occupants vulnerable. Those like Peter, the young Nigerian man with irregular status desperate to earn money, never leave the confines of their room except to work.

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Those with regular status are free to move, but their options are limited. Moving for them typically involves relocating from one precarious space to another.

These old villas and apartment buildings have been allowed to dilapidate because there is no market for them (Elsheshtawy 2010). Only nationals can buy and sell these properties, and they do not want to live in them. Yet, despite their dilapidation and their dirty and sometimes cockroach-infested spaces, the emotional distress of beds stacked one upon another and the lack of personal space, the vulnerability that is created by these marginalized spaces is in small part rectified by the accommodation being located in the older part of the city.

Atmosphere in the Older Neighborhoods

The older, lower-income neighborhoods of Dubai have a distinctly different atmosphere and vibe than the newer more affluent areas of the city, as well as vastly different boundaries. The streets in the older areas look a bit tired and worn; however, they are full of people and life. The sidewalks are bustling in a way not found in other parts of the city where cars are required. The streets are filled almost solely with lower-income foreign migrant workers. One exception is in the Al Fahidi district in the older part of Bur Dubai. Here is where tourists go for a taste of local Emirati heritage. In this area a small historical neighborhood has been revived and turned into an art district, with cafes and small boutique hotels. Surrounding this small-refurbished area a completely different cultural heritage is found. Leaving the square where the Dubai historical museum is located, one unexpectedly crosses a boundary and enters a new world. One informally referred to as Hindi Lane. In this hidden away space, there is a series of very narrow alley ways with colorful small shops and nooks where one can purchase small

religious idols, flowers and other items for worship in the Hindu temple that is up a set a stairs and also hidden away. It is a relatively small area packed with people that soon gives way to narrow streets and walkways where shops selling clothing, electronics, kitchen supplies, and other goods can be found. Even on these streets one can imagine they are in the streets of India.

The boundary one crosses to enter Hindi Lane is quite stark. One feels as if they have just stepped into a new world. In other parts such as Al Jaffiliya and the older parts of Al Satwa, the neighborhoods tend more to blend together. Here, the concept of "hard" and "soft" boundaries plays a trick. Low-income earners do not perceive the "starkness" of this boundary. For them, they are transitioning into a space that welcomes them. It is the affluent Westerner—perhaps wealthy Emiratis, too—who feel they are the outsiders crossing a hard boundary.

The internal network of roads, especially in Al Fahidi and Deira, are narrower and more organic, if not chaotic, and traffic jams are common on the small roads. There can be a sense of being in another world, and relatively little sense of being isolated from the rest of the city. The old neighborhoods of Dubai are spaces where workers are able to exchange information, engage with others from their own country and even region, form and strengthen friendships, and "evoke a sense of belonging" (Elsheshtawy 2010, 63). For women, too, these neighborhoods are comfortable and inviting. The spaces found in the old neighborhoods invite diverse nationalities and ethnicities to engage. They are more relaxed, the boundaries are more fluid, and the street life more vibrant. They are, contends Elsheshtawy, "a place worth living in for all and not a select few," a space where true "urbanity" can be found (Elsheshtawy 2014, 758). Yet, even though these

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spaces lack the uniqueness of Hindi Lane, a visitor could easily believe that he or she is walking through a small city in South Asia. Many Indians and Pakistanis wear the traditional *shalwar kameez*, restaurants serve "ethnic" South Asian cuisine. Living in one's cultural neighborhood means that freshly baked *roti* is always available for Pakistanis in Al Jaffiliya, and *injera* is available in Deira for Ethiopians on their way home.

Spatial Distribution & Boundaries in the City

These older neighborhoods are the ones that for Michael represented "life on the other side." The first time Michael came to Dubai to search for a job, he found bed space in Deira and made friends with others who were also in search of work. Here and in the other older neighborhoods is where a significant majority of the urban poor live, a population that is composed of lower-income foreigners working in Dubai. While nationals are rare in these neighborhoods, in other, newer, urban areas of the city, such as in Business Bay, The Palm Jumeirah, and Dubai Marina, some do reside in apartment buildings along with more affluent non-nationals. Mostly, however, nationals tend to cluster in Emirati-majority neighborhoods.

Examining where various groups live in Dubai reveals the links between nationality and/or racial identity, socio-economic class, and occupation. For Emiratis, spatial distribution is driven primarily by nationality. For non-nationals, it is primarily determined by socio-economic level and secondarily by nationality. Among the more affluent foreigners, discriminatory attitudes about class and nationality and the lifestyle they would like drive their choice of location and establish their spatial boundaries. In

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contrast, low-wage migrant workers have far fewer choices and more restrictions, as do the poor in most cities of the world.

As discussed in the previous chapters, for both my male and female participants, nationality and racial identity were key determiners of employment options. As shown in chapter five, educated Africans and less formally educated South Asians compete for jobs that have the same skills and salary levels. As the job one obtains in the UAE determines the socio-economic group that will define them in the UAE, it too dictates their spatial boundaries. Thus, when employers dictated where my participants were to live, less educated South Asians and more educated Africans found themselves sharing the same room.

When my participants were allowed to choose their accommodation, they self-segregated, often choosing to live where their fellow nationals live. For example, Brice was a Cameroonian man who was working as a security guard when I met him. Soon after, he began studying for a certificate in tourism during his off hours. When he finished his security contract, he was able to find a job in Bur Dubai in tourism. Given the opportunity to decide where to live, he chose a forty-five minute commute so that he could rent bed space in Deira to be near other Africans. In general, African communities are most often found in Deira and to a lesser degree in Al Satwa; Filipinos lean towards Al Satwa; and South Asian communities are dominant in all of the neighborhoods. When possible, finding a culturally-similar community with similar socio-economic standing was beneficial for my participants. It provided social support and a sense of inclusion, factors that can lessen vulnerability. For Brice, it increased the quality of his life through the increased opportunities for socializing with those who were culturally similar. For

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Michael, living with other Africans in Deira provided support and solidarity in his job search. It also made it easier for him to access networks that could provide leads about potential jobs and advice on how best to go about one's search. According to him, they also provided him inspiration. Some of the individuals he met in the room where he stayed had gotten better jobs. He said that seeing what they had achieved helped motivate him.

Low-wage migrants living in the older neighborhoods of Dubai rarely move out of these neighborhoods. While the physicality of the boundaries that enclose these neighborhoods are quite soft, the ability to cross over them into more affluent parts of the city also make them hard. This is because upward mobility—be it in terms of income, job, or accommodation—is difficult and uncommon. It is rare because, for most, the job they were hired for is the only job they will have. While the location of Brice's job, accommodation, and responsibilities involving remittances allowed him the possibility to study, most migrants who live in the city have great difficulty in accessing such opportunities due to excessive work hours, distance from the institutions that provide the education, and economic limitations. Labor laws and the *kafala* system generally make upward mobility nearly impossible for most low-wage workers, and keep them confined to specific neighborhoods. Employers know that workers are trapped in these marginalizing zones, and most use this to further exploit their employees, requiring more work, more hours, less free time, and in some cases, less money.

While few will move out of these low-income neighborhoods, movement within can be frequent. For example, over the course of eight or nine months, Jasweer and Wafa—a Pakistani mother and her adult-aged daughter—moved six or seven times. All

but one of the moves was within the same neighborhood of Al Jaffiliya. They moved for various reasons: to find lower bed-space rent, to escape others who were sharing the room, to follow others who decided to move, or to be in what they hoped would be a better room or location. The last move that I know they made was to a different neighborhood, but still within the older parts of Dubai. This move was an attempt to shorten Wafa's commute to work. In general, attention to where South Asians live is less noteworthy because of their prevalence in all neighborhoods. Jasweer and Wafa's move is significant because the specific location they chose in Deira had a large number of Africans. Choosing to move there disrupts the standard stereotypes.

Perceptions of the older neighborhoods have changed over time. In the early part of the 2000s, the older, poorer neighborhoods of Dubai went unnoticed by tourists, and the more affluent who resided in Dubai easily avoided them (Elsheshtawy 2008, 2010, 2013, 2014). More recently, these neighborhoods have become "more or less integrated into the city fabric" (63). Their spatial boundaries have become softer and those not considered "low-income" come in search of good shopping deals and authentic cheap food. A few even choose to live there so as to have a more "authentic" overseas experience, one that is often not felt in other parts of the city.

The boundaries between the older neighborhoods blend into one another, and as a whole, they are well integrated into the city. These boundaries are soft and easy to cross. In contrast, the newer residential developments where more affluent migrants and locals live are much more segregated. These developments cater to various socio-economic classes, from the very affluent to the lower-middle classes. Large multi-lane highways delineate these wealthier developments from less wealthier ones and from industrial

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zones where low-wage workers both work and live, making each differentiated zone almost impossible to access on foot. Even in a car the route can be quite circuitous. In addition, most communities are gated. Lower-income developments where middle-income migrants live can usually be freely driven into, but upper ones require a pass or invitation. Regardless, the developments cater to those in cars and generally have few access points.

Replacing the Old with the New

Newer residential developments were built on "empty" land. However, in the older, poorer parts of Dubai, newer developments are displacing old. These neighborhoods are home to a mix of populations and include locals, too. What differentiates the neighborhoods is socio-economic class, not nationality. Projects which were conceived prior to the 2009 financial crisis were, according Elsheshtawy (2014), put on hold, and decisions to "raze" much of the older, poorer neighborhoods reconsidered. The hold continued because older neighborhoods were found to be a draw for tourists interested in enjoying the "ethnic eateries" and experiencing the "real" more "human side" of Dubai [Elsheshtawy2014, 59). Today, in 2017, the period of stagnation has ended, and early plans to "raze" the area have been revived. On the ground, it is difficult to fully grasp the degree to which entire neighborhoods are being leveled. The main arteries hide the extent to which it is taking place. Electronic maps, however, show this well (see figure 4). These spaces have easy access to government and commercial services and to spaces that exude a sense of urbanity. In addition, the old villas provide affordable bed space for low-wage workers. Removal of this neighborhood results in the removal of this population.

Figure 4. Map showing methodical transition from old to new.

Elsheshtawy's use of the term "raze" to describe what the plans had been in 2009 is an apt term. While in other inner cities of the world, debates revolve around "revitalization" and "gentrification" of older neighborhoods, here the homes and other structures receive neither. Rather, they are leveled, leaving a fresh slate. What is similar to other cities, though, is the displacement of those who occupied the spaces. Whether or not the neighborhoods are razed, revitalized or gentrified, the result is typically the displacement of the poor and marginalized. For locals, razing the neighborhoods is beneficial. Locals had good reason to hold onto their dilapidating properties as the government compensates them for the land, and if by chance there are nationals still residing in any of the old villas, the government will assist their relocation to the suburbs near other Emirati homes. Foreign low-income workers are not so lucky.

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As I discussed earlier, the condition of accommodations in the city and in the labor camps are equally good and bad. What differs is their location. While the crowded, dirty, and dilapidated villas can put their occupants at risk and their overcrowd condition with no personal space can exacerbate illness and cause emotional distress, being located in these neighborhoods encompassed by softer boundaries allows them to participate in what Elsheshtawy (2010) refers to as the "urbanity" of the city. The room that Gabriel shared with fifteen co-workers is in a villa two streets away from the frontline of demolition. Gabriel said that his boss has threatened to relocate him to accommodation outside of the city. This is one of Gabriel's greatest fears. He said he had to live out in the labor camps once for two weeks, and he cannot go back. Having otherwise only lived in the city and working with men who speak little to no English, Gabriel's social networks are all in the city. Having the condition of spatial—and thus social—marginalization on top of the marginalizing condition of being a university educated man working as a building cleaner with others who are the polar opposite is both emotionally and psychologically taxing for him.

In Dubai, the desire to exclude is demonstrated spatially. Some exclusion is done with explicit marking of boundaries; others are determined much more subtly and without clear definition. This is the case in the older neighborhoods. The boundaries are porous and are easily crossed, but the old and weathered buildings and streets with throngs of people moving along them, clearly mark this area as different.

Labor Camps

The labor camps are also marked by an architecture that is noticeably different. What sets them apart is their location, which is remote and distant to services and other

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amenities in the urban areas. Location is a key indicator for spatial and social marginalization, and, while the boundaries may seem invisible, the environment and extreme climate make them quite hard.

For the labor camps, there is a lack of data on the specific nationalities of workers, their specific employment, and earning categories. There is also no reliable information on the number of workers who reside in various parts of the city. Based on my fifteen years in Dubai and carrying out my fieldwork, I would venture that there are many more low-wage workers in the labor camps.

A labor camp could be thought of as a type of neighborhood. They are designed specifically for accommodating "single" low-wage migrant workers, not spouses or other family members. Typically, a company will rent a building or group of buildings to accommodate its employees. These buildings are referred to as worker accommodation and are set within their own compound. The "better" quality ones are guarded to keep non-residents out. There can be hundreds of compounds within a labor camp. The buildings are typically two or three stories high. These buildings are reminiscent of dormitories or army barracks. Each level has a common room with sinks, showers, and toilets. On the ground floor is a space for cooking, composed of long concrete counters with burners spaced out along them, and a space for eating.

The general conditions of accommodation are not so different from those in the older neighborhoods. There are both good quality and poor quality. The better accommodation has toilets and showers that are of a sufficient number, well-functioning, and clean. Air-conditioning runs well in the rooms where the men sleep. There are a sufficient number of spaces for cooking, so long waits are not required, and a large, clean

dining room to gather and eat. Some compounds provide cafeteria-style food for their workers. The best compounds have recreational and fitness rooms. The compound is generally clean, as workers from other companies come daily to clean.

As my participants were at the lower end of the wage pool, their accommodation tended to be far less desirable. Similar to those in the city, some used a portable gas tank and burner for cooking in their rooms. One explained that they usually cooked their dinner outside in the open lot behind their building because the kitchen was always crowed and smelly. Some camps were strict about prohibiting the use of gas in their rooms, but did not provide cooking facilities. Those who lacked the space and/or ability to cook outside were forced to purchase prepared food. In the evenings, entrepreneurial migrants would sell this in the streets.

Location of Camps

What sets labor camps apart from accommodation in the older neighborhoods is their location. In the past, labor accommodation was often at the location of the worksite. Today, this is not the case. Starting in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the government changed the law. Companies are now expected to provide accommodation separate from the worksite and within designated areas. This has resulted in labor camps being pushed to the periphery, farther and farther from the city. Distance, the natural environment, extreme climate, and the built environment come together to create harder boundaries and increased marginalization.

The two most well-known labor camps in Dubai are Sonapur and Al Quoz. However, there are many other labor camps near to industrial areas mostly on the outskirts of the city. Companies who have men working in the industrial zones will often

house them in accommodation that is nearby. Construction companies have sites throughout the city. Thus, it is not possible to house their employees near the worksite, and the men may have lengthy commutes each way. The most recently built labor camps are found in what might best be referred to as "in the desert." Participants in my study lived in Al Quoz and Sonapur labor camps, as well as labor camps in the desert. In this section, I discuss these three areas in this order, moving from that with the least socio-spatial marginalization to the most. In addition, I address the gendered dimension of these spaces.

Al Quoz

The labor camp in Al Quoz is quite a larger zone (see Figure 5). Originally it would have been on the outskirts of the city; however, the city has now grown around it and in certain ways has incorporated it. It is an approximately seven-kilometer by three-kilometer space with many roads crisscrossing in and out. Most of its edges are clearly defined by highways, but some parts protrude into surrounding neighborhoods that have grown up alongside the camp. Overall, its boundaries are not as soft as those encompassing the older neighborhoods, and not nearly as hard as other labor camps. As a result, workers can cross in and out of this labor camp with relative ease.
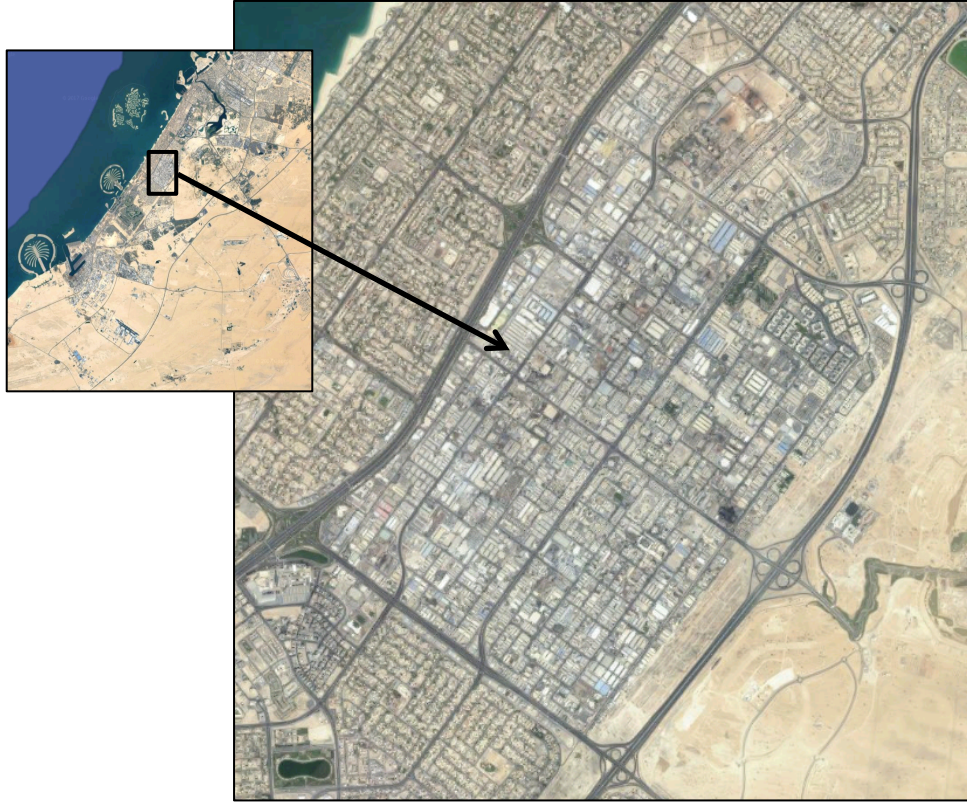
Figure 5. Al Quoz labor camp.

The northern and southern ends of Al Quoz contrast in their integration with surrounding neighborhoods. At the northern end, the distinction is less clear because the apartment building structures of the neighboring residential area do not drastically differ from worker accommodations in the labor camp. One reason for the less obvious distinction may be the better quality of labor accommodation and the lower socio-economic level of the adjacent residential apartment buildings. Another is the less rigid and more fluid roads that separate these spaces. In contrast, the southern edge of Al Quoz is quite distinct. Industrial buildings and worker accommodations are separated from the residential villas in the adjacent Al Barsha neighborhood by a broad multi-lane road. While the boundaries are porous and relatively easy to cross, the densely packed

industrial buildings create a harder boundary, and the distance, time, and cost of public transportation required to access places outside the area of Al Quoz can deter (but not completely deny) mobility.

To the uncritical eye, the boundaries between may seem to go unnoticed. However, while affluent expats could likely not clearly articulate the borders, they are perceived and the general space is avoided. Few affluent expats, especially Western ones, enter the inner regions of Al Quoz unless they have a purpose. I first ventured into Al Quoz as part of my volunteer work with a local NGO. Those who are more affluent have an inexplicable fear of venturing into these areas. It is perhaps the tendency to conflate a labor camp with a ghetto and the presumed violence that takes place there, as well as the assumption that one's presence is unwanted. The conflation is wrong. On a Friday morning, the day of rest for many workers, I would venture into the Al Quoz. There are small and large groceries, inexpensive cafeterias, medical clinics, and later in the day, a few vendors selling fruits, vegetables, and prepared food. The area is different from other neighborhoods, but that is due to the lack of women on the streets, the abundance of bleak three to four story buildings, and the dustiness and lack of sidewalks and greenery. My presence (in my car) was of little concern.

While the labor camps certainly present male occupants with challenges, the difficulties women face far exceed them. The central reason gender plays such an important role in determining one's experience is because women are such a significant *minority* in these spaces. Rashma, a Nepalese woman, was the only woman I interviewed who lived in a labor camp. I did not visit Rashma's accommodation, but I did visit another women's camp located in Sonapur. Based on what others told me, this women's

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accommodation was one of the better facilities. The rooms were quite clean and tidy, and there was ample cooking and refrigerator space for its occupants. Women were four to a room. The facility was run in a manner similar to how some women's sororities are run in the sense of having a chaperone. There were also curfews that resulted in the occupants' movements being closely monitored, managed, and restricted (See also Kathiravelu 2016). While it would have been unheard of to have a curfew for men, women were deemed in need of such protection. Rashma did not say whether she had a curfew or not. She did say that she was scared to go outside because there were so many men and they were continually trying to talk to her. As a result, she only left her room for work or to purchase prepared meals. (Her accommodation did not provide meals or cooking facilities.)

While crossing the boundaries between Al Quoz and surrounding neighborhoods was manageable by all, for Rashma the tiresomeness that results from continually warding off unwanted male attention creates an additional cause for exhaustion. Further, while all who resided in the labor camp were marginalized in terms of their isolation, being isolated within their compound marginalized women further. Within the boundaries of the masculine-gendered zone of the labor camps, men were relatively free to do as they wanted. This created an environment where the movement and freedom of women were either self-restricted as in Rashma's case or restricted by the camp's chaperone who enforced curfew hours. The mobility of individuals living in the labor camps was not restricted, unless one was a woman. For women, the boundaries, gates, and infantilizing curfews reflected patriarchal barriers reinforced with physical barriers, making boundary crossing a tedious—and at times impossible—endeavor.

Sonapur

The boundaries of Al Quoz are harder than those of the older neighborhoods, but much softer than other labor camps. Sonapur is the labor camp that Michael referred to at the beginning of this section. He was living there when I interviewed him. It was the place he yearned to leave.

"Sonapur"—an ironic "nickname" for the labor camp—is a Hindi word for "Place of Gold." It is part of a larger neighborhood called Muhaisnah. Sonapur is relatively square with an area approximately two kilometers by two kilometers. It was once on the outskirts of the city; however, the city—while keeping its distance—has grown up around it. Walls, eight-lane highways, and wide-open expanses surround it, making it hard to physically cross (see figure 6.) In addition, it has only two roads leading in and out of the entire area. In the evening, it can take an hour more for the buses transporting the workers to make it in through the congestion and enter one of the two gates. Nothing is a close walk away. It is both isolated and isolating. Its boundaries are etched into the landscape in a way that creates spatial—and social—exclusion.
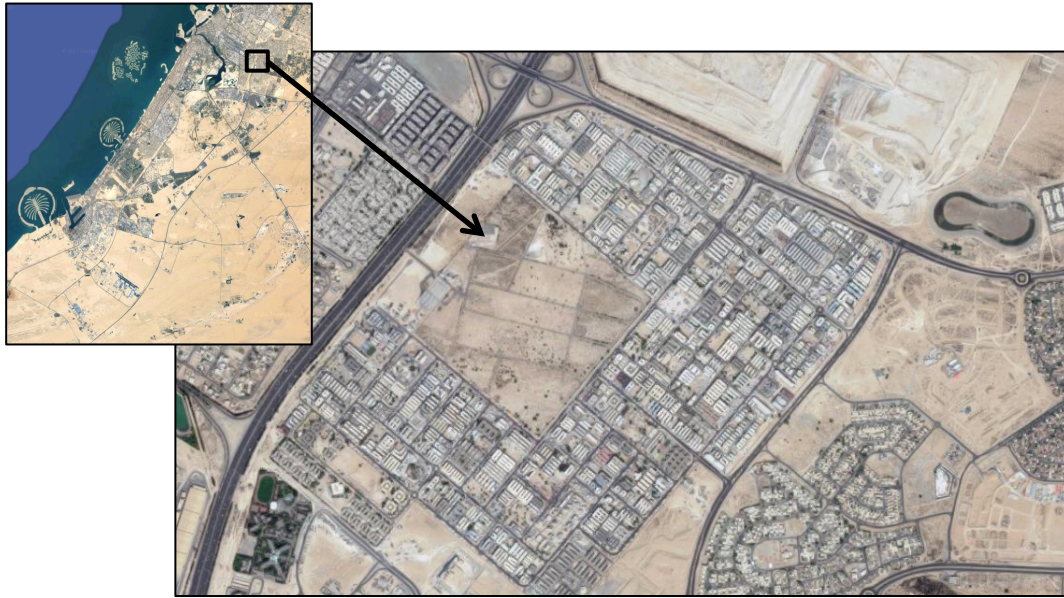
Figure 6. Sonapur labor camp.

Like Al Quoz, Sonapur hosted both good and bad quality accommodation. However, it lacked the higher end facilities. For example, in Al Quoz, a few compounds make an effort to have trees and recreational facilities; one even hosts a full-sized, grass soccer field. The field was a focal point for various sporting events and brought people together in an appealing environment. Sonapur lacked this. Any empty spaces were sandy lots, and no trees adorned the spaces. Michael said that it seemed there was currently some effort to improve the roads and create sidewalks, all for the Expo 2020 to be held in Dubai.

Camps "in the Desert"

Within the emirate of Dubai, there are far more labor camp areas than just Sonapur and Al Quoz. Many in the industrial areas are located on the southwestern outskirts of the city, in the direction of Abu Dhabi. More are located in what many would

consider the middle of the desert, in the empty area between Dubai and Abu Dhabi (see figure 7). While the location of labor accommodations have a distinct role in marginalizing workers, the actual conditions of accommodations—like that in the older neighborhoods of the city or in the labor camps—could be good or poor. The quality of the facilities in the labor camps, for the most part, is not location dependent.

Only one of my participants was put in a labor camp "in the desert." His was in one of the more marginalizing spaces. Manish was a twenty-eight-year-old Nepali man whose contract was switched at the airport in Katmandu immediately before departure. As a result, he was only earning 450Dh ($123) a month. As we drove to the camp, he described the poor conditions of his accommodation. He said that it was unclean and had water dripping from the ceilings. There was no kitchen or other cooking facilities for preparing food. At night, other migrants set up small stalls to sell prepared food.
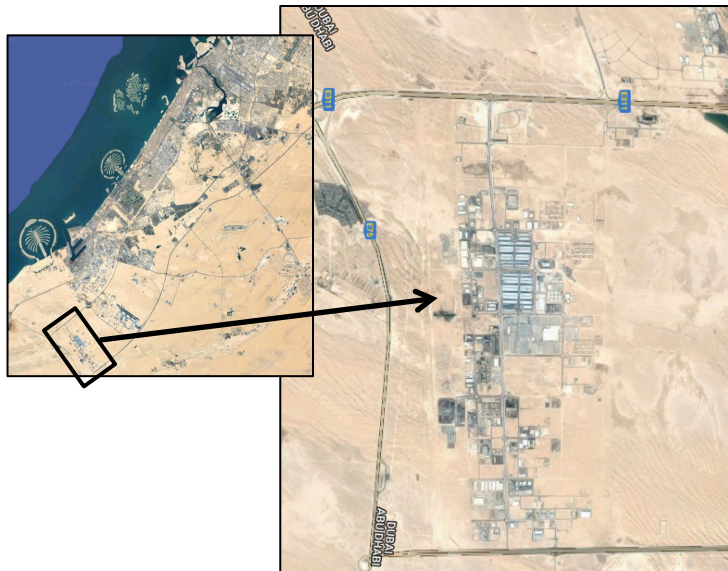
Figure 7. Labor camp "in the desert."

In contrast to Manish's accommodation are the (so called) "luxury" labor camps being built in other parts of the desert. Both Abu Dhabi and Dubai have started building such worker accommodations. Rather than calling these sites "labor camps," there has been a concerted effort to change the terminology for these camps, presumably in hopes of changing how they are perceived. Abu Dhabi refers to the "luxury" camps as "workers' residential cities." These "cities" are not actually in residential neighborhoods, nor are they in the city. They are new developments for foreign workers to live in and are located far outside of the city "in the desert." They are often adjacent to industrial areas presumably where the occupants of the accommodation work. Needless to say that despite the quality of these "luxury" camps, their location does much to marginalize its occupants.

Exclusionary Processes

For all of my participants, regardless of the location of their accommodation, the room they slept in and shared with multiple other bodies was for the most a marginalizing space. It could marginalize through the dirty, dilapidated, sub-standard conditions of the space, its overcrowding and potential for spreading illness, the dangers created by using propane gas in the small rooms, and the overall impact of enduring such experiences. The conditions of the accommodation in the labor camps were not worse because of their location. In fact, there was the potential for rooms in the labor camps to be an improvement over similar spaces in older neighborhoods of the city. What differentiated the accommodation and either increased or reduced the marginalization of its occupants was its location. This does not mean that the experiences of those living more centrally in

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the city were necessarily easier or more manageable. Many of my participants who lived in the city had horrific experiences. However, focusing on location as a factor can help reveal why it holds such power to marginalize, allowing for greater exploitation and hence increased vulnerability.

The final section of this chapter examines the role of location in spatially and socially marginalizing my participants. It builds on and consolidates some of the issues and themes brought up throughout the chapter. The overall goal is to examine who gets stuck in zones of marginalization and who has the agency to cross out of them, escaping either temporarily or permanently. This section begins by considering the motivation in relegating certain bodies to undesirable spaces. It then examines the experiences of my participants in crossing spatial boundaries. The focus leans more towards those who reside in labor camps and addresses those in the city to a lesser degree. It first addresses why some low-wage migrant workers do not cross spatial boundaries and thus get stuck in zones of marginalization, and then focuses on those who attempt to cross spatial boundaries and in so doing escape zones of marginalization and in the process reduce their vulnerability.

Why Exclusion Is Desired

The desire to spatially exclude laborers—the term often used for those who perform outside labor—and other low-wage migrants is driven by several factors. One is the belief that this population is a threat to the safety of families and harmful to tourism. In response to complaints by Emirati families in Abu Dhabi who see male low-wage migrant "bachelors" to be a threat, the government created a law requiring worker accommodation to be built at least five kilometers away from neighborhoods where

families reside (Kühl 2012). The law also stated that the "workers' residential cities" (i.e., the "luxury" labor camps built for foreign workers) be built far from tourist areas. The effect was to limit workers' "ability to access, occupy, and use other parts of the city" by housing them at a distance that would squelch any desires to journey into the city center (Kühl 2012, 18). Similarly in Dubai, the aim of removing worker accommodation from the main parts of the city and building new ones in "fringe locations" was done so as to reduce the access of workers to affluent tourist destinations, and "free it [the affluent] from their presence" (Elsheshtawy 2010, 64). In both cases, the low-wage migrant worker is seen as the deviant "other," one who should be relegated to the social and spatial periphery (Shields 1991). This approach to expelling the poor to peripheral areas is not new. Engels addressed this in his 1872 essay *The Housing Question*. In it, he addresses the bourgeois approach to dealing with the poor, which was to displace them to areas apart from and peripheral to the areas occupied by the bourgeois (Fainstein 2014).

Another reason to place laborers out of sight, behind boundaries that dissuade crossing, is to obscure what is within. In this case, those who are being dissuaded from crossing boundaries are affluent passersby. Their presence is discouraged to avoid their bringing attention to the conditions of those inside. It also lessens attention to the less desirable activities that can take place on the eve of workers' day off. This may include excessive drinking, violence, and general lawlessness. The chaperone of the women's camp I visited addressed these issues. She gave me a tour on a Thursday afternoon, the eve of most workers' day off. She said soon the streets would be filled with "a bunch of drunken men." The week before she said that a riot had broken out in a compound nearby before spreading into the streets. Men had damaged the bus parked opposite us on the

road, and then later two of the men who lived in the camp were thrown from a rooftop in their compound, killing them. This type of "lawlessness" is apparently quite common in the labor camps on a Thursday night evening. However, like this incident, such events typically do not make the local newspapers.

Other activities that are hidden include worker protests. According to Buckley (2012) in her article on neoliberalism and class struggle in Dubai, in the mid-2000s during the height of Dubai's construction boom, laborers began to collectively protest. The government initially responded with violence, imprisonment, and deportation; however, over time, the government became more lenient as long as protests were non-violent and did not leave the confines of the labor camps (Buckley 2012). This left affluent city residents and the media ignorant of the ongoing conflicts. The government was free to manipulate the information received outside of the camps, and free to remain hands-off. They could define the conflicts as a private matter between the workers and their employers. The boundaries between the labor camps and surrounding neighborhoods and city create a divide between those lives deserving of protection and those that apparently do not.

The boundaries surrounding labor camps serve not only to keep what is inside from exiting, but also serve to keep those on the outside from entering. Maintaining an image of those within as deviant and the space they inhabit as potentially threatening reduces engagement between the various socio-economic groups residing in the city, leaving the affluent ignorant and the low-wage worker within "a zone of Otherness" (Shields 1991).

Those Who Get Stuck

The ability to cross over the spatial boundaries that delimited the zones of marginalization that my participants occupied was rare. Apart from what work necessitated, the majority of my participants appeared to be less likely or unable to cross socio-spatial boundaries. There are many potential reasons why they chose not to cross the spatial boundaries that encompassed the neighborhood or labor camp where they resided. For many, in the labor camps, it was due to the "buffer zone" that physically separated worker accommodation from affluent developments (Kühl 2012, 18). The buffer was the boundary created by the heat and expanse of the desert, the highways, the lack of adequate transportation and time, and general exhaustion from their long week of work. These obstacles create an immense boundary that is physically difficult to navigate and leaves workers "stuck" in their zone of marginalization.

Avoiding more affluent areas was also the result of monetary limitations. This limitation was expressed by two of my participants. Maya was a Nepali domestic worker who lived near Emirates Mall (the mall with the ski slope). Maya had yet to receive any of her salary because her employer had been withholding to refund the agent that had brought her. I met Maya when she was sitting outside the Mall, in a grassy left-over space between it and the highway. When asked if she ever entered the mall, she asked why she should bother when she does not have any money. Negasi, the Ethiopian man whose father was a university professor, worked as a security guard in a sports complex located in the center of the city. His shared accommodation was also located there. He said that every dirham he earned was needed by him and his family. He stated,

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I never go out. I live around here, I eat around here. I live in Dubai, [but] I never go anywhere. People talk about Dubai is this … Dubai is that … I don't even know it. Now I'm three years here. You'll be surprised. If you take me somewhere, it will be a new thing for me.

Immobility can also be emotionally and psychologically driven. Low-wage international migrants exhibit a high degree of mobility in having emigrated from their home country; however, in the host country they are often immobilized. Their sense of obligation to their families and their need for remittances may immobilize them in relation to their accommodation and work situation, restraining any impulses they might have to alter their circumstances (Mahdavi 2016). This family obligation was also a likely cause for Negasi to stay within the space of his work and accommodation.

Another reason why migrants may choose not to cross its boundaries is that the marginalized zones they occupy provide comfort and security. Earlier discussions make clear that a great deal of effort goes into maintaining the seclusion of these groups. This separation—the zones and boundaries that separate them—is not lost on low-wage workers. The divisions between the different segments of society and the exclusion that results are "tangibly and viscerally felt" (Kathiravelu 2016, 141). They sense that they are unwanted and unwelcome, and this can leave them feeling they have no entitlement to the "real" Dubai. This entitlement and power is felt by those who embody the crowded, dirty, left-over spaces in the margins. As a result, it seemed that some of my participants practiced a form of self-imposed exclusion because they felt they lacked the right to access certain spaces, and thus were wary of transgressing the socio-economic spaces to which they had been consigned. They also seemed to engage in self-exclusionary

practices because they wished to avoid discriminating practices that left them feeling

alienated.

For those in labor camps even going to the older neighborhoods where occupants

were of similar socio-economic status could be difficult. Michael who yearned to escape

the labor camp said,

> When I go to the big towns [the older parts of Dubai]… I'm always
> feeling I'm intruding. … I'm more comfortable [here] … It's like I'm
> getting acquainted with this place [the Sonapur labor camp]. I don't see
> any police. I can do anything. That's why I feel isolated at times. […]Ah
> … it … this place … This place makes me … we are shut [in]; at the
> moment I realize even we have a wall around this place. Yeah? It's like a
> gated community. [Laughter] Not in a good way. There is no social life
> here… I'm getting acquainted with this place [the labor camp]. Outside
> there … you feel *unsafe*…. I haven't become acquainted with the rules
> […]

For Michael, the walls of Sonapur had become reassuring. He knew he needed to engage

socially with those in the city, but he was also intimidated by thoughts of doing so. If

Michael, who had previously lived there, felt some anxiety about appropriating the city

streets, what about those who have never ventured out of the camps? Many low-wage

migrant workers who come on an employment visa are given accommodation in a labor

camp. They may be fearful of attempting to access the affluent areas of Dubai and

unaware of the older neighborhoods where they might engage with other like-minded

migrants and expand their knowledge and social networks. Michael who had lived in

Deira prior to being put in Sonapur said,

> I tell these people here [in Sonapur], go to the big Dubai. See. People are
> living happily. People are living like, yeah… … It's a social life. You
> need it!... in your system! You need to feel it.

The inability of workers to cross over the boundaries that trap them within zones of marginalization leaves them vulnerable to greater exploitation and abuse by their employers and reduces their ability for upward mobility and a fuller and more balanced life. As Michael said at the end of his interview, "People are supposed to be seen." Socio-spatial marginalization denies them this right.

Those Who Cross Over

While many low-wage migrant workers may not cross the spatial boundaries that define the zone to which they have been assigned, some do. The following are examples of low-wage workers who managed to cross boundaries either temporarily or permanently, and what motivated them to do so.

Among low-wage migrant workers, a fairly assertive and rebellious reaction to being allocated accommodation in an isolated, peripheral location, is to refuse it and find one's own. None of my participants were in the position to be able to do this. However, an article in a local UAE newspaper told of such a story. It told about men in Abu Dhabi who refused to stay in the accommodation their company was providing (Ahmad 2015a). It stated that the men who chose not to stay in their company's accommodation due to its isolated location opted instead to pay rent out of their own pockets so that they could live more centrally in the city. The site of the company's accommodation is on Saadiyat island. This labor camp is one of the newer "luxury" style workers' accommodations, but although it meets all international standards regarding space—three-square meters of space per person—and meals are provided, the man being interviewed said he preferred not to live there due to its location. Instead, he moved off the island into the city proper and now pays 350Dh ($95) a month to share a three-bedroom apartment with forty-five

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men. His company does not subsidize this; however, the man contends that the expense is worth it. He and the others were willing to clean their own rooms, cook their own food, and live with forty-five men in an apartment. This is significant. The freedom these men were able to obtain by crossing the boundaries that secluded them and moving into the city granted them the ability to escape the zones of marginalization that excluded them and to access and use the city's urban spaces. Living in the city reduced the spatial boundaries between them and their right to the city, and it increased the (healthy) boundaries—spatially, metaphorically, and emotionally—between them and their employer and the work environment. Most low-wage workers do not have the choice to relocate because of their low wages. Some, however, can if they are able to sacrifice part of their income.

Whether one has the capacity to cross boundaries depends in part on where their accommodation is. For those whose labor camp is in the desert on the borders of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, as was Manish's accommodation, accessing the city without transportation would have been impossible, even in cooler weather. Those whose labor camps were more central, as Sonapur and al Quoz are, could venture out if motivated to. Toben, a thirty-five-year-old Nigerian man with some university education, was motivated to venture out of his camp to go to church on Fridays. Toben said he went to church as do many he knows and that the first church he went to was attended mostly by Africans. He decided he wanted to engage with a more diverse group so he began attending a church located in Dubai Marina, a much more affluent section of the city. Toben said, "I needed a church where I can also mix with whites. … I need to mingle, new cultures. This church is all the nationalities of the world. The pastor is South

African, white." Toben crossed several boundaries, a socio-spatial one separating the socio-economically poor from the affluent, as well as social boundary separating racially and nationally distinct groups. The willingness of a church member to pick him up each week aided his temporary boundary crossing.

Like Toben, Michael was another person who was able to routinely cross out of the zones that marginalized him. He explained that although he felt more comfortable and safer staying within the confines of the labor camp, he also needed to journey into Deira to sustain himself. He said, "For me to [stay] sane, on my off days, which are normally Friday, I normally go to those places, just to feel … yeah … … the environment is there. That is the Dubai environment…" Meeting up in Deira with the friends he had initially made when he came to Dubai helped him to rejuvenate himself and to maintain his social networks.

The search for noteworthy examples of crossing boundaries that marginalize can result in smaller movements going unrecognized. Maya said that there was no point in her going into the mall because she has no money. In lieu of entering the mall, she was sitting in the grassy left-over space between it and the highway. These left-over-spaces—found also in the in-between spaces of boulevards and roundabout—become the areas where low-wage workers congregate. The well-groomed lawns are taken over and occupied by those denied entry into the mall. They force their presence upon the affluent passersby and refuse to go unnoticed. In a sense, they are challenging society's boundaries.[150]

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150. There is, of course, a counter view for this. Though space may provide a respite and in one sense a challenge to authority, their proximity to such affluence would certainly deepen awareness of one's social location and create a psychological barrier that prohibits entry.

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While Michael escaped Sonapur for the older neighborhoods of Dubai, Gabriel and Mercy both escaped these older neighborhoods for the affluent neighborhoods of Dubai. Gabriel only did so occasionally when time permitted. Mercy escaped it for good. Mercy was a thirty-two-year-old Nigerian woman with a degree in cosmetology. Mercy had had an extremely challenging experience in Dubai, one that left her homeless and sexually violated. Even after her hardships, she was unwilling to accept the easily available hair salon jobs in Deira that paid Dh1000 ($267) per month and did not want to live there either. A few months after finally being hired by a hair salon in the affluent area of Dubai Marina, Mercy was able to move into a shared apartment a short distance away from her job, and a long distance away from the older neighborhoods of Dubai. The bedroom she shared was still filled with multiple bunk beds; however, the apartment had a proper kitchen and bathrooms. Of all of my participants, Mercy's journey out of Deira seemed the most momentous.

Of my forty-four participants, only five or six seemed to have been able to cross boundaries even in seemingly insignificant ways, and Mercy was the only one to do so in a significant way. The vast majority were immobilized, unable to escape their assigned zones.

Zones of Inclusion

Low-wage migrant workers need, as all humans do, a sense of social inclusion in order to live a full life (Cass, Shove, and Urry 2005). Urban citizenship, according to Lefebvre, addresses this by attending to the rights that are necessary to allow individuals to appropriate—to access and use—urban spaces (Kendall 2012). The freedom and ability to appropriate space and experience the sociality that comes from such

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engagement should be a social right. Achieving this right requires mobility so as to maintain social networks and relationships (Cass, Shove, and Urry 2005).

The ability to traverse boundaries—as well as to have and maintain the boundaries of one's choosing—empowers the individual and increases independence, sociality, and well-being. Michael pointed out that labor camps—which are places of exclusion and marginalization—are also refuges where one feels safe. Walls, buildings, highways, and desert all act as barriers to the outside world, barriers that can protect. But the sense of safety they create is a false security that isolates and increases vulnerability, pushing its inhabitants even further to the margins.

One participant, not yet mentioned, had a great deal of mobility. Rifat was a Bangladeshi man working as a private driver for a family in Dubai. He was one of my three outliers, earning far more than my 1500Dh ($408) limit. I kept him in my sample because I thought his story would provide a good contrast to the others. By choice, Rifat lived in the Al Quoz labor camp. As I mentioned, labor camps have accommodation that is of poor quality as well as good. In addition, the family whom Rifat worked for allowed him to keep their car at night and on Friday, so Rifat had mobility. Further, Rifat was able to share a room that he described as clean and comfortable with three of his close friends. Rifat's access to mobility gave him the opportunity to live where he wanted and with whom he wanted, and to "appropriate" the city as he needed.

Conclusion

There are a limited number of scholars who examine the spatiality of life in Dubai in relation to the lives of low-wage workers (Elsheshtawy 2008, 2010, 2013, 2014; Kühl 2012). Elsheshtawy's (2008, 2010, 2013, 2014) work is quite extensive and focuses on

the physicality of space in order to study its social function for low- and middle-income migrants. Kühl's (2012) work in the UAE is more limited; however, her research addresses the policies that are behind the spatial practices of low-wage migrant workers. Both of their works significantly informed this study; however, it also goes beyond their work. This chapter examined the various ways in which the physicality of space and the policies and societal attitudes that determine it impact the emotional well-being of low-wage workers.

The quality and location of my participants' accommodation was the medium through which inequality was demarcated and structural violence manifested. The peripheral location of the labor camps make them an easy focal point for examining the role of marginality in creating spatial exclusion. However, the isolation felt by those in the older, poorer neighborhoods of Dubai should not be forgotten. Their boundaries and the rooms they occupy are more invisible, but have the power to isolate and marginalize from mainstream society, making the occupants vulnerable to exploitation. An inclusive zone is one that provides a livable space that is clean and not unreasonably crowded, and that is spatially located to allow for a sense of sociality and the appropriation of urban spaces.

CHAPTER 8

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING:

SURVIVING THE ENDURANCE RACE

> Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realizes
> his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can
> work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her
> or his community (WHO 2001, 1).

Emotional well-being in the context of this study is broadly envisioned. It is a

reflection of how people subjectively feel and think about their experiences (Diener

2013), including the ordinary person's capacity to achieve her or his aims and deal with

the challenges of life (WHO 2001). Mental health and well-being are often thought to be

under the purview of psychology. This assumption, according to Sheldon Stryker (2007)

a sociologist by training and a scholar in both family sociology and social psychology, is

narrow and misdirected.

Sociological studies on mental health focus on the normal responses of healthy

persons to highly stressful life events (Aneshensel 1992; Horwitz 2003). The focus is on

the social—social structures, social institutions, social relationships, social groups, social

processes—and how they lead to well-being and distress (Aneshensel, Rutter, and

Lachenbruch 1991; Horwitz 2003; Lazarus 2006; Stryker 2007). They are social because

they are external and collective, and are independent from any one individual. The aim of

a sociological approach is to "uncover patterns and regularities" among people whose

circumstances are similar (Pearlin 1989, 242, quoted in Horwitz 2002, 160). This chapter

is an analysis of the factors and processes that impacted my participants' well-being. I

qualify my use of well-being as "emotional" to reflect the importance emotions play in all

aspects of well-being—physical, mental, and social (Lazarus 1999)— and their ability to control cognition, which in turn impacts an individual's appraisal of self and environment.

To situate my participants' emotional well-being, I consider them in regard to a broad continuum ranging from thriving to languishing. The aim is not to quantitatively "measure" their well-being, but to allow us to gain a general understanding of my participants' state of well-being by focusing on the processes and factors that determined it. The high end of the well-being spectrum is easy to articulate. One is content, happy, and thriving. It is what social psychologist Corey Keyes (2002) referred to as "flourishing." However, what is the absence of thriving? Death by suicide or engaging in suicidal thought or behavior would clearly be the extreme opposite, but many people, regardless of their situation, would never engage in such activities. Keyes (2002) refers to the absence of thriving as "languishing," the inability to function well. It is "life with low well-being;" it is "emptiness and stagnation, constituting a life of quiet despair" (Keyes 2002, 210). Such conditions often manifest themselves in mental disorders (illness), such as anxiety disorders and depression. In contrast, those who fall in the middle of this spectrum would, according to Keyes, be described as moderately mentally healthy.[151, 152]

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151. Some contend that many definitions of wellbeing are broad, vague, and hard to measure, as is the definition and the continuum I am using (Dodge et al. 2012; Forgeard et al. 2011). However, while individual capacity and psychological well-being cannot help but enter into the discussion, this chapter's focus is on the social factors and processes that led my participants to appear to have what would be a broadly conceived sense of high or low well-being. Further, a "diagnosis" of their well-being is beyond the area of my expertise.

152. I have been tempted to refer to those in the mid-range as simply "enduring;" however, people can endure extremely difficult conditions. Synonyms for enduring include bearing, surviving, withstanding. Thus, if one is enduring, they likely occupy the space ranging between languishing and moderately mentally healthy, where one is holding ground, hoping not to slide further downwards.

The vast majority of my participants existed in the lower range of this spectrum.[153] They were people who could be considered as moderately mentally healthy or languishing in despair. Often, their experiences had them vacillating between these two conditions. Eight of my participants—18%, or more than one in six—who had no past history of suicidal ideation (engaging in suicidal thought) did so for the first time after arriving in Dubai. Engaging in suicidal thought (or behavior) does not mean that these individuals were necessarily more depressed or less mentally healthy than others. The factors that play into suicidal behavior are much more complex, and some individuals would never countenance such actions no matter their desperation or despair. What was clear was that whether or not my participants thrived, languished, or occupied the space in between depended on the degree and type of stress they experienced as a result of the structural violence they encountered, their perceptions of this stress, and the amount of resilience they possessed to counter it.

The stratification of society and one's position in it determines one's access to the resources that build resilience. The fewer resources one has access to, then the more difficult it is to resist the demands of those with greater power and to avoid harmful living and working conditions and, as a result, the more vulnerable one becomes (Fenwick and Tausig 2007). Chapters two through five provided analyses of the migration structures that affect the stratification of society in the UAE, the social factors that determined my participants' position in that stratification, and the conditions and

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153. Two participants, Jean, a Filipina domestic worker, and Rifat, a Bangladeshi personal driver, were clearly in the upper range of the spectrum. They are the two outliers discussed in chapters two, six, and seven, and again later in this chapter.

circumstances—structural inequalities—they dealt with daily in their working and living environments.

This chapter considers the state of my participants' emotional well-being and theorizes about the factors that influenced it. It describes how potentially stressful events or situations can potentially be made better or worse depending on one's resilience and perceptions. The first part of this chapter discusses two significant attributes of the stressors my participants encountered and focuses on one type of stressor that influenced their well-being. It then focuses on the role of resilience and perceptions and how these influenced the ability to manage the stressful events encountered. In effect, this was quite little. My participants' resilience was no competition for the structural violence that underlay the exploitative conditions they faced. This does not mean that they did not persevere. Being able to persevere in one's situation until it changes is certainly a sign of resilience; however, persevering is quite different from overcoming or mitigating it. Most did not have the resilience required by the later. The second part of the chapter discusses the impact of these stressful circumstances and the depression they produced. Finally it addresses the substantial number of participants who engaged in suicidal ideation as a result of the quiet despair they endured and discusses the mechanisms that move one from suicidal ideation to engaging in suicidal behavior.

Factors That Impact Well-Being

> [In Cameroon] I was stressed, like, when can I ever get a better life, when will we be able to have something like … but [here in Dubai] this much stress?! It's better to stay back home. It's really, really better to stay home. [There] you know you don't have anything. But nobody will stress you … but here, every time I'm like you have this [indicating her neck and shoulders where stress accumulates] this stress, and everything. At times,

you're moving; it's like you'd fall and die. What kind of life is this? You just… it's not easy. It's really, really painful.

<div align="right">Sophie, a 25-year-old Cameroonian woman</div>

The mental anguish that Sophie—and many other participants—felt was palpable. They were confused and distressed by how such conditions could exist and how people could treat others with such disregard and menace. They felt hopeless about their ability to rectify or escape their circumstances. These stressful circumstances or events are referred to as stressors.

<div align="center">Stressors</div>

Stressors can potentially disrupt one's sense of equilibrium if they are perceived as exceeding one's capacity to deal with them and as harming one's well-being (Dodge et al. 2012; Headey and Wearing 1992; Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Stressors are part of everyday life, and healthy individuals in typical daily experiences can usually cope with and manage the stressors they encounter (Resick 2001). However, where one is located in the social system can increase the likelihood of encountering certain types of external stressors. Inequality, resource deprivation, poverty, discrimination, and overcrowding are just some of the stresses determined by social segmentation and experienced most frequently.

It is argued that circumstances are not inherently stressful; rather, they become stressful if we do not have or believe we do not have the ability to cope with the demands created by these stressors or the ability to change them (Aneshensel 1992). However, while one's capacity for resilience and resourcefulness can often help to overcome stressful situations, when the cause of that stress is extreme, such as homelessness or

extreme exploitation, then this capacity is often not enough (Aneshensel 1992). These forms of stressors go beyond normal experience and expectations and can be traumatic (Resick 2001). Traumatic stressors are often unexpected and so intense that one is unable to cope with them or manage (Boss 2006). This describes well the stressors that many of my participants encountered.

Sophie, the woman quoted at the beginning of this section, worked in a small hair salon. She spoke at length about the stress she endured and its impact on her. She talked about the stress of attempting to find a job while on a tourist visa, and then about simply trying to survive her job.

> I came with the tourist visa and I had to look for a job and within that
> process, my God, you cannot believe. It was like, I could feel like when
> you are so much stresses and everything, your nerves, everything, it's like,
> I'm like what is this? [… And now, working here] is really, really,
> stressful. At times, even when I sit, I feel like the nerves [indicating in her
> neck]... It's too much. It's paining because of stress.

Once Sophie found a job, her employer and the work environment caused her extreme stress. The lengthy days of twelve or more hours, two or fewer days off a month, constantly being on her feet, and harsh verbal threats made to prevent her and her three co-workers from complaining to authorities were mentally and physically stressful, as well as disempowering. Sophie said,

> Like if I want to leave the job, she will tell you, I have your passport, I
> will go to Labor and tell Labor that you run away and I will black list
> you…. She is stronger than me. How can I fight? I don't have anything.
> She is the one giving the money, and all of that. How can I go there to tell
> them she is lying? Who would believe you? Because there was one lady
> before, she cancelled. And she [the employer] really, really dealt with that
> lady.[154]

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154. The woman was put in jail and later deported.

I asked Sophie if life back home was stressful. She said that her family would "struggle to get something to eat and all of that," and that they found "odd jobs just to earn a living; to survive." However, the stress that she experienced in her home country was incomparable to what she experienced here. She explained that in her home country you may be quite poor, but "nobody will stress you [out]." She was distinguishing between the stress of living and being poor, and the stress of being intentionally mistreated—intentionally "stressed out"—by one's employer. Many of my participants experienced this type of purposeful mistreatment.

The circumstances that caused my participants' stress were far ranging. In relation to their work, they experienced, for example, stress from worrying about whether their employers would pay them on time, if at all, whether they would get sick and not be paid, and whether they might be terminated. They stressed about their children, elderly parents, or ill family members back in their home countries, whether they were earning enough money to pay for their families' rent, food, and schooling, whether their family had a decent place to live, and whether they could cover the health expenses of family members.

My participants were ready and willing to bear the stressful circumstances they encountered if, in the process, they were able to help their families, even if marginally. Gabra, one of my Ethiopian participants, said, "You're here sacrificing. Separated from your wife, your kids, your mother, everything … Sacrificing. If I am sacrificing myself like this, I have to get something back. You have to get something. If I lose something, I have to gain something." Gabra felt that he was no better off than he had been before coming to Dubai. Rather, being

separated from his family and having such difficult living and working conditions made him feel worse off.

There are many classifications that can be used to describe stressful events, such as whether the stressor is predictable, unique, or intense (Price, Price, and McKenry 2016). While these and other dimensions of stress could explain the circumstances that my participants encountered, there are three other dimensions that stood out. Their stressors tended to be cumulative in their density, chronic in their duration, and in their type they were an ambiguous loss. I first briefly address their cumulative and chronic nature, and then focus in greater depth on ambiguous loss, a particular type of stressor that was frequently experienced by my participants.

Cumulative and Chronic Stressors

Stressors are cumulative when there are multiple stressors layered upon one another. This is referred to as *stress pileup* (Price, Price, and McKenry 2016). The vast majority of the stressors my participants encountered were cumulative. For example, the construction workers in my sample endured the stress of living in accommodations with eight or more individuals in a confined space with poor conditions, the stress of working twelve plus hours a day with little personal time or remuneration for their work, the stress of working outside in an extremely harsh climate, as well as the stress of earning extremely low pay, being financially penalized and harassed if they were ever sick, and being continually discriminated against on account of their nationality, race, and/or ethnicity, or on account of some other dimension of their identity.

In addition to experiencing a multiplicity of stressors that piled up, the stressful events my participants encountered were also chronic in that they were persistent and on-

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going conditions (Boss 2000). Although, the end of my participants' two-year contract marked the end of the contract, it did not mark the end of their need to stay overseas and work. This ongoing need made many of their cumulative stressors also chronic, persisting over many years. Most workers would have to stay in the same job or attempt to find another job. Some of my participants had been in the UAE for years, with little change to their social or economic status. As a result, the chronic (socio-economic) stress they experienced in their home countries followed them into the host country and would likely—as shown by their long-term stagnated status thus far—follow them back to their home country. The duration of this stress is, of course, extremely chronic.

One of my oldest participant's experiences demonstrated how low-wage migrant workers' stressors could be chronic and cumulative. Mohamed was an Indian man who said he was about fifty years old, but looked like he was closer to eighty. He was small, thin, and slightly bent over, with hands and face weathered by the sun. He had had only six months of schooling as a child before he had begun working. When he was in his mid-to-late twenties, Mohamed came to Dubai. Since arriving, he had worked for the same construction company. In the mid-nineties when he arrived, he earned Dh650 (US$177), and when I met him in 2016, he was earning Dh750 (US$204). He also earned about Dh100-150 (US$27-41) in overtime each month.[155] He was able to take a holiday every two years. Having been in the UAE for numerous years, Mohamed's migration was

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155. In 2012, there was an article in the *Gulf News*, a local newspaper, which stated that the cost of living had risen eighty-eight percent between 2002 and 2012. This news article or any other article addressing the rise in cost of living can no longer be found on any local newspaper website. I arrived in the UAE in 2002; as a result, the dates and statistics were notable, and the rise was quite noticeable. The cost of groceries had risen significantly and, whereas we had eaten out quite frequently in the earlier years, we rarely did so in 2012. Rents had also increased significantly; however, the university we worked for covered our rent.

chronic in its duration. Yet, it was also cumulative in its density. The stress of family separation, of economic insecurity, of his on-going health problems, as well as the multiple work and life-related stressors mentioned throughout this dissertation were all part of this cumulative stress.

Another facet of chronic stress that low-wage workers can face is the ongoing conflict between the social or cultural position experienced in the home country and the newly subordinated position occupied in the host country. Such shifts in how one is perceived by others can be stressful because the new "cultural definitions" can run counter to those experienced in the home country (Horwitz 2003, 161). Many of my participants encountered this; however, it seemed to be more stressful and frustrating for some groups more than others. As I discussed in chapter five, South Asian participants had been socialized in a society with high levels of stratification. As a result, apart from a very small number of South Asians, issues of discrimination on the basis of socio-economic class were often internalized. Africans, however, were not use to such discrimination and explicit stratification, and thus were quite aware of it when this new identity was forced upon them.

Ambiguous Loss

Pauline Boss (2006), a professor of family and marriage therapy, developed a theory that helps to explain the role of ambiguity and loss in creating situations which can become highly stressful when one lacks resilience and holds negative perceptions. According to her theory, "ambiguity coupled with *loss* creates a powerful barrier to coping and grieving and leads to symptoms such as depression" (1, emphasis in original). In other words, ambiguous loss is the *ambiguity* of a new situation coupled with the *loss*

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of what was familiar. It is not the presence of ambiguity and loss as two isolated factors that is problematic. Rather, it is how these two factors connect, the uncertainty they create, and the inability to resolve the situation that can result in confusion, shock, anxiety, and depression. Boss's theory of ambiguous loss can provide a point of access for understanding the type of stress my participants encountered and its impact on their emotional well-being.

There are two situations in which ambiguous loss can occur. One is when a loved one is physically present, but psychologically absent, as are individuals with dementia or Alzheimer. In such cases, there is uncertainty about what the future holds and a loss of a familiar and important relationship. The second situation in which ambiguous loss can occur is when a loved one is psychologically present, but physically absent, as are, for example, family members who die and migrants who leave home. In both cases, the physical absence of this valued person in relationship to others in the family creates a new, unfamiliar situation and is felt as loss. Ambiguous loss has the potential to be the most stressful situation because it defies resolution (Boss 2006).

Ambiguous loss simply describes a situation. Just because someone experiences ambiguity and loss does not mean that they suffer. Rather, a situation becomes problematic when a high degree of ambiguity is connected to it and the individual does not have the resilience[156] to deal with it (Boss 2006). Ambiguity can occur in the case of family membership and dealing with changes in roles or dealing with who is in and who is out of the family. This ambiguity is referred to as boundary ambiguity. When boundary

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156. Resilience is addressed in depth later in the chapter. In short, it is the personal assets and external resources that help individuals deal with the stressors they encounter.

ambiguity is high, a wide range of feelings can emerge, including ambivalence, confusion, hopelessness, fear, guilt, anger, and inadequacy. The impact of these feelings can lead to anxiety, depression, passivity, and immobilization. Heightened boundary ambiguity is considered a risk factor to well-being and mental health (Boss 2006).

In the scope of transnational migration, ambiguous loss can be examined from the perspective of the family left behind (Boccagni 2013; E. Castañeda and Buck 2011; Solheim and Ballard 2016), or from the migrant perspective (Falicov 2002; Horton 2009; Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, and Louie 2002). The absent person has not died, so the loss is not concrete like death. For both those who migrate or stay behind, the relationship shifts and changes, and parts diminish, feeling like a loss (Solheim and Ballard 2016). The ambiguity of a migrant's life in the new host country and the temporariness of their migration together with a sense of loss and a lack of clarity regarding their role in the family they left behind can make it difficult if not impossible to find closure in the loss, resulting in heightened boundary ambiguity (Falicov 2002).

Loss of Family

Most low-wage workers who emigrate feel the loss of family members acutely. This can include children, the group that receives the most attention in the literature, as well as a spouse, parents, or siblings. The literature on transnational mothering is extensive (Chang 2000; Das Gupta 2015; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Michele R. Gamburd 2008; Parreñas 2001, 2005).[157] Mothers who migrate are forced to leave their children in the care of others. They worry about whether the money they send back to the

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157. There are both pros and cons to transnational parenting, which is outside the focus of this chapter.

caretaker is being used properly and what their children are doing throughout each day. They also worry about their ability to maintain close relationships with the young children whom they were forced to leave behind. Among my participants, eight of the women had children whom they had to leave behind in the care of others. They were generally cared for by grandmothers, sisters, or other family members. It was common for my participants to feel "stressed" about their children and to "think of them all the time."

Several women with whom I spoke (and who were not part of my sample of forty-four) confirmed the challenges of transnational mothering. A camp boss for a women's accommodation in Sonapur said that such constant uncertainty was problematic for many of the women in her accommodation. Tasha, a Kenyan domestic worker who was also not a participant, but someone with whom I became friends, provided an example of this. She had been separated from her five-year-old son for about two years when I met her. After she left Kenya to come to Dubai, her sister had cared for her son. Tasha worried about his daily care, his schooling, and when she would next be able to see him, but most importantly she worried that she was losing her role as mother and her mother-son relationship. The last time Tasha had returned home for a visit, her son had referred to her sister—and not her—as "mom."

Transnational mothering can also be looked at through the lens of ambiguous loss (Horton 2009; Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, and Louie 2002). Falicov (2002), a clinical psychiatrist and researcher, uses the concept of ambiguous loss in her research on migrant mothers. Some of these women said that their children referred to both themselves and the temporary caregivers as "mother." Falicov asks if this is a child's attempt to deal with

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ambiguous loss by accepting two mothers, reflecting a more fluid definition of multiple attachments, or if it reflected heightened boundary ambiguity and the division of loyalties. In Tasha's case, it appeared that her son's loyalties were shifting. Whether his reference to Tasha's sister as "mom" was instinctual or intentional, Tasha did not know. Regardless, the emotional and psychological distress that she experienced was due to the loss she felt by separation coupled with ambiguity about her future, how long she would have to remain in Dubai and away from her son, and whether she would ever be able to regain her son's loyalty and love.

Another woman I encountered while carrying out my fieldwork shared a similar experience but from the "child's" perspective. Jenny was a young Filipina woman in her twenties who was currently living with her parents in Dubai when I met her. She was not one of my participants, but her story provides insight on the anger and abandonment that can be felt by children who are left behind when their mothers emigrate (Das Gupta 2015; Parreñas 2017). Jenny said that she and her brother had spent their entire childhood in the Philippines away from their parents. They were forced to stay with their grandparents because schooling in Dubai was (and is even more so today) too expensive for many foreign migrants. Jenny said that when she was young she felt like her mother had abandoned her and that this feeling did not begin to recede until after she had finished high school. The physical loss of a mother and the uncertainty of the future are ambiguous losses, and that they are on going and confusing for the child heightens boundary ambiguity. The fear that children experience can be symptomatic of trauma (Das Gupta 2015). For the mother who migrates, the loss that is experienced in relation to the child coupled with the ambivalence one feels about, for example, the circumstances

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and whether one made the correct decisions can create guilt, fear, anxiety, and stress (Boss 2006).

Among my participants, the absence of their children was not the only loss they spoke of. Often it was parents or spouses. Rohan was a twenty-seven-year-old Bangladeshi with a fourth grade education who had been in Dubai for four years and was working in construction. He had migrated to Dubai in order to help his mother and ailing father. However, to do so, Rohan had convinced his father to sell his home to pay for Rohan's migration. This resulted in his parents living in a rented room. Once in Dubai, Rohan's extremely low salary of Dh600 (US$163) provided little help for his parents and resulted in the loss of his family's home. Much of Rohan's story spoke to issues of ambiguous loss.

Tarun, my interpreter, and I met Rohan in the evening in Sonapur labor camp. He seemed very fragile, emotionally and psychologically. He went back and forth on what he said, one moment saying that he wanted to stay in Dubai and the next stating that he wanted to return home to Bangladesh. He was concerned about his parents and deeply conflicted about his decision to come to Dubai and to leave his parents. As the interview went on and it grew later, it was hard to determine if Rohan was just exhausted and tired from a long day, or that the process of talking about his experience and challenges had mentally worn him out. His responses got slower and waivered more and more. Yet, he also did not seem eager to leave us. (As mentioned earlier, I believe my participants found the opportunity to unburden themselves of the pain they carried to be very cathartic.)

Examined through the lens of ambiguous loss, Rohan felt a sense of loss at being physically absent from his parents. He worried about his father who continued to work and about how his illness was progressing. He was unable to assist his father by being physically present, and he was unable to assist his father with sufficient remittances, failing to be the family provider which he felt was his duty. This situation stoked feelings of guilt, shame, and helplessness. In his own words, Rohan said he felt "hopeless," had "regret" because he "didn't do good for his family and parents." The loss that Rohan felt in connection to his parents was increased by the high level of ambiguity he endured regarding his future in Dubai, and whether he would ever earn a sufficient salary. The ambiguity of Rohan's circumstances lead to feelings of fear, inadequacy, and ambivalence. As pointed out, the inability to find resolution can make this one of the most stressful situations experienced and can likely have the most negative consequences on well-being (Boss 2006).

Loss of a Place

Boundary ambiguity deals with family membership, and who is in and who is out of the family, but loss is not only experienced in relation to valued others. Loss can also be experienced in many other ways (Boss 2006; Falicov 2002; Keller and Keller 2011; Solheim and Ballard 2016). The ambiguity of one's new situation can also be coupled with the loss of familiar environments, such as one's home, meals with loved ones, or a sense of community. There is also loss in the physical presence one had in the context of or in relationship to these places.

Many of my participants clearly felt loss in relation to the living arrangement in Dubai. The places they came from did not require them to share a room with eight, ten, or

fifteen strangers. It did not require them to sleep in two or three-high bunk beds. Sophie

said, "Can you believe! . . Like one, two, three beds [high]. Like what kind of . . . I'm

broke . . . I don't have a bed . . . I have never experienced this. Three beds! Some of my

participants—whose contracts included meals—also spoke about the food they were

expected to eat. Brice, a Cameroonian man said,

> That [the food] is the worst part of it. … Because I don't… they provide
> food, but I don't eat, because when I eat I .... There's nothing there. …
> Indian and Arabic food. … I can go for breakfast food because it is
> normal, bread, jam, butter. … sometimes omelet. For the food, no. Arabic,
> Indian, Filipino also. … … Sometimes I try to eat it, but sometimes I just
> go to the grocery. I get something I'm used to.

What was lost was the familiar. In this case, the loss was tied to nationality, culture, way

of life, and foods.

Loss of place can also be connected to the loss of a familiar community. Gabra

was a thirty-five-year-old Ethiopian man. He had left his wife and three children behind.

Gabra felt a strong sense of loss in relation to his family, but he also spoke of loss in

relation to place. When Gabra spoke about isolation and lack of community, he was

bridging together the loss of valued people with the loss of place. Gabra said, "[There] is

no social life here. We are coming… me, as an Ethiopian, I am coming from a big social

life … and a social life family. Social life has a meaning in our country." Communities

are both the people and their context. People belong to and have roles within

communities. When they emigrate, they can lose the comfort and identity created by

those places.

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Loss of Meaning

Boss (2006) writes that loss is experienced in relationship to different elements of our lives. In addition to the physical and/or psychological loss of a valued person and the loss of place, one can also experience loss through the inability to find meaning in one's circumstances or life events. Boss writes that one of the factors that prevents making meaning is disillusionment, which can manifest itself as "a mind-numbing apathy and emotional death" (Boss 2006, 87). Disillusionment was widely experienced by my participants. They had come to Dubai with certain expectations, and what they found was far different. Disillusionment was found in the conditions under which they were forced to live and work, the salaries they would earn, and the treatment they received from their employers. These conditions created stress through their ambiguous nature as well as through their tendency to be cumulative and chronic.

In previous chapters, Sophie spoke about the illusions she held of Dubai and the "slave"-like treatment she received from her employer. The stress that Sophie experienced in regard to all facets of her life in Dubai left her uncertain of why she had come as well as confused and at a loss to understand how someone could be expected to live under such circumstances. During her interview, Sophie said, "I'm like what is this? It was better to stay back home. I'm frustrated. I'm lost. I'm in a strange world. What am I doing here? It was better to stay back with my parents, at least I know I am somewhere." Sophie experienced loss of valued others and loss of the familiarity of place. Five times throughout our interview, she asked the hypothetical question "What kind of life is this?" This question was about her current life in Dubai, a life that does not make sense to her and a life that left her ambivalent about her decision to come.

Ambiguity coupled with loss has the potential to confuse and lead to feelings of fear, hopelessness, and despair.

Other participants—all women—echoed this exact sentiment. Rashma, one of the women from Nepal, asked, "What is this life?" and Mercy, the hairstylist from Nigeria whose saga had included living on the streets of Dubai, also asked, "God, what is this?" and Sunita, also from Nepal and who was being raped by her employer, said, "Why did I come here?" I am uncertain why these types of responses seemed to be gendered. Suarez-Orozco and her colleagues (2002) carried out research on parents who migrate and the children they leave behind. They found that there is a qualitative difference in how women experience and express separation from their children. Perhaps this applies to a broader range of losses.

Ambiguity and loss can be traumatic because of one's inability to resolve the situation. In addition, what has been lost is often not recognized. This lack of recognition makes it difficult to understand the basis for one's grief. Boss (2006) contends that ambiguous loss, whether psychological or physical, can be the most stressful because we often do not recognize that it is the psychological or physical loss of these individuals combined with an uncertain future that is causing distress.

In addition to experiencing chronic and cumulative stress, Muhamed likely experienced ambiguous loss, too. When I asked him when he would be able to return home, Muhamed said he did not know. The ambiguity in this situation was in not knowing when he could leave Dubai for good. The loss he felt could have been the relationship he might have had with his wife and children had he lived with them for the

past twenty-three years or it might have been related to his role as economic provider, a role that he believed he had inadequately performed.

In sum, chronic stress deals with the duration of the stress, cumulative stress deals with the density or pile up of stressors, and ambiguous loss deals with a type of stress, one in which ambiguity is experienced together with loss creating a situation that is or seems irresolvable (Boss 2006). All of these attributes are important; however, the root cause of my participants' stress in the UAE was their exploitative working and living conditions. The following sections examine the effectiveness of resilience and perceptions in overcoming such conditions.

<div align="center">Resilience</div>

In order to be moderately mentally healthy, one needs to have a sufficient amount of resilience to deal with the stressful circumstances encountered throughout life. This resilience is typically composed of external resources and personal assets. Although these forms of resilience are needed to offset the stressors one encounters, my participants often lacked them. This section addresses these two forms of resilience, but focuses on personal assets. The two forms of personal assets discussed are the resilience provided by past adversities and the degree to which my participants relied on families and friends for emotional support.

Resilience is the opposite of vulnerability. If one is resilient, then one can cope with challenging and stressful life events encountered (Masten et al. 1995). Resilience can come in the form of external resources and personal assets. External resources includes those provided by governmental or non-governmental institutions (Fineman 2010). These include ethical employers and recruiters, embassies that act on behalf of

their citizens, laws that are designed to protect migrant workers from exploitation, the mechanisms that provide safety nets when employers do not abide by those laws, and the non-governmental organizations and the support systems they provide. These resources have been discussed throughout this dissertation. I return to them later in this chapter.

Personal assets are not innate attributes; rather, they are the attitudes and behaviors learned from those in one's family and community, and as one grows and deals with life's adversities (McDermott 2017). They often include factors such as family, upbringing, education, and work, and can potentially become important forms of resilience in the future. This is, however, a broad generalization and the specific context will determine if certain attributes are positive or negative. Family, friends, and communities can also be assets in the form of socioeconomic, political, and cultural resources (Baker and Tsuda 2015), as well as in the form of psychological and emotional fortitude.

A Lifetime of Adversity

Research has also shown that individuals who have a history of dealing with "lifetime adversity report better mental health and well-being outcomes" (Fletcher and Sarkar 2013, 20). These adversities can be a resource that provides resilience. Many of my participants spoke about the difficulties they had faced in their home countries, including the inability to go to school because of a lack of money and the shortage of food. Going through these difficult circumstances while growing up provided important resilience while in Dubai. Two of my participants provided good examples of this. Brice**,** the Cameroonian man working as a security guard, said that he learned to cope with harsh circumstances early in life,

I started from a small age. When I was age three … after school at 2 pm, I wasn't sure if there'd be food … so see, my mind is prepared already. And it was 50 km to get to the [my grandparents'] farm, that's good, because you are sure there is food there. … We go there. We carry things. So I am used to it. I can always cope with these things, from a small age.

Brice believed his difficult past had strengthened his capacity to endure. He said, "You know, I grew up in a harsh environment so I was used to hardship [before I came to Dubai]." Mercy, the hairstylist from Nigeria, felt similarly. She said that her two older brothers were of no help to her family, and, as a result, "I'm the girl at the middle and at the same time I'm the man." Mercy felt that the role she had been forced to play had given her the capacity to perform the roles that men typically perform for their families, and, thus, the capacity to endure her present situation.

Family and Friends

Boss (2006) contends that how one reacts to a stressful event is often a combination of life experiences and interactions with significant others. The resilience Brice and Mercy gained from a lifetime of adversities was further enhanced with emotional support provided by family members. Their family resources were economically weak, but while growing up, they were emotionally strong. Brice said he was close to his mother and siblings, and Mercy was very close to her mother (though not her brothers). They both felt strongly supported and loved by these family members throughout their life. The emotional and psychological support of family provides migrant workers with resilience, helping them to deal with the adversities they encounter and reducing the ambiguous loss felt by separation.

An extensive amount of research supports the importance and need for social support in building resilience and a sense of well-being among migrants (Branaman

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2007; Chadwick and Collins 2015; Schweitzer, Greenslade, and Kagee 2007). This has been shown in quantitative research (Diener 2009; Sohn, Choi, and Jung 2016), and qualitative research (Brough et al. 2003; Kermode et al. 2007; Weishaar 2010). Some of my participants relied on the emotional and psychological support of their families whom they had left in the home country, but others did not. This was made evident by whether or not they chose to be truthful to their families or chose to withhold important details about their circumstances. This deception had the potential to both reduce and increase resilience.

Overall, very few of my participants were fully honest with family members. They withheld the worst details about their work and living conditions. Michael, a Kenyan man whose job was washing cars, was one of the exceptions. He was very honest with his mother and wife. Asked if he tells them even the worst details, he said, "Big time," and then explained,

> I can tell you, every day at 4 o'clock [before he goes to work], either my
> mom will call me or my wife will call me. At least they know I need that
> to start working. They normally call me. I told them it usually works. And
> trust me, it normally works. I just go to the cars, and I start. …

Michael was over six foot tall, and he found washing cars was not only mentally taxing but physically stressful, too. He was able to endure his situation because of the emotional resilience his mother and wife provided him. A few other participants were also honest with a spouse or one of their siblings. Often this was the case if that spouse or sibling had for some reason—often in search of work—come to Dubai. These individuals were unique cases. More often, my participants withheld important details from their families back in the home country.

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Being Deceptive to Family

Migrant workers often seem to sabotage opportunities for emotional and psychological support from their families out of a desire to prevent one's family from worrying about them and/or a desire to protect one's pride. They sabotage such opportunities by withholding the worst details about their working and living conditions. Some deceive through omission and others more purposefully (Mahler 1995; Solheim and Ballard 2016). This is also common in the UAE (A. M. Gardner 2012; Kakande 2013). Based on my participants' stories, I found that this deception has the potential to provide resilience while also depleting it.

Many of my participants participated in acts of deception with their family and/or friends, reducing their ability to draw on them as resources. Mohamed, the fifty-year-old man from India, had been in Dubai for twenty-three years. His wife and his family did not know how little he earned or of his living conditions. He also did not tell them that he was ill. Mohamed said that he withheld the truth for the sake of his wife, who was his only close friend either in Dubai or in his home country. Mohamed said that if she knew of his circumstances, she would tell him to come home. However, he knew that if he returned home, there would be no one to provide her with food. Mohamed chose not to distress his family. He suffered in silence, as he had for the past twenty-three years. Mohamed was not unique in this. Many of my participants said that they withheld the worst information from their loved ones so as to keep them from worrying. Some participants believed that by withholding the worst details of their conditions, they were protecting the emotional well-being of their families.

Solheim and Ballard (2016) in their discussion of ambiguous loss among Mexican migrants and their families back home said that in some cases both parties knowingly participate in deception. The family (in the home country) knows that the parent or spouse who emigrated is withholding information, and the migrant worker knows that the family withholds certain information, too. This deception is knowingly engaged in to prevent the other party from worrying. It also allowed the family member who migrated to maintain dignity despite the circumstances.

One participant gave a very clear example of what Solheim and Ballard (2016) found in their research. When asked if he told his parents about his poor salary and conditions, Rohan, the Bangladeshi man, said through Tarun my interpreter, "No. If [I] tell them they will cry. … [I] just tell them I'm working good and everything is good here, but [they don't know that I am] working in the sun and only earning six hundred [dirhams]." I told him I thought it would be difficult for his family to be compassionate and emotionally supportive if they did not know his circumstances. Rohan replied, "but they realize. They understand. [My] parents understand [my] situation ... bad ... but [I] never tell them." Rohan did not tell his family about his circumstances because he did not want them to worry, and his parents (most likely) did not question him because they wanted him to maintain his dignity. There were likely things that his parents withheld from Rohan, too.

Being Deceptive to Friends

Although a small group of my participants confided in a parent or a sibling, as far as I knew, none of my participants confided in their friends (at home or in UAE).[158] The central reason why my participants hid their living and working conditions was due to pride. They were embarrassed by the work they performed, the salary they earned, and the conditions under which they lived. Gabriel is an example of this.

Gabriel, the young man who had a degree in geology, had been in Dubai for over four years when I met him. His first contract had been as a clerk for a catering company. He was quite sociable and while there he had made many friends among his co-workers of diverse nationalities. After their employer terminated him and all of his co-workers, Gabriel had only been able to find work as a security guard. He returned home to Nigeria to await the new visa. When it arrived it was a cleaning visa. When asked about whether he would tell his former co-workers and other friends in Dubai about his current job, Gabriel said,

> How? What will I…. How will I… tell friends? How will I…. If I tell someone I'm working as a cleaner. Ohhhh. Nooooo. They just, hmmmm… They will tell you, Ohhh, sorry. At the end of the day, the person will bring up my story, tell my story.… and they laugh.…[159]

There are potentially two ways that Gabriel's friends could be a source for resilience. One involved Gabriel sharing his circumstances with his friends and telling them about the emotional and psychological pain these circumstances created. The

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158. The exception to this were friends who were co-workers. In these cases, their friends already knew about their working and living conditions.

159. Being a cleaner is not only embarrassing, it has far reaching consequences. The job type is put on the visa, and this can impact future opportunities.

second was ensuring that his friends continued to like and respect him. This required

withholding information about his current degrading circumstances. For Gabriel, both

were not possible, and maintaining his dignity was a far more important—and reliable—

form of resilience.

The majority of my participants made the same choice as Gabriel. They chose not

use either their families or friends as emotional resources. It is difficult—if not

impossible—to know if deception was the correct choice. By not sharing his or her

circumstances, there might be no one—apart from me—who knew the truth. On the other

hand, honesty did have the ability to shatter resilience. Rohan's sister who knew of his

circumstances tormented him because she saw him as responsible for them. (This is

addressed later in the chapter when I examine suicidal thoughts.)[160]

Dishonesty—or withholding of the full truth—also had the potential to create

greater stress and anxiety. Participants, who were not honest about their circumstances,

would berate their family members for not being more understanding. Michael believed

that he would not lose the respect of his mother and wife by sharing his difficulties. He

knew he needed the compassion—and encouragement—that these valued others could

provide. At the same time, he withheld the worst details from other family members back

home. He said, "I tell them … you people don't have any idea what we go through, so

whatever little I send, take care of it." Another participant said that even if you tell them

the truth, they usually think you are lying. The Dubai image is so powerful and pervasive

that truth can have a hard time reckoning with it.

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160. It was not just those with extremely low-level jobs or pay that would choose to deceive, so would those with better jobs and pay. For these individuals, such details were not discussed—or were lied about—so as to avoid continual requests for loans, connections, and/or referrals.

Together external resources and personal assets have the potential to help one deal with and overcome the stressors they encounter. When one has effectively dealt with such challenges, then equilibrium has been re-established (Dodge et al. 2012; Headey and Wearing 1992). Equilibrium is a useful conceptual tool for thinking about stability and how it is achieved. In the field of migration, Baker and Tsuda (2015) contend that out-migration is triggered when individuals or communities have an insufficient proportion of resilience to counter social and/or natural disruptions. When resilience is high, then there is a stronger likelihood that emigration is not required because the individual and/or community has access to the resources that are needed to mitigate the challenges created by the disruption. The concept of equilibrium resonates with my participants' circumstances. However, an additional essential factor was the role of perceptions.

<div align="center">Perceptions</div>

In many, but not all cases, personal assets, external resources, and the stressors themselves can be impacted by one's perceptions. These perceptions of one's self, one's self-efficacy, one's capacity, and one's agency as well as of outside forces have the power to influence our emotional response to circumstances and our capacity to overcome, manage, or simply endure those circumstances (Beck and Beck 2011). When perceptions are positive, they are a form of resilience in themselves (Boss 2006). When they are not, the result can be self-defeating thoughts and immobilization. In some situations (but certainly not all), perceiving one has an asset, even if she or he does not, can influence one's resilience (Aneshensel 1992).

Perceptions are driven by emotions. In the mid-1960s, Richard Lazarus argued that stress and emotions are interdependent; they depend on how one evaluates (or

perceives) a situation, and that this constant "appraisal" of our environment impacts our well-being (Lazarus 2006). Emotions are the filter through which all other factors pass, including stressful events, our understanding of those events, and the ability to deal with those events. The effects of emotions have been discussed throughout this dissertation. Chapter three focused on the fear that led to greater vulnerability, and chapter five addressed the feelings of isolation and exclusion brought by their physical segregation. There was also shame and guilt that arose from the sense that they had failed their families, disillusionment and hopelessness over their circumstances, and frustration and anger over their sense of powerlessness. These reactions were in response to the stressful circumstances they experienced and their condition of being structurally vulnerable. Emotions control perceptions which can in part (and in certain situations) determine one's resilience.

Attention to perceptions is a constructivist stance (Rubin and Rubin 2011). Individuals in particular contexts see and interpret the world in different ways depending on their experiences (Berger and Luckmann 1967). For a researcher, a constructivist stance means listening to another to learn what it is like, for example, to be a low-wage migrant worker in Dubai. The researcher listens to understand how the other perceives and interprets her or his circumstances. This stance has been foundational to this research, which was guided by Charmaz's (2014) constructivist grounded theory approach.

My participants' perceptions of themselves and their circumstance had—in some cases—a strong influence on their ability to deal with their situations. This section examines the role of perceptions in dealing with stress, and is mindful that even though

one may hold strong, positive perceptions, external forces—or "physical facts" as Berger and Luckman write (1967)—can easily mitigate these assets. Further, as with the topic of resilience, my participants' stories were often contradictory, reflecting the complexity that a constructivist stance acknowledges (Creswell 2013).

The role of positive perceptions is present in Boss's model of ambiguous loss, which has its foundations in the work of Reuben Hill, a family sociologist and the man considered the father of family stress theory. In the late 1950s, he developed a model for explaining why family stressors may result in higher degrees of stress and crisis for some families, and not for others (Boss 2006; Price, Price, and McKenry 2016; Weber 2011).

Hill's ABC-X Model has been extended and adapted into multiple configurations, but its core premise has remained the same, and it is still the basis from which current theories on stress, resilience, and crisis build. Hill's formula has three variables that determine whether a family has successfully coped with an event or situation. The first is the event or situation. The other two variables are factors that determine the outcome of the event and whether it becomes stressful. (Hill refers to the events as stressors, but they are in effect "potential" stressors.) The first of the two factors that impacts the outcome of the event is perceptions, or according to Hill's original definition, how one defines the event. The second factor is the family's existing resources, including personal and external forms of resilience. Positive perceptions and adequate resources provide a buffer, helping a family to adapt to new circumstances successfully. A failure to adapt can result in crisis.

Hill's model introduced the concept of perceptions and their impact on resilience and access to resources. Events and circumstances are rarely experienced or reflected

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upon without them being altered by each individual's own perceptions. These perceptions, or "appraisals" as Lazarus (2006) labeled them, are influenced by the beliefs we develop throughout our lifetime and, whether recognized or not, that guide our thinking and behavior (Beck and Beck 2011). The environment does not alone determine one's well-being; it is how we evaluate the environment in relation to ourselves that influences it (Lazarus 2006). In these instances, cognitive behavioral psychology and family stress theory have a strong constructivist stance.

My participants' perceptions of themselves and their sense of agency were revealed in part when they spoke about control, and whether they felt they had control over their lives and circumstances. Sunita, the Nepalese woman who (as a domestic worker) had been repeatedly raped by the man of the house,[161] said that her experiences in Dubai had made her "weaker." The sexual abuse she endured led her to feel unsafe and to fear everyone. She said that she no longer "believe[d] anyone." These responses show what little control she felt she had over her situation. More often, however, if participants were asked directly if they felt in control of their lives, the answer was yes. When asked, Brice said, "Of course. I am the only person who has the ability to change my life. If I decide to go home now, I can go." Such answers appeared to reflect the desire and belief (and perhaps the neoliberal ideology) that one should be independent and in control. There was also strong recognition that one was not. Earlier in my interview with Brice, he had said, "I was left with one week only before I had to go back to my country. The money I used to come here, the expenses I had just … part was loan … so I couldn't go back. My debt was [about Dh3000 (US$816)]. … … That time you know, I was like, I

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161. Sunita's story is told in great detail in chapter six.

can't go home…" Brice's responses reflect a sense of power and powerlessness. He believed he had no other choice but to accept the very low paying security job. Yet, he still held positive perceptions of himself and of his personal assets. Brice's story is an interesting contrast to Negasi's.

Negasi was also a security guard when we met. He had grown up in faculty housing because his father was dean. His upbringing in Ethiopia had been comfortable, and he was university educated. As a result, he found being a security guard to be demoralizing. He thought he deserved better in life, but he also blamed himself for his inability to achieve more. He said,

> I don't feel like I deserve to work like [a security guard]… I have an education. I have everything. I'm not … it just kills me sometimes. To stand in the door [while working as a guard]…why can't you do something with yourself?! And all of my education; the time that I wasted in school, work, sometimes it just drives me crazy. I can't even stand myself sometimes. […] I'm grateful that I can work, but every time I wake up and wear that uniform, I say I don't deserve it. … And things are not going my way to change it. I tried a lot of things and things are not going my way. Not feeling like… just waking up… after all I've been through in life, and in school … I never imagined for a second I would be like this.

Both Brice and Negasi spoke English fluently. Brice's background had prepared him for life's adversities, but Negais's had not. Brice had not been able to complete his university training, but Negasi had. During Brice's two-year contract doing security, he took courses to get certified as a tour agent. Negasi had chosen not to.

It is easy to understand why Negasi's childhood living in university housing and being a university graduate were central to his identity. Brice's encounters with life's adversities and his ability to overcome them had also clearly influenced his identity and sense of self-efficacy. In Dubai, Negasi and Brice both lived and worked in bad

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circumstances. They both were shocked by the living arrangements. However, they both

dealt with their circumstances quite differently. Brice was acquiring certification as a tour

agent while he was working as a security guard. Negasi, who had been in Dubai longer,

had either chosen not to or been unable to. It is easy to imagine how Negasi's identity as

a university graduate and comfortable upbringing might prevent him from taking the

steps to be trained in an occupation he deemed below his stature. Negasi had accepted the

security position as a stopgap measure, a temporary necessity. Choosing to be trained in

an occupation that he deemed to also have a low stature—such as tour agent—was

accepting that he was now of that status.

In considering why Brice was able to move forward and Negasi was immobilized,

perceptions of control and self-efficacy probably play a role; however, there is likely

more. Brice thought he had the answer. He said,

> Most people who come here … can't carry on … because where they
> come from, maybe they haven't been through hard time, through hardship.
> They always had what they want and so when things turn around … they
> have to start trying for themselves when they are already old.

I knew that Brice and Negasi knew each other from work and it was fairly evident that

Brice was thinking of Negasi while speaking about the inability of some to cope with

their circumstances or low status.[162] It does appear that Brice had more of a fighting spirit

and stronger sense of self-efficacy, and likely the hardships he endured while growing up

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162. The vast majority of my participants did not know each other, and almost none worked for the same company as others. If a participant did know another, it was usually only as an acquaintance.

prepared him for greater hardship later in life. These experiences helped him to perceive the difficulties he was facing as manageable, or at least as ones that he could endure.[163]

While these factors likely all played a role in Negasi's difficulties, another lens that could be used to examine Negasi's situation is Boss's model of ambiguous loss. Central to her concept is the role of perceptions. It is how one perceives a loss and the ambiguity of a new situation that determines whether that situation will be traumatic and debilitating, or not. This is where resilience comes into play; it is through positive perceptions.

Negasi felt as though he had wasted his education, his previous work experience, and the time and effort he had put into them. He was fearful that he was loosing his achievements. Getting a certificate in tourism (or in some other "less-skilled" industry) would be an indication that he had chosen to forsake his achievements. In addition, there was a great deal of ambiguity as to what Negasi's future would be. High levels of ambiguity combined with what one perceives as extreme loss can, states Boss (2006), lead to feelings of grief, hopelessness, shame, and inadequacy, which can lead to passivity and immobilization. Negasi demonstrated this immobilization.

Perceptions are extremely important. How we perceive ourselves and how we perceive events impacts our ability to overcome, manage, or endure them. It is, however, extremely important to consider, in this context, other outside forces that influence the ability to achieve goals. Having the time available for re-training presumes that one has an employer who is willing and able to schedule your hours around the training course

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163. Interestingly, in contrast to this research, a US study showed that people with higher levels of education reported fewer negative feelings and less anxiety than those with lower levels of education [Simon2007inAvison].

desired. It also presumes that one has much less financial responsibility to family back home and that one can afford to cover the cost of that training. Negasi said, "I manage to send her [his mother] every month 1000, 1200 [dirhams] because I have my mom, my sister, and some other people who are living with my mom. I have to send everything." Most of my participants had little free time to use as they chose, and most had extensive financial responsibilities to family back home. Brice was my only participant who engaged in such training while working.

God, Hope, and Self-Talk

Finally, religious faith, hope, and positive self-talk (the practice of talking to oneself) had the potential to impact my participants' perceptions of their circumstances, and in so doing, were also an important source or resilience. Falicov (2002) writes that the ability to tolerate loss and ambiguity relates to culturally based understandings of faith and religious beliefs. The beliefs, as well as self-talk, help individuals construct narratives about themselves and the adversities they face. When they are positive, they improve perceptions and aid resilience.

A good number of my participants would say they had hope and an equal number would say they did not. Many spoke of hopelessness but when asked directly would say they had hope. At times, this seemed due to the need to affirm the role of God. Muhamed, the fifty-year-old Indian man, said he was hopeless when asked, but then quickly shifted the focus to God, in a sense, reminding himself that God, not he, knew all. Interpreting for him, Tarun said, "Before he was hopeful. Now he's … … He says God knows everything now. He doesn't know what's going to happen. … He's been here 23 years, and since [arriving in Dubai] he is earning, struggling, nothing happens."

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It was quite common for participants to say, "God will help me," "It's in the hands of God," "He will decide," "He knows everything," or that they talked to God, "I pray. God will solve everything." Less common was questioning God's motives or stating that one had lost their belief. Two exceptions were Maya and Sunita, both domestic workers from Nepal. Maya asked why God had given her "such a bad life." Sunita, who had been repeatedly raped by her employer, said that she "no longer believed in religion." I would say that only one participant was robustly hopeful.[164] Pachai, a young Indian man with a university degree, was working as a neighborhood delivery "boy" for a small shop earning a very low salary. He gave a resounding "no" when asked if he felt hopeless. He said, "No way! No chance! … I am very hard man. Everyday my attention is very big, but… … I'm slim, but I'm very strong. … Emotionally very strong." Many others would say that they felt hopeless "often" or "so many times."

In some instances, self-talk, hope, and faith were often one and the same. Gabriel compares his difficulties to those of others, and then demonstrates self-talk when he cajoles himself into thinking differently about his experiences. He said,

> I met somebody that works in construction. ... Look at this person. He
> works in construction: It's worse [job than mine]. … … When he
> explained his own problem to me. [The man said,] I work for almost 18
> hours, in the sunnn!!! During the whole day and there is no break time.
> Then I knew. … Ahhhh. That is hectic. I know. For the ones I met… That
> is when I thought, oh, come on, you will survive. I try to talk to myself.
> I'm consoling myself. Trying to … oh God help me.

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164. This does not include Jean and Rifat who were my two extreme outliers. They were discussed in chapters six and five respectively as well as in the next section.

Gabriel compares and cajoles, and integrates his hope with a belief in God. These practices helped maintain positive perceptions. They, too, were essential coping skills that provided resilience.

Positive perceptions have the potential to increase resilience. However, even though one may have strong personal assets and hold strong, positive perceptions, external resources—Berger and Luckman's "physical facts" —can easily mitigate them. These physical facts in the form of immigration laws and policies and the extent to which they are upheld have the potential to negate all other forms of resilience. It is why individuals languish. It is why those who languish have "incomplete mental health" and "low well-being"(Keyes 2002, 210).

The Continuum of Emotional Well-Being

Low-wage migrant workers filter the stressors they encounter, their perceptions of those stressors, and their resilience and resources through their emotions. It is an iterative process that can build strength or deplete it. When resilience is strong and stressors can be managed, then a state of equilibrium is achieved, one is moderately mentally healthy, and perhaps even able to thrive and flourish. Rifat, a thirty-seven-year-old Bangladeshi man who worked as a personal driver, and Jean, a forty-five-year-old Filipina woman who worked as a nanny, were the only two individuals in my study who appeared to be thriving. Their living and working conditions were fair and reasonable; they earned relatively good salaries, were treated well by their employers, and appeared to be happy with their lives. I asked Jean if she wished she were back in the Philippines. She was ambivalent and in no hurry to return. The rest of my participants fluctuated between the lower poles of languishing and moderately mentally healthy. When perceptions are too

negative, resources too small, and/or stressors too immense (or chronic, or cumulative, or ambiguous) to overcome or deal with, resilience is reduced and equilibrium is not achieved. When this occurs, stress takes over and, for many, culminates as depression.

Depression

My participants endured an immense amount of stress. Personal assets and positive perceptions helped, but the type, scope, and degree of the stressors they encountered would have been emotionally and psychologically taxing for the best of us. The stress that accumulated manifested itself as anxiety and depression. It is this depression that likely had the greatest impact on their emotional well-being.

Major depression is a mental illness and it impacts the ability to function. The cause may be due to a genetic predisposition (Gerhardt 2014); however, assuming this is always the case and without considering the role of social and situational factors provides a very partial understanding (Hjelmeland 2013; Pearlin, Avison, and Fazio 2007). There is extensive research linking well-being to key social determinants, such as income inequality and social status (Aneshensel 1992; Fenwick and Tausig 2007; Simon 2007) and social stratification (D. S. Massey 2008; Muntaner, Borrell, and Chung 2007). These chronic stressors increase the chances of becoming emotionally distressed and developing depression and anxiety (Catherall 2004; Resick 2001). Research has shown that precarious work and marginalization makes migrants vulnerable to mental health issues such as depression (Standing 2011; Syed 2015). The depression my participants spoke of may have been major depression, or it may have been an everyday emotional reaction to extreme adversity resulting from feelings of fear, loss, anxiety, anger, despair, and

sadness. Which it is I am not in the position to say. Regardless, their discourse—which focused on feelings and experiences of depression—were numerous.

Early in my fieldwork, a participant brought up the issue of depression without prompting. Gabra, the man with a wife and three children back in Ethiopia, worked as an outdoor security guard. He, said, "One thing I have to tell you here: Depression. You can talk to me about depression. Oh my God. Depression is the main thing that happens to you in Dubai." He spoke at length about the problem of depression and believed that the central cause was isolation. He said,

> You know why? Because there is no social life here. We are coming. Me, as an Ethiopian, I am coming from a big social life. … And a social life family. Social life has a meaning in our country. …. I have to share my feelings. My happiness, my sorrow. … [Here,] I don't have a home. I just have a place to sleep. I don't have anybody to talk to. I need to discuss about many things. I need to discuss about life, my future, my dreams. Everything. But there is nobody around. This is the difficult thing I am going through…. But it is not just me. Most the people are going through this difficult time. This lonely life. Loneliness. You feel like you are living alone. … … Too hard this stuff.

I told Gabra that it sounded like he was very isolated. He quickly latched onto that word.

> Isolation. That's a big thing. Me, it's not about the hardness of the job. Sometime you work hard, outside in the sun. … But more than that you feel isolated. Sometimes people coming from the same places get together. Asia for example. Pakistani people have Pakistanis." [...] Sometimes, … these things I told you about, depression. It changes your mind. Sometimes I react with these guys. I react. … I react like if someone wakes me up, … Oh my God… I'm over the house. … I don't know… Why?.... This depression causes me these things. If I were peaceful with myself, I wouldn't react that way. Maybe I would pass it. … Especially, if it is repeated. …. So this thing … it is not only me. Depression. It's everywhere. …

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Irritability and anger are also signs of depression. In the lives of my participants, there were many factors driving depression: the work, the housing, the marginalization and isolation, social deprivation, de-skilling, being ill-treated or ill-spoken about as a result of one's race or nationality, feeling hopeless. When asked about depression, more than one participant said, "But of course. Who wouldn't be?"

<div align="center">Suicidal Ideation</div>

In this study, eight of my forty-four participants spoke of having suicidal ideation for the first time in their lives after arriving in Dubai.[165] This is 18% of my sample. The global average for suicidal thoughts is shown to be 9.2%[166]. That my participants had never contemplated suicide until arriving in Dubai is significant. Depression was prevalent among my participants and there is a strong association between depression and suicidality (Ferreira et al. 2015; Klonsky, May, and Saffer 2016; O'Connor et al. 2016). Thus, this section discusses the prevalence of suicidal thoughts among my sample.

Although there is very little research that looks at suicidal ideation among temporary migrant populations, there are several studies that can help inform this study. One study actually is about this population. Final year medical students at a UAE university administered a survey in 2011 to 318 male migrant workers in labor camps. The aim was to determine the level of depression and suicidal ideation. The majority of the participants were Indian and Pakistani, and more than half of the study participants earned less than Dh1000 (US$367) per month, which according to the authors was

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165. See Appendix B for nationality, age, gender, and the presence (or absence) of suicidal ideation for each participant.

166. This is based on Nock et al. (2008; 2009). It is addressed again later in this chapter.

"barely sufficient to survive" and would impact the ability to send remittances. A relationship between income and likelihood of depression was found. A quarter of the respondents indicated difficulties with depression, and, among those earning less than Dh500 (US$184) per month, it was fifty percent. Those in construction had the highest risk of depression. Overall, they found a high prevalence of suicide ideation. Among my participants, only one earned less than Dh500 (US$184); however, fourteen of my forty-four earned Dh950 (US$271) or less.

Another study was carried out in Kuwait (Zahid et al. 2003). This study focused on women who had come to perform domestic work and who were hospitalized for psychiatric "breakdown." (The authors provided no description of a psychiatric breakdown.) Notable is that half of the women in study who were hospitalized over the course of the two-year-study were placed there within their first three months of arriving in Kuwait. This would likely be a strong indicator that conditions for domestic workers in Kuwait were less than optimal. The UAE has many of the same immigration policies.

A more recent study on suicidal ideation—not in the Arab Gulf region—was carried out on mostly first generation immigrants in the US and Spain (Fortuna et al. 2016). The respondents were of various socio-economic levels. Fortuna et al. (2016) found that among the 537 immigrants surveyed, suicidal ideation increased for those who had resided in the host country on temporary status for more than ten years, and that it went down for those who acquired citizenship. The authors found that the process of migration, disruption to social ties and support, experiences of family loss or instability, and experiences of discrimination were linked to depression and suicidality and that the cumulative effect of these factors was also associated with suicidal ideation. My

participants experienced these same cumulative and chronic stressors. Also, the Fortuna et al. (2016) study found that the symptoms associated with suicidal ideation were depression, anxiety, and experiences of trauma, and that the origin country and host country made little difference. Other research has shown that suicidality is linked to the country, culture, and/and society within which one was raised and socialized (Colucci 2013; Colucci and Lester 2012; Hjelmeland 2013; Leach 2006), However, like the Fortuna et al. (2016) study, my study also did not show such a link. Those who engaged in suicidal thoughts after arriving in the UAE represented a wide range of nationalities. The one exception was that none of my African participants had engaged in suicidal thought or action in their home country; those who had were from South Asia and the Philippines.

Finally, the Nock et al. (2008; 2009) study mentioned at the beginning of this section was a cross-national survey of 108,663 respondents from the general population in twenty-one countries. Because the focus was not on immigrants or temporary migrants, the study offers a useful contrast. The Nock et al. average of suicidal ideation among the general population was 9.2%. They further found that high-income countries have higher rates of suicidal ideation than low- and middle-income countries and that the US has one of the highest rates at 15.6%. These statistics are a good point of reference. The rate of suicidality was much higher among my participants than the global average.[167] Sixteen of my forty-four participants (36%) had engaged in suicidal behavior or thought at some point in their lives, thirteen of those engaged in suicidal thought in the UAE, and eight of

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167. My participants were all from low-income countries, but had a higher rate of suicidal ideation than high-income countries. Could this be due to moving to and working in a high-income country?

the those had done so for the first time after arriving in Dubai. These numbers are significant (see table 2).

Table 2. Participants who engaged in suicidal thought

Only in home country	In both home country & UAE	Only in UAE	Never
3 / 44 (6.8%)	5 / 44 (11.4%)	8 / 44 (18.2%)	28 / 44 (63.6%)
	13 / 44 (20.5%) In UAE (and maybe in home country) 16 / 44 (36%) At some point in life (in the home country, UAE, or both)		

Note: The total number of participants in the study was forty-four.

That 18.2% of my participants only thought of suicide after arriving in the UAE is a clear indication that (among those in my sample) suicidal thoughts were a bi-product of post-migration stressors, that experiences while living in the country of origin did not influence them, and that, because they occurred post-arrival, they were likely not influenced by pre-existing psychiatric or biomedical causes.

Andreas Heinz (2014), a researcher in the field of psychiatry, argues that suicide attempts are not always driven by mental illness, and they should be seen as a distress signal indicating that current circumstances have become unbearable. Thus, to understand the circumstances, it is important to contextualize findings both temporally and spatially (Hjelmeland and Knizek 2010). Considering the context and circumstances which motivate suicidal thoughts will, according to Heinz (2014), help to avoid inappropriately labeling individuals who suffer from discrimination, political situations, and unequal

social structures as mentally ill. It focuses attention on the "everyday emotional reactions to adversity" (Heinz 2014, 137).

Focusing on suicidality as a post-migration phenomenon focuses attention on circumstances that occurred in the host country and on circumstances that might be due to having left home. While some circumstances are personal, others are due to the social patterning of suicide (Wray, Colen, and Pescosolido 2011). This can include the discriminatory, unequal social structures that result in exploitative working and living conditions as well as isolation and marginalization. Research has shown that factors such as isolation and insufficient social support may lead to high levels of anxiety, depression, and hopelessness decreasing the ability to cope and hence making them susceptible to suicide (Hovey and Magaña 2003; Kposowa 2000), as do poor economic conditions and disadvantage (Baudelot and Establet 2008; Spallek et al. 2014). Suicidality is also associated with a sense of alienation, isolation, and the inability to integrate into highly segregated societies, resulting in deep incongruity between immigrants' own lives and the more affluent lives of those who surround them (Wadsworth and Kubrin 2006). A factory owner I interviewed said that the men who work in his family's small company lived in Umm Al Quwain, an emirate (state) that is much smaller and less affluent than Dubai. There, he said, "workers are not surrounded by the opulence that one encounters around every corner of Dubai." He felt this made it easier on his workers.

The various personal and social factors that impact well-being are not isolated; they work iteratively, continually informing each other. They can also impact individuals differently, some factors playing more significant roles than others. Yet, while there was some differentiation, two conditions laid the foundation and exasperated all other

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variables. The first condition was that the stressors my participants encountered were chronic, cumulative, and extremely exploitative. The second condition overlaps with the first. External resources—a central form of resilience—were lacking. These external resources are the laws, policies, and governmental institutions that are designed to prevent exploitative living and working conditions and the mechanisms that provide safety nets when such conditions do arise. The lack of such preventative and protective measures increased stress and uncertainty, heightened boundary ambiguity, increased negative perceptions and hopelessness, and weakened emotions.

At the beginning of my interviews, I would explain that my study was motivated by the numerous accounts of suicide in the UAE. I would then not mention it again until near the end of the interview, and then only if it seemed appropriate. I wanted to give my participants the chance to speak to the issue on their own. Their words illustrate the hopelessness and utter despair that drove many to have suicidal thoughts. Negasi, the Ethiopian man with a university degree, had such thoughts. He said, "I can get why people kill themselves…. When you talk about high suicide rates, I can feel … I feel like that sometimes. … It's not the life I would wish for anybody."

I asked Sophie, the woman who spoke at length about stress, if she was ever so hopeless that she wanted to end her life, Sophie said,

> It's like for a minute you say it is better I am dead and I never (incomprehensible) … It's not easy (tears silently falling). … Many times I just say I wish I didn't even exist and wouldn't have to go through all of this. If this is really what I have to go through to… to get rich, or to earn a living, then I shouldn't even exist, because this is more than dead. It is really painful. Especially deep in the heart. When you feel your heart... the pain... it's better to be dead because when you're dead you don't feel anything. You just have to sleep. (hopeless or cynical laughter) And all of that…

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Mercy seemed to come the closest to acting upon her suicidal thoughts. She said,

> "Yes… Um… when I was in this… when I was passing through this
> challenges, I was walking on the road one day. I just, like, .. this large
> RTA bus … like.. I want to die… so… I keep a… There was a time again..
> that was the first one.. but, … Before, then, … in Deira it is very easy for
> you to come out and get… I (incomprehensible) alcohol, like this. So…
> there was a day I said I will kill myself then. Let me just die and go. I
> called one of my … somebody who used to (incomprehensible). They
> brought one drink for me, spirits. I said, when I finish this I want my
> intestine to cut. That was my intention for drinking those things. ...
> Because I want to die. … I don't want my family to know about me. Let
> them… just, oh I'm in Dubai, but they don't know I'm already dead. ... So
> that was all things coming in my head... So another one again... this the
> second one... The one again, this my last Kish. The first 4 days I did not
> eat anything I did not take any water. I said I will die... here… anything. If
> it's food... for food, I will not eat. God take my life, I don't want to live
> anymore (small laugh) … oh gosh… okay…"

Rohan, the Bangladeshi man discussed earlier, had lost his family's home because he had

failed to repay his debt in time. He seemed to carry an immense amount of grief and guilt

inside of him. He was the only participant who spoke about family motivating his

suicidal thoughts. Through Tarun, my interpreter, Rohan said,

> [My] sister said, "other people are earning very good and sending good
> money to the home, but you are not sending, what are you doing there?"
> … At that time, [I] was thinking about suicide. … [I did not act on it
> because I was] thinking, after I die, how will my parents survive?

While Rohan perceived his parents as being compassionate—"They realize. They

understand."—his sister either did not understand his circumstances, or chose to

blame their family's misfortunates on him.

While these stories help to illustrate my participants' despair, considering the

contrast between how they assessed their mental well-being before migrating and after

arriving in Dubai, reveals the immense change that occurred. Prior to carrying out my

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fieldwork, it seemed reasonable to presume that individuals who engaged in suicidal

thought had a history of such in their home countries. Thus, if someone spoke of suicidal

thoughts, I always asked if they'd experienced them in their home country, too. Five of

my participants had. The eight others, who included Rohan, Mercy, Sophie, and Negasi

whose stories were shared above, had not. They had only engaged in suicidal thought

since arriving in the UAE. When Rohan was asked if he had ever considered suicide

before coming to Dubai, he adamantly said "Never!" This was a common response.

Sophie said, "No, back home I didn't have [suicidal thoughts] … It's in Dubai. This

stress and everything and even thinking of dying… It's in Dubai. It's here." Negasi said,

"No…. Suicide starts here… sometimes because I don't speak to anybody about my

problems. Like I can't even tell my mom what is going on. …. I can't even talk to my

friends… old friends. … […..] I have nothing to go back to." Brice, who had not engaged

in suicidal thoughts himself, understood what drove others to do so. He said, "If you

don't have somebody you can talk to here … that's why people commit suicide. If you

don't have somebody you can express your feelings to, you go crazy. …"

It is impossible to know why Sophie, Mercy, and Rohan and the other five

participants engaged in suicidal thought. Several participants who said they would never

consider suicide referenced their religion, yet others who appeared religious did consider

suicide. Some who considered suicide appeared to be quite emotionally and

psychologically strong and carried positive perceptions, and some who seemed weaker in

this regard said they would never consider it. Those who engaged in suicidal ideation

represented a diversity of nationalities and genders. Their time in the UAE ranged

between one and four years. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, some people simply would not engage in suicidal thought.[168]

Heinz (2014) writes that suicidality can show that a person is "mentally distressed," that he or she "does not know how to continue her or his life in the given circumstances," or it can be an "emergency signal" indicating the need for help (137). Even though depression has been shown to be strongly associated with suicidality, Verrochio et al. (2016) found in their review of the literature that mental pain is an even stronger indicator of suicidal ideation. On the continuum of emotional well-being, many if not most of my participants hovered in the lower regions. Regardless of whether they engaged in suicidal ideation, the stress, anxiety, and mental pain they felt over their conditions was significant.[169]

How Ideation Progresses to Attempt

My aim in addressing suicidal ideation was to present a more tangible and accessible way to appreciate the level of distress my participants were experiencing. However, discussions of ideation also raise questions about the potential for suicidal thought to progress to suicide attempt or suicide. Four of my participants had attempted suicide in their home country; however, neither they nor anyone else in my sample had attempted it in the UAE. This does not, however, mean that they will not.

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168. It is possible that there are factors that distinguish between those who would and would not engage in suicidal ideation. However, such further analysis would require expertise beyond the author's.

169. During our interviews, the idea that participants may be "languishing" was often difficult to ascertain. Apart from individuals, such as Rohan and Negasi, whose anguish and distress were quite palpable, the interview process was restorative and helped revive them and give them a sense of hope. Many appeared happy by the end of the interview. Loneliness, isolation, and a lack of emotional support were briefly interrupted as I listened intently to what they had to say and showed compassion for what they were enduring.

It is only relatively recently that researchers have begun to explore the processes through which suicidal thoughts progress to suicidal attempts. That is the goal of this section, to examine the potentiality for such movement. It begins with a general introduction to theories of suicide that is of relevance to my participants and then addresses how ideation can develop into action.

Numerous theories attempt to explain the factors that motivate suicidal thought and behavior, and several of them are relevant to my participants' experiences. One of these is the role of psychological pain, or psychache, as Shneidman (1998) labeled it. Suicide, according to Shneidman (1998) is neither psychiatrically nor environmentally based. Rather, it is due to the inability to deal with adversity. "[F]rustrated psychological needs" result when an individual's "threshold" for psychological pain has been exceeded; when this occurs, psychache ensues and the likelihood for suicidal behavior increases (Shneidman 1998, 18). The mental pain individuals experience can depend on the meanings which individuals, groups, cultures, or societies give to suicide. These meanings—which are the motivators of suicide—can include rebellion and acts of protest or defiance, revenge and punishment of others, self-punishment due to a sense of failure, and suffering or pain due to distress, fear, alienation, or hopelessness (Lester 2011). Abramson et al. (2000) in his theory of suicide suggest that issues of hopelessness in relationship to depression may be a significant factor in understanding how psychosocial factors impact suicide. The work of Shneidman (1998) and Abramson et al. (2000) has been substantiated in other studies. In fact, psychache, hopelessness, and escape are the three most agreed upon motivators of suicide attempts (Verrocchio et al. 2016).

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Social isolation is another form of psychological pain. Addressed over a century ago, Durkheim's sociological study of suicide and the role of belonging is still relevant today. Central to his theory is that suicide is a social phenomenon, rather than an individual one. There are shared societal experiences that play a role in suicidal behavior. One of these factors is integration. Durkheim explains that integration involves having a sense of belonging that comes from familial or community bonds. These bonds reduce feelings of isolation and generally foster well-being. Building on Durkheim, as well as Shneidman, more recent work by Joiner (2007) has addressed the role of burdensomeness and belongingness as central motivators.

These studies are all relevant to this research. However, (apart from Joiner's work) they do not differentiate between suicidal ideation, attempts, or completed suicide. The work of Klonsky and May (2014), whose aim has been to understand which suicide ideators are at most risk of attempting suicide, does differentiate. Klonsky and May (2014) credit Joiner (2007) who was the first to analyze how suicidal thoughts advance to attempt and for inspiring their ideation-to-action framework. Joiner's (2007) theory of suicide is based on the premise that suicidal behavior increases when one—who already perceives him or herself as a burden and not belonging—acquires the capacity to enact lethal self-injury.

Klonsky and May's (2014) contend that psychological pain typically does not develop into suicidal ideation. If individuals have hope that their situation can be overcome, then they focus on bringing about that change and do not develop thoughts about ending their lives. It is when individuals with psychological pain also feel hopeless about their circumstances that suicidal thoughts develop. Becoming hopeless is the first

step of advancing from ideation to attempt. The second step is lacking a sense of connectedness, either to people or to some other aspect of life. This is similar to Joiner's burdensomeness and belonging and Durkheim's social isolation and lack of integration. Finally, as Joiner stated, individuals need the capacity to attempt suicide; however, unlike Joiner who limits capacity to the acquired experiences of self-injury, Klonsky and May see capacity more broadly. To them, capacity can also be dispositional (having low sensitivity to pain) and practical (having *access* to lethal means to kill oneself). Psychological pain and hopelessness combined with a perception of being unconnected coupled with an increased capacity for suicide increase the potential for suicidal ideation to progress into suicidal attempt.

My participants spoke of the hopelessness that led them to despair. Sophie talked about the mental distress she felt by her ill-treatment. Rohan spoke about the shame and guilt that arose from believing he had failed his parents. Many told me about the disillusionment and hopelessness they felt about their circumstances. Gabra spoke at length about the depression and isolation that he and so many others experience. Gabriel told about the soul crushing discrimination he encountered. Brice described the cognitive disconnect between his current situation and the life he should have been living. Boss (2006) contends that the ambiguity of one's circumstances combined with a sense of loss can result in feelings of hopelessness, fear, and shame. Feelings of ambiguous loss were the result of Tasha leaving her son behind and Mohamed not knowing when he would be able to return home.

Taliaferro and Muehlenkamp (2014) in their research on adolescents found that hopelessness and depression were predictors for both ideators and attempters. Verrochio

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et al. (2016) found in their review of forty-two studies that mental pain was central to suicide. Pompili et al. (2011) in their study of fifty individuals with suicidal ideation and fifty who had attempted suicide found that stressful life events and major depression were frequently reported by both. They also found that suicide attempters are more likely to speak of low social support than ideators.

What do these findings tell us about the future of my participants? Will their pain, hopelessness, isolation, and depression lead from suicidal ideation to suicidal attempts? I do not attempt to answer these questions, but leave them for the reader to consider.

Conclusion

Resilience comes from the personal assets and external resources to which one has access. Some of my participants had quite strong personal assets. They had a supportive family, a solid education, and an upbringing that prepared them to deal with and cope with harsh circumstances. Further, if we assume that those in better mental states tend to be the ones who migrate (i.e., the healthy migrant effect), then we can assume that the individuals in my study were self-selected, robust, resilient, and healthier than those who did not emigrate. However, while personal assets were relatively strong, external resources were more questionable.

External resources can include the environment where one lives and works and the institutional resources available. The environment relates to issues discussed in the previous chapter, most importantly, the location of one's accommodation and its condition. Both have the potential to harm resilience. Institutional resources are the structures—found in the laws and policies—that are designed for the protection of migrant workers. This was discussed at length in chapters three and four. In the UAE,

although there are extensive laws designed to protect, the sponsorship system which grants undue power to the employer, the vagueness with which some of the laws are written, and the inability to enforce the laws and policies that are on the books result in little protection for workers.

The stressors my participants encountered would, I believe, be considered extreme. They were chronic, cumulative, and ambiguous, as well as traumatic. Resick (2001) defines traumatic stress as stress that goes "beyond normal developmental life challenges" and are events that are "accompanied by intense fear, helplessness, or horror" (2). Being made to sleep on their employers' dining room floor, limited to one day off a month, being raped or otherwise harassed by one's male employer—I believe these would be considered traumatic. (The ILO indicators for forced labor discussed in chapter four provide a quick reference for the stressors encountered, many of which would be considered excessive and traumatic.)

Under most circumstances, one's perceptions and resilience provide the tools needed to deal with external stressors. My participants faced difficult odds. The stressors they encountered were extreme and the external resources that people tend to count on were denied to them. These resources were important because they provided the tools for overcoming, managing, or enduring the stressors they encountered, and for being moderately mentally healthy.

Only a limited amount of research on temporary low-wage migrant workers has been examined through a lens that examines the role of stressors in relationship to perceptions and resilience, and none has done so in the Arab Gulf. Further, research that addresses the particular stress of ambiguous loss among migrant workers is also quite

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limited and absent in this region. Finally, the literature that explores the processes

through which suicidal ideators become suicidal attempters is relatively limited, and none

has explored it in relationship to migrant workers.

The emotional well-being of my participants is found in the lower regions of the

continuum for emotional well-being, that region where "emptiness and stagnation

constitut[e] a life of quiet despair" (Keyes 2002, 210). Yet, despite this—despite the lack

of laws and policies that are designed to protect, despite the chronic, cumulative, and

ambiguous stress, and despite the depression, suicidal thoughts, and languishing at the

lower regions of emotional well-being—my participants endured. For resilience, their

only resources were personal. For some it was their life experiences that had taught them

to keep moving forward. For many, it was their family and hope for a better future. For

most, it was their belief in a higher power that controlled their life. All endured, but for

many it was and continues to be an unending endurance race. Time will tell if Klonsky's

(2014) theory of progression from ideator to attempter holds true.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

This dissertation research has explored and described the experiences of temporary low-wage migrant workers in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. It examines how structural violence in this particular context often led to experiences that increased vulnerability and that subsequently impacted emotional well-being. Unlike previous research which has focused only on migrant workers from a particular country or region, this study's sample represented a broad diversity of nationalities, occupations, and employers. Further, it targeted those earning in the lowest wage bracket of less than Dh1500 (US$408) per month. No other study of which I am aware has focused solely on this wage bracket in the Arab Gulf, had this diversity, or focused on the impact of structural violence on emotional well-being. These attributes and the exploratory nature of the study generated data that both reinforced previous findings on low-wage workers in the UAE and led to new findings.

Findings

Structural violence created many of the conditions and stressors that caused the vulnerability of my participants. These stressors included exploitative living and working conditions; verbal, physical, and sexual abuse; temporariness, low pay, and debt; chronic, cumulative, and traumatic attributes of their stress; extreme de-skilling and discriminatory treatment; isolation and exclusion; and the ambiguous loss created by the uncertainty of their circumstances coupled with the loss they experienced in relation to their families and homelands. Their vulnerability led to fear, stress, anxiety, and

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depression, which were the determinants of their emotional well-being. For some, it resulted in suicidal ideation.

Gainful employment and its associated economic benefits were central to why almost all of my participants came to the UAE, but they do not tell the complete story. These reasons do not explain the structural factors that prevented them from acquiring adequate work in their own countries, nor the other unassociated reasons that motivated their departure, such as misconceptions and/or deceptions concerning potential opportunities in the UAE, as well as socio-political and socio-cultural factors. Many of these factors are brought up in migration research focused on the Arab Gulf. However, I found that regardless of their motivation to emigrate and regardless of what they knew about the UAE context, there was a clear tendency to dismiss and/or rationalize information that did not align with their desperate need for gainful employment. This cognitive dissonance filtered out undesirable information and reduced their capacity to think critically about the information they were given. They did not migrate for rational reasons; rather, they rationalized their reasons for migrating.

The research design for this project is significant because it resulted in a diverse sample that gave me the opportunity to theorize about the role of national, racial, and ethnic labels. I found that the complex ways in which nationality, ethnicity, and race intersect with socio-economic status, education, gender, and social capital determine the very diverse and unequal outcomes among those from the Global South. These factors determined my participants' extent of marginalization, residential segregation, quality of housing, access to urban centers, and mental health. They determined the degree to which my participants were made structurally vulnerable, as well as the extent to which they

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lacked the resources—namely those that provide protection by the law—to overcome

such structural obstacles. While much of this is consistent with literature on the Arab

Gulf, there are two ways in which my analysis differs. One is its attempt to disentangle

the role of nationality, race, and ethnicity. Labeling discrimination based on nationality as

"racism" can be useful because it draws attention to the discriminatory practice of

privileging some nationalities over other. However, from an academic and more scholarly

perspective, lumping these very different prejudices together misses the opportunity to

tease them apart and to analyze them in greater depth. Further comparative work could be

done cross-nationally to tease apart the similar and differing processes through which

nationality, race, and ethnicity both overlap and are articulated differently in different

contexts.

The second way my analysis of discriminatory factors differs is its attention to

historical precedence. The UAE's history of slavery and colonialism, and its

contemporary embracing of neoliberal ideology perpetuates the structural violence

created by their historic divisions and power relations and, in the process, maintains

discriminatory divisions. It is also possible that there is simply universal distain for those

with darker skin color; however, this would not account for greater respect and inclusion

for those of certain nationalities. The composition of my sample as well as knowledge of

the broader UAE context revealed that historically driven racial divisions played an

important role in determining the degree of discrimination encountered and their overall

rights and privileges. More historical and comparative research could help bolster this

finding.

This research also addressed issues of sociality and spatiality, and how they intermingle. Bunnell and Kathiravelu (2016) identified the presence of friendship and sociality in the lives of low-wage migrants and the multiple purposes it serves. Friendship impacted this population emotionally and affectively, and performed practical functions in terms of access to the city and negotiating one's way through it. The researchers explored "friendship, conviviality, and other forms of positive sociality" that act as resources, making life more livable (204). They found that "friendship and other forms of convivial sociality act not just as social glue," but that their presence acts "as a kind of balm that helps soothe and heal" the challenges of living in highly stratified cities and performing low-wage work (211). As discussed in chapter seven, the ability to access and engage in the sociality of the city is important because—along with life experiences, the emotional support of family, and religious beliefs—it helps one to endure his or her circumstances. However, my participants' experiences revealed that access to this sociality was often limited through structural forces.

Specifically, these limitations were due to the spatial dimension of discrimination. Attending to this dimension of the context, moves analysis beyond the "bodies" and focuses attention on the unique features of particular spaces and how they shape the experience of those living in them (Foner 2017). Focusing on the spatial dimension prompted me to theorize about zones of marginalization. Other forms of discrimination were very much driven by nationality, race, and ethnicity, while borders, boundaries, and spaces were often governed by socio-economic status. It determined the spaces within which one could move and the boundaries one could cross. My participants' stories were about marginalization, exclusion, and limited mobility. Their stories revealed how space

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and the relations that governed all aspects of their lives often resulted in zones of marginalization. Low-wage worker accommodation is the clearest example of these zones which can marginalize through their peripheral location and the physical conditions of the space. The location and conditions of the accommodation are a form of structural violence in that the harm they create is hidden and ambiguous. The limited ability of occupants to move in and out of these zones increases vulnerability to exploitation and abuse by employers. What happens when the sociality described by Bunnell and Kathiravelu is deemed relevant but inaccessible? Zones of marginalization offer conceptual avenues for examining how access to the sociality of the city is linked with access to institutional resources, and how together they can increase the vulnerability.

Limitations

This study sample's strength was found in the great diversity of its sample. This may, however, also be considered one of its greatest weaknesses. As discussed in chapter four, a broad diversity of low-wage migrant workers meant that communication skills were extremely varied. Some participants were highly skilled in English, others were more analytically and self-reflexively skilled, and others were neither of these. There are, of course, always differences in the loquaciousness of interviewees; however, it is likely not to this extreme or in such socially segmented ways. Those with higher-level English language skills tended to be from Africa and were often more educated. Those from Asia tended on the whole to be more tentative. In the process of writing up this research, I often battled against the desire to use data which provided richer, more eloquent, and more quotable examples; however, doing so misrepresents my sample and their experiences. This was a challenge I was constantly aware of, but not one I would have

changed. It is the diversity of my sample population that led to some of the most notable conclusions.

The findings from this study are not meant to be generalizable or representative of the entire population of low-wage workers earning less than Dh1500 (US$408) per month. This sample was hand-selected. I was put in contact with many participants because previous ones said they knew someone who had "a good story to tell," typically meaning that the individual had encountered extremely difficult circumstances. There were some relatively "good" employers in the sense that although the pay was quite low, they covered the visa, flight, and other fees as they were supposed to by law, and employees had one day off a week and shared a room with "only" four to six co-workers. The general conditions of the accommodation and related facilities were acceptable, and the location was not too isolated.

Yet, even though there are some relatively good employers, the salary (<Dh1500) makes it almost impossible to remit a sufficient amount of money and to have a life worth living, a life that is not confined by the perimeter of one's labor camp, nor denied the sociality of the city. While my sample was hand-picked, their salaries were quite common and consistent with other sources. There is no minimum wage in the UAE and there are no official statistics on salaries among low-wage workers.[170] A website that provides information about all aspects of living in Dubai and which seems to have the most comprehensive collection of data on salaries for low-wage occupations is DubaiFAQs (www.dubaifaqs.com). The website appears to base salary amounts on

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170. Charterhouse is a large recruitment agency in the UAE. It produces an annual salary guide to the UAE. The lowest salary amount provided is for a Transactional Accountant Dh6,000 per month

information gathered from the media, job advertisements, recruiters, and readers on their forum. For 2014, they stated that cleaners earn between Dh800 and 1300 per month, laborers between Dh600 and 1500, and maids and nannies between Dh700 and 3000. These amounts reflect for the most part the salaries of my participants (see Appendix B for participants' occupations and salaries).

My participants' conditions are not necessarily representative of the entire population of migrants earning Dh1500 or less a month, and salary is not always indicative of working and living conditions. However, based on the experiences of my participants, the labor camp accommodation I observed while volunteering with the NGO, the accommodations I saw while visiting my participants, and the advertisements for bed space, accommodation with poor conditions is far from rare. Thus, I believe my findings clearly point to a larger problem. Those who earn the least in the UAE are forced to endure the least favorable conditions and suffer greater abuse.

Further, while these findings are not generalizable, they are transferable. This ethnographic research did not only examine low-wage migrants and their experiences, it also studied the city, it geography, and its history to better understand its unique features and how those features structured the experiences of those who migrated there. Other researchers can take these data and the context in which they are grounded, and determine the appropriateness of transferability (C. Marshall and Rossman 2015).

Another limitation of the study was the absence of certain populations who were not represented in my sample. I know there are substantial numbers of extremely low-wage Chinese, Vietnamese, and Indonesian workers. However, it was typically easier for other nationalities from the Global South to engage and gain the trust of potential

interviewees, and I had no connections to these populations; thus, I was unable to engage with them. I do have a very good representation of the lowest paid occupations, apart from factory workers. Again, I lacked access. Finally, only one of my participants, Ras, a twenty-six-year-old Indian man, identified as gay, and much of his narrative was closely connected to his identity as a gay man. As a result, he was not included in my discussions in this dissertation. It is possible that there were other participants who might have identified as LGBTQ; however, the friend who put me in contact with Ras was also openly gay, so Ras likely presumed I already knew, and was therefore open about his sexuality.

Finally, the greatest limitation of all was conducting ethnographic fieldwork in a politically sensitive context. As I discussed in the methodology chapter, the Dubai government is sensitive to any form of commentary that may present the city negatively. This includes negative comments about the economy as well as the weather. Classroom conversations that professors can hold are restricted and scholars whose work has been deemed threatening have had to leave the university. Due to the high level of surveillance and control, individuals who could have potentially connected me with workers felt unable to put themselves, their companies, and/or their employees in what they perceived would be a risky situation and some workers were unwilling to participate due to the fear of being deported and banned. The climate of fear and possible retribution was a barrier that increased the difficulty of this research.

Policy Recommendations

A recurring theme in the literature on low-wage migrant workers in the UAE is, as discussed in chapter four, the problematic and abusive nature of the *kafala* system.

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This is without question one of the most significant problems facing foreigners in the UAE. However, another issue is equally in need of attention. It is in relationship to the enforcement of immigration and employment law and the non-compliance of Emirati officials whose job it is to do this. I offer one policy recommendation that would greatly improve the lives of low-wage migrant workers.

Much of the exploitation my participants encountered was due to laws being poorly enforced and/or ignored by government officials. One example of this is employers who retain employee passports as discussed in chapter six.[171] This is a common illegal practice and is discussed frequently in the media. In addition, on a UAE government website, one of the central points given for "spreading awareness amongst workers" is that workers are "entitled to keep possession of all … personal identification documents." Yet, as described in chapter six, during my visit to Immigration with a domestic worker, the Immigration official told us quite blatantly that employers must retain domestic worker passports to prevent them from absconding. This is a clear example of non-compliance.

Another example involves abuse by employers as well as non-compliance by officials. Employers exploit low-wage workers when they force them to re-pay hiring and visa renewal costs. By law, employers of low-wage workers are to cover the cost of recruitment and hiring. These include the cost of entry visa and travel to the UAE, and the cost of medical tests, health insurance, and insurance of the employee's residency permit. At the moment, as my participants' experiences often showed, the government

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171. Both employers of domestic workers and companies who employ dozens or more workers commonly retain passports.

has difficulty enforcing these rights, making it extremely easy for employers to pass these costs on to their employees. One of the central reasons why it is easy for employers to exploit workers in this way is because of the government's (current) inability to ensure the anonymity of low-wage migrant workers who wish to submit a complaint regarding such conditions to the Ministry of Labor. Workers are told to either submit complaints at the Ministry in person or through its "helpline number." In theory, a worker's identity is to be protected. However, as my participants' experiences showed, this was not the case, and they will potentially face retribution by their employer. It could be that loss of anonymity occurs on rare occasions; however, stories such as these spread quickly. If workers cannot trust that their anonymity will be protected, then they are not going to risk raising complaints. As I discussed in much depth in chapter four, it is too easy for employers to terminate their employees.

A final example of non-compliance and lack of anonymity is found in the process of submitting complaints against one's employer to the Ministry of Labor. As discussed in chapter four, my participants learned that complaints were often not confidential and that employers could sometimes learn who submitted the complaint. When this happens, employees risk early termination of their employment. Further, it was also learned that if workers go to the Ministry of Labor to address contractual problems, such as being denied their end-of-contract gratuity that by law employers are required to pay, they may find that their Emirati sponsor/employer is the official sitting behind the desk. Again, this is a case of non-compliance as well as a conflict of interest and exploitation of one's position of power.

The job of government officials in the Ministry of Labor and Immigration is to uphold the law. However, based on my participants' experiences, the laws that have been designed to protect workers are often ignored by these officials. These acts of non-compliance appear to be commonplace and widespread. Assuming that non-compliance of its laws runs counter to the desires of UAE rulers, then addressing where, how, when, and why these acts of non-compliance occur is essential. When they are not addressed, such non-compliance is deemed intentional and acceptable. Failing to address them results in the UAE government—and the UAE culture as a whole—being seen as indifferent to the exploitative practices that harm those who are most marginalized in society.

Future Research

As this was an exploratory story, it addressed a broad range of issues, and thus presents many potential avenues of inquiry that could be further explored. One is in regards to how issues of race, ethnicity, and nationality interact with age and with length of stay in the UAE. The length of my participants' sojourns was quite varied. Some of them had arrived in the UAE within months of our interview and others had been there for decades. One man had been in the UAE for twenty-three years. In general, South Asians and Filipina participants were older on average and had stayed for much longer than African ones. I am uncertain as to the cause. It could be that sub-Saharan Africans stay for shorter periods because of a strong desire and ability to return home or move onwards, or that there is—likely because of their education—eventually a greater likelihood of upper mobility, thus disqualifying them from being in my sample. Or, it could be that because of their higher levels of education they were less willing to stay and

endure such low-paid, "unskilled" work, which most found extremely demoralizing. Of course, one possibility is that it is simply one of the limitations of having a small sample. Additional research could explore migration patterns and processes of this population. If many sub-Saharan Africans have remained in the UAE and managed to obtain upward mobility, perhaps greater effort could be made to understand the processes involved and how obstacles can be negotiated.

Also, while I focused on the role of socio-economic status in determining zones of marginalization, the spatiality of racial and national discrimination could be further explored. Recently in follow-up conversations with black African participants, I have been told that racist behavior seems to be increasing despite new anti-discrimination legislation. Companies in the process of hiring will deny black Africans entry into their offices or physically eject them from their space. The Africans I know will do whatever possible to avoid placing themselves in spaces where they will have to endure blatant, demoralizing racist comments and behaviors. Unfortunately, however, during the job search, one does not know if he or she has entered a zone of marginalization until it is too late. More analysis could be given to the roles of nationality and race and how these two components limit physical movement into certain spaces and opportunities to particular jobs.[172] Also related to the spatiality of the city is the design of new public spaces, their

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172. Recently I was told about a black African woman who sat for an Emirates Catering entry test. (Giving entry tests is a useful way for companies to quickly weed out job seekers who are not qualified.) After everyone finished the test, the tests were collected, and the names of those who had the highest scores were placed on the bulletin board. This woman had received the highest marks. When she approached the company personnel for the next step, he looked at her, did not ask her any questions, and told her she was not appropriate for the job. The introductory page of Emirates Flight Catering Careers webpage states that it is "a multicultural workplace" and that they "have taken pride in creating an inclusive" environment. Another story of racist treatment involved being yelled at on the phone by company personnel asking, "Why would we want to hire an African?!!!!"

function, and how they target particular groups, most often tourists, and middle and upper class residents. Further research could explore how these spaces erase the traces of low-wage migrant workers, even when they are present. This could then be the basis for a cross-national comparative analysis that examines how exclusionary practices work in different contexts.

Further research on the spatial aspect of migrant bodies could also look at labor accommodation and unpack a more detailed and analytical examination of the bodily experience of sharing such confined spaces on a daily basis. Lucy Jackson (2016) has written on the territory of the body of domestic workers and how the individual demarcates it. Boundaries, according to Jackson (2016), are not random but are created in defense and in relation to particular experiences, and individuals choose to engage in specific activities that reinforce those aspects of their territory and its borders that are most important to the maintenance of self. The boundaries and zones of marginalization that impact those living in shared housing could be examined in relation to the scale of the body, how it experiences and interprets space and territory, and how this impacts its ability to cope and be productive. The outer limits of my participants' territory seemed to be physical as well as imagined or symbolic. They spoke about others invading their space and the visceral effect of such intrusions on their emotional and physical health. My participants also spoke of the active ways in which employers attempted to dismantle boundaries to undermine and reduce workers' agency. Further research could examine how the scale of the migrant body within the broader scope of the city can be strengthened or made more vulnerable.

Finally, some argue that it is not possible to draw comparisons between the US and UAE immigration policies and the treatment of low-wage workers because the UAE is not a "democracy." I would argue that a comparative analysis is very much needed. Foreigners in the UAE and outside-observers of the region and its policies have little awareness of the parallels that can be drawn between the two countries. For example, studies addressing how employers use the threat of deportation as a mechanism of control among migrants who have regular—but *temporary*—status can be found in the US (Benz-Rogers 2014; Hahamovitch 2013; Johnston 2010) and in Europe (Bridget Anderson and Rogaly 2005). Further, the international community often condemns the unjust *kafala* system, viewing it as a deviant system. However, it is not. The diversity and scale to which temporary foreign workers are used in the UAE sets it far apart. However, systems tying low-wage temporary migrant workers to employers can also be found in the US (Apgar 2015; Bauder 2006; Benz-Rogers 2014; Delgado-Wise, Márquez, and Gaspar 2015; Hill 2011), Canada (Foster 2012; Hill 2011; Strauss and McGrath 2017; Valiani 2012), the UK (Bridget Anderson and Rogaly 2005; Scott 2015), and parts of Europe (Mannon et al. 2012; Pajnik 2012; Plewa 2013). Castle et al. (2015) argue that it is becoming more and more common for governments to revitalize old guestworker programs. They write, "governments everywhere seem to be looking back to the old guest worker model or the contract labour models used in Gulf oil economies and some Asian labour-importing countries, to introduce new systems of what is euphemistically labelled 'circular migration'" (2380).

Carrying out an exploratory study of the emotional well-being of low-wage migrant workers in Dubai is important because it sheds further light on the

marginalization and oppression of this population and how it impacts their emotional well-being. As part of a comparative study, this research can serve a broader purpose by revealing the ways in which UAE practices are similarly engaged in by the US (and other democracies). Denying such parallels allows those in the US and elsewhere to presume that they have the moral high ground, to distance themselves from such practices, and to believe they are justified in their incrimination of the Gulf. As a result, the mechanisms that allow such social inequalities persist and spread. For Americans, the UAE is an important case study, not because of certain clear objectifiable differences, but because of the similarities it holds.

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APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA BY REGION

	Africa		South Asia		Asia Pacific		All Regions
		F:M		F:M		F:M	
	Cameroon 3	2:1	Bangladesh 5	0:5	Philippines	2:0	
	Ethiopia 3	1:2	India 5	0:5			
	Ghana 2	0:2	Nepal 6	3:3			
	Kenya 3	2:1	Pakistan 6	4:2			
	Nigeria 7	1:6	Sri Lanka 2	2:0			
Total Participants[1]	18 (41%)		24 (55%)		2 (5%)		44
Female : Male	6:12		9:15		2:0		17:27
Age							
Average age	29.5		34		46.5		32.7
Education							
HS + further edu.	13/18 (72%)		5/24 (21%)		2/2 (100%)		20/44
Grade 6 through HS	4 (22%)		10 (42%)		0		14
Grade 5 or less	1 (5%)		9 (38%)		0		10
Monthly Salary in Dirhams							
Earned > 1500 ($408)[2]	3/18 (17%)		1/24 (.4%)		2/2 (100%)		6/44 (14%)
Earned 1500 or less[2, 3]	12/18 (67%)		18/24 (75%)		0		30/44 (68%)
Earned 950 or less	4/18 (22%)		8/24 (33%)		0		12/44 (27%)
Not earning a salary[2]	3/18 (17%)		5/24 (21%)		0		8/44 (18%)
Accommodation in Dubai							
Labor camp	10/18		11/24		0/2		21/44
Live-in	2		4		1		7
Provide bed space	3		3		0		6
Rent bed space in city	3		4		1		8
Rent bed in camp	0		1		0		1
Currently homeless	0		1 (in labor camp)		0		1
At some point homeless[4]	1		3		0		4
Visa Status on Arrival							
Visit	16/18		4/24		1/2		21/44
Employment	2		20		1		23
Visa Status at Time of Interview							
Working on a visit visa	4		1		0		5
Irregular	1		2		0		3

[1]Percentages are rounded off to the nearest whole number.

[2]Those earning over or less than 1500 or not earning add up to total participants by region.

[3]This includes those earning Dh950 or less; it does not include those who are not earning a salary

[4]Some participants are double counted.

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANTS BY NATIONALITY, OCCUPATION, AGE, AND SALARY

	Pseudonym	Nationality	Occupation at time of interview	Age	Salary AED	US$
1	Rashma	Nepali	Cleaner - commercial	28	900	245
2	Manish	Nepali	Cleaner - commercial	28	450	123
3	Gabra	Ethiopian	Security Guard	35	900	245
4	Wafa	Pakistani	Unemployed nurse	26	S / VV	–
5	Jasweer	Pakistani	Bus Nanny	46	1500	408
6	Rifat	Bangladeshi	Personal Driver	37	5000	1361
7	Jean	Filipina	Nanny live-in: for Lebanese/Brit	45	3500	953
8	Jilan	Pakistani	DW live-in: for Pakistani	30	1500	408
9	Ghaziyah	Pakistani	"Businesswoman" – unemployed	29	S / VV	–
10	Ganiru	Nigerian	Construction	29	700	191
11	Negasi	Ethiopian	Security Guard	30	1000	272
12	Ras	Indian	Rest. Supervisor	26	1300	354
13	Toben	Nigerian	Construction	35	1000	272
14	Jason	Indian	No job; accountant temporarily	24	S / VV	–
15	Brice	Cameroonian	Security Guard	29	1000	272
16	Yabani	Nigerian	Security Guard	30	1300	354
17	Maya	Nepali	DW live-in: for Indian	27	600	163
18	Sunita	Nepali	DW live-in: for Indian	28	600	163
19	Nina	Cameroonian	No job; was live-in DW 1 week	28	S / VV	–
20	Nabin	Nepali	Cleaner - commercial	40	700	191
21	Rabia	Sri Lankan	Cleaner - commercial	52	1000	272
22	Tariq	Pakistani	Gardener	40	1500	408
23	Michael	Kenyan	Car washer	32	1000	272
24	Pachai	India	Shop Deliverer	23	1200	327
25	Usman	Pakistani	Personal Driver for Emirati	30	1500	408
26	Emu	Ethiopian	Salon worker, trained	24	1000	272
27	Ankit	Nepali	Construction – not working; ill	48	NE	–
28	Sophie	Cameroonian	Salon worker, not trained	25	1000	272
29	Analyn	Filipina	Security Guard	48	2200	599
30	Muhamed	Indian	Construction	50	1050	286
31	Kendra	Kenyan	DW live-in: for Egyptian; agent	24	1000	272
32	Lisha	Kenyan	DW live-in: for Indian	35	1600	436
33	Mike	Nigerian	Window washer	36	900	245
34	Danjua	Sri Lankan	DW live-in; absconded; irregular	33	I – 800	218
35	Abir	Bangladeshi	Construction	42	1400	381
36	Peter	Nigerian	Irregular - puts ads on cars	27	I – 3000	817
37	Gabriel	Nigerian	Cleaner – commercial	26	800	218
38	Fardin	Bangladeshi	Cleaner – commercial –outdoor	35	1100	300
39	Sumon	Bangladeshi	Cleaner – unemployed; irregular	32	I / NE	–
40	Joseph	Ghanaian	Cleaner - commercial	25	W / NE / VV	–
41	Godwin	Ghanaian	Cleaner - commercial	28	W / NE / VV	–
42	Ayaan	Indian	Cleaner - commercial	?	950	259
43	Rohan	Bangladeshi	Construction	27	600	163
44	Mercy	Nigerian	Hair stylist	32	2300	626

S = Searching for work; I = Irregular status; W = Working; NE = Not earning a salary; VV = Visitor Visa
Participants are listed in the order interviewed.

APPENDIX C

IRB LETTER, INFORMATION LETTER, AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

APPROVAL:CONTINUATION

Takeyuki Tsuda
Human Evolution and Social Change, School of (SHESC)
480/965-7887
Takeyuki.Gaku.Tsuda@asu.edu

Dear Takeyuki Tsuda:

On 3/6/2018 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Continuing Review
Title:	The emotional and psychological well-being of low-wage migrant workers in the UAE
Investigator:	Takeyuki Tsuda
IRB ID:	STUDY00000840
Category of review:	(7)(b) Social science methods, (7)(a) Behavioral research
Funding:	Name: ASU: Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA)
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Consent form for Focus Group, Category: Consent Form; • Recruitment script for others, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Consent forms for Participants, Category: Consent Form; • Recruitment script for participants, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Recruitment Script for FG, Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB approved the protocol from 3/6/2018 to 3/21/2019 inclusive. Three weeks before 3/21/2019 you are to submit a completed Continuing Review application and required attachments to request continuing approval or closure.

Page 1 of 2

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 3/21/2019 approval of this protocol expires on that date. When consent is appropriate, you must use final, watermarked versions available under the "Documents" tab in ERA-IRB.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Elizabeth Reber-Rider
        Elizabeth Reber-Rider
        Takeyuki Tsuda

Interview protocol:
Interviewees are invited to start their story where they want. As much as possible, control of the narrative is given to them, allowing those who want, to freely tell their story with minimal interruption. During pauses, probing questions or encouragement to move on is given. At the end (see page 2), issues that did not arise organically or sufficiently, are explored in greater depth.

Part I: 3 periods of migration

1. Home country
   - *Tell me about your home, where you come from.*
   - *Tell me about your family. …*
   - *Tell me about your community, village.*
   - *Tell me about the people in your life when you lived there.*
   - *Tell me about your schooling/education/work experience.*
   - *What effected / influenced you the most as a child? … as a teen?*
   - *Who …*

2. During
   - *Tell me how you learned about the UAE, and what you knew about it.*
   - *Tell me about your expectations.*
   - *Tell me about your reasons for migrating.*
       - *Were there any other reasons?*
   - *Tell me about the process.*
   - *Tell me about how you paid the agent / for the ticket / for the plane ticket*

3. Host country
   - *Tell me about your work.*
   - *Tell me about where you sleep / live.*
   - *Tell me about life is like there.*
   - *Tell me step-by-step what you do throughout the day. (ask if seems useful)*
   - *Tell me about your physical health, and whether it has changed.*

   Probing questions for above:
   - *Can you tell me more about that?*
   - *How did it make you feel?*
   - *What was most challenging/difficult about (that experience/event)?*
   - *How was it challenging/difficult?*
   - *Was there anyone or anything that helped you survive (manage that period)?*

Part II: Specific issues
Keeping in mind the 3 parts of migration, after part I, questions are <u>asked if suitable and appropriate</u>.
- Sources of emotional support
  - *Tell me about your relationships with… family, friends, community.*
    - *Tell me about the people in your family you are closest to.*
    - *Tell me about the people in your village / neighborhood / community that you are closest to.*
      - *Tell me about what you did with them. … friendly, helpful,*
      - *Tell me about the economic level of the people where you lived.*
  - *Tell me about the people in your life now.*
  - *Tell me about what or who brings you emotional strength.*
    - *Who do you share your worries with?*
  - *Who do you trust the most?*
  - *Who do you talk to when you feel stressed or worried?*
    - *What do you talk about?*
  - Probe about:
    - relationships with family, friends, community
    - isolation / feeling alone
    - role/importance of religion/spirituality
- Sources of stress
  - *What were/are your biggest concerns/worries?*
  - *What about your everyday life do you find most stressful? ***
  - *What things in life seem too big, too difficult?*
  - *How do you feel about…*
    - shared accommodation (privacy, space); food
    - work conditions, free time
    - distance from family/community
- Coping mechanisms – how stress and difficulties are dealt with
  - *What helps you survive each day of work? ….* [try to be specific]
  - *From where do you get your inner strength?*
  - *What motivates you? Gives you encouragement?*
- Emotional state
  - *What do you usually think about when you are NOT working?*
  - *How do you usually feel during the day when you are working?*
  - *Do you feel safe?* (especially for women)
  - *How did it feel being here on a visit visa? … without a visa?*
  - *Are you easily discouraged?*
- Self-appraisal (self-assessment; and self-efficacy (belief) and self-esteem (view of))
  - *How do you feel about your life? … about the work you are doing?*
    - *Are you satisfied/okay with …*
  - *Tell me about the future.*
  - *Tell me about your goals.*

- - *Do you feel you have been treated fairly (here, during, with…)*
- Discrimination
  - *Do people treat you badly because of your religion, or nationality or for other reasons?*
    - *Tell me about it.*
  - *Can you give some examples of when you have experienced it?*

Suicide (might come end of part I or II) … <u>only ask if there is indication that it is a possibility</u>
- *Does life ever seem like too much work / too difficult?*
- *Tell me what you think about when life seems too difficult or cruel.*
- *What do you want to do when it feels that way?*

  Depending on responses, ….
  - *Have you ever tried to hurt yourself? Tell me about it.*
    - *Tell me about what happened to make you think about it.*
  - *Have you ever wanted to <u>end your life</u>?*
  - *If not… What stopped your from acting?*
  - *If yes… Tell me about it.*
    - *Tell me about what happened to make you do it.*

  Do you think your life has improved since coming here?
- *If yes, tell me how it has improved. In what ways.*

  <u>End of interview, ask:</u>
- How do you feel now?
- Why did you decide to be interviewed? Motivation?

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT for INTERVIEWS with
LOW-WAGE MIGRANT WORKERS

Well-bing of Migrants in the UAE

My name is Lisa Reber. I am a doctoral student under the direction of Professor Takeyuki Tsuda in the Department of Justice and Social Inquiry at Arizona State University. I would like to interview you because you about your experiences as a migrant.

I would like to listen to the story of your life. I want to learn about life in your home country, the process of migrating here, life in the host country. I want to learn about your well-being, and the stresses and challenges you experience.

There will be one interview and it will last for about an hour. It will depend on how much time you have available. You have the right to not answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. I may ask to do another interview; however, you may choose not to.

I will not tell anyone else about you and what you tell me. Your identity will be kept secret.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to be interviewed.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact me

Lisa Reber

WRITTEN CONSENT FORM for INTERVIEWS
with MIGRANTS WORKERING IN THE UAE,
and with INDIVIDUALS WHO WORK WITH MIGRANTS

Focus of interview: Well-being of migrants in the UAE

Principle Investigator: Dr. Takeyuki Tsuda, Professor (and dissertation co-chair)
School of Human Evolution and Social Change
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona, 85287-2402 USA

Co-Investigator: Lisa Reber
In the US: Justice & Social Inquiry
School of Social Transformation
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona, 85287-6403 USA

In the UAE: Zayed University
Dubai, UAE

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?
We invite you to take part in a research study because you are a migrant who is working in the UAE, and because I believe you have valuable information to share based on your experiences.

Why is this research being done?
This research is being done in order to obtain a better understanding of the experiences and conditions faced by migrants, and the suicidal thoughts that some migrants engage in.

What will I be asked about?
You will be asked to share your knowledge about the following:
• the experiences and conditions that are faced in the migration process in the migrant's country and here in the UAE, and views of these experiences,
• thoughts about what helps/hurts the ability to have a positive experience as a migrant,
• greatest concerns for migrants, and
• future plans.

How long will the research last?
We expect that individual participants will spend between at least 30 minutes to an hour in an interview. Following the interview, you may be asked to participate in a further interview; however, you may choose not to. If we do another interview, we will do it at a location convenient to you.

How many people will be studied?

We expect to interview between 30 and 80 migrant workers.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?
You are free to decide whether you wish to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you will only be expected to do one interview. Following the interview, and if you agree, we may arrange a follow-up interview.

Who will be present during the interview?
The only people who will be present during the interview are you, the translator, and the interviewer, Lisa Reber.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?
You can leave the research at any time; it will not be held against you.

What happens to the information collected for the research?
Your responses will be confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

If you choose to not have a second interview, then no information identifying you will be kept. If you agree to future interviews, information identifying you and your contact information will be kept in a locked and secure place. All data will be deleted when the research ends. This will be no later than 2022.

Will I be compensated?
No compensation will be given for this interview. Compensation for future interviews will be provided in the form of phone cards.

Who can I talk to if I have concerns?
If you have questions or concerns, you can contact Lisa Reber who will be carrying out the interviews at lisareber@asu.edu, or contact the research team at takeyuki.gaku.tsuda@asu.edu
This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may talk to them at (+1-480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by Lisa Reber.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides Lisa Reber.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

By signing below I agree to participate in an interview for this study.

_____   _____ _____
Signature   Printed Name   Date