

## UNDECIDED PRESENT, UNCERTAIN FUTURES



The previous chapters have focused on the encounter between foreign nationals and legal and surveillance institutions. Migrants' deportability, however, is not just felt and experienced in relation to these official bodies, it is also embedded in their daily lives, social relations and sense of self.

When foreign nationals are confronted with the Home Office's intent to deport them, they are usually confused, surprised, some even shocked. They do not fully understand why this is happening to them, how they can prevent it, what their chances are of preventing it and the full consequences of failing to prevent it. As these questions are gradually answered in one way or another, foreign nationals grasp the circumstances they are in and uncertainty prevails as to whether or not they will be able to remain in the UK and the degree of damage that may ensue to their present and future life. When filing the notice of appeal, foreign nationals become appellants and new routines enter their daily lives. Some might lose their right to work, most will be subjected to some form of state surveillance, all will experience long-term uncertainty. This chapter focuses on the impact of deportability on migrants' everyday lives and the strategies they devise to cope with it.

Much of the literature on uncertainty has been developed by researchers in the field of nursing and health, focusing on patients, their relatives and caregivers (Ågård and Harder 2007; Morser and Penrod 1999; Penrod 2007). While the context here differs, this literature is nevertheless relevant. The findings of Ågård and Harder's (2007) study of the experience of uncertainty and the coping strategies employed by relatives of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) patients in Denmark, for example, may be translated into the present context.

The authors find that, confronted with uncertainty about whether their loved ones will survive (and if so, the extent and seriousness of any eventual disabilities), relatives tend to deploy three main coping strategies: enduring uncertainty; putting self apart (that is, a process of withdrawal and refraining from showing concern); and forming personal cues (that is, constantly assessing one's case) as gathering information is vital to their ability to adapt, even if the cues might lead to misconceptions (Ågård and Harder 2007). Both appellants and relatives in this study have used these coping strategies in much the same way.

Yet living under the constant threat of forced removal affects not just migrants' current lives but also their imagining of possible futures (Burman 2006). Thus the ability of appellants and their relatives to reshape the futures available to them represents another coping strategy that is either not present or a taboo subject in the context of an ICU. This chapter looks first at the material consequences and human costs of persistent waiting, and the resulting internalisation of deportability. It then focuses on four coping strategies devised by migrants: the three identified by Ågård and Harder (2007) mentioned above – enduring uncertainty, putting self apart, and forming personal cues – but also a fourth: re-imagining possible futures.

## **The Embodiment of Chronic Concern**

When looking at the embodied and sensory experiences of undocumented migrants in Israel during a fierce campaign that led to their mass criminalisation, arrest and deportation, Willen found that illegality deeply impacted upon 'migrants' everyday, embodied experiences of being-in-the-world ... profoundly shaping their subjective experiences of time, space, embodiment, sociality and self' (Willen 2007: 10). Much like Willen, I argue here that deportability pervades the everyday lives of migrants facing deportation from the UK and their relatives. It intrudes on their sense of self, affects their social relations and alters their conceptions of the present and the future.

This embodiment of deportability is informed by migrants' own experiences and memories of arrest, detention and the appeals process, by stories read in the media or heard from other detainees and appellants, and by migrants' own sensory fields: spotting white vans, hearing aeroplanes or the sound of keys, for instance, produce memories of arrest and detention, triggers that lead to a reassertion of migrants' sense of insecurity, bringing out fear and anxiety.

Hamid came from North Africa on a six-month tourist visa with no intention of staying in the UK. Back home he had a job he liked and that afforded him a good lifestyle. He was single but very close to his family. During his stay in London he met and fell in love with a British citizen, now his wife. His wife has two children from a previous (abusive) marriage, and together they have a daughter. After a minor and very unfortunate incident with the law, Hamid was served with a deportation notice. By the time I met with him, he had been in the appeals process for two years:

I can't, I can't be like this. I can't. Is hard, is like when you go to sleep, you're thinking, when you're having a shower you're thinking, when you eat you're thinking, when get up and go. You're thinking all the time about this. What's going on? Sometimes when I look to my daughter, happy ... I'm not happy. I have to show her I'm happy. I have to play with her. 'Cause you know children they have that feeling. If you're not, they can find out. So what I have to do? In my home, I don't know what I have to do, but I cannot do nothing. For a man to sit every day without a job, it is very difficult for me. It is very difficult to wait for my wife to spend money for me. It is very difficult for me, especially in my country. It's not woman spending money for man. [...] In my country if a woman spends money for me, he is not a man. He has to spend money for her. He has to get it, even if she is working, he has to spend money for her. Has to buy her clothes, gifts, you know, car, he has to do that. If he's got good money he has to do that. If he hasn't got good money he has to do that. He has to look after the woman. Not the woman look after the man. It is not possible. So I'm feeling like, I'm nothing. So that's the problem. I feel like I'm nothing. I wanna do something, I wanna ... you know? One year without working is ... I'm gonna be sick. I'm sick already.

Hamid's narrative reveals many of the issues that research participants identified as impacting upon their lives in general and their sense of self in particular. Hamid hides his concerns from the children in order to protect them. Appearing well to others, especially to close relatives, was important to most research participants. Constant efforts were made to conceal visible bodily expressions of worry. This is no easy task. Like Hamid, many research participants spoke of feelings of constant tension, of being consumed by persistent worry. Their lives are ridden with anxiety and even the most basic daily chores must be performed while thinking about their predicament. This is exacerbated when appellants are unable to work, thus leaving them with little or nothing to distract them from concerns over their deportation.<sup>1</sup>

To Hamid, being financially dependent on his wife seriously challenged his male identity – feelings of emasculation were often described by research participants.<sup>2</sup> The inability to work is, in fact,

of paramount importance to appellants' sense of self. Like Hamid, others constantly felt idle, useless and a financial burden on their families. Facing deportation can also be a significant financial strain on the household. Some appellants have lost permission to work, others cannot be employed as a consequence of the conditions of bail. Some are self-employed, but their income is uncertain. Household income may thus be significantly reduced or lost altogether. There are also the added expenses of facing deportation such as solicitor's fees and the costs associated with reporting or being in detention. Being able to work and provide for one's family is something George and most others long for:

I am just a normal person, I just want to work and be with my wife and my kids. They depend on me and I want to feel able to work and do my things. Before, we did well, we were not rich but we had enough. Yesterday I did something I never thought I would, I gathered all my stuff and I sold it. They gave me £730. If I want to get the things back I have to give them back [£]1,000 in six months. I want to be relaxed, to work for my kids, I don't care if I have criminal record, I have people who know me and who will give me work.

Feeling useless is compounded by an additional sense of worthlessness due to an awareness that one's presence in the UK is undesired, an issue felt acutely by Maria:

It's breaking me down spiritually, it's this feeling that I am worthless, that the government is so disgusted by me, that I'm not even worth being listened to. That I'm just ... A cockroach you know, has more status than I have, more respect than I have. [...] And I know that I am not a bad person. But that I am looked at as a monster and as an unwanted and as an undesirable. Like a leper, like when they used to walk around with bells on and it's inhuman and it's degrading and it's demoralising. It's heartbreaking. Sorry [*cries*].

This identity – as one who is rejected, undesirable and unwanted – is experienced as an assault on the sense of self (Burman 2006; Willen 2007). As detailed in Chapter 3, forms of state control such as detention and reporting undermine migrants' sense of self by making them feel untrustworthy, infantilised and dehumanised. Likewise, chronic stress and long-term uncertainty are internalised and become embodied. Appetite loss, binge eating, sleep loss, nightmares, headaches, migraines, exhaustion, depression, inability to concentrate, sadness, crying, loss of energy or drive – all these were afflicted many research participants, both appellants and relatives.<sup>3</sup> Most have gained or lost visible amounts of weight, and all described feeling that they had aged, feelings exemplified by hair loss and greying, and the appearance or intensification of wrinkles. Hamid had this to say:

'I was 78 kilos, I'm going down, I'm going down. My age is nearly 33. I feel like I'm 75. Can you imagine that? Because of this'.

Research participants were well aware of how much deportation had become embodied as a corrupting agent, and many health problems experienced by appellants and their relatives were directly attributed to their deportability, as George makes clear:

And now I have a premature baby, born at six months. And the question is why was he born at six months? Because the day the lawyer told me that the determination was not appealable, there was no grounds for further appeal, I returned home, I told my wife that. That was at 7 P.M., we went out to the park with the kids, I saw she was very pensive. At 3 A.M. she is feeling unwell, her water breaks and she is ready to give birth. My first reaction was to apologise to her for putting her in this situation. I called the ambulance and we came here to the hospital. And this was the biggest consequence of the stress. I kept asking her to forgive me. Because now it was not just about her life but the life of my son as well. The two were in danger. Because of an unfair determination.

This was not an isolated incident. Jen too had a premature baby, and Rashid's wife had a late miscarriage, both when appealing their husbands' deportation. In all three cases, and as George's words above exemplify, a direct link is established by research participants between stress derived from deportation and early births and miscarriages. It is not my place to validate or challenge these claims. The point is that appellants and families believe that one was the consequence of the other, and this belief has effects: it reasserts a sense of vulnerability, and influences their perception of justice as once again they feel wrong is being done to them.

Even those who were employed, such as appellants' relatives, frequently reported missing work and spending whole days in bed. Hamid, like other research participants, also repeatedly described feeling on the verge of a breakdown:

If they deport me I'm not gonna fight again. I'm not going to do that. 'Cause is finish. No more. [...] If I have to go back, I will go back. I'm not gonna die. I'm still strong, I still have energy. But if stay here like this, I will be destroyed like this. That's the problem here. I will be destroyed.

For Hamid, as for most others, the deportation appeal process has been long and intense: he is reaching the point of giving up, which is exactly what migrants believe to be the aim of the system. Hamid met with me a few days after his last appeal at the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal (AIT). At the time he was still waiting for the determination but his mind was made up that this was it for him. He

hoped that there would be a good outcome, but should the appeal be denied he would fight no more and would return to North Africa. He felt nothing any more; he could not work and it hurt him to see his wife's pain. He felt he had reached his limit and could not take his family through another round of appeals. Although not all were this ready to give up, many research participants described similar feelings of hopelessness, abandonment and isolation.

Hamid describes how he feels responsible for the circumstances his family finds itself in:

I haven't got any feeling anymore. I don't feel nothing. I've been without work one year. I've been in prison one year so I've been trying to have my proper future legally and properly I didn't have it. And my wife she's ... now she's not okay. She's not like before. My wife, she's been changing a lot. She is tired. She been tired before, a lot of problems from when she was married, violence, and now she ... it's more than that. She got a depression, she's very ... I ... I cannot see that. I cannot stay like this and watching her destroying ... I don't like it, it's because of me. Because us just trying to have a good, a proper family, that's what we're trying to do. But now it doesn't make any difference for me.

The sense of responsibility that he feels for the well-being of others is not particular to Hamid. For George, the early birth of his son added to his guilt, as his narrative above illustrates. Randall calls this the 'imposition of false guilt' – feeling responsible for what family and other close ones go through on account of one's imminent deportation (Randall 1987: 466). This is a feeling echoed by most research participants. As David says, 'Because of my mistakes the family pays the price'. David had been appealing his deportation for two years by the time I interviewed him. He arrived in the UK with his wife and his oldest son in the 1990s, escaping the civil war that has devastated their country. His two younger children were born in the UK:

It is a frustrating process, stressful, depressing, because your life stops there. And in these two years, believe me Ines; I was not able to do anything. [...] It is also a bit shameful, embarrassing to be living like this after fourteen years [in the UK]. It really gets frustrating, stressful and also for my wife, this is very difficult for her, difficult for us, very very difficult. Because I always say that I rather have trouble with the police, with the police I know when my troubles will end. But immigration problems with the Home Office ... with the Home Office you never know, at any time they can come and say, 'No, it's time to go'. [...] So this is something that really affects the family you know? Because the family is not settled, is not grounded, is not safe. So this is bad, especially for me and for my wife. The children don't really know what is happening because I hide it from them. But imagine that when they came to take me last

March and said my flight was booked for April, imagine if my kids would hear that Dad is in Africa, that Dad was deported and that Dad won't be able to see them in the next ten years. What is that? It's absurd! It doesn't make sense.

Unwanted in their country of residence, prevented from working and supporting their families and feeling responsible for the impact of their own deportability on their relatives, migrants' everyday lives become marked with extreme nervousness, anxiety, irritation, guilt, fear, anger and suspicion. The long-term waiting, marked by acute uncertainty, is internalised and embodied by appellants and their close relatives. As already noted, migrants responded to this by deploying four main coping strategies: enduring uncertainty; putting self apart; forming personal cues; and re-imagining possible futures.

## **Enduring Uncertainty**

Underlying the narratives presented thus far is a constant feeling of uncertainty. Migrants do not know whether they will be able to remain in the UK or if they will be removed. They do not know when they will know this. They do not fully understand their rights to appeal and are constantly unsure whether there is scope for another appeal or not. They do not know how (or when) their removal will be carried out and under which conditions. They do not know how much longer they can handle 'not knowing' – how much longer they can resist. They do not know whether their family units will survive separation. They do not know how the family will manage financially. They do not know what they will do on departure from the UK.

Appellants and relatives endure uncertainty in the course of their deportability as a coping strategy. To endure is to tolerate, to bear with patience. They endure because that is their only way to maintain some hope that their families will not be separated and that their lives might resume as they had once planned them. As Chapter 2 showed, the long-term waiting experienced in the deportation appeals process is marked by alternations between, on the one hand, short periods of intense activity in preparing the case and meeting deadlines, and on the other, a long-lasting uneventfulness (Craig, Fletcher and Goodall 2008).

Uncertainty here is intrinsically related to waiting: time spent waiting for a hearing to take place, for an appeal to be decided, for

a change in policy or new case law that may favour their odds of winning their appeal. Long-term waiting, however, is not necessarily a passive activity (Griffiths 2014; Turnbull 2014). Rotter (2012) and Fritsche (2012) contend that such long-term waiting for a 'normal' secure life ought to be understood as an engaged activity.<sup>4</sup> In fact, appellants and relatives do try to make the most out of the (now undetermined) time remaining to the appellant in the UK. For some this translates into spending as much time as possible with their family; for others, like Andre who is single, it means earning as much money as possible so he does not go back empty handed. Yet this waiting period is not taken as a gift. Rather, it is perceived as a time of non-existence (Khosravi 2011), where lives are not moving forward and time stands still. For most, this long-term waiting is a further punishment.<sup>5</sup>

Migrants' former plans for their future lives were devised considering their stay in the UK. The threat of deportation has left their future plans and present lives pending. Hamid had this to say:

I did, you know, when I come here the first time, I was thinking about a lot of projects you know, like a dream. I was thinking about to do school, for hairdresser, I was thinking to do many project. Business ... I was working hard. In one day, in one second, everything been changed for me, for my life. So now, it doesn't make sense for me. Nothing.

Like Hamid, many other research participants commented on how they felt their lives were on hold, the plans they had made before now suspended. David and Tony were about to start degree courses, Tania was considering another child with her partner. It was not so much that their plans were discarded altogether and others replaced them; rather, they were put on hold, often with no alternative plans. They were waiting, holding on to former plans in case there should be a favourable outcome that would allow them to proceed with life as they had planned it. Sometimes alternative short-term plans are devised. David pursued a plumbing course instead of a law degree – it demanded less attention and investment, it would be a lesser loss should he be removed half way through it, and would (indeed did) provide an income source for him and his family when formal employment became unfeasible.

Many research participants described feeling as if time itself was standing still, because their lives were not moving forward. This feeling was unsettling to the point of a craving for closure, even if that meant removal. In fact, as seen in Chapter 3 many in detention are broken down into wanting to be deported. Hamid, and others I spoke to, would not go as far as 'wanting' to be deported, but he did

express reaching the point where he no longer wished to fight his deportation:

Yeah, just fed up. I was going. One night I was going. I told my wife, 'That's it, that's it. You come once a year or two times a year and my daughter she gonna stay with me a little bit and she gonna stay with you a little bit, maybe summer she would have stay with me'. That's finish. I will work for her over there, I will do everything for my daughter. And that's it 'cause I'm tired. I cannot, I never ever thought I would have a life like this. Never. The first time. Never. So, I fed up. I am. And everyone's saying, even solicitors saying, 'If you go you never come back' because you gonna be there minimum three years and some people even ten years you know! Then they not gonna accept your application. I told them, 'I don't care. I'm tired'.

In fact, the waiting and uncertainty that ensues in the course of deportation is so exhausting, and the desire for closure so prevalent, that many research participants felt they might as well have been deported without appeal if deportation was to be the end result anyway. The interim waiting period of uncertainty is too unnerving to bear. It is seen not merely as a general waste of time but, as mentioned above, a punishment – a feeling David holds:

Not only I served my time but they then put me in detention and want to deport me, so why didn't they just deported me from the start? They knew they were going to deport me, so why did they let me stay here these two years and at the end of it they want to deport me? The waiting, the family, this whole thing! We're always living with that thing of not knowing what tomorrow brings, what will happen. I don't know what will happen to me tomorrow. Why? I'm not settled. The Home Office won't decide, they don't know what they'll do with me.

This feeling was also prevalent in appellants' family members, as narrated here by Tania with regards to her partner's deportation:

It is waiting, it's the waiting, it's the worst thing. And knowing that that is going to be the outcome I'd rather not go through this, I'd rather that they just kept him and send him off. There's no point on letting him getting out and spending time with us, what's up with that? Just makes it worse.

Of course these words cannot be taken at face value.<sup>6</sup> As hard as this long-lasting interim period may be, migrants are also aware that it is the product of the appeals system, which is the only available legal recourse to fight deportation. What once again becomes clear from these statements is that detention in particular and the uncertain time period inherent in the appeals process are taken as further punishments. For migrants, having closure is not just the end of uncertainty

but also equivalent to 'having time'. For better or for worse, they just want to know what is going to happen so they can plan accordingly and proceed with their lives.<sup>7</sup> The pending threat of deportation hinders migrants' ability to rebuild their lives following conviction, as this extract from the focus-group discussion I ran exemplifies:

M: When I first met Ines I was in a really bad state because I live in my flat where I live for twenty-two years, I'm still there and when I met Ines I was going through a really hard time ... I wasn't eating, I wasn't sleeping but I was very very stressed out, really really stressed out, because I felt they were going to come and get me in the middle of the night so I was pacing up and down. But I didn't feel that I should leave my home, I didn't think that I should run away, but psychologically I was really screwed up and that affected my behaviour, that affected how I interlinked with people, my concentration, how I saw my life. Well, I didn't see a life: I wasn't able to apply for employment, I was kind of stuck. I felt that I was just getting closed in. And I am just wondering whether you guys have experienced something similar? [*All nod affirmatively.*]

D: Actually, when I am sleeping sometimes I just go to my window and see if there is any van, any police car down in front of my building because I was scared that they could come anytime and take me to the detention centre or something like that.

Also clear from this extract is that living with the pending threat of deportation affects migrants' spatial and temporal constructions of risk (Khosravi 2011; Talavera, Nunez-Mchiri and Heyman 2010; Willen 2007). Risk, conceptualised here as the possibility of detention and forced removal, was remapped onto the weekly appointment at the reporting centre (see Chapter 3) and the nights at home, as shown above. In a more extreme case, for Samuel, electronic monitoring turned his home into a prison during curfew hours. Home is no longer a safe haven, but a site of imprisonment or perceived risk, particularly at night-time.<sup>8</sup>

Family support, religion, counselling and volunteer work were all significant in ensuring research participants were able to endure uncertainty. Family support is vital for appellants not just when making their case to the AIT, as seen in Chapter 2, but also in their daily lives. Appellants tended to disclose their immigration problems only to those close to them, but even here there was often a distinction in the support provided by family members and that of other acquaintances. Take Samuel's case:

I told the people close to me 'cause at the end of the day there is still an outcome that is still a possibility [...] so I have to tell people close to me, 'Listen I might not be about too long'. But the general people I don't really tell because it's

not really a thing I like to disclose. [...] People have been supportive, a lot of people been telling me, 'No, they can't do that, you will win, you will win, you will win'. But they don't really understand, you know? So obviously they trying to give me confidence and cheer me up, they are supporting me really, but I know the realness: it's not as easy as people say it is. As before when I was in prison people were telling me, 'Yeah you going to win, look at your case'. But when I lost my first hearing, that's when I knew this is serious.

Samuel's words illustrate what many appellants described: while other people close to them, such as friends and colleagues, can be supportive, they do not fully understand the extent of the migrant's concern. Constant reassertions that 'it will all be okay', although appreciated, leave appellants with a sense of loneliness: no one but them and their families really understand how serious the matter is.

Volunteering was an option taken by some appellants. Maria, for instance, knows that her volunteer work impacts on other people's lives – continuing to work is what lifts her up, it is her way of enduring uncertainty and dealing with the sense of unworthiness that deportation imposes on her. Volunteering was vital to many as a way of being active, feeling useful and being distracted from deportation concerns.

Many research participants also described how facing deportation reinforced their faith. Tania, as did many others, turned to religion for comfort:

But I think what's helping him [her partner, who is appealing deportation] it's his faith, he prays five times a day and I think that's helping him you know. I find that I spend more time at church now and maybe that might be helping me a bit but now it's just ... I'm really dreading the day [of the appeal hearing], I'm really dreading, and I hope they can just make a decision then and there you know. I can't bear to have it prolonged.

Both Samuel and Julio had rediscovered their faith during this period of uncertainty and become more and more engaged with their religions. For most research participants, faith and religion were important for coping, even if their congregations were usually not aware of their dire situation. In fact, a renewal of religious faith has been described as an important source of strength, hope and resilience for migrants under immigration detention in the UK (McGregor 2012).

Counselling and therapy were also commonly sought out when deportation became an issue, both for appellants and family members like Tania:

He was seeing a counsellor while he was in detention, he was feeling quite sick, but I actually see one here because I find this quite tough to go through

but I don't ... it's very hard, I've lost people in my life. Now I feel that there is an uncertain future and it's difficult, I find it very difficult for me. [...] It's just the whole build up, not being able to sleep, it's just so stressful, it really is stressful, just to think about it stresses me.

Enduring uncertainty is extremely tiring and exhausting. Migrants' lives are on hold, their families are unsettled, they feel ungrounded. As I have shown, this is a period marked by extreme pressure and, at the same time, an intense sense of stagnation. In enduring it, appellants and relatives navigate through the appeals system in the hope that it brings a positive outcome. Yet, as long-term waiting produces an intense desire for closure (be it deportation or leave to remain), migrants feel their desire to endure dwindling.

### **Vanishing and the Death of the Self**

In 1987, Margaret Randall published an article detailing the impact of her own struggle not to be deported from the US. 'Deportation', she writes, 'conjures up a constant state of low-level anxiety, ... the threat of having to leave where I am and therefore never really living where I am ... [D]eportation is then a state of mind as well as a state of the body' (Randall 1987: 479). As Randall suggests, absence in the course of deportation is a process, not an event. Deportees, through uncertainty and disquiet, fear and need of protection, gradually withdraw from their families and everyday lives. Their absence is thus felt long before removal is certain and acted upon.

Absence in the context of deportation is expressed in many ways: in the lack of financial contribution to the household, in the appellant's inability to join the family on their holidays, in the suspension of future plans, in the physical absence of the appellant when taken into detention. Here, my discussion will focus on the process of 'putting self apart' as a coping strategy in managing deportability.

Ågård and Harder (2007) describe how relatives of ICU patients use a process of 'putting self apart' as a way to deal with uncertainty. This process involves relatives refraining from showing their concern to the patient and other relatives in order not to cause additional fear and suffering, choosing instead to act cheerfully. The authors also found that, while having a loved one in an ICU brings its own problems to relatives (extreme anxiety, lack of sleep, financial worries and so on), they felt that their own needs and anxieties were illegitimate – care and attention should be focused exclusively on the patient (Ågård and Harder 2007). Many parallels can be drawn

here. Remember, for instance, Hamid's description of his attempts to appear happy to his children. This section is centred on how the process of 'putting self apart' takes shape in the context of deportation in the UK. I argue here that in the course of deportation, 'putting self apart' is a process that leads to isolation and absence, to what Randall (1987: 479) describes as vanishing and the death of the self.

Like the relatives of ICU patients discussed by Ågård and Harder (2007), appellants become absent in trying to protect family members from their ordeal: not wanting to overburden the family with their concern, they no longer talk about it. Hamid, being consumed by this concern, became unable to talk about anything else. So, like many others, he just does not talk, is less vocal, less visible, less present:

The problem is now, even if I have some friends and we're sitting like this talking to each other, I cannot speak with them, I cannot. I cannot focus, I'm not focusing on nothing. So, why I don't talk to my family. My sister, she called me yesterday. 'Why you don't wanna talk to me?' My sister, she's the one I speak to. 'Why you don't speak to me. Go to the internet, I wanna see you in our camera, I wanna talk to you'. I don't know, I don't wanna talk. I don't wanna see anyone. Not people that I don't know. People I do know, I don't wanna see them, I don't wanna talk to them. [...] So the problem, no one can feel it, is only you. So, that's the pain. The pain you cannot feel it. No one can feel it. Just you. So I did talk too much [at first], maybe ... sometimes I think I'm giving them stress or headache or something. So, 'cause when you talk too much about your problem every day, is no good for people, you gonna hurt people.

Hamid's words are illustrative of two ailments often described by appellants and their relatives: First, that as much as people try to be supportive, no one really understands what they are experiencing. Close family members are perhaps the only ones who can understand them as they have a stake in what is happening too. Second, by the time they were interviewed, research participants, like Hamid, were often no longer talking to anyone about their cases. Not necessarily because they did not want to, but mostly because they do not want to overburden their loved ones. This not only affects marital relations, it adds to their sense of loneliness and initiates a process of absence. Appellants are still in the UK, with their families, but their minds are engaged elsewhere. They begin to feel absent, and their families are not oblivious to it. Appellants are not able to shake off their concern but no longer share it with their spouses. In their efforts to hide their anxieties, appellants withdraw and unavoidably become absent.

What came out clearly at the focus-group discussion I ran was that participants really longed for the opportunity to share their concerns.

They were eager to talk to each other, to share their stories and compare circumstances. They were excited when exchanging notes on solicitors, detention centres and even immigration judges. They were finishing each other's sentences and pep-talking each other. At the end of the session, the conversation ran as follows:

M: Listen guys, this was really nice to meet people like you that I can talk to about this situation and feel okay about talking.

R: Yeah, it was cool, I needed this support.

A: Is good, I am more relaxed, I took it out.

J: I never talk this topic to my wife because it makes her sad.

They then exchanged contacts and left the session together, heading for the tube while chatting away about their cases. Research participants often felt much the same way about my interviews. The open nature of the research interviews meant that they could talk about pretty much anything they wanted to, and what was concerning them the most. As Andre once told me: 'Every time I talk to you, I feel good, it uplifts my spirit'. Being heard and letting things out during interviews and the focus-group discussion was a relief, just like being heard in court was important for their sense of a 'fair trial' as seen in Chapter 2.

Appellants do not always disclose their deportability to others, sometimes not even to close family members like parents and siblings. Not disclosing this means not counting on their support and again feeling isolated. For young offenders, like Samuel and Tony, the need to avoid previous (dodgy) connections can mean a break with old friendships, further exacerbating their sense of isolation.

Family support is vital in enduring uncertainty and resisting deportation. Yet, having suffered separation before, through imprisonment and detention,<sup>9</sup> appellants and family members do prepare as best as they can for the gap that removal will create. Maria expresses her concern thus:

What is happening at the moment with my removal is having a huge impact on the whole family, because it's not like I am here today gone tomorrow. It's an ongoing process and the whole family are taking a part in that. They are doing statements, they are going to court, they are the ones that ... like for instance today, they are at my sister's house, it's my youngest niece that's been holding me up all day today. She is seventeen years old and she is, 'It's OK aunty, we won't forget you, we'll come and see you'. But I can see that she is looking at me thinking, 'Shit!' because I am very involved in their lives.

What Maria is emphasising here is that absence, or invisibility as Randall (1987) calls it, is a process that develops over time and

involves the family as well as the one facing deportation. It is not, however, only the family that starts preparing for the possible removal of the appellant; appellants too make conscious efforts to protect themselves from the pain of separation. Maria goes on:

I can't bear ... [*cries*]. I can't bear to pick up my grandson because I know that I might not be able to do it tomorrow or next week so I don't want to do it and I look at him and when he crawls towards me and wants me to pick him up in a way it's like I am rejecting him and I don't want to, but it's like, it's almost like there is no other way for me to deal with this situation. [...] And now I have to watch my son withdraw himself from me, I have to make myself not hold my grandchild, make myself lie to my mother about the fact that I am okay and that everything is fine. She doesn't really know how bad the situation is, because she got a heart problem and I don't want to tell her because it would just break her. How my sisters avoid me [*cries again*], and as time passes by, it's not because they are doing it on purpose, it's because they don't know how else to deal with the situation. And because they feel so helpless. All I have to do is tell them what I want them to do and they will do it, but I don't know what to tell them. I don't know.

Research participants were well aware that the closer you are to people the harder it is to lose them. For Tania, her partner's deportation was affecting not just their own relationship but how she felt about his relationship with their daughter:

I find it very difficult to be in a relationship with him knowing that this is over my head. I think it's harder to let go of somebody when you very close with him. So I think, if he's able to stay I would love to have another child with him, but I just find that being around him ... I find it upsetting. He deals with it in his own way but I just find ... I don't even like to see him and our daughter together. I'm happy that they are together but I don't want him to be around because it makes me feel sad. Because ... if he goes he can't come back for ten years. And our daughter she's not going to have any relationship with him, because I'm not going there. [...] And my daughter you know, if he is deported, she will be like 14, coming up to 15 [*cries*]. Her childhood will be over, it will be very hard to keep the relationship from abroad.

What is narrated here by Maria and Tania was described by others: appellants and family members, in attempting to protect themselves against the eventual absence of their loved ones, withdraw from them – they become more distant and less available. The absence of appellants is also vividly and visually felt in the lack of financial contribution, in the holiday photos spread around the house where the deportee no longer figures and in the suspension of future plans. In enduring uncertainty and 'putting self apart', both appellants and their relatives are responding to the embodiment of fear and anxiety

produced by the constant threat of deportation. By withdrawing and isolating themselves, they initiate the appellants' process of absenting.

The interruption of migrants' existence in the UK is thus not effected at the moment of their actual removal from the territory. Migrants' lives become suspended from the moment they realise exactly what it means to receive notice of deportation. Appellants become absent, not when they leave UK soil through removal, but long before through their deportability – their absence is not an event, but a process that develops through the embodiment of their deportability and ensuing chronic stress and long-term uncertainty. Their lives are only half lived in the UK, as their present and their futures are suspended under the threat of having to leave the country of their choice.

### **Forming Personal Cues**

Enduring uncertainty is challenging and demanding. In their efforts to manage uncertainty and endure it, appellants and relatives relied on work, family support, religion and therapy. They also sought, much like the relatives of ICU patients discussed by Ågård and Harder (2007), to retrieve as much information as possible from everywhere possible. Ågård and Harder found that the experiences of relatives of ICU patients 'circled around a predominant need to know what had happened, how the patient was doing and what might happen' (Ågård and Harder 2007: 174). Relatives were constantly making personal assessments of the patient's condition as, 'knowing became the vehicle that could bring assurance or clarity' to them and was thus 'a fundamental aspect of the relatives' ability to adapt to a new reality' (Ågård and Harder 2007: 174). These assessments, or personal cues, were not, however, always fully informed and often led to misconceptions on the condition of the patient. In much the same way, appellants and their relatives, although depending on solicitors and caseworkers to obtain reliable information, were constantly seeking other sources of information, which here too sometimes led to misconceptions. I have mentioned in previous chapters how detainees compared cases in the attempt to understand their own chances and, most importantly, how they have given different immigration judges the reputation of being too strict or good (see Chapter 2). The media is also an important source of information, and news articles are eagerly read or listened to for clues. Stories of dawn raids on

asylum seekers' homes haunt migrants and influence their sense of security. Politicians' speeches are also carefully inspected. George, for example, e-mailed me in October 2011 in response to something he saw: 'Just a moment ago I was watching Theresa May's declarations ... At BBC she said she is going to deport all foreigners with a criminal record and she will destroy the Human Rights Act ... I see a dark future ahead'.

The internet is used by many too. In fact, most people who contacted me through my research web page were seeking informal legal advice – which I was in no position to offer. My informants frequently told me of stories and cases they read about on the internet, trying to find ways to determine their chances, to predict the outcome of their own cases. Yet despite these efforts they were well aware that the determination of their case was down to the AIT, and that many factors outside their control contributed to that decision. Even so, forming personal cues allowed appellants and their relatives to have a relative sense of 'doing something about it'. Further, forming such personal cues about their cases offered at times renewed hope.

In contrast to the desire to retrieve as much information as possible about their chances in the appeal hearing, preparations for an eventual return were seldom made, even if deportation and its implications for the family was constantly on appellants' minds. No efforts were made to retrieve information regarding housing, work opportunities and such like in their country of origin. This is not to be construed as denial, but rather as a coping strategy: much as relatives of ICU patients will not shop around for mortuary services while their loved ones are struggling to survive, migrants will not make arrangements for deportation until removal is certain.

Generational differences influence how a person foresees deportation to their country of origin. Whereas first-generation migrants focused on the emotional pain derived from family separation and financial hardships, the 1.5 generation (that is, those who migrated to the UK as children or in their early teens) focused on incidents of displacement, ignorance and isolation. First-generation migrants were seldom capable of conveying their imaginings concerning return in the context of deportation. They just could not or did not want 'to even think about that', which can be related to their general unwillingness to make arrangements for their eventual return. The few who did manage to convey how they foresaw their forced return described apprehension over their outdated knowledge as to 'how things work over there now'. Their narratives speculated on the eventual need to call in favours from distant relatives and acquaintances,

and depending on them for accommodation and work opportunities, at least to begin with. Few intended to be open about the nature of their return, and creating a believable reason for their individual return was a task to be performed when the time came. Their emphasis was on the impact of family separation on their children, the financial burden they would become to the family left behind and the disruption (or destruction) of what they had accomplished since their arrival in the UK.

Migrants who had arrived in the UK as young children or in their early teens showed no hesitation in conveying how they imagined their return. Not having children and spouses of their own, for most returning was a scary and unsettling prospect, but it was not a cause of despair. They focused their first thoughts upon the actual moment of arrival at the airport, emphasising their lack of links to, and knowledge of, the country of origin. As Tony said: 'They'll drop me at the airport and then what? Who do I talk to? Where do I go?' Following the airport narrative, other instances of ignorance and displacement were described: of having no sense of where they will be, where they are supposed to go, how they can establish a life and how frightening that realisation is to them. Maria explains:

How am I going to problem-solve in Latin America when I don't know what the system is like? How am I going to do that with a British attitude? How am I going to do that? I am going to go back to a country where as a woman I have to be someone else that I don't know who that is. How am I going to cope with that? And it's important for people to realise that, in England. To realise that is British people that are being deported. It's not Latin Americans, just because they hold that passport does not mean that that's the way they are from because the reality is that everything about me that is important, everything that is relative to who I am, is going to be left here. And I am probably half way through my life and I am gonna have to go back to somewhere where I don't know anyone, I don't know how the system works, I don't know what the services are, I don't know ... I just don't know and that is a very frightening thought. [...] I have no family whatsoever, none, zero. Nothing. I will arrive in Latin America not knowing where to go. There won't be anybody waiting for me at the airport.

Parents of UK-raised young adults like Jamal articulated anxieties similar to those expressed above by Maria:

But if they deport him, first I don't think his country is going to accept him. [...] And even if they take him, he has nowhere to go, he does not know anyone, he's got nobody. He doesn't speak proper Arabic, so what he is to do I have no idea. He cannot manage to live with them, language barrier, religion, he's not a Muslim, he's not, he doesn't believe nothing. And number three

he's going to break away from his family, foster and the family in northern America, it's like going to hell, exactly, that's what it is.

And Naomi:

My mum said, 'Let them send him home, let him find his own ground', that is how she doesn't care. Sending him home to whom, to what? Where would he go? Standing in the airport and what? I'll have to fly down with him. She is not going to help me with the kids when I travel there. And who is going to look after the kids when I go?

Naomi's statement focuses on yet another concern of research participants when thinking of their eventual return: the logistics of the migrant's return and its financial implications. The deportee, independent of his migration generation, is likely to need remittances from the family left in the UK. In the case of first-generation migrants, the family will also have to adjust to the loss of someone with an income. This was a major concern for research participants, who felt the Home Office does not really consider how deportation impacts upon their lives. Naomi, whose son was being deported and was still dependent on her, expanded on this:

He is not in school, he doesn't have a life, and what are they going to do? Destroy his life, and destroy my life? I can't travel back and forth to the Caribbean, I got four other kids to look after, you see I've got a baby. It's going to affect everyone, is not just going to affect me. Because now I'll have to send him money out there, I'll have to find him a home to live, I'm gonna have to go down with him to rent a place, which means I'm gonna have to leave them. I'm on my own; I got no one to look after them. My mum doesn't give any support. Nobody buys them anything or does anything for them. Plus someone can kill my child out there 'cause the crime rate and the murder rate is extremely high. There is a lot of things around it that the government don't even know, and they are not looking at these situations, they are just looking at the fact that, 'Oh you broken the law, blah blah blah, and you pay the penalty'.

For those with spouses and children, the family remaining in the UK will become, in every practical sense, a single-parent unit. Take Tania's concern:

You know, people say to me, 'Just take it as it comes, enjoy the day', but it's not the same, you know. He could be gone. [...] You know, I know I can get over something easier but it's also not having no support, you know, people say they're friends, they're calling me but blood is thicker than water, and having him around I know that if there is anything I need he's there. And other people are not. When she [daughter] is sick at two o'clock in the morning, I don't feel comfortable picking up and calling on a friend, it's just it's not

feasible you know. And I don't know how I'm going to cope. We're not in court until next month, it's far, I feel sad, even though he's here, and having a great time, it makes me feel quite depressed to be honest.

Many spouses or parents of appellants fear they might have to quit their jobs and become dependent on welfare.<sup>10</sup> This is what actually happened to Louise who, on her husband's deportation, had to give up her job, as she could not reconcile it with the demands of her baby. She feels it is ironic that her husband's deportation, allegedly for the greater good, resulted in two fewer income-earning tax-payers and one more family depending on government support. It is beyond her understanding how the UK public benefited from it.

Foreseeing how their lives will change if they or their loved ones are deported was constantly on migrants' and family members' minds. Yet, as mentioned above, most were not taking active steps to prepare for their eventual deportation. Not preparing for the worst was vital to enduring deportability. Appellants had not made any efforts to look for income-earning opportunities or accommodation in their country of origin. Whatever family remained there was not aware that the appellant might be returning soon. To prepare for return is to take deportation as certain. It was not until her case was beyond hope that preparations were made by Maria:

Like I said I don't know anybody there, so I thought okay, I have to try and make some links somehow, so I made an appointment at the consulate to see if there is a way that they might be able to link me up, if there is an organisation, I need to find out what kind of services I can access when I get there, I don't know. I don't have a cousin or uncle to ask.

Maria booked the appointment at the consulate after her last visit to a legal caseworker made it clear that there was no hope for her case: the appeals were exhausted and it was only a matter of time until she would be deported.<sup>11</sup> She could no longer ignore it. Faced with a general lack of ties to her country of origin, she saw no other way than to resort to the consulate.

For different reasons, Tania was constantly urging her partner to make arrangements for his return:

I tell him, 'You need to prepare, try to make arrangements'. I put £1,000 as surety and can I really trust him? I tell him, 'You need to speak to me'. I'm thinking the worst. What if he goes underground? I don't know? Who can you trust? I can't trust anybody else. This is my life savings!

Tania feared her partner would run away and leave her to raise their child alone. As his surety, she had pledged her entire savings, and the

prospect of losing them was daunting. In preparing for his return to the Caribbean, should he be deported, she hoped her partner would be more assured that there was a place to return to and thus less inclined to run away. Sadly she had no success.

Like enduring uncertainty and putting self apart, forming personal cues about their chances of staying and not preparing for their forced return assisted appellants and their relatives to manage deportability. Not making arrangements for deportation assisted migrants in coping with their undecided present and uncertain future, enabling them to hope for the best and cling on to the hope of better luck.

### **Re-imagining Possible Futures**

The long-term experience of being under the threat of deportation reshapes migrants' sense of time and transforms their sense of possible futures (Burman 2006; Randall 1987; Willen 2007). Living with the risk of being deported is like an intermission of indeterminate length in migrants' lives and in the plans they had devised and hoped for before deportation intruded on their lives. In this sense, and in the course of the deportation process, migrants have to reshape their sense of possible futures to include possible departures – deportation being only one of them.

Considering alternatives to deportation is presented here as a coping strategy – one that prevents migrants from directly facing a dreaded reality and allows them to focus instead on better futures. It is also testament to the fact that, for research participants, deportation meant above all 'leaving the UK', rather than 'returning home'. This section explores migrants' departure options and their reshaping of possible futures.

How migrants feel towards their eventual forced return is influenced by their pre-migration lives (and migration aims), sustained transnational connections and the current stage of their life course. Take Hamid:

Personally I can go to my country, is no problem. I can go. It's not hell over there – it is a country. We have food, we have water, I done my job. No problem. But how come I go there, and my daughter stays here behind me? My wife behind me? My wife and me, we can deal with it, if they deport me, no problem. She can come to see me, I can talk to her, I can speak to her, and phone, she can have her own life. We can divorce, no problem. Just because we haven't got any chance to ... But what about our family? Our children?

What gonna happen to them? [...] How about us? They're splitting us, they wanna split. Why? So that's why I'm upset. I'm very sad.

Hamid had not long left northern Africa when I met him. His parents and siblings remained there and longed for his return; he still had connections and knew he could easily make a living – enough to support himself in any case. For him, deportation was a problem because it meant separation from his wife, daughter and stepchildren. For others who migrated to the UK as adults, return meant more hardship than this.

Tania's partner, Latrell, joined his mother in the UK in his late teens. He arrived as an asylum seeker, and the rest of his family had been killed prior to his leaving for Britain. For him, the prospect of return was dominated by a fear of violence. He absconded when his appeal was dismissed, and he was eventually caught and deported. He now remains in touch with Tania and his daughter by phone, and hopes to return soon 'one way or another'.

Parallel to his deportation appeal, Andre was fighting the extradition requested by his country of origin. Andre left his country while still on license (from a prison sentence). He joined his adult sisters in the UK in the hope of a clean start. Returning to his native country meant having to deal with the consequences of breaking his license and possibly spending more time in prison. Equally important for him, it also meant the cancellation of all he had accomplished through rehabilitation while in the UK penal system: it meant the end of his ongoing training as a personal trainer and his career plans in the UK. Unfortunate in his extradition appeal, Andre decided not to appeal his deportation. Not appealing meant that he was extradited before his deportation order was signed, thus ensuring that once matters were solved back home he could return to the UK and proceed with his plans. Not appealing his deportation was his way of ensuring he would be able to pursue (in the future) his aims.<sup>12</sup>

George and David, and most other first-generation migrants participating in this project, arrived in the UK as young adults seeking better professional opportunities and a better life. All except Latrell would agree with Hamid, that wherever they are sent, 'It's not hell over there – it is a country'. Some had close friends and family back home, others only distant relatives. Most kept contact with family left behind, either frequently or sporadically. Some visited their country of origin whenever their financial situation allowed or when family events demanded (to attend funerals, for instance). Others never returned. Some sent remittances, others did not. But most retained

some level of connection with their country of origin and had some idea of what it is like to live there. They admitted that hardship can be overcome and that, however difficult it may be to adjust to their new situation, sooner or later they would adapt. What they could not cope with was the prospect of family separation and the end of everything they had worked for and accomplished since their arrival in the UK.

For research participants, sustaining transnational connections with their country of origin did not make their forced return a welcome development of their migration trajectory. A life-course perspective is relevant in understanding migrants' strategies in managing deportation from the UK. Unlike family relocation, through separation they are able to carry on pursuing their life goals. Yet the existence of transnational connections is not unimportant. On the one hand it may translate into important assistance upon forced return to the country of origin. On the other hand, the prevalence of transnational links with relatives and close acquaintances elsewhere in the world broadens appellants' options to include onward migration, which appears as a viable and preferable solution to many.

Other appellants arrived in the UK as young children or in their early teens. They are 1.5 or second-generation migrants for whom deportation does not mean a return 'home' but rather having to leave the place they consider their home. This generational group has little or no memory of living in the country of origin and their links to it differ considerably from those of their parents and the appellants that migrated as adults. Along with their parents, a few had visited the country they are to be deported to, but most had not. Some spoke their country's native language, others did not. For all of them, the UK was the only reality they knew. As Maria said, 'everything about me that is important, everything that is relative to who I am, is going to be left here'. For this group, deportation is exile in its purest sense – even if they are being returned to their country of origin. Moniz (2004) captures this feeling well in his discussion of the reality that Portuguese citizens who had grown up in the US faced upon deportation to the Azores, a small archipelago in the Atlantic that offers little in the way of American lifestyle and opportunities.

In fact, most studies of deportees' experience of return have focused on this generational group of migrants, documenting their displacement and exclusion; in other words, documenting their exile (see Drotbohm 2011; Moniz 2004; Ygvansson and Coutin 2006; Zilberg 2004). However, my findings suggest that, for first-generation migrants too, deportation is tantamount to exile. The way they see it, they are being banished from their residence of choice. They are

being removed not just from their homes and families but also from the lives they have built and the future lives that they had planned.

As shown above, making arrangements for their return amounts to seeing deportation as an inevitable event, and not just one possible future. For most, preparing for their return is unthinkable while removal is uncertain and there are other options on the table. Tania's partner, Latrell, never prepared for his return. Even when his last appeal was dismissed, it was Tania and not him who contacted me for help. He was not making arrangements because admitting defeat was not part of his plans. He was in fact considering the option that Tania had always feared, and went underground a few days after she called me for help.

Before accepting the fact of deportation, research participants considered all other options, including migrating to a third country. Such a third country could be one where the migrant has close family members or other support networks, that offers them better opportunities to rebuild their lives and, very important, which is closer to the UK (and thus cheaper to travel from), thus facilitating family visits. However, there are visa restrictions for many, and migrating to a third country is not always feasible, as Naomi makes clear:

To be honest it got great impact because Jerome has no one to go back to. And if Jerome wants to get deported, Jerome will be in over there lost right. And most of my family is over here, my mum is over here and so over here is my cousins, my uncles, most of my mum's family is over here, most of my dad's family is in America. Now, because of his case he can't be sent to America. My grandmother, his great-grandmother, she is the only one in Trinidad and she is in a nursing home.

Naomi's first option would be to send Jerome to the US to live with her aunts, but because Jerome was sentenced for possession of drugs she knew he would not be allowed in. George, holding a Latin American passport, developed a similar strategy:

Between you and me, I can tell you that I will go to [X, a southern European country]. I will not let them deport me. If I go there, my kids can see me, it's a two-hour flight. And I can restart my life, my family is there, all my brothers and sisters and my father are there. And on top of it, I can get a passport there in two years because my grandparents are citizens. I had already thought of it. And have told this to my wife to reassure her. [...] I have a visa to [X], so I can go there.

George did leave his family in the UK and went to Southern Europe, only to return two years later. David too, instead of being deported to Southern Africa, was considering moving to a southern European

country where many of his relatives were now based and for which he was sure he would be able to obtain a visa. Tony also contemplated life in countries other than his own if he was deported, although he was well aware that it was unlikely he would be granted a visa elsewhere with his West African passport. Onward migration is often seen as a better option than removal to the country of origin, but one that is dependent on obtaining a visa and on the transnational social relations that migrants have sustained.

Experiencing deportability also impacted on migrants' sense of the future in the UK. In Chapter 3 George's detention narrative mentioned the hatred some detainees developed for the UK because of their unreasonable incarceration. While hatred as such was never made visible to me by research participants, many did describe feeling disenchanted and disappointed with the UK in general and its justice system in particular, particularly over the way they had been treated since their conviction. Maria was very clear on this:

My faith is dwindling and my faith in a fair system and in justice, my belief in what I thought Britain stood for – all of that, that's just been crushed, and I been left with nothing else to replace it apart from rejection and the fact that I have been shunned from society and that ... I look at everybody and I just think that everybody hates me, everyone hates me. And I don't know what else to do and it is that helplessness.

McGregor (2009) also describes feelings of hate and anger among formerly detained Zimbabwean asylum seekers in the UK and details how detention has impacted upon their attitudes towards the law and the UK. Many of her informants responded to this disillusionment by becoming political activists. This was not, however, a reaction adopted by any of my research participants (see Chapter 5). Rather, disappointment with the UK and its justice system prompted many migrants to review their future plans of residing in the UK. George, who before conviction never considered returning to Latin America or migrating elsewhere, is now contemplating departure from the UK at a later stage in his life, when his children are grown up:

I'm thirty-nine years old. I want to go away. The way they are treating me here I don't want to stay. I want to go. But my wife she don't want to go. She said, 'No, because you didn't do nothing, you are stupid if you give up'. [...] This dream for me ended. But the only thing I am very grateful for in this country is my children. That's it. I had a cleaner company, I had big contracts, I made lots of money. Now I have ... well, money is not everything in this life.

And Simon:

You lose your love for this country when you go through this. And now, even if things go well and I get sorted here, I am not sure I want to stay in the long term. I lost respect for this country. It's no longer the same thing. I no longer can work here with my heart and soul into it. They took that away from me. This injustice.

This is not to say that migrants wish to leave right away and might as well be deported. As mentioned before, at this point in their lives research participants wished to remain in the UK above anything else. The point is that George, Simon and many others have responded to this unexpected disenchantment with the UK by incorporating departure, in the long term, into their imagining of possible futures.

### *Deportation as Family Separation*

When all appeals are exhausted the family is left largely with four options: first, the family unit departs; second, the appellant departs (to the country of origin or elsewhere) and the family remains in the UK; third, the appellant goes underground and the family stays; fourth, the whole family goes underground in the UK. The third and fourth options imply carrying on living indefinitely in fear and uncertainty, under the permanent threat of arrest and deportation. Apart from Latrell, who went underground soon after his last appeal was dismissed,<sup>13</sup> none seriously considered these options.<sup>14</sup>

Research participants described both constant worry about how the family would cope with deportation, and recurrent consideration of the strategies available to them, even if none made efforts to prepare for their eventual deportation. In the midst of all the uncertainty, there was one thing all were very clear about: whatever happened to the one facing deportation, the family would stay put in the UK. In this sense, for the research participants, the extent of disruption to family life runs deeper than the AIT envisages, as not one of them considered moving the family out of the UK: for them deportation meant family separation (or even termination), but never family relocation. For instance Claire, whose husband was appealing deportation to North America:

They say I can go back to the US with him, but he is going back there as a homeless person, how is he going to sponsor me and my family? And I have no health insurance, how am I going to get treated there? Where will we live? How can they expect me to move to another country in my 50s? Move away from my children and grandchildren? They are making the decision of whether I should remain married or not, 'cause if he's deported that's it, it's the end of my marriage.

Even in cases where visas and health concerns were not an issue, in twelve months of fieldwork I never once came across a family that considered relocating themselves to the place the parent, child or spouse was deported to. The outcome of the four cases that had an unhappy ending confirmed this: no family relocated. Tania stayed in the UK with her daughter after her partner's removal. George, when faced with deportation to Latin America, departed alone to another European country only to come back after two years. Louise stayed in the UK with her newborn baby and struggled to save enough money to visit her husband in West Africa once, for three weeks, during the three years of his ban on returning to the UK. Andre was extradited to Southern Europe, his sisters remained in the UK.

The fact that appellants' immediate relatives (spouse and children or parents and siblings) had all obtained British citizenship since deportation became a pressing issue also suggests that permanent family relocation did not feature in their plans.<sup>15</sup> Existing studies focusing on deportees from the US, mostly second-generation migrants, further suggest that deportation results more frequently in family separation than family relocation (Das Gupta 2014; Drotbohm 2011; Golash-Boza 2014; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013; Hagan, Eschbach and Rodriguez 2008; HRW 2007; Moniz 2004; PDHRP 2009; Peutz 2006; Zilberg 2004).<sup>16</sup> For the AIT and the Home Office, family separation brought about as a result of dismissed appeals, such as the above examples, stems from families choosing not to relocate with the appellant, as no major impediments to doing so were stipulated by the AIT. For appellants and their families, separation is a direct result of the tribunal's failure to understand that for them relocation is not an option, even if the appellant is to be deported to a country that can eventually afford them the same lifestyle and opportunities. Generational differences and stages in the life cycle play a decisive role in migrants' perspectives on return (Jansen 2011; Jeffert and Murison 2011) and their ability to integrate deportation in their imaginings of the future. A life-course perspective that takes into account the family cycle is relevant to the understanding of migrants' reluctance to relocate.

The first-generation migrants in this study migrated to the UK as young adults, either singly or jointly with newly-wed spouses. Some, like David and George, viewed their lives in the UK as settled and had no desire or intention to return permanently to their home countries. Others, like Naomi, wished to return and settle in their country of origin at a later stage in life, when the children were independent

and she had the financial means to settle comfortably there. At this point in their lives, and whether or not they envisaged an eventual return home, none was ready to depart from the UK or migrate elsewhere. Now aged between thirty and fifty, they were still advancing their careers and had young children to raise. George, for instance, emphasised several times that, no matter what happened, his children would be educated in the UK.

Those who arrived in the UK as children were at the time of conviction mostly young adults still living with their parents.<sup>17</sup> They showed no interest whatsoever in returning to their countries of origin. For them the UK is home. Migration may be part of their life plans, but not necessarily to the country of origin. Tony, for instance, revealed the desire to work elsewhere in the world, to travel and get acquainted with different lifestyles, but to return to the UK once he established a family, as that was where he wanted his children to be raised. Still dependent on their parents, these youths could hardly expect their parents and siblings to return with them. Like the first-generation migrants described above, their parents would not consider a return at a time when their financial situation was unstable and there were other children to think of.

Family relocation involves uprooting children, often born in the UK, who have few links to the country of origin – their cultural, social and linguistic reference points would be left behind were they to move (Bhabha 1998; Brabeck and Xu 2010). It also involves the cancellation or deferral not just of their spouses' professional activities and development but also of opportunities for their children to succeed in life. It would involve distancing family members from wider family and friends in the UK and from the support networks that they have developed. Furthermore, there are financial considerations: someone has to remain employed to support the family.<sup>18</sup> This is particularly important as, for many, whatever savings were accumulated have been spent in their legal battle to stay in the UK. Finally, and no less importantly for research participants, taking the family away from the UK would be tantamount to giving up everything the family had accomplished since arrival. It would be to forget the future that the family in general hoped for, and which was envisioned for the children in particular, and to endure another new beginning.

Family separation is often an intrinsic element, temporary or otherwise, of the migration process. Yet, as states tighten their border controls and implement increasingly restrictive migration policies, family separation becomes ever more common both through deportation and removal and the ever more limited scope for family

reunification (Menjívar 2012). Through family separation, migrants are able carry on pursuing the family's initial goal of migration.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout this chapter I have addressed the ways in which the experience of living under the constant threat of deportation, and the resulting uncertainty of waiting, affect everyday life, social relationships and the sense of self, thus highlighting the consequences and costs of deportability. I have also examined the main coping strategies deployed by deportable migrants and their families. Equally important in considering coping strategies is an exploration of what migrants do to react against their deportability, an issue examined in the next chapter.

## Notes

1. It may be more than coincidence that the one appellant interviewed who was not consumed by thoughts about his deportation was Basem, a very busy businessman.
2. McGregor (2009, 2011) also found that Zimbabwean asylum seekers felt emasculated due to dependency on relatives.
3. These symptoms or expressions of concern have been documented in other studies concerning deportable migrants and their families, mostly in the US (see Brabeck and Xu 2010; Das 2008; Hagan, Eschbach and Rodriguez 2008; PDHRP 2009; Randall 1987; Talavera, Nunez-Mchiri and Heyman 2010).
4. For instance, the asylum seekers among whom Rotter (2012) conducted research had spent two to nine years waiting for a determination of their status as either refugees to be protected or failed asylum seekers to be removed. During the waiting period they found productive ways to occupy their time, by developing social and religious networks and social relations, strengthening their cases and so on.
5. McDonald (2012) refers to waiting as a 'time tax' that further penalises defendants) in the context of young criminal offenders.
6. Craig, Fletcher and Goodall (2008) found that asylum seekers felt similarly about their adjudication process.
7. Reality is not that clear cut however. Closure was certainly the end of extreme uncertainty to Hamid and Samuel, whose appeals were allowed. Even so, their deportation experiences have made them all too aware that their lives in the UK are not to be taken for granted. The end of their deportation process meant they could move on with their lives, but obtaining citizenship to secure their stay in the UK was now one of their main concerns. For Tania, Louise, George and Andre, closure did not mean the end of uncertainty. Whereas they, or their relatives, have left the UK, they all seek to return, and their lives are now structured around that eventuality.
8. As mentioned in Chapter 3, even though no research participant was subjected to home raids, the fact that these are often mentioned in the media affects their sense of security.
9. While in prison (and detention), however, even if absent from everyday life and family events, relatives could visit. That the prisoner is in the UK, has a release date and will be able to resume life also brings a sense that the family and prisoner are closer to each other than they would or will ever be upon deportation. Deportation is not just a personal absence from home, it is absence from the country with no possibility of return – it is thus the absence of a future in the UK and of a future with the

family. Having said that, it is important to emphasise that time spent in prison and detention do inform how the threat of deportation is experienced. Appellants and families have these periods of separation as reference points.

10. Dependency on welfare is also a documented outcome of deportation in the US context (see Brabeck and Xu 2010).
11. Note, however, that, two years later, at the time of writing, Maria is still in London 'waiting' to be deported.
12. Andre was extradited in 2010 and placed in prison upon arrival in his country of origin. He was released on parole two years later. He plans to return to the UK in five years' time, when his parole period is over.
13. Perhaps not coincidentally, Latrell was the only research participant who feared for his life if removed to his country of origin.
14. We saw in Chapter 3 how deportees viewed state control strategies as beside the point as it made no sense for them to abscond when their goal was to remain with their families.
15. Tony had already filed for citizenship when he was convicted, but for others, applying for citizenship was carried out when the deportability of one family member made it all too clear that the family's ability to stay in the UK could not be taken for granted. Although eligible for citizenship, most migrants in this study had not previously applied for it because the process is financially costly and most did not need it on a day to day basis. Apart from Hamid, who was working using his brother's papers (and hence not eligible), all others were lawfully residing in the UK. Not having British citizenship had not been an impediment to their lives prior to the conviction of one family member.
16. In his study of second-generation Portuguese migrants deported from the US to the Azores, Moniz (2004) found that family reunification was uncommon and, when attempted, largely unsuccessful. Not many children and spouses were willing to leave the US for the Azores due to limited employment opportunities, lack of support networks and resistance to leaving the place they had made their home. Those who did try faced extreme difficulties in adjusting to life on the islands, not only due to language barriers but also in dealing with the stigma now attached to them as families of deportees. Many returned to the US shortly after arrival.
17. Maria and Basem both migrated to the UK at a young age, but unlike other 1.5 generation appellants, they were in their fifties. They had children and grandchildren, had always lived in the UK and never considered migrating elsewhere.
18. In fact, even if it was not the case with any research participant in this study, Zilberg (2004) and Drotbohm (2011) have called attention to the fact that the deportation of one family member may hinder the long-desired return of the older generation, which now has to remain in the host country in order to provide for the one stranded in the country of origin.
19. A study of migrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan to Canada, albeit not in the context of deportation, also finds that family separation after migration (not upon migration) was preferable to the return of the whole family as it allows the family to pursue improvements in their life chances, including those of the children (Waters 2011).