A culture of migration

A study of shared meanings attached to migration from Ghana to Europe

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Acknowledgements

My interest in migration was sparked during the Master Development and Rural Innovation. However, my interest in migration does not lie in the integration debate in receiving countries or the immigration policies that are made. I am interested in the migrants themselves. They have stories to tell about the choices they have made and the importance of leaving their country has for them and their kin. This interest in migrants' stories led to this thesis focussing on the meanings of migration.

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Abstract

This study is the second of two theses focussing on Ghanaian migration as part of the Master Development and Rural Innovation. Based on observations and interviews with aspiring migrants, returned migrants and family members of migrants, this thesis aims to analyse the meanings Ghanaians attach to migration. These meanings are created through interaction between migrants, aspiring migrants and family members of migrants. The interactions are not limited to Ghana, but span two or more nation states.

I consider two approaches to the research; symbolic interactionism, which views shared meanings as a dynamic process shaped by interaction. The second approach positions symbolic interactionism within theories of culture, as culture is the way people orient themselves towards others and only exists when ideas are shared through interaction.

I found that Europe is idealised through interaction between migrants in Europe and significant others who remain in Ghana. Furthermore, it appears that migration has become a marker of distinction in Ghana. Thus making migration a prime form of cosmopolitan cultural capital. Migration is valued so much that failure to succeed is not viewed as an option. This leads to an ideal type of migration process and the construction of the *good migrant*. Migrants send remittances to family members in Ghana and portray an image of success so not to lose face. The migrants meeting the expectations attached to the notion of the good migrant results in a repetitive process of migration. Aspiring migrants expect Europe to be like heaven, leave for Europe and try to meet expectations by sending remittances and appearing successful. Thereby serving as an enticement for others to migrate and recreate the process.

Contents

I have a dream

lyrics by: **Nana Sarfo**

I have a dream
And I have a vision
No matter what the circumstance is
I've got to work hard to achieve it

As the years are going by
And the earth is going round in circles
I've got to move on with life
to see the future bright and so right

I know one day my star will shine
and that day my dream will come true
I know one day my star will shine
and that day my dream will come true

As the years are going by
And the earth is going round in circles
I've got to move on with life
to see the future bright and so right

I know one day my star will shine
and that day my dream will come true
I know one day my star will shine
and that day my dream will come true

Oh oh oh, it's my dream
It's my dream and dreams come true
It's a dream
Oh it's a dream and dreams come true

1 Introduction

Listening to my neighbour, a local musician, singing 'I have a dream', I realise he has captured the sentiments of so many Ghanaians in a single song. Ghanaians dream about leaving Ghana and going to Europe to become successful.

Every year thousands of Ghanaians migrate to Europe. They either enter the continent with official visas, work permits or scholarships. Or, as increasingly common due to stricter policies, Ghanaians migrate to Europe through informal channels and live in European countries as illegal immigrants. According to information from Ghanaian embassies, half a million Ghanaians currently live in Europe and North America (Mafe projects, June 2012). But why? Migration obviously has meaning and value in the lives of Ghanaians. After all, a person does not wake up one morning, pack their bags and leave in search of a better life on a whim. These meanings are not created in a vacuum, but are constructed through interaction with others (Blumer, 1969).

Studies on Ghanaian migration are mainly focussed on economics, development and policy issues and are often orientated towards remittances. The construction of meanings is only lightly touched upon in these prior studies. By taking the shared meanings of migration in Ghana as the main focal point of this study, I am able to add another dimension to the knowledge about migration in the Ghanaian context.

This study is the second of two theses focussing on Ghanaian migration as part of the Master Development and Rural Innovation. Before embarking on this study, I completed the first thesis. It focused on the transnational contacts and the social identity of Ghanaian migrants in Amsterdam Zuidoost. For this second thesis I have focussed on the construction of meanings of migration, through interaction, in the country of origin.

This thesis aims to analyse the meanings that Ghanaians attach to migration. These meanings are created through interaction between migrants, aspiring migrants and family members of migrants. The interactions are not limited to those within Ghana, but are lasting relationships that span two or more nation states. Thus, taking place in a transnational space (Faist et al. 2013). This approach provides me with more insight into the role of migration in everyday lives of Ghanaians and why migration takes on the form that it has. The data for this thesis was gathered during four months of field work in two cities in Ghana; Accra and Kumasi. There, I observed interactions between family members and migrants. Furthermore, I conducted eighteen interviews with aspiring migrants, returned migrants and family members of migrants.

In the next chapter, I discuss the theoretical approach to the research problem and the relevant prior research on this topic. In chapter three I outline the methodology for this research before discussing my findings in chapters four to eight. These findings relate to the following topics: Europe as the Promised Land, migration as distinction, pressure, transnational relationships and finally, success and failure. Chapter nine is the conclusion and there I discuss how my findings relate to the construction of shared meanings of migration and how this results in a pattern of behaviour related to how migration 'should be done'. Chapter ten concludes this thesis with a discussion and recommendations for further research.

2 Theoretical Framework

This thesis is concerned with shared meanings and the construction of a culture of migration. To give an understanding of how the topic can be viewed, I consider two approaches to the research problem. The first is symbolic interactionism, which views shared meanings as a dynamic process, shaped by interaction. The second paragraph positions symbolic interactionism within theories of culture. I then continue with a review of literature focusing on transnational migration and prior studies on Ghanaian migration. This chapter will conclude with the research question this study aims to answer.

2.1 Symbolic Interactionism

The theoretical approach to this research is symbolic interactionism which is rooted in interpretative sociology. These theories emerged in the 1960s when views of sociological theorists started to change. During this period, the relationship between an individual and society became an important theme, more specifically the tension between the two. Sociological theorists started to focus on interactions rather than on abstract social systems or structures. Moreover, they were interested in the ways people constructed and created meaning in social interaction (Calhoun et al., 2007). This became the main tenet of symbolic interactionism.

Symbolic interactionism departs from the idea that people give meaning to the objects or interactions that make up their world. Action is the process through which people interact, interpret, give meaning and determine situations. Another important idea is that the interpretation and interaction form institutions and networks (Blumer, 1969). The process of shaping institutions is caused by people repeating actions. These repeated actions ultimately form a pattern among individuals. Eventually, the patterns of interaction are adopted by more and more individuals to form collective patterns of behaviour, sustained by formal and informal rules and expectations (Berger and Luckman, 1966). These collective patterns of behaviour are not fixed, but are constantly negotiated and reshaped through further interaction and interpretation. They never reach one final point, but are changing and renewing as interaction takes place between people (Blumer, 1969).

Symbolic interactionism assumes that humans do not simply act or react. Another person's action is interpreted and is given meaning. The process of interpretation and giving meaning to an action determines the response (Blumer, 1969). The process of deriving meaning from interaction is what makes the interaction symbolic. Symbols are means for deriving meaning, for example the use of language. These symbols are used by humans to construct meaning in the process of preparing for interaction, interacting with another person and reflecting on that interaction. This is different from the classical stimulus response-model from behavioural psychology and biology which assumes that a certain action always leads to reaction in specific way (Blumer, 1969). For example Pavlov's dogs salivating when they hear the bell ring.

To summarise, symbolic interactionism has three main points of departure: action is based on the meaning people give to the objects or interactions that make up their world, meanings are constructed through interaction with other individuals and finally, giving meaning is a dynamic process of interpretation. This third point refers to the process of interaction within the mind of an actor. During interaction an individual interprets and gives meaning to an object before responding. Communicating as it were to oneself what the response should be in a particular situation (Blumer, 1986).

These three points have implications for the method of research in symbolic interactionism. Blumer (1969) stresses the necessity for researchers to get close to the empirical world of the people being studied. To unravel the meanings, researchers should study interactions in their natural setting. However, as I will explain in the following section, Blumer takes naturalism further than I believe is possible.

Blumers' position on naturalism

Blumer (1969, 1986) takes the view that researchers must be totally submerged in the social world of the people being researched and must understand and see the world as the research subjects do. However, it is not possible to completely see the world of others as they see it. Regardless of the extent to which I am able to adapt to the behaviour and expectations of Ghanaians, I cannot draw on the same experiences or interactions that have shaped the respondents' social world. This is not only because I am not Ghanaian and have no plans to migrate from Africa to Europe, it is more fundamental.

An individual can never fully understand the world of another person. People can convey meanings to each other, share experiences through language or joint activities, but a person does not share consciousness with other humans (Fuchs, 2001). The research of meanings people give to objects, involves these meanings being uncovered through interaction, interviews and observations. This may provide a clear picture, but cannot replicate what happens inside a respondent's mind. It is not possible to look out at the world and see it through another person's eyes with their emotions, interpretations and meanings. In short, it is possible to understand the way an individual sees their social world, but it is not possible to be that person (Fuchs, 2001).

Having said this, it remains important to understand the social world of my respondents as much as possible. As an outsider I am not expected to understand the meanings that Ghanaians have constructed in relation to migration and can ask questions on issues that have been taken for granted. I cannot become Ghanaian, but I can learn to understand (a large part of) my respondents' social world.

Using symbolic interactionism allows me to analyse the meanings that Ghanaians construct in the interaction that aspiring migrants have with each other and with important others in their lives. By analysing meanings I can gain insight into the importance Europe and migration have in the social world of the aspiring migrants and their family. These meanings are created through the process of interaction. People acting the same way in society is mostly the result of previous interaction, which has led to a common understanding of how to act in particular situations (Blumer, 1969).

In my research, interactions and meanings of interest are: The meanings attached to migration and the common understanding of how to do migration and become a migrant. I aim to identify the symbols aspiring migrants and their families in Ghana construct relating to migration. This approach provides me with more insight into the role of migration in everyday lives of Ghanaians and why migration takes on the form that it has. Chapters four to eight will elaborate on the symbols and the themes that emerged from the data. First I will consider how symbolic interactionism is positioned within theories of culture, as meaning giving is part of culture. Culture is the way people orient themselves towards others and only exists when ideas are shared through interaction between people.

2.2 Theories of culture

In the 1960s and 1970s, theories of culture also changed (Calhoun et al., 2007). Within a society so much diversity can be found that, amidst all these subcultures, one cannot say that a culture is something that people from one particular background or one particular nation state share. Keesing (1974) distinguishes four main areas in which theorists have attempted to recast the concept of culture. The first is culture as adaptive systems. This approach looks at how certain cultural patterns are developed in various societies. In this line of thought a link is drawn between Darwin's evolutionary theory and the formation of these cultural patterns. Over time and space the culture of a nation, group or subgroup evolves. These groups are able to change and adapt to new situations that they are presented with (Keesing, 1974).

The three other areas are ideational theories of culture, which contrast the view of the adaptive system theorists. Within the ideational approach there are three different ways of looking at culture.

1. *Cultures as Cognitive Systems:* To operate in ways that are desired, a person must have knowledge of the desired beliefs and behaviour patterns within a society. Language is an example of this kind of thinking. The knowledge of words and grammar enables a person to communicate in that language.

2. *Cultures as Structural Systems:* In this approach culture is seen as a structure of symbols that influence the minds of actors. This structure is seen as autonomous and constructed into a universal logic of culture. Thereby emphasising the stability of cultures defined on a macro level and that they are hardly being affected by independent human interaction.

3. *Cultures as Symbolic Systems:* Cultures consist of shared meanings of people in a society. However, to understand these systems one must look at them in the empirical world. In contrast to cultures as structural systems, meanings are not constructed in the minds of actors, but are formed in interaction with others. This view on culture is similar to the approach of symbolic interactionism. Culture is constructed on a micro level, through the interaction of individuals (Keesing, 1974).

This research focuses on the meanings and the desire to migrate from Ghana to Europe. A decision that appears to be embedded in the culture of Ghanaians, according to the migrants I have spoken to. As discussed in the previous paragraph, one must attempt to understand the respondents' life worlds. To understand the 'culture of migration' I approach culture as a symbolic system. Culture is not created 'in the mind' (Fuchs 2001:138) of an individual. There is no collective structure that is transferred directly from one person's mind to the mind of another. Instead, the ideas that shape a culture are created through the process of interaction, thus allowing for the creation of new and changing meanings (Keesing, 1974; Fuchs, 2001).

Having now positioned symbolic interactionism in relation to theories of culture, I will proceed with a review of prior research on transnational migration. First, a brief explanation of the use of the term transnationalism in this study.

2.3 Transnationalism
In the 1970s, social scientists started to change their views on migration. Assimilation was no longer seen as the only possible outcome of successful migration. They now started to focus on and recognise cultural differences between people and how these differences were socially constructed (Calhoun et al., 2007).

In the 1980s, the term transnational migration was introduced in studies of migration and started to emerge more frequently in the 1990s (Bouras, 2012). Transnationalism is not necessarily a new occurrence, but it has become more visible and easier to engage in since the increase and availability of communication technology. Large distances can be bridged and more migrants have the opportunity to interact with their home country (Portes et al., 1999). Although migrants might have engaged in transnational activity throughout history, transnationalism provides a new lens for looking at migration and the 'dual lives' (Portes et al., 1999:217) of migrants. However, it is not only migrants who lead these 'dual lives' that span two or more nation states. The interaction between migrants and those who remain in Ghana is two-way and should therefore also include family members that remain in the country of origin (Faist et al., 2013).

There are two types of transnationalism and with that two ways of analysing transnational activity of migrants: transnationalism from above and from below. The first type refers to transnationalism of economic corporations and governments. The latter refers to transnational activities initiated by and between individuals (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Portes et al., 1999). As my interest is in the process of constructing shared meanings based on the interaction between individual actors, this study is limited to the discussion of transnationalism from below.

Transnational social ties and social spaces
Transnationalism is a broad concept, covering different areas of people's lives: 'the familial, socio-cultural, economic and political' (Faist et al., 2013:28). The difference between familial and socio-cultural areas lies in the extent that the relationships are tied to formal regulations and institutions (Faist et al., 2013). In this research, the focus is on the familial transnational relationships and addresses some of the socio-cultural aspects of transnationalism, but later we will see that this study also encompasses the economic sphere.

These relationships take place within a transnational social space. Within these transnational social spaces there are social ties. These social ties are transnational interactions between two or more individuals. It is through these social ties that shared meanings, symbols and collective interpretations are created. There are three types of transnational social spaces: transnational kinship groups, transnational circuits, transnational

communities (Faist et al., 2013). An example of the transnational kinship group is the extended family system of the Ghanaians. The transnational kinship groups 'make use of resources inherent in social ties like reciprocity. Reciprocity means that what one party receives from the other requires some return. Reciprocity is expressed, for example, in financial remittances from migrants to their families.' (Faist 2013:58).

Transnational circuits refer to social ties between organisations and individual actors. These ties are not linked to the notion of kin, but to achieving a 'common goal' usually involving an exchange of financial or social resources (Faist et al., 2013:58). Transnational communities are characterised by the formation of a collective identity. Jewish and Hellenic diasporas are examples, but the term can also apply to migrant communities with a strong sense of institutionalised collective identity across national state boundaries (Faist et al., 2013).

2.4 Prior research on transnational migration

Literature on Ghanaian and West-African migration mainly focuses on the remittances of migrants, migration and development and policy measures (e.g. Mazzucato, 2008). Though these studies are extensive, the social and cultural elements of migration receive less attention in the migration literature (Awumbila et al., 2011). The majority of studies also concentrate on the migrants *after* they made the decision to leave the country of origin (Kley et al., 2009). However, the process that precedes the migrants' decision gives insight into the expectations they have before leaving and the role that others may play in the collective patterns of behaviour regarding migration.

The construction of meanings are only lightly touched upon in prior studies. By taking the shared meanings of migration in Ghana as the main focal point of this study, I am able to add another dimension to the knowledge about migration in the Ghanaian context. Added value is that the research uncovers the perception aspiring migrants have, the expectations of families, how this leads to shared meanings and a construction of the ideal type of migrant.

Carling and Akesson (2009) studied the meanings attached to migration in the Cape Verdean Islands. This study is one of the few that focuses on the construction of meanings of migration and refers to a culture of migration. Though their approach differs from this study in the sense that it examines the meanings of migration in relation to national identity, there are many similarities. Their study shows that there is a strong desire to travel among the population, resulting from meanings attached to migration. Their analysis of ideas and experiences with regard to migration uncovers patterns of collective behaviour showing the added value of such an approach. However, the particular construction of meanings they analysed may not be applicable to all communities in Africa. There are differences between some of the meanings that Ghanaians have constructed with regard to migration and the meanings for Cape Verdeans. Therefore generalisations should not be made about African migration on the basis of one migrant population, but meanings of migration should be studied in the context of the population they are constructed in.

In 2012, as part of my master's programme, I completed a minor thesis focusing on the transnational contacts of Ghanaian migrants living in Amsterdam Zuidoost. This research showed that Ghanaian migrants in Amsterdam Zuidoost maintain close relationships with their families and significant others who have remained in Ghana. These ties with the country of origin are reflected in frequent contact with their family members and the remittances that migrants send home. Before leaving Ghana, migrants imagined Europe and the Netherlands to be like heaven. Migrating to Europe is seen as the journey to the Promised Land. However, after arriving in the Netherlands life was not how the migrants expected it to be; it was a lot harder. The Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands experience hardships in their daily lives that are not shared with family in Ghana. 'For the family in Ghana, migration means the opportunity to improve your life and the lives of your family members. Remittances symbolise these expectations of improvement and financial means.' (Baker 2012:48). These expectations place migrants in a double bind. If they inform the family they are not believed, but not sharing the hardships means migrants are expected to meet all the responsibilities they initially thought they could fulfil. Thus creating the notion of the good migrant; a migrant who is successful and sends regular remittances back to Ghana (Baker, 2012).

Despite the double bind, the migrants' identity is strongly linked to that of a Ghanaian even if the person has lived in the Netherlands for over 30 years. Migrants invest in upholding Ghanaian morals and raise their children the Ghanaian way. In doing so, they draw a demarcation between themselves and the Dutch, to avoid adopting patterns of behaviour identified as non-Ghanaian (Baker, 2012).

Ghana was referred to as home and the Netherlands is seen as a temporary place of residence. This is reflected by the act of referring to themselves as being travellers, not migrants. Migrants have a strong link with Ghana through the relationships they maintain with family and significant others who have remained 'home', but also in a reversal of the Promised Land idea. After the actual migration to the Netherlands migrants begin to see Ghana as the Promised Land. The intention is to return home one day when they have enough money or are old. Ghana becomes the land where you can be with your family and feel at home (Baker, 2012).

The study in Amsterdam Zuidoost raised questions about how meanings of migration are constructed in Ghana before a person decides to leave. The construction of the notion of a good migrant and the extent to which this notion is valued could not be covered within the scope of my previous research. This thesis aims to answer these questions and fill the gap in the understanding of collective patterns of behaviour based on shared meanings of migration.

2.5 Research question

The objective of the research is to understand the construction of shared meanings of migration and to understand how these shared meanings shape a collective pattern of behaviour with regard to how migration should be done. I approach this objective from the symbolic interactionism perspective, which views shared meanings as a dynamic process shaped by interaction. Symbolic interactionism is positioned within theories of culture, as culture consists of shared meanings of people in a society. The interactions that shaped this culture of migration are not limited to Ghana, but include interactions that span two or more nation states. The interaction between migrants and those who remain in Ghana is two-way. Little research has been done, that focuses on the construction of these meanings through transnational interaction. This study aims to add another dimension to the knowledge about migration in the Ghanaian context by analysing; the perception aspiring migrants have, the expectations of families and how this leads to shared meanings and a construction of the current patterns of behaviour. This resulted in the following research question:

How do shared meanings of migration between Ghanaian migrants, aspiring migrants and family members shape a culture of migration?

Sub questions that specify the research question:
1. What are the expectations of aspiring migrants?
2. What are aspiring migrants' experiences with migrants in Europe?
3. What are the expectations of family members of migrants?
4. What are the family's experiences with migrants in Europe?
5. How does family in Ghana contribute to the notion of the good migrant?

3 Research methodology

The research was conducted as part of two theses focussing on Ghanaian migration. The first thesis examined the transnational ties between Ghanaian migrants in Amsterdam Zuidoost, the Netherlands and those who had remained in Ghana. This second and final thesis focuses on the shared meanings of migration constructed in the country of origin. This research is not part of a wider project, but a personal initiative based on my interest in migration issues.

3.1 Uncovering meanings

I chose to use qualitative research methods to study the research problem. This choice relates to the theoretical approach and the aim of my research, which was: to understand how shared meanings of migration shape a culture of migration. A quantitative approach would not uncover the possible variation in meanings of migration. A quantitative approach would standardised meanings into pre-determined or measurable answers and would not take variations in how actors see the world into account. A qualitative approach, however, allows for the various ways individuals see their world (Seale, 1998).

Naturalism

An important part of qualitative research is doing fieldwork. The importance of this lies in the alternative view of social scientists on the nature of research. The premise of naturalism is that, in order to understand people's behaviour, researchers must use an approach that provides access to the meanings that guide people's behaviour (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This involves observing and taking part in everyday lives of people to understand the issues being studied.

I aimed to make sense of the interactions, situations and group existence in their natural setting to understand the meanings awarded to them by Ghanaians. By getting to know their world I aimed to reduce the risk of being lead by my own assumptions about the social construction of their world (Seale, 1998). As discussed in the previous chapter, although I approach this study from the theoretical approach of symbolic interactionism, I disagree with Blumer (1969) on the issue of naturalism. Blumer (1969) says that in order to understand meanings that are formed through interaction, researchers must be totally submerged in the social world of the respondents and see the social world of research subjects exactly as they do. As I have already explained, I do not believe that this is possible in the extent that Blumer describes. However, it is important for researchers to understand the social world they are studying as much as possible to reduce the risk of being lead by their own assumptions about the social construction of the respondents' world and the meanings they attach to objects. That being said the role of an outsider has its advantages since researchers can observe things that the insiders do not see or have taken for granted. In the following paragraphs I explain the methods taken to perform this qualitative study and the way in which I aimed to understand the meanings attached to migration, as Ghanaians do.

3.2 Adapting the research question

Initially, the aim of this research was to focus on the involvement of family members in the decision to migrate. My prior research in Amsterdam Zuidoost showed close relationships with family members in Ghana (Baker, 2012). Due the closeness of these ties between the Ghanaian migrants and their kin, I wanted to focus on the involvement of the families in the migration process and their influence on the decisions of aspiring migrants. Are decisions to migrate made collectively or are the choices migrants make individual ones that have collective consequences? Based on the findings in Amsterdam Zuidoost I expected decisions to be made collectively and within these family ties. This initially led to the following research question: *How do Ghanaians make the decision to migrate to Europe and how is the decision making process influenced by important others?*

Early on in the process of data collection it became clear that the decision to migrate and how it is influenced by others, was different than I had initially anticipated. The process of migration is very secretive and the actual involvement of family is more complex. The focus on making the decision appeared not to be the best approach in uncovering shared meanings of migration, since the desire to migrate among Ghanaians seems omnipresent and exists already at an early age. My initial research question did not cover

the complexity of the situation in Ghana nor did it allow for examination of the patterns of behaviour attached to migration. To cover the complexity of the migration process in Ghana and the construction of the meanings attached to the process, I revised the objective and the research question of this study. The focus shifted from the decision making process and the involvement of family to the construction of shared meanings of migration. The objective of this research is to understand the construction of shared meanings of migration and how these shared meanings shape a collective pattern of behaviour with regard to how migration should be done.

3.3 Research site

This study focuses on shared meanings of migration that are constructed through interaction between *aspiring migrants, family members of migrants* and *migrants in Europe.* Before embarking on my four months of fieldwork, I identified Accra and Kumasi as the two main areas where many Ghanaians migrating to Europe come from. Ghanaians from other regions in Ghana often pass through the capital, Accra, when wishing to migrate to Europe (Mazzucato, 2008). Therefore, I expected to find aspiring migrants there. The second urban area, Kumasi, is the capital of the Ashanti region. The Ashanti tribe is one of the largest in Ghana and also the main ethnic group migrating to Europe. During my research in Amsterdam Zuidoost the majority of my respondents originated from Kumasi (Baker, 2012). Based on this, apart from aspiring migrants, I also expected to find many family members of migrants in Kumasi.

University in Accra

Before departing to Ghana I made contact with the Centre of Migration Studies, part of the University of Ghana. The university was an important research site at the start of this study. Through the network of professors I managed to find my first respondents and the university grounds provided a neutral meeting point for interviews with respondents.

Church

During my research among Ghanaian migrants in Amsterdam Zuidoost I found that being a regular visitor in church services helped to gain people's trust. If the pastor considered my presence acceptable the rest of the congregation followed suit. By informing the leaders of the church what I was doing, it spread to the rest of the congregation or community.

In Accra I made some attempts to attend church services. However, a respondent's church turned out to be an unsuitable place for meeting respondents. The meetings with the pastor were focussed on recruiting me as part of the church and giving me spiritual lessons. Therefore it was not possible to do research there. However, a Ghanaian respondent in Amsterdam suggested a Baptist church in Kumasi to me. This church did provide me with opportunities of access to respondents and to observe this aspect of community life.

Sampling

Identifying respondents proved a challenge. Aspiring migrants have no particular physical or occupational traits that are visible in the search for respondents. I had built rapport with Ghanaians in the Netherlands and made contact with a few friends and family members of respondents from my prior research in the Netherlands. I also contacted the Centre of Migration Studies of the University of Ghana. By using snowball sampling I used these contacts to find respondents. I also actively searched for respondents in the neighbourhoods I was living in, in Accra and Kumasi. In Accra I lived in an area where few tourists stay, spending most of my time getting to know people in the neighbourhood. Especially in Kumasi it was easier to find respondents, as Ghanaians in Amsterdam Zuidoost had provided me with some contact details of family members and a church pastor.

3.4 Participant observation

Participant observation provided insights about the behaviours and habits of aspiring migrants and family members of migrants. Information that might not be given in an interview because it is viewed as mundane, normal or sensitive could be collected through observation. Another advantage of participant observation is that what people say and what people do might not be one and the same (Seale, 1998). Themes of interest during observations were: how family members and significant others interact with each other, how they interact with (aspiring) migrants and the financial and social position of family members.

To build rapport with respondents it was important to spend time getting to know people. The right people, potential respondents, were not identifiable at the start of the data collection process. The church services in Kumasi provided me with an opportunity for participant observation. The second site for participant observation was families. In Accra I lived on a hostel compound, run by a Ghanaian family. I was able to observe interactions within this family. In Kumasi I lived in the same house as relatives of migrants in the Netherlands. Providing me with ample opportunity to observe their interactions with each other and in some situations also their interactions with family members in Europe.

3.5 Interviews

I was interested in respondents' accounts to understand behaviour, choices and the value of migration in their social world from the perspective of respondents. This type of data could not be collected by participant observation. An interview provides access to feelings, ideas and thoughts that help understand the meanings attached to migration (Seale, 1998). I conducted eighteen in-depth interviews with aspiring migrants, family members of migrants and returned migrants. For these interviews I used an interview guide containing topics to be discussed and possible questions. However, the order of topics and the phrasing of questions depended on the situation and how the conversation flowed. The topics discussed related to the expectations of Europe, the relationships and experiences with migrants and their own plans to go to Europe. The interview guides used during data collection are included in Appendix I.

This type of interview gave me flexibility to ask for further explanation on topics and discover new topics that the respondents might address (Seale, 1998). An example of this flexibility is the shift in the focus of the research. On the basis of the first few interviews, I found that the family's involvement was different than I initially expected and the topics of the interview did not cover the situation in Ghana. The flexibility of the interview structure allowed me to adapt the interview and find out more about migration as an individual decision.

To verify whether or not I understood the social world of respondents, I used two strategies. The first was used during interviews, I would summarise respondents' answers in my own words during interviews to see if I understood the response as was intended. The second strategy was to relate data from another interview to respondents to see if they recognised the social world being portrayed. However, I did not discard data immediately if another respondent did not recognise the response of another. It might not be favourable for a respondent to have the social world described in another way or the person might not have the same experience or opinion and therefore not recognise the social world being described (Seale and Kelly, 1998).

As an outsider I was not expected to understand the meanings that Ghanaians have constructed in relation to migration and could ask questions about issues that have been taken for granted. I cannot become a Ghanaian, but I could learn to understand a large part of their social world. This is important during data collection, since I would otherwise be guided by my own ideas and assumptions about Ghanaian migration and consequently, not collecting valid data that reflects the meaning Ghanaians give to Europe and migration (Seale, 1998; Blumer, 1969).

Interview respondents

I conducted interviews with Ghanaians who fell within the following categories of respondents:

1. *Aspiring migrants*
   The criteria for aspiring migrants were not easy to determine. Preferably I would have interviewed Ghanaians who had started to make concrete plans to migrate to Europe. However, since the decision process to migrate to Europe is a concealed process, people with concrete plans were difficult to locate. Therefore I also included people with less specific plans to migrate in this category.

2. *Family of migrants in Europe*
   To establish the meaning of migration for families who remain in Ghana I also included families of migrants already in Europe.

3. *Returned migrants*
   This category emerged during the process of data collection. While interviewing a family member of a migrant, I discovered that the respondent had also migrated to Europe and returned to Ghana. This respondent was able to provide me with more insight into the construction of meanings and moreover, the way these meanings are upheld in a transnational space. Therefore I chose to include this category of respondents.

Before I started the fieldwork, I had another category of respondents: *Family members of aspiring migrants.* This category was connected to the original research question, focussing on the involvement of family members in the decision to migration. However, since family members are not (always) informed about aspiring migrants' plans, or are informed at the last moment, they were not a relevant category for this study.

The table below gives an overview of the interview respondents and the division among the categories of variation.

Table 1: Interview respondents

	City	Category	Gender	Age
Respondent 1	Accra	Family abroad & returned migrant	Male	60
Respondent 2	Accra	Aspiring migrant	Male	35
Respondent 3	Accra	Family abroad & returned migrant	Male	50+
Respondent 4	Accra	Family abroad	Male	50+
Respondent 5	Accra	Aspiring migrant (student) & family abroad	Male	25
Respondent 6	Accra	Family abroad & aspiring migrant	Male	40+
Respondent 7	Accra	Family abroad	Male	50+
Respondent 8	Accra	Aspiring migrant (student)	Female	23
Respondent 9	Kumasi	Family abroad	Male	40
Respondent 10	Kumasi	Family abroad & returned migrant	Male	29
Respondent 11	Kumasi	Aspiring migrant	Male	21+
Respondent 12	Kumasi	Aspiring migrant	Male	21+
Respondent 13	Kumasi	Aspiring migrant & Family abroad	Male	21
Respondent 14	Kumasi	Aspiring migrant (student) & family abroad	Female	30+
Respondent 15	Kumasi	Family abroad	Male	41
Respondent 16	Kumasi	Returned migrant	Male	45+
Respondent 17	Kumasi	Aspiring migrant	Male	24
Respondent 18	Kumasi	Returned migrant (student)	Male	30+

I interviewed eighteen respondents in total. Eight were interviewed in Accra and ten respondents in Kumasi. The division being nearly equal is due to my fieldwork being the same length of time in these areas (two months in each city). Looking at the three categories (returned migrants, aspiring migrants and family members) nine are aspiring migrants, five are returned migrants and eleven have family members living abroad (some respondents fall into two categories). Though I found it important to interview respondents from all three categories, I do not discuss the differences between these categories in great detail in the chapters that follow, as it is the interaction between these three categories and the migrants in Europe that shape the meanings of migration.

I aimed for diversification in the age of the respondents and they range from 21 to 60 years old. There are differences in age range between the three categories of respondents. The aspiring migrants are, all but two, under thirty years of age. According to respondents it is this age group that has the strongest desire to go to Europe. Family members are mostly older, as are the returned migrants.

Though I strived to interview both male and female respondents, I only managed to interview two women. To compensate for the limited amount of female respondents and to understand it, I did ask men about women migrating to Europe. This provided some insights into migration and gender. However, without interviewing more women, this data is predominantly a male perspective on migration.

3.6 Role of the researcher

During research I was perceived as an outsider. Physical traits such as the difference in skin colour were mentioned continually by respondents. Respondents also made references to the degree of financial differences they perceived to be present between me as a white student and them as a black person. Thereby drawing a demarcation between them the Ghanaians and me the European. The role of an outsider was an advantage in the sense that respondents understood I did not understand issues that were logical to them and that did not warrant an explanation for other Ghanaians. They were prepared to be explicit and explain things that made perfect sense to them. I was not Ghanaian and therefore did not understand their social world, so they took extra pains to explain upon request.

I found that I had to be very clear in introducing myself and the research topic. Though this is the case for every research, I discovered the need to double check since my presence was sometimes misinterpreted as that of a connection man or scout in search of suitable migrants to take with me to Europe.

3.7 Recording data

Observations were recorded as field notes and written up as soon as possible to reduce the loss of data. When conducting interviews, I used audio recording with permission of the respondents. Before I started the fieldwork I considered it possible that I might not be able to rely on this method of recording data. My experience during my prior research on migration in the Netherlands, was that Ghanaians were reluctant to speak to me or let me record the interview. This was due to people fearing negative consequences with immigration officials. However, in Ghana this was not an issue. Respondents were not concerned about repercussions and allowed me to record the interviews. An advantage of using audio recording was that I was able to focus on the interview conversation, probing questions and it allowed me to note impressions and situations that cannot be recorded on tape. The recorded interview also has advantages for the analysis.

3.8 Data analysis

The choice of using qualitative data collection methods had consequences for the data analysis. The data is collected in a semi-structured manner. To make sense of the data, I first transcribed the interview recordings. Then I coded my field notes and interview transcripts using the coding software Atlas TI.

Transcribing interviews is time consuming, however the advantage is that it allows researchers to familiarise themselves with the data while transcribing. Using literal transcriptions of the interviews also allows for analysis of how people describe things and see if certain themes or terms reoccur during the different interviews (Seale, 1998). Transcribing also helped with developing a coding scheme and precise analysis of the data. The coding scheme allowed me to identify relevant and reoccurring topics and I was able to systematically order the quotations and notes on the basis of these reoccurring themes.

Seale and Kelly (1998) distinguish two ways to analyse interview data. The first is using the interview as a resource. This means, using the interview content to gather information and insights about behaviour, social interaction and meanings that take place in the social world of the respondent, outside of the interview setting. Using the interview as topic requires that the researcher sees the interview itself as an object of analysis. The phrasing of answers provides insights into the way the respondents view their world and how they wish to represent it. The latter is mainly used in discourse analysis, however the two do not have to be mutually exclusive.

I analysed my interview data mainly as a topic. The in-depth interviews allowed me to ask about personal feelings and the giving of meaning to migration. However, looking for common words, phrases and representations of these contacts provided extra insights into the meanings that are attached to migration (Seale and Kelly, 1998). For example, in interviews respondents referred to a specific name that people in Ghana give to migrants. This specific name reflects the meanings of migration as a marker of distinction (chapter five).

3.9 Limitations of the research

Although this research was carefully prepared, it still has its limitations and shortcomings. The first limitation is the sample size. I interviewed eighteen respondents in the three categories mentioned. Though this thesis provides an in-depth perspective on the meanings of migration my respondents construct, too many generalisations on the basis of these accounts cannot be made, as it may not be applicable to other regions in Ghana. Another limitation is related to the sample. Respondents are mostly male. I had hoped to interview more women with plans to travel to Europe, but this was not possible. I was unable to find more female respondents. Thus, presenting a male perspective on migration from Ghana to Europe.

The final limitation relates to the interview as a method of data collection. As discussed, an interview provides access to feelings and meanings. However, the limitation of this method of data collection is that it creates an unnatural setting and recreates a situation. The consequences for the data is that actual behaviour can only be asked about, but there might be a difference between what people do and what people say. Participant observation was a means to limit the consequences of this, however not all behaviour can be observed.

4 Europe as the Promised Land

In the following chapters I will discuss the findings from data gathered during observations and interviews in Ghana with aspiring migrants, returned migrants and with family members of migrants living in Europe. In this chapter I discuss ideas and expectations about what life is like in Europe. The subsequent chapters cover the following topics: migration as distinction, pressure related to migration and transnational relationships. I conclude my findings in chapter eight; focusing on the findings related to success and a fear of failure.

4.1 Going to heaven

All eighteen respondents talk about earning more money through migration to Europe. Europe is described as a place in the world where jobs are in abundance and making a living is much simpler than in Ghana. The idea is that there is always work to be found in Europe, whereas in Ghana there is a lot of unemployment. Also health care, technical advancements and the availability and quality of education are mentioned as being better in Europe than in Ghana. Europe is idealised; viewed as being better than Ghana, especially in terms of making money and earning a living. During interviews aspiring migrants imagined what it would mean for their lives, if they had the opportunity to travel to Europe.

> 'If I get the chance I'll travel to Europe. (...) That was what I was believing because I was thinking if I go there I can go and work and save some money, but if I bring it here and change it, it will be like much here and I can do something with it here. Maybe I can buy land for my own or build a house for my own. Maybe I can establish some business with my own money. (...) Here when you work they don't pay you hours. They pay you like month and it's nothing. So if I'm working in Europe and every four, five or one hour I'm getting my money and it's good. I can live on some and I can save something. It's good.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, 35 years old, respondent 2**

> 'Normally when we go there our main issue is we are going to work and do the money part. That's the main reason we the African or we the Ghanaian go there. You come and build your house, small house, and a car. You are making a living. That's all. (...) Because when I go there and I get work to do. I'll get small, small euro and dollar. When you bring euro or when you bring dollar to Ghana, it will fetch you money.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, 40 years old, respondent 6**

> 'Money is in London and if you travel what you mean is money: to make money. So that your family may be happy, find a good place. Find a home for your family to enjoy the life.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 12**

The idealisation of Europe takes on almost biblical forms in narratives of the expectations of Europe. One of my respondents refers to colonialism as the Genesis of migration to Europe. In the beginning, colonialism created the desire to migrate. More common are the descriptions of Europe as greener pastures and the Promised Land. The comparison to the Promised Land emerged during my minor thesis (Baker, 2012) and this notion is also very much present in the minds of my respondents in Accra and Kumasi.

> 'Yes, you see this world. Let me say in the beginning our side of the world was not like Europe. Maybe their mentality and everything was different. Until the colonising, the British came. Those people came here and taught us a lot of things like maybe electricity, cars and everything. People fell in love with it. To me I think that's the beginning.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, 35 years old, respondent 2**

> 'If I go there I would think it will be as if I am in heaven. (...) Because when I go there and I get work to do it will fetch you money.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, 45 years old, respondent 7**

The idealisation of Europe is strongly related to the financial possibilities migrants see. However, respondents also see Europe as having more facilities and possessing more knowledge than Ghana, or at the very least, better. Attached to the idealisation of Europe is the desire to migrate. The desire to leave is very strong, almost palatable, in everyday life. Wherever I was in Ghana people would ask me to take them 'back to my country' and express a desire to go and work in Europe. A respondent answered my questions about the desire to travel by posing a question to me:

'Let me ask you something. Would you love to stay in Ghana here, more than in your country, in terms of the development? If you had a chance would you love to stay here more than there, in terms of the lighting system, water system, hospital? Where do you choose to stay?'

Family abroad, man, 40 years old, respondent 10

This respondent did not actually expect an answer. According to him it was a given: a person would choose Europe over Ghana. The desire to travel to Europe is described by respondents as a shared desire. If given the opportunity the majority say that 'everybody' would leave Ghana immediately and migrate to Europe.

'Right now if they put a plane or a ship so people can come in free and go to Europe it will be full. It will be like full because everybody wants to go and work.'

Aspiring migrant, man, 35 years old, respondent 2

The extent of the desire to migrate is expressed most graphically by a respondent who talks of people's willingness to become voluntary slaves just to work in Europe. He uses the analogy of slavery in his classes if lecturing about migration in Ghana.

'If today the white man makes a mistake and brings a ship to the harbour and that those who want to voluntary become slaves [*can go*], the ship will sink. Because people will want to go. A lot of people will want to go. Just because there is a perception that when you go there you will make it. That is the perception.'

Family in Europe, man, 50 years old, respondent 4

Considering the history of Ghana and the slave trade from its shores, it is quite astonishing that this comparison is drawn. However, this comparison expresses and captures the extent of the desire and the idealisation of Europe I observed to be present in the minds of my respondents: if aspiring migrants can only make it to the shores of Europe they will able to create a (financially) better life for themselves. The use of the word 'voluntary become slaves' paints a picture of working in slavery in Europe still being better than remaining in Ghana.

In short, Europe is idealised and pictured as the Promised Land where there is no lack of financial resources and the countries are more advanced in utility and health care facilities. The notion of Europe as the Promised Land is linked to a strong desire to travel there. This desire is so strong that a person is willing to be a slave in heaven just to profit from the riches there. Again this brings religious sentiments to mind with respondents preferring to live on the outskirts of 'heaven' rather than never see it at all.

4.2 The paradox of the Promised Land

The ship with voluntary slaves that sets sail to Europe is perhaps a prelude that it is not always the heaven aspiring migrants expect to find. Despite the idealisation of Europe and the predominantly positive expectations Ghanaians have, respondents also refer to hardships in the lives of migrants in Europe. The way my respondents talk about hardships in Europe creates a paradox. Respondents will say that they have heard that life in Europe is hard, but will also compare Europe to heaven in the same interview. When interviewing returned migrants they talk about Europe not being as idyllic as people in Ghana expect it to be. However, the struggles that migrants face, are not always shared with family and significant others in Ghana.

'So once a person is coming from Europe he has money. They [*people in Ghana*] know very few people have money and they think they [*migrants*] still have more money than those here. So that information is not widespread at all. That is why people are willing to walk through the dessert even if they will die. They [*aspiring migrants*] walk to Europe because they believe they will get the money.'

'No, they [*migrants*] don't tell people. Even if you come down with a thousand pounds it's a lot of money to spend here. But in Europe they probably cannot rent a proper apartment. It's a lot of money here. So for the person who is unemployed here, getting that small money is enough. If he can get a council flat, small money to eat and to buy a mobile phone it's enough.'

Returned migrant & family abroad, man, 50 years old, respondent 3

The respondent reflects on the ideas that people in Ghana have about Europe, due to the hardships migrants face not being shared. Interestingly, after pointing out that the information about Europe not being easy is not shared with family remaining in Ghana, he continues the conversation by stating that the migrants in Europe are still better off there than if they had remained living in Ghana. In the following statement he goes even further by saying that even those who are homeless in Europe are in a better position than if they had remained in Ghana.

> 'The people you see on the streets and I see on the streets [*in Europe*] are probably still better off than if they were here [*in Ghana*].'
>
> **Returned migrant & family abroad, man, 50 years old, respondent 3**

This is a paradox that I encountered in most conversations and interviews. Respondents speak of hardships that people experience, but at the same time they contradict their own narratives or do not believe that what migrants experience is really hard. Respondents that have not travelled and have heard stories of hardships say that at least it is better to struggle in Europe than to remain in Ghana, since it will eventually be more beneficial to you and your family:

> 'Yeah. Sometimes it's heavy, but it's not too heavy as we've been saying. It's about the currency. If you bring one dollar here, today it's almost two Cedi, our money here. I will go out and get ten dollars, it's more than 10 Cedi here. So we want to go there and do something with that. (...) Some experience the burden as heavy, but the benefit is high. It's only that you adjust yourself to the system of how it is so that it will help you and your family and the friends too.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 11**

During interviews I often heard the phrase: 'You have to struggle and one day you'll make it.' One respondent compares the process of migration to an old film about a Second World War concentration camp. He has a strong desire to travel to Europe, but sees difficulties he might face in Europe as part of the process to reach his goal.

> 'The only thing is that you have been travelled to another country and you are back or while you are there. Yeah, you are in the fighting field. It's like this film Escape from Sobibor. You run for your life. You're struggling for your life to get something.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 11**

The ambivalence in the idealisation of Europe is related to hope. Hope that if the journey to Europe is difficult you will reach a destination that made the journey to Europe worthwhile. To put it differently, the idea that a person will eventually reach a 'Promised Land' helps migrants deal with hardships faced in the process of travelling to Europe. This was illustrated by one of my respondents who related his experiences of travelling to the United Kingdom as an illegal immigrant. His mother had arranged for a connection man (a people smuggler) to collect him from his grandmother's home when he was fifteen years old. My respondent had no knowledge of his impending journey before the connection man arrived at his house. He was told to pack his belongings and travel with this man the same evening. As my respondent related the events to me it appeared that the emotions of leaving unexpectedly, and with a stranger, were overshadowed by pure excitement of going to Europe:

> 'It was shocking for me. Like who's this man, you know. Stranger. (...) I just couldn't wait to go there and the idea that I was going to London was even massive. Like come on guys, you know.'
>
> **Returned migrant, man, 29 years old, respondent 9**

My respondent did not travel to Europe directly. The connection man kept him in the Ivory Coast until his mother had paid more money. Eventually this change of plan meant he lived with the connection man for a period of three months. Staying with a stranger while his mother was being threatened was not a traumatic experience for my respondent. He described this period of his life as exciting. He was looking forward to finally making it to Europe and was impatient to leave the Ivory Coast, because he wanted to finally get there. So whatever he had to endure, it was worth it.

'Imagine if you're going to Europe. You don't worry; you just can't wait to get there. That was all that was going on in my mind, just wanting to get there. So, but in the end I did get there and I'm happy that I did the travelling.'

Returned migrant, man, 29 years old, respondent 9

This respondent's memories of the excitement appeared to be very vivid as he related his story to me. His eyes gleamed as he recalled the anticipation he felt. This respondent said that he is glad he went to Europe. This is remarkable since he had himself deported after five years, because he could no longer face the hardships of being an illegal immigrant. The migration to Europe was not an idyllic experience that lived up to his expectations. Yet, he still relived the excitement as if it is was a pleasant experience.

To summarise, there is a contradiction in the notion of the Promised Land. Europe is described as being like heaven. However, returned migrants talks about life in Europe being difficult. These sentiments are not always shared with family members in Ghana. Yet, aspiring migrants and family members of migrants also say they have heard that life in Europe can be hard. Hardships are seen as being arbitrary and are part of the struggle that results in being successful one day. Migrants in Europe are viewed as being better off than the people who have remained in Ghana.

5 Migration as distinction

In this chapter I will consider the distinction that is created between migrants and non-migrants in Ghana and between family with migrants in Europe and those without migrants in the family. Here I use distinction in a Bourdieusian sense. People distinguish themselves from others and in doing so they position themselves in a social field (Bourdieu, 1986). One striking finding was that migration plays a role in Ghanaian status hierarchy. Migration is an action that benefits migrants and their families, in both the economic and the social sphere. The distinction related to migration is reflected in two types of symbols from which this distinction is derived: material symbols and non-material symbols of distinction. I will begin by discussing the material symbols of distinction for migrants.

5.1 Material symbols of distinction

Migration provides migrants with money that cannot be earned in Ghana. Since the improved financial gain is mentioned by all eighteen respondents it is an important part of migration. However, the shared meanings attached to this financial gain through migration appear to be more complex than money alone. Money earned abroad by migrants has become a material symbol of distinction between those who have travelled and those who have not. Travelling to Europe is not an opportunity that everybody gets. The migrants are looked up to and respected by others, because they have been able to acquire wealth. If migrants are able to return to Ghana, either for a visit or permanently, they are received with more ceremony than a family member visiting from another part of Ghana.

> 'In Ghana here they see people who travel, I don't actually know how to put it. They see you like you are an important person, somebody special. Especially when you travel and you make it very well. That is why people travel.'
>
> **Family abroad, man, 40 years old, respondent 15**

This quote illustrates that migrants hold a valued position. Migrants are rewarded a higher social position due to their migration, than if they had remained in Ghana. Thereby, connecting the act of migration to the status of an important person. This status is even further enhanced if migrants are able to 'make it very well'. In other words, earn a lot of money in Europe. This perceived financial wealth is directly linked to the social status of migrants. The link between acquiring material symbols and migrants' social position is crucial in understanding the meanings attached to migration. Financial wealth and social hierarchy are strongly related. Material symbols of distinction that emerged from the data that showed a link between the two are: remittances, goods from abroad and property.

Remittances

Within the family, migrants can elevate their place in the social hierarchy by sending regular remittances to the family members in Ghana. The more migrants do for the family in Ghana, the more the family respects the migrants and award more social responsibilities or attention to them. That the concept of respect is linked to remittances is illustrated in the following quote:

> 'Because when you were here maybe you can't give them that much money and the things that they've been needing and now you are travelled outside and get some money. When you come, if anything, if anyone needs something you can give it to them so that the person you give it too can be respecting you more than what he was doing previously. Because in the world, the whole world here is only based on the currency. What I need and you can help me. That's all.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 11**

The more migrants remit to the family the higher their position in the social hierarchy of the family becomes. A migrant helping many family members versus a migrant that only helps a few people in the family, also creates a distinction between migrants. The more migrants do for the family in terms of remittances, the more the migrants are respected. Migrants can be respected so much that they are able to acquire the position of family head. The highest respected post in Ghanaian family life, according to respondents.

'So in our society, the further that you go, the more social status that you assume within the family. (...) Within my broader family we have those who are older than me. But, because probably I have been extending assistance to all the sectors of the family, in the election of the whole family head they bypass all those who are older than me and see that 'Oh he can do it'. He can take control. So they appoint you as the family head. Notwithstanding the fact that we have older ones than you. (…) Once you have been appointed as the family head, you hold the land in trust for the family. That is one example. So once you assume that status it is like a status of a chief, you become the head of the family, the clan. You then hold the land in trust for the family. (…) It is your respectability within the family that will gain you access to that position.'

Family in Europe, man, 50 years old, respondent 4

According to my respondents age is an important parameter of respect in Ghana. Respondents say that elders are to be respected and their advice should be taken seriously by younger members of the family. It emerges that respect based on age can be overruled if this respect is earned through migration. However, this respect needs to be earned by migrants through remittances. The more family members migrants remit to, the more responsible they are deemed. They are seen to have the family's interest in mind. Therefore these migrants can be awarded more and more respect and can be given a higher position in the family.

Goods from abroad

The idealisation of Europe is not limited to people living abroad and sending money. Products and goods coming from Europe are valued more than locally manufactured products. TVs, cars, furniture and even clothing are all sold on the streets in Ghana and advertised as coming from Europe. Around the corner from my house in Accra I could buy TVs from the Netherlands and in Kumasi a respondent introduced me to a man who imports second hand cars from Europe. These goods are often imported by migrants living in Europe and their family members sell them in their own shops. If I went to a shop in Ghana the owners would be quick to point out what came from Europe. Family members of migrants would also prefer to receive something that came from Europe than a product bought in Ghana:

'Most of the time the things around here are from China or not made all that well. My sister will bring me things, something like blender, washing machine and those things that is better than those from China.'

Aspiring migrant, woman, 35 years old, respondent 14

A woman was cooking a Ghanaian dish for me at the house I was living in. She told me the can of tuna that she had brought with her, was tuna that her daughter had brought from London, therefore it was very good. That it was the exact same brand of tuna that the shop next door sold was not important. This one was from London, so according to her it was better than the locally produced tuna.

Property

Migrants living abroad build houses for themselves while they are still in Europe. This house serves different purposes: it is a home for migrants when they return to Ghana, living quarters for the extended family and a symbol of success. Migrants' houses are larger than houses in the area that have been built by Ghanaians who have not migrated to Europe.

'Because mostly what you know is that many Ghanaians who are there come here and build mansions. They always come back to build mansions here. They buy land and put something on it. Like, look at the family I was saying. (...) They have built houses here and when they come and you look at how they live, it's better than most people who are living here. Unless maybe you compare them to the ministers or those people.'

Aspiring migrant, man, 35 years old, respondent 2

In Ghana, owning land is an important symbol of success. If you rent a home in Ghana you are seen as being a poor person, but a person with money owns land. People look up to those Ghanaians who have their own property. Thus making property of migrants a material symbol of distinction.

'Most people travel and they have succeeded. They are ok. You can easy get money to go and build a house for the family. So I can see; Oh, this man. The time he went to Holland, he came and built a house, a nice house (...) because of the good salary there.'

Family abroad, man, 40 years old, respondent 10

The houses are seen as a direct result from the money migrants earn in Europe. The size of the house or even the possibility to build, are seen as privileges that arise from the higher salaries migrants are perceived to earn in Europe.

To sum up this paragraph, remittances, property and goods from abroad are material symbols from which meaning is derived. Migration creates distinction between those who have migrated and those who have not. Remittances and property are the most important material symbols of distinction. The expected financial gain that migrants are expected to accumulate in Europe awards them a higher social status. However, it is not only material symbols that create the distinction between migrants and non-migrants. These non-material symbols of distinction will be considered in the following paragraph.

5.2 Non-material symbols of distinction

The most visible non-material symbol of distinction is the way migrants are addressed in Ghana. Migrants that return to Ghana, either for a visit or permanently, are given a specific name; Burgher.

> 'You come here and everybody thinks you are the richest guy. They give you a name: Burgher. (…) Yeah because it just means that you've been out and come back. Out of the country and come back.'
> **Returned migrant, man, 29 years old, respondent 9**

The act of giving migrants a specific name creates a distinction between those who have migrated and those who have not. The word Burgher referring to the richest guy reflects the respect that money from abroad will give a person. The name and the meaning attached to it, reflect the status of the person in Ghanaian culture. Migrants are the richest guys in a culture where respect is linked to financial well-being. Therefore they have gained respect through their migration and assumed financial well-being. The explanation of the literal meaning and origin of the name Burgher varies. One respondent says it originates from the word burger, hamburger, referring to the westernisation of the 'travelled' Ghanaian. Two other respondents refer to the German: Burger, meaning citizen, possibly referring to migrants obtaining residency in Europe. This residency would mean that migrants are free to travel between Ghana and Europe. The latter explanation relates to a sense global citizenship and being well-travelled that respondents have referred to. Respondents described migrants as no longer being seen as 'a villager'.

> 'If you're a villager I can explain it this way. It's like you don't travel so you have no experience in life. You are always in your country. So sometimes when you travel you meet a different people with different characters so that you will learn something from them. Yeah. That is one. That is why I explain that maybe you are a villager.'
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 11**

No longer being considered a villager refers to a migrant's mentality and knowledge of the world. They have been able to see more of the world and experience more. This personal development is related to learning things abroad. A respondent describes this as follows:

> 'You will learn more things so that it will help you develop your mentals, know more things about yourself. He's [*the pastor of the church*] been teaching us and we saw that what he has learned there has helped him.'
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 12**

Apart from personal development, respondents also refer to the knowledge that can be acquired through migration. Migrants can eventually bring this know-how back with them to Ghana to use there. Thus creating a distinction on the basis of migrants' knowledge or skills.

Physical appearances

In Ghana a distinction between migrants and non-migrants is also visible in the descriptions of physical appearances. According to respondents a migrant's physical appearance is different after living in Europe, than the appearance of a person who has remained in Ghana.

> 'And because a lot of people who have been living in Europe when they come down here you can see. Even if they have kids, when they are born and grow there you can see the kids. The way they are growing and everything is different. (...) The eyes, the colour, everything. Ghanaian kids in Europe have very white eyes. Even you see their colour. Like my own is black, but still you can see it's different. You see this kid is from Europe or maybe America or maybe Canada. So there is much difference. Maybe you won't see it, but me I'll see it.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, 35 years old, respondent 2**

The skin colour of migrants is described as being different. It is considered to be lighter than the skin colour of people remaining in Ghana. Lighter skin appears to be considered to be more beautiful in Ghana than having a very dark skin colour. In the city and at the side of the road, enormous billboards advertised whitening creams to give a person lighter skin, mostly aimed at women. When I was visiting family members of Ghanaians I had befriended in the Netherlands, I complemented the healthy appearance of an elderly woman. Interestingly the response to my complement provided some insight into views about beauty ideals. My host immediately thanked me for my complement and said that: Yes, his mother did look very well and beautiful, since she had a light complexion, nearly white.

Another beauty ideal is being fat:

> 'When you are coming even your body can see you've lived in a place where you are more comfortable. The human surface you can see that you have changed your condition. Maybe when you were here you where lean, you were growing lean. Immediate you entered in Europe you grow fat.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 12**

Being fat means that people are looking prosperous. The distinction that people in Ghana draw between themselves and migrants on the basis of physical appearance, means that migration is considered to make a person more beautiful as well as more knowledgeable, richer and more respected.

> 'The point is that while you are here your colour is going to be changed [*referring to my tan*]. If I go outside the way I speak will change. Just because I'm no more speaking in our local language. I'm speaking in a different dialect. So my language is going to change. Also my behaviour is going to change. If someone sees you, the person will see yes, this guy is coming from a certain place. Based on the attitude and your character, the previous character and the current one has been changed. So they can see the difference between staying here and going outside, the difference.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 11**

To conclude this paragraph, I identified the following non-material symbols of distinction: the name Burgher, the physical appearance of migrants, and the personal development and knowledge of migrants due to the time they spent in Europe. Burgher is perhaps the most visible symbol of distinction; it is a label reserved for migrants.

5.3 Distinction for family members of migrants

The distinction between migrants and those who have remained in Ghana is not the only distinction that is made in relation to migration. A distinction is also made between families that have migrants in Europe and those families that do not. Before elaborating on this distinction between families, I will first discuss the role of family in the lives of Ghanaians to place this distinction of family members in the context of Ghanaian family relationships.

Role of the family

In Ghana men and women who travel to Europe are seen as being materially better off. The family assumes that this perceived material gain for the migrant will directly benefit them as family members. The reason for this assumption is tied to the role that the family plays in the everyday lives of Ghanaians. In Ghana a person is not only responsible for oneself, but has obligations to the people that are part of the family. A respondent that has lived in the Europe for a few years but returned to Ghana, illustrates the role of the family:

'When we are together that is when we know that we are human beings. As we say in Ghana:
I am, because we are and since we are, therefore I am.'

Returned migrant, man, 60 years old, respondent 1

This respondent appears to quote the African philosopher John Mbiti to stress the importance of the family in a Ghanaians life. An individual is nothing without the family and vice versa. Relating this relationship to migration; since an individual is tied to the family, the family expects to benefit from migrants (financial) success. Family of migrants expect to receive regular remittances once the person has travelled to Europe. These remittances contribute to the financial situation of the family. A respondent describes how people in Ghana expect the lives of family members to change through migration of a relative.

'We see them that they should have moved maybe from their poverty to a different level. That they maybe should be enjoying small.'

Aspiring migrant, woman, 35 years old, respondent 14

As the family's situation improves, it creates a distinction between the family of migrants and the families that do not have a migrant in the family.

When referring to their family, my respondents are not always just referring to their nuclear family. In Ghana the family is broader; aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews and other more distant relatives are all mentioned as 'my family' and are part of what respondents describe as the extended family system.

'In our system when we talk of family we are not talking about you and your husband and your kids. Nononono. Anybody who…my father's wife's son can call me, they see me and call me brother. So when I get home anybody who has anything to do with me, my mother, anybody. As far as you become receptive to the person, it's your family member. We deal with the extended family, not the nuclear type. You can't do that here.'

Family in Europe, man, 50 years old, respondent 4

A family can cover a large group of people. The extended family are not necessarily all blood relatives. Ghanaians refer to cousins as brothers, but also refer to some of their friends as such. Different people may have family ties with a migrant depending on the nature of the relationship.

Boasting

Migration is a way or a chance for family to improve their financial and material situation. However, the desire to have family members in Europe runs deeper than just financial gain. As already discussed, respect is linked to financial and material well-being and financial gain is seen as an increase in status. The distinction between migrants and non-migrants however, also extends to the family members still living in Ghana. For the relatives of migrants, having a family member who lives in Europe means that they have a successful person in the family, which is something to boast about to other people. It brings a certain amount of pride to the family, since they have something that the other people in their village or town do not have. Therefore you are a person or family to be envied. The following quote illustrates this by comparing migration to graduating from college:

'Sometimes I do listen to some people saying my son is outside. He is working outside. That means you have also travelled before. Sometimes based on our colour and your colour, sometimes when you come down here you just want to experience how black people live and do their things. That's why we also come over to your country so that our family will see that we are also travelled before. That's why they boast about it. If in the family no one has gone to university before, as some has just entered university they can say: 'we have graduate in our family'. That is why they can boast on my brother or sister is outside Ghana.'

Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 10

The act of boasting about migration and the comparison with going to university shows that migration is an important life achievement. It is something that migrants can be proud of and something that family members can be proud of. Their son or daughter has managed to travel to Europe and has the chance to 'do something with their life', as various respondents have called it. It is a distinction that is comparable to the way parents boast about the achievements of their children.

One respondent has family members in Europe and is also planning to travel to the United Kingdom. What is remarkable is that he draws a distinction between himself and others, even though he has never left the country. He has taught himself to speak with an American accent (he had tried a British accent, but he said he was not as good at it) and talks about other Ghanaians as 'local Ghanaians':

'It's something in the local Ghanaian community. Like they know living out there, because talking about foreign exchange in Ghana, the cedi to the pound. It's a bit higher. So the money that he has out there, when he comes here it's a bit more. I guess that's the real reason they rate those people higher than local Ghanaians.'
Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 12

Families who have a relative in Europe can benefit from the social distinction of the migrant. They too can gain a higher position in the social hierarchy, albeit through somebody else's migration. The assumed financial well-being of the migrants' family awards them a higher status. The family can choose to elevate this status further by extending financial assistance to others outside the family:

'Considering if my family is rich enough, somebody can come and borrow something. Maybe come and borrow money from you. If you are able to help that person. Maybe every day you're coming and you help him or her, through that the person may know or the person may consider you as help. The person may consider that you have helped her. So through that you earn something.'
Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 11

At important social events parents of migrants can show their elevated social status by wearing traditional clothes made with a special fabric which tells people they have a child who lives abroad.

'So you have a cloth, a type of cloth which has a name: Meba wo abrokyire. It means my son is in Europe [*literal translation: my child is abroad*]. So anybody that puts it on, if you are going to a funeral and your son is there [*in Europe*] and he has given you some, you want to put it on. So everybody within the village or town will know: "Hey, this man." You understand what I am saying? That is enough to entice him whose son is also hanging around for him to find a way to get him there. It is purely for economical and social reasons. Everybody wants the family to be seen as to be doing well, so they come up, at times selling their property, building to travel, just for social status or economic reasons.'
Family in Europe, man, 50 years old, respondent 4

I found the cloth that this respondent was talking about in a fabric shop in the centre of Kumasi. The price of the woven material is nearly four times the amount of the best quality wax fabric you can buy in Ghana. The reason for the high price, according to the shop owners, was that it was 'London material' and is imported from Europe. Because it was so costly it could only be purchased in large quantities, making it one of the most expensive fabrics in the shops. Wearing this cloth is a way of symbolising a person's status and position in society without words.

'Meba wo abrokyire'

A special cloth worn by parents of migrants at special occasions to show they have a child living abroad.

The distinction for family members of migrants has symbols from which this distinction is derived. The material symbols for family are the remittances and goods that migrants send. Non-material symbols are the distinction family members create from having a migrant in the family. Migration is a life achievement that the family can boast about and reflects well on their status as a successful family. For parents there is a specific cloth available through which they can distinguish themselves at important social events, symbolically stating their position as the parent of a migrant.

Students in the family

Four of my respondents were (former) students. The distinction for students in Ghana is slightly different than for migrants that go to Europe to work. First of all their financial benefits are not related to money earned in Europe. By obtaining a scholarship in Europe they are able to further their education with a master's degree or a PhD which they cannot afford in Ghana. The financial benefits related to earning more money come once students have returned to Ghana. People with a degree from abroad are perceived as having more experience than people who have obtained it in Ghana. A student with a degree from Europe (or America) is regarded as having a better qualification for a job than a person who has obtained the same degree from a university in Ghana. Subsequently, having a degree from Europe also provides a higher salary for the same position.

> 'At the moment it does not, but when I take initiative and I find a school and come back that is when it will benefit them. Financially, I'm talking of money. I would take more money than I'm taking at the moment because of my education. Even when you come and you do your master out of the country you get more money than someone who schools in Ghana. (…) I don't know how. It's the same master's degree, but the one outside takes more money.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 12**

For family of students, having a family member studying abroad is still something to boast about. Although it will not directly increase their financial and social status, at least not in the same degree. For the parents of the student, the scholarship means that a financial problem has been taken off their hands, according to respondents. The students are no longer a burden or financial drain on the family's resources.

> 'They [*the parents*] are happy. They think that I am good, I am great, I am blessed because from the way they would see me in school days for me taking this of their hands. (…) So taking that responsibility for my fees in Norway of 14.000 a year. If you have taken 14.000 Euro of the hands of a parent, he is happy. They are very happy.'
>
> **Student travelling to Europe, man, 25 years old, respondent 5**

> 'They [*the parents*] know I'm schooling so it's not like I'm employed and I have to give them allowance or other pay bills or what not. (….) Even paying undergraduate it was quite expensive but I think my parents, because you are young your parents would try to support. But when you are out of school you don't expect them to feed, not that they won't give you but you don't expect to put all your problems. Because you have already graduated from one stage I think others need to graduate. So you have to find ways and means or alternatives of how you want to further your education. So you do something that can help them. Not that they can't do it, but it will be a lot of pressure on them.'
>
> **Student travelling to Europe, woman, 25 years old, respondent 8**

To sum up these findings, students are in a different position than migrants that go to Europe to work. The distinction they are awarded is not linked to their financial success in Europe, since their studies do not permit them to remit in the same degree. The financial benefit for the students themselves, is related to earning more money once they have returned to Ghana, since a degree from Europe provides a higher salary for the same position. However, despite producing less material symbols of distinction these students have a high amount of non-material symbols. For family they are not only university graduates, but they are graduates *and* migrants. Allowing parents a double opportunity to boast about the achievements of their children.

5.4 Migration as cosmopolitan cultural capital

These findings point to migration being a marker of distinction. Distinction can take place through three forms of capital: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). I argue that migration becomes a prime form of cultural capital to distinguish oneself symbolically, through the material and non-material symbols of migration discussed in this chapter. There are three different kinds of cultural capital:

1. Embodied cultural capital; this refers to cultural capital that can be seen in the physic appearance or intellect of an individual and is not directly transferable to another person.
2. Objectified cultural capital; this is cultural capital that is linked to an object that represents the embodied capital. For example, a house a migrant has built in Ghana and the clothes that the migrants' parents wear to distinguish themselves.
3. Institutionalised cultural capital; for example an educational qualification such as a master's degree. (Bourdieu, 1986)

The volume of this cultural capital is a way of positioning the bearer or carrier of this capital. However, the value of the cultural capital only becomes apparent in interaction. To determine this value and one's position due to this form of capital, others are needed to position an individual (Bourdieu, 1986, 1994). With regard to migration I conceptualise this as *cosmopolitan* cultural capital. This is a form of cultural capital that offers a competitive edge in positioning oneself socially and takes place in a global arena (Weenink, 2008).

The distinction between migrants and non-migrants and between families with a migrated member and those families without, is a form of cosmopolitan cultural capital. The concept of cosmopolitan cultural capital provides new ways of distinction. In this research it provides another way of understanding the meaning that migration has in the Ghanaian culture. Migration leads to new social positioning that affects the *local* social hierarchy in Ghana through the obtained cosmopolitan cultural capital.

Weenink (2008) distinguishes two types of cosmopolitans: a dedicated and a pragmatic type. The dedicated type of cosmopolitan sees the world as a place that is to be explored and discovered. A person's opportunity should not be limited by national boundaries. A pragmatic cosmopolitan is characterised as restricting cosmopolitanism to 'an asset of competitive advantage'. This kind of cosmopolitanism is applicable to Ghanaian migration. The process of migration is seen as a means to an end. Ghanaians do not want to engage with the 'other' as in learning *about* other cultures in the narratives of my respondents. Instead, I would be inclined to say that they wish to learn *from* them. Thus, migration is a means to an end in the sense that the cosmopolitan capital will provide migrants and their families a better position, economically and socially upon return to Ghana.

6 Pressure

Respondents stress that migration is an individual decision that migrants have made and that families are hardly involved in the process. However, respondents did talk about experiencing pressure from family. In chapter eight I will examine the involvement of family before migrants leave Ghana, but here I will look the pressure that aspiring migrants and migrants experience. The pressure exerted on people in relation to migration appears to be twofold: pressure to migrate to Europe and pressure to meet the expectations of the family.

6.1 Pressure to migrate

During interviews, stories of pressure being put on a person to migrate to Europe emerged. Some respondents talk about family members or spouses trying to persuade them to go to Europe. In collecting and analysing the data a difference in pressure exerted on men and women emerged. It is mostly men that actively express the desire to travel from Ghana to Europe. In Ghanaian culture the gender roles are clearly divided. The women look after the domestic matters and are responsible for the children, either by caring for the children themselves or by arranging others to do this. The man is seen as the chief financial provider for the family. However, due to the family system in Ghana this means that a man is not only responsible for his wife and children, but for more people:

> 'Especially the men, they, you know men are supposed to take care of their wives or even their sisters and so. So you have to find something to do. They have to earn something. So you take care of not only your parents, but also your sisters and others. And you know there is no pension when people retire, that they have a pension every month. For many people there is nothing like that and unless you worked with a company or the government or police, there is nothing. Your insurance is your child, so that when you grow old you expect that child to take care [*of you*]. That is the social insurance that you have. So you cast a burden and a responsibility on the child. Especially men, they have to find something, they have to go out. Take care of themselves, take care of their parents and so on.'
>
> **Returned migrant, man, 60 years old, respondent 1**

The role of main provider for the family and the responsibilities that come with this role, puts pressure on the men. To meet the responsibilities attached to the male gender role, respondents felt pressured to migrate to Europe. The pressure a man can feel from his family to travel to Europe is related to the idealisation of Europe. If a man is expected to be the provider for the family, the pressure will be to undertake action and find work in a place where the most money is expected to be earned; Europe. Added to the financial benefits of migrating to Europe, the distinction that is awarded to migrants and their families is another motivator for families to put pressure on people to migrate to Europe. Since they too desire to profit from this distinction migration creates for the family.

A respondent, an aspiring migrant, wanted to travel to Europe in a few years time. He did not want to leave his family just yet, since the children were still small. As a father he felt that he needed to stay in Ghana a bit longer to teach his children what was 'right and wrong'. His wife, however, wanted her husband to travel to Europe as soon as possible. He confided that it was leading to tension.

> 'Family didn't put pressure on me. Only my wife. She wants me to go there and find work. She gives me a headache. She wants me to build a small house for them.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant with family in Europe, man, 40 years old, respondent 6**

Men can also experience pressure to migrate from other family members or significant others. The responsibilities that a man should fulfil are learned early on in life. Young men take pride in being able to meet the expectations linked to being a man in Ghanaian culture, but the pressure to meet these expectations is not limited to family alone.

'It starts before you travel. I made an example as you grow up as boys. You know in this part of the world there is one thing that identifies or that make you a man, it's your ability to provide for your family. Unlike in the west, where sometimes responsibilities are shared at home. But your eyes open and you are growing from boy to manhood. You know that these are my responsibilities; I need to live and be able to singlehandedly provide for my family. And it is seen in your ability to provide food, shelter, clothing, pay your children's school fees, everything. So we kind of grow up with that mind. When you grow up with such a mind, it becomes a competition of a sort.

Now among my mates I was the first to build. As I was growing up I had a senior brother. One thing my parents are going to tell me is how your brother living abroad has been able to acquire this and this in that short space of time. This is how a man should live. So it starts unconsciously and the pressure builds and builds, builds.'

Returned migrant, man, early thirties, respondent 18

Pressure arises from the value attached to migration in terms of a way to distinguish oneself. As the quote above shows the pressure placed on people to migrate is related to this. The pressure that this respondent is referring to in the second half of the quote shows that a person's success is also determined by migration. He was the first to build among his friends because he had lived in Europe. But also, his example of parents referring to the success of the older brother due to migration illustrates that a person's success is measured by his ability to migrate and the financial and cosmopolitan cultural capital that migrants have acquired through going to Europe.

Role of the women

Child care and household duties are seen as women's responsibilities. In the event of migration to Europe a mother is often required to leave her children behind in Ghana to be taken care of by family members. As there will be no available or affordable child care in Europe. It is common practice that the grandmother cares for a child while the mother works, either inside or outside of Ghana. But for women the pressure to leave the country appears to be less high. When a woman with children does decide to migrate, the people she has to involve and things she has to organise are much more than in the case of a man migrating.

'Because you know when it comes to women most of the time you have to be taking care of the kids. Even though the man can take care of the kids, but you take a major role in handling the kids. So if right now I want to leave, we have to go and look for somebody to take care of this and the whole lot.

But this the man, he has a lot of responsibilities on him, but in taking care of the home much more depends on you the woman. So with the man convincing you, the woman, that he wants to leave and travel doesn't involve a lot. Because you the woman, if I have kids and I have even a baby of a year and 2 months, I have to find somebody to leave these small kids with them. Where will this person be living? Who'll be cooking for them? Who'll be taken care of their homework and those petty, petty things a woman needs to be doing?

But if my husband wants to travel the babies are not with him. He just goes to work and comes back and helps you out with your daily routine of work. So the man convincing the woman is easier than you, the woman, leaving the whole family who much depends on you. It's impossible. So the man has to agree absolutely before you leave.'

Aspiring migrant, woman, 35 years old, respondent 14

The role of wife and mother is attached to the physical home or compound in Ghana. This places women in a position in which they experience less pressure, but also have less opportunities to migrate. Especially for married women it is more difficult to migrate and increase their cultural cosmopolitan capital through migration. Since only two of the eighteen respondents were women, I by no means claim that the findings on how they experience pressure to migrate to be complete. However, based on these two interviews and the data from male respondents talking about women, it appears that women first have to gain permission from their husbands before they leave the country.

'Now it is changing but in the traditional family it is the man that is the head of the house. He decides on most things.'

Returned migrant, man, 60 years old, respondent 1

The woman who wanted her husband, one of my respondents, to migrate to Europe informed me that she could not go as a woman since it would not be seen as respectful. Only unmarried women should migrate to Europe, according to her. Married women are not supposed to leave their husbands behind in Ghana.

Perhaps this is linked to the masculinity of the man being challenged. A man who needs his wife to go and travel is not fulfilling the expectations of a provider attached to the male gender role. Ideas of female migration are ambiguous. During a conversation with a female shopkeeper, the woman remarks that people would think that she was up to 'no good' with other men if she travelled alone to Europe. Therefore behaving disrespectfully to her husband. On the other hand, a female respondent from Kumasi says that if a woman does travel it will benefit the family.

> 'No. Even with our system like the Akans we believe that when a woman travels it's a benefit for the family. Because we believe that women think about the family so whatever they get they will bring it back home. So when women travel with Akans we don't have a problem with that. And you believe that when they are going, you know we like hard work. So they will go, work hard and bring something back home. Mostly we are not lazy people so we go and work hard and bring something back home. So when somebody travels we are happy.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, woman, 35 years old, respondent 14**

To summarise the issue of pressure, it appears that migrants experience pressure to migrate to Europe. This pressure is related to gender. Men are expected to provide for both their nuclear and extended families. Therefore, the pressure placed on the men to leave Ghana and migrate to Europe is related to earning money and providing for the family. Since Europe is idealised in terms of earning money, migration is seen as way for men to fulfil the expectations attached to the male gender role.

Women are responsible for the home and caring for their husband and children. As a result, women experience less pressure to migrate. On the other hand, if married women wish to travel to Europe, they have to arrange alternative child care and obtain permission from their husbands. Thus, making migration more difficult for them to organise. Migration is linked to distinction and a person's success is measured by migration. If women are not able to migrate because they have been denied permission from a spouse or cannot find adequate child care, it places them at a disadvantage in acquiring their own cosmopolitan cultural capital. However, if their husband migrates, women will also benefit from the distinction that his status as a migrant will bring to their family.

6.2 Pressure to meet family's expectations

Family members exert pressure on migrants to send them remittances. This is linked to the importance of family, the extended family system and the elevated position in the social hierarchy. Due to the general expectations of life in Europe and the possibilities that migrants are perceived to have, the family expects their own lives to improve once someone has travelled to Europe. Family members of migrants put pressure on relatives in Europe to meet these financial expectations.

> 'My brother's school fees, Christmas they expect some money and some clothing and shoes. Some even expect cars or property for everybody. They expect a lot from you. You know it's like a family thing, so if you have it everybody expects you have to bring some to them. Everybody. Everybody who thinks "oh, now you are in Europe". So you have to do everything.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, 35 years old, respondent 2**

> 'That one they keep on asking. Yeah, until you give it to him or her. So that one you are ok. They can even boast on that. My brother give this from Europe to me. Yeah, that's why.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 11**

> 'That is the perception that we are having. So that you call extended or nuclear family. Everybody will be bringing his or her problems to be solved. They know that maybe you have a lot of money so that you can come to their aid. That pushes people into that end, because over here we have extended family system. Aunties, uncles, whoever is a family member. So that maybe when, by the grace of God, you are successful everybody you will extend your hand to all those family members. So this is also another pressure that they exert on people so that they want to travel and come and help.'
>
> **Family abroad, man, 40 years old, respondent 15**

The pressure that migrants receive is linked to the idealisation of Europe. Because Europe is seen as easier to find work and employees receive a higher salary, the family will put pressure on migrants living in Europe to send remittances, build property or send gifts. However, linking back to the notion of migration as

distinction, money is not the only reason family has for putting pressure on the migrants. As already discussed in the previous chapter, having a migrant in the family, especially in the nuclear family, will elevate the social status of the family members in Ghana. Having a relative abroad is something that family members of a migrant boast about on itself, but having a family member abroad who contributes to and improves the financial situation will enhance the social position of the family even further. Therefore putting pressure on a migrant is an interaction generated by the meaning that the family has attached to migration and financial gain.

My respondents talked about the need to meet the requests of family members. The perception of Europe not being easy is not accepted, so migrants are called and requested to send various items and remittances to Ghana. However, the need migrants feel to meet these expectations is also very strong. It surpasses the desire to inform family members of the migrants' situation if they are experiencing difficulties in finding employment to meet these expectations. The interaction between these family members and the meanings attached to the social status, of both the migrant and the family members, contributes to the choice of many migrants to meet the expectations that family and significant others in Ghana have of them.

> 'I was making an earlier reference to the fact that money is regarded in certain circles. So people try to keep face and keep people respecting them. Sometimes it doesn't really matter who you are, but what you have. It's that thing which has crept into our thinking. Sometimes too there is pressure on people in Europe. Pressure to succeed, pressure to drive those flashy cars. Pressure to build mansions. It kind of comes from the expectation. So people want to live lifestyles that meet that expectation.'
>
> **Returned migrant, man, early thirties, respondent 18**

These findings on the pressure migrants experience from families are similar to my previous research findings focussing on Ghanaians living in Amsterdam Zuidoost. One of my conclusions was that migrants experience pressure to send remittances. These remittances are a symbol through which they can show they are successful and gain respect by behaving as 'a good migrant'. Thus, migrants gain respect through sending remittances (Baker, 2012). These themes also emerged in Ghana. Family members of migrants say they do not believe migrants stories of hardships faced in Europe. On the other hand, I found that for migrants breaking this taboo on telling family that life is hard and that they are not able to meet expectations, it means that the migrant is no longer seen as being a 'good migrant'. Thus migrants find themselves in a double bind; if they do not live up to the expectations that people in Ghana have, they lose the social status they have obtained in Ghana through migration. However, by not informing the family in Ghana that life in Europe does not meet the idea of heaven, migrants are forced to find ways of meeting the expectations in Ghana. They must find ways to remit to their family and display affluence when they are able to visit. Even if their situation in Europe is not that of a migrant earning a lot of money. This 'double bind' is illustrated in the following quote from a returned migrant who lives in Ghana, but still has a parent living in Europe:

> 'That is why I told you that many people give a false impression. They either want to satisfy or meet the expectations of society or their families. So instead of really telling them the truth, they come and wow in flashy clothes. So in that sense you get to know that most people keep a face. I have seen people, who really come back, come on holidays, with a loan to blow their cash. It's just the impression that they want to create.
>
> Sometimes too people here put a financial burden on those outside. Every problem you see people calling, asking. Sometimes it has become difficult for people to even come for holidays back home because the pressure is too great. There are so many people asking what did you bring for me, what did you bring for me, what did you bring for me? Left and right everybody wants something. So in that sense you are forced into also creating that false impression. Unless you have no fear of money. That is where it comes from. It comes from pressure, expectations and continual asking.'
>
> **Returned migrant, man, early thirties, respondent 18**

The need to keep face and meet the expectations of family is very strong. As is the pressure that families put on migrants to meet these expectations. Migrants left for Europe with the idea that they were going to be earning more money for themselves and their family. Migrants have also seen the distinction that migration creates in Ghana and expected to benefit from the competitive edge that migration would give them socially. However, when faced with a situation in Europe that is different from the expectations, they choose to go along with what is required of them. If they choose not to, migrants might not be believed by family members. Thus, losing their social position as a valued member of the family and rendering their entire migration process to Europe as useless.

Limited to migrants

The remittances from Europe are valued so much as a symbol conveying the meaning of prosperity and social status that it is only migrants who receive pressure to contribute to family. Family members that have returned to Ghana permanently or who have acquired wealth in Ghana will not receive the same amount of pressure. This reflects the social value that migration and remittances have in the social context in Ghana.

> 'Yes, because it's a mentality. As I am here now, and it will interest you that I get the same money as I was getting in Europe but when I'm here I don't get pressure. When I'm there the pressure likes me. My senior brother when I was there, he was here and had more money than I had, but they will not ask him. Once you are there they think it's easier to send money. That is the issue.'
>
> **Returned migrant & family abroad, man, 50 years old, respondent 3**

> 'It's going to be heavier because anyone who sees that you have travelled, you have more money. So the main base is that you say that you are going to gather some money from someone's country and bring it back. So when you are back, it means the money is with you. So you have to do to help them. And you yourself if you can't do certain things to them you'll feel ashamed of yourself. Because someone else will go there and build a house for them. So that your friends and others will see that you have gone outside and you done something. Which means you get it from someone's country and bring it back to your country.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 11**

As these quotes show, it is migrants that are pressured to help the members of the family. Other people who have remained in Ghana, but are doing well receive little or no pressure to help.

To sum up the findings related to meeting expectations, it emerges that the pressure to live up the expectations that family and significant others in Ghana have of migrants is very strong. Migrants who do not meet expectations of the family in Ghana may lose everything they migrated for in the first place: to be seen as a successful and important person. Therefore they will find ways of meeting expectations in Ghana and upholding the notion of success. I will elaborate more on the issues of success and failure in chapter eight.

6.3 System of reciprocity

A reason to yield to the pressure family members put on migrants is also described by returned migrants as the debts people have towards their family. In Accra a man lived next door to the hostel I was living in. The owner allowed him continual access to her premises and he made a living out of selling African crafts from his home directly next to the back door of the hostel. On a regular basis the hostel owner would provide him with extra food and access to water. He had a few boys living in the same simple hut that she also looked out for. These were acts of kindness and she appeared to be genuinely helping the young men living next door. However, I noticed that this meant they were indebted to her. If this lady needed somebody to help out with showing guests around Accra or running errands in another city, she would send the neighbour. He always obliged but was not always pleased to so, since in some cases it meant he was gone for a few days without the opportunity to work or sell things from his shop.

I observed the same system of indebtedness and reciprocity related to migration. Helping a family member migrate or actions of kindness towards them are not purely altruistic. A person expects something in return later in life. As I will discuss in detail in chapter eight, respondents say that migrants leave secretively and inform as few people as possible about their departure. That being said, some respondents do speak of others helping migrants financially. In these situations it appears that a financial debt has to be fulfilled, for example a family member has financially contributed to the costs of the migration process. Pressure is then put on migrants to fulfil this debt in the hope to benefit from the expected returns of the migration process.

> 'Because they know the system that they have contributed money for you. You feel obliged. If you study on a scholarship you are not obliged. Even so you will receive pressure but you can manage that. But once somebody has sold their property, given you their money and you are there, you don't feel fine. '
>
> **Returned migrant & family abroad, man, 50 years old, respondent 3**

However, debt is also related to things that people have done for you in your life. A returned migrant illustrates this by telling me that a person does not only expect something in return, but something better. This system of reciprocity means that the migrant living in Europe is expected to do something for the people that have helped him.

> 'I was saying that maybe you were in school. You came home in the holidays and somebody gives you maybe one Cedi. "Take it to buy sugar to go to school". So he has contributed towards your life. He's expecting that when he's old you also pay attention to him'
>
> **Returned migrant, man, 40 years old, respondent 16**

The larger the assistance, the higher the reward. However, this system would in theory also work in favour of the migrant. The migrant is not only reciprocating a good deed when sending home remittances and meeting requests. This process also creates an indebtedness to the migrant. Once all debts are seen to be 'paid' whatever the migrants are able to give can also be seen as investing in future returns that the migrants might eventual reap the benefits from when they return home to Ghana. In other words, they are also doing a good deed that can one day be reciprocated.

> 'If you are in Europe and every month or even twice a year you are able to send so much money to your parents, to your brothers, to your sisters, your uncles or something. Or you buy something. You buy car, for example, and your father has a car to use. Or your brother, you buy a bus so he can use it for a business and so on. Of course, then you have a good name in the family. If you don't do all this then everybody says: "this man, he is better off than the rest of us but he is not helping anybody. So if there comes a time that they need to do something for you, they will not be eager to do so.'
>
> **Returned migrant, man, 60 years old, respondent 1**

> 'If I want to command that social respect in my family then I should not be seen to be limiting my assistance to my sisters' siblings alone, but it should transcend to all those that are in need and that I can help. So in our society, the further that you go, the more social status that you assume within the family. Even if you have and are not helping you will be deemed to be irresponsible.'
>
> **Family in Europe, man, 50 years old, respondent 4**

The further the migrants go in meeting expectations the more respect they will eventually gain from family members in Ghana. By returning favours and showing that they have remembered the good deeds that people in Ghana have done for them, migrants can further enhance their position in the social hierarchy. They are seen as being responsible by remembering their duties towards others. The system of reciprocity creates the opportunity for this distinction to be made, since the people in Ghana who are reciprocated can create a distinction between those who are good migrants and those who are not. The system of reciprocity also contributes to the distinction of family members or significant others, since they are not being forgotten and benefit from the migration of others through receiving remittances.

6.4 Strategies to cope with pressures

Respondents refer to room to manoeuvre with regard to meeting the expectations and pressure exerted by family members. Interestingly, the possibilities for managing pressure not only emerged in interviews with returned migrants, but also with family members and aspiring migrants. Therefore it appears that managing pressure from family by migrants is a strategy that is accepted by those remaining in Ghana. If migrants do not have the finances to meet the requests, one way of meeting the expectations of family is by giving only part of the money that has been requested.

> 'YES. Even if you don't have you have to find means. Even if you can't satisfy the person, the little that you do to help you do that to save yourself. Maybe he asks for 100 Cedi and you don't have 100 Cedi. So it's better [*to give a little*] than just leaving it and not attending to the person.'
>
> **Returned migrant, man, 40 years old, respondent 16**

It is less damaging for the migrants to give the little that they can give, rather than making the person wait until the entire amount can be remitted. Making a person wait, is seen as ignoring the person in question and being disrespectful. On the other hand, migrants do not have to meet all the requests that are posed. As discussed in the previous chapter, this can be a large group of people and migrants would have to earn very high salaries to meet all the demands and appeals of family members. The migrants can manage requests

from family members based on the family relationship that the migrants have with the person. Family members who are not as closely related will receive less than family members that are closely related and (in the case of male migrants) they are obligated to provide for.

> 'Yes. That I would say yes. There are certain obligations that, I don't want to use the word obligation, responsibility. Because my sisters children, my direct sisters children, it is my duty if my sister is not in a position and I am. They would be looking up to me. They call me uncle, direct uncle. But there are others who also call me uncle from the same family but I can decide to help or not to help, depending on that I cannot. But if my sisters' children go wayward I will be blamed. "Oh, he has it but he is not helping." The second scenario people may blame me but I can decide to defend myself. It isn't, it might not be my direct responsibility. (…) So you become more responsible if the person is very close to you. But if he is so distant it depends on the magnanimity of the person concerned. It depends on, like on my capability, if I can, yes I will.'
>
> **Family abroad, man, 50 years old, respondent 4**

A third option migrants can employ in mitigating the pressure they receive, is by bringing another family member over to Europe. By doing so the migrant can spilt the burden. But this also allows them to meet pressure of aspiring migrants that wish to come to Europe. Having a migrant in the family can make it easier for aspiring migrants to obtain papers or get assistance with locating a reliable connection man to get into the country. Some countries require a letter of invitation from a person living in the destination country. A friend (Ghanaian or otherwise) or a family member can provide this for an aspiring migrant.

> 'If I want to go now? Ok, now I have to get invitation and have somebody to support me. Like, Oh I'm inviting you. (...) If I want to go I need somebody to invite me. Like the family I stayed with. If they want to invite me, they can invite me and support me and everything.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, 35 years old, respondent 2**

Apart from invitation letters or advice, there are cases when migrants in Europe organise the entire trip for an aspiring migrant.

> 'My elderly brother, first born, thought of helping me. So I first travelled to Holland. I didn't know that he'd acquired a passport for me and it was a German passport. So I was asked to learn a few things in German, but we didn't come to Germany direct. We came through Holland. So we stayed for a few months.'
>
> **Returned migrant, man, 40 years old, respondent 16**

> 'Then I have to do something. That one is there. So you have to help them. Maybe for you to reduce your burden if you take one from here to you outside so that he also can help some. (…) When I take him, maybe we have to bring money to five people. We can divide it. I can give something to three people and he can give something to two people. So that the burden will be lighter for me.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 11**

In literature (Mazzucato, 2008) bringing family members over to Europe is seen as part of a migration cycle that allows a migrant to be relieved of his burden of caring for the family. The next person that comes to Europe is responsible for taking over. My respondents however, only refer to splitting the burden between two or more people. This does not mean that this is an equal division of tasks. However, based on the system of reciprocity the new migrant is indebted to the person that managed to get him into Europe. This is a similar situation to what one of my respondents told me about a family he used to work for. They brought one family member after the other to Europe. Each one works for the travel fees of the next person. Once the migrant has paid for the next person's connection to Europe, the new migrant takes over and earns money for the person next in line.

To summarise, migrants in Europe are put under pressure by family members to meet expectations and fulfil duties. Migrants employ various strategies for coping with these pressures. One is by remitting what they can afford to family members. Even if it is not the full amount requested, this will be accepted and does not appear to have negative social consequences for migrants. Migrants can also be selective in who they send remittances to. Extended family members can be bypassed if the migrants do not want to, or do not have the means to meet their requests. The third strategy for dealing with pressure is to bring a family member to Europe to split the burden. The benefit is twofold: it meets the request of a family member to be brought to Europe and migrants in Europe have someone to split the financial burden of caring for the family with.

7 Transnational ties

As outlined at the beginning of the thesis, migrants living in Europe interact with family members and significant others who have remained in Ghana. In my opinion, looking at the transnational relationships between migrants and significant others in Ghana will also contribute to the understanding of the meanings of migration as these are shaped by interactions between migrants and those who have remained in the country of origin. In the second part of this chapter I look at a specific transnational relationship; the relationship between parents and children. Migrants are often not able to bring their children to Europe and leave their children behind in Ghana with relatives.

7.1 Creating the good migrant

A migrant in Europe continues the relationships with family remaining in Ghana. Ideas aspiring migrants have about migration and the meanings that are attached to it, are partly influenced by Ghanaians who have already migrated to Europe. When migrants living in Europe are able to pay a visit to Ghana they present themselves as being successful. The factors that contribute to migrants' presentation of themselves will be discussed in more detail in chapter eight, but here I would like to focus on the impact that the interaction with migrants has on those who have remained in Ghana.

Migrants send remittances to family members on a regular basis, or at least they try to do so. If migrants are able to go to Ghana for a family visit they will bring presents for the family from Europe. Money that has been earned in Europe is also brought to family members and in some cases to friends or others who pose a request to receive money. My respondents talk about what they see migrants bring back from Europe and they indicate that it creates the idea that if these migrants can travel to Europe and earn more than a person in Ghana, why should you not try and do the same?

> 'I was born and grew up to see like, a lot of people coming from Europe. They bring cars and they can build a house and they have some money and you can see their kids are in a good school and everything. So people are thinking like: "Oh Europe is a place that you go and life is better. You can make it very good." (...) I am coming from the Ashanti region and most of the people have been to Europe. Like, if they are developing a new area you see a lot of houses and so many things and you realise most of them are people who are living in Europe. So it makes everybody jealous or if I also go to Europe I can also come and build something and make something here. Then why don't I also plan a way to go there and make it there and come back.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, 35 years old, respondent 2**

> 'When you also consider the fact that people who have also travelled outside; the purpose is coming back with money. Then naturally you know that there is a gold mine there [*in Europe*]. So we have a taste which we have acquired from being a colonial and we have cases of people who have travelled to Europe and America and have come back as rich people. What signal does it send? It's obvious. So that comes from what we have seen others get from being outside. It's a taste also, because when you grow up loving or socialising to a British way of living or an Americanised world. Naturally the songs you listen to are in English. So we grow up unconsciously acquiring that taste. So what would be the next thing on my mind? Let me leg there and satisfy my desires.'
>
> **Returned migrant, man, early thirties, respondent 18**

The image that migrants, when visiting Ghana, portray of their lives in Europe is interpreted by family members as being able to lead a prosperous life. The affluence these migrants display upon return or during visits becomes an enticement for others to go and try their luck in Europe. While talking to family members of Ghanaians that I had met in Amsterdam, I discovered that when visiting friends and family in Ghana, these migrants gave the impression that they had money. However, in Amsterdam they live in a small apartment building and do not have an above average standard of living. When I asked their cousin what he knew about housing in Europe, he told me that he knew all about apartment buildings. His family had told him that an apartment was much better than a house in Europe, since it did not use so much land. Apartments were explained to be a superior invention to the way Ghanaians build their houses, because of this limited land use. When these family members return to Ghana, the clothes they wear and the stories they tell are taken as indications that life is indeed as idyllic as the non-migrant family members (wish to) believe.

The nice clothes respondents talked about migrants wearing when they visit Ghana, reminded me of my observations on my flight to Accra at the start of my fieldwork. I had seen that most of the Ghanaian passengers on the flight were dressed in their Sunday best. Clothes that looked expensive and beautiful, but were perhaps not the most comfortable for a long flight. Also many people were travelling with bags full of wrapped presents and European products. When I asked returned migrants about this, they said that these people were most likely migrants returning to Ghana for a visit and look their best to show their success to the family who would be collecting them from the airport.

As discussed in chapter five, migrants living abroad build houses for themselves while they are still in Europe. The houses are situated in the villages or cities the migrants have originated from, but are rarely used by the migrants themselves. Often these houses are larger than the others in the area. In Ghana, owning land is an important symbol of success. If you rent a home in Ghana you are seen as being a poor person, but a person with money owns land. People look up to those Ghanaians who have their own property.

During my data collection I lived in an area of Kumasi were most of the houses belonged to Ghanaians living in Europe. The majority of these houses are large double storey buildings that had been built by people living abroad. The houses were either vacant or occupied by family members, the migrants themselves did not live there. However, the physical presence of these houses contributes to the idea: there is money in Europe and travelling there allows a person to acquire large property. The two photographs below serve to illustrate the difference in housing that Ghanaians see between migrants and non-migrants. The first house is situated in an average middle class area of Accra. The second house has been built by migrants in Kumasi.

Photograph 1: Average middle class housing – Accra

Photograph 2: A migrant's house – Kumasi

Although a distinction is drawn between migrants and non-migrants on the basis of the assumed financial position and acquired social status, the contribution (returned) migrants make to the idealisation of migration is not always intentional. In conversations with a pastor who had spent time in abroad, he told me that he wanted to discourage his congregation to travel. According to him, young people are better off remaining in Ghana and trying to make something of their lives there instead of migrating to Europe. However, while interviewing a young man in the congregation I found that he had a strong desire to travel. Everything the pastor was teaching them was seen as proof that a person learns new things abroad. He also wanted to learn new things, gain new insights and become like the pastor. His role model had travelled and therefore he wished to do the same. In the same church I observed that while the pastor said he did not want to encourage migration, the wealth of his church and of himself could also been seen as wealth acquired abroad. For example, he would take pictures with his brand new iPad during Sunday services. Whether or not it was bought abroad, it still silently conveyed the message that you can own something like an iPad, if you have travelled.

Reflecting on the paradox of Europe as the Promised Land, as described in chapter four, the image that migrants portray when visiting family and significant others in Ghana appears to contrast stories migrants tell their family and significant others about life in Europe. Family members in Ghana say that the migrants abroad want to convey the message that it is not as easy in Europe as they expected it to be. The family members have heard migrants' stories of the hours being long and the work being hard, but at the end of the day the family does not really believe that life abroad is very challenging. Family in Ghana justify the reasons why migrants tell them about hardships in Europe. A way of justifying this is by saying that migrants are selfish and that they do not want to share the spoils from Europe.

> 'They [*family in Ghana*] don't know what they [*migrants*] go through when they are there so they just think they are a bit selfish. If they [*migrants*] don't send them [*the family*] anything like clothing and other stuff they will think that they're selfish, but that is not what it is. The problem is they don't get the money and all the things they hoped to get when they were in Ghana. That's communication, miscommunication on the part of the local people and the people travelling.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, 21 years old, respondent 13**

As this respondent points out, the family does not believe negative stories about Europe. Although this respondent implies that he believes the situation of family members abroad, other respondents do not believe the migrants and rationalise the reason the migrants might have for telling them that it is hard in Europe. Since the migrant had visited Ghana and appeared to have more money than before he or she travelled to Europe; it cannot be that hard. At the very least, whatever the cost was, the end result is that the migrant has made money:

> 'Everyone wants you to give him a sandal, mobile phone and those things. But they [*migrants*] want to stress the point that they did not get it on the floor [*easily*]. They work hard for it. Sometimes people are not able to provide and people think that maybe they are stingy, but it's not like that. (…) It's like what they work for they want to do something with that money. Not just sharing it. They work hard and got it. So they won't give it to you for free. You also have to work. That's why people want follow them and go there and work for their own to achieve what they think they've got. What they need but they cannot get it from them. So I have to go there myself to struggle and get those things myself.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, woman, 35 years old, respondent 14**

In short, it appears that the interaction between migrants and family in Ghana contributes to the notion that migration creates wealth and prosperity. Remittances, the houses that are build and the general appearance of prosperity are all symbols from which the family derives meaning. The migrants visiting Ghana and the material symbols of migration that they display are interpreted by non-migrants and shape the idea of Europe as the Promised Land. Stories that migrants tell of hardships in Europe and their everyday experiences of life in Europe are less influential in the construction of shared meanings of migration as they contradict the tangible symbols that the family in Ghana observe.

7.2 Absent parents

When migrants leave for Europe, their children often stay behind in Ghana. Migrants' children are either cared for by a spouse or family members remaining in Ghana; often this is a grandmother or an uncle. In Ghana it is not unusual for children to be raised by somebody other than their parents at some point in life. This is not a new occurrence; however children being raised by family members is a common practice among migrants living in Europe (Awumbila et al., 2011).

> 'Most of the times they have a house in Ghana. When they go, they try to build extra ones. They send money. Sometimes the children are little. They just leave them with the wife. (…) They go to extended family. Auntie or uncle to be taken care of.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, 21 years old, respondent 13**

> 'At that time we were young and they were to work. So that was another problem because we were young and they can't take us along. (…) So yeah first I stayed with my grandmother in the village and later I came to live in Kumasi with my mother's sister.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, 35 years old, respondent 2**

Four of my respondents remained in Ghana while (one of) their parents migrated to Europe and one respondent had a cousin grow up with him because the father was in Europe. An absent parent and being raised by someone other than a parent is experienced differently by respondents. For some it is not seen as problematic and they are not bothered by the separation. One respondent said he had never wondered why he had remained in Ghana while his father lived elsewhere.

> 'I never asked him [*why my father left me behind*]. Once I was getting my money, I was getting my gifts it was good. All the guys in my area would come and surround my laptop, my Play Station, Xbox. They didn't even know what it is. I was happy about that, so I wanted him to stay there so he could get more toys like that. So we were getting the money, the clothing, so we were cool. So why he didn't bring us? I didn't ask because I was getting the money, the laptop and all the toys I needed to be happy. Up until now I don't even need to go there. I'm still getting the things. (...) He sent me a new laptop. I don't buy things. Up to pen drive, he even sends me pen drive.'
>
> **Student travelling to Europe, man, 25 years old, respondent 5**

For this particular respondent, his fathers' choice to leave him behind appears to be compensated by the gifts he receives. The respondent values the material remittances that he receives, more than the physical presence of his father in his daily life. At the moment this respondent lives in his fathers' home in Accra, while his father lives abroad, and is not lacking materially. In recent years, the respondent's father has invited him to join him in America, but the respondent chose to travel to Norway instead. According to the respondent his father now wants the family to be together, but he does not see the need for this himself. However, other respondents talked about an emotional void experienced due to the migration of their father and what they felt they had missed in their own upbringing.

> 'I lived with my mom. (...) Also it's one reason why I don't want to be away. You can see that there is a void when you live with your mom alone. Materially I was alright but being close to my dad, as a boy I didn't have it. I do not want to create that problem for my kids. (...) Because I think that a stable family life is very important for bringing up children. So why would you stay somewhere and leave your children? (...)
>
> He wanted to make money. For the family in the simplest term. But for me I have seen a mistake in it and I wouldn't want that for my kids. (...) You know if you have a male figure of authority in your house things are different than just living with your mum. You learn many things as a boy directly from your dad as women do with their mums. But I saw that gap in my father's absence. That's why I'm committed to my children.'
>
> **Returned migrant, man, early thirties, respondent 18**

> 'In terms of training they don't get the affection that a father has to give for his son or daughter. It always hurts people. If you don't have a dad here sometimes when you go to school you are told to bring your dad and if you don't get your dad to attend it's a bit somehow shameful because other people's dads are coming. (…) It's not so shameful but it's a bit when you don't have it, I don't know how to put it, you'll be left out or something. Because those who are having their dad here will be have extra attention. He'll know what's going on in the children's life.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, 21 years old, respondent 13**

Both quotes end with interesting statements. The first respondent refers to his commitment to his children. Implying that his father was not committed to him, since his father had made the choice to leave him in Ghana and travel to Europe. This respondent does not value the financial gain above the presence of his father. The second respondent, talking about to his cousins' situation, refers to the attention that a person will miss due to the absence of a father in their daily lives by stating that the father is not around to see what his child experiences on a day-to-day basis. Indicating that the father is estranged from what happens in the lives of his children.

The parents had chosen to migrate to increase the family's financial situation and enhance their social position. The desire to migrate and create a better life for the family is described as the main motivator for the parents to leave the children behind. Among the Ashanti, the ethnic group that most of my respondents belong too, mothers express their devotion by working hard to meet their children's needs (Clark 1994, in Awumbila et al., 2011). They believe that anybody can carry out the daily tasks of feeding and nurturing a child. However, they firmly believe that 'no one will work for children as much as their own parents' (Clark 1994, as cited in Awumbila et al., 2011:16). In this light, the parents' choice to leave the children in Ghana while they migrate to Europe can be seen as an expression of their commitment to their children. However, it is debatable whether the children themselves view it as such. The respondents who had travelled to Europe themselves had found the idealisation not matching the reality and returned with the decision that migration was not worth the sacrifice it involved. A respondent has only seen his child twice since his son was born two years ago.

> 'This is partly why I am crying for my son, because his mother is there and if I am there I can be part of togetherness and then we could be living and supporting this child. Otherwise it is going to be the same thing again, a repeated story. Like me, he's also not going to have the chance of mother and father and that makes me worry, because I know the things that worry me and I don't want him to experience this.'
> **Returned migrant, man, 29 years old, respondent 9**

Interestingly, when these young men talk about the experienced absence of their parents, and that they would not like their children to experience the same, they do not mention how they experienced their mothers' absence. In some cases, the mother had joined a respondent's father, but the absence of the mother seems to be of less importance to respondents. One of my respondents does talk about the absence of his mother, but only in terms of a way to gain access to Europe. This respondent lived with his father before he joined his mother in Europe. He experienced the time with his father as difficult, since his father was quite violent. However, this respondent does not appear to be worried about the absence of his mother in his life. Until the situation reached a point where the respondent sees that his mother living in London is a way of accessing the United Kingdom himself.

> 'He used his anger on me. He fought me like his own age you know. (...) So I ran out and came to my grandmother's house here. My mom, I started really pushing her, writing her and she knew that I had to be supported. (...) So I used to write my mom, all the time. (...) This is how I got the chance to go, because I always improved my relationship with her so she could come and get me to see Europe. Then I started really pushing her, writing her and she knew that I had to be supported. So the best she could do was to get somebody to bring me to London. So for me it was like a great chance to get out and go somewhere else.'
> **Returned migrant, man, 29 years old, respondent 10**

The respondent's wish to join his mother in Europe, is related to a desire to go to Europe and to a lesser extent being reunited with his mother. The respondent employs the relationship as a migration strategy by putting pressure on his mother to arrange his migration to Europe. The pressure that the respondent exerts on his mother results in him being collected by a connection man and brought to the United Kingdom. Upon arrival in Europe the respondent is provided with an identity and a job. In return for the investment that his mother made in bringing him to Europe this respondent was expected to give the money that he earned to his mother. However, he refused to do so and they went their separate ways for the majority of the time he spent in London. Though this is the story of one respondent, it sheds light on how transnational relationships are employed by aspiring migrants as a migration strategy. Either by asking migrants for assistance and advice or by putting pressure on the person in Europe to collect or arrange passage for them.

To summarise, respondents experience the absence of their father due to migration differently. For some the physical presence is less important than the financial and social advantages of having a father abroad. For others the presence of their father was missed. There appears to be tension in the ideas of what migrants should do when they have children. Perhaps this is the start of a shift in the idea of how migration should be done, a case of a new symbol emerging. Blumer (1969) says that patterns of behaviour are dynamic. Ways of doing things are constantly changing through interaction. It appears that the relationship between parents and children is changing, with children now desiring the physical and emotional presence in their lives. I would not go so far as to argue that it has reached the stage of a collective pattern of behaviour, but it may emerge as such in time. I will revisit this issue in chapter ten in the discussion and recommendations for further research.

8 Success and failure

This is the final chapter covering the findings of the research. Success and failure emerged as important themes during the interviews. First I consider how migrants are perceived in the event of failure. Then I examine strategies that migrants employ to manage the risk of being considered a failure in the eyes of those who have remained in Ghana. Finally, I look at migrants' return to Ghana. This return is an important part of the process, since the desire to return as successful migrants is as strong as the desire to migrate to Europe.

Success and failure reflect ideas about how migration should be done. As discussed in chapter seven, the concept of the 'good migrant' emerged during my previous study on Ghanaian migration. One of my conclusions was that remittances symbolise the expectations of improvements and financial means. Remittances are more complex than money being exchanged over borders. The remittances have become symbols through which migrants can show that they are successful and are a good migrant (Baker, 2012). The expected success of migrants is linked to characteristics of the ideal type of migrant that is perceived to exist among their family members or significant others in Ghana. In this research, the extent of this ideal type of migrant in the minds of respondents was interesting. Before leaving the country aspiring migrants have a strong notion of what the family expects from them. Failing as a migrant is seen as shameful. Respondents sniggered and laughed while relating stories of people they knew or heard of that lived in poverty in Europe or were shamed in Ghana.

> 'I have a friend who travelled outside and he's not making it and I know, the wife knows but other family members don't know. They still send him information they want car and these things. But if he tells them they will not believe it. So very few people know. (...) It's a disgrace you see, because he's struggling. So only close family members will know.'
>
> **Family abroad, man, 25 years old, respondent 4**

> 'For those who are going through the proper channels it is good. But those who are walking through the dessert, going through, sleeping on the street, finding it difficult to eat, finding it difficult to come here. Their life is a bit, I don't know. There is nothing good to say about those people. Maybe with time they will do it. (...) I was talking to one of my teachers. He said he met a Ghanaian there and he said that from the way the man was talking he thought that for the next ten years the man won't even get a plane ticket home. The way the life of the man is, he won't get a plane ticket and he will die there and they will bury him there. Hahahahaha. So I think for such people life is very difficult.'
>
> **Student travelling to Europe, man, 25 years old, respondent 5**

As described in chapter four, Europe is idealised as the Promised Land. It is viewed as the best place to go to earn money. The importance of success is linked to this idealisation. Furthermore, the distinction that migration creates and the affluence migrants display when visiting or returning to Ghana, strengthen the idea that success is readily achieved once migrants have reached Europe. Due to these ideas migrants who fail, are not seen as unlucky or having had a hard time. Instead, they are viewed as individuals who had access to a good opportunity but did not make use of their chance. Failed migrants are described as useless people. They are ridiculed and laughed at. Respondents link failure to a person's mindset. Success is mind over matter for migrants. In Ghana people feel that even if migrants encounter difficult situations, if they work hard and have the right attitude there is no reason for them to fail.

> 'It means that you went there to work so that you can succeed in the world. Whether you went to open a job there or you have your own work to do, that is why you go there. So you come back after so many years there and you come back with nothing. What do you expect your people to tell you? (...) People will tell you that you are a useless person!'
>
> **Aspiring migrant with family abroad, man, 40 years old, respondent 6**

As discussed in chapter five, family boasts about relatives who live abroad and see them as important people. However, this distinction disappears if migrants have not been able to meet the expectations the family and significant others in Ghana have. A respondent shared his experiences about what it was like for him when he returned from Europe without money. He had lived there illegally and eventually decided to return home to Ghana. This respondent felt there was nothing for him in Europe unless he could live there legally. After he returned to Ghana his family first ignored him and would not speak to him:

'My family, my dad was here and he said to me if you don't have about 500 million cedi [*current valuation 50.000 Ghana cedi*] don't come. If you don't have this money, don't come. And I was sad because I feel like I've been away for a long time and I want people to say: "Hi, welcome home", you know. But it wasn't like this. It was between money and me. In the beginning, they fought me. Like, it was really crazy. Like, I didn't have family so I decided to stay in Accra.'

Returned migrant, man, 29 years old, respondent 10

Eventually this situation has improved and he has been accepted back into the family. He has now married a German woman. His wife lives in Germany with his baby son. However, during the interviews with him about his family I found that although he might have been welcomed back in the family, he was not really taken seriously. My respondent is making plans to join his wife in Germany but his uncle laughs at these plans and mocks his chances of success. This respondent has been trying to get family and friends to help him out financially, but he is seen as a 'bad investment' so they will not sponsor him.

'Of course. Now we speak. Now everybody is nice. (...) Because I've made them believe that it is not how they think about me. You know I think partly their worry was that I was coming to be dependant. Like that they would have to take care of me or do stuff for me. But they realised that it is not like this. I get up and I do my own thing, so I think it has changed their perspective and thinking about me. That's one thing that I'm glad about and that's why I feel that if I am ready to move on or go elsewhere it will not be a bad idea at all. (...) Friends of mine are saying: I really want to help you, but you drink and you smoke too much. So I don't want to, I'm afraid you will not be able to do it because of all these habits you have.'

Returned migrant, man, 29 years old, respondent 10

In short, it appears that a migrants' failure has social consequence. Based on this migrant's story it appears that initial repercussions sever family relationships, however over time a person will be accepted back into the family. Though their status within the family may not be completely restored and certainly not elevated due to their migration, they do not become total outcasts. Failed migrants might be seen as useless, but it appears they are not completely excluded from social life. Interestingly the contradictory descriptions of Europe, described in chapter four, are related to this fear of failure. Respondents told me that they have heard from family living abroad that life is not as easy as they thought. It is difficult to find a job and make money. However, the family in Ghana does not believe the stories of migrants. They do not feel migrants have really had a hard life in Europe, since they are able to earn more money than those who remained in Ghana. As the following quote shows, life in Europe is better than Ghana, so failure is not possible:

'Like if you [*a migrant*] work eight hours there and get money and if I work eight hours here, I'll not get the same equivalent as you'll [*the migrant*] get there and you say it's too hard. NO! It's not hard like that because you got something that was better than I got here.'

Aspiring migrant, woman, 35 years old, respondent 14

Failure is not only a failure on the part of the migrant. It is not talked about because it is considered a shame to the family. In the case of failure it will be hushed up as much as possible. Close family will often know the circumstances of a person's return if he was not successful or was deported, but where possible the family will avoid telling others. The way migrants earn money abroad is an ambiguous topic. Some say that it is a shame that a person earns their money in Europe as a cleaner, while others see no shame at all.

'It's a shame to say you brother is there and he is not earning money or is cleaning. It's a shame. You will not say. (...) What it means is that it's frowned upon to say that the person has studied [*and is a cleaner*]. So assuming that I was working as a cleaner I can probably manage to tell my wife, but I can't tell my siblings. I can't tell my mother that I'm just a cleaner. Somebody they respect so much, ha-ha. You understand? Because it is not something that is nice to their ears. So they keep it to themselves what they go through over there. People are not aware.'

Returned migrant & family abroad, man, 50 years old, respondent 3

'They live there, people are supposed to believe that they are living well, but it is not true. Some people don't have anything there. (...) Mostly you don't tell your problems to people here because you already want them to think that you are well. You want them to feel… They already assume that you are there. Once you get there you are in heaven. They already assume that you are there, but they are not able to know what jobs you have to do to survive there. (…) Because they are proud. Too proud, too proud to tell you that I am a cleaner.'

Returned migrant, man, 29 years old, respondent 10

The expectations of Europe and of migrants' success are not only related to the outcome of their migration to Europe. It appears that not only the financial gain, the property migrants build and the remittances they send are important, but also the way migrants earn their money in Europe plays a role in the way they are perceived. Being a cleaner is something that migrants are not proud to share. It thus appears that the type of job migrants can acquire in Europe has an effect on the social status of migrants. Especially, educated migrants are seen to be wasting their degrees if they (remain) working in Europe, doing menial jobs while they have a university degree. Migrants not telling their families that they are 'just' cleaners is related to the hardships and disappointments migrants may face, but choose not to talk about for fear of being labelled a failure.

8.1 Informing others

Related to the issues of success and failure are the choices aspiring migrants make about informing people about their migration plans. I found that my respondents prefer to tell as few people as possible about their plans to travel. Many will talk about their desire to travel to Europe and express freely what it is that they wish to do there. However, when it comes to actually planning and preparing to leave for Europe aspiring migrants do not usually inform others. An important motivation for not telling people is belief in witchcraft. In Ghana there is a strong belief in spiritualism and curses despite the Christian religion of the majority of the population. My respondents fear family members might put a curse on people travelling. This curse would stop the aspiring migrant reaching Europe. By choosing not to tell anybody about plans to travel, aspiring migrants can avoid this curse and make it to Europe successfully.

'Because here they believe in so many things. Like sprits and witchcraft and so many things. Like, maybe it can happen that you have spent a lot of money and then you will bounce. If it happens that you go and couldn't stay and they bring you back, people will talk about you: "Oh, look at him. He said he was going to Europe, but look at him." So everything has to be secret.'

Aspiring migrant, man, 35 years old, respondent 2

'It sometimes depends on the relationship within the family. As you know we Ghanaians have some negative talks. Anything spiritual. So some people think if I tell him or her, he will work in a spiritual way that I cannot go. So some will not tell you before they have completed everything and some will not tell you until they have reached where they are going before calling you to tell that they are no more here; I'm there. They have the idea that witchcraft will destroy the papers alone. So they will not tell you.'

Family in Europe, man 40 years old, respondent 15

'They [*the migrants*] normally do it under the blindside of the family. They sneak out. The reason they don't tell anybody is the belief in spiritualism. You know we believe in, there is a belief that you can harm or spiritual do something to stop my efforts. There is a perception that this man is a wizard. So if he sees what I am doing he would spiritually stall it so I want to be very Nicodemus [*secretive*] in whatever I do.'

Family in Europe, man, 50 years old, respondent 4

Though I do not underestimate the strong belief in witchcraft present in Ghana, it does provide aspiring migrants with a good reason for explaining why they did not inform people before leaving Ghana. A strong belief in spiritualism is not the only reason for not informing people when making migration plans. Another reason not to inform family members or significant others is linked to the expected success. To reduce the risk of being labelled a failure if aspiring migrants do not reach Europe, or in the event of immediate deportation, migrants choose to inform as little people as possible. If the attempt to stay in Europe fails migrants can pretend they never went.

'I have a friend whose younger brother was travelling to the US and the mother was doing everything for him. After having the documents that he need, the father was in the house but they did not inform the father. (...) He said I'm going to Accra. The father says ok. He did not take any bag with him. He just take a small travelling bag. Then that night around 10 or 12 in the night I went and took his things into the car there. He's other brother sent it to Accra.

The only thing that the father will hear is: I have reached US. So the father was asking how did this travelling come about: "I know that you told me you were going to Accra so why US?", "I was trying to surprise you." At first the father was angry a little while. He called his wife and the wife said: "He wanted to do that to surprise you". So he said: "Ok, the most important thing is that he's reached safely."

When you sit down and think about it, it's useless because he is not here. You cannot tell him he should come back again because he has gone over there.

Family in Europe, man, 40 years old, respondent 14

The quote above refers to the migration of this respondent's friend. Although it refers to an aspiring migrant's migration to the United States the same strategy is employed by aspiring migrants travelling to Europe, according to my respondent. The aspiring migrant in this quote does inform his mother, who arranges the process for him. However, he feels he cannot inform the father about his impending departure, but is able to offer an explanation (through his mother) that is satisfactory. Here the belief in witchcraft is not used, but the father is told that it was a big surprise for his benefit. This line of reasoning is possible due to the distinction and success that the departure is assumed to bring to the father.

The idea that a person has more opportunities in Europe is so deeply embedded in the minds of my respondents that some families see sending a family member to Europe as an investment. A respondent talks of practices that he has encountered over the years:

'Yeah, I mean it's a common practice. You have like one piece of land and that will cost like 5,000 euro's. Your daughter needs about 6,000 euro's to travel. It's ok for the people to sell that property and give the money to their daughter with the hope that if she gets there she will get more money to come back.'

Returned migrant & family abroad, man, 50 years old, respondent 3

This quote contradicts the stories that migrants tell about families not being involved before a person migrates. The respondent refers to selling of land by a parent to help a child migrate as common practice. However, my respondents say they inform only a few people about their plans. They say it is their own decision to travel and family members are not part of a collective decision making process. Based on these accounts I would argue that the majority leave secretly. However, there are cases when they ask family members to contribute to their migration. Respondents have stressed however that they only ask people that they trust so not to jeopardise their passage to Europe.

The choice of not informing others appears to be linked to whether or not a migrant is migrating legally or through an irregular channel:

'People don't go through the right channel. Many have to go through the back door. I mean if you are going through the back door, how do you make fanfare? It is only when one has genuinely secured everything and you don't have anything to fear. Then they come and the whole family will know. Because on that score he has processed everything genuinely. Then you will see the whole family bussed up to the airport to see him off. (…) It is an official trip. But if he has seen somebody who as manipulated the way he wouldn't even cough because he is going to pay his way out. And that is going to be a disaster if he goes and he is not able to make it. If you make a fanfare and you are not able to enter because you are not going legally and you don't know what is going to happen on your way, you don't talk about it. You only talk about it and make a fanfare and family can go to the church for thanksgiving before you leave, that is genuine, then all the documents are fine. There is a big fanfare.'

Family in Europe, man, 50 years old, respondent 4

If the situation in Europe is uncertain, as is the case for many of my respondents aspiring to travel, they will only inform close family or the people that are contributing (financially) to their travel. When I asked a respondent, a young man in his early twenties, if he could be gone tomorrow and nobody would know he smiled and said:

> 'Yes. It's my personal this thing. I wanted to do something before someone sees. Sometime I will tell you I will do this and I can't do it. Then I feel ashamed about myself. I won't tell you anything and before you know I've done it. That's all. For instance, if I want to give you something I won't tell you: "Tomorrow I will give you this." I'll just do it as a surprise while you are there and I know you are in need of that thing and I send it to you. That's all. A big surprise.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 11**

Again this quote refers to an element of surprise. The respondent wishes to do something before he is stopped by others to achieve the goal of reaching Europe. But more importantly, if the respondent does not tell anybody, the success will come as a surprise awarding him distinction in Ghana. However, with the element of surprise, failure will go unnoticed.

Though respondents who are able to or are planning to migrate legally, say that they would inform their family before they leave Ghana, these respondents also say that they will only inform their family after they have already arranged everything. For example, students will only inform their parents once the scholarship is obtained. Some aspiring migrants I interviewed, said they would tell their family before they leave, but the family in question would not know anything of the migration aspirations at the time of the interview. One of my respondents remarked:

> 'Oh, I would involve them. When everything is there, when my papers before I will tell them.'
>
> **Student preparing to travel, woman, 25 years old, respondent 8**

When asked about reason for not informing family members earlier she replied that:

> 'There was no role that they could play in it. You see, if it became possible that I could go it was good news. Then I could tell them. But to tell them that I was applying was not really necessary, because there was nothing that they were going to do. So it is only when you know it is ok, I will go then you need to tell them.'
>
> **Student preparing to travel, woman, 25 years old, respondent 8**

I heard the same during interviews with returned migrants who had gone Europe to work. They preferred to inform family after things were arranged. Once more this appears to be a strategy for managing the risk of failure. Migrants travelling on a scholarship, for example, do not face the risk of being deported upon arrival in Europe. However, though failed attempts to migration are not as stigmatised as migrants that have actually failed, it is conceivable that they do not want family to know about failed attempts to travel.

It appears that the main tendency is that aspiring migrants inform nobody or as few people as possible about their departure to Europe. Despite examples of family being involved in the process, such as the land being sold to facilitate migration of a child and migrants experiencing some pressure to migrate (chapter six), it appears that migration is usually an individual decision. Furthermore, migrants prefer to keep their migration a secret until they have either reached Europe or have secured the necessary papers. These choices are related to fear of being labelled a failure by family members and significant others who remain in Ghana.

8.2 Return

Return is seen as the conclusion to the migration process. It is in Ghana that migrants receive their social status of either a successful or a useless person. Whereas family members benefit from the distinction of migration through migrants' absence, migrants reap the rewards of migration once they return to Ghana. Returning as successful migrants and settling back in the country of origin allows migrants to relax and enjoy their newfound social status that migration has brought them.

Despite an idealisation of Europe, permanent settlement abroad does not appear to be an option in the minds of any of my respondents. Even aspiring migrants talk of returning. The overall aim is to travel to Europe for a few years and then 'come home' to Ghana. Family of migrants talk about the day when their loved ones will eventually come back to Ghana. The aspiring migrants that I interviewed expressed a strong desire to travel to Europe. I found enthusiasm to see Europe and to leave Ghana so great, that I informed about the wish to return. However, as respondents informed me in no uncertain terms, despite the desire to one day 'most defiantly travel' they are not going to remain in Europe forever.

> 'I don't want to stay. You must return! (...) Oh, you see Ghana is where you were born to. Or Ghana is where you come from. In the normal way if you travel abroad you must come back to know how your family is. Maybe when you told them, maybe I've told the family to go and look for a house for me. You don't travel, in my perception, I will not travel abroad to stay there. I just want to go there to earn something. To come and then enjoy it with my family where I was born. So it is good to come back to where, or it's good to reinstate where you were. (…) You see you knew the culture more than the other. So you must come back. That is the only thing.'
>
> **Aspiring migrant, man, early twenties, respondent 12**

The moment of return however, is postponed until the desired level of success has been achieved. Since Europe does not always meet the ideal that migrants expect it to be, it can take a while for migrants to earn enough money to allow them to return.

> 'Most of them come back. Once they are they are there they keep preparing. The most important thing is to have a house to which you will come. So most Ghanaians once they are outside are building houses. Because when you go back you will need that. You don't want to go back and stay in a family house. So once they are able to get that then…Ghanaians don't want to grow old in Europe because in Europe all the old people are miserable. That's how they see it. Because nobody takes care of them. They are taken to an old people's home and Ghanaians don't want that. If only you are here you have people taking care of you. You will always, even if you don't have your children or your family members, somebody will always care for you. That is very true. So Ghanaians are afraid to get old in Europe.'
>
> **Returned migrant, man, 60 years old, respondent 1**

Respondents talk disapprovingly about people staying in Europe, which I also came across in my previous study (Baker, 2012). Return is something that migrants must do. It is something which they start preparing for by the act of building houses in Ghana for when they finally return. Thus, property also shows the neighbourhood that migrants are still part of Ghana and one day will return to their home, in both senses of the word.

In my minor thesis respondents in Amsterdam Zuidoost also expressed a strong desire to one day return to Ghana. However, they had a different time span in mind with regard to plans of returning to Ghana. Migrants in Amsterdam talked of returning 'home' to Ghana one day, when they get old because they don't want to stay in Europe for ever. This is partly related to a stereotypical view of the elderly in Europe living in old people homes (Baker, 2012). Aspiring migrants in Ghana talk about returning home to Ghana after a few years. The reason for this difference is linked to the success of migrants. The moment of return is a point of tension in stories of respondents; it is linked to the moral issues of success and failure. If migrants have sent remittances to the family and built a house in Ghana, returning home for good means that they can reap the rewards of being a good migrant. They can enjoy the social position of a respected person in society permanently. However, to do this migrants must have earned enough money and helped enough family members. Migrants are expected to return with money and means of starting a better life for themselves and the family. Therefore the migrants' return is linked to the speed of this success.

'Yeah, of course. They said to me: You can't come and live here without money. The assumption is that you go there to make money and then you come here, you know. But you don't go there to live there.'

Returned migrant, man, 29 years old, respondent 10

The quote above is from the same respondent that was ignored by his family when he returned from Europe without money. He stresses the point that although his family thought that he returned to Ghana too soon, since he had not earned enough money, his family did expect him to return one day. Family members have a desire to see their relatives in Europe back home.

To summarise, returning to Ghana is seen as something migrants must eventually do. It is the closure of a successful migration process. However, there are conditions for this return. There is a cycle that makes up the ideal migration career. A person must migrate, send home remittances to his or her family, obtain land and a house and finally return as a successful migrant. The return as a successful migrant is the moment that migrants benefit most from their acquired cosmopolitan cultural capital, that I discussed in chapter five. Upon return they are able to continuously benefit from the distinction they have been awarded through their migration to Europe.

9 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to understand the construction of shared meanings of migration and how these meanings shape a collective pattern of behaviour. This research adds to existing studies on Ghanaian migration which mainly concentrate around economic or development issues. There is limited research on the perception of Ghanaians with regard to migration and the construction of the meanings they attach to migration. This study aims to contribute to an understanding of this aspect by looking at how migration is perceived by Ghanaians and its value in Ghana.

In studying the research problem I used the theoretical approach of symbolic interactionism and positioned it within theories of culture. In my analysis I focused on the construction of meanings through interaction between individuals. This analysis was not limited to interactions within the nation state of Ghana. Transnational relationships between migrants in Europe and individuals in Ghana (aspiring migrants, family of migrants and significant others) shape the meanings of migration. In the subsequent paragraphs I will consider the most important findings of the research: Europe as the Promised Land, migration as distinction, pressure, the good migrant and the transnational ties. I will then discuss prior expectations of the research. The chapter concludes with an answer to the research question.

9.1 Constructing the Promised Land

Aspiring migrants and family members of migrants idealise Europe. They refer to Europe as heaven and see it as being better than Ghana in terms of earning a living, education and overall standard of living. Related to this notion of Europe as the biblical Promised Land, is the strong desire of Ghanaians to migrate to Europe. The most extreme illustration of the extent of this desire is a respondents' description of Ghanaians' willingness to become voluntary slaves, as long the ship is sailing for Europe.

Migrants' experiences in Europe are not always those of a person living and working in heaven. However, they do not always share this with family members or significant others in Ghana. The migrants that do talk about negative experiences are often not believed. Aspiring migrants who have heard the stories of life being difficult, still idealise Europe. It emerged that the desire to travel and the idealisation of Europe prevail above the stories of hard work and difficult circumstances. The idealisation present in Ghana appears to be upheld through the interaction between migrants in Europe and those remaining in Ghana. Migrants in Europe portray an image of affluence; during their absence they send remittances and build houses in Ghana. When these migrants return from Europe they lavish their relatives with gifts and money. Through the interaction between migrants and non-migrants these things become symbols from which meaning is derived. The portrayed affluence and tangible symbols of migration conflict the migrants' stories about life in Europe not being as ideal as believed. It emerged that these symbols are regarded to be more important for the construction of the idealisation of Europe, than the stories that migrants tell about hardships.

9.2 Distinction and cosmopolitan cultural capital

Migration has become a way to distinguish oneself in Ghanaian culture. Distinction is about positioning oneself in relation to others and interaction needs to take place so that one's status can be determined (Bourdieu, 1994). Migration has become a prime from of cosmopolitan cultural capital, offering a competitive edge in positioning oneself socially and takes place in a global area (Weenink, 2008). The concept of cosmopolitan cultural capital provides new ways of understanding the meaning that migration has in Ghana. Cosmopolitan cultural capital is grounded in migration and positions the bearer of this capital within the local status hierarchy in Ghana.

There is a connection between a persons' social position and the financial wealth migrants have accumulated through migration. For example, the more migrants remit, the more respect and social distinction they are able to acquire. Acquired financial wealth and property are important material symbols of distinction, separating migrants from non-migrants. The houses that are built in Ghana by migrants are larger than those built by non-migrants. This is a form of objectified cultural capital, displaying the success the migrants achieved through their migration to Europe and setting themselves apart from non-migrants. Other material symbols that emerged as markers of distinctions are: goods from abroad and remittances.

There are however, also non-material symbols of distinction. The most predominant is the specific name that is given to migrants; Burgher. The act of giving migrants a name reflects the respect that money from abroad will give a person and it draws a clear distinction between migrants and non-migrants. Other non-material symbols are forms of embodied cosmopolitan cultural capital. A distinction is made between migrants and non-migrants based on; differences in skin colour, language and attitudes of migrants in Europe. These are forms of embodied cultural capital; cultural capital that can be seen in the physical appearance or intellect of an individual and which is not directly transferable to another person.

Distinction for family

The structure and importance of the (extended) family in everyday lives leads to successes and failures of individual members affecting the entire family. Migration is seen as an important life achievement that reflects well on the entire family. The social status of the family contributes to an individuals' social status and vice versa. Therefore, the distinction that migrants obtain is extended to the family members.

The distinction for family members of migrants has symbols from which this distinction is derived. This however, takes on different forms than the symbols of distinction related to migrants. The distinction for family lays in the *receiving* of remittances, as opposed to the act of *sending* remittances which creates distinction for migrants. Thereby illustrating that migration is a life achievement that the family can boast about and reflects well on their status as a successful family. Having a migrant in the family, especially a child in Europe, becomes a symbol of distinction in itself. For parents there is a specific cloth available through which they can distinguish themselves at important social events. This cloth, *Meba wo Abrokyire,* becomes an objectified form of cosmopolitan cultural capital through which parents symbolically state their position in society without words.

In short, in Ghana cosmopolitan cultural capital that stems from having transnational ties is an important way to attain status. By making distinctions, such as going to Europe, buying products produced in Europe and wearing specials clothes, family members distinguish themselves and position themselves in relation to others. This leads to the follow point; the pressure that aspiring migrants and migrants in Europe experience from their families and significant others.

9.3 Pressure

Migration as a prime form of capital accumulation has led to pressure being exerted on migrants to migrate to Europe. The pressure that aspiring migrants receive to leave for Europe appears to be related to gender. This is linked to the meanings attached to the male gender role. A desire to elevate a family's financial and social position can add to the pressure exerted on men to fulfil their masculine duties by migrating to Europe. It can also become a matter of prestige, a way of exerting yourself from your peers and a form of distinction as a successful person.

Linked to the idealisation of Europe is the pressure that (extended) family members put on migrants to meet their expectations once migrants are already in Europe. By meeting these expectations the migrants will increase the cosmopolitan culture capital of their family members in Ghana. The shared meaning of the Promised Land is so strong that the family does not believe migrants if they say Europe does not live up to these expectations. Migration to Europe has become the ideal way to acquire wealth and elevate social position. An explanation of meeting the demands of family members is the system of reciprocity in Ghana. Ghanaians are expected to return favours and show that they have remembered the good deeds of other people. Migrants that abide by this system by sending remittances to people who have helped them in the past are seen as being responsible, thus a good migrant. This can enhance their social prestige in the local status hierarchy in Ghana.

However, migrants do not meet all requests and employ strategies for coping with pressures. A strategy is remitting what they can afford to family members. Also, migrants can choose be selective in who they send remittances to on the basis of the relationship with the family members. Another strategy is to bring a family member to Europe. By doing so the migrants in Europe have someone to split the financial burden with.

9.4 The good migrant

An important issues relating to the construction of meanings of migration are success and the fear of failure. After migrating to Europe, failure is not seen as an option for migrants. Not only in the minds of the aspiring migrants, but moreover in the minds of families. Migrants who do not live up to expectations and who are not able to deliver the desired cosmopolitan cultural capital are seen as failures. These migrants are ridiculed and labelled as irresponsible by family and significant others in Ghana. Thus, failure is distinction in the negative sense.

Meanings attached to returning without money and success are also upheld through the fear of failure. For migrants it is not acceptable to talk about hardships faced Europe and difficulties in meeting expectations, with their family members. In prior research I referred to the situation migrants find themselves in as a 'double bind'; migrants are unable to meet demands of family members, but are also unable to tell them it is not possible to do so for fear of losing their respect (Baker, 2012). In Ghana it emerged that this double bind stretches further than just the taboo on talking about experiences of hardships. These meanings of migration have created a repetitive pattern of behaviour. This pattern is as follows: aspiring migrants travel to Europe with the image of Europe being the Promised Land. If upon arrival there are hardships that have to be endured, migrants either do not talk about them with non-migrants in Ghana and if they do, they are often not believed. The migrants do not wish to be seen as failures, irresponsible or useless people. Therefore they meet the expectation as best they can and display acquired wealth when returning to Ghana. The interaction migrants have with their family members upholds the meanings attached to Europe and the value of migration in Ghana. Both parties uphold the 'agreed' behaviour and the idea of the good migrant. Thus, the cycle continues with new (aspiring) migrants that follow and their interactions with Ghana.

Related to the fear of failure are the choices aspiring migrants make before leaving Ghana. Due to fear of not being successful or not being able to reach Europe, migrants inform as few people as possible. Thereby managing the risk of being shamed.

Although there is a strong desire to migrate, there is also an equally strong desire to return to Ghana. Respondents stress that they are not going to live in Europe forever, but are only going to gain financial and social benefits. Migrants' return to Ghana is seen as the conclusion to the migration process. For migrants the benefit of their social position is limited in their everyday lives, since the distinction that migration creates is awarded in Ghana. Migrants do experience these rewards of migration during visits to Ghana. However, the moment migrants are able to return to Ghana permanently, is the moment they can enjoy the rewards of their migration on a daily basis. Through meeting the expectations attached to the notion of the good migrant, those who have returned to Ghana successfully can enjoy the respect and the social distinction that is grounded on the volume of their cosmopolitan cultural capital.

9.5 Transnational ties

As shown in the paragraphs above the transnational ties of migrants play a vital role in the construction of meanings of migration and in upholding these meanings. The expectations and interactions between those inside and outside of Ghana create and uphold the idealised image of Europe and what makes a good migrant.

A specific transnational relationship that emerged is the relationship between parents and children. Migrants' children often stay behind in Ghana and are cared for by a spouse or family members. There are differences in how respondents experienced the absence of parents, especially fathers, due to migration. Some saw the physical presence as less important than the advantages of having a parent abroad. However, for others the presence of their father was missed. These respondents stated that they saw a mistake in their father's choice and would not leave their children in Ghana. Thus, there appears to be tension in the relationship between migrant-parents and children, with some children now desiring the physical and emotional presence of parents in their lives.

9.6 Prior expectations and previous work

This study adds to my own prior research on Ghanaian migration. My minor thesis focused on the transnational ties and the identity of migrants in Amsterdam Zuidoost. During this study meanings attached to migration were analysed. However, the findings of this minor thesis only showed one perspective, that of the migrants in Amsterdam Zuidoost. This research sheds light on the perspective of those in Ghana. This angle is important; as one of the conclusions of my prior research was that migrants find it important to maintain their Ghanaian identity as much as possible. Therefore the meanings that are constructed in interaction with people in Ghana are valued the most.

Based on the strong ties that are present between migrants in Europe and the families in Ghana I expected there to be more involvement of the family in the process of migration. Though pressure is experienced by some to migrate and though some families do provide assistance, migration is referred to as an individual decision. The involvement of family members does not appear to be part of a collective decision making process, though in some cases family members do influence migrants' decisions. This involvement appears however, to be subtle and at the request of the migrant; overt force does not appear to be used.

9.7 The research question

This research aimed to answer the following research question: How do shared meanings of migration between Ghanaian migrants, aspiring migrants and family members shape a culture of migration?

Based on the conclusions draw above the answer to the research question can be formulated as follows: The idealisation of Europe is constructed through interaction between migrants in Europe and aspiring migrants, family members and significant others who remain in Ghana. Migration has become part of a status struggle in Ghana. Distinctions or social positioning are grounded on material and non-material symbols that have meaning in the Ghanaian culture of migration. Thus, making migration a prime form of cosmopolitan cultural capital.

Migration is valued so much that failure to succeed is not viewed as an option and is seen as shameful. Thus, putting pressure on migrants in Europe to appear successful. This leads to the following pattern of behaviour with regard to the migration process: Migrants leave Ghana secretly, send remittances to Ghana and enhance the social status for themselves and family members. The moment migrants permanently return to Ghana is seen as the conclusion to the migration process and the moment they can reap the rewards of their migration.

The shared meanings of migration are created and upheld through interactions between migrants in Europe and non-migrants (family members, aspiring migrants and returned migrants) in Ghana. These interactions, taking place in a transnational space have led to the construction of the good migrant. Migrants can be seen as being a good migrant by sending remittances and portraying an image of success so not to lose face. This creates a repetitive process of migration: Aspiring migrants expect Europe to be like heaven, leave for Europe and try to meet expectations by appearing successful. By doing so these migrants are not shamed but are awarded a higher social status in Ghana. The image these migrants portray serves as an enticement for others to migrate. This process is then recreated with the aspiring migrants that follow and travel to Europe to become successful people in Ghana.

10 Discussion and recommendations for further research

This thesis shows that migration is a complex process of exchanging meanings and ideas. It aims to add to prior research on Ghanaian migration by analysing the meanings migration has in Ghana. By using the theoretical approach of symbolic interactionism and positioning it within theories of culture, I was able to analyse migration on a micro level. By looking at the interactions between migrants in Europe and their family members and significant others in Ghana, it emerged that migration is part of a symbolic economy that goes beyond the process of exchanging remittances and material goods. It also has consequences for the social position of migrants and their family members in Ghana.

The use of the transnational lens in studying these interactions allowed for an analysis that not only focussed on the interactions within Ghana, but also on the role that migrants in Europe and returned migrants, aspiring migrants and family members play in the construction of shared meanings of migration. The added value being that by looking at these relationships and interactions the analyses go beyond ideas and expectations in Ghana, but looks at how meanings of migration are created and upheld through interaction between actors in two or more nation states. These analyses showed the symbols of migration have contributed to a normative typology of the migrant; the good migrant.

These social consequences are related to migration as a marker of distinction. By taking the Bourdieusain approach to distinction I looked at migration as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). I consider migration to be a form of cosmopolitan cultural capital; cultural capital acquired in a globalising arena (Weenink, 2008). This form of capital plays an important role in positioning oneself in the local status hierarchy in Ghana. Thus, further demonstrating that migration is more than an economic exchange, but also has effects on the socio-cultural sphere.

However, this study raises questions that cannot be explored within the scope of this research. The first issue I wish to discuss is related to the stories and experiences of migrants who have not been successful during their migration to Europe. My findings show that failure is not considered to be an option for migrants. As discussed, migrants find themselves in a double bind as they are unable to meet the expectations of family members, but since not meeting them would have negative social affects; migrants try and meet expectations as best they can. However, not all migrants are able to uphold the ideal of the 'good migrant' and are thus labelled as a failure by family and significant others in Ghana. Though these findings give insight into the meanings of migration and the value of success, I was not able to explore the failure of migrants in depth. A research focussing on migrants who have failed to become a good migrant, can provide insights in how meanings of migration are contested by migrants who have failed to meet expectations. A topic of interest would be the influence of the perceived failure on the relationships between migrants and those who remained in Ghana. My respondents said that migrants who have not succeeded are seen as useless people. Thus, indicating that the migrants' failure has created a marker of distinction in a negative sense. This raises questions about how this affects the migrants. Are there ways for migrants to redeem themselves and regain their position in the family or does failure in Europe lead to a permanent devaluation of the position in the local status hierarchy? The answers to these questions could shed light on the issue of failure. The interactions between family and migrants may change as a result of this failure, perhaps leading to new meanings of migration being created and a change in the patterns of behaviour.

The second recommendation for further research relates to transnational child-parent relationships. Though it is not uncommon for children to be raised by someone other than their parents, international migration has led to children and parents being separated for longer periods of time. Further research on this could shed light on the meanings attached to transnational child care, both from the perspective of the child in Ghana as from the perspective of the migrant-parent in Europe. Issues that would be of interest to analyse are how children and parents interact with each other when separated by migration. Especially with regard to migration as a marker of distinction. How are parents perceived in the eyes of their children if they are not able to be successful in Europe? How does success and failure play a role in these interactions? Research

on these interactions could add to the knowledge about meanings of migration and the value that is attached to it. As discussed in chapter seven, in Akan culture it is believed that no one will work as hard for the children as the parents themselves. Is migration a marker of distinction that extends beyond the ideal type of the 'good migrant' and also creates distinction as 'the good parent'?

As mentioned in chapter seven, the separation of children and parents through migration is a pattern of behaviour that is being challenged by some of the children of (returned) migrants. They do not want to be separated from their own children through migration. These respondents appear to value intimate child-parent relationships in the sense of the physical presence of the parent prevailing above the financial benefits and social distinction of having a parent in Europe. This raises questions about the meanings these Ghanaians attach to transnational child care and migration. Does this mean that this category of parents will choose not to migrate or will they create alternative patterns of transnational child care by bringing their children with them to Europe or choosing to be absent for shorter periods of time?

Both of these suggestions for further research relate to possible shifts in the meanings that are attached to Europe and migration. The migration from Ghana to Europe is relatively recent. Ghanaians started to migrate there in the 1980s and 1990s (Adepoju, 2005). As Mazzucato (2008) states, Ghanaians enter Europe in an era when the receiving countries have designed polices to keep them out. Respondents talk about the majority of migrants entering through informal channels. Thus, making the opportunities for migrants to succeed more difficult. Illegal immigrants have less chances of obtaining high paid jobs, even if they have the necessary credentials, the lack of papers is an obstacle. Will this, and the above mentioned issues, affect the idea of Europe as the Promised Land? The notion of the Promised Land is strongly related to hope. Hope of one day going to a better place. Therefore, Ghanaians hold on to the idea of Europe being better than Ghana, even if they have heard stories that indicate otherwise. If the idealisation of Europe would start to disappear due to opportunities of success being contested, what affect would this have on the hope of Ghanaians? Will a new Promised Land emerge as a place to realise dreams and to elevate your position in the local status hierarchy? Or will new meanings and ways of distinction emerge within Ghana?

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Appendix I Interview guides

Interview guide - *Aspiring migrants*

Introduction
Before starting the interview I explained to respondents what the aim of my research was, answered respondents' questions about the research and obtained permission to record the interview.

Topic list
1. Family life/life in Ghana
2. Expectations of Europe
3. Decision making
4. Role of family and migrants
5. Organising migration

Topic 1 – Family life/ life in Ghana
1. What do you do?
   a. Job, study etc.
2. Can you tell me about family life in Ghana?
   a. Prompts: Size, extended family, nuclear family, hierarchy, important events
3. How are decisions made in the family?

Topic 2 – Expectations of Europe
1. Can you tell me what you think Europe is like?
   a. Which countries are the best to go to?
2. What do you think life is like for Ghanaians living in Europe?
   a. Can you explain why you think it is like that?
   b. What kind of work will you do in Europe/hope to do?
   c. Where do you get information about Europe from?
3. Are there benefits from migration?
   a. What are they?
4. Are there differences in the opportunities for Ghanaians here in Ghana and those that travel to Europe?
5. How are people who have travelled to Europe seen in Ghana?
   a. Prompts: the family, others

Topic 3 – Influences and decision making
1. How did you make the decision to travel/migrate?
   a. Prompts: involvement of others
2. Do you have any friends or family in the country you are planning to travel to?
   a. What have they told you about life in that country?
3. Have you told people about your plans to travel?
4. Is someone helping you to go to Europe?
   a. How do they help you?

Topic 4 – Role of family

1. Do you know any Ghanaians who have travelled to Europe?
    a. If no: do you know any families that have members living in Europe?
    b. What do they (migrants and/or family members abroad) tell you about Europe?
2. Do you have any family or friends in Europe?
3. What does your family think of your plans to travel to Europe?
    a. Do they know? If not, why haven't you told them?
    b. Is permission needed from family head to travel?
    c. Can they forbid you to travel?
4. When you go to Europe what are your family's expectations of you?
    a. Do you have responsibilities or obligations?
    b. Do you have to send remittances?
    c. How often will you contact them or travel back to Ghana?
5. What happens if you can't meet the expectations of your family?
6. What happens if you do meet expectations?

Topic 5 – Organising migration

1. When do you plan to go to Europe?
2. How are you going to get there?
3. Do you have any connections in the country you are travelling to?

Interview guide - *Returned migrants*

Topic list
1. Expectations of Europe
2. Influences and decision
3. Reason and circumstances of return
4. Expectations family had of migrant

Topic 1 - Expectations of Europe
1. Can you tell me about family life in Ghana?
2. How are decisions made in the family?
3. Can you tell me what you though Europe was like before you went there?
   a. Did it meet these expectations?
2. Where did you get your information about Europe from?
3. What is life is like for a Ghanaian living in Europe?
   a. What kind of work did you do in Europe?

Topic 2 – Influences and decision
1. Why did you go to Europe?
   a. What was the role of the family is this decision?
2. What did it mean for your family that they had a family member living in Europe?
3. How are decisions made in the family about travelling?

Topic 3 - Reason and circumstances of return
1. What were your experiences in Europe?
2. Why did you return to Ghana?
3. How where you received by family?
   a. Why is this manner?
   b. How did you experience this?

Topic 4 – Expectations family has of migrant
1. Did you remain in contact with your family while you were in Europe?
2. What did the family think your life was like in Europe?
3. What did your family expect of you?
   a. Did you meet those expectations?
4. How are migrants seen in Ghana?
5. Do families benefit from your migration?
6. What happens if you found it hard in Europe?

Interview guide - *Families of migrants in Europe*

Topic list:
1. Family life
2. Expectations of Europe
3. Involvement / knowledge about decision
4. Expectations family has of migrant

Topic 1 - family life
1. Can you tell me about family life in Ghana?
   a. Prompts: Size, extended family, nuclear family, hierarchy
2. How are decisions made in the family?

Topic 2 – Expectations of Europe
1. In which country does your family member live now?
   a. What did you know about this country before he/she travelled there?
2. What kind of work does your family member do in Europe?
3. Does your family member tell you about his/her life in Europe?
   a. What does he/she tell you?
4. What do you think life is like for a Ghanaian living in Europe?
   a. Has this view changed since your family member has travelled there?

Topic 3 – Involvement in and knowledge about the decision
1. Why did your family member choose to go to Europe?
   a. What was the role of the family is this choice?
   b. Were you involved in choosing where he/she should go?
2. Did your family member have contacts in the country where he/she is?
3. Did you know that he/she was travelling before he/she left?
   a. How does the family make decisions concerning travelling?
4. What does it mean for you as a family that you have a family member in Europe?
5. Does family/did you contribute to the person's migration?

Topic 4 – Expectations family has of migrant
1. Do you speak to your family member?
2. Do they send you goods/remittances?
   a. Does your family member manage this?
   b. If no: why do you think that is?
3. Are there responsibilities migrants have to fulfil?
4. What happens if your family member finds it hard in Europe?
5. How does the family see a person who has travelled to in Europe?
6. What are the benefits for the person who has travelled?
7. Does the family benefit from a person's migration?