Return Migration, Reintegration and Sense of Belonging

The Case of Skilled Ghanaian Returnees
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Kwaku Arhin-Sam

Nomos
To
Hanna, Lyla & Liam
The presumption that return migration is merely the act of going ‘back home’ often underestimates the complexities of the process including return migrants’ feelings of belonging. Indeed, return migration is increasingly becoming an essential phenomenon in international migration discourses. However, attention to return migration has so far focused on areas such as the developmental contributions of returnees towards the home country, challenges of return migration and reintegration, and transnational practices of return migrants including issues on identity and belonging. In Ghana, studies on return migration have looked at challenges stemming from gender roles among return migrants. Hitherto, how return migrants construct a sense of belonging in the process reintegration is yet to be explored further. This study fills the gap by examining the relationship between belonging and reintegration and how returnees define and construct belonging and reintegration using skilled return migrants in Ghana as a case.

The study employed different qualitative approaches in gathering data from return migrants and non-migrants. Correctly, the study used in-depth semi-structured episodic interviews, focus group discussions and egocentric network maps. The in-depth semi-structured episodic interviews and egocentric network maps were used in eliciting responses from 30 skilled return migrants. In addition, six focus group discussions were conducted with non-migrants on their perceptions towards return migrants.

Return migration is a journey with complex routes including different actors and stakeholders. To capture the entirety of returnees’ migration experiences, the study examined pre-migration, while abroad and after return experiences of returnees. These stages of the migration cycle are captured as episodic stories of the returnees in this book. The interlocking roles of these episodes of the returnees’ experiences offer a broader angle into interrogating migration and return migration decisions of the people going through this process.

The study shows education as the primary drive for migration for the return migrants in this study. Although important, return intentions only become actual return after the occurrence of a return trigger. Return migrants motivations for return are made up of economic and socio-cultural reasons. Behind these reasons is the conviction by these returnees to give
back to the home society via the remittance of various forms of capital including human, economic, and social capitals.

Post return challenges for the respondents are return shocks that centre on cultural practices and social expectations. The fear of unknown, failure and uncertainty, starting all over again are part of the after-return challenges. Nevertheless, return migrants use strategies like motivational statements, compromising their standards, speaking local languages, keeping transnational and return migrant networks and holidays to deal with return challenges.

Returnees conceptualisations belonging fall under individual belonging (place belongingness) and social/collective belonging (politics of belonging). Within these categories, returnees define belonging as being accepted, feeling at home, not to be treated differently, and having responsibilities and ownership. Individual belonging makes up feelings of attachments to Ghana as a place through memories of cultural and family heritage. Social/collective belonging manifested through how people in the home society include or exclude returnees upon traits such as type of English and fluency in the home languages, the degree of ‘Ghanaian-ness,’ and the tendency for returnees to compare situations in the home country with experiences abroad.

This book further discusses skilled returnees conceptualisation of reintegration in three ways; flowing with the home country system or vibrating at the same frequency as the home society, adapting to the home society’s standards while keeping one’s standards, and accepting differences. In the end, the conceptions of reintegration suggest a two-way process of adaptation in which both returnees and the home society play a critical role in achieving reintegration. The significant contribution of this study is the conceptual development of the Reintegration and Belonging (RnB) framework which models a two-fold relationship between sense of belonging and reintegration. First, belonging (individual/place belongingness) as a reintegration dimension and Second, belonging (social/collective belonging) as an embedded feeling/attachment in the dimensions of reintegration except the individual/place belonging dimension.
Acknowledgements

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<td>AVR</td>
<td>Assisted Voluntary Return</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<td>CIM</td>
<td>Centre for International Migration</td>
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<td>CMS</td>
<td>Centre for Migration Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoC</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce SAP</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAAD</td>
<td>Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSB</td>
<td>Diaspora Support Bureau</td>
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<td>DSU</td>
<td>Diaspora Support Unit</td>
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<td>ERP</td>
<td>Economic Recovery Programme</td>
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<td>GBA</td>
<td>Ghana Bar Association</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GIPC</td>
<td>Ghana Investment Promotion Centre</td>
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<td>GIZ</td>
<td>Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</td>
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<td>GLSS</td>
<td>Ghana Living Standard Survey</td>
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<td>GMA</td>
<td>Ghana Medical Association</td>
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<td>GPRS I</td>
<td>Ghana Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy I</td>
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<td>GPRS II</td>
<td>Ghana Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II</td>
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<td>GRA</td>
<td>Ghana Revenue Authority</td>
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<td>GSFP</td>
<td>Ghana School Feeding Programme</td>
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<td>GSS</td>
<td>Ghana Statistical Service</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<td>IDA</td>
<td>International Development Association</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organisation for Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISSER</td>
<td>Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEAP</td>
<td>Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIC</td>
<td>Low-Income Country</td>
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<td>LMIC</td>
<td>Lower Middle-Income Country</td>
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<td>MIC</td>
<td>Middle Income Country</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>MIDA</td>
<td>Migration for Development in Africa</td>
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<td>MFARI</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration</td>
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<td>NCE</td>
<td>Neo-Classical Economics</td>
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<td>NELM</td>
<td>New Economics of Labour Migration</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
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<td>NHIS</td>
<td>National Health Insurance Scheme</td>
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<td>NCM</td>
<td>National Commission on Migration</td>
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<td>NMPG</td>
<td>National Migration Policy Ghana</td>
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<td>NSPS</td>
<td>National Social Protection Strategy</td>
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<td>ODA</td>
<td>Official Development Assistance</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>PPP</td>
<td>Private Public Partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td>RQNP</td>
<td>Return of Qualified Nationals Programme</td>
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<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSA</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan African</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRQN</td>
<td>Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN DESA</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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Chapter 1. The Context of the Research

1.1. Introduction

‘One of the happiest moments in my life; In the night when I woke up, I asked myself am I in Europe or am in Ghana? And when I thought I was in Ghana, I said Hurray. Very relieving, very very happy. Now if you tell me to go and live in Europe, I will say you are my worst and deadliest enemy. I don’t want it; I want to be home. I feel free; I feel recognised, I feel respected, I feel seen, I feel felt, I feel belonged’ – Kabelah (8:57)

Kabelah is a skilled returnee who moved back home to Ghana after living in Europe for close to 20 years. In the quotation above, he was expressing his initial feelings about his return to Ghana. His euphoria is evident from his claim of having returned ‘home’ and his sense of belonging to his country of origin. For Kabelah, returning home was a permanent decision. Feelings of acceptance, recognition, appreciation, respect, and belonging were among how Kabelah initially described his return experience. Two years after his return, however, Kabelah was interviewed by a government institution in Ghana and asked about any challenges he faced during reintegration. His answer was as follows:

‘Not really, apart from the emotional ones I may say.’

Carefully examining the question highlights the position of the person interviewing Kabelah. Asking about the challenges that he faced during reintegration suggested that reintegration had already taken place and even completed. This speaks to a fundamental gap between how reintegration is often perceived and its complex reality. Studying the two quotations from Kabelah reveals that his claim to be home was not a guarantee that no chal-
lenges would arise. Furthermore, the emotional challenges to which he referred remain an issue that is often downgraded in return migration discourses, including research.

When Russel King wrote that ‘return migration is the great unwritten chapter in the history of migration’ (7), he exposed the neglect and fuzziness surrounding the concept of return. King’s (2000) statement was after the first European conference on international return migration, which was held in Rome in 1981 (Kubat, 1981). Since that event, the phenomenon has received further attention.

Over recent decades, the migration literature, including refugee studies, has predominantly focused on return migration as a developmental policy tool due to the social, financial, and cultural capital transfers associated with different categories of returnees (Ammassari, 2004; Ammassari, 2009; Khadria, 2004). Many scholars (J. W. Berry, 1990; Castles, Korac, Vasta, & Vertovec, 2002; Esser, 2006) have put significant effort into understanding immigrants’ integration in host countries. Meanwhile the same cannot be said about reintegration in home countries.

This gap may be due to the assumption that reintegration is not of particular interest because returnees go back to their home country, similar to what Kabelah mentioned in the first quotation above. Such an assumption negates returnees’ reintegration challenges, especially inherent and emotional challenges. Ignoring these struggles leaves a number of unresolved challenges and presents problems because returnees, both skilled and unskilled, change while in the host society, and that transformation may affect their cultural values, preferences, and lifestyles. One must, therefore, acknowledge return as representing different emotions and outcomes (King & Christou, 2011). It can be a journey of hope, but it can also involve despair, an unsettling path, or the realisation that one has become a stranger in his or her homeland. Upon the migrant’s return, ‘the imagined or real ‘home’ left behind may not be the same’ (De Bree et al., 2010, 490). Situations like these often lead to migrants experiencing a sense of isolation, alienation, and displacement (Antonsich, 2010; Dorling et al., 2008; Hooks, 2009), which can result from an inadequate feeling of belonging. These experiences have the potential to influence returnees by emotionally disconnecting them from the home society that they had imagined. Returning to the above quotation, despite the emotional challenges, Kabelah saw himself as permanently returned but as yet to reinteg-

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grate. The question of how returnees overcome the challenges related to emotional disconnection or lack of sense of belonging that confront them during reintegration thus emerges. The answer lies in how return migration is premised and how reintegration and sense of belonging are postulated.

1.2. Specific Research Intentions

In October 2012, I returned to Ghana from Germany, where I had been studying. I left Ghana in October 2010, and two years later, I returned to Ghana for a three-month internship. Upon returning I found that my view of my home country had changed drastically. This transformation did not occur because different buildings and streets were erected, neither was the weather less hot nor the electricity supply was suddenly as dependable as that in Germany. Sooner, I realised that the change was about me and that my society had evolved in my absence. The result of my experience after that visit back home for the first time informed the entire research in this book.

During the process of reintegration, returnees face circumstances and develop practices that have the potential to influence how they imagine their home countries, and these factors further impact their reintegration and sense of belonging. Return migration and reintegration are then premised as a new phase in which belonging to a ‘place,’ and ‘community’ must be renegotiated (De Bree et al., 2010).

Many studies have identified structural constraints, such as difficulties in relation to finding jobs, bureaucratic processes for registering businesses, and accommodation, as among the challenges that confront returnees (Boger, 2010; Dorling et al., 2008; Hooks, 2009; Martin, 2005; Setrana & Tonah, 2014). Others have explored identity crises, sense of belonging among returnees, and transnational practices that create a sense of belonging among returnees as numbering among return obstacles (Bhimji, 2008; Brouwer, 2006; Cerase, 1974; Christou, 2006; De Bree et al., 2010; Long and Oxfeld, 2004; Padersen, 2003; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2013; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 201; Ramji, 2006; Stefansson, 2004). In addition to considering the above findings and the specific context of Ghana, studies have also looked at challenges resulting from changing gender roles among returnees (Manuh, 1998; Setrana & Tonah, 2014; Twum-Baah, 2005; Wong, 2013).

The gap in these works, however, concerns the lack of a coherent conceptualisation to explain returnees’ sense of belonging during reintegra-
tion. Hence, there is a lack of understanding and conceptual models spanning the different home society dimensions for not only exploring reintegration but also explaining that phenomenon and what it means to have a sense of belonging. In other words, the problem of constructing, defining, relating, and performing (see on page 19 for more on performativity), belonging within the different dimensions of social reintegration has still not been explored in the existing literature. This constitutes the gap that this study intends to bridge. Furthermore, some returnees may be able to attain reintegration and realise a sense of belonging after their return, but there are others who may never achieve those aims, regardless of the period in question. The related problem is that if home countries cannot understand returnees and their conceptions about the return societies, the result may be re-migration, and subsequently, permanent brain drain.

When I began this research, I did not have strong conjectures in mind apart from the constant reminders of how I felt during my visit to Ghana in October 2012. Those memories brought me closer to a practical realisation of the problems associated with return and the subsequent gaps in the literature.

As part of my effort to bridge the existing gap in the literature, I examined the reintegration of skilled Ghanaian returnees (also known as ‘been-tos’ or ‘borgas’). In doing so, I was specifically interested in the mechanisms through which returnees construct a sense of belonging as part of their social, structural, cultural, and identity-related reintegration in Ghanaian society. The primary guiding question for this study was; what are the mechanisms via which skilled Ghanaian returnees construct a sense of belonging as they readjust across social, structural, cultural, and identification dimensions of reintegration?

This study examined skilled returnees based on the presupposition that those individuals may be more likely than their less-skilled counterparts to integrate into the host country in terms of education, job market, and other factors. Overall, the outcomes shed light on the relationship between reintegration and sense of belonging via a somewhat structured representation of the lived experiences of return migrants. Although the research uses Ghana as a case, the result of this study is intended to be useful for different types of return migration into different cultural and social contexts.

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4 The name ‘borga’ or ‘been-to,’ in Ghana, is ascribed to a person who travels outside the country and returns either for permanent or short stay.

5 The term mechanism is used in this study to refer to definitions, conceptions, strategies, approaches, and daily practices.
The study is especially relevant for other home countries that share similar characteristics as Ghana.

1.3. Focus and Underlying Rationale

Since returning to democracy in 1992 after a period of military rule, the West African country, Ghana, has featured a stable democracy that has won the admiration of the international community. In addition to this stable political environment, Ghana has a sound, competitive, and robust economy and was categorised as a lower middle-income country in late 2010. With the discovery of crude oil in 2010 and the expansion of other sectors, including agriculture, mining, trade, and manufacturing, Ghana has been an attractive investment and labour destination for multinational firms and skilled professionals alike. Despite the promising features of Ghana which are assumed to naturally attract skilled returnees (IOM 2008, 163), past and present Ghanaian governments have tried unsuccessfully via many programs to lure skilled Ghanaian international migrants.

The choice of Ghana for this study is justified by the country’s unique situation, with over 3 million global diaspora members outside Africa as of 2012 (IMO, 2012). Apart from West African countries, the US, the UK, and other European countries (e.g., Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy) serve as attractive countries of destination for Ghanaian emigrants (IOM, 2009). In West Africa, Ghana also has the highest emigration rate for highly skilled workers. A 2006 European Union report estimated that out of all Ghanaian international migrants living in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, approximately 61.5% were skilled individuals (EU, 2006). This figure suggests that the overall skill level of Ghanaians living abroad is high.

Nevertheless, many Ghanaians also acquire skills and expertise at foreign universities and institutions (UNESCO, 2008, cited by IOM, 2009). Despite leaving for far-flung destinations, some skilled Ghanaian migrants still return to Ghana. Therefore, this study examines elements of return migration with the potential to inform individual returnees’ decisions and broader governmental and non-governmental return migration initiatives related to national development.

The study used qualitative approaches for both data collection and analysis. Specifically, in-depth semi-structured episodic interviews, focus group discussions, and egocentric network maps were used to collect the
Chapter 1. The Context of the Research

qualitative data. Subsequently, the data were analysed using grounded theory approach.

1.4. The relevance of the Study

The study has academic, societal, and policy-related relevance. This book adopts a social developmental and multidisciplinary approach, drawing on sociological, anthropological, and social psychology disciplines. Over the past decades, studies on return migration have featured specific focuses, such as return preparedness, reasons for return, developmental effects of return, and reintegration strategies. However, part of the goal of this study was to develop a conceptual and analytical framework linking together the phases of the migration cycle to explain and assess migrants’ sense of belonging during the reintegration process. This book, therefore, helps to bridge the existing gap in the academic literature regarding return migration and sense of belonging; it is rooted in empirical research and seeks to understand the real-world phenomena of return, reintegration, and sense of belonging.

The direct policy relevance of this study deserves attention, as does the question of how that process influences development. The findings of the study offer valuable input for policy strategies and programmes aimed at attracting returnees, assisting with reintegration, and achieving a sustainable return. Even though examining social change and development was not part of the primary goals, I nonetheless studied returnees’ potentials, following successful reintegration and the attainment of a sense of belonging. In other words, I considered how returnees could share new ideas within the home country’s social environment. I, therefore, argue that returnees must meet certain conditions if they are to achieve their full potential regarding the sharing of new ideas, positive contributions and investing in the development of the home country; among these conditions is the achievement of a sense of belonging – which function as a component of reintegration. This goal should direct policies regarding both development and social change in countries such as Ghana. Additionally, the study generates awareness of the perceptions held by non-migrants and returnees that could potentially lead to conflict and risks regarding security and the social order in the home country. Most importantly, the outcomes of the study provide returnees with practical information. It offers both current and potential returnees, practical guidance regarding what to expect upon return and some mitigating strategies. Finally, host/destination countries
benefit from the knowledge this study contributes to understanding the interconnectedness between returnees and the host country. The book also informs destination countries on policy and programs aimed at assisting migrants’ return to countries of origin.

1.5. Structure of this Book

This book has 12 chapters. This first chapter has provided a short introduction to the general framework of the study, outlined its aims, relevance, and scope. Chapter 2 offers an in-depth review of the existing theoretical and empirical literature on return migration, reintegration, and sense of belonging as a basis for the study. Following the empirical and theoretical review, a conceptual framework is constructed, and questions are posed to help establish the conceptual relationship between reintegration and sense of belonging. Chapter 3 contains a historical overview of Ghana until the present and demonstrates how Ghana’s political and migratory histories are intertwined. It also captures the role of government policies and different political regimes and struggles in contributing to migration trends in Ghana. Chapter 4 underscores the different return migration waves and characteristics existing in different historical contexts in Ghana. It reveals the various programmes and interventions introduced by different Ghanaian governments to promote return migration in Ghana. Apart from the historical accounts, this chapter also highlights current forms of mobilisation of returnees in Ghana. In terms of its contribution to the overall research, the chapter examines the political and structural environment in Ghana as a home country for returnees, emphasising the related opportunities and legal supports. Chapter 5 presents the research methodology and methods used to collect, analyse, and present the findings of this study. It also explains the approach employed in the qualitative interviews and focus group discussions, the analytical strategy, and the ethical issues that need to be considered.

In Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, the research results are analysed and discussed. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 centre on three pivotal returnee experiences: pre-migration, migration, and return. More specifically, Chapter 6 examines returnees’ pre-migration experiences and how these experiences influence their migration motives and their migration decisions and expectations. Chapter 7 discusses returnees’ migration experiences in the host country. It analyses how sense of belonging is experienced in the host country and how that factor influences the decision to return and return
expectations. The chapter also outlines the general relationship between return intentions and actual return via a conceptual model. Chapter 8 presents findings on perceptions of non-migrants on returnees. It examines the sociocultural and developmental implications of these perceptions to the overall reintegration process and how returnees’ sense of belonging evolves in the post-return society. Chapter 9 deals with life after return. The chapter highlights return experiences concerning changes, challenges, and strategies. Chapter 10 elicits returnees’ definitions and conceptions of reintegration and sense of belonging. The chapter analyses and discusses the experiences of returnees in terms of reintegration, belonging, and how their understandings of these concepts overlap with their decisions and motivations.

Chapters 11 constitutes the theory-building section of this book. It examines the relationship between return, reintegration, and belonging in terms of various societal dimensions. The chapter looks at the underlining themes of reintegration and belonging drawn from the results and discussions in the result chapters and places them within the context of existing studies. In this chapter, I propose a conceptual model for mechanisms of belonging and reintegration among returnees. Chapter 12 encompasses the concluding remarks of this book. It contains a summary of the key findings of the study, a reflection on those results, and recommendations for further research and policy.
Chapter 2: Theoretical and Conceptual Considerations

2.1. Introduction

Human Migration is the movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border or within a state (IOM, 2011; p. 62). The movement of persons who leave their country of origin, or a country of habitual residence, to establish themselves either permanently or temporarily is known as international migration (IOM 2011, pp.). In the history of international migration, the trend that stronger economies attract the highest number of immigrants who mostly come from developing countries developed has (Massey et al., 1993). International immigrants comprise both skilled and unskilled migrants. In his analysis of major existing major migration theories, Cassarino (2004) mentioned wage, labour and capital demand differentials between home and host countries as part of the reasons for international migration (Cassarino, 2004). Other empirical works on migration in Ghana (Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003, Arthur 1991, Bump, 2006, Massey et al., 1993) have suggested seeking better opportunities in economic or education or both as reasons for migration.

After a period of stay in host countries, many international migrants return to their home countries. The phenomenon of return migration is often associated with Ravenstein’s (1885) laws of migration, which suggest that every migration stream generates a counter-stream. Return migration was for some time neglected. Nevertheless, discussions on return migration has seen a significant increase since 2000. This is seen from the number of studies that are devoted to understanding and examining the multidimensional perspectives of return migration. For instance, perspectives on ‘diasporic homelands’ (Markowtiz and Stefansson, 2004), second generation returns (Tsuda, 2009), imagined and provisional return (Long and Oxfeld, 2004) and contributions to return migration theories (Ammassari, 2009; Cassarino, 2004) shows the increasing interest in grasping the complex nature of return migration. Stimulating scientific debates on return migration among scholars, according to Cassarino (2004) only began in 1980 but since then return migration has often taken centre stage in different discourses within migration scholarships.

Notwithstanding the increased research attention on return migration, consensus on the definition, categories and rationale underlying return mi-
gration remain fuzzy and blurry. Furthermore, connected to return migration is the issue of reintegration, which also lacks proper definition, conceptualisation, and categorisation. Together, return migration and reintegration remain underexplored and thinly conceptualised. Apart from the discrepancies surrounding the foundations of return migration and the lack of its relationship with reintegration, the developmental impact of return migration remains contested. However, return migrants are as functional agents in this fuzzy and complicated process of returning and re integrating. Within this understanding is the role of sense of belonging in this overall blurry process for returnees.

This chapter looks at the central concepts that form the foundation of the study. The chapter clarifies return migration, reintegration, and sense of belonging by drawing on literature across multiple fields and research disciplines. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the underlining relationships between return migration, reintegration and belonging. The post-return migration model highlights the process of return and the different levels and dimensions of reintegration while revealing the connection of these dimensions and processes to the sense of belonging of returnees. The dimensions of reintegration suggest a new method and theoretical position for examining different domains of reintegration. The literature on belonging is essential in the discussion on how returnees define, conceptualise, and demonstrate belonging. It provides a cornerstone for understanding the impact and the role of sense of belonging in post-return decisions of returnees. In efforts to configure the post-return migration model, some leading questions such as “how much integration is in reintegration?”; “What is the role of sense of belonging in post-return migration?”; and “How does the relationship between a sense of belonging and reintegration affect the nature of return migration in terms of permanent or non-permanent returned migration?” are asked. Even though I do not intend to measure successful or unsuccessful return migration and the developmental impact of return on the home country, the overall connection between the post-return migration model and development in the home country remains part of my interest.

The chapter is divided into four sessions. The first session of the chapter is devoted to exploring return migration and its different connotations and attributes — the second session that will provide an overview of reintegration and its conceptualisations. The third session looks at the literature on belonging as I discuss the various positions around belonging. Next, the chapter will move to discuss a conceptual model of post-return migration. In all these discussions, I will be defining and pointing out the definitional
2.2. Return Migration in Migration Discourse

According to Bovenkerk (1974), depending on who is using it, return migration is defined and described differently in different terminologies by migration experts and politicians. Debates surrounding return migration and its definition stem from issues of temporarity versus permanency, length of stay abroad and length of stay after return, the category of people returning and the circumstances surrounding the return - voluntary versus involuntary.

Gmelch’s (1980) definition of return migration as ‘the movement of emigrants back to their homeland to resettle’ suggests return migration as a permanent endeavour. It presents the idea of return as an end [to ‘resettle’] to the migration circle. Recent studies, however, suggest otherwise; that return migration can only be another step in the migration cycle which leads to fluid mobility (Riiskjaer & Nielsson, 2008; Stefannson, 2004). Amid the confusion on permanent versus temporary return, Thomas-Hope (1999) upholds that migrants keep different forms of connections and linkages with their home countries while abroad and this could develop into an eventual return for permanent settlement while at the same time keeping ties with the host country. Analytically, there is a challenge in distinguishing between those migrants returning for vacations, social event, tourism – appropriately called seasonal returnees - from those returning permanently. Nevertheless, return migration, in the context of this book, excludes migrants returning for vacation or more extended home visits with no intentions to resettle in the home country.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) offers a comprehensive definition for international return migration as the act of persons returning to their country of citizenship after living in another country and intending to stay in their home country for at least one year (IOM, 2004). This definition offers time duration for expected return – at least one year. In another definition of the IOM, return migration is ‘the movement of a person returning to his/her country of origin or habitual residence usually after spending at least one year in another country’ (IOM, 2004). Another definition that sets the period for return migrants is the one by the United Nations Statistics Division for collecting data on international migration (UNSD, 1998). The United Nation agency defines return mi-
grants as persons returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants (whether short-term or long-term) in another country and who are intending to stay in their own country for at least a year (cf. Di Saint Pierre, Francesca; Martinovic, Borja; De Vroome, Thomas, 2015). Besides, by short term or long term, reference is to an individual who has been abroad for at least 12 months and returned home with intentions to stay home for at least one year.

These definitions outline the boundedness of return concerning time spent abroad and the intended time to stay in the home country after return. The definitions exclude people who travel from their home countries to another country for stays that are less than a year and people who return to their home country for less than a year. However, there are arguments that a period of 3 months can be considered enough to constitute a migration episode especially in the case of seasonal migration (Bilsborrow, Oberai, & Standing, 1984; Carletto & de Brauw, 2008). This is because three months is enough time for exposure to another culture and context to have an impact on a person’s values and behaviour, and taste. Here, return migration in its long-term sense excludes seasonal migrants who are considered short-term migrants. The problem with such definitions is the presupposition that return migration marks the first time return of migrants to their home country after being away for a considerable period. This may not be the case since most migrants maintain regular contacts with the home country and may visit home several times before deciding to return; a typical case for many Ghanaian migrants.

On the contrary, King (2000) offers a sociological definition of return migration; as ‘the process whereby people return to their country or place of origin after a significant period in another country or region’ (pp.). As a reaction to King’s (2000) definition, Ammassari (2009) concludes that King does not specify what constitutes ‘significant period’ and thereby suggesting the simplicity of the definition. The problem with a simple definition of return migration, according to Dumont & Spielvogel (2008), is that it may obscure the more complex aspects of the phenomenon such as secondary or repeat migration and temporary or permanent return.

Moving from the discussions on the length of stay abroad, and after return, the category of people who return is equally relevant for this study. Return migrants leave the host country as foreigners or citizens (in the case of dual citizens) and return to their home countries. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) (1998): classifies international migrant citizens as:
Returning from study or training abroad
- Returning from employment abroad
- Returning after working abroad as international civil servants
- Humanitarian migration
- Repatriating refugees
- Repatriating asylum-seekers
- Citizens deported from abroad
- Other returning citizens

The other returning citizens here are ‘all international migrant citizens returning to their own country for a lengthy stay (of at least 12 months) who cannot be classified into previous categories. Citizens who settled abroad and return to establish their place of usual residence in their own country should be included in this category’ (UN DESA, 1998; p. 54). Such definition by the UN may be attributed to an attempt towards international migration regime (Sachs, 2016) which may conflict with other sovereign migration regimes of both host and home countries. For example, the UN’s definition fits for countries that offer dual citizenships like Ghana. In that case, when Ghanaians migrate and take on citizenships of host countries; upon their return to Ghana, they continue to be Ghanaian citizens. This, however, is only possible if in getting the citizenship of the host country they did not give up their Ghanaian citizenship. In a case where the Ghanaian citizenship is given up, the definition becomes problematic. Thus, such returnees may be considered foreigners by the UN definition but still be classified as return migrants by the definitions of Gmelch (1980) and King (2000), especially if these migrants have been abroad for a ‘significant period’ and are returning to their homeland to ‘resettle.’ Attention should further be drawn to the fact that for some Sub-Saharan African countries especially in the case of Ghana, return migration may as well include ‘return to motherland’ which involve people with African ancestries in the United States of America and central America who return to Africa as a symbol of returning ‘home’ after the slave trade.

Furthermore, return migration can be voluntary, assisted voluntary or involuntary (IOM, 2001). Voluntary return is as an informed decision freely taken by an individual to return, but assisted voluntary return involves financial and organisational help for the individual to return. Sometimes, assisted voluntary return may include reintegration assistance. The involuntary or forced return is a return that an individual does not undertake willingly (IOM, 2001). The contradiction and complexity in definitions of return suggest that return migration, as a phenomenon is not a straightfor-
ward definition concept especially when defined across different disciplines and fields of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

Albeit the above discussions, King’s (2000) definition of return migration which allows the ‘significant period’ to be defined to suits scholarly works such as this research, by allowing for. Therefore, King’s (2000) definition of return migration is adapted for this study but the insightful conceptions provided in other definitions are not discarded.

For this study, return migration is defined as a process whereby migrants, after spending at least two years (significant period) in the host country go back to their home country either voluntarily or assisted voluntarily in settling and have been in the home country for at least six months.

The return migrants\(^6\) in the context of this study are skilled (returning from study or training abroad and or returning from employment abroad) and may have contacts with the host country including regular short-term visits like vacations, social events, or tourism. A significant period in my definition of return migration is two years. Thus, concerning skilled returnees, the consideration of a minimum of 2 years as a significant period is based on the assumption that a minimum of two years is often needed for completing higher education. Furthermore, attainment of higher education mostly forms the basis for the use of the adverb ‘skilled’ for this category of returnees. This definition of return migration, however, excludes migrants who travel to their home country for short-term visits such as vacations, social events or for tourism.

While explaining the position of returnees in this study, it is equally relevant to highlight people who are compared with returnees in many return migration studies – non-migrants. In this study, non-migrants are used (to refer to those who stay in the home country and do not migrate or did not yet migrate similar to other works such as Ammassari, 2004; Bakuri, 2014; Binaisa, 2013; Black, King, & Tiemoko, 2003; De & Pierre, 2008; Haan, 2006; Hunt, 2004; Khalid, 2011). Non-migrants are also referred to as ‘stay-ers’ (Agunias & Analyst, 2006; De Bree, Davids, & De Haas, 2010; Hunt, 2004; Kivisto, 2001; Ardovino, 2008), or ‘stayers – behind’ (Harpviken, 2014), meaning those who stayed behind while others migrate. Iara (2006) further differentiates migrants/returnees from non-migrants by also using the terms ‘movers’ and ‘stayers’. The use of returnees and non-migrants carries no superiority or negative connotations to persons in such categories but merely for the sake of conceptual references.

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\(^6\) Return migrants are also referred to as returnees in this study.
2.3. Conceptual Underpinnings and Scope of the Research

2.3.1. Belonging

The concept of belonging has become applicable to many spheres of social interactions. However, belonging is only recently gaining grounds in social sciences. As an alternative concept to identity, belonging has become prominent in the analysis of intergroup and personal attachments within different strata of society. Indeed, Identity is still an everyday concept to different social actors and commentators (Anthias 2013). Even so, identity continues to occupy a relevant role in any rational use of belonging. Despite its dominance in the capture of individual and intergroup relations and connectedness, identity is limited in capturing the complexities that I intend to communicate in this study. Like the views of other scholars, this study sees identity as an overburdened concept engaging a lot but delivering little or meaning everything or nothing (Anthias, 2013; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011). Besides, the following arguments are in support of the choice of belonging over identity as the best-fit concept for this study concerning the narrowness of identity. Firstly, identity, in its everyday use, is often constructed as a static phenomenon which assumes rigid categories and homogenous placement of people in a fixed position (Anthias, 2013; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011). Such constructions and assumptions of identity erect rigid social boundaries that impede mobility within these boundaries. Secondly, identity as a concept does not bring to bear how people access group memberships, and how social actors make or unmake, maintain, or resist identity categories (Anthias, 2013; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Thirdly, even though ‘identity narratives can shift and change, be contested and multiple’ (Yuval-Davis, 2006, pp. 202), they fail to acknowledge the fluidity of social boundaries and their corresponding dynamism. Finally, identity does not account for new and emerging forms of identities and the existing tensions within and at the crossroads of categories (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Further, belonging embraces an intersectional approach to recognising social interactions that are situated within inter/intra-relations, institutions, symbolic and material dimensions of social setups (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2006). In this study, the host and home societies and their institutions, the social relations of returnees and the symbolic and material status of returnees, form part of the intersectional arenas of belonging. Also, belonging accommodates collective identity and at the same time acknowledges the heterogeneity within a collective. Here, the individ-
ual returnee, other returnees and non-migrants as collectives are of analytical importance. Furthermore, belonging recognises dynamics and flexibilities of boundaries and pays attention to hierarchies or levels of attachments including the intersection of old and new forms of identities (Middleton, 2012; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011; Pfaff-Czarnecka & Toffin, 2011). Belonging, in this study, is not how it is constructed in state programs or actions but on the level of individual accounts on interrelation dynamics. Choosing belonging as an analytical concept is ideally crucial for the phenomenon understudy – skilled returnees and their reintegration.

Ontologically, in Martin Heidegger’s (1962) terms, belonging ‘is always a matter of being-in, being-of, or being-with’ (Middleton, 2012; pp.71). Fiske (2004) describes belonging as one of the five core social motive themes in social psychology and sees belonging as a motivation for ‘close relationships, helping, and groups’ (pp. 17). In other instances, belonging is defined as ‘feeling at home’ (Yuval-Davis 2006, pp. 197); as an ‘individual’s embeddedness in a collective’ (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 3); and as the ‘experience of personal involvement and feeling an integral part of a system’ (Hagerty et al. 1992, 173). Some definitions treat belonging as individuals’ feeling and attachments to places, people, or things (Cuba & Hummon 1993, pp. 126; Morley 2001, pp. 441; Savage et al. 2004, pp. 207; Pollini 2005; Hernandez et al. 2007, pp. 310). Others refer to belonging as the claim for membership or inclusion into a group or as territorial ownership/claim to a geographical location (Fortier 1997, pp. 42; Crowley, 1999, pp. 25; Manning, 2004). The different definitions and meanings avow how belonging – like other social science terms – is a multidimensional concept (Yuval-Davis, Anthias et al. 2005, 526). The description and definitions of belonging place the concept as “an emotional, felt, and affective phenomenon —at once intimate, social, and pregnant with political potential” (Middleton, 2012; pp. 70). On such similar lines, belonging resonates feelings and senses – hence in this study, the concept is mentioned as a feeling of belonging or a sense of belonging. Even so, belonging, as a concept, is less theorised and not clearly defined in social sciences (Antonsich 2010). Notwithstanding this fuzziness and multidimensionality, there are analytical works on belonging (Fenster 2005, Yuval-Davis 2006, Antonsich 2010, Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011) that are relevant to this study.

For data collection and analysis, this book conceptualises sense of belonging from two different but closely related levels – the individual level and the social/collective level. Antonsich’s (2010) analytical description of

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7 See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heideggerian_terminology.
belonging underpins this conceptualisation. Thus, according to Marco Antonsich\(^8\) (2010), belonging refers to place-belongingness and politics of belonging. Place-belongingness is ‘a personal, intimate, feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place and politics of belonging is seen as ‘a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion’ (2). This study, therefore, conceptualises Antonsich’s (2010) place-belongingness and politics of belonging as occurring within individual and social/collective belonging levels, respectively.

At the individual level, belonging is construed as a notion of emotional connotation or as feeling at home in a place (Antonsich 2010, 6). Home here signifies a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment (Hooks, 2009, 213) as used in the same way by Yuval-Davis (2006, 197), and Antonsich (2010, 6), but also about the country of origin in the case of migrants. The description of the individual sense of belonging relates to how notions of place attachment (Hernandez et al. 2007, 310, Carling & Pettersen 2014, 13), rootedness (Savage et al. 2004, 207) and sense of place (Savage et al. 2004, 29) have been discussed.

To elaborate on his description of belonging, Antonsich (2010) offers five factors that spawn feelings of place-belonging among people. These are autobiographic, relational, cultural, economic, and legal factors. These factors have the potential to generate embedded feelings of emotional undertones and attachments that make a person feel belonged. The autobiographic factors refer to the ‘history, personal experiences, relations, and memories which attach a particular person to a given place’ (Antonsich 2010, 8, citing Dixon and Durrheim 2004, 459). These historical/individual experiences include (childhood) memories of the place a person grew up and the people connected to this place like family and friends. The continued existence of this place added to the presence of family and friends leads to a ‘place belongingness feelings’ (8). Relational factors relate to the personal and social ties or networks that ‘enrich the life of an individual in a given place’ (Antonsich 2010, 8). These ties may be strong or weak on the level of emotional density.

The social and personal ties or relations with family members and friends are often ‘emotionally dense’ ones, which create a sense of connectedness and attachment leading to a sense of belonging. Language, food, and

\(^8\) The distinction by Antonsich is closely related to other works that have describe belonging as a personal intimate private sentiment of place attachment and as an official, public oriented formal structure of membership (Fenster 2005, Jones and Krzysanowski 2007).
eating style, music, dance and other material aspects of culture, and traditions and habits like religion make up the cultural factors from which elements of intimacy and sense of feeling at home can be drawn. Antonsich (2010) refers to economic factors as having the potential to create stable material conditions for a safe environment for one’s self and family. In that sense, economic factors are more than material gains (10). Thus, it also has an embedded sense of feeling of having a stake in a place, which gives a sense of place belongingness.

The legal factors cover issues like citizenship, residence permit and other legal requirements necessary for a person to claim access to a place. The focus here is not on the offer of legal claims, although necessary, but instead on the inherent embedded sense of security plus the resources that these legal factors provide for managing uncertainties. Therefore, when the legal status of a person is not questioned, it offers the individual a sense of place belonging. Apart from the above factors, other issues like the length of stay at a place also generate a sense of place belonging. The place in the conceptualisation of belonging may not necessarily be where a person grew up. The absence of place of belongingness or individual sense of belonging is not exclusion – as with politics of belonging or social belonging – (Trudeau 2006, 423 cited by Antonsich 2010), but rather ‘a sense of loneliness, isolation, alienation, and displacement (Antonsich 2010, 12, citing Dorling et al. 2008, 23; Hooks 2009, 24)

At the social or collective level of Antonsich’s (2010) analysis, politics of belonging is a resource in discourses and practices of social inclusion/exclusions. Here, the key factors for what generates social/collective belonging are membership (to a group), ownership (of a place) and identification. The denial of ownership of a place or membership in a group or the inability to identify with a group or a place leads to a sense of exclusion. Social belonging is, therefore, the ‘dirty works of boundary maintenance’ (Crowley, 1999, 30). These boundaries relate to both geographical space (spatial) and social networks or bonds (social). It also represents individuals’ membership in a political community and the mechanisms by which the community validates claims for inclusion (Yuval-Davis 2003, Anthias 2006). Politics of belonging involves two parties: the party (A) seeking belonging and (B) the party with the power to grant belonging (Antonsich 2010, 13). In the case of migrants, the individual migrant and the entering society represent parties A and B respectively. Of relevance is the recognition of the underlying power relations that connote a sense of belonging.

The above analysis of belonging suggests that the “sociology of emotions” should come to terms with the ‘sociology of power’ (Yuval-Davis et
Thus, belonging ‘is not only about membership, rights, and duties (as with citizenship), or merely about forms of identification with groups, or with other people. Rather, it is about the social places constructed by such identifications and memberships, and the ways in which social place has resonances with the stability of the self, one with feelings of being part of a larger whole and with the emotional and social bonds that are related to such places’ (Anthias 2006, pp. 21). It is therefore not enough to construe belonging in only one of these two main dimensions (individual or social/collective) because the result will be to ‘fall in the trap of either a socially de-contextualised individualism or an all-encompassing social(ising) discourse’ (Antonsich, 2010, p. 1). Belonging among returnees can, therefore, be perceived as the ‘desire for attachments, be it to people, places, or modes of beings’ (Probyn 1996, p. 19).

In this study belonging is operationalised as an individual’s emotional feelings towards a particular place or group of people that give a feeling of home (individual sense of belonging) and individual feelings about how integral they are in a group or a place based on the acceptance or rejection level of the group or the place (social belonging). I, therefore, measure and analyse belonging from an individual’s feeling of acceptance or rejection, loneliness, isolation, alienation, displacement and the feeling of inclusion or exclusion towards a group or a place. In efforts to conceive this, one must consider belonging from two main levels (individual and social/collective) and their generating factors. Thus, questions to elicit feelings on doing and or undoing of belonging are meaningful when they are constructed upon how individuals see themselves within these factors.

**Table 1: Dimensions and Factors of Belonging**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of belonging</th>
<th>Individual sense of belonging (Place belongingness)</th>
<th>Social/collective belonging (Politics of belonging)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generating factors</td>
<td>Biographic</td>
<td>Ownership (land, place)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Membership /inclusion (groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Identification (recognition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of belonging</td>
<td>Sense of loneliness, isolation, alienation, nonexistence, and emotional displacement</td>
<td>Sense of exclusion, rejection, marginalisation, worthlessness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Antonsich (2010)
The proposition that returnees keep multi-local ties or attachments leads to the conceptualisation of multiple belonging among returnees – defined as having attachments, ties, networks or connections to people, or modes of being which can be traced to both home and host societies. Upon this, it makes sense to understand returnee’s sense of belonging as making up a transnational sense of belonging (belongingness in host societies) and a current-local sense of belonging (home belongingness). The sense of belonging to home societies and towards host societies upon return is referred to in this study as the post-return sense of belonging. The literature review and the conceptualisation of sense of belonging further draw attention to the performativity aspects of belonging. ‘Performativity is the reiteration of norms that precede, constrain and exceed the performer. Performative acts include legal sentences, baptisms, inaugurations, or other forms of statements that do not only perform an action but also confer a binding power on the action performed. Viewing belonging as performative means that sense of belonging is constructed by the very expressions that are said to be their result’ (Butler, 1999, 43). That is, belonging is conceived as relevant to returnees’ wellbeing.

2.3.2. Reintegration: Context-Dependent Dynamic of Integration

Aside, a sense of belonging, the concept of reintegration is relevant for this study. The word integration means different things to different people. Lookwood (1964) differentiates between social and system integration. ‘System integration refers to the result of the anonymous functioning of institutions, organisations and mechanisms. Social integration is the inclusion of individuals in a system, the creation of relationships among individuals and their attitudes towards the society’ (Lockwood 1964, cf. Heckmann & Wolfgang 2006, pp. 2). Integration, according to the IOM (2004), refers to the ‘process, by which immigrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups’ (32). Reintegration is ‘re-inclusion or re-incorporation of a person into a group or a process, e.g. of a migrant into the society of his country of origin’ (IOM 2004, 54). Hitherto, unlike the integration of immigrants in host societies, reintegration of returnees, as an analytical concept is less conceptualised. In this study, however, I will try to conceptualise reintegration from existing literature by looking at works on immigrants’ integration.

I argue that the reintegration of returnees can be appreciated if it is treated similarly to immigrants’ integration. Therefore, to posit reintegration, it
is necessary to develop sets of theoretical assumptions on existing and relevant frameworks on integration. To conceptualise returnees’ homecoming as reintegration, I will pursue two immigrant integration frameworks,

- Berry’s (1974, 1980) acculturation orientations of immigrants in host countries. Here, I will argue for similar acculturation orientation for returnees – (re) integration
- Esser’s (2006) dimensions of social integration. As a second step to the conceptualising reintegration, I will argue that reintegration, like integration, follows different dimensions or domains in the home society.

Berry’s (1974, 1980) bi-dimensional quadric-modal acculturation model that outlines four acculturation strategies adopted by immigrants and migrant groups in dominant (host) cultures provides a good basis for conceptualizing reintegration among returnees. The four strategies he identifies are marginalisation, separation, assimilation, and integration. Marginalisation occurs when there is neither inclusion in the host society, nor ethnic group. Separation is when there is inclusion in the ethnic group, but exclusion from the host society. Assimilation is the inclusion in the host society, but exclusion from the ethnic group and integration occurs when there is inclusion in both ethnic group and the host society – multiple inclusion. Given these acculturation orientations, migrants in the host country are often likely to pursue integration; also because of their transnational orientations (J. W. Berry, 1990; Esser, 1999; Vertovec, 1999).

The adoption of integration by migrants is on the bases of migrants’ inclusion/exclusion into society in general but not limited to inclusion or exclusion into the society’s culture as Berry (1980) initially did with his acculturation strategies. What this means is that integration does not necessarily mean a bi-inclusion/exclusion affair (not only about the host and home country cultures). Instead, I argue from a transnational view that migrants may as well be engaged in multi-cultural setups in integration.

Also, the conceptual orientation of this study (considering existing framings in the literature) on reintegration premises that returnees maintain aspects of inclusion in host societies as they also seek re-entry in the home society – multiple inclusion. Similarly, one may equally assume reintegration as the most likely acculturation orientation for returnees in the home country. The assumption here is that return migrants maintain transnational links and engagements to the host country even when they are back in the home country. The transnational idea of returnees in this conceptualisation lies within the framework of transnationalism. The above conception is illustrated in figure 1 below.
Next, to what extent is reintegration integral for return migrants? To answer this, Esser’s (1999) work on social migrants’ integration is germane. He proposed four primary forms of social integration: acculturation, placement, interaction, and identification. Esser (2006) also referred to the above forms as structural, cultural, social, and emotional dimensions of social integration\(^9\) (8).

- **Acculturation** encompasses the process whereby an individual, acquires the knowledge, cultural standards and competencies needed for understanding a social system and acting successfully in the system. It also includes knowledge of typical situations and the mastering of social programs and acting in its norms and other social screenplays (16). The fundamental result of the acculturation will be the acquisition of cultural and human capital via a cognitive socialisation into the system.

- **Placement** refers to an individual gaining a position in society, for example, education or economic positions. It also involves acquiring the rights associated with particular positions, the opportunity to establish social relations and to win cultural, social, and economic capital. It is a form of involvement in the society and the inclusion of individual/actor

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9 Esser’s dimensions of social integration were originally grouped as placement, acculturation, integration, and identification. However, he also refers to these dimensions as structural, cultural, social, and emotional, respectively. To avoid confusion, this study will refer to Esser’s dimensions as structural, cultural, social, and emotional.
2.3. Conceptual Underpinnings and Scope of the Research

in already existing and integrated social systems with positions. Factors such as citizenships, voting and assuming professional or other positions fall under placement. Here the individual/actor needs specific education, social opportunities for connecting and keeping social relationships with members of the social system. As conditions for placement or social acceptance, prejudices and discriminations must be absent. According to Esser (1999), placement is an essential condition for acquiring available capital such as economic and human capital.

- Interaction in Esser’s (1999) social integration is the formation of relationships and networks by individuals/actors who share mutual orientations through knowledge and symbols for social transactions. The networks and relationships also include romantic relationships, friendships, family connections and the overall membership in a social group. Embedded in these social networks are social capitals and other resources and usable skills.

- How a person sees him or herself as part of a collective body constitutes identification. It is the mutual cognitive and emotional relationship between an individual/actor and the social system as a collective body. Here, factors such as loyalty to society, institutions, value bases, the feeling of solidarity and the approval of the social order are essential for identification.

On the assumption of social reintegration in the home society, Esser’s (1999) social integration (of immigrants in host societies) that is discussed above is thus conceptualised similarly to returnees.

- Within the placement dimension, social reintegration implies access to positions in the job and housing markets of the home society. It involves access to social and economic capital based on fair treatment, mutuality, shared respect, appreciation, and acceptance.

- Acculturation (Cultural) may seem uncomplicated because returnees do not return to an entirely new society, but one that they are familiar and are presumed to maintain some aspects of their home cultural standards and competencies while abroad, for example, language. However, in situations where the cultural values, norms and practices of returnees are influenced as a result of their migration experiences, differences may arise concerning their competencies within the home culture, especially when there is a significant difference between the home and host societies. Such situations can result in the loss of cultural standards and other competencies or knowledge of the home society. When this happens, one needs some level of (re) acculturation to (re) acquire the lost competencies and (re) interact successfully in the home society.
• Interaction, for returnees, refers to the re-formation of relationships and networks, by individuals who share a mutual orientation. The attached social capital to these social networks acts as an essential resource for returnees. Per se, the sense of respect, re-acceptance, the respective renegotiation and formation of old and new networks, and the appreciation of a person’s worth into these networks constitute the embedded sense of belonging.

• Identification requires the individual returnee’s empathy and solidarity with the social system in the home country. It has cognitive and emotional aspects. The emotional dimension is conceptualised to convey significant emotional attachments, based on purely subjective feelings of returnees.

Importantly, the use of Esser’s (1999) model for the conceptualisation of reintegration is only limited to the dimensions of the social system that he stressed. I do not drag in the lengthy discourse of the entire migration debates due to the differences in the preoccupations of Esser’s (1999) model. Furthermore, having acknowledged the narrow use for which I am mirroring Esser’s (1999) model, I will introduce an added concept (example transnationalism) to make my case for reintegration. The above conception is contained in table 2 below.
### Table 2: Integration/Reintegration Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Integration (Host Society)</td>
<td>Position in the educational or economic system</td>
<td>Knowledge and skills on cultural standards and competencies for interaction</td>
<td>Formation of relationships and other social networks for social capital</td>
<td>Sense of acceptance and attachments / Cognitive and emotional aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Reintegration (Home Societies)</td>
<td>Repositioning in the job and housing market</td>
<td>Re-acquire and renegotiate cultural standards and competencies for re-interaction</td>
<td>Reconnecting old networks and the formation of new networks for social capital</td>
<td>Acceptance, attachments, valued worth / Cognitive and emotional aspects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s construction. Returnees reintegration matrix as context-dependent dynamic on immigrant integration based on Esser’s dimensions of social integration

The frameworks from Berry and Esser thus offer the basis for conceptualising returnees’ reintegration as follows

- that like immigrants in host societies, returnees in their home society will choose reintegration as an acculturation orientation (see figure 1)
- that returnees will reintegrate in domains of the social system in the home society – acculturation (cultural), placement (structurally), interaction (socially) and Identification (emotionally)

It is worth to note that these dimensions of social reintegration are situated in a transnational understanding. As defined by Vertovec (1999; p. 1), transnationalism refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states (see Duval, 2004).

Nevertheless, transnationalism could refer to groups such as an ‘ethnic group (e.g. diasporic groups); a category (e.g. sex workers); a person (e.g. a person who commutes across borders, or a person with homes in more than one country); an orientation (although not necessarily ‘cosmopolitan’); processes (e.g. trading rules, or juridical human rights)” (Anthias, 2006: pp. 19). Returnees have multi-local social networks (meeting all the categories by Anthias (2006)) that translate into transnational belonging and practices. The transnational orientation which suggests multiplicity of
belonging also provides a meaningful framework under which sense of belonging is conceptualised.

From the position of transnationalism, a migrant’s level of integration in the host society is presumed significant in the analysis of return migration and reintegration. Such an orientation offers the premise to analyse mechanisms and interactions of returnees within both societies. Bearing in mind the focus of this study on migrants’ constructions of a sense of belongings after return, the above-mentioned dimensions of social reintegration, their relations to each other, and the role of belonging in each dimension constitute the conceptual framings of this study.

2.3.3 Conceptual Gap in Reintegration and Belonging

Despite the suggestions for framing belonging in two dimensions/level and offering a similarity of reintegration to integration, there are still conceptual gaps in the existing literature. For example, belonging is conceptualised in many ways:

- As a psychological motivator across all human interactions (Maslow, 1943);
- As emotional attachments about home and homeland, and social identifications, and membership within a group (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2006);
- As social locations, epitome for social participation and solidarity (Anthias, 2013) and
- As emotional attachments and political projects of collectivities (Antonsich, 2010).

All the above conceptualisations (including that from Astonish, which I have adopted for this study) do not orientate belonging across separate groups of people. Belonging, despite its intersectional and multidimensional characteristic, presents itself as a uniform for all individuals and societies. How different groups and individuals conceptualise, perform and experience belonging is missing in most of these conceptualisations. Also, the constellations of conceptualisation of belonging are blurring the distinctiveness of the concept from identity (Middleton, 2012). Within these gaps, this study seeks to advance the conceptualisation that belonging is not merely a feeling or symbolic attribution existing only in mind (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2006), and it is not only about individual against a collective (Antonsich, 2010). Instead, I argue that belonging is an active experience which has decisive actions that are translated into socio-
cultural engagements spanning across space, place, and time in multiplicity (Anthias, 2006; Antonsich, 2010; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2003, 2006).

The seeming lack of conceptualisation of reintegration limits my earlier conceptualisations as well. Out of the existing relevant literature focusing on works on the integration of migrants in host societies, the possible conclusion is that reintegration may take similar forms. However, this conclusion raises relevant questions that are yet to be answered by such conceptualisation. Thus, the conceptual analysis falls short of answering the following critical conceptual questions:

- Can Esser’s integration dimensions be indeed mirrored for the case of reintegration?
- Can all the dimensions of social integration be followed in their order of attainments in the case of reintegration?
- How are reintegration and belonging-related in the context return migration and returnees?

The conceptual gap is illustrated in figure 2 below.

2.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the definitional and theoretical positions of return migration. Return migration has been positioned as an essential element in the migration cycle but not an end to the cycle. The chapter has further presented the conceptual stand of this study by looking at the main concepts of belonging and reintegration among returnees. Overall, the remaining conceptual question is the role of belonging in the reintegration of return migrants.
Chapter 3. International Migration in Ghana

3.1. Introduction

Without any specific context, migration discourse can be described as a canopy discourse and can only be propagated as a tree without roots. The roots of migrants, therefore, represent a significant factor in different migrants’ decision. In this chapter, Ghana as a country of origin is discussed. Also, the chapter looks at Ghanaian international migration history. The unique situation of Ghana which is reflected in her contribution of over three (3) million active diasporans outside Africa worldwide as of 2012 (IOM, 2012) justifies the choice of Ghana for this study (see 1.3. Focus and Underlying Rational). However, despite the high number of skilled Ghanaian international migrants, the country has difficulties in attracting and maintaining skilled returnees. This chapter looks at the historical overview of Ghana’s migration path, stakeholders, debates, and policies as well as research on Ghana’s migration over the last decades.

3.2. A Brief History and Profile of Ghana

On March 6th, 1957, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African country in colonial Africa to gain independence. It comes after almost eight years of struggle for independence led by the Convention People’s Party’s then-popular leader Kwame Nkrumah and other comrades. The newly inde-

10 Ghana’s independence from the British was significant for the rest of the continent of Africa who were in the dying brims of colonial rules. In the early days of Ghana’s independence, the country was globally and regionally well positioned in both economic and political influence; thus, meddlesome in the affairs of other sub-Saharan countries, which translated into many other African countries gaining independence from their colonial rulers.
11 The convention Peoples Party is one of the oldest political parties in Ghana and the party that won Ghana’s independence. In present day, the party is still actively involved in Ghana’s democratic dispensation although it has failed to regain power after Nkrumah was overthrown.
12 Among those actively recognised in Ghana’s independence struggle (popularly called the big six) are Obetsebi-Lamptey, Ako Adjei, Edward Akuffo-Addo, J. B. Danquah, William Ofori Atta https://ghanahistory.wordpress.com/tag/big-six/.
pendent country – Ghana – was formed from the merger of the British colony of the Gold Coast and the Togoland Trust Territory and enjoyed economic and political advantages unmatched elsewhere in Africa. The name Gold Coast was given because of substantial gold found to be common among the indigenous people and the vast natural deposits of the mineral, (Berry, 1995; Reference Division, 1956). The present country – Ghana – is named after the ancient Ghana Empire from which the ancestors of the inhabitants of the present country are thought to have migrated from (Berry, 1995).

Pre-colonial Ghana in its present location is believed to have had ethnic population settlements by the sixteenth century. Ethnic rulers like kings and prominent chiefs and the regular inter-tribal conflicts in those days had led to many fragments of smaller groups. The *Ashanti* Kingdom is considered one of the powerful kingdoms in those times while the ethnic *Akan* was and still is the largest ethnic group among 75 ethnic groups that exist in the present day.

Upon the arrival of the Europeans in Ghana, many of the inhabitants of the then Gold Coast were still in the process of consolidating their territories and after many chain migrations from different parts of the present West Africa region. Most of these migrant communities including immigrant groups were thus in the process of securing a permanent place of dwelling. This, however, did not apply to major ethnic groups like the *Ewe, Ga* and the *Fante* as these groups (also coastal groups) were mostly well settled even though some Akan ethnic groups especially those in the hinterlands were still not settled. (Berry, 1995)

The Portuguese were the first European country to arrive in 1471 under the command of Prince Henry the Navigator and built their first castle in 1482 at *Elmina*.13 Aware of the existence of gold and other minerals like diamonds through the Muslim North Africa (which traded with settlements like the Gold Coast), the Portuguese traded mainly in Gold, pepper and ivory with the local people (Berry, 1995). Soon, other Europeans followed and by the 18th century, the Danish, Dutch and British had arrived at the coast of modern Ghana and were trading with the people. Upon the explosion of European plantations more labour for the Americas, the trade in gold, ivory and other minerals was significantly replaced with a more lucrative slave trade (the transatlantic slave trade) leading to one of the early waves of forced migration in Africa. During the transatlantic slave trade period, Ghana became an important colony not because many of the slaves

13 *Elmina* is a coastal town of present day Ghana.
were taken from the Gold Coast but also because of the colony’s strategic location along the Atlantic coast (which was easily accessible means to Americas)\(^\text{14}\). The Elmina Castle, Cape Coast Castle\(^\text{15}\) and the Christiansburg Castle\(^\text{16}\) became the central hub for shipping slaves off the coast of Sub-Sahara Africa (Patricia & Muhammad, 2003; Perbi, 2002). The Europeans built several castles and forts.

Furthermore, the colonial powers competed heavily among themselves in their efforts to consolidate their control and to protect their establishments, notably between the Dutch and the Danes over forts and castles (Perbi, 2002). Soon, all the Europeans but the British left the Gold Coast. The British therefore become the leading European power in the Gold Coast (Berry, 1995; Historyworld, 2016). During the colonial era, British dominance was endorsed through the establishments of treaties with local chiefs, continuation and expansion of formal education systems, court systems to punish delinquencies and other salient administrative outposts. In no time, the relationship between the foreign ‘white’ traders and the local people had translated into British government appointing representatives in the forms of governors to oversee the administrative dispensation of Gold Coast; the first of which was Governor Worsley Hill.

Present-Day Ghana is in western Africa and shares boundaries with Cote d’Ivoire to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, and Togo to the East. The country’s south borders the Gulf of Guinea between Cote d’Ivoire and Togo. Ghana has a total area of 238537 sq. km made up of 227537 sq. km land and 11000 sq. km water.\(^\text{17}\) According to the recent census of 2012, the estimated population of Ghana stands at 25,000 000\(^\text{18}\) (representing 51% females and 49% males), consequentially in an overall population density of 78 persons per sq. km (201 per sq. mi).

\(^{15}\) Originally built by the Swedes in 1653 for trade in timber and gold, but later used in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Coast_Castle.
\(^{16}\) Originally built by Denmark-Norway merchants in the 1660s https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osu_Castle .
Administratively, Ghana is divided into 16 regions and a total of 254 metropolises, municipalities, and districts aligned with the government decentralisation policy setting up district assemblies in 1998. District, municipal and metropolitan assemblies aim at decentralising the implementation of national policies relating to governance, health, education, agricultural, sanitation and resource mobilisation at the local level in context to local level priorities and developmental needs (Awumbila, Manuh, Quartey, Tagoe, and Bosiakoh, 2008).

Present Ghana represents a stable democratic regime with successful democratic and peaceful change of governments (since 1992). However, the country has also experienced darker moments in its governance through various military regimes and coup d’état. Hitherto, it has remained democratic after transitioning to a democratic rule in 1992 ushering in the 4th republic in 1993 which has lasted till present. In that respect, Ghana can be described as having its fair share of political instability and military rule but also democracy.

Furthermore, the country has witnessed significant economic growth mainly from the beginning of the 1980s. On the one hand, the economic growth of Ghana from the beginning of the 1980s is attributed to the economic reforms that the then government pursued which encompassed the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) under the guidance of the International Monitory Fund (IMF) and the World Band respectively (Awumbila, Manuh, Quartey, Tagoe, and Bosiakoh, 2008). On the other hand, some describe these programmes as causing slow growth instead. Ghana’s economic growth has been described as reasonably resilient in its steady performance in the face of the global recession following the 2008 economic crisis. Notwithstanding, the economic situation in Ghana has been a concern for some time now predominantly after 2011.

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19 On December 27, 2018, Ghana held a successful referendum which resulted in the creation of six new regions to add to the ten already existing regions. See https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ghananews-electorate-say-yes-to-creation-of-six-new-regions.html


21 Even though Ghana’s independence was won on the backbone of democracy (with an election of the first president), the country went through a period of military coup d’état following the overthrow of the first elected president. The country returned to its current republic state (4th republic) in 1992 after being under military rule from 1979. More on Ghana’s political timeline, see http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13434226.
The 2014 economic figures (in figure 3 above) depict Ghana’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 4% (GSS, 2015) representing the worse economic performance rate over the last half decade as it falls below the average of 5.0% for Sub-Saharah Africa (SSA) (IMF, 2015). It comes as a sharp fall in comparison to the country’s 2011 GDP growth of 15.0% (GSS, 2015). Mostly described as agrarian, Ghana’s economy is dependent on key exports like cocoa, timber, gold and more recently oil and a mushrooming service sector (Awumbila, Manuh, Quartey, Tagoe, & Thomas Antwi Bosiakoh, 2008).

Since 2011 after Ghana has been exporting oil in a commercial quantity and the economy of the nation has been buoyed. However, the contribution of oil in the overall national economy has not yet shown the much-expected significant contribution to the overall GDP. For example, in 2013 (see figure 4), the overall GDP growth of 5.4% comprised a 3.9% non-oil GDP growth rate (ISSER, 2014). When the share of oil export constituted 40% of the country’s overall exports in 2012, Ghana’s economy was tipped as becoming an oil-dependent country (ISSER, 2014). Figure 4, however, confirms otherwise as the contribution of oil is still less than what one can lead one to claim economically dependent status for the country as the country is still hooked on to other major sectors for GDP growth like the service sector which grew 5.6% in 2014 (ISSER, 2014).

Despite the downing trend in which the Ghanaian economy seems to be heading, Ghana’s slow growth rate momentum is not elite, taking into
consideration the global economy in general, which is in a continuing struggle with the global economic and financial crisis. Furthermore, the fall in oil prices globally has also added another dimension of constraint to the middle-income country as Ghana has failed to reap the expected gains from its commercial oil sales on the world market (ISSER, 2014).

Figure 4: Ghana: Trends in GDP Growth Rates, 2009 – 2014

![Graph showing trends in GDP growth rates](source: IMF, 2015 a)

Between 1980 and 2014, Ghana’s Human Development Index (HDI) value has shown an increase from 0.415 to 0.579 representing an average annual increase of about 0.98 (UNDP, 2015 a). Table 3 highlights the country’s HDI contributory components over the last three decades.

Table 3: Ghana’s Human Development Index from 1990 to 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth</th>
<th>Expected years of schooling</th>
<th>Mean years of schooling</th>
<th>GNI per capita (2011 PPP$)</th>
<th>HDI value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>0.455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2,036</td>
<td>0.473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2,214</td>
<td>0.486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>2,556</td>
<td>0.509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>3,011</td>
<td>0.554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>3,861</td>
<td>0.585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>3,889</td>
<td>0.588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4,096</td>
<td>0.592</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Briefing
In table 3, Ghana’s HDI value was ranked 140 out of 189 countries and territories in 2017 with a score of 0.592, putting the country in the medium human development category (UNDP, 2018). Life expectancy at birth in Ghana has shown a significant increase from 56.8 in 1990 to 63.0 in 2017. The adult literacy rate as of 2015 was 76.6%22, but the country still struggles with a multidimensional poverty index value of 0.156 representing 33.7% of the country’s population as at 201423.

In 2010, Ghana transitioned to becoming a Lower Middle-Income Country (LMIC) after re-basing its GDP. With such a status brought the complexities to respond to the reorganisation of institutional responsibility, changing of systems with implication on aid flows and new patterns of development cooperations with other countries especially donor countries. Theoretically, having an LMIC status takes for granted that Ghana would have moved beyond aid dependency, food insecurity, poor health services, economic stagnation, and widespread poverty, which is usually concomitant with low-income countries. Nonetheless, ‘the reality of Ghana today still reflects some of the salient characteristics of a low-income country as is the case with many other countries in the band of lower-middle-income countries’ (Ghartey, Jee, & Chung, 2014, pp. 4). This makes one question the kind of dilemma that countries who reach the LMIC status face in terms of challenges in how to maintain LMIC status and not to fall to Low-Income Country (LIC) status and how to transition to Middle Income Country (MIC) a process that requires vast institutional and capital investment in . The implication of the LMIC status for Ghana, however, is the inability to access concessional finance and grants as well as changing the country’s relationship with other creditors even though the status accelerates private sector financing. But this also meant that soft loans, mostly from the International Development Association (IDA), had to end (Moss & Majerowicz, 2012).

Hitherto in its current LMIC status, Ghana’s economy continues to be donor-dependent. In 2013 Ghana was ranked the 9th out of the top 10 Official Development Assistance (ODA) recipients in Africa totalling 1808 USD million. (OECD, 2015)

Apart from donor aids, the country is also robust in generating internal funds to support its economy. This can be seen from policies put in place by the government. Some of these include the restructuring of the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) in 2009 to coordinate and strengthen revenue

22 see https://knoema.com/atlas/Ghana/topics/Education/Literacy/Adult-literacy-rate
collection, the establishment of the National Policy on Public-Private Partnerships in 2011 to Promote Private Public Partnerships (PPPs) and investor confidence. The country also issued its first euro bonds in 2007, and as of 2015, Ghana was set to use its 4th euro bond aimed at raising US$2.5 billion (MoF, 2015). Despite these, income levels in both relative and absolute terms beep at exceptionally low levels. According to the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS) round 6 report of 2014, national average annual gross household income stood at GH¢16,645 with annual per capita gross income of GH¢5,347 (US$8,446 and US$2,713 respectively, using the annual average exchange rate of 2013, GH¢1.9708 to the US dollar) nationally (GSS, 2014). The report also showed the increasing levels of income disparities in the country by remaking the existing quartile differences representing household incomes in five quartiles with the first quartile being the lowest and fifth the highest. The annual quartile gross income per capita differences showed the average income of a household in the highest quartile (fifth) about four times as much as that of a household in the lowest quintile representing GH¢25,200.9 and GH¢6,571.8 respectively. With an annual per capita gross income of GH¢5,347 the implication is that on an average, a person lives on GH¢14.65 per day (GSS, 2014).

As a country, Ghana faces similar challenges as many countries in the region. The literacy rate hovers around 56.3% for the population’s 15 years and above (GSS, 2014). Over the years, many efforts have been put in place (an example is the School-Feeding Programme) to ensure high school attendance rate. Notwithstanding these, the quality of education in Ghana still has some miles to clock although comparatively higher than some of its neighbours. Ghana continues to stand tall as it attracts a considerable number of international students from nearby all African countries (especially Nigeria) and beyond. Ghana as at 2015 had more than 12,000 primary schools, 5,500 junior secondary schools, 700 senior secondary schools, 18 technical institutions, 21 nursing training colleges, three theological colleges, twenty university colleges, six tutorial colleges, ten polytechnics, six public universities and three chartered private universities (EP-Nuffic, 2015). Access to education, therefore, is relatively easy for the majority of Ghanaians, however, the education system produces many people with low or no employable skills and qualifications to get jobs in formal sectors apart from the fact that the cost of education in Ghana especially at the tertiary level continues to bourgeon (K. Akyeampong, 2007; International Bu-

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24 The school-feeding program targets children in primary school age by providing one square meal to children in school.
This leaves the country with a significant unemployment rate. Unemployment Rate in Ghana increased to 5.77 per cent in 2016 from 5.54 per cent in 2015. Unemployment Rate in Ghana averaged 6.51 per cent from 1991 until 2016, reaching an all-time high of 10.36 per cent in 2000 and a record low of 3.60 per cent in 2006.  

Access to essential social services and amenities is still a challenge for the lower middle-income country. On areas of energy, road networks, access to potable water and health, Ghana still has some way to go. The most recent challenge was the dumsor situation where Ghana had to ration electricity for over three years (2012 – 2016) leading to further worsening of economic predicaments and poverty in the country. The country, thus, still faces a lack of infrastructural improvement in areas of housing, road networks, health, and education. Indicators of social protection in Ghana, however, point towards an improvement in recent years. Over the years, various government programmes, policies and efforts have been channelled towards reducing vulnerabilities among citizenry by supporting strategies to protect people from chronic poverty, risk, and shocks. This is not in any way suggesting that these contingencies are untraceable in Ghana but to point out that efforts in recent years in reducing these likelihoods are on-going. Chronologically, policies such as the social security law of 1991, the Ghana Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I) 2002-2005, the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) 2003, the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) 2005, the Ghana Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II (GPRS II) 2006-2009, the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) 2007, and the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) 2008 remain on the list of major social protection programmes in Ghana. Most of these interventions include cash transfers, access to health care for vulnerable groups, and providing school children with food and books. These programmes also include strategies to mitigate social catastrophes at the macro level as part of the development agendas (Abebrese, 2011).

Apart from these, there is copious sanguinity in Ghana’s future. Over the last two decades, Ghana has transformed immensely. The country’s political stability upon a democratic governance has seen peaceful political power transfers through democratic elections; the recent discovery and com-

26 Dumsor is the Akan word, which mean ‘turn off and on.’ The concept was coined to depict the worse energy crises the country has had to face over the last decade where access to regular electricity became extremely irregular and unpredictable.
3.3. International Migration in Ghana

Bluntly, Ghana is a country of migration. This is because; migration has always been part of the Ghanaian history, going back many decades. Furthermore, Ghana’s international migration history cannot be recounted without taking into consideration the broader context of West Africa’s international migration movements (Peil, 1974). Acknowledging Ghana’s international migration history in a regional context thus depicts the historical movements that have many repercussions for the country and its neighbours. Migration in Ghana covers many phases and eras of the country’s history. Within these different migration transitions and eras, the one constant denominator in describing Ghana’s migration is perception of migration as a source of attaining resources for livelihood for both emigrants and immigrants in this long history.

In discussing international migration in Ghana, I will categorise the country’s international migration history into two main eras curved around the country’s most significant and historical stem; colonisation. These are the pre-independence migration era and post-independence migration era. The distinction is to portray the migration trend but also highlight the pull and push factors, which led to different and complex patterns of migration in Ghana. While mentioning the immigration of other nationals into the country, the emigration of Ghanaians to other countries will also be discussed in these migration eras.
The transatlantic slave trade contributed significantly to modern day Ghana’s (formerly Gold Coast) pre-independence migration. During the transatlantic slave trade, it is estimated that over 13 million Africans were shipped off the coast of Africa as slaves out of which 77 per cent (10.1 million) were from the current West and Central Africa (Whatley & Gillezeau, 2009). The number of Ghanaians among this number of slaves was incredibly significant (Lake, 1995; Johnson, 2012). While many migration accounts do not recognise the slave trade as migration, I argue that the transatlantic slave trade makes up the first wave of pre-independent international and intercontinental migration in Ghana.

Furthermore, apart from the slave trade, which saw many forced migrations in Ghanaian and other neighbouring countries, migration, was a common phenomenon in West Africa. For example, the Wangara migrations which took place in the 15th and 16th century led a significant number of Hausa, Fulani, Arabs and Mossi traders from Niger, Nigeria and Mali trooping to migrate to different parts of the country where they established themselves in various market cities but most especially in Kumasi (Rouch, 1954, 1959; Peil, 1974; J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). These movements were noticed at the dawn of colonial-era signalling the flow of immigrants from neighbouring countries to Ghana even before British Gold Coast colonial rule was formed in 1867. Until this point in the country’s history, pre-colonial Ghana enjoyed relative economic prosperity and immigration constituted trade in ivory, kola nuts, livestock, clothes and hides among other trading activities which served as pull factors for neighbouring countries (J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). This also meant emigration was not attractive for many Ghanaians at this time.

The commercial immigration, however, did not stop during the colonial era but continued and took different forms as well. Thus, the colonial era led to the construction of railways, expansion of mines and construction of harbours in Ghana. As a result, the need for more labourers was paramount. Even though the immigration figures reduced during World War II, Peil (1974) recounts that the number of immigrants increased again after the war. Digging for diamonds, selling of yams and meat (by butchers) remained the monopolised jobs for immigrants from Nigeria, Mali and the Hausa respectively as ‘respected jobs’ (supervisory and clerical jobs) went to local and better-educated Ghanaians at that time (Peil, 1974; J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003).
Ghana within this era was a receiving country as she recorded high number of immigrants moving in for jobs. Towards the end of the colonial era, few Ghanaians migrated mostly to the United Kingdom for education and many returned afterwards to take up positions in the colonial government (J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). This era also saw the migration of elite or skilled Ghanaians.

3.3.2. Post-Independence Migration Era (from 1957 to date)

All through the colonial era and the early years after Ghana’s independence, the young country was still an attractive destination for many of her neighbours. In the early years after independence and Kwame Nkrumah becoming the first president, the country’s migration profile took another turn. Two main factors explain the increased number of immigrants in Ghana in the early years after 1957. The first reason relates to the buoyant economy that the country inherited after gaining independence while the second reason stemmed from the foreign policy of President Nkrumah. The Pan-Africanism foreign policies of President Nkrumah thus promoted the status of Ghana as a migrant-receiving country on the continent (Awumbila et al., 2008) thereby attracting migrants from beyond the West African region to include Eastern and Southern Africa. During this time, Ghana did not only attract traders or economic migrants, but the country also became a haven for many African freedom fighters and Pan-Africanists (J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). According to Anarfi, et al. (2000), migrants from other African countries constituted 98% of the total 12% non-Ghanaians in the 1960 census making Ghana a net immigration country. Ghanaian professionals at the time also migrated to newly independent African States like Botswana, Sierra Leone, Zambia, and the Gambia, serving in public institutions/administrations and as teachers in these countries.

Modern Ghana’s emigration history can thus be traced to late 1960 as the turning point that led to many Ghanaians emigrating at a significant rate. The economic situation in Ghana took a downturn leading to economic hardship fuelled by political instability, rising unemployment, the balance of payment deficit and social malaise (J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). At this point, many Ghanaian professionals such as lawyers, teachers, and administrators left the country. Many of these professionals were invited by other African countries such as Uganda, Botswana, Zambia, and Nigeria to aid these newly independent countries in their development agendas. (Anarfi, et al. 2000). Some of the Ghanaian professionals also immigrated...
to countries where they were trained and worked there while those outside the country studying stayed behind after completing their studies. (J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). Until 1965, emigration of Ghanaians was still very minimal. However, the years following 1965 saw an unparalleled size of economic crisis. As a result of the economic crisis that the country was going through, the government of the time introduced the Aliens Compliance Order in 1970. With this Order, all non-Ghanaians without valid documents were expelled and deported from Ghana. The Aliens Compliance Order earned Ghana a negative reputation against an image as the leader of African unity and also displeased many neighbouring governments such as Nigeria, Togo, Mali, Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Cote D’Ivoire whose nationals were the most affected. (Awumbila, M.; Manuh, T.; Quartey, P.; Tagoe, C. A.; Bosiakoh, 2008; Olaosebikan, 2013 a; Peil, 1974)

Furthermore, expulsion27 was the primary strategy for governments at the time in dealing with immigrants and as such Ghana was hardly alone in this regard (Awumbila et al., 2008). Nevertheless, these events labelled Ghana unattractive for both its nationals and foreigners alike, and by 1970, the 12% non-Ghanaian population from 1960 had dwindled to only 6.6%. (Awumbila et al., 2008; J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003; Brydon, 1985). Towards the end of the 1970s, Ghana was experiencing what Anarfi and Kwakye (2003) called the phase of initial emigration of Ghanaians. Apart from the unfavourable conditions in Ghana, the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 likewise drove many Ghanaians to various parts of the West African region especially to Nigeria that had become attractive because of the oil boom in the country and Cote D’Ivoire that was experiencing a much favourable economic boom.

The number of Ghanaians who migrated out of the country reached a large-scale phase from the beginning of the 1980s (J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). The increased political instability coupled with severe economic hardships in an economy which one could describe as collapsing led to a vast number of unskilled and semi-skilled Ghanaians joining the emigration train ‘in search of jobs in neighbouring West African countries’, (J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). This was because, despite the country going through economic hardships there was political instabilities: in 1981, President Rawlings had taken over power from the just elected President Hilla

27 Other countries in West Africa that used expulsion to deal with immigrants were: Ivory Coast in 1958 and 1964, Senegal in 1967, Sierra-Leone in 1968 and Nigeria in 1983 and 1985 (Adepoju, 2005:5).
Limann in a coup d'état leading to people getting frustrated with military government rule. Aside the return of military rule, the 1982-1983 famine resulting from severe drought and massive bush fires – that destroyed large plantations and properties – further created a scene of hopelessness and lack of confidence in the Ghanaian economy (Abdul-Gafaru, 2009; J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003; Awumbila et al., 2008; Olaosebikan, 2013b). Apart from Nigeria and Cote D’Ivoire who attracted over 1,000,000 and between 500,000 to 800,000 Ghanaians respectively, Liberia, Republic of South Africa, and Gabon also had a fair share of the emigrants (J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). Up until this time, the primary destination for Ghanaian migrants was within Africa and especially within the West Africa Region.

The years following 1983 showed a landmark pattern in Ghana’s migration history. During this period, Ghanaian migrants became intercontinental, and migration beyond the African continent gained momentum as migration to neighbouring West African countries began to decline. This follows especially the fall in oil prices leading to Nigeria in particularly experiencing economic hardships. Apart from this, Nigeria, which was the major attractive destination for Ghanaian migrants, expelled over 1.5 million Ghanaians (which constituted about 15% of the total Ghanaian population at the time) between 1983 and 1985 (1.2 million expelled in 1983 and 300,000 expelled in 1985). The situation in Ghana had not improved to absorb all these returnees. As a result of these events (return to military rule, the famine and expulsion from Nigerian), Ghana became the least attractive home for returnees. Migration, therefore, became the ‘tried and tested strategy’ for dealing with the ‘deteriorating economic and social conditions’ (Manuh, 2001; p. 19). Most of the Ghanaians expelled from Nigeria plus other non-returnee nationals changed the migrants’ destination path of Ghana to an intercontinental one.

Towards the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s, destinations such as Western Europe and North America became the emerging routes as Ghanaian migrants kept and established diaspora communities in these countries. These communities continued to grow through immigrant networks, family unification and chain migration (J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003; GTZ, 2009). Meanwhile, migration to other African countries continued, and new routes were also paved. For example, routes through the Sahara Desert to North Africa and the later crossing of the Mediterranean Sea over to Southern Europe gained momentum as legal means to Europe became stricter. Central and Eastern Asia and North African countries including Japan, China, South Korea and Libya and Egypt and the Gulf regions also
became attractive to Ghanaian migrants (J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003; IOM, 2009; Schans, Mazzucato, Schoumaker, & Flahaux, 2013).

Ghanaian migrants’ dispersal into various parts of the globe continued through the 1990s unabated until today. Ghanaian diaspora populations have swelled in countries like Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, United States of America, the Netherlands, and Italy. For example, Mensah et al. (2005) observed that between 1999 and 2004, registered Ghanaian trained doctors in the UK had doubled from 143 to 293. The top 10 destinations from Ghana between 1975 until 2009 are displayed in table 4 below, using data from a household survey on migration between Africa and Europe.

**Table 4: Ghanaian Migrants Destinations from 1975 – 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte d’Ivoire</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 countries</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>611</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N: 173

Table 4 shows the migration trends that have been pursued by Ghanaian migrants over the last centuries. According to the Development Research Centre (DRC) of the University of Sussex, Ghana’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates for 2008 puts Ghanaian migrants in more than 33 countries around the globe (DRC, 2007). As of 2012, Ghana had over three (3) million active diaspora outside Africa (IOM 2012). This number, however, has been increasing. Thus, apart from West African countries, the United States, the United Kingdom and other European countries like Germany, the Netherlands and Italy continue to serve as countries of destination for Ghanaian emigrants (IOM, 2009).

Accounting for this number of international migrations across the globe are significant push factors. That is, during the military era of post-independent Ghana, insecurity, the difficulty of getting into the few higher education institutions and economic challenges were the main push factors. However, from the early 1990s till now, push factors include the inability...
to get into institutions of higher learning, poor health infrastructure, employment, poverty and the lack of international exposure (J. K. Anarfi & Jagare, 2005; J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003; Awumbila et al., 2008; Black, King, et al., 2003; Setrana & Tonah, 2014; Twum-Baah, 2005; Yendaw, Tanle, & Kumi-Kyereme, 2013).

Over the last decade, on the other hand, Ghana has become a destination country for its neighbours especially Liberia, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leon, and Nigeria. The civil war in Liberia, Sierra Leon and more recently Ivory Coast accounted for the migration of many people from these countries to Ghana. Nigerians, however, are attracted to Ghana because of the seeming similarity between these two countries and their rate of developments. The educational system, business environment and the energy situation in Ghana have in the past decade become part of the pull factors for Nigerian immigrants in Ghana. Apart from migrants from other West African countries, the 2010 population census revealed a considerable number of immigrants from countries like Malaysia, India, and China. That is, presently, despite the high number of emigration of Ghanaians to many destinations, the country still receives a sizeable number of migrants as well.

3.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter has highlighted the historical overview of Ghana to date and showed clearly that Ghana’s political and migration histories are intertwined. The various phases of Ghana’s history have been captured to reflect a situation where the country moved from a country that attracted migrants from its neighbours to become a country of emigration. Undoubtedly, the role of government policies and different political regimes and struggles contributed to the migration trends in Ghana. The chapter revealed that Ghanaian’s migration trend is highly dependent on internal indicators of improved living conditions and a situation like political stability and economic development. Until the downward trend of Ghana’s economy, the chapter shows that emigration was not a concern to many ordinary Ghanaian households in the early years after independence. Despite the opening of new migration routes for emigration to countries outside the continent, West Africa and other African regions continue to shelter many Ghanaian diasporas. Within these discourses on Ghana’s international migration, it is also clear that the migration of skilled Ghanaians was highlighted as always being part of the milieu. Overall, this chapter con-
tributes to the current study by putting into context the historical foundations of international migration in Ghana.
4.1. History of International Return Migration in Ghana

As many Ghanaians migrate to far and near countries, within and outside West Africa, within and beyond the African continent, return migration to Ghana takes similar forms. Return\textsuperscript{28} migration in Ghana is usually uncategorised and assumed to happen in a homogenous fashion. Regardless of the skill level, the generation of migrants and the impact of returnees, return migration has in most cases been put in one box of reference. Many Ghanian migrants return from various parts of the world. However, returnees from countries within the West African region still surmounts to a substantial number of return migrants in Ghana. Despite the view that thereturn migration’s popularity soared only in the 1980 (Awumbila, M., Alhassan, O., Badasu, D., Antwi Bosiakoh, T. and Dankyi, 2011\textsuperscript{a}), I conceptualise that the phenomenon existed in periods preceding the ‘formal’ animation of return migration as a concept in migration scholarship. Based on Ghana’s historical account on migration\textsuperscript{29}, I conceptualise and place return migration in Ghana under five main chronological phases.

The first phase took place between 1940 and 1960. Following the independence of Ghana, many of the few elites who had the opportunity to go abroad either for further studies or training did return. Most of these returnees were not only part of the struggles for independence but also included professionals who were either invited by the freedom fighters or returned on their own. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, for example, was a returnee himself having studied abroad and returning to lead the independence struggle. After the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah in the 1960\textsuperscript{s}, many loyalists of his government emigrated.

On the other hand, many of his opponents in exile returned to the country to take up power. It is worth mentioning that the first phase of return migration comprised elites who also became powerful politicians. Many of them become part of the freedom fighting elites. The number of returnees in this phase was however small and usually return marked the end of the

\textsuperscript{28} The use of return in this study implies international return only.
\textsuperscript{29} See Chapter 3.
migration cycle for those directly involved even though families of these returnees continued to migrate and do return to Ghana (Peil, 1974).

The second phase of return migration to Ghana took place between the 1970s and 1980s. Within this period, return migration to Ghana involved returnees from neighbouring countries within West Africa. Significant in this phase was the mass deportation of Ghanaians from Nigeria (J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). Returnees in this phase were mostly skilled migrants who had taken up skilled jobs in neighbouring countries. Majority of returnees from Nigeria, for example, were teachers. (Anarfi, et al. 2000). This period in Ghana’s return migration history is the most significant as it saw bulk Ghanaian returnees than other periods. Additionally, due to the formal discourse of return migration’s emergence in the 1980s, the period came to represent the turning point for scholarly work on return migration in Ghana and Africa as a whole (J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). Return here also included different generations of returnees as well as the companion of other nationals as partners and some with their dual-national children (Awumbila et al., 2008).

The period between 1990 and 2000 constitutes the third phase of return migration to Ghana. Despite the mass return in the second phase, many returnees emigrated following the problems in the country at the time – economic crisis, military rule, and the famine in the 1980s (Abdul Gafaru, 2009; J. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003).

However, after returning to democratic rule in the early 1990s, many Ghanaians returned from abroad. Many of these returnees were politicians who came to start political parties in the new republic. Also, among the returnees in this phase were professionals who came to invest in the new democratic economy or invited by the Government. After returning to democratic rule in 1992, the then government also sponsored mass state scholarships for Ghanaians to go abroad for studies. Many of these education migrants also returned to Ghana within this period. Another important type of return was also observed within this phase; the return of African descendants from the diaspora30 (Schramm, 2004; Awumbila et al., 2008).

The fourth phase lies between the years 2000 and 2010 where after a peaceful transition of power from one political party to another, many Ghanaians in the diaspora saw a new Ghana, which promised hope. Thus,

30 These are descendants of victims of the transatlantic slave trade who still regard Ghana as their ancestral home. Their return is usually referred to as ‘home coming’ – signifying their return from slavery after many years and generations.
the political turn in Ghana’s history is heavily credited with return migration to Ghana within this phase (Twum-Baah 2005; Manuh et al. 2010). Many of the returnees were politicians who had left the country under the previous government. While the new government invited some elite returnees, other returnees saw the prospects to return and invest in their home country. Furthermore, this phase also saw many returnees who came back home for retirements.

The current phase makes up the fifth phase of return migration in Ghana. From 2010, Ghana’s economic and political records were beacons to the rest of the continent (Setrana & Tonah, 2014). Returnees in this phase include people who migrated for reason of education and returning after gaining experience abroad. Also, some are Ghanaians who lived in different countries and returned for investments or returned as representatives of foreign investors. The discovery of oil within this phase added to the pull factors for return. The current phase is a mixture of different returnees that characterised earlier phases. This phase also represents younger and entrepreneur returnees who return mostly with the hope to improve the conditions of their homeland. Furthermore, the current phase is fluid and dynamic in terms of the kind of returnees as many of them are skilled and many have dual citizenship or hold significant bonds and attachments to the countries from where they return. This is due to the increase in technology and communication systems, and infrastructure, making staying in touch in and across borders via communication and movements less cumbersome than other periods.

4.2. Typologies of Return Migration in Ghana

Return migration is not a new phenomenon in Ghana. Even though the term return migration started in the 1980s (Awumbila, M.; Manuh, T.; Quartey, P.; Tagoe, C. A.; Bosiakoh, 2008), in the case of Ghana, there are other forms of return namely;

- Afro-diaspora Return Migration (ADRM),
- Forced / Repatriated Return,
- Ghanaian Diaspora Return Migration (GDRM).
- The categorisation of return migration in Ghana is conceptually rooted in the notion of homecoming as a cross-border affair. Both ADRM and GDRM are because of international migration, which goes beyond the borders of Ghana and in both cases; the notion of homecoming plays a prominent role for returnees and researchers alike. Awumbila et al.
(2008, p.16) maintain that homecoming ‘has not always been by compulsion’ however, this depends on whether one deals with forced or voluntary return – even though there are scepticisms about whether there is anything like voluntary return. Nevertheless, Awumbila et al. (2008) refer to return migration as a homecoming. Thus, the focus on return here assumes that the return is voluntary. It is worth noting that the use of homecoming has different meanings in the context of return migration. In the first instance – as used by Awumbila et al. (2008) – it implies a voluntary return. Another use of homecoming infers a return to ancestral roots. In the second meaning of homecoming, home signifies the ancestral home (as used in the case of people whose ancestors were sold into slavery). Additionally, Black et al. (2003) used homecoming to represent the importation of skills and other resources from the host country by returnees and thereby using these skills for the benefit of the home country – Ghana. In other words, Black et al. (2000) see homecoming in terms of brain gain. These assumptions and contextualisation underline the two types of return migration in Ghana that are discussed below.

4.2.1. Afro-diaspora Return Migration – ‘Return to the Motherland Africa’

Return migration in Ghana is not just about Ghanaians who travelled outside Ghana and returned after some years. Rather, the nation’s return migration typology encompasses ‘return to the motherland Africa’ where African Americans and people of African descent from the Caribbean, South and North America travel to Ghana to set up contacts with the land of their ancestors and mothers who were sold into slavery (Lake, 1995). Bruner (1996) observed that tourist visits by black people outside the African continent to Ghana represents return migration as well. This type of homecoming is return migration. The establishment of the Emancipation Day celebrations in the 1990s by the government, for example, was a strategic attempt to support African Americans and other people of African descent to return to Ghana and more importantly Africa. Many of these returns are genealogy related tourism, traced to ancestral tourism called the ‘root packages’. This comes about because of the government’s insistence on Ghana being the primary point of departure on the West African coast during the transatlantic slave trade. Ghana thus projects herself to be ‘the promised land’ (Schramm, 2004, p. 134). African descent returnees undertake rituals of rebirth to welcome them back home from the
diaspora. Fehler (2011) also adds that this type of return migration contributes to tourism in Ghana.

4.2.2. Deportation Return

According to Collyer (2012), the transfer of individuals from a state where they do not enjoy the benefits of citizenship to the state where they do constitutes deportation. This process of return is involuntary and often violent and involves the use of threat or force. This typology of return in Ghana was highly recorded in the 1980s especially in the case of Nigeria’s expulsion of Ghanaian migrants. Since the 2000s many Ghanaians have used the desert route to migrate to Northern Africa especially Libya and others continuing to Europe. Before 2011, Libya was among the main destinations for many West African migrants. However, this changed when the Gaddafi regime was overthrown, and the economic situation in Libya dwindled. Since then, many Ghanaian and other West African migrants transit through Libya and then get on boats to cross the Mediterranean sea to get to Europe. Often, these migrants become stranded in their quest to reach Europe and end up in the hands of smugglers in Libya. Many of these migrants are regularly deported back to Ghana. Although deportation from Libya existed in the time of Gaddafi, the numbers have soared since his demise, particularly since 2011. Even so, the migration crisis of Europe (which began in 2013)\(^{31}\) has also contributed to a high number of deportation from the European Union (Kleist & Bob-Milliar, 2013) including other countries around the globe. The high expectations of communities in Ghana towards returnees are regardless of the mode or type of return (Kleist & Bob-Milliar, 2013). Hence, since many deportees return with little or no resources, they usually face stigmatisation and are considered failures in their societies. The shaming culture attached to unsuccessful migration pushes deportees sometimes to avoid going back to their hometowns after return (Brotherton & Barrios, 2009). Also, many of these returnees owe money and other commitments and thus returning without many fortunes to pay back such debts become a burden. The few fortunate ones who can return with some wealth and can invest well after their return, however, can gain the respect of their communities (Setrana & Tonah, 2014).

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31 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_migrant_crisis
4.2.3. Ghanaian Diaspora Return Migration

The historical track of the Ghanaian diaspora returning from their international stays is fuzzy due to the lack of exact data. Nonetheless, apart from the mass return of Ghanaians from Nigeria following the mass deportation in 1983 and the few returnees seen to have returned after studying in colonial countries to work for the colonial masters, the return stream of Ghanaian migrants from abroad could be traced to the 1980s. That is, return migration in Ghana registered mass returnees from neighbouring West African countries in the 1980s. Here also, the conditions within the country in terms of the government in power, the political stability, and the economic situation informed return decisions among returnees. However, most of the return that happened within the 1980s surmounts to what Dekker (1995) describes as ‘forced homecoming.’

Towards the beginning and middle of the 1990s, after the Provisional National Democratic Council (PNDC) had ceased power from the elected government in 1974, the country was showing signs of stability. Within this time, the Ghanaian diaspora was beginning to take shape with a population estimated at more than 3 million representing around 10 to 20 per cent of the national population (Anarfi et al. 2004; Peil 1995). Ghanaian diaspora communities are populated in countries such as the United States, Canada, and Western Europe specifically in the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Italy, and Germany (Asiedu 2005; Anarfi et al. 2004; Twum-Baah 2005; Manuh et al. 2010).

Upon the return to a stable political environment which saw a peaceful election in 1992, and the development of the country’s current constitution also in 1992, Ghana was set to attract its diaspora back home. Even though emigration also increased within the 1990s, return migration gained momentum through specific government policies but also individual decisions to return played a significant role. The return trend continued after the 2000s when the New Patriotic Party was elected into power. The opening up of Ghana’s economy during these periods and the increasing pace of development demanded highly skilled labour and investment in the economy thereby incentivising return. Reasons for return, however, remain varied. Another event contributing to return migration is traced to the destabilisation of the North African nation of Libya. This is

32 The emigration of Ghanaians to the diaspora and the historical phases has been described in the earlier chapter. This type of return migration encompasses many of migration phases already discussed.

33 See more of these policies in the next chapter.
because, from the late 1990s until the overthrow of Muammar al-Gadhafi in Libya, the North African country was an attractive destination for many Ghanaians migrants, especially unskilled migrants. The war, however, led to many migrants, specifically those who were unable to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe, return to Ghana.

According to the 1999 Ghana Living Standard Survey (cited in IOM 2009), 10 per cent of emigrants return in any given year; standing for a significant number of Ghanaian diaspora returnees. Furthermore, upon return, Anarfi et al. (2003), Taylor (2009) and Setrana & Tonah, (2014) among other works have observed that most of these returnees prefer to remain in urban centres of Ghana (Accra and Kumasi).

Overall, the Ghanaian diaspora returnees can be grouped into highly skilled, less skilled, and unskilled, as well as voluntary and involuntary returnees. This typology of return can further be classified into intra-continental or inter-continental. Intra-continental refers to returnees from within the African continent like neighbouring countries in West Africa or currently from South Africa or previously North Africa.

Inter-continental returnees, however, represent those returning from countries beyond the African continent. Periodic visits for several reasons can be seen within this typology of returnees. For example, since the early days of Ghana’s emigration history, short visits from destination countries have been observed until present (Asare, 2012; Awumbila et al. 2011b; Bosiakoh, 2012; Peil, 1974; Wong, 2013). Nonetheless, this research focused on long-term inter-continental returnees, specifically from Western Europe and North America. Ghanaian diaspora return migration also includes the return of second and third generations of Ghanaians born to Ghanaian parents outside Ghana and the return of children of interracial relationships of which one parent is a Ghanaian.

Naming and labelling are essential in how returnees are identified. For example, second, third or fourth generation returnees (children of Ghanaian parents) especially those returning from western societies are called ‘Abrokyere Nkodaa’ (children from abroad or western children). Interestingly, this label is also for children who have two black parents (same race) provided one of the parents is Ghanaian. The main rationale for using the term ‘western’ children is where these children are born. Furthermore, second, third, or fourth generation children of interracial parents (mostly a Ghanaian and white or light-skinned parents) are called ‘half-caste’ or ‘Obroni ba’ (white person’s child) in Ghana. Here, the basis for the label comes from the ‘cappuccino’ skin colours of such returnees. People who
emigrated from Ghana and return after some years abroad – first generation returnees – are mostly referred to as ‘borgas’ or ‘burgers’, or ‘been-tos’.

4.4. Structural Environment of Return Migration in Ghana

Since returning to democracy in 1992, Ghana has shown a stable democracy that has won the admiration of the international community. Apart from the stable political environment, Ghana has a sound, competitive and robust economy that was re-categorised as a lower middle-income country in late 2010. With the discovery and production of crude oil in 2010, and the expansion of other sectors like agriculture, mining, trade and industries, Ghana has since 2004 been an attractive investment and labour destination for multinational firms and skilled professionals alike. Apart from these qualities which are perceived to attract skilled returnees (IOM 2008, 163), past and present governments of Ghana have tried attracting skilled Ghanaian international migrants through different policy initiatives. To Ammassari and Black (2001), the main purpose of these initiatives is not only to reverse ‘brain drain’ but to encourage migrants’ accumulated resources further abroad to be utilised in the home country. This is seen from the number of policies and units that are set up with the aims to encourage skilled Ghanaian migrants to return since 1992. Some of the government policies and initiatives are contained in table 5 below.

Table 5: Return Migration related Policies and Programmes in Ghana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Policy / programme</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>National Population Policy</td>
<td>Monitor International migration, stems brain drain, attracts skilled migrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Dual Citizenship Regulation Act</td>
<td>Attract skilled Ghanaian migrants with other citizenships by extending dual citizenship to Ghanaian migrants living abroad to help facilitate and also encourage their return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Non-Resident Ghanaian Secretariat</td>
<td>Link up with Ghanaians abroad and encourage their return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations</td>
<td>Access contributions of Ghanaian international migrants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.4. Structural Environment of Return Migration in Ghana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Policy / programme</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Representation of People Act (RoPA) (Act 699)</td>
<td>Recognise the right of Ghanaians in the Diaspora to vote and to indirectly foster return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Diaspora Support Unit</td>
<td>Engage with and provide information for Ghanaian diaspora and their return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>National Migration Policy (NMP)</td>
<td>A comprehensive policy guide for the management of the country’s internal, intra-regional and international migration flows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?34</td>
<td>Ghana National Commission on Migration (GNCM)</td>
<td>Manage migration and migration-related issues in line with the National migration polity in collaboration with other state and non-state agencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Again, recent developments and collaborated efforts on the part of the government and other establishments have seen a significant contribution to the structural environment for return in Ghana. Prominent is the ‘Home Coming Summit’ which was organised by the then Kufuor government in 2001. Overall, the summit was a success. It was aimed at encouraging Ghanaian migrants to invest in their homeland and to also establish linkages with African-American diaspora. As a result, the Non-Resident Ghanaian Secretariat was set up in response to the summit’s recommendations and to encourage return. Another recommended outcome of the summit in 2001 was the setting up of the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) under the Office of the President; with the mandate to aid migrants and returnees to invest in Ghana through setting up businesses. In its current state, the GIPC remain under-resourced and lacks access to reliable data on Ghanaian migrants overseas thereby making the Centre inef-

34 Despite the huge discussion on the NMP and its implementation plan, the entire policy is yet to be implemented as at January 2019. The GNCM is part of the implementation plan but not yet constituted till date.
fective in contacting migrants (Manuh and Asante, 2005; Mazzucato, 2007).

Furthermore, in 2004, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the University of Ghana and the Dutch Embassy organised a conference under the theme ‘Migration and Development in Ghana’. The outcome of the conference was a book titled *At Home in the World* edited by Manuh (2005). Following the conference, the Centre for Migration Studies was established in 2006 by the three organisers of the conference with the aim to coordinate, lead and initiate research on migration in Ghana. In another cooperation, the government of Ghana and IOM also initiated the IOM-run ‘Return of Qualified African Nationals’ and the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programmes to prevent brain drain and promote brain gain. The MIDA programme aims at preventing brain drain specifically in the health sector (IOM, 2004).

Other organisations and international agencies also have different projects and initiatives which go a long way in contributing to the structural environment for return migration. Alongside government policies and initiatives, other countries through their embassies and development agencies in Ghana run other programmes. Among some of these countries are the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. A typical example of such structural initiative is the return expert programme that is run by the Centre for International Migration (CIM) under the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the German Federal Employment Agency. The programme supports experts who studied in Germany to return to their home country by either finding them a job placement in the home country and topping up their salaries or returnees registering with them for a salary top-up after they (returnees) find jobs in their home country. The salary top-ups can last for six months or more.

Furthermore, recent developments led to the official launching of a National Migration Policy (NMP) for Ghana. Launched in April 2016, the National migration policy was a collaborative effort of the Migration Unit of the Ministry for Interior and the Centre for Migration Policy. The policy epitomises a bold attempt by the country to manage migration and sustainable development through a comprehensive framework. In its goal, the policy is intended to ‘promote the benefits and minimise the costs of internal and international migration through legal means with the rights and security of migrants well respected to ensure socio-economic development in Ghana’ (Ministry of Interior, 2016; p.5).
On return migration, the NMP recognises the challenges of return and reintegration or returnees citing the massive abrupt return migration, which took place between 2011 and 2012. This time saw a significant number of Ghanaian migrants returning home. The NMP’s policy goals on return migration are:

- To facilitate the return, readmission, and reintegration of Ghanaian emigrations;
- To strengthen government capacity to manage return migration;
- To raise awareness about job opportunities in Ghana;
- To assist returning migrants with re-engagement in their sector of work;
- To create awareness among Ghanaians about the positive contribution of returnees.

The intended strategies to achieve the above goals are to:

- Establish a unit within the Ministry responsible for the implementation of the NMP;
- Draft guidelines for the evacuation of Ghanaian nationals abroad, during situations of political crisis, deportation, or natural disaster;
- Develop a government framework for the reintegration of returned migrants;
- Establish a database of Ghanaians residing abroad;
- Promote socio-cultural acceptance of returnees and the protection of returnee (and family) rights;
- Create bi-lateral and multi-lateral partnerships on migrant return and reintegration;
- Offer rehabilitation services to forced returnees, provide incentives for returning migrants to restart work in their area of expertise, and advertise this among the emigrant and the Ghanaian population.

Source: (Ministry of Interior, 2016)

Another project that is running alongside the NMP is Ghana’s diaspora engagement Project. The diaspora engagement project was started as a year-long project in 2012 resulting from a partnership between the government of Ghana and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The project was intended to contribute to the efforts of the Government of Ghana to mobilise the country’s diaspora toward its socio-economic development through dialogue and subsequent developmental engagements in Ghana. The diaspora represents an important, and often, an underappreciated national resource whose immense contribution to Ghana’s development cannot be overemphasised. It was implemented as a sustainable process by which the government and its agencies can harness the resources,
expertise, and goodwill of the sizable Ghanaian diaspora for the country. The project targets explicitly Ghanaian diaspora associations in the five countries (USA, Italy, UK, Germany, and the Netherlands) with the highest concentrations of Ghanaian emigrants. Specific interventions planned under the project include profiling of Ghanaian diaspora groups in the target countries, holding of dialogue fora between the Government of Ghana and the diaspora, the establishment of a national Diaspora Support Unit, the creation of a diaspora database and diaspora website. It is envisioned that this project will serve as a platform for facilitating the engagement of the country’s emigrants in sustainable development by the Government of Ghana.

Following up on the objectives of the project, the diaspora support unit was established in 2012 to facilitate a strong relationship between the Ghanaian diaspora and the State. It is expected that such facilitation will result in the increment of investment of resources (know-how, financial, experience) of the Ghanaian diaspora in social and economic initiatives in Ghana. The specific objectives of the unit were to ensure good relations between diaspora and Ghanaian authorities, support favourable migration and investment policies for the diaspora, and ensure that the Diaspora is well informed on services and resource transfer options available in Ghana.

On the day-to-day operations of the unit, bottlenecks preventing active diaspora involvement in Ghana’s development are to be addressed. After the initial period for the DSU was exhausted, the unit was adopted into the foreign affairs ministry as a bureau of the ministry. This resulted in not only consolidating the sustainability of the project, but it also broadens the real scope of the new bureau. The primary visible evidence of the existence of the Diaspora bureau is its website which provides necessary information and other news items intended for the diaspora communities.

4.4.1. Analysing Ghana’s Political Environment for Return Migration

Upon inter-policy and initiative analysis, what we see here is a wide range of initiatives and projects that are set up to offer a structural framework and environment that facilitates the return and a smooth re-embedding of returnees. The final arrival of the migration policy which is currently awaiting its implementation will test the coordinated efforts and political will to tackle what seems to be nothing more than policy ideas. Past policies and initiatives by different governments have been criticised for lacking institutional coordination and proper implementation (Awumbila et
al. 2008). The problem of duplication of efforts and the lack of information flow from one office corridor to the other are some of the main successes that we seek to celebrate from current initiatives such as the migration policy.

A careful examination of Ghanaian’s migration and return migration initiatives in terms of policies and programme shows many independent efforts. This affects the effectiveness and coordination of these different efforts. For the successful implementation of the NMP, this study argues for efforts aimed at inter-institutional coordination on data sharing and dialogue between different stakeholders. Furthermore, there is a need for public education and information sharing especially among those impacted by the NMP. The reason, for example, many of the migrant respondents in this research have no idea about many of these initiatives and programmes. This means that until programmes are un-shelved and rolled out to the targeted group of people, the basis for embarking on such initiatives, to mitigate return challenges, may never be met even though initiatives have been put in place. Civil society groups as well as returnees themselves should also foster a spirit of looking for and demanding some of these return migration structural environments.

The above government programmes plus other reports and recommendations35 for Ghana confirm not only the country’s seriousness toward attracting its citizens abroad, but it also suggests the importance of return migration to sustainable development. Unfortunately, many of these policies, programmes and recommendations have failed to achieve their intended objectives (Anarfi & Kwankye 2003, Awumbila et al. 2008). This is because these policies and programmes do not have an integration strategy for returnees and the complex process of return is not well grasped. The over-reliance on the developmental attributes of returnees thus lead to a neglect of personal entanglements that need addressing.

4.4.2. Returnee Mobilisations in Ghana

Returnees are not a homogenous group in Ghana. They are spread all over the country and are usually involved in many activities and professions.

They cannot be located in a particular settlement in Ghana neither are they easily accessible. Within this multiplicity and heterogeneity among returnees about activities and lifestyles, many returnees are mobilised in Ghana. Mobilisation in this context refers to how returnee groups and associations are formed and frameworks under which these groups operate. Thus, the social, professional, and cultural groupings of returnees are still the focus here. During the research period, interviews with organisations and individuals who served as experts in return migration in Ghana played essential roles this section. In other words, while trying to understand the group dynamics and group formations among returnees in their home country, the descriptions and analysis of both formal, informal, structured, and unstructured mobilisation of returnees became necessary as part of efforts to unravel the different environments that exist in Ghana for returnees. Visiting different organisations and institutions prompted the underlining features and contexts, which lead to mobilisations of returnees.

Returnee mobilisation in Ghana can be grouped into two; external and internal mobilisation. External mobilisations are those that come about as a result of institutions or organisations whose efforts create platforms that bring together return migrants. Internal mobilisations, however, refer to efforts initiated by returnees themselves that end up bringing them together for a common purpose.

The external mobilisation of return migrants in Ghana can be observed from the efforts of local institutions and international organisations. The local institutions represent both government and non-governmental institutions. An example of a governmental institution that mobilises returnees is the Diaspora support bureau which through its returnee profiling system brings together returnees for some events and interactions. Furthermore, other government institutions such as the Ghana National Investment Promotion Council (GNIPC) also organise investment platforms that sometimes create avenues for returnees to mingle and interact.

Non-governmental institutions that are engaged in mobilising returns are the main professional associations. For example, the legal requirement of certain professions such as medical professionals (Ghana Medical Association (GMA)), law practitioners (Ghana Bar Association (GBA)), and other industries like the Chamber of Commerce (CoC) offer opportunities where returnee mobilisations can be perused. Others may include university lecturers and professors who mobilise themselves because they work in the same universities.
On the part of international mobilising institutions and organisations, perhaps the most common is the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). In the past years, programmes such as the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) and the Return of Qualified Nationals programme called the Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) III Ghana have led to returnee mobilisations in Ghana. Through these programmes, the IOM\(^{36}\) maintains a database of returnees from different backgrounds. Other international institutions and organisations that engage in programmes and activities that lead to returnee mobilisations included foreign country embassies such as the British Council, the Netherlands embassy, the US embassy as well as the German embassy. Additionally, international organisations such as the German development cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) among others are worth mentioning. For instance, the Centre for International Migration’s (CIM) programme under the German development cooperation (GIZ) offers a platform where returnees from Germany meet periodically. Apart from these, other foreign institutions and associations such as university alumni networks (example, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) alumni network\(^{37}\), Harvard University Alumni network etc.) also enhance returnee mobilisation in Ghana.

In addition to external organisations and establishments whose activities lead to direct or indirect mobilisations of returnees in Ghana, there are many cases where return migrants themselves have mobilised into groups and associations – internal mobilisation. These kinds of returnee networks are usually informed by many reasons some of which include sharing of information and for social events\(^{38}\). Example of such mobilisation is the Ahaspora\(^{39}\) which was founded to bring together returnees for social events and activities.

Also, many returnees mobilise themselves on lines of alumni, cities where they lived abroad and even from countries where they return. For example, some returnees from Germany continue to celebrate Oktoberfest

\(^{36}\) http://www.iom.int/countries/ghana.

\(^{37}\) http://ic.daad.de/accra/alumni.htm.

\(^{38}\) Kindly define ahaspora first before pointing readers to read more See http://www.ahaspora.com/.

\(^{39}\) ‘Aha’ is a Twi (Akan) word for ‘Here’ and ‘spora’ is a stem of Diaspora. This name befits our status of being home as global citizens. The group aims to bridge the gap between those who are ‘Ahas’, Ahasporans, and Diasporans, by sharing ideas and experiences to build a true ‘Gateway to Africa’ http://www.ahaspora.com/ .
Another way returnees mobilise themselves is through hometown associations. Many returnees who come from a particular city or village are sometimes brought together during events and other gatherings. Migrants usually as part of efforts to perform a particular function to support their communities initiate some of these events.

In many cases, some of these mobilisations are a mere continuation of diaspora communities abroad. Thus, due to many ethnic diaspora associations abroad (Byfield, 2000; Magu, 2014; Manuh, 1998; Mohamoud, 2003), when members of these communities return, they tend to continue to mobilise themselves on these lines when they return to Ghana. The different ways in which returnees are mobilised is depicted in figure 5 below.

It is important to know that many returnee groups and associations are coming up in modern day Ghana. In analysing these networks and mobilisations, one concludes that these groups’ formations and association establishments provide different spaces (both virtual and physical) where returnee relations and coordination take place. As a result, different migration identities are pursued while the processes of reintegration continue. The mobilisation of returnees may be construed in terms of skilled and unskilled returnees as well.

**Figure 5: Returnee mobilisation in Ghana**

Source: Author’s construction

Professional and alumni associations intentionally target skilled returnees. However, other forms of mobilisations target returnees in general regard-

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40 Source: Expert interview with a staff of GIZ/CIM Ghana office.
less of skills. For example, business associations and community/hometown associations do not necessarily consider skills.

4.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter has underscored that there are different return migration existing in different historical contexts in Ghana. It emphasised that return migration in Ghana is heterogeneous. The chapter also reveals the different government programmes and interventions that reflect efforts by various Ghana governments to promote migration issues in Ghana. Despite these efforts, the chapter recommends inter-institutional coordination and cooperation at various levels of government for migration policies and programmes to be effective. Return migration still receives less attention and constructed on the accounts of developmental gains of returnees. The overall chapter, therefore, clears the pathway into understanding the past and present situation of Ghana in terms of migration. It shows that Ghana continues to be a country of migration in all forms. The role of this chapter in the overall research, however, is to highlight the political and structural environment existing in Ghana as a country of return.
Chapter 5. Research Methodology and Methods

‘Contrary to what you may have heard, qualitative research designs do exist.’
(Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp.16).

5.1. Introduction

This research addresses the mechanisms through which skilled Ghanaian returnees construct a sense of belonging as they reintegrate socially, structurally, culturally, and emotionally. Questions to elicit such research goal are answered using qualitative approaches to social research. The empirical work in this study explored how skilled returnees reintegrate, how and why they make individual decisions regarding their reintegration and how their sense of belonging influences these decisions.

This chapter presents the methodology and methods that were used in the study, including the ethical considerations that were made during data collection and analysis, and at the discussion stage. I gathered empirical evidence in Ghana, as part of existing information on Ghanaian returnees. As a qualitative study, I used semi-structured interviews to collect skilled Ghanaian returnees’ immigration stories. These experiences grasp the complexities and nuances of migration decisions, experiences, return decisions and experiences of reintegration and belonging after return. Besides, I conducted focus group discussions with non-migrants to understand how returnees are perceived in the Ghanaian society. Official (governmental) data on Ghanaian returnees remains inadequate to provide the necessary information on the return and reintegration experiences of Ghanaian returnees. As a result, this study adds to existing research on return migration and migration in Ghana.

There are four sections in this chapter. The first section provides details on methodology and research design. The second section explains the approach and sampling strategies that I used, as the third section explains the methods and procedures I used for the analysis. The last part discusses ethical considerations I made in the course of this research study and concludes with a summary.
In this study (exploratory), I used methodological triangulation\textsuperscript{41} to combine different qualitative methods for gathering data and presentation of findings. The study embraces the interpretivism paradigm (constructivism). Hence, the focal point of the research is the reality as experienced by the entities under study (Bryman, 2012). Constructivism emphasises that ‘data and findings of a study are created within the process of research’ (Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, 1998; pp. 206). This means that ‘people, including researchers, construct the realities in which they participate’ (Charmaz, 2014; pp. 202); interpreting the studied phenomenon itself is a construction (Charmaz, 2014).

As a researcher, I positioned myself as a co-constructor of the data, by not adhering to the assumption that there ‘is’ a given reality out there on which I collect data. Thus, I draw on the experiences and constructions of multiple views of returnees about the phenomena of return, reintegration, and sense of belonging, and ‘locate it in its web of connections and constraints’ (Charmaz, 2014). The choice of a constructivist approach and the qualitative research approaches is because this study examines a contextualised process, difficult to quantify. Also, this research analytically describes social scenes that recreate feelings, networks, beliefs, practices, actions, and decisions among individuals\textsuperscript{42} and such are better looked at from the constructivist and qualitative lenses as subjective views could be better captured through such. Furthermore, I adopted ethnographic and grounded theory research design approaches in the collection and analysis of data and for discussing the results of this research work.

The grounded theory approach that was used in data collection and analysis, as well as the presentation of data, can be described as a quasi-grounded theory approach. Grounded theory emerged from the work of Glaser and Strauss in 1967 through their book ‘The Discovery of the Grounded Theory’ which became a turning point for doing qualitative research. In this book, Glaser and Strauss advised that the approach for collecting and analysing data in social science should be systematic (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I refer to the approach/steps suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the ‘classical’ steps to doing grounded theory.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} See Bryman, 2008; Mikkelsen 1995; Denzin 1970.
\item \textsuperscript{42} http://www.upei.ca/~xliu/ed611/day6.htm.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
In spite of borrowing primary fundamental rationales and premises from grounded theory, I did not adhere to a ‘classical’ grounded theory (especially its steps collecting and analysing data at the same time during fieldwork, and the back-and-forth visits to the research field). Indeed, grounded theory in itself is not a strict bound method, with a single application for conducting research. The quasi-nature suggests the cherry picking of different approaches in grounded theory to suit this particular research. By adopting a constructivist approach, my positioning in grounded theory is closer to the propositions of Charmaz (2014) than, for instance, to Glaser or Strauss’ approaches to grounded theory.

5.3. Sampling Procedure

In this section, I present how the empirical fieldwork unfolded. It covers the sampling processes by referring to the sampling techniques that I used for finding respondents for this research.

5.3.1. People: The Sampling Strategy

Return migrants in Ghana are hard to reach people. Just like how Atkinson and Flint (2001) describe about population, hard-to-reach population refers to a population that is difficult to locate and has an unusual or stigmatised condition. Skilled returnees, however, are not stigmatised or live in any particular conditions in Ghana. Nonetheless, returnees represent a particular segment of the population and are difficult to locate because they are spread in different parts of the country and even in the same city.

To be able to reach the targeted people for this study, purposive sampling techniques (non-probability sampling) was employed. Purposive sampling aims to ‘sample cases or participants strategically so that those samples are relevant to the research questions that are being posed’ (Bryman, 2012; p418.). Within the forms of purposive sampling, I drew on theoretical sampling as proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Theoretical sampling is ‘a type of grounded theory sampling in which the researcher aims to develop the properties of his or her developing categories or theory, not to sample randomly selected populations or to sample representative distributions of a particular population. When engaging in theoretical

sampling, the researcher seeks people, events, or information to illuminate and define the boundaries and relevance of the categories. Because the purpose of theoretical sampling is to sample to develop the theoretical categories, conducting it can take the researcher across substantive areas’ (Charmaz, 2014; p.204) (see Bryant & Charmaz, 2012). The relevance of the respondents for the research questions of this study, therefore, informed my choice of purposive (theoretical) sampling.

In total, two groups of people were relevant for answering the research questions: returnees and non-migrants. The principal respondents are skilled returnees. However, to ascertain the complexity and the nuance of the socio-cultural environments that returnees go back into, I collected data from non-migrants.

Returnees respondents:
Returnees vary in many aspects regarding where they return from, how long they have been away, how long it has been since returning and whether skilled or not. Within this mix of variations, I used criterion sampling to define the unit of analysis by including people who will be relevant to the research. The following benchmarks were considered in selecting the returnee respondents:

- Skills of the returnee – selecting returnees who are skilled having a bachelor’s degree or above);
- Professional status of returnee – returnees who were students or workers in their host countries for at least two years were selected;
- Region from which returnee stayed – returnees from North America and Western Europe were preferred;
- Duration of return – returnees who have spent and stayed in the home country six months or more.

The reason behind these criteria include;

Skilled Returnees:
The typical indicator for categorising migrants as skilled is either level of education or occupation type. In this study, I refer to skilled migrant/returnees as ‘persons with tertiary education … typically adults who have completed a formal two-year college education or more’ (IOM 2008, p.52).

As part of the migration-development nexus, the issue of brain drain constitutes a significant proportion of the debate. Thus, the situation where some countries benefit as others lose qualified workforce across the globe is not new to migration literature. Within this discourse, however, the effect of skilled migrants is equally significant in determining the overall implication on the countries that lose their citizens to others. Upon putting the inter-country situation of loss and gains of qualified human resources...
in perspective, I argue that skilled migrants in this study are active agents in this process with the power and ability to make decisions on how they offer their skills and where; regarding geographical location. This is because, according to Rooth & Saarela (2007), in a two-country model ‘where migration flow is negatively selected on skills, return migrants are the ‘best of the worst’ and if it is positively selected on skills, return migrants are the ‘worst of the best.’

Nevertheless, in the case where skills are sufficiently portable, those with higher skills will see it more rewarding to migrate and the same principle drives return (Rooth & Saarela, 2007). It means that skilled migrants possess skills that can move across borders. It presupposes that decision by skilled migrants to either remain in a foreign country or return to the countries of origin should be regarded as calculated and ‘voluntary’ rather than ‘involuntary’ or accidental. Meanwhile, the fluidity and the potential ‘easiness’ for skilled returnees to re-migrate make them an exciting unit of analysis to understand how they make decisions on return and reinteg ration and how they contextualise sense of belonging.

Returnees who stayed in the host countries for at least two years:
The two years in the host country is informed by how I define skilled migrant/returnees (see on page 62, skilled returnees). Thus, it is informed by the assumption that two years is adequate for the completion of a formal college education or more.

Returnees from North America and Western Europe:
The volume of Ghanaian diaspora in these geographical locations informed this criterion (See 1.3. Focus and Underlying Rational). Thus, the economic and social lifestyles in Western societies plus other forms of imagined ‘greener pastures’ make western countries attractive destinations for many Ghanaian emigrants. Hence, a significant number of Ghanaian returnees are from these countries.

Returned for six months or more:
To distinguish between return visits and long-term returns, a period of six months or more was used to select returnees with permanent return intentions. The criterion for a permanent return, however, is weak because there was no way to substantiate planned intentions. However, by selecting returnees who have returned for six months, the assumption was that the returnees had spent enough time to re-experience the home society.

44 The category of Western Europe is only based on geo-political locations of these countries in the European Union.
The non-migrant respondents:
The reason for the non-migrants, in this study, was to understand the home environment within which returnees reintegrate and how they negotiate belonging. Thus, to understand the different domains of reintegration and belonging, it was necessary to comprehend the perceptions of non-migrants toward returnees. As a researcher, I positioned myself in the return environment. The criteria for non-migrants sampling was that the person has a friend or family member who is a returnee but not necessarily a returnee participant in this study. The assumption was that such relationships would expose the non-migrant to personal experiences and encounters with returnees.

The non-migrant focus group members were mixed regarding ethnic and regional backgrounds. Furthermore, the focus group members were made up of people with different educational backgrounds, including higher education background (tertiary level) and lower level academic qualifications (up to high school). For the overall target group for this research, (skilled returnees) I also sampled skilled and unskilled non-migrants representing tertiary education and below the tertiary education level for skilled and unskilled respectively. However, the use of skilled and unskilled is strictly about the educational attainment of the group member and not to any other categorisation structure.

Skilled non-migrants included university students, police officers, and teachers while unskilled non-migrants included hairdressers, street hawkers, car wash boys45, and hairdressers. Except for the university students, all the other occupations are not exclusive regarding the educational attainment (skilled or unskilled) and the kind of occupational activities. To clarify, the fact that the car washing boys and police officers in this study were unskilled and skilled respectively does not mean that all car washing boys are unskilled in Ghana and police officers are all skilled. Instead, the distinction remains solely in the members within the focus group discussions and their educational qualification.

Also, the purposive sampling of non-migrants was not representational per se. The goal was to ascertain views from different social levels and groups that returnees are more likely to encounter daily.

45 The name given to car washing bay attendants.
Data Collection Techniques and Methods

The primary data collection instrument for the study was semi-structured episodic interviews with skilled returnees. Also, I conducted focus group discussions with non-migrants.

5.4.1. Semi-Structured Episodic Interviews – with Return Migrants

Episodic (narrative) interviews are premised on the understanding that respondents' experiences in particular domains of their lives 'are stored and remembered in forms of narrative-episodic and semantic knowledge' (Flick, 2009: p.185). Episodic knowledge is more organised and closer to experiences that have links to concrete situations, unlike semantic knowledge that is based on assumptions and relations that are generalised and abstract (Flick, 2009). These two pieces of knowledge are deemed essential for narrative interviews. I chose to use episodic (narrative) interviews because I was interested in returnees’ context related presentations in the forms of narratives because such a technique makes their recounts proximal to the actual experiences (Flick, 2009: p.186). From the understanding that returnees have a pre-migration, migration and return experiences, the choice of episodic (narrative) interviews to capture these experiences fitted most. Besides, I used episodic (narrative) interviews because returnees’ pre-migration, migration, and return experiences represent situational episodes. Furthermore, these episodes were relevant to the questions that this study seeks to answer.

I used an interview guide (see Appendix 1) with questions about returnees’ before, during, and after return experiences. I developed the interview guide based on the research questions. Although I had developed a conceptual framework which looks at the interrelations of reintegration and sense of belonging, this did not dictate the framing for the interview guide. Rather, I conceptualised the interview guide based on the dictates of the constructivist approach where experiences and personal stories of the respondents remained the goal; with me as an active participant in shaping reality. As such, questions contained in the interview guide were aimed to extract the theoretical sampling underpinnings of the study that informs the phenomena under study – reintegration strategies and constructions of a sense of belonging. I framed the questions to solicit answers to my research questions. The use of semi-structured interviews allows for a mix of
standardisation and comparability, but it also allows the participants the freedom to speak on their terms and frame of reference (Green et al., 2015). The interviews with returnees were conducted at the convenience of the respondents. Interviews were conducted in respondents’ offices, homes, hotel lounges, shops, and café/bars. Before each interview, respondents signed consent forms, and their permissions were sought to audio-record the interviews. The average duration of an interview was 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English with some occasional use of home language (Twi) terminologies and slangs. A total of 30 interviews were conducted. The breakdown of demographic information about the respondents is attached (as Appendix A7).

5.4.3. Focus Group Discussions – with Non-migrants

The focus group discussions were based on Krueger and Casey’s (2015) guidelines for question development and conducting focus group discussions. Accordingly, to ensure consistency across groups while still allowing for flexibility in individual responses during the discussion sessions, I used a semi-structured focus group discussion guide. Some of the questions that I asked were; what do you think about people who travel outside the country and come back? And what do you think about the term ‘burger’? The focus group discussions were conducted among non-migrants who have return migrants as friends or relatives through the use of purposive sampling. A total of four focus group discussions were conducted in 3 cities/towns (Accra, Cape Coast, and Techiman), which also constitutes the three cluster-sampling areas that I planned for the primary field research across Ghana. Two focus group discussions were conducted in Techiman, one in Cape Coast and one in Accra. Notwithstanding, the groups were homogenous when it comes to ethnic backgrounds.

Discussions were held in Twi or English and in some cases mixed. There were both homogenous and heterogeneous compositions of the discussion groups regarding men and women. The discussions were conducted within a 6-month interval in two phases (phase 1 = May – July 2015; phase 2 = December 2015 – January 2016). The focus group discussion sessions lasted between 1 and 1.5 hours. Before starting any focus group discussion ses-

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46 Home language has been used in this book instead of local language because of how local can sometimes be derogatory in its use. Home language refers to the ethnic languages that are spoken in Ghana.

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sions, I sang a verse of a well known song or a phrase about returnees – as focal stimuli. I mostly sang ‘borga borga ena eye den?’ (returnee and so what?), and used phrases such as ‘borga aye loose’ (the broke returnee) that are ubiquitous and well known. The use of these focal stimuli served as an ice-breaker to ease tensions between the group members and me. The ages of the group members range from 20 to 46 years for all the composition.

5.5. Analysis: Method and Approach

5.5.2. Data Analysis

This study uses the qualitative approach to examine returnees’ readjustments into home society and focuses on how returnees construct a sense of belonging and reintegration. The use of data from open-ended questions geared towards qualitative analysis. As expected in most qualitative research, the analysis of the qualitative data for this research has been a back and forth process. In the end, my approaches to the analysis of the interviews and focus group discussions data changed when compared to my initial planned approach for analysis. Thus, when I started working on my data (episodic interviews), the idea was to concentrate on particular research questions – such as reasons for migrating, reasons for return and experiences after return). Soon, I realised – after reading some of my interviews – that emphasising on my research questions alone would limit me to a small fraction of the data. Therefore, I resolved to work with complete interviews for the first few interviews. Listening to the interview tapes and comparing it with the transcribed interviews gave me a general understanding and enhanced my familiarity with the data. This process made me realise how my personal experiences as a Ghanaian and potential returnee is intertwined with some of the experiences of my respondents. In this sub-chapter, I will outline the steps involved in the analysis of the data.

5.5.2.1 Adopting Grounded Theory Analytical Approach

I used coding techniques from grounded theory. The grounded theory approach to qualitative data coding is a systematic approach that follows either three or two major steps depending on whether one follows the ‘traditional’ approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or the more recent approach (Charmaz, 2014). The three crucial steps proposed by Glaser & Strauss
(1967) are open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding involves sifting through the interview transcripts for major concepts and patterns in the data. It includes line-by-line, word-by-word, or paragraph-by-paragraph (or a combination of two or all) examination of the interview transcript. Glaser & Strauss (1967) mentioned that the most critical process in the open coding step is constant comparative analysis. This is where concepts are identified, and transcripts are always reviewed for commonalities and differences.

In addition, codes are compared with one another within the same and or other transcripts. Axial coding comes after open coding, and it is where major concepts that were developed during open coding are applied to large amounts of data. Here, categories are interconnected to provide clarity and definition to each category while looking for variations between and within categories. This leads to sub-category development, which gives ‘fine tuning’ to the codes as different aspects of phenomena are identified. The final step in Glaser & Strauss’ (1967) approach is selective coding, which brings out the relationships between categories. It involves building a story that connects the categories, producing a discursive set of theoretical propositions. All these steps go beyond description to a theory building that is ‘grounded’ in the data.

Charmaz’s (2014) two significant steps in grounded theory coding are initial and focused coding. The initial coding is similar to open coding by Glaser & Strauss (1967). It involves naming each word, line, or segment of the data. The focus coding, however, uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesise, integrate, a large amount of data.

As recommended in grounded theory approaches, I approached the data with an open mind. I started the analysis without predefined codes or any coding scheme. Furthermore, I had no literature cues that could influence the direction of my coding and analysis either. Below are the steps in my analysis.

47 It is more a combination of axial and selective coding.
Case selection:
The idea in GT is to do the code development based on a time-consuming, in-depth procedure. As mentioned earlier (on page 64), I had a total of 30 interview data (15 transcribed) – and as a result, I focused on a small number of the interview data; six interviews out of the 15 at the start. The selec-
tion of these six interviews was based on the following decision. First, I organised the interviews based on the different characteristics that resulted from the different respondents. The characteristics include marital status of returnees, the countries they returned from, gender, returnee with children and duration of their stay abroad, and how long they have returned. Thus, while familiarising myself with the data, I noticed – in line with the principles of theoretical coding – that the characteristics mentioned above made a difference in what the participants experienced and reported. Therefore, I selected those interviews which were in line with the ideas underlying theoretical sampling, for variety of these characteristics. These variations were in the data in spite of the sampling technique used. For instance, regarding marital status, I looked for single and married returnees as well as those who returned with children.

Regarding the countries of destination, I did not select every country but made sure that the variations are spread across the two central regions of destination. Additionally, while there are returnees who were away for as long as over two decades, there were others that went away for at most three years but not less than two years. The same applies to how long the respondents had returned home. There were those who had returned for five years (maximum in the entire data) and those who had returned for less than a year but not lesser than six months.

The reason for selecting interviews that have these different variations was to understand the several returnees in this study, and here I must stress that my goal was towards representation but to have as many variations as possible. Furthermore, returnees are heterogeneous in their experiences and narratives. Hence each interview data was considered as such.

Step 1: Initial coding phase

I used line-by-line coding during the initial coding phase. This follows what Saldana (2016) calls pre-coding where I circled and highlighted some parts of the transcripts while reading through them before the initial coding. In the initial coding phase, I used different approaches, mostly versus coding, process coding and in vivo coding. Versus coding identifies dichotomous or binary terms that directly conflict each other (Saldana, 2016 citing Wolcott (2003)). I used versus coding to highlight segments of ideas or experience ‘that suggest strong conflicts, microaggressions or competing goals within, among, and between participants’ (Saldana, 2016; p 137). Process coding is also called action coding because it uses gerunds (words ending with ‘-ing’) to convey action in the data (Charmaz, 2014; Saldana, 2016). For most of my codes I used process coding because psychological concepts such as prejudice, identity, memory, and in my case,
sense of belonging have in them embedded processes and according to Willig (2013), these are things people do rather than something people have (Saldana, 2016). In vivo coding, also known as ‘literal coding’ ‘verbatim coding,’ ‘inductive coding,’ ‘natural coding,’ and ‘emic coding’ (Saldana, 2016) refers to the use of an exact word or phrase of the respondent as a code. Where the concepts or words or phrases used by my respondents were theoretical or carry a significant idea or expresses a specific behavioural display, I used in vivo coding.

The different coding methods for the initial coding phase of my analysis were used only when it fitted the data. I also wanted to avoid using a one-way method of coding. In my view, combining different methods of coding (Saldana, 2016) at the initial coding stage offered me the freedom, flexibility, and control in using the appropriate way to label segments of my data. Additionally, it helped me to capture the content for what I was digging from the data.

Table 6: Example of codes in the initial coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Coding method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I try to assimilate, but I won’t let their culture also influence my culture.’</td>
<td>My culture vs their culture</td>
<td>Versus coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘It’s just a feeling. You know the feeling of the unknown can make you really go down or stay afloat. I didn’t know what was going to happen tomorrow.’ (1:146)</td>
<td>Living in uncertainty</td>
<td>Process coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Especially, society is vile. You can quote me anywhere. Society is vile’ (1:235)</td>
<td>Society is vile</td>
<td>In vivo coding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2: The focus-coding phase
The second phase of my analysis (after the initial coding) is challenging to characterise under one of the two main approaches in grounded theory already mentioned (page 67). The actual process for the second part of my analysis started after my initial coding when I was left with more than 1000 codes. To start the focus coding, I had to merge codes, recode, and re-evaluate my initial codes. According to Charmaz (2014), focus coding is concentrating on initial codes; making a comparison with and between codes
At this point, the comparative process began – comparison within and across interviews. While doing focus coding, many ideas and conceptualisations surfaced which I wrote down in the form of memos. At this point, the interconnectedness of codes, re-coding and merging codes took me to a different level of understanding – a higher abstraction than the initial codes.

The iterative nature of grounded theory meant that I used initial and focus coding along with each other. All through the process, the main activities were constant comparisons of codes, data, and conceptualisations of theoretical hunches. I used process coding in my focus coding. Likewise, I maintained some of my in vivo codes in the focus-coding phase. Also, I used the Axial-coding technique. I used Axial coding to specify the properties and dimensions of a category as it deals with the interrelatedness of categories and subcategories (Straus & Corbin, 1990, 1998). Using Axial coding, I defined the relationships between the different categories and integrated all the categories systematically.

At this point, I adopted issue focus analysis – to learn from all respondents about specific issues, events, or process (Weiss, 1994). Issue focus analysis became relevant because I needed to focus on fundamental issues/concepts of research; belonging and reintegration. These concepts were part of my initial conceptualisation for this study, and therefore a focus on them was justified. To connect these concepts to the entire analytical process meant that I let the data speak for itself during the initial coding stage as explained earlier. This was followed by a careful and conscious look out for these concepts and how they have been emerging from the data.

Furthermore, because I used episodic interviews, the use of issue focus analysis helped to concentrate on these episodes separately (and how the concepts, belonging and reintegration, have been emerging within each episode) and later together – alongside all other emerging issues from the data. For example, looking at pre-migration, while abroad, and after return episodes; and at the same time looking for traces and meanings of belonging within these episodes.

Again, the approach facilitated the integration of my categories. According to Weiss (1994), there are two steps in integrating categories – local integration and inclusive integration. The bringing together of all sources of data collection refers to the local integration. Meanwhile, inclusive integration means creating a coherent story by bringing together all aspects of the analysis – similar to selective coding as proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1987). Nevertheless, I did not strictly follow these processes as I brought together all aspects of each episode of the migrants’ experiences to create a coherent
story. For example, I followed each episode differently and analysed each episode separately by focusing on issues arising from these individual episodes – before migration, while abroad and after return experiences. While doing this, concepts, and issues such as belonging, and reintegration were followed throughout each episode to observe how the respondents – in each episode – talked about these concepts.

I used Atlas.ti to support the entire analysis. After conceptualising the analysis with the approaches discussed above, I started to sort and to create categories using code families. During the axial and focus coding stage, I used networks in Atlas.ti to establish the different relationships and integrations of categories and between categories. See the diagram below.

Figure 7: Code groups/Code families (Screen Shot)

The screenshot above depicts the code families (code group) on the left and the different codes on the rights. Colours were assigned to each sub-category to denote all the codes under a particular sub-category. This made it easy to group codes and to avoid getting lost in the data. An example of the primary integration, using networks is in the diagram below.
The Screenshot above shows the relationships between codes in the same subcategories; distinguished with the same colour. Relationships between subcategories and the main categories are also depicted. This integration (network) illustrates the different dimensions of a category and its interrelatedness with other categories, thereby creating a coherent story in the form of a condensed network.
Overall, in the analysis of the interview data, I utilised different approaches in grounded theory when useful for my data. This was time-consuming, but in the long run, it gave me much control over the data leading to different emerging issues which otherwise might be lost. Questions such as: what is going on here? What does it mean and how does this relate to other categories? guided me throughout the analysis. At some point in the analysis, there were no new emerging issues. I was thus nearing theoretical saturation. This happened after going through the rest of the transcribed interviews, looking for new emerging concepts and ideas. When nothing new was coming out of the data, I used the existing categories to run through the rest of the interview data to check for reaffirmation, renaming and recoding of existing codes and categories.

Also, the processes and approaches described above were used to analyse the focus group discussions. Hitherto, even though I have described my analysis in phases, it does not mean that these phases were mutually exclusive. Instead, it was fluid and involved a rigorous back and forth process as depicted in figure 8.
5.6. Personal Reflections

My relation to this research has never been understated or neglected from the start, during and after the analysis, and writing of this book. I am a Ghanaian by birth. I grew up in Ghana and did most of my schooling – from kindergarten to the university level – in Ghana. Due to the nature of my father’s occupation as a civil servant, I moved around in Ghana from one region to the other while growing up. Across the country, I have lived in the southern, central, and northern parts of Ghana. After my bachelor’s degree in Ghana and working for two years, I travelled to Germany to pursue a master’s degree. A reflection on myself makes me nothing short of the people I researched in this book. My experiences as a native Ghanaian with knowledge of everyday life in Ghana, and now as a potential returnee make me inseparable from this study. Even though my closeness to the people I researched may influence my stance in this book, being in this position helps me to elaborate some of the issues and narratives that I deal with in this book. Besides, my goal in this qualitative research is not to pride in objectivity even if there can be anything like that. Such reflection is in line with what Charmaz (2012) characterises as constructive grounded theory. ‘The constructivist approach treats research as construction but acknowledges that it occurs under specific conditions – of which we may not be aware, and which may not be of our choosing’ (Charmaz, 2012; p.13).

I must concede that during interviews and discussions, there were some cases where I did not probe terminologies and statements because of my familiarity with those situations, sayings, and expressions – especially for the first few interviews. In some instances, especially during interviews with returnees, many of them thought of me as a returnee and someone who understand their situation. In this way, there were many instances where expressions like ‘as you know it yourself’ was used. In such cases, I had to push for meanings than just letting those thoughts go or taking it for granted that I know. However, I realised that the idea that I was one of them made it easier for the interviewees to have a chatting environment with me than a ‘typical’ interview session. By chatting, I mean that I felt like they were sharing their experiences and thoughts as they will share.

48 In my observation, there was no uncomfortable moments in sharing what otherwise could be seen as ‘shameful’ experiences by someone who does not know or have not had similar experiences. For example, respondents were not uncomfortable in opening up to the menial jobs and other ‘embarrassing’ moments they were part of abroad.
with a colleague than a researcher. This environment, in my view, removed any researcher-respondent obstacle that could have arisen (such as telling me what I need to hear). As I reflect on this, the relaxed and comfortable manner and atmosphere in which my respondents shared their experiences and thoughts made it not only relaxing for me as a researcher, but it opened up ways that made me understand them better than I would have should I have only been seen as a researcher. For example, I was driven around by one of my respondents to visit some of the projects that he is involved with. His idea was to show me so that if I want to invest, I could partner him in his ventures. At this point, my role changed from a researcher to a potential business partner who could be trusted with business investment.

While the skilled returnee respondents considered me a returnee, my role and position during the focus group discussion were different. For the non-migrant focus group discussants, I represent one of the returnees who needed to know about [this ‘group’ of people] returnees. During the focus group discussions, I had to introduce myself to the discussants about who I was and where I had come from, and what the focus group discussion was for – as ethical requirement dictates. As a result, I got the impression that many of the discussants felt at ease and narrated their experiences with returnees as if to inform me about what my colleague returnees do and how they feel about some of the things ‘we’ returnees to and how they perceive ‘us’ returnees. In many instances, phrases like ‘wo nkrofo no’ (translated: your people) and references such as ‘se wo nso woye borga’ (translated: ‘but you are also a borga’) were directed at me as respondents made their points.

I must say that during these discussions many expressions (for example ‘yooyoo’) and metaphorical expressions with hidden meanings (such as ‘freezing in his palms’) were used for which I had to give contextual meanings and interpretations during the analysis and presentation of the results. As a limitation, I must agree to the possibility that my closeness to the society and the people may have caused some of my informants to withhold elaborate descriptions and explanations because of the assumption that I already know. I realised this during the analysis of the data. In some instances, I addressed such cases by consulting friends and in some few cases contacting some of the respondents to get clarifications and elaborate interpretations during the report writing stage of this book.

Borrowing from the constructivists’ camp, I must add that the result and findings of this study would have been different if a non-native had conducted this study and even other natives. Nevertheless, it is right to be
open to the idea that there could have been the possibility of losing some issues to interpretations due to lack of understanding of the way of life and the narrative expressions that were sometimes used. On the contrary, there could be some issues that would have been revealed which may not be covered in this study due to the level of my closeness. Nevertheless, the efforts I put into minimising the ‘adverse effects’ of my proximity to the researched phenomenon make me confident to admit that I did not miss much of what I could gather and explain regarding skilled returnees in Ghana. Furthermore, I had support from friends and colleagues (also from colloquiaums and supervisors) who looked at my data to give me different perspectives to complement my own necessarily limited perspectives.

While interpreting the results, I provide a broader background and contextual framework based on my familiarity with the society and the people I interviewed. In my view, I do not see my position -both as a researcher, and as a potential respondent– as problematic or having an undesired influence on the results and interpretations that I offer. Instead, I consider this as a ‘positive’ addition which puts this study in a validity spot.

I am a direct beneficiary of this study. As I reflect on my role in the entire process of the study, my gain from the study is significant. Researching on people that I most probably will turn out to be one of them gives me a first-hand understanding of what it means to return home. The different roles I played and how I was perceived, changed me as a person. But this does not leave out the contradictions that I still have when it comes to how to reconcile my roles and positions now as a researcher and when I finally return ‘home’ someday. The point is still that return one can never be well prepared to mitigate challenges associated with the return process. However, through this research, my attachments have equipped me to take into consideration issues I may never have thought about should I return today. This includes the network space I have amassed within the research period. From this personal reflection, the African adage that ‘Man, know thyself’ applies to me in terms of how I have come to know myself as a potential returnee someday.

49 These background descriptions and interpretations should not be seen as a generalisation of my result to the issues or people I research about.
5.7. Ethical Considerations

During the interviews, all the respondents signed a consent form which specified their rights and responsibilities as well as my role as a researcher. With this information, including my contact details, the respondents had the right and opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. The same ethical principles were followed for the focus group discussions and the expert interviews.

Upon my first research visit to Ghana, even though I had followed the academic and research situation in Ghana, I had no idea about the existence of an ethical committee. I got to know that the committee is responsible for issuing ethical clearance certificates for research in the social sciences. Getting this information was helpful because the government and the academic community welcomed the move to give ethical clearance to academic research in Ghana. A failure to get this clearance automatically renders the research illegal and difficult to publish reports from such a study even when the researcher conducts it without the necessary clearance. After putting together an application and sending my proposal which indicated the data to be collected as well as the consent forms for all the participants needed for the study, the research was evaluated and given an ethical clearance certificate. Thus, this study passed the required ethical standards regarding the academic regulation and requirements in Ghana (See appendix 6. Ethical Clearance). Even before getting the ethical clearance from the University of Ghana’s ethics committee, I provided all the necessary platforms to observe and uphold the ethical requirements and standards of my graduate school making this research solid on its ethical considerations.

For the interviews with returnees, some respondents offered that I could use their original names in this book. They were those respondents who associated with the study as a way to channel their stories to the world. Others objected to this. To provide anonymity in general, I mixed the names up; making it difficult to identify respondents by their names. However, those who expressed no objection to the detailed background and the use of their names in the book can still be traced by their stories. Another ethical consideration relates to how comfortable some returnees became with me. Thus, by regarding me as one of them, some forgot my role as a researcher and in some cases volunteered information that was too personal. To deal with such situations, I asked the respondents whether to pause the recorder or not, and in other cases, the respondents themselves
asked to speak off the record. Many of such discussions, therefore, were not taped.

For the focus group discussions, I used false names for all the respondents to maintain their anonymity.

5.8. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined and justified the methodology and methods employed in the study. The use of triangulation of qualitative methods, for both data collection and analysis reveals the rootedness of the methodology in constructivism.

The chapter described the methods for collecting data from skilled returnees - semi-structured episodic interview and egocentric network maps. Furthermore, focus group discussions were used to collect data from non-migrants. The data collected in this study were analysed using the grounded theory approach to coding. Also, the chapter detailed my role and the ethical considerations adhered to in the entire process.
Results and Discussions

I. Overview of the interview data and respondents

In the following chapters, I will present the results of the study following the analysis of the interview with returnees\textsuperscript{50}. The use of episodic interviews called for a focus on different periods of the returnees’ lives that are important for understanding return, reintegration, and returnees’ conceptions of sense of belonging. Return migration is best understood when the entire migration phases and experiences are wholly considered rather than considering them as individual events. The following chapters contain the stories of returnees covering the period of their time in Ghana before migration, experiences while abroad and from their after-return experiences respectively. The result is founded on providing detailed individual accounts within these episodes of the migration cycle. While interpreting the results, I offer – in some cases – contextual standpoints, based on my familiarity with the research environment (Ghana) to disentangle some of the difficulties surrounding the themes that I present.

II. Description of the Interview Data

I returned from the fieldwork in Ghana with 30 interviews. From the 30 interviewees, 20 and 10 were males and females respectively. The number of single and married returnees stood at 14 and 16 respectively. Out of the 16 married returnees, seven had children. Most of the married returnees met their partners abroad and either married abroad or came to conduct their marriage ceremonies in Ghana. Few were married before travelling abroad. Many returnees travelled for education, and they averagely stayed for less than three years. Some returnees had their partners join them abroad or visit them abroad and as a result, had some of their children abroad. Those whose partners did not join them had their kids in Ghana. Only three of the returnees returned with their children. These returnees

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\textsuperscript{50} The use of returnee (s) anywhere in this chapter is largely in reference to those particular individuals that I interviewed for this study and not Ghanaian returnees in general.
met their partners abroad and had their children there before returning with them to Ghana. The average age of the returnees before migration stand at 25 but 35 after return. This means that the returnees in the study are in their active working years. Except for one retired returnee, the other returnees in this study can be traced to different jobs and industries like financial services, NGOs, hospitality, human resources, manufacturing, academia, and the telecommunication industries. None of my respondents was unemployed, yet many mentioned that they were looking for better jobs. The lowest and highest academic achievements of the returnees before migration are high school certificates and master’s degrees respectively. Meanwhile, the lowest and highest academic achievements after return are bachelor’s degree and doctorate respectively. The majority of the returnees had master’s degrees. In total, the returnees in this study come from western Europe and North America – Specifically from Germany, the United Kingdom, United States of America, Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria, and Canada.

III. The Respondents

The returnees in this study are highly skilled Ghanaians who are involved in different aspects of the Ghanaian society. In terms of status, the returnees may be described as an elite group who are highly educated and are embedded in different transnational and trans-local fields. The social background of the returnees, however, is heterogeneous. Some of them are from high social status and families in Ghana and others from middle income and lower status family backgrounds. Aside from the family and social background, the social status ascribed to returnees in general (skilled or unskilled) by the home society, is often homogenous. Importantly, the family backgrounds of returnees play a role in their reintegration after return. Pseudo-names are used to maintain the anonymity of the returnees.

51 Some of these homogenous ascriptions and assumptions will be dealt with in the subsequent chapter.
Chapter 6: Life Before Abroad: Narratives on Pre-Migration

‘Everything within the circle is one thing, which is encircled, en-framed. That would be the spatial aspect. But the temporal aspect of the circle is that you leave, go somewhere, and always come back. The circle suggests immediately a completed totality, whether in time or in space’ (Joseph Campbell, The Power of Myth, 1988)

6.1. Introduction

One of the ways in which migration is conceptualised is the idea that it is a circle (McHugh & Mings, 1996); but even from that point of view, we constantly need to remind ourselves that being circle or not, migration starts from somewhere in order for the circle to initiate. In that case, I consider pre-remigration experiences and all its related events as fundamental to the circle. In this study, the pre-migration era/time/phase52 (as part of the migration circle) is defined as the time spent in the home country before embarking on migration. This definition is only applicable to first-generation migrants or people who were born and or spent a significant53 amount of time in the country of origin before travelling abroad. The results presented here are based on questions such as: what were the reasons for migrating? How was it for you in terms of how you felt at home at the time? The returnees’ pre-migration accounts are discussed under four themes (1) Ghana then54, (2) migration motives, (3) reasons for migrating, and (4) pre-migration expectations.

52 Era, time, and phase are used synonymously in this chapter.
53 Significant here remains open to any point (teenage/early/adult, adult) in one’s life before migration.
54 This title (a category from the analysis) is extracted from the way my respondents referred to their pre-migration experiences in Ghana. The term ‘Ghana then’ therefore carries the views of respondents on how it is used to differentiate the time and space between the two Ghanaian societies (before and after migration Ghana) in terms of practices and individual experiences. It also contextualises how the current and old Ghanaian societies (Ghana now and Ghana then) respectively come up, in reference to narratives and personal reflections of the returnees.
Akwasi did all his primary and middle school education in Ghana; from kindergarten to the sixth-form level. He could be described as someone who went through the standard education in Ghana at the time. Just like most sixth-formers in his time (in the late 1980s), before completing his sixth-form education, Akwasi took the ‘A-levels’ examination (known then as the ‘November’ exams) and passed. His good grades qualified him to apply for a university. This was all during his final year of sixth-form education. Coming from an affluent family, Akwasi’s father was keen on his son’s education and therefore pushed him to apply to universities in the United States (US). He got admission into one of the universities in the States and left the shores of Ghana two weeks after completing his sixth-form education. Having spent his entire teenage life in Ghana before travelling abroad, Akwasi vividly recalls his pre-migration days as a teenage boy. This was during the time of military rule (the late 1970s to 1992) in Ghana.

‘I had seen the lawful side of Ghana, but during the JJ Rawlings era, I also saw the military side of Ghana... I remember waking up in the morning after the second coup, 45 military people with guns and stuff. I was young back then, but it leaves a very big impression on you. – Akwasi (4:10-13)

Putting his experience into context, pre-migration Ghana for Akwasi represents an entirely different Ghanaian society. It is about growing up in a country of military and democratic governments in sub-Sahara Africa, which indeed carries different understandings of society. Thus, before the military rule, Akwasi admits that he experienced a non-military Ghana as well (this was before the 1978 coup de tar) – and calls this the ‘lawful side of Ghana.’

Akwasi lived between two different times and experienced different governments – democratic and military. He explained his pre-migration experience in Ghana as both lawful and unlawful to depict democratic and mil-

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55 Akwasi is a returnee from the United States of America and has returned to Ghana for the past 3 and half years at the time of this study. Spending close to 20 years abroad, he returned to Ghana in his late 40s and owns a business (hardware store) in one of the busy suburbs of Accra. Akwasi is a divorcee and his children and ex-wife all live in the US. He returned alone and had not married again during the interview.
itary eras respectively. Akwasi’s story sketches a picture of “military harassment” as characteristic of pre-migration Ghana (the ‘Ghana then’). From Akwasi’s experience, the ‘Ghana then’ represents a society of injustice and human rights abuses – making it a society that is unattractive to live in which perhaps served a reason to migrate. However, Akwasi does not only recount the negative aspects of his ‘Ghana then.’ In spite of the unattractive nature of the society at the time because of the military rule, Akwasi also mentions that the society at the time was one where institutions worked.

‘We had institutions that worked. You couldn’t drive in the middle of the road during the military days... everybody was afraid to take a bribe from you because they did not know whom you were relating to from the military perspective.’ Akwasi (4:146)

Akwasi was not praising the military era here but was making a case for the ‘Ghana then’ and what characterised the society at that time. On the one hand, he refers to the ‘Ghana then’ as a society he did not want to grow up in because of the military rule. On the other hand, Akwasi recognises how functional and uncorrupt the society was at the time. These views about the ‘Ghana then’ may seem contradictory. Nevertheless, the only possible contextualisation that presents itself for interpreting such contradiction in Akwasi’s narration is with regards to the different eras in which he tells his experiences. Thus, while reflecting on the ‘Ghana then’ and the current situation after his return, Akwasi compares the level of corruption and the rate of indiscipline he has witnessed in these ‘two’ home societies. Even though he may not have had the same interpretation for the effect of the military rule during the pre-migration time, he is only able to do so many years after his return to the home society and only after comparing the “current Ghana” with the “then Ghana”. Hitherto, the pre-migration episode and the experiences about the society at the time is a reflection after comparing the ‘after-return episode’ with the ‘pre-migration’ one.

Among the respondents, it was only Akwasi who mentioned the military era in his pre-migration experience. This could be that Akwasi was old enough to understand the society at the time. It could also mean that for those who did not share such (military government) experiences were too young to comprehend what was going on or perhaps the military era did not represent a highlight in terms of experiences during the pre-migration time. What this means is that ‘Ghana then’ has to be contextualised as a different period for different people of different generations, and histories, which in turn suggests different meanings to different returnees. Many of the respondents in the study travelled outside Ghana during the 4th repub-
lic (post-military Ghana – 1992 onwards). They represent different generations and historical points regarding the ‘Ghana then’. These returnees recount their pre-migration times with different meanings that are different from the present society – ‘Ghana now’.

Interestingly, many of the respondents share similar stories when it comes to childhood experiences in society. For example, issues about parenting, family interactions, cultural norms and values, and the level of discipline at the time came up as part of their experiences. Take Ekua\textsuperscript{56} for example – ‘Ghana then’ represents good social life but with strict parents whose reason for sending her abroad for school was to get her away from distractions.

‘Yeah, I had a good social life {laughs}, and I guess for my parents, that was probably another thing. Maybe they thought it would be a little better not to have so much of, you know go start afresh from somewhere where there’s not so much of a distraction as far as friends and boyfriends’– Ekua (5:44)

Apart from parental restrictions at the time in the case of Ekua, the ‘Ghana then’ for Yaw was a society where the emphasis was on family.

‘You know I think the families were much more of a close net than I see these days. I mean growing up, there was one TV station. You had no choice but to talk to your brothers and sisters. So, you didn’t get a lot of time glued to the TV or your Nintendo or Sega and all that stuff. – Yaw (4:16)

Reflecting on the television programs in the then society, Akosua\textsuperscript{57} also added that the television programs at the time emphasised respect and taught cultural practices. However, not all migrants left when they were teenagers. In the case of Kojo\textsuperscript{58}, he was working in a reputable institution

\textsuperscript{56} Ekua returned to Ghana with her husband and two children from Canada where she stayed for 18 years. Upon their return, she and her husband run a restaurant and a bar lounge in one of the expensive suburbs of Accra. The husband of Ekua, although a Ghanaian, was not born in Ghana and did not grow up in Ghana. This means that Mitchel has become the main person to introduce Ghana to her family upon return.

\textsuperscript{57} Akosua runs her own human resource firm in Accra. She left Ghana about 14 years ago, and during the time of the interview she had returned for close to 2 years. She is a single female returnee.

\textsuperscript{58} When I met Kojo for the interview, he had returned for close to one year after spending 3 years and some few months in the UK. He currently works as a university lecturer at a private university in Accra. Kojo was in his early 30s.
in Ghana before travelling to the United Kingdom. He had finished his university degree and was earning a respectable income and had his rented furnished apartment. He had a girlfriend, and they were planning to get married someday. He had just started his career and had fewer responsibilities and demands from family and friends.

‘I was staying in an apartment; I had everything. Even when I was going, I left all my chairs, fridge, tv to somebody.’ – Kojo (6:15)

For a returnee like Kojo, ‘Ghana then’ was a life with many prospects for young men; he was bold and confident about his future.

During the interviews, many referred to the ‘Ghana then’ in a social and cultural sense. Thus, by referring to those times, social and cultural images are presented. For example, despite completing his university education before leaving Ghana for Austria, Kabelah was one of the few from his family and community to have made it to the university level. He was a ‘zongo’ boy from ‘Tudu’, a suburb of Accra. He was from a poor Muslim family and had to finance his university education by engaging in different ‘buying and selling’ businesses. As an entrepreneurial and industrious person, his university education was strange for a Muslim ‘zongo’ man at this time. It was thus considered by both family and friends as unprecedented when Kabelah decided to continue his education abroad. Before completing his bachelor education, Kabelah and his business partner were doing very well. Owning two taxis at the time and having accumulated enough money while still a university student, Kabelah explains his pre-migration

59 Kabelah is a returnee from Austria with a PhD. He had returned for 3 years during the interview. Kabelah lived in Austria for 19 years before returning to Ghana with his wife. He studied in Austria from masters to the doctorate level where after which he lectured for a number of years before his return to Ghana.

60 ‘Zongo’ is a word which originates from the Sahel region of the north and means ‘caravan’ and was once used to describe the areas where trans-Saharan traders would rest their loaded camels as they stopped on the fringes of towns and settlements in the south to barter cattle and cloth for salt and Ashanti gold. In Ghana, it is used broadly to refer to a stranger community specifically created and inhabited by northern migrants. The ‘Zongo’ is characterised by overcrowding, inadequate sanitation and dilapidated buildings (Awumbila, et al, 2011; Zakiya in Eborka, 2014). It also characterises poverty and inequality in terms of education, healthcare, and national and infrastructural development with mainstream society. The majority of ‘Zongo’ inhabitants are usually Muslims.

61 He explains that because many Muslims from the ‘Zongo’ did not find formal education attractive but as waste of time, there were little to no role models in his community to look up to.
Ghana as challenging for a person from a poor and marginalised community. His pre-migration view of Ghana was complex; entailing multiple contradictions. For him, it was a country of opportunities and for doing business. But it was also a time where he had to make drastic decisions; a time where he had to struggle through poverty; a time where people from poor and marginalised backgrounds had fewer prospects in university education; and a time where traveling abroad for education was not typical for certain segments of the society.

From the different pre-migration experiences, the analysis portrays ‘Ghana then’ as a historical point for returnees in terms of how their lives intertwined with the home society’s history. As a result, returnees position themselves as people who have experienced and gone through history with the home society when referring to the ‘Ghana then’. For instance, while talking about growing up in a military rule, Akwasi positioned himself as someone who has seen the different historical transitions in Ghana’s government systems. Again, for current Muslim youths who see university education as nothing strange and normal to travel abroad to continue their education, Kabelah’s narrative is a reminder of the social transformations that have taken place. Returnees’ recollection of the pre-migration society constitutes historical collections of social, political, cultural and economic transformations which in the end shapes the overall developmental progress of the home country.

Furthermore, we also see that the ‘Ghana then’ remains a familiarity of culture, social structures, and relations for returnees. Indeed, the home country they come to meet is not the same as pre-migration memories due to transformations in the home country. Nevertheless, many returnees hold on to their pre-migration memories to access and evaluate the present and for reinstating their originality in the future of the home society. For example, when Akwasi talks about family, his main point of reference goes back to the family dynamics of the ‘Ghana then’; and through this lens, he sees the changes in present Ghana and with the same pre-migration lens he imagines an ‘ideal future Ghana’. In effect, the ‘ideal future Ghana’ becomes somewhat similar to pre-migration Ghana. Such a view also explains why some returnees will have high expectations of the home society which are often based on pre-migration memories of the home society\(^\text{62}\).

Again, returnees may use their pre-migration experiences to remind ‘others\(^\text{63}\)’ of their loyalty to the home society by keeping those memories.

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\(^{62}\) See return expectation of returnees in the next chapter.

\(^{63}\) ‘Others’ here refers to both non-migrants and other returnees.
and as a way of showcasing their connection to the home society. That is, by pointing to the ‘Ghana then’ (the music at the time, the food, the school system, the kind of television programs, the family and social cohesion, and mechanisms at the time, how institutions use to work, the type of games children played), returnees aim to reduce the feeling of foreigner towards them by the home society. For example, when Yaw talks about pre-emigration times, his emphasis is on how disciplined children were at the time. In the same way, Akosua asserts how cultural values and norms were upheld. With such recollections, returnees refer to a point in time in the Ghanaian society, which they tend to consider unique. Sharing such experiences becomes a mechanism to re-echo their nativity and familiarity with the society they call home. One can, therefore, conclude that upon return, the renegotiation of the home society takes place on a foundation of the society that the returnee is familiar with and has experienced rather than the new society that one comes to meet. That is, for both returnees and non-migrants who experienced similar pre-migration timelines, such memories become common grounds to rebuild social networks and for returnees to renegotiate their re-entry into the society. For the non-migrants who do not share similar timelines, returnees use their pre-migration experiences as a historical account; as people who experienced those times – ‘Ghana then’ as a means to claim to belong. Also, returnees’ positions and development in the ‘Ghana then’ contribute to the memories they left behind. For instance, whether as teenagers like Mitchel and Akwasi, an entrepreneur like Kabelah or as an early-career person like Kojo, their personal development and social positions and roles within their family and friend networks as well as the general society are reflected in their narratives about the ‘Ghana then’.

In summary, when migrants return home, their memories of the country and society they left behind is by no means a treasure for them as they navigate through the home society. Their understandings and definitions of many of the after-return society’s way of life are more likely to a reflection on the ‘Ghana then’ (pre-migration society). Even for those who made regular home visits, – like Akosua – different aspects of the pre-migration era remained intact as they negotiate through the returning society. Thus, at this point of the migration circle, the familiar society and its practices are often defined by the social and cultural practices at the time.

Furthermore, it is vital to assert that memories of the pre-migration society and the culture become part of the reintegration strategies for the returnees. Returnees focus on these known memories from the past as a starting point to gain re-entry into the ‘new Ghana.’ So far, it is clear that
in many instances, the difference between the pre-migration society and the return society may not be the same for all migrants. On the one hand, such differences may be influenced by the way the past (pre-migration) is remembered; how the home is imagined (while abroad) and how the after-return society is experienced. However, on the other hand, these two societies (Ghana then and now) can be very different as a result of transformations that have taken place. It is not enough to imagine that many returnees fall into this ‘trap’ but to mention that although these may be different societies, some returnees tend to become conservatives as they try to maintain some aspects of the pre-migration society. Such returnees are said to have a conservatism agenda (Carese, 1974). Thus, according to Carese (1974), conservative returnees bring back no new initiatives to the home society but to maintain the status quo of the home country. However, this study challenges such position and argues that the seemingly conservative nature of some returnees is often as a result of pre-migration experiences and may constitute a reintegration strategy rather than just having conservativism agenda. To conclude, the pre-migration experiences are an important part of the migration circle. It remains the background image of the home country because the returnees carry it with them throughout their stay abroad and even after returning home. That is, returnees’ pre-migration experiences and memories represent a place of growing up, a historical place to identify with and a place to belong.

6.3. Motives and Reasons for migration – The push-pull factors

Migration motives are mostly driven by the desire of the migrants to fulfill personal objectives or achieve personal goals via migration (Black, Ammassari, et al., 2003; King, 2012; Yendaw et al., 2013). They constitute the overall migration goals on which a person may decide to migrate – the push-pull factors.

Originating from Lee (1966), the push-pull model conceives migration as driven by a set of push factors (poverty, unemployment, landlessness, inaccessibility of education system, rapid population growth, political repression, low social status, poor marriage prospects etc.) of the region or country of origin (cf. King, 2012), and pull factors (better income and job prospects, better education and welfare systems, land to settle on and farm, generation and job opportunities etc.) of the region or country of destination.
sound environmental and living conditions, political freedom etc.) of the place or country of destination. Furthermore, the push-pull model also includes goods and information (Kivisto, 2001).

Delving further, the data revealed education as the primary pull factor. For these returnees, the migration goal was to continue their education abroad and to gain international exposure and experiences.

‘I went to study because I applied for the school, and got admission’ – Kojo (6:1)

‘The main reason was just really to better myself’ – Akosua (1:5)

The notion of bettering one’s self, as explained by Akosua, means that while education is the driving motive, another pull factor was the idea of exploring other cultures, getting exposed to another lifestyle, and expanding economic prospects which were all part of expected gains from the migration endeavour.

‘...there are lots of incentives in the UK when you go there to study, so I was incentivised by one of those things.’ – Kojo (6:1)

In the case of other returnees, apart from their education, joining their family was another pull factor for migrating. For instance, Kwadwo shows this in his narrative;

‘My mother lived in America so for me it was just a matter of...going through secondary school here and then continuing university and the rest of my life in America basically.’ – Kwadwo (3:3)

On the push side, the educational system in Ghana at the time was a major factor for returnees’ migration. For example, Akosua explained that;

‘At the time, we just had Legon [University of Ghana, Legon] and UST [University of Science and Technology] and so a lot of the programmes didn’t seem like appealing, and it was extremely competitive to get there ... It [United Kingdom] was quite appealing as far as living, accommodations and classrooms not being filled and things like that I heard of, so that was it.’ – Akosua (5:4)

Despite her personal decision to migrate, we see here the situation (competitiveness of university admissions) at the time contributed to Akosua’s

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65 Kwadwo returned from the United States with his wife and 2 children. He lived in the states for more than 10 years and during the time of this interview he was working with a multinational company from the United States based in Accra.
decision to migrate. Similarly, Kabelah recounted the difficulty of getting admission into postgraduate education in Ghana as a push factor to migrate.

‘Those days even until the mid-90s, doing a postgraduate programme was very rare and difficult in Ghana, so it was always easy for somebody looking for opportunities to do these programs outside’ – Kabelah (8:8)

So far, the result shows education, family reunion, getting exposure and gaining foreign experience as reasons (pull factors) why the returnees migrated in the first place. Another aspect of the result is factors that influenced the migration decisions – the push factors. For example, the stories of Akosua and Kabelah that highlight the education systems in Ghana at the time attest to factors that influenced the motivation to emigrate.

6.5. Pre-Migration Expectations

Unlike motives and reasons, expectations are what the returnees looked forward to before migrating. Pre-migration expectations are often dependent on the amount and type of information that the potential migrant has about the host country. They include stories from friends, books, and other sources of information about the host country. The difference between pre-migration expectations and migration motives is that while motives represent the goals and reasons for migrating, the expectations are what lead a person into selecting a particular host country from other countries where the same migration motives could have been achieved. For instance, travelling abroad for continuing one’s education can be the migration motive. However, expectations of having a possibility to work as a student (the case of Kojo), easiness to speak the host language (the case of Kojo and Akwasi) and the presence of a friend or family (the case of Akosua, Ekua and Kwadwo) may constitute the pre-migration expectations. That is, apart from the pull factors in the host country, the pre-migration expectations constitute another layer of the migration decision. A typical example can be drawn from Kojo’s narrative where his migration expectations were based on factors such as the possibility to work after his education and gaining professional experience and exposure. Furthermore, Kabelah’s conclusion on travelling to Austria for his postgraduate education was based on his expectations from studying in Austria – to get a non-English perspective.
‘Finally, I settled on Innsbruck because even though Innsbruck hadn’t offered me a scholarship...It took me quite a long time before I decided to go to Innsbruck for the simple reason that I thought, let me get a different perspective than an English perspective, something new something different and maybe I will come back with something different.’ – Kabelah (8:3)

In his story, Kabelah disclosed that he also got admissions into postgraduate programs in the UK and the US. For some of the admissions from the US and UK, he was even offered scholarships. However, he decided to go to Innsbruck in Austria instead. Thus, the expectation to get a different experience, different from the English perspective (which he believed he already had), drove Kabelah’s education motive for travelling abroad into choosing Innsbruck over other cities to study. Furthermore, pre-migration expectations differ between people who are travelling for the first time and those who have had short-term travelling experience before migrating for a longer time. Take Akwasi for example;

‘I think I had some reservations. I had seen what life all was about. And I had travelled. I had been to the UK; I had been to the US several times’ – Akwasi. (4:14)

Akwasi’s situation was not the same for other returnees. For a first-time traveller, such as Kojo, his pre-migration expectations were founded on information from other sources. Between Akwasi and Kojo, one can deduce that the pre-migration expectations of Kojo were higher than Akwasi’s pre-migration expectations in their respective host countries.

To summarise returnees’ migration expectation, the induction here can be interpreted as a close-knit link to the pull factors that draw people to a particular host country as these factors then become the basis for migrants’ expectations. That is, pre-migration expectations (gaining exposure and foreign experience, bettering one’s self) serve as a fundamental factor for people when it comes to choosing host countries.

The expectation to belong in the host country did not come up during the analysis as part of returnees’ pre-migration expectations. This could mean that before migrating, people are usually aware of their connection to the host country. Without factors such as membership, ownership and ancestral or childhood memories which can generate a sense of belonging to the host country, first-time migrants who had no families abroad like Kojo, could not expect to have a sense of belonging in the host country. The situation, however, may be different for migrants who have families abroad and for those who are not travelling abroad for the first time. Take
for example migrants like Ekua and Kwadwo; they had family relations (aunties and parents respectively) and therefore expected to belong to the host country within the context of their relations there. Thus, the sense of belonging for returnees who joined family relations abroad are that which are derived from feelings of attachments that are specifically tied to these relationships but not entirely to the host country.

6.6. Chapter Summary and Discussion

The chapter highlights returnees’ pre-migration experiences and memories about the home they left behind (‘Ghana then’), their migration motives and expectations before migration. Life before migration is a representation of the social state of the returnees; their personal experiences and a historical point in the home country before migration. The chapter showed that the pre-migration era constitutes a point in one’s life where the home society’s culture and historical timelines are embedded in the individual’s personal life story. Pre-migration experiences further point to the different contexts of the society that returnees left behind.

The chapter also highlighted the motivations behind the migration of the returnees in this study. For all the returnees, the main reason for migrating was education. Besides, reasons like ‘getting exposure’ and ‘knowing other places and cultures’ were mentioned. That is, push-pull factors for migrating included difficulty in getting into undergraduate and graduate education in Ghana at the time and the perceived opportunities for exposure and jobs abroad respectively.

Furthermore, the chapter has demonstrated that while motives for migrating may lead to actual migration, pre-migration expectations are based on the kind of information a person has about the host country (especially in the case of first-time travellers). This ultimately leads to migrants’ choice of a host country from where migration goals are estimated to be achieved. While it is not a pre-migration expectation to have a sense of belonging towards the host country for many first-time migrants, those who expected to belong in the host country only did so because of attachments to different social and family relations in the host country.
Chapter 7: Life Abroad

7.1. Introduction

After the motivations for migrating and pre-migration expectations are made clear in the chosen destination, the migration journey enters the next phase when migrants arrive in the host country. The experiences of returnees while abroad are therefore presented in this chapter as a continuation of their migration experiences. Here in this chapter, results are presented in thematic headings of life abroad, feelings towards host society, return intentions, preparations, expectations, and reasons for return.

7.2. Life Abroad

The flight from Ghana to the United States was not an easy one for Afia. She was already missing her best friends who were all starting their university education at the University of Ghana, Legon without her. She was on a flight to the United States of America to continue her education. She had just completed senior high school in Ghana, and her parents wanted her to continue her studies abroad. She was still a teenager leaving the comfort and the protection of her family and friends to an unknown country. The entire flight was a flashpoint of flashbacks into how life in Ghana was in some few months, weeks, days and hours ago. The seemingly dramatic situation was possibly due to the fear of the unknown world that awaits her on the other side of the flight and perhaps the realisation that the pre-migration time in Ghana including her relations may not be the same anymore.

Upon her arrival in the US, Afia accounts for an event that brightened her mood after heading out of the aeroplane to the airport terminal.

‘I was very concerned about missing my connecting flight and things like that. And I almost did because of technical issues at the airport. Then I saw Mohammed Ali at the local terminal. I’m like, listen I know my boxing and that’s Mohammed Ali, and then people were like, oh wow. There were two other people that were looking equally confused and uncertain, so I knew they were going the same place.’ – Afia (7:3)
Seeing Mohammed Ali in person was a big thing for Afia because it calmed her down and it made her happy. It is interesting to observe that finding other stranded people who seemed lost like herself made her transition into the new geographical space and location where over one and half decades of her life was going to be spent far from her home country easier.

Not all return migrants made such a grand entry to the host country as Afia. Often, migrants face the challenge of finding their way around during their first few days abroad. The returnees described early days in the host country for migrants as constant contact with different cultures, people, and activities. Through these different interactions, migrants engage in multicultural activities and experiences. Also, migrants’ early days experiences regularly result in cultural shocks.

‘I tell you, the first year the culture shock, even the food you ate was different and if you wanted something from Africa to eat you couldn't find it. You had to adapt. So that was a bad side. So, lonely? Yes’ – Akwas (4:24)

‘if you had a friend and for example, you said I would come and see you sometime this week, it didn't work. You can't say oh well let's hang out sometime. It had to be on Tuesday at 9:00 am. Nothing was left to chance. That took me a while. But I soon learned that if you valued or wanted to build the relationship, that's how things work there.’
– Ekua (5:14)

Making appointments to meet friends, dealing with loneliness, and diversities in food are some of the issues that characterised culture shocks for many of the respondents. Skilled migrants’ multicultural experiences in the host country are often via their time at school or their workplaces. However, their everyday life in the host country was mainly centred around their education. The reason could be that in their early days, many international students in host countries, are either restricted by their visa regarding jobs or that their study workload makes it less likely to focus on other activities.

Also, it was the first time for some of the returnees to be in an entirely white dominated school or mixed-race school. This is the case for Akosua;

‘Bournemouth happens to be a typical white town. Full of retired people so you have the extreme end of the students, and then you have the extreme end of the old people. So, there were a lot of white folks. ...for like maybe two weeks I felt very awkward because I've never been to school or university where the cultural, the dynamism, the multi-cul-
tural stuff is like this. This is pure Caucasians, Indians, what have you. But then I was the only black person in the class’ – Akosua (1:269)

Akosua was the only black person in her class, and that was completely different from what she was used to in Ghana. For Akosua, the early days in the host country was about reconciling sitting in a class with mixed people (in terms of race) and having to become a minority in the city she lived; something she had never paid attention to or experienced in the home country. Without any negative connotation, Akosua also describes how strange it was for her to see lots of old people in such a small town. Context wise, one should understand that in Ghana, there is not much segregation between the old and the young. Senior homes and senior citizen services are not typical scenes in Ghana. Hence, finding herself at a place where the institutional and social structure offered different services for old people in the society was something that she had to get used to as part of the everyday life, and it indeed was a cultural shock.

Apart from school, working in the host country was also part of the everyday life abroad for some of the returnees.

‘So, you know, you did the western thing; you work, and you went to school at the same time’ – Akwasi (4:29)

Akwasi calls it the ‘western thing;’ referring to the practice of schooling and working at the same time. It was something new for many of the returnees. This is because, back then in Ghana, working and schooling at the same time were rare because of the lack of employment opportunities for students, especially at the bachelor level. While abroad, many of the returnees’ everyday life in the host country was characterised by working and at the same time schooling to raise money for their upkeep.

There are different kinds of jobs or work that the returnees did while studying abroad – domestic, menial and student jobs. Ekua, called it domestic work;

66 To add my personal experience to what Akosua describes here, I also found myself in a very small community during my studies in Germany where the population of elderly people was almost close to the population of students in the small community. Seeing the regular visits of the ambulance and how the senior home was taken care of became an eye opener especially when I saw nurses driving around in small cars with praxis inscription on them offering care to old people in their homes. This indeed was a big cultural difference for me.  
67 However, these days it is a common practice in Ghana to be schooling and working due to the availability of distance education programs and sandwich studies. Nevertheless, it is still rare among regular students in universities in Ghana.
‘Canada was very strict on their immigration policy so international students can’t work. So yeah, no I didn’t. A couple of my aunt’s friends eventually had me come and do some household chores for them, and [they] gave me some pocket money then, so you go and clean their house or cut their grass, cook the meals, things like that.’ – Ekua (5:15)

The strict laws regarding ‘formal’ work for international students in Canada at the time meant that Ekua had to work as domestic help for some of her aunt’s friends. Kwadwo, on the other hand, worked in a convenient store in the US during his early days abroad as a student.

‘I started; my parents helped me get a job at the convenience store. It’s a pharmacy it also has a convenient store.’ – Kwadwo (3:18)

The jobs that paid less and were not regarded ‘formal’ were called minimal or menial jobs by the returnees;

‘…the works I did was very minimal. So, they just barely paid for my basic sustenance.’ – Akwasi (4:31)

Apart from domestic and menial jobs, some of the returnees worked either as student assistants or ‘formally’ worked in the host country. These jobs, thus, paid student hour work rates;

‘Yes, I went to college then university there then I worked as well’ – Akosua (1:96)

The returnees’ described different kinds of jobs in the host country. In their explanations, they referred to three main types of work that were available to them. The first is domestic work, which means working for other families. It includes babysitting, cleaning, cutting lawns and grass, grocery shopping for a family and sometimes cooking for other families for payment –what Ekua was doing. The second type of job is menial or minimal jobs as in Akwasi’s description. These jobs paid little but cannot be described as student jobs. It includes working in restaurants, hotels, convenient shops etc. Student jobs – the third – however, are those jobs that attract student rates in terms of hours for work. It involves doing any work that the law of the host country stipulates for hour rate of work. Student jobs may also include student assistant jobs, which are usually linked to the study environment. During the early years abroad, everyday life came with different experiences and exposures to different aspects of the host society and its culture. It is usually filled with many cultural shocks, adjustments and reconciliations of one’s self, culture, and identity.
Feelings towards the host societies in terms of attachments and inclusion differ from one returnee to another. In this study, returnees were asked whether they felt included in host their society or not. This was to determine whether the returnees felt a sense of belonging in the host country or not and what made them feel as such.

7.3.1. Feeling Included

Some returnees felt included in the host country. For example, Akwasi felt included because until some point of his time in the host country, he did not feel different as a foreigner.

‘Maybe I had blinders on. I remember my CEO asking once, ‘don’t you feel different by being the only African American in this room?’ And I was ‘you know I had never thought of that.’ That thought just did not occur until he said it. But after he said it now, I get it. Now I started looking around and going ‘you are right, am the only African American in this room’” – Akwasi (4:48)

Akwasi worked for a multinational retail company in the US before returning home to Ghana. He was the second in line to the CEO at the company where he worked. As he narrates his experiences as a migrant, the mentioning of having ‘blinders on’ explains how he felt towards the host community. It describes a point in his life whereby in the midst of others, he could not recognise himself as a minority or a migrant. However, how he felt and saw himself concerning his inclusion in the workplace was different from how others saw him. Here we see that Akwasi was always considered African American by his colleagues even when he (Akwasi) had ‘blinders on.’ This could be explained in racial terms, but it could also suggest the fluidity in racial references in America which may denote different levels of inclusion.

The issue here is that how one sees himself or herself in terms of inclusion may not necessarily reconcile with how others in the host society see him or her. For instance, his schooling and travels in the United States helped him familiarise with different parts of the country.

‘I was until university. I was there for six years. Got my masters and everything from the same school. Stayed in Aidan for four more years
and then work came calling so I travelled to Seattle. I think I have lived in almost 12 different states in the US’ – Akwasi (4:26)

That is, having spent close to two decades in the United States, Akwasi lived in 12 states and thus felt connected as a result of his extensive knowledge of the country. Here one can observe that Akwasi was referring to the number of states he lived in the United States. To him, this conveys a sense of closeness to the host country. Akwasi’s sense of inclusion was mainly a matter of integration and was founded on him taking part in the education structure of the host society and being able to work in a professional capacity after school elicit a feeling of inclusion in the host society. Furthermore, Akwasi felt integrated into the host country because of his ability to pick up the American English accent.

‘I did [felt part]. Literally, after two, three years my language completely changed. Nobody ever asked if I was from Africa anymore. They assumed I was from Los Angeles or some other places... You could tell I had a slight accent’ – Akwasi (4:35)

When people stopped asking Akwasi if he comes from Africa, it made him feel part of the host society; a point where people did not wonder where he is from. People thinking that he was from another part of the host country because of his accent constituted acceptance and feeling of inclusion.

Apart from speaking with the accent of the host society, returnees feel included if they can participate in politics and sports. Kwadwo, for example, mentioned that

‘The election of Bush, Obama I mean all of them. It was just that like in school college sports you go to the stadium you go to watch American football, you participate in debates on TV... So, I felt American because you know you are going to be part of the people that would decide whom the next president was going to be. I remember January of 2009 because we voted in 2008; Obama won in 2008. That Christmas to January, I was in Ghana. And I specifically booked my ticket so that I could make it back to the inauguration because I lived in DC.’ – Kwadwo (3:40)

Attending two presidential inaugurations (Bush’s and Obama’s) was more than just being a spectator of the event for someone like Kwadwo. It was a system to which he had contributed. The feeling of being affected by political decisions was inevitable. Choosing to participate in these events and other activities was in a way to accept the host society and its structures, and yet it gives a sense of inclusion. Through these activities, Kwadwo be-
believed that he was connected to the host society. The use of ‘we voted’ characterises his level of connectedness. Here, Kwadwo identifies with the host society. Another cue from Kwadwo’s narrative is how ‘feeling included’ is demonstrated. That is, he acted on how he felt toward the host country by planning his travel such that he could participate in the presidential inauguration of the host country. The political, social, and cultural participation of migrants, therefore, contributes significantly to how returnees feel towards the host society.

In their narrations, some returnees connected how they felt in the host country to the sense of inclusion they had from the schools they attended. For example, according to Akosua;

‘College they made me feel part because I think it’s because the college was a multi-cultural college, it was all people from all walks of life, so that was quite interesting’ – Akosua (1:97)

Multicultural environments account for the feeling of inclusion for many migrants. The multicultural environments here represent different nationalities and people with migration background including natives of the host country. It is therefore not surprising that many schools provide a positive environment for many international students. In this study, the school environments provided a place of inclusion owing to the different backgrounds of the students. One can accommodate the thought that students with migration backgrounds shared a sense of solidarity and therefore accepted each other which accounted for the sense of inclusion among themselves. Outside the school, however, the situation is different for many migrants. For example, in the case of Akosua, she mentioned that she felt out of place when she started working after completing her education in the UK;

‘I really felt out of place was my very last job where I was working with, in a very big company AGE UK and that you felt not wanted there. Even though my team I was working with were fantastic, but the other sub-teams, you see somebody you say hi nothing gets by not even a smile, nothing. So, you decide to eventually crawl back in your shell because you only get back out when you realise that this is what is going on.’ – Akosua (1:52)

Even though she did not mention the makeup of her team or other workers in the workplace, I presumed the people in this workplace were less multicultural. This is because Akosua had earlier mentioned that she worked for another company before working at AGE UK.
'In terms of working, [I] work[ed] in GAP. GAP is a US Retail Company...and they were multi-cultural again, so you never really fell out of place.' – Akosua (1:104)

The two accounts by Akosua of the different companies suggest that where there is a multicultural working environment, feeling of inclusion was achieved than where there was no multicultural working environment. It is important to note that apart from school environments; mixed cultural environments elicited a feeling of inclusion for Akosua. This situation suggests that despite feeling included in the host country, it was not necessarily because of the ‘native’ host society per se but because the returnees found themselves in a transnational community of people from different parts of the world. Thus, the feeling of inclusion could be described as more towards the specific community of friends, acquaintances, family relations and co-workers than to the entire host society as a whole. Indeed, Akosua’s reasons for having a feeling of inclusion is different from the reasons that Kwadwo talked about (voting and attending presidential inaugurations).

Another way that some returnees felt included in the host countries was through diaspora communities. Ekua, for example, recalls her feeling towards the Canadian society through her involvement with the Ghanaian diaspora in Canada.

‘Did a lot [for the] Ghana-Canada fellowship..., we did a lot to help with it. When I was in university I actually [was the] social director I think at some point at the university I was at a Ghanaian club there. So yeah we did help’ – Ekua (5:20)

In a different context, Akwasi grew up in a community of racialised Americans – African American community;

By then I think I had adapted. You know, we grow up in neighbourhoods with a lot of African Americans, so you became part of It.’ – Akwasi

Both Ekua and Akwasi describe how they felt towards the host society. Analysing this further depicts that their feeling of inclusion in the host country was generated from their engagements in different communities that are present in the host countries. This suggests that a migrant’s feeling of inclusion in a host country may be as a result of his or her engagement and acceptance into a multicultural (transnational) group and not necessarily because of acceptance and inclusion into the mainstream host society.
In summary, how well returnees got to know about the host country, speaking with the native accent, participation in politics, sports, engagements in multicultural and diaspora communities constituted factors that generated a feeling of inclusion in the host country.

All through the analysis, the respondents avoided using the word integration as they shared their experiences about how they felt towards the host society. The returnees used the word inclusion instead of integration. It could be that the respondents were consciously avoiding the concept integration because of its politicisation. Another reason could be that feeling included did not necessarily mean integrated. This will be discussed in detail in chapter 10 on the meanings of belonging and integration.

7.3.2. ‘Feeling out of Place’

Migrants, including those with dual citizenships are always considered as the other in host countries. Feeling out of place, an in vivo code from a respondent, connotes a sense of exclusion that migrants feel toward the host country. In the previous section, notions of inclusion in the host country arose from the returnees’ attachments and associations to other groups rather than the mainstream host society. The feeling of exclusion, depicted in this section, however, emerged from returnees’ reflection on their relationship with the mainstream host society. Reasons for feeling out of place in the host country are (1) that the returnees did not feel at home in the host country as they do in Ghana, (2) that they were always seen and treated as foreigners, and (3) that they had different types of identities compared to the mainstream identities in the host country.

As a migrant, Akosua spent more than a decade in the United Kingdom and one of the reasons behind her movement to the UK was to reach her siblings who lived in the UK. Losing her parents at a very tender age, the only close family she had were her siblings. Therefore, moving to London was a way to stay close to her family and to also continue her education. Akosua’s feelings towards the UK is complex and yet intriguing. Hoping to connect to the host society through the church, Akosua describes the church in the UK otherwise;

‘I’m Catholic. The Catholic way of doing things in the UK is completely different from the Catholic way of doing things in Ghana. I didn’t have any friends as far as the church was concerned. But you see, for me, my friends are my siblings. So, when I’m with my siblings, they are my friends’ – Akosua (1:109)
Without friends at church, Akosua’s connection to the UK centred on her siblings. This shows the role of the church in the lives of many Ghanaian migrants. The relationship between church societies and social life is a very close one for many Ghanaians. Apart from church serving as an organised structure for development back home in Ghana (Schröder 2006, Jach 2005, Sieveking/Faist/Fauser 2008), many migrants participation in similar associations abroad is also for a sense of inclusion as in the case of Akosua. She describes her feelings toward the host country as a contrast to feeling at home. Thus, her narrative explains her understanding and feelings about what home means.

“We always say there’s nothing like home, and definitely, there’s nothing like home. I lived in the UK for 12 years, but I never felt at home. I felt at home when I was at home with my family but then the environment around you, you never feel at home. No matter what they say, you will never feel at home; you still find a bit of something missing’ – Akosua (1:42)

Akosua’s reason for feeling out of place in the UK was the lack of home feeling she experienced when she was not with her siblings. She did not feel included in the host society outside the comfort of her siblings. By home, Akosua meant more than her siblings though. The home was also connected to a geographical location and more specifically the human interactions and the atmosphere in such a place, which in this case was Ghana.

‘you miss of course the home food, you miss the whole thing about getting up in the morning and all I’m doing is just walking down the street to go and say hi to my friend or a family friend, or I just call a girlfriend and just hang out. Quality of life wasn’t getting up in the morning, hitting down the train station, trying to get through to work, get work done. At work, people can choose to say hi to you, or they won't say hi to you. You get back on the train, you back at home and that's it. That was the routine. At least that was my routine’ – Akosua (1:49)

Here we see a sharp contrast in the two ways of lives that Akosua is talking about. In one, the cultural and social activities differentiate what she sees as home and what is not. In the other, home is about the quality of life. Thus, where there are fewer social interactions and no spontaneous activities, there is no resemblance to home. By making such a comparison between the host and home societies, Akosua draws attention to the lifestyle
she was accustomed to, before her travelling abroad. That is, her feelings
towards the host society is embedded in a critical assessment of her every-
day life (waking up in the morning to take a train to work, close from
work and getting the train back home as a daily routine), which leads her
to question the quality of life in the UK. Moreover, her understanding of
quality of life in the above quote is about the social networks and social
interactions around her. The easiness of meeting friends and family mem-
bers, the exchange of pleasantries coupled with the food and a sense of
having a life aside workplace – describing it as how it is in the home coun-
try – seemed very important to her. Therefore, the lack of these experiences
was the cause of her feeling out of place in the host country

Furthermore, Home here represents not only a physical location or
space but also situations that generate a familiar feeling of connectedness,
security, and easiness. Here, the multiplicity of the meaning of home
comes up. For example, home is where Akosua’s siblings are and, in this
context, the home of her siblings which is geographically located in the
UK. However, beyond this home (family/siblings), the larger socio-cultural
environment in the UK was nothing like home compared to Ghana. Thus,
we see two meanings of home here; one is the feeling of home that is gen-
erated through the presence of family and the home that comes about as a
result of certain practices that create home feelings. The lack of these fac-
tors, therefore, creates no home feeling.

Another way in which returnees expressed a feeling of exclusion in the
host country relates to what it meant to be a foreigner.

‘So, I don’t know if I was proud back then I think I get angry. You
know when somebody asked you, you always say, why are they asking
me where I am from? Why can’t I be just part of the African American
community?’ – Akwasi (4:40)

Undoubtedly, migrants are foreigners in the host country. However, what
constitutes a foreigner, is less investigated. The question of what it takes to
be a foreigner is easy to answer when one considers the nationality and le-
gal requirements of a citizen and a non-citizen. Nevertheless, the feeling of
being a foreigner can cohabitate in the minds of citizens with migrant
backgrounds in a host country (Bauböck, 2006).

To be a foreigner is thus more than the cultural shocks (as discussed in
the sections above) and the new experiences that a person goes through for
the first time in the host society. It is about the reaction of others towards
those considered foreigners. While abroad, the returnees specifically mentioned the colour of their skin (black Africans) as one of the constant reminders of being foreigner especially the returnees from western European countries. Regardless of the level of integration, the stereotypical reminders remain an endless emphasis on one’s foreigner state. For example, while in Austria, Kabelah (see footnote 54 above) became fluent in the German language to the point where he was employed by his university to teach German to other international students. His involvement and assimilation in the Austrian society saw him taking up refereeing in the national football league amongst other cultural participation in the host country. Rising through the ranks to become a lecturer, Kabelah indeed seemed to be a well-integrated and an influential middle-class figure in both Austria and international scene. Despite his status in the host society as a middle-class university lecturer who one can set as an example of an integrated migrant, Kabelah conceptualises the idea of being a foreigner in his experience as follows;

‘No! …that is the mistake many people do. If you think you have integrated enough into the system, we tend to forget the contradictions of the system. And I tell you that is why some of us when they think they are there, I am this now I feel like a German, an Austrian, I feel ok, but they forget that that thing is not written on your face. Who you are, what you are, what they see is your phenotypical features; you are black man, you are an N or that N Man, you are a refugee, you are an asulant, you are a poor man, you come from the bush, your place is full of hunger full of disease. This is not something that everybody puts in its right perspective when you enter the train [or] enter the bus.’ – Kabelah (8:6)

By system, Kabelah was referring to the functioning of the host society. His notion of being a foreigner goes beyond what any level of integration could offer. The contradictions of the system which he talks about are in terms of the prejudice, stereotypes, power structure, social structure, and racial stratifications in the system. What Kabelah mean is that often people tend to forget that these contradictions exist. And by people, he was referring to migrants.

In the quotation above, Kabelah talks about integration but downplays it by suggesting that integration does not take away how others perceive a foreigner. As Kabelah emphasises on those experiences, I observed (from

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68 Specifically, in the context of respondents for this study.
his posture and tone) the feeling of betrayal which seems to engulf the idea that being a foreigner remains an experience that cannot be shed off irrespective of the social class that a migrant achieves in the host society especially in the case of blacks in white-dominated host countries. At the same time, delving deeper into the data, the mentioning of prejudices and stereotypes can be interpreted as re-enforcers of what I call ‘foreigner-ship’. For instance, irrespective of the number of years that a Ghanaian spends in Germany, the mere colour of his or her skin remains a constant reminder that the person is a foreigner. This may be a different case for a German migrant in the USA for instance. The feeling of ‘foreigner-ship’ is beyond the colour of the skin, but it does not make race less important in discussing ‘being a foreigner’. The understanding here is that it is not just about being black or African, but the prejudices and stereotypes that accompany what it means to be black – in this case, a ‘nigger’, refugee, asylum seeker, poor, coming from the bush, hunger, and diseases – that set the difference between the African foreigners and white European natives.

Furthermore, Kabelah’s narrative suggests that irrespective of a migrant’s feeling towards the host country, it does not change how the host society sees such migrant; he or she is always a foreigner. For example, regardless of how one feels connected to the host society, that cannot be ‘written on your face’ instead, what people see is the phenotypical features (black African for instance). In the case of Kabelah, his portfolio, and academic and professional credentials were reduced to the prejudices of a black African man. Kabelah tells his story further exemplifies with a story thus;

‘I tell you a story of somebody whose daughter I was teaching, and that person is a customs official. I went on holidays, came and landed in Innsbruck, he saw Malaria proliferates [medication], and he says it’s a drug, he literally put all my luggage in asunder and then he took this malaria proliferates wanting to go and send it to the laboratory because it could be drugs that I brought into the system until the final analysis he saw my name, and then he asked me if I was a teacher at the University of Innsbruck, I said yes, and he said the daughter attended my course and was full of praise for me in his house. Not until he got to know; I was just anyone on the street, so you see these are two

69 Being a foreigner
70 Nigger is an ethnic slur against black people. It remains offensive to black people as a reminder of slavery and racism. It was often used derogatorily, and by the mid-twentieth century, particularly in the United States, its usage became unambiguously a pejorative, racist insult. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigger.)
things even between father and daughter. The daughter respected me because of the person I am; the father saw me, and he knew everything about me already, and he wanted to treat me because of his prejudiced mind. I was a stereotype for him. I knew if I went to the university, I was on the university campus, I was in the cafeteria or in the lecture theatre I felt good and big. But if I came out, I knew the contradiction I was in. Even in the university, I knew there were contradictions, and they were even the dangerous ones. Those intellectual racists’ – Ka-belah (8:5)

In the quotation above, the issue was not necessarily about the luggage search, but the reason behind the search – the prejudice that he is black and hence may have (illegal) drugs. Yet the veil of prejudice fell after the customs officer got to know what Kabelah does for a living. In the explanations of Kabelah, this is a good description of as what it means to be a foreigner. Even in his safe environment (his university campus), he recalled instances of intellectual racism. The intellectual racism, as he lamented came from his academic colleagues who held racist prejudices about him irrespective of his contributions to the community.

Nevertheless, being black in a western European country/society is not the same as in the USA. There is an ambiguity of racial discrimination in these societies. These differences were experienced by returnees from the USA and Western European countries. For instance, in his familiarity with what it means to be a foreigner in the USA, Kwadwo recalled an incident with some police officers:

‘I also remember walking to my apartment in Washington DC. It was around 9.30pm. Washington DC parking is [an] issue, so you have to park on the streets sometimes you have to park a little farther away and walk home. So, I parked my car and walking home. And then I saw a police car slowly like driving beside me, and then he asked me, do you live in this neighbourhood? And I said yeah, I live here; he is like which house? I said well that house right there then he says I want to see you walk into your house just because I was black. For me as an African there were two things; there was me being black, and there was me being African because sometimes even when you are interacting even [from] your look, they can tell perhaps you are African and so those two things always made you feel am I not a part of this?’ – Kwadwo (3:48)

Indeed, Kwadwo speaks about his experience from being a foreigner. One can attribute such a situation in the USA to blacks in general and not nec-
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essarily about Kwadwo being a foreigner. That is, it could be interpreted as
the reinforcement of a broader stereotype towards blacks in America. In
this case, Kwadwo points to two stereotypical features about himself; the
fact that he is black and the fact that he is African. These two identities
made him feel foreigner most times in the United States.

Connecting these narratives reveals being a foreigner and how one feels
towards the host countries as paradoxical. For instance, Kwadwo and Ka-
belah’s experiences are different vis-à-vis what it means to be black in Aus-
tria and the United States respectively. However, their experiences under-
score the understanding that life abroad is a constant reminder of being a
foreigner/ black and its related racial stereotypes. And thus, the deploy-
ment of these stereotypes by “natives” of the host country signals a sense of
‘feeling out of place’ among migrants. Another way in which the returnees
expressed why they felt out of place in the host country was how they
talked about their identities. In Akwasi’s case, it was the fact that he was
conscious of the dual identities he had.

‘I’m American but I’m African so I always had that dual identity, and
they showed up as and when but for the most part the African identity
was stronger than the American.’ – Akwasi (3:39)

Akwasi’s assertion of being American comes from the fact that he is an
American via the American passport he possesses. It is not clear what Ak-
wasi meant when he offered the idea that his African identity was stronger
than the American one. It may be speculative to refer to African identity
and what exactly it entails. However, the notion of an African identity ac-
cording to Kojo is about values and norms; “cultural background and
training”:

‘I am true African because my values and norms have gotten deep
within me. Boys, my friends do certain things I find it difficult to do.
For example, get married to an older person, get papers, and move on.
And I find it difficult to do that; I don’t know [maybe] because I am
true African. My values and norms are too deep for me, and it prevents
me from doing those things. I abhor a lot of things because it all boils
down to my cultural background and my training.’ – Kojo (6:54)

Interestingly, Kojo talks about being a true African instead of a true Ghana-
ian. This is what I call the diaspora situations; where people ascribe to an
African identity (values) rather than a national identity. Thus, in his view,
the reason for being a true African was his composure to stick to those val-
ues he mentioned. He compares himself with his friends, whom he be-
lieves have disregarded their African values. However, it is important to note that while he thinks the activities of his friends are not African, he did not also necessarily view those activities as the norms of the host society either. Here, what he may be referring to is that some of his friends engage in activities that they would most probably not do in the home country and for him (Kojo) not doing the same makes him the true African. Again, Kojo considers some practices and norms in the host country as contrary to the so-called African values that are ‘deep within him.’

To interpret what it means to feel out of place, as part of the experiences in the host country, different thoughts avail themselves. On the one hand, the notion of being a foreigner is perceived as what makes assimilation in the host country impossible for some migrants as in the case of Kabelah. But again, to be a foreigner also touches on the identity of the migrant himself or herself and what that means as we see from Kojo and Akwasi. Thus, while conveying that the host society prays on those prejudices and stereotypes of migrants, we can also take a step back to recognise that some returnees prefer to remain and even exhibit practices that set them apart from the mainstream lifestyle in the host country. Therefore, by entrenching those values and practices, they reinforce their identification as foreigners. For example, by maintaining the African identity which is usually through the performance of certain practices and activities, migrants may draw attention to themselves for others to recognise them as foreigners.

On the other hand of the argument, one can also put forward that the mere fact that they will never cease to be foreigners in the eyes of the host society reinforces migrants to take up their foreigner identities – a situation of the egg and the chicken. This can even lead to situations where migrants sometimes exploit some stereotypes for their benefits. Upon whichever direction one decides to dwell, the notion of being a foreigner presents itself as a dilemma in conceptualising migrants feeling towards the host society.

To summarise, returnees’ lack of home feeling towards the host society is not far-fetched from ideas behind the constant reminder that they are foreigners. In some cases, these reminders are also enhanced by migrant’s performance of identities from the home countries. As a result, these identities stand out, often attracting stereotypes which in turn lead to a sense of exclusion in the host country. Returnees’ feelings toward the host society also affect their sense of belonging in both host and home societies. In this section, feelings of inclusion and exclusion by returnees in the host countries portray the embedded politics of belonging in which case certain elements, such as race and identity or structural and social positions, limit or enhance respectively how one defines a sense of belonging.
7.4. Having Return Intentions

Return intentions are often ignored because they can hardly predict actual behaviour (Carling & Pettersen, 2014). They are the convictions of migrants that they will return to their home country someday. When and whether these intentions materialise is still a grey area in the literature. In some cases, the intention to return has been described as a ‘myth’ because they usually do not become realities among migrants (Carling & Pettersen, 2014).

Nevertheless, while abroad, the returnees in this study admitted having the intention to return to Ghana someday. For someone like Akosua;

‘The very first day, I left January 11th and the very moment I walked through, and I got to Gatwick Airport, I knew that this wasn't home for me. I knew that I have to come back home after I've gained quite a lot of experience and gone to school and stuff.’ – Akosua (1.119)

Just like Akosua, others like Kwadwo and Kabelah saw their time abroad as only an opportunity to gain professional experiences and that achieving such goals would be the deciding factor for actual return. According to Kwadwo, his intention to return someday played a guiding role in how he planned and organised his time abroad.

‘When I left, I always had that feeling that I will come back. I didn’t know how, I didn't know when it would be, but I knew for sure. So, even before my wife and I we got married, we discussed that at some point when our children are young we would like them to grow to have a life here in Ghana, to grow up as part of their childhood. Spend some part, minimum part of their childhood in Ghana. So, it goes to show that I had always been conscious of coming back.’ – Kwadwo (3:22)

Kwadwo indicated how he negotiated his return intention into his relationship with his wife. Another observation from Kwadwo’s narrative demonstrates the lack of a timeline for return intentions. Thus, even though most migrants may have return intentions, the timeframe for these intentions and the actual time when return takes place are often unknown even to the migrants themselves. Hence, in return thinking, the return preparation for the actual return to take place is often not included in the return intentions.

To return to the home country was always part of the migrants’ agenda. Another way to look at it is that many of the returnees had the opportuni-
ty to continue staying in the country of destination but chose to return. From that point of view, one can interpret these returns as voluntary, and that return intention was impressed upon as fundamental to the migration endeavour in the first place. Another important outcome is how the returnees make important and strategic decisions based on their intentions to return. For example, as a result of their intention to return, Ekua and her husband started building their house and planned for business in Ghana long before they returned. For this, it makes sense to agree with Carling & Pettersen (2014) that return intentions ‘represent summary attitudes to the migration experience, and can affect behaviour other than return itself – for instance about investment in relationships, skills or assets.’ (p. 14). In the case of returnees, however, return indeed took place.

7.5. Return Preparations

Another finding stood out – that return preparation is diverse and complex. That is, one sub-code emerged to explain how return decisions are made as part of the preparation to return. Interestingly, it did not come up in the data that return decision precedes return preparations. Instead, the results indicated that return decisions are part of the general return preparations (taking into consideration the positions of such narratives in all the stories).

Based on the data, I interpret return decision as the point where migrants set the time frame for returning, informs people about it and then make other preparations (savings, pensions etc.) towards the actual return. For instance, Akosua decided to return to Ghana after 12 years in the United Kingdom. She has a close relationship with her siblings (one of the reasons for moving to the UK in the first place). As part of her preparations to return – after she was convinced to return – as to whether her siblings will approve of the decision to return became an issue about.

‘My two brothers thought I was going because of a man basically, so they didn’t, they were like If you go, you have to, you’ve dug your own grave you have to lie in it, it’s your own bed you have to lie in it. If you make mistakes, you come back. My other sisters were like go, ignore them and go’ – Akosua (1:157)

According to Akosua, the concern of the brothers was a genuine one. This was because while abroad, Akosua was in a relationship and the partner was in Ghana. The brother's concern was for her not to return to Ghana...
because of the partner. Analytically, such interaction between the returnee and her siblings exposes the influence of relations (family or friends) in the actual return decision. Although Akosua eventually returned, it does not hide the fact that she had to arrive at that decision at the risk of ‘digging her own grave and laying in it’ – meaning she risked the support of her brothers should something go wrong after her return to Ghana. Under such circumstance, the decision to return is highly dependent on the approval or disapproval of close relations which are considered fundamental cliques of the return process.

So, they [her sisters] were also part of the influence to push me out of the UK to try and set up’ – Akosua (1:159)

To have opposition to the idea to return was not limited to Akosua. Kojo recounts the oppositions and the supporters of his decision to return. In his case, these influences came from relations at home in Ghana.

‘My senior sister and mother, they even encouraged me to come because when I wanted to come, I know if I speak to friends they will say no why are you coming, Ghana is difficult. I even spoke to uncles who said why do you want to come? I spoke to my sister, and my mother and…they encouraged me to come back, and since I came they have been supporting…’ – Kojo (6:46)

Kojo’s case brings us closer to the realisation that these relations and people who are considered important in the decision to return – whether supporters or opposition to the return decisions – can be in the host country as the case of Akosua or family and friend relations in the home country, whose support is vital after return. The significance of these people in the actualization return can be seen through the different roles they play in the returnee’s life especially in the early days. For example, in Akosua’s case, her sisters introduced her to their networks in Ghana where she started making contacts for her business. Kojo’s support came from her sister who offered her accommodation and assisted him financially until he found a job and a new accommodation.

Returnees who have children and partners accounted for their return decision differently. For instance, Kabelah explains that he negotiated his return intention with his wife from the onset of their relationship and therefore it was easy when the decision for actual return was made.

‘Look Kwaku [referring to me], I have to honestly tell you the children or the family would have maybe delayed my coming to Ghana, but they wouldn’t have prevented me. I wanted it. They could have delayed
it, but they wouldn’t have prevented me. And this one because there
was no child involved it was a decision with the two of us, and she was
also in love with Ghana.’ – Kabelah (8:46)

Kabelah’s return decision was a joint decision between himself and his
wife who was also ready to return at that point. Akwasi, on the other hand,
is a divorcee, but his children live with his ex-wife; therefore, notwith-
standing that the decision to return was up to him alone to make, his responsi-
bility towards his children was still something to consider in the return
preparations. Akwasi’s decision to return however did not meet opposition
from his ex-wife on the condition that he continues his responsibilities to-
wards the children;

‘My ex-wife and I had divorced, so my children left with her. So, I dis-
cussed with her that I was going to Ghana and she said if that’s your
dream, nobody is going to stop you so far as you could take care of the
children and I only had to do that for a couple of years, so I was like,
you know what, it is time’ – Akwasi (4:63)

Akwasi and Kabelah’s experiences are different from Ekua who returned
with her husband and their two children. The decision to return, accord-
ing to Ekua, was made by the couple without their children. She explained
and admitted that the decision was much easier because their children
were still young. However, she recounted an incident which otherwise
would have made the decision to return more difficult;

‘At the time, my oldest was 8. I realised that she actually had some
reservations about coming. We came across something she had written.
So, at that point, I realised this had had an impact on her; it wasn’t
simple. And I’m glad that we did because I feel like if we had stayed
any longer, it would’ve been a lot tougher for her to adjust.’ – Ekua
(5:27)

Return for adult migrants is not the same for their children. Parents may
be returning, but for their children, the so-called return may be migration
for them, especially for children born in the host country. Therefore, even
when one assumes that children are not old enough to be affected by re-
turn migration, the decision to return in one way or the other needs to
consider the feelings of these children.

Overall, depending on the network and family status, the return deci-
sions of returnees come in different forms and requires different deliber-
ations. For example, Kojo, a single returnee did not need to worry about
children or partner during his preparation to return. His return prepara-

7.5. Return Preparations
tion focused on what he can show to his friends and families as a returnee. His preparation was not about building a house or buying a car before returning. What he (Kojo) did, in this case, was to get the assurance that he can stay with his sister for a while after his return. There are no gender differences in the return preparations of returnees who were single. This is because it does not matter whether one is male or female when it comes to return preparations in terms of the decision. The critical aspect, however, is how other stakeholders such as friends and family members influence the return decision. For example, between Kojo and Akosua – both single male and female returnees respectively – their decision to return took into consideration the role of their family relatives.

Returnees prepare towards their homecoming in different ways employing different approaches to return. Regular home visits before return, building a house, looking for a job in the home country, initiating business plans and re-establishing relations in the host country are among the different approaches that are adopted by returnees. For example, Kwadwo resorted to making regular visits to Ghana.

‘I think three years before I came, I started coming back more often as the feeling got stronger to come back’ – Kwadwo (3:24)

Return visits are one of the main preparations for a long-term return. Such visits positively amplify feeling toward the home society. The purpose of these visits often boils down to building and re-building social networks and to familiarise with one’s home environment.

Another way one prepares to return is about looking for employment opportunities before return. Kwadwo for instance mentioned;


Kwadwo works with a multinational company in Ghana after his return. His preparation towards returning to Ghana centred on the possibility to find a job. Considering identifying a job as his primary concern, Kwadwo first secured a job in Ghana before his return. For couples and families with children, preparations towards return can take the form of step-return migration or an all at once return. Step-return migration means one of the partners will return alone to make the necessary preparations (build a house, get a job, survey schools for children etc.) before the return of the other partner and children (if any). In the case of an all at once return, the couple or family with children, all return to the home country at the same
time. For example, Kwadwo returned first before his family joined him (step return migration), and Ekua returned with her family all at once.

Return preparation is therefore more than just packing bags and baggage. It includes the return decision. Here the role of family and friend networks who have the potential to support the return process (especially in the early days after return) is essential. This refers to the type of social networks both in the home and host countries. The influences of these networks (such as family members, partners, and friends) might not affect actual return for some migrants while for others it is critical. The interconnectedness of return decision and return preparations highlights the complexities surrounding the point where return ceases to be just ideas/intentions but instead, becomes a process worth undertaking. Differences exist between married returnees (with or without children) and single returnees. For married couple returnees, the preparation to return need to be a unilateral decision for both partners and even so when there are children involved. For single returnees, it requires the negotiation of return with close-relations.

7.6. Return Expectations

Another dimension to return preparation is returnees’ expectations before the return. Return expectations are what one hopes to experience in the home society. The nature of one’s expectation towards the home society can significantly affect the patterns and preparations towards a return and the after-return life in the home society. Returnees’ expectations towards the home society are often by their pre-migration memories about the country of origin.

‘I was expecting it to be at the minimum, similar to what I left. I did not know it was going to be that drastic compared to what I had known. What I basically remembered’ – Akwasi (4:68)

Akwasi’s return expectation towards the home country was tied to his pre-migration image/memory of the society he left behind. This is also because Akwasi was not in regular contact with the happenings in the home society.

‘Because we didn’t have social media. I couldn’t send a Facebook and keep those lines of communications open. Some of these people I haven’t spoken to for 25 years. I haven’t seen them for 25 years so even when I see them; they look different because the last time I saw them,
they were 18 years old. Now they are 40 something, so you are looking
at him like, is this really that guy? – Akwasi (4:541)

With such few contacts and return visits, it is understandable that Akwasi
expected Ghana to be similar to what he left behind. Ekua, on the other
hand, had a different return expectation.

‘When I was growing up it wasn’t like this for my mother. She had all
the support and help in Ghana from family members, So I always used
to convince him [her husband] that we have to come together, espe-
cially whiles the kids are younger, so we can rely on that kind of help.’
– Ekua (5:30)

Growing up as a child in Ghana, Ekua’s familiarity with family support in
raising kids stayed with her while abroad, and these memories constituted
expectations she looked forward to while preparing to return.

Another return expectation was responsibilities that await returnees.

‘There was so much expectation, and that expectation is a perceived ex-
pectation. I perceive that they are expecting this and that from me. No-
boby said anything, but it’s my mind, so I thought the people perceive
this from’ – Kojo (6:16)

Kojo’s return expectations included social demand (example financial obli-
gations and assumption of certain roles) from family and friends. Thus,
Kojo’s expectations mirror expectations of the home society towards re-
turnees and how he was going to fulfil these expectations. His knowledge
of what society expects from returnees originates from his pre-migration
familiarity with society’s demands from returnees.

The difference between Kojo, Ekua and Akwasi may well be dependent
on the length of stay of these returnees abroad and their social back-
grounds. Kojo spent three years in the UK compared to the 12 and 25 years
that Ekua and Akwasi spent in Canada and the US respectively. Between
the three, Kojo’s expectation reflects current happenings and social situa-
tion in Ghana than the others. Keeping regular contact with the home
country while abroad and staying connected with friends in Ghana and
getting to know the achievements of his friends in Ghana, Kojo expected
demands from friends and family as a returnee. Also, Kojo’s pre-migration
image of the society he left behind was entirely different from the Ghana
that Ekua and Akwasi were expecting. It was an image of a society where
people expected returnees to act or behave in a particular way\textsuperscript{71}. Even though Kojo describes his return expectations as his perception, it comes from the general perception\textsuperscript{72} in Ghana about returnees and what is expected of them.

7.6.1. Expectation to Belong

On the theoretical level of conceptualising return expectations, the hidden embedded expectation to belong was evident in the returnees’ expectations. That is, these expectations do not reflect issues like loneliness, rejection, or complex readjustments. At this point in the migratory trajectory, the returnees were either not expecting challenges regarding belonging or did not acknowledge the possibility of that happening. The reasons for this can be attributed to the idea of going home which according to Caitríona Ní Laoire (2008) ‘contributes to nostalgic and idealised imaginings of a homeland’ (37). Here the understanding that they return to the homeland inherently leads to the expectation to belong, which I have demonstrated in the latter part of this book that it may not necessarily become a reality.

Affirming others studies like Corcoran (2002) and Ní Laoire (2008) (especially about return migration to Ireland), this study sees the expectation to belong as culminating from the understanding of homeland in terms of how the returnees articulate ‘a sense of community, associated with family, social networks and place’ (Ní Laoire, 2008; p38). With these expectations, before return, many returnees are guided by their return decision into believing in a different society than the one they eventually return. The pre-return society they expected resembled the one they left behind; the one that is similar to everyone including non-migrants, and most importantly the one that they belonged and were accepted and included.

7.7. Reasons for Return

Classical economic models have limited the reasons for return migration to returnees’ success or failure in the home country. The theoretical standpoint that migration and return are both decisions based on economic pos-
itions of the people involved has faced criticisms that point to other factors such as family, social responsibilities and the socio-political environments of the home country (Lewis & Williams, 1986; Diatta and Mbow, 1999; Hope, 1999). Reasons for return vary from one returnee to the other. Nevertheless, the reason for return constitutes a strong force in the return migration process. Reasons for return become the building blocks for seeking re-entry in the home country. It also serves as a justification for the migration expedition in general. In both scenarios, reasons for return are important for the renegotiation of return and reintegration. In the analysis of reasons for return, the result showed reasons such as giving back to society, proving others wrong, not to compromise with lifestyle, to give children a better life, to belong, starting a business, and having a partner and family.

7.7.1. ‘Giving back to society’

‘That didn’t have to be money. I could have, and I sent money, but for me, it wasn’t the thing I thought I wanted to give. I wanted to give off myself, and for me, my thinking was if I could touch one life making somebody’s dream bigger. To me, that was good enough, and so these were the things that mattered most to me and that these are the things that made me want to come back’ – Kwadwo (3:59)

In the quotation above, Kwadwo does not only justify his return but also points out the other available option if his return was only about bringing back financial support. He attributed the reason for his return to offering his human resource to the home society. Like Kwadwo, Akosua also mentioned returning to give back to society.

‘Giving back to society, that's my passion. Giving back to society, making a difference in somebody’s life; that's my passion.’
‘I knew that I have to come back home after I’ve gained quite a lot of experience and gone to school and stuff’ – Akosua (1:258/1:271)

Delving deeper into the result reveals that many of the returnees believed that they had acquired enough resources for investment in Ghana. Akosua, for example, seemed convinced that having acquired professionalism, capital, experience, and exposure (something she imagined is limited among non-migrants), she had to return to effect changes in the home country.

‘The way in which people dealt with things here [in Ghana], I felt there's a lot of skills or a lot of gap in how people deal with the essence
of urgency, with time and how people deal with stuff and I felt that I’d bagged enough experience, why don’t I go back and make a difference?’ – Akosua (1:270)

Upon this reassurance of ‘bridging the gap’ that exists in the home country, Akosua and other skilled returnees see return as a service to their society. In their explanations, the returnees’ idea of giving back to society reflect a sense that they owe their home country something. Their notion of making a difference in Ghana, for example, goes back to their wish to improve the home environments. The implication of such a reason for return on integration and belonging is the positive reflection and positioning of the returnee as someone who has the interest of the country at heart. Furthermore, the thought of giving back to society is something that many migrants have in mind even for those without any timeline for return.

7.2.2. ‘Proving people wrong’

Kojo’s reason for returning was to prove to the friends he left in the UK that they are wrong about the perception that migration is the only key to success in life. Thus, according to Kojo;

‘when I was coming; I said I want to come to Ghana and make it then I will go back and show myself that it is possible to come here and make it.’ – Kojo (6:41)

Returning to make a difference in Kojo’s case means proving to people that he can also ‘make it’ (be successful) in Ghana. It is easy to understand Kojo’s point – to prove others wrong – because of the perception towards migration and migrants in Ghana. However, the perception that the solution to becoming successful lies in migrating to western countries is not only among non-migrants but equally among migrants themselves. Taking on the challenge to show that he can succeed in Ghana was something that Kojo talked about with nobility and a sense of sacrifice to show the extent he is willing to go to change the general societal perceptions about return migration.

7.7.3. ‘Staying is compromising with lifestyle.’

Realising that he could not achieve his migration expectation Kojo further narrated that the favourable option was to return.
‘I thought I would be richer, I will be more respected, I will be happier you know then I had plans, I had the hope, I had plans for myself, but I couldn’t achieve any of that. So, I went there, the place, the weather, no work for me to do... I did not feel connected at all... I came back because when I juxtapose my life, before and when I went, I thought I was much better in Ghana. I had tasted good in Ghana, so I thought why not come to Ghana’ – Kojo (6:12)

Kojo’s story is a compelling one, yet it is about him refusing to believe that staying abroad is the only way to achieve his life goals. By saying he had ‘tasted good in Ghana’, he was referring to his pre-migration life in Ghana. No wonder that his reason for returning was to prove people wrong and change the perception that life in Ghana can also ‘taste good.’ Admitting to his challenges to adapt in the host country and his inability to achieve his migration objective, Kojo may thus fall under Cerase’s (1974) categories of returnees as ‘return of failure’. But this is not how he (Kojo) sees it. Rather, his return was purely a well calculated rational choice. It is about realising where he felt safe, happy, and comfortable and convinced to realise his capabilities – which in his case was Ghana. He compared staying in the United Kingdom to compromising the lifestyle he imagines for himself. Ekua (a returnee from Canada) also shared a similar reason for returning to Ghana;

‘If you want to be very happy there, you have to get used to living in that kind of weather. But I found myself being a different person all together at winter time. I didn’t enjoy it.
It’s a good six months of that, so I always knew that had to stop. If it wasn’t for that, otherwise I’m sure I would have probably stuck around but just feeling like you’re compromising with your lifestyle for a good six months in a year didn't seem right.’ – Ekua (5:25)

Ekua’s inability to stand the cold weather in Canada cannot be interpreted as failing to achieve her migration goals and thus “a return of failure” For both Kojo and Ekua, returning was the best option for them to have the life they want. Even though they both have different backgrounds and stories, their perception of their home country as the best option between home and abroad is still insightful. The difference between them, however, is that Ekua and her family accumulated enough capital and secured for themselves some necessities such as completing their house in Accra before returning; a complete opposite of Kojo.
7.7.4. ‘Giving children a better life’

Giving his children a better life was Akwasi’s reason for returning to Ghana from the US. According to Akwasi;

‘It is not just about work work work; I want my children to have a lot of what I did not have when I went over there. And I think it would be far easier to get that in Ghana than abroad’ – Akwasi (4:57)

Looking back at his pre-migration life in Ghana and what he missed when he went abroad, Akwasi seemed convinced that the best choice for his children was to return to Ghana. Indeed, he described the situation in Ghana before he left as the military rule; however, Akwasi was not expecting a military rule situation upon his return. Instead, he was referring to the socio-cultural practices including the norms and values in which he grew up in Ghana. Also, Akwasi did not mention that he returned with his children from his earlier marriage neither did he affirm that he has started a new family in Ghana, yet he mentioned that his reason for returning to Ghana is partly related to his children. Kwadwo, however, explained why he returned for the same reason.

‘we discussed that at some point when our children are young we would like them to grow to have a life here in Ghana to grow up as part of their childhood’ – Kwadwo (3:23)

Kwadwo and his wife want to establish a link for their children and their native country in order not to lose their heritage and ancestry roots. Another interesting outcome was the belief that they can better discipline their children in Ghana, provide them with a strong moral foundation and most importantly expose them to a stronger human interaction in Ghana than in western countries. Many West African migrants share the understanding that the African continent and its culture is superior to western culture regarding norms and values and good training for children. In some instances, migrants send their children back to their home countries as a disciplinary measure. Sometimes, migrant parents send their children to the home country to protect them from racism and hostilities that can endanger the entire family (Bledsoe & Sow, 2011). In their study on West African migrants living in Europe, Bledsoe & Sow, (2011) concluded that some West African migrant parents “build on long-standing African disciplinary efforts in hopes of toughening their children’s resilience to the challenges in the new place and wait for the risk to dissipate” (pp. 747). It
is therefore not surprising that some migrant parents return to the home country with their children for similar reasons.

‘You know my children are happy. They have a bigger and wider social network than they did in America because in America most of the time they are home they are indoors but here they have access to a whole bunch of people to interact with which is very helpful for their emotional development.’ – Kwadwo (3:106)

That is, Kwadwo’s expectation of the home society for his children is fulfilled after return – a sign that in some cases return expectations may be met upon return.

7.7.5. ‘This is where I belong.’

The rationale behind Kwadwo’s reason for return – for his children to get in touch with their native home and roots – is shared by other returnees. For example, the claim of being a Ghanaian was the reason for Afia’s return after spending more than ten years in the US.

‘Because at the end of the day, home is home. This is where I belong! I bare the name; I’m an Asiedu. I am Ghanaian. I just didn’t want to let go of that. Because I really did not need to come back and I felt myself drifting further and further away. And I was like no. Your parents are here; your ancestral hometown is here, you have a town where you ground. You can go off and drift off into the world, but I think roots. The idea of roots is important to me, and I think that’s because I’ve had to claw to claim some and I really just wanted to hang on to whatever it was. Because if I wasn’t going to be Ghanaian then really what was I? Because I knew I wasn’t American, and I would never be American. I have a British passport, but I’m not British. I’m not Jamaican. I’m much less Jamaican than I am Ghanaian. I’ve never been to Jamaica. My mother was Jamaican, grew up in England. So, my only connection to Jamaica was my very Jamaican grandmother who lived in England as well. I want to be something, so I can’t be American, I’m not British, I’m not Jamaican, so it's just Ghana, so I better go and fight for it!’ – Afia (7:7/5)

As patriotic as it may seem, it is not difficult to understand what Afia is putting across. Having a Jamaican mum and a Ghanaian Dad, Afia grew up in Ghana because her parents moved to Ghana after meeting in the UK.
She was born in Ghana but still visited her grandmother in the UK a couple of times. For most of her childhood, Ghana was the home country. As a child from a transnational marriage, Afia is fair in complexion. Her fair skin complexing makes her stand out among other Ghanaian children. She was often labelled as a foreigner in Ghana and a ‘half-caste’ because of her complexion. With such a label, she always felt the treatment of being a foreigner in Ghana despite having a Ghanaian dad and a common Akan surname – Asiedu.

After spending some part of her adult life in the US, Afia felt strong towards coming back in order not to lose her claim of being a Ghanaian – to fight for her claim as a Ghanaian. In her case, fighting for where she feels she belongs and holding on to this claim of belonging necessitated her return. Thus, her feeling for belonging somewhere was stronger than any other reason for return. Furthermore, a sense of belonging is conceived in terms of ancestral heritage and connection to the home country; and the fear of losing this ancestral connection to the homeland is a reason for return.

7.7.6. Partner and Business

Akosua also gave her reason for return as due to her partner who was in Ghana at the time.

‘I was also seeing somebody long distance, and, we both felt that we didn't want to do long distance anymore, so it made sense for me to come back because he was doing very well in his business.’ – Akosua (1:130)

Apart from having a partner in Ghana, Akosua also mentioned that starting her own business was also part of the reason for her return.

“I felt Okay if I come back and I set up this business it is going to go well so why don't I come back home? I had made plans for coming back home anyway; I just didn't know when” – Akosua (1:133)

73 Even though there is no cast system in Ghana, children of interracial marriages especially those that produce children who are fair in complexion than the average Ghanaian complexion are called half-cast. This means such children possess half of each of the parent’s cast that they belong to.
Considering the time of her return (around 2010/11), the data revealed that Akosua returned during the times where Ghana’s economy was in decent shape and favourable for establishing a business. Like most of the returnees, Akosua’s reason for returning also factored the economic situation at the time as a pull factor for return.

Furthermore, reasons for returning may correspond to social (staying is compromising with lifestyle, family), structural (Giving back to society, business), cultural (giving children a better life, proving people wrong) and emotional (this is where I belong, having a life partner) reasons for return.

7.8. ‘It just hits you’ – Return Triggers

Delving deeper into the data, in-between having return intentions and actualizing return (based on the reason for return), there is a significant phase which is usually missed by many return migration researchers. Many scholars have itemized several reasons in theorizing what usually triggers. However, when it comes to what I term ‘prompters,’ little is known in the literature. That is, despite the reasons identified as contributing to return, there are events or situations in the returnees’ time abroad that can trigger return – ‘trigger events.’ These events play a key role in the realisation of return intentions. Since for some migrants, return intentions never became relevant, immediate, and demanding, it is not until such a particular day, and trigger event happens that return becomes the obvious option. Akwasi, for example, could not explain what exactly happened but narrates that ‘it just hit’ him to return.

‘It just hit you. Actually, I was in a meeting on a Monday, and I just said I am done. It just hit me. I mean it’s like, I felt irrelevant at that moment because I felt I had lost my culture, I had lost my roots and it was time to connect and at the time, the money, the fear of losing the job, none of that mattered at that meeting. In fact, I recall we were doing a presentation; I am looking at the board; they ask me a question; I am looking at everybody blind; can’t answer. My boss goes like ‘Are you OK?’ and I whispered I think I am done. And I remember what he said, even though you are thinking, are you crazy? Take a vacation; you just overworked. I said I think I am done. Something was just pulling

74 See the review of relevant literature in chapter 2.
me back home. I don’t know what it was. So literally I never went back to work after that day’ – Akwasi (4:58)

Suddenly, the sense of losing his roots, culture and forgetting his origin started gushing out and in effect rationalised Akwasi’s return. Before this time, everything was normal, and although he mentioned not knowing what triggered this sudden edge to return, Akwasi still maintains what happened that day as the trigger moment – as sudden/unexpected and accidental – ‘it just hit you.’

Akosua, also recalled what happened to trigger her return;

‘[It was] extremely cold so I got to the train station and I was trying to board a train, and it took us, we stayed at the train station for about 2 hours waiting for the train. Eventually one came through, and obviously, everybody is trying to get on the train trying to get to work, so I got in, and this gentleman stepped on my foot. People had their hands up in the air trying to hold onto stuff, it was just packed and then all of a sudden, I started crying. Out of the blue I started crying and then I could hear a voice in my head saying, why are you doing this to yourself when you can go home and make a difference. You’ve been here for 12 years, you’ve been here for 11 years at that time, go back home. You don’t need to sit on the train all the time and go to work and yes there are some fantastic black people who have made it in terms of their career, and I’m sure I would have made it. But then I felt that Ghana actually lacked a lot of things so why don’t I come back and do it but what really killed it one was the fact that I sat on the train and I felt you know, I won’t get this in Ghana. Ghana there’s no snow. I can just get my car, drive to work and that’s it. There’s more to the quality of life than this.’ – Akosua (1:126)

In the particular situation of Akosua, ‘the trigger’ was when someone stepped on her toes in a crowded train on a cold winter morning. This moment ‘suddenly’ awakened different but urgent reasons for returning. The incident thus brought to life the strong conviction to return. She admits that she could still have stayed on in the UK and become successful in her career, but the incident made her question her life in the UK then. The opportunities and privileges in the host country became irrelevant for her at that moment; the quality of life that awaits her in the home country became the pull factor that drew her to return. What I found from Akosua’s story is that she started comparing life abroad and how life will be if she returns. At that point, she became convinced that her expertise will be bet-
ter put to use in Ghana than in the UK – a significant reason for her return anyway.

Putting it in perspective, the ‘return triggers’ – I argue – may not necessarily be the same as the reason for return, but they are significant in the return process. Imagine that the return intentions of migrants are ‘asleep’ while they go about their day to day activities abroad, the ‘return trigger’ therefore is that particular event or situation that awakens the ‘sleeping return intention’ for which the right reason for returning is sought by the migrant and hence preparation towards the actual return is made. Often these triggers are silent in returnees’ stories until they reflect on them. Such reflections put into context the emotional and the psychosocial state of the migrant as at the time the return trigger takes place such as in the case of Akosua who was saddened and emotionally stressed (crying) after the incident on the train. It is equally worth noting that sometimes, migrants may even dismiss these triggers until that moment when the trigger makes more sense.

Timing is also relevant in understanding these return triggers. This is because, in time, a ‘normal’ routine or ‘regular’ situation or event which in many other time scenes would be treated as part of everyday life may turn to become a trigger, thereby awakening a sense of returning. For example, it was not the first time Akosua found herself in a crowded train during winter, and neither was it the first time Akwasi was lost in his mind during a meeting, but those could be understood as ‘normal’ activities until the incidents on these particular days.

Additionally, the preparations towards returning – based on return intentions – also determines whether the ‘return trigger’ is ignored or considered. For instance, in the case of Akwasi, he felt content, ready and convinced about his financial capital with which he can return and start life back home. The same goes for Kabelah who was at the peak of his career abroad as a university lecturer in Austria, and with that, he could easily find a job in Ghana. Also, Akosua, upon considering the economic situation at the time and the expertise she had; she was more than ready to acknowledge the ‘return trigger’ leading to her return. That is, for return triggers to occur, the reasons or motivation for migration should be achieved to some extent. The same cannot be said for those who may feel unprepared and perceive as impossible to start life in Ghana because of lacking financial resources for resettling in Ghana. For those, the ‘return triggers’ are highly possible to be ignored.
7.9. The Z-Return model

The journey between migrants’ intention to return and the actual return is a long one. For many migrants, the intention to return someday to their home countries can be described as something that they hardly depart from. Yes, it may become a myth (Carling & Pettersen, 2014) as some migrants may have no specific time attached to their idea to return (de Haas & Fokkema, 2011). In efforts to understand the linkages between intending to return and the actual realisation of return, has often led to many speculations. For example, in their study of return migration intention determinants among Moroccan migrants in Europe, de Haas & Fokkema (2011) found that return intention is higher among migrants who have stayed longer in the host country and among people who have moved several times in their lives. Again, the use of return migration theories to project reasons for return (Snel, Faber, & Engbersen, 2015) has given less evidence to explain the gap between intentions and returning. However, this gap has been filled with the understanding that decisions to return are highly influenced by economic factors, achievements in the host societies and most especially the attainment of returnees’ motives for migrating (Carling & Pettersen, 2014; Snel et al., 2015; Tılıç-Rittersberger et al., 1986). Whereas some of these propounded reasons may be useful in the overall understanding of this complex process, the question remains; at what point do migrants make the decision to return and start preparing to return? It is this question and gap that the Z-Return Model is used to respond to.
The model above explains the steps between return intentions and actual return. The significant finding in this context is the argument for return triggers. From the analysis in this chapter, the intention to return was found to be a constant factor for many returnees (see section 7.4.), yet they were not acted upon until certain situations or events happened – making the choice to return visible and justifiable. From the diagram below, return triggers (see 7.8. ‘It just hit you’ – Return Triggers) inform the return decision and the subsequent preparations (see 7.5. Return Preparations) leading to the actual return. Embedded in the decision to return, return preparations and actual return are return expectations (see 7.6. Return Expectations); which, usually, are based on the migrant's familiarity with the home country in terms of how updated he or she is to current situations in the home country. Return expectations also include the expectations of belonging.

Between the return trigger and the return decision (illustrated in broken lines), the migrant weighs all the possible reasons to call for an actual return, as these reasons also become the justification after the actual return. The model also acknowledges the possibility that migrants may be engaged in return preparations (illustrated in broken lines) even from their
first day abroad; meaning that return preparation is not seen as something that is only initiated after the decision to return.

Furthermore, I argue that migrants may always set conditions to support return (see 6.3.) and may return when those conditions are met, but even so, these supportive conditions must be triggered. From the migration motives expressed in the earlier chapter, one can argue that many of the skilled returnee respondents in this study achieved their motive for migration – education. However, they did not return after achieving their advanced degrees until trigger moments manifested themselves. Also, the result in this chapter contextualises the understanding that return intentions are higher among returnees who have achieved their migration goals – usually economic goals. Thus, while the motivation for travelling was achieved, some returnees did not necessarily achieve their economic migration goals but still returned.

7.10. Chapter Summary

The time abroad presents itself as constituting a significant part of returnees’ experiences. From the daily experiences – resulting from different activities – to their feelings toward the host country, the result has contextualised return intentions and actual return, and how returnees reflect on their time abroad. The sense of belonging – how returnees felt in the host country – has also been depicted in this chapter as having limited or enhanced factors and that it can be multiple. That is, feeling included or excluded in the host country explains the underlying experiences of the politics of belonging in these societies.

The role of return intentions and the players in the decision to return also present itself as significant for returnees especially within the early days of return in terms of support from people who are considered important by the returnee. These factors cannot be ignored when making the return decision and preparing for the return. I have also highlighted that reasons for return in themselves tend to be a constant re-evaluation of returnees’ time abroad and their expected life in Ghana. That is, upon these considerations, return expectations play a significant role in the reasons for return; yet, pre-migration memories are present in these return expectations including the expectation to belong.

The most significant finding that the analysis brings to bear is the explanation of what happens between intentions to return and the actual return. Thus, return triggers come to explain the justifications for return in-
intentions and reasons, thereby transforming these mental aspirations into performable activities – actual return. The chapter concludes with the Z-Return Model which brings together the processes that migrants go through from their time of having return intentions until when actual return takes place.
Chapter 8. Returnees in the Eyes of Stayers

8.1. Introduction

Within the migration phenomenon, there are, those who leave (migrants) and those who stay behind (stayers\textsuperscript{75}). For those who leave, some might go for a short time; others long and others commute. There are also people who have become ‘stayers’ after returning for a long time. Although many people may choose to stay behind as friends and family members migrate, there are others who do not choose to stay behind but are confronted with poverty and other reasons such as family responsibilities; making it difficult if not impossible to migrate. Regardless of the reasons why some people stay while others migrate; for those who migrate, it is considered a privilege, fortune, success and a ‘good luck’ in the Ghanaian context (Awumibia, M., Alhassan, O., Badasu, D., Antwi Bosiakoh, T. and Dankyi, 2011 b; Setrana & Tonah, 2014). Such perceptions of migrants alone create some social ordering that place migrants above those who stay in the home country. Non-migrants/stayers here, thus, refer to those people who have not (yet) migrated abroad and have spent all their lives in the country of origin. The use of the term non-migrants or stayers does not have any adverse nuance neither does it undermine people who are considered as such. In every society, non-migrants are no strangers to returnees. They are the family, friends, and other acquaintances that returnees leave behind during migration. They are the neighbours, former classmates, street vendors, relatives, business friends, work colleagues, partners, and any other person or group of persons other than returnees.

In this section, I give insight into the results of the focus group discussions with non-migrant Ghanaians, more specifically non-migrants who have returnee friends or family relations. I structured the discussions according to the emphasis of the focus group members even though I had a discussion guide with me\textsuperscript{76}. I wanted to remain open to how non-migrants perceive returnees. The perceptions of non-migrants help to understand the position of returnees and the expected sociocultural environment they return into. Overall, non-migrants’ perceptions help in conceptualising re-

\textsuperscript{75} I use stayers here to denote non-migrants.
\textsuperscript{76} See Appendix A3 Focus Group Discussion Guide.
returnees’ reintegration process – which is still the primary interest of this study.

8.2. Who is a Borga? Labels and Definitions of a Returnee

During the focus group discussion with non-migrants, my interest was in how they define ‘borga’ or whom they would refer to as ‘borga.’ Responding to this question opened the door to many nuances of the term. Most of the focus group discussions were conducted in the Akan language (Twi or Fanti) and as such, ‘borga’ was used in place of any mention of returnees in the entire discussions.

As non-migrants talk about returnees by defining who a ‘borga’ is, two things are exposed. One has to do with their reference to public perception and that which they see to constitute who should be called a ‘borga’ and who not. This is particularly important because, regarding general perceptions of returnees like their dressing styles, even returnees themselves are aware of them. The label has social status connotations. While some returnees in this study distance themselves from such social status, other returnees embrace it. For many who grew up in Ghana before travelling abroad, they are used to the label and therefore share no different perception than non-migrant as these come from rooted public perceptions on what ‘borga’ means. This part of the research takes into account non-migrants’ constructions as made up of public perceptions and what they have personally experienced. Therefore, the word ‘borga’ means different to different people despite sharing a common perception on what the label entails.

‘Someone who’s travelled… Who’s been in the country, travelled to a foreign land, [and] come back.’ – Stella (2:1)

Stella’s description of who a ‘borga’ is constitutes the basic understanding of the term. Here, we can see that the returnee needs to have been in Ghana before travelling abroad. As to how long or until what age a person should be in the country before travelling, Stella did not clearly indicate. Nevertheless, spending time in Ghana before travelling can also mean growing up in Ghana and or even schooling in Ghana before travelling abroad. This is significant because returnees who are born either abroad to Ghanaian parents or interracial parents are not considered ‘borgas.’ These types of returnees are usually ‘called half cast’ (for returnees with interra-
cial parents) or *aburokyire ni akodaa* meaning ‘born abroad or child from abroad’.

The definition of ‘borga’ also includes the achievements of the returnee.

‘Well I usually think those we brand ‘borgas’ are not those ones who usually come with the positive impact’ - Christina (2:44)

The positive impact here refers to those socially accepted ways of life which constitute living within the standard norms and way of life, but most importantly it is about returning with resources that can contribute to socio-economic standards which benefit society in general.

‘...you see them with nothing. They just go there, get these menial jobs to do and then they just come back, just come spend their money. That is what I... those are the kind of people I will call ‘borgas’ but not necessarily someone going there to achieve something positive, and you know’ – Christina (2:45)

By achievement, what matters is what the returnee comes back with apart from the material wealth. This description instils some social class structuring among returnees based on the assumption of what the returnee brings back and their contributions to society. Here, Christina suggests something more than just travelling abroad. She takes us a step further into a stratification system whereby ‘borgas’ refer to those perceived to be on the bottom of the returnee status level. Thus, by calling only those who have returned without any positive impact ‘borgas,’ the label is reduced to those considered as low achievers. Christina’s definition is usually shared by some elites including skilled returnees. For such people, the ‘borga’ label is only for unskilled migrants or illiterate migrant returnees. The description of ‘borga’ by Christina, to some extent, contradicts studies such as Nieswand’s (2014) which suggest ‘burgers’ are rather skilled or returnees who return and impact their societies. What I found, however, was that for returnees themselves and other skilled non-migrants, learned and skilled returnees are rather referred to as ‘bee-tos’ – similar to how Martin (2005) describes educated returnees. However, I must admit that on many occasions (during the focus group discussions with non-migrants), the reference to ‘borgas’ makes no exception to skilled or unskilled returnees.

Christina further describes ‘borgas’ as people who do menial jobs in the host country. By menial jobs, she was referring to unskilled jobs in the host countries such as cleaning, sweeping and any other jobs that do not re-

77 Author’s personal experience from the society
quire special skills. Nevertheless, this definition or understanding of Christina (of who a ‘borga’ is or is not in terms of skilled and unskilled) is not a popular definition for the label ‘borga’. As a general perception, however, anyone who travels outside the country and returns is a ‘borga,’ and as such, differences between skilled and unskilled become irrelevant to many non-migrants in the focus group discussions. In that case, Stella’s definition of ‘borga’ is a commonly shared one.

Another description of ‘borgas’ stems from their way of dressing.

‘…because when they return there is some ‘yooyoo’ lifestyle that they live that we see makes us call them ‘borgas’- Atta (1:19).

Many of the discussants perceived ‘borgas’ as people who dress in a particular way. The ‘yooyoo’ lifestyle, according to Atta, reiterates the dressing style of ‘borgas’, which makes them stand out and easily recognisable. The description by Atta, however, falls among the general definition of ‘borgas’ as people who dress in a particular way (yooyoo) and behave in a certain manner (show off). One can attribute such a description of ‘borgas’ as something that physically identifies returnees. From Atta’s point of view, the visible lifestyles of returnees can be deduced to mean that ‘borgas’ become easily recognisable via their lifestyle especially how they dress.

Furthermore, it is assumed that ‘borgas’ are successful people in terms of financial and material wealth. For example, in the view of Yaw;

‘…I mean people do think if you travel and come back, you’ve gone to make it so when you come down here, we call you ‘borga’ because… everything about you has changed. Maybe more money too.’ – Mensah (2:2).

The expression ‘people do think’ means that Mensah was talking about a general perception about returnees. I call this general perception a public perception. The public perceptions are often expressed in a similar way such as ‘people think’, ‘everyone knows’, ‘people say’ etc. Such phrases shed light on the fact that the perception needs not be verified by the person quoting it. The perception thus automatically becomes part of the ‘common sense’ or an ‘already known’ and accepted belief or fact. This description of ‘borgas’ can be maintained as one of the commonly shared perceptions (travelled abroad and back, have a different lifestyle, dress in a partic-

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78 Yooyoo is a way of dressing which involves lots of chains and rings. It is similar to the black American hip-hop dressing style. It is sometimes called Akata. Yooyoo can also mean ‘showing off’.

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ular way, and are rich and successful) about returnees in terms of characteristics.

The results from the focus group discussions with non-migrants also suggest that such a description of ‘borgas’ increases non-migrant’s expectations towards returnees. For example, a ‘borga’ is expected to have her/his own house and to have a car among other expectations.

‘The most important thing is to build a house at least and then maybe you can buy cars later.’ – Ama (1:69)

People who are referred to as ‘borgas’ in Ghanaian societies are considered to have returned with ‘more money’ and are rich, irrespective of the skills they possess or how much they positively impact their society. And again, for many non-migrants, the difference between skilled and unskilled is blurry when it comes to calling a returnee ‘borga.’ Success, for that matter, can be broad but in this context, it refers to what Ama (a street hawker) alludes to as:

‘…the perfect one so to speak; ‘borga’ is a returnee who has been able to build houses and owns properties and not just good body or skin tone.’ – Ama (1:68)

Ama was reacting to another group member’s description of ‘borgas’ as returnees with ‘good body or skin tone.’ Indeed, in the description of some of the focus group member, some of the changes that identify a person as a ‘borga’ is the skin tone. It is assuming that the cold weather condition in western countries contributes to light-toned color change in the skin of returnees. Ama, however, refuses this assertion as not enough in describing ‘borgas’ but draws the discussion on returnees’ success. By success, material possessions quickly came into the argument. The number of cars, houses, and other material wealth tops this successful list. Also, we see the description of ‘borga’ transformed from a ‘positive impact’ returnee to a successful returnee. Hitherto, defining a returnee as a ‘borga’ goes beyond just the ‘yooyoo’ lifestyle, the kind of job the person did abroad and how much a person impacts the home society. It is the observable economic transformations of a person beyond their pre-migration status. The source of the money and the skill level means nothing in this kind of description. Thus, it all comes down to ‘the end,’ not ‘the means’ – the material possession.

Analysing further, ‘borga’ is not just a label; it attracts some level of social status. It sets those that are labelled apart from others. You can hear it through songs of popular local artists. Movies have it in their titles, and

8.2. Who is a Borga? Labels and Definitions of a Returnee

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Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.
some characters in local movies are called that way. It is difficult to get the
original version of the meaning of the exact word and where it originated.
Despite the polarised meanings of its originality, the word ‘borga’ un-
doubtedly remains a household name. Depending on who is using it or
whom it is labelled after, what comes to mind after you hear the
word ‘borga’ in the Ghanaian context usually has to do with travelling
abroad. Personally, growing up in Ghanaian from childhood until my
adulthood, I remember very well how often my friends and I will label
each other or other people as ‘borga’ based on the things we see them do,
wear, or even the way they walk or speak. As to what constitutes ‘borga’ or
how it came about was not of concern to any of us then. It has become
part and parcel of the everyday vocabulary having its grammatical place in
the home language of Akans. For instance, a question like ‘woa borga anaa?’
meaning, ‘have you borgerd?’ reflects the grammatically placed tense and
aspepectual readings of of the word ‘borga’ as “have …borgerd” indicating
present perfect. Similarly, it has a gender placement as well. While a man is
a ‘borga’, a woman becomes a ‘borgres’ even though ‘borga’ is generic for
returnees of both genders. The original usage of the term ‘borga’ was for
male returnees, and this was because, in those days (the late 1970s and ear-
ly 1980s), international migration was mostly dominated by males (E.
Akyeampong, 2000 a). In present-day Ghana, this label remains for return
migrants – both female and male returnees. The origination of the word
itself leads to many interpretations. As I sampled from different sources
(from returnees, non-migrant respondents, and literature), two dominant
contending narratives of the origin of the term were noticed.

The first narrative comprises a series of stories that trace the name ‘bor-
ga’ to Germany. In this narrative, the term is synonymous with the Ger-
man word ‘Bürger’ which means ‘citizen.’ The narrative postulates that the
name originated from early returnees from Germany who had become
‘Bürgers’ in Germany and as such wanted to maintain their ‘Bürger’ titles
while in Ghana79. A slightly different version of this narrative is that upon
returning to Ghana, these German-based migrants wanted to maintain
their ‘borgas’ (citizens) of Ghana which is similar to ‘Bürger’ in Germany.
The same narrative holds that many of these returnees were returning from
the German city of Hamburg (Nieswand, 2008) and thus calling them-
selves ‘Hamburg Bürgers’ meaning citizens from Hamburg. Referring to
themselves as Bürger later became the name for returnees by non-migrants

79 This narrative comes from an expert interview with a former worker of IOM-
Ghana.
as well. Bürger then transformed into ‘borga’ due to the phonetic pronunc-iation differences in Deutsch and Twi (Akyeampong, 2000 a).

The second narrative stems from how past returnees had narrated their experiences from abroad in terms of what they eat. This narrative holds that most returnees complained of missing eating ‘borgas’ as in the food burger; hence they were usually called ‘burger eaters’ and then to ‘borgas’ (plural). 80

Interestingly, in both narratives, the central argument is thing that returnees themselves came up the term ‘borga.’ Thus, in both narratives, the name originated from returnees themselves. This explains why the name borga does not connote negative taggings of returnees. The returnee label in Ghana is different from returnees of other countries when one considers the negative connotations that sometimes come with labels for returnees. For example, the kikokushijo 81 of Japan or the Almancı of Turkey are often used for returnees and attract, to some extent, negative meanings (Pusch & Splitt, 2013). Borga, on the other hand, attracts some social status (Wong, 2013)

The first narrative (on the meaning of borga) though seems more appealing to the origin of this label. Notably, the term ‘borga’ was not in Ghanaian vocabulary until the late 1970 to early 1980 s. This was also the period when Germany became a popular destination for many Ghanaians. The population of Ghanaians in German cities like Hamburg, Düsseldorf, Berlin and Frankfurt was very significant (E. Akyeampong, 2000 a). Chronologically, the term borga showed its head during this period. Another critical element is the Ghanaian music genre called highlife 82, which developed a distinct version called the burger highlife in 1980. Ghanaian migrants in Germany in collaboration with German producers and musicians created the burger highlife music (Collins, 2004). Musicians like George Darko and Charles Amoah were among the pioneers of burger highlife but were also Ghanaian migrants in Germany. Calling this music genre by the name burger highlife is synonymous with how these migrants called themselves when they returned to Ghana. In many of the burger

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80 This is also another narrative from an expert interview.
81 The Japan Times, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2014/05/04/issues/kikokushijo-returnees-country-yet-ready/#.WFJ4-qIrIUE.
82 Highlife is a type of Ghanaian music genre. It started in early 20th century. It is made up of traditional harmonic 9th melody and other rhythmic structures from Akan music. Over the years there have been other genres of Ghanaian music like burger highlife (different version of highlife) and hiplife (the mixture of American hip-pop style and highlife.)
highlife songs, musicians sung about their experiences abroad and especially the challenge they faced abroad. Love songs on how lovers are separated because of one partner migrating and then coming for the other partners were mostly on the top list of songs from this genre. Undoubtedly, for many who have not migrated (like me before migrating), listening to these songs gave impressions of the life of a migrant. Lyrics of songs and music videos thus portrayed more about what it means to be a borga.

In Ghana, the term ‘borga’ is popular (mostly) among the Akan ethnic group. It originated from Akan return migrants. Within the period described above, the Akans remain the biggest ethnic group that emigrated to Germany. Presently, one can easily trace many old migrant generations of Ghanaians in Germany to Akans especially the Ashantis (Akyeampong, 2000a; Bob-Milliar, 2009; Bob-Milliar & Bob-Milliar, 2013; Collins, 2004). The idea that migrants created their label presents itself as a new conception for further deliberation. It remains a question of whether they wanted to be easily identified or whether they wanted a way to be recognised as still being Ghanaians. Such contradiction may remain a puzzle though.

The dressing styles of the early-days ‘borgas’ from Germany, popularly known as ‘Pimpinees,’ (mostly by male returnees) remains one of the main identifiers of returnees. ‘Pimpinees’ is where they (mostly men) wear their trousers very high either around the level of the belly button or even higher up to the chest with an over-sized tucked-in shirt. Many finger rings and neck chains (as in the picture below) accompany this way of dressing (Tonah, 2007). The dressing style was opposite how people dress in those times; therefore, making ‘borgas’ very easy to identify from their physical appearance (Tonah, 2007).

Picture 1: A picture of how Borgas are portrayed in Dressing

Often returnees are called ‘borgas’ and identified with the country from where they return. For example, German ‘borga,’ American, Italian or Spain ‘borga.’ Similarly, returnees from neighbouring countries or to other places either than Europe and USA are also labelled as such. So, there are also Libyan ‘borgas,’ South African ‘borgas,’ China ‘borgas’ or Togo ‘borgas.’ There is, however, a certain structure of supremacy among ‘borgas’ depending on the country from where one returns. For example, an Italian ‘borga’ is superior to a Togo ‘borga’ as echoed in the work of Bob-Milliar & Bob-Milliar (2013).

In conclusion, the label ‘borga’ remains reserved for only the Ghanaian Diaspora Return Migration (GDRM) (see the section on types of returnees). Thus, returnees of African descendants of slave trade who return to the African continent (Ghana) to learn about their past and reconnect

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with their ancestral roots are not part of those that are referred to as ‘borgas.’ Up to now, we have observed that although the term ‘borga’ has become a household label for returnees, depending on who uses the label – it may come with different meanings and undertones. Non-migrants’ definitions of ‘borga’ entail how the returnees are observed and described. These definitions of borga, therefore, include characteristics such as how they dress, where they travelled to and the idea of success and the social status that comes with the label.

8.3. Narratives on Change

When non-migrants talk about ‘changes’ among returnees, they often compare the behavioural, the cultural, and the socio-economic differences between a person’s pre-migration and after-return status. That is if one imagines the person they use to know before he or she migrated, then change, as I argue, is the aggregate of differences that have taken place in the returnee’s life taking into consideration the pre-migration times and return time. This socio-cultural, and economic status thus becomes the common denominator for explaining the differences that are observed among returnees. In the case where non-migrants are not aware of the returnees’ pre-migration social status, the after-return status of a person is enough for observing the change. In cases where the pre-migration status of the returnee is unknown, the non-migrants compared the returnee’s cultural and social practices with the cultural and social practices of the home country to ascertain how much a returnee has changed. Thus, the periods for these comparisons remain the pre-migration and the return phases of the migration cycle. Again, the changes in returnees constitute the observed patterns, which centre on returnees’ physical and attitudinal changes, in addition to material possessions.

Changes among returnees were blamed on the length of stay in the host country. According to the non-migrants, changes among returnees are in terms of the amount of time they spent abroad. For instance, according to Mensah,

‘Those who go and stay there for long, even how they walk changes. And also, how they behave or also how they even spend money becomes different.’ – Mensah (1:3)

The word change refers to many things about returnees. Here change is correlated with length of stay abroad. The perception of how much a re-
turnee has changed – as dependent on long stay abroad – is quite fascinating. On the surface, it holds that the longer a person stays away from ‘home,’ the more likely it is for some of the ‘home’ culture traits to be unlearnt. However, when Mensah mentioned the length of stay abroad, he was referring to two things. On the one hand, the length of stay abroad dictates the actual number of years or months that a returnee has spent abroad. On the other hand, he was referring to those migrants who do not keep in contact with the home society while abroad; opposite to what Mina describes;

‘But we have other people who usually once they go there, they usually come down. They are still in line.’ – Mina (2:23)

From Mina’s narration, she prefers migrants who stay in touch with home while abroad. By saying that they ’usually come down,’ presupposes those who regularly visit Ghana while abroad. Staying out of touch with friends and families means that the returnee has stayed away from home for a long time. Here, time is construed on the lines of familiarity and being updated on home affairs. It does not imply that non-migrants do not recognise changes in returnees who spent short time abroad or even among regular home visitors, but those short-term migrants who finally return are perceived not to have gone through as many changes as migrants who have been abroad for a long time.

Delving further in the data (by connecting results from the focus group discussion with non-migrants and result from interviews with returnees), there are many differences in levels of immersion by migrants in the host country that can lead to different variations of change between returnees. For instance, apart from the amount of time that migrants spend abroad, some skilled returnees indicated that the skill levels of migrants dictate different levels of immersions in the host country. For instance, during the interview with returnees, a description by Kofi – a skilled returnee – sought to suggest the existence of differences in levels of engagements in host countries by skilled and unskilled migrants. He (Kofi) refers to unskilled migrants by looking at some of the lifestyles that many unskilled migrants engage in while abroad.

‘…they shop from Ghanaian or afro shops, eat traditional home food almost every day, attend Ghanaian [African] parties, listen and watch home country [Ghanaian] radio and television channels via internet, have [mainly Ghanaian] friends and…they have more update on
Ghana stuffs...so they blend in easily when they come back because they didn’t change much’ – (Kofi, a skilled returnee).

Thus, from Kofi’s point of view, these differences between skilled and unskilled migrants go to the core of how much migrants change in relation to the home culture when they return. To him (Kofi), it may also explain why skilled returnees are more likely than unskilled returnees to have problems readjusting to the home culture than unskilled returnees. From Mensah’s (a non-migrants) view, changes are as a result of the time that returnees spend abroad while in the view of Kofi (a skilled returnee), the magnitude of the changes in returnees differs between skilled and unskilled migrants. The connection between these two opinions and narratives with regards to changes among returnees is that both explanations uphold that returnees change while abroad. The different levels of change are thus seen from different contributory factors such as the time spent abroad, how regular a migrant kept in touch with the home country while abroad and the extent to which the migrant immersed him or herself in the host country which in the view of Kofi, differs between skilled and unskilled migrants.

However, to many non-migrants like Mensah, this difference between skilled and unskilled returnees is blurring if not unknown to them. So far, from my data, many non-migrants’ perceptions (public perceptions) on returnees do not differentiate much between skilled and unskilled returnees; meaning that regardless of their skills level, returnees tend to exhibit changes that contradict their pre-migration ways of life –the life that was best known to non-migrants.

Changes here – observed by non-migrants – encompass returnees’ attitudes and physical appearances. For example, walking in a particular way and money spending habits represents physical and attitudinal changes respectively. In total, the lifestyle of the returnee is what is described to have changed.
8.4. Noticing Change – Physical and Attitudinal Changes

‘For instance, we know of returnee who returned about three weeks ago but when he comes here, how he talks to us, his dressing and even skin ton...he could even shake hands with you, and you’d feel the freeze in his palms’ – Kojo (1:37)

Dressing (the most mentioned observations about returnees) is one of the main perceptions about returnees. They are known to dress in ‘yooyoo’ style but also very decent. Wearing clothes and shoes that are considered expensive puts one in this lifestyle as well. Appearance, therefore, is vital for non-migrants in their perception of returnees.

It also includes the walking styles of returnees. Returnees are perceived to walk in a certain way. In Ghana, people are ‘known’ to walk in a relaxed manner and slowly, but returnees are perceived to walk much faster and mostly seem to be in a hurry. Such is a general perception towards people in western societies who are considered as people who walk fast and so when people returned from the western countries; they also walk in ways that are similar to their host societies. The interesting thing here is how stereotypes towards western countries are bluntly transferred to returnees from western countries. Typically, some perceptions are just a transposition of how non-migrants believe things to be working in western countries. For instance, ice (freezing) has become a common metaphor used by non-migrants to physically describe returnees.

Ice in itself is not easy to transport from one country to another by a regular passenger on a flight going back to his/her home country. However, the use of ice as the vocabulary of non-migrants – about returnees – carries different meanings. To anyone else, the expression ‘you’d feel the freeze in his palms’ may seem puzzling and draw attention and questions like; how can one freeze in the hot temperature below the equator? But this is both a metaphor and a clear language expression that is used in describing returnees. Expressions that contain ‘ice or freeze’ (example ‘a bor-ga with ice’) may indicate two things. First, it shows how long a person has returned – recently arrived or returned for a long time. Secondly, it may suggest the tangible and intangible properties/possessions (example

83 As a native and potential returnee, I have experienced people telling me that I have ice in me that I should melt some of the ice. The metaphor of ice, which I find interesting, made me take time to explain this metaphor in depth. The interpretation and ideas expressed here are based on my personal understanding and familiarity with this concept and what it entails as part of everyday expressions.
8.4. Noticing Change – Physical and Attitudinal Changes

wealth, mindset, physical appearance etc.) of the returnee, from the ‘cold’.

When ice and freezing are used in expressions towards returnees like the one from Mike, the attention is drawn to the skin tone of the returnee. It is part of the general understanding that western countries are extremely cold because of the winter season. The cold therefore is considered advantageous for dark skin tones of Africans and Ghanaians to be specific. That, it makes the dark skin soft and smooth. Therefore, when people return from these regions, they are perceived to have beautiful skin tones compared to non-migrants. Apart from the weather, it is also part of the general belief that there are better skin care and skin cosmetics in western countries that are readily available for migrants which help to endow migrants with ‘perfect’ skin tones. As a result of these cosmetics and the cold temperature, returnees are believed to return with ‘freezing bodies’, – with ‘palms’ included – which go to explain how good they look when they return. Since handshake is the common form of greeting in Ghana, Mike’s reference to the returnee’s palm as freezing is to explain the soft and moist palms of his returnee friend’s hand that he shook. The perceiving that returnees as ‘having some ice in them’ is widely used to equally denote the duration of returnees’ stay. Thus, migrants who are perceived to have recently returned do have more ice than those who hard return for a longer period. For example, a returnee who has spent days home is considered to have more ice in him/her than a returnee who has returned for a year or more. It is perceived that those who have returned for long are already drained of their ice which is otherwise taken that their ice has already melted because of the warm temperature below the equator.

But Ice is more than just the physical looks and skin colour. It is also a metaphor for money and specifically foreign currency, which has superiority over the home currency (the New Ghanaian Cedi – NGC) in terms of exchange rate. As mentioned already, the returnees I researched on are those from western countries. The currencies in these countries – the Pound, Euro, and the Dollar – remain on top of all other currencies respectively in terms of their exchange rates with respect to the NGC. Therefore, when non-migrants talk of ice in returnees, they on many occasions refer

84 Returning from the cold refers to western, developed, and industrialised countries. The shared characteristic of these countries is the low temperatures because of the winter season compared to Ghana that has hot temperature.

85 A perfect skin tone is often described as soft, moist, clear, clean, and spotless but also somehow fair in complexion.
to returnees as coming back with hard currencies that can be ‘melted’ to get more NGC. It also explains why newly arrived returnees are believed to have more ice and have freezing palms than old-time returnees. This lies at the core of the belief that all returnees are wealthy because even when they return with few hard currencies, they can easily exchange them for higher sums of NGC especially during their early days of return.

Atta narrates an incident with a newly arrived returnee who visited his workplace to wash her car.

‘Last time a woman came here to wash her car, and they had brought her all her bags and stuff [from the airport] like that. She wasn’t even familiar with the Ghanaian currency. It was the people she came with instead who was teaching her. So, we all said, ‘Eeii that’s a real lady borga.’ After she opened her purse to pay me, she didn’t know the Ghanaian currency quiet well. So, then she took 20 Cedis and asked, ‘Is this the amount for the washing fee?’ – Atta (1:75)

Even though Atta did not use the ice metaphor, such experience fits a scenario where ice is used to not only explain that this returnee had just arrived (because she had all her bags with her from the airport), but it also tells her unfamiliarity with the home currency. She had (presumably) changed some foreign currency to home currency but still cannot tell the difference in the value of what she had to pay – in this case by asking if it cost 20 Ghana Cedis, she would have paid twice for the price of the service.

Nonetheless, the perception that returnees have ice in them is not limited to physical money that returnees possess. In some cases, it includes the experience and the advantages that returnees are perceived to have – that can be converted into getting good jobs and living a good life. In general, the use of ice as a metaphor to describe the status of returnees stand for all that is foreign or new to the home society that a person returning from abroad brings along – the different values, currency, mentality, language, lifestyle, and appearance. Interestingly the ice melts away after a significant period in the home country. For example, a returnee may return with a thick (usually English) accent during the early days of return, but after some time, this accent may disappear when the ice has melted; or a person may return with a high sense of time consciousness which can melt away after returning for a long time and getting to experience the ‘Ghanaian time’.

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86 This was not my first time of hearing the phrase Ghanaian time. I knew what the discussants were referring to when I was analysing data. It is interesting to grow
Furthermore, Christina highlights another way that non-migrants identify returnees.

‘They usually have this way of dressing and yes I guess the way they speak’ – Christina (2:4).

Many returnees, according to Christina, come back with some accent. For those returning from the United States or the United Kingdom, for example, their English accent can easily be distinguished from the Ghanaian accent. The moment when one starts to speak with a different English accent, people turn around and wonder where the person comes from. Even though it is mostly with an English accent, the way returnees speak the indigenous languages in some cases reveals the recency in their return. The pronunciation of some words and the general construction of sentences becomes the pitfalls that trap returnees.

Referring to the way returnees speak can also mean the confidence with which they speak. Many are perceived to outspoken and very vocal. In a society where a person sometimes ‘must accept the situation and give it to God’\textsuperscript{87}, ‘speaking up against a situation that you are not happy about and making comparisons with how things are done better in the host country is against the unspoken rules of society. Unfortunately, this becomes a hallmark of returnees. The change in returnees’ mentality is seen from their way of arguments, worldviews, their understanding of what is right and wrong, fair, and unfair, justice and injustice.\textsuperscript{88}

Moreover, non-migrants referred to the mentalities of returnees when explaining what constitutes changes in returnees.

\textsuperscript{87} This is a common statement within Ghanaian society to signify tolerance and the idea to give up on.

\textsuperscript{88} This part is based on my personal experience and understanding of the Ghanaian society as a native.
‘Well I think, [] it could also be as a result of you having a different mentality when you went there. You have sort of gone to learn their culture, and then you come back here, and it is far; like our culture and their culture is parallel it is far far different’ – Mike (2:20)

A migrant’s reason (referred to by Mike as mentality or mindset) for the migration expedition is considered vital to how far he or she changes upon returning home. It is perceived that depending on the mentality of a migrant, he or she chooses to learn the host culture or not. Here, ‘learning their culture’ is perceived to be the sole right of the migrants. That is a migrant can decide to learn the host culture or not. It is not only wrong to learn the host culture, but it is the fact that the host culture is perceived to be parallel to the home culture that makes the difference. Such beliefs (i.e. ‘You have sort of gone to learn their culture’ – Mike) suggest that migrants chose to assimilate in the host society and as a result, forget their own home culture. The change in returnees’ mentality is seen from their way of arguments, worldviews, their understanding of what is right and wrong, fair, and unfair, justice and injustice. For those returning from western countries, their mentalities are simply western.

Apart from the perception that returnees come back with different mindsets which make them alien to the home country culture and social etiquettes, changes in attitudes of returnees are also perceived from their relationship with others – mostly with non-migrants. Changes in returnees are seen from how they relate to old friends and how they react among family members and people that they are ‘supposed’ to know.

In general, I concluded that non-migrants are very conscious of the fact that returnees are not homogenous. Mostly when non-migrants talk about changes in returnees, they consciously place their perceptions on the understanding that returnees are different. Just like Christina puts it;

‘Yeah sometimes, it’s relative. You can’t put all of them in one box.’ – Christina (2:5)

This suggests that some of the observations are returnee specific. One can also argue that by the fact that some people are close to returnees (family members, friends etc.) they must be ‘good returnees. I must, however, add that some of the experiences, which underlie non-migrants’ perceptions to-

89 Mentality here is more of the mindset and personality of the returnee which has developed over the course of period and time abroad. Mentality in this context as used in the original Akan language can also mean mindset.
90 Western stresses the relationship of the migrant to the migration country (ies.)
ward returnees, are established through their relations and interactions with returnees.

Nevertheless, some perceptions only come about as a result of other non-migrants’ experiences with returnees which are shared among non-migrants and thereby constituting a general perception. What I mean here is that, while some of these perceptions may come about as a result of a non-migrant’s membership in the ‘Ghanaian perceptual community’ where perceptions (public) are passed down to the other via everyday interactions including songs, movies, and other media, there are those that came about as a result of people’s personal experiences with returnees.

So far, the result reveals that reference to changes in returnees’ attitude by non-migrants rests on the kind of lifestyle they (returnees) exhibit. Still, when dealing with attitudes, lifestyles of returnees are rather perceived in terms of returnees’ relationships with non-migrants. Again, it is perceived that the mind-sets of returnees play a significant role in determining the direction of the changes that have taken place in the returnee.

8.5. Domains of Change in Returnees

Non-migrants’ perceptions of changes in returnees are analysed under three main categories (based on data from the focus group discussions); positive, negative and unacceptable change. These types of changes heavily rest on the kinds of attitudes that are displayed by returnees and the impact of their new status on their family, friends, and communities. Interpersonal relations of returnees, regarding relationships with non-migrants, play a significant role in how returnees are perceived. Being reserved from known friends or establishing new networks with other returnees inform the attitudinal changes that have taken place. What this implies is that returnees tend to be picky about whom they befriend when they come back home— they mostly shun old friends for other returnee friends.

8.5.1. Notions of positive change

Changes that are perceived positive are based on calculations of the impact that returnees have on the home society as a result of their status and attitude.

‘I mean some people come back with so many things …they learn so many things. They come back with so many ideas, so many positive
things, it depends like I said it depends on what you went there with’- Stella (2:49)

What Stella alludes to in the above statement is an indication of perceived impacts. As a university student her perception of positive change in returnees originates from the social impacts that returnees have on the home society.

The keeping of time, ideas and professionalism of the returnees are perceived as positive transformations, something that sets them apart from non-migrants. For instance, to Christina, (also a university student);

‘When you come back [to] Ghana here, we know we have bad timing, and we know timing is a very important thing, but we have this perception... this mentality that Ghanaians and their timing that is how it is. So, we know they know. So, when they come, that is something we have to tap from them. Whichever whether we like it or not we have to learn from them. Their timing; I haven’t seen anybody who has ever left the shores of Ghana and has never learnt anything good from timing. Most of them are time conscious’- Christina (2:48)

One of the positive changes that most of my discussants pointed out about returnees is that returnees keep time. Even though it is highly possible that many returnees are poor at keeping time, the general perception of ‘good timing’ among returnees still holds for many cases. To establish her point on some positive changes in returnees, Christina further pointed what is often referred to as ‘the Ghanaian time’ where it is inherently accepted if people don’t keep to the time when it comes to appointments and events. Christina also seems to suggest here that by not falling in line with ‘the Ghanaian time’ but upholding to keeping time and being punctual, returnees exhibit a positive attitude worth emulating. Also, positive changes are considered to be based on the changed mindset that they return with. Many of the discussants agree that the connection between returnees’ mindsets and the changes that take place in migrants and returnees is a strong one. While it is perceived that there are many opportunities abroad, it is also understood that some western lifestyles and mindset lead to no good. The migrant is therefore perceived as an active agent and architect of his or her mindset as to whether to make the right choices or the wrong ones. Being considered positively changed is therefore perceived as an indication that the returnee made choices that are based on a positive mindset just like the way Stella puts it:
'If you were very determined, say if I want to go London and read law, the mentality will be – I have to achieve something. Someone else on the other hand [-] just because my aunt is there, and they told me to come, so I went there – and you know their lifestyle is very different' – Stella (2:50).

The mindset or returnees depicted here leads back to the reasons for migrating in the first place. As described here, what Stella is putting across is the fact that people with determination and positive life goals for their migration experience are more likely to return as positively changed. Stella, from the two scenarios seems very convinced that it was a matter of choice and that some people make the wrong choices when they migrate, thus tying the reasons for migration and the subsequent transformation while abroad to the mindset of the returnee. There is also a sense of disappointment as she discusses these two-persons’ situation. This disappointment is partly blamed on those people who are considered just fortunate to join family and relations abroad without having any positive mindset before migrating. This goes to suggest that migration should be a planned endeavour and everyone who gets ‘fortunate enough’ should make good use of the opportunity.

Furthermore, non-migrants discussed how the positive change in returnees influence returnees’ relationship with non-migrants and how they comport themselves in public. Returnees who are considered humble and appreciative of old friends are seen positively changed people. Likewise, some of the discussants mentioned that some returnees are law abiding by not littering publicly.

‘That means a positive change. They are really law abiding. Because with this borga I was talking about, at first when I am with him and litre around, he does same but after he travelled and returned, even if he sees me holding a plastic bag, he advises me to drop it in his car instead of littering around so that we dispose it in a dustbin when we see one. So, that is a change I see in him because that’s what he also experienced when he travelled outside’ – Frank (1:41)

Again, Kwame mentioned a returnee who refused to hoot the horns of their cars in public.

‘Last time a man came here to wash his car. Before he turned to enter the bay, he slowed down. There was a car behind him whose driver blew the horns loudly on him. In his reaction to that ‘get out! Travel and gain some enlightenment. Do you think you can blow car horns
like this in any foreign country? Villager. ‘So, we were a bit surprised and wondered whether blowing of car horns is not done in abroad like it is done in Ghana. So, that made me realise there is a difference in the living outside and the living here in Ghana. Because when the driver blew the car horns on him in that manner, he made him realise that it was unnecessary.’ – Kwame (1:52/3)

These accounts by Kwame and Frank unanimously are perceived to have come as a result of returnees’ experiences abroad as described.

8.5.2. Notions of negative change

The non-migrant discussants pointed out that some changes in returnees are negative changes. Based on the analysis, I define negative change as those changes that are observed by non-migrants as actions and behaviours of returnees that contradicts accepted actions and behaviour of the home society. Thus, I found out that attitudes such as returnees distancing themselves from non-migrants, habits like smoking [in public], womanising, disregard for home ‘culture’, disrespectful, cluelessness, selfishness and stinginess are those that came up as negative change during the focus group discussions.

‘I can say when they return they don’t even want anyone close to them…meanwhile before they travelled abroad, he was your playmate, but now that he’s a returnee he becomes proud and pompous’- Owusu (1:16)

Owusu is a junior high school graduate. He has friends who travelled outside the country, and some of these friends have now returned from countries like UK, Canada, and the Netherlands. According to him, many of these friends who returned are now ‘big shots’ – meaning that they have lucrative businesses, are gainfully employed and are doing white coloured jobs and as such find the company of their old playmates undesirable. Such an experience by Owusu explains his description of such attitude of those returnee friends as a negative change. To him (Owusu), these friends have returned as entirely new people whose attitude have been influenced by the fact that they have travelled abroad and therefore undermine old pals. While he describes it as sad, he also explains that these returnee friends have become egoistic and arrogant; an attitude he – Owusu – regards as a negative change.
‘And some of them come back, and they think they are on top of the world. They say I’ve returned from abroad, so I don’t belong to this circle’ – Christina (2:25)

Christina, on the other hand, is a final year university student. She also has returnee friends from Germany, UK and Italy including a family relation. The expression she used – ‘they think they are on top of the world’ – can be explained to mean returnees see themselves better than others. Both Owusu and Christina share a similar understanding about some returnees and their attitudes after return. They talk about those returnees who create a gap between themselves and old friends.

Here, what I find fascinating is that the individual returnee’s ability to relate to old friends and acquaintances prior to migrating comes into question. In both narratives, however, proud and pretentiousness of returnees are perceived on the assumption that returnees consider themselves as socially, financially, and intellectually superior to non-migrants. Such an assumption is guided by the fact that returnees are seen establishing new networks and making friends with people of a higher social class than their old playmates. While this may be true in Owusu’s case, Christina’s reflection on negative change among returnees is otherwise. She points to returnees who, even though, might be on the same social class level with non-migrants still consider themselves better and more advanced. Such a perception can be seen to rest in the court of many skilled non-migrant professionals like Christina. Even though they may be holding the same qualifications with returnees, the exposure and the transnational experiences of returnees are considered helpful for returnees. From her experience, Christina chose to see these returnees as purporting to imply they are better than non-migrants and therefore even think they don’t belong\textsuperscript{91} with non-migrants.

\textsuperscript{91} This purported perception by Christina opens the door to yet another crucial element in the return and reintegration process of returnees – sense of belonging. Imagine a situation where returnees look to be accepted back home as they settle back into their home country. In settling in and feeling part of the society again after staying abroad for some years, most returnees look for acceptance and inclusion in the home society and to be considered part of the social fibre. However, with some non-migrants like Christina who sees returnees as not belonging to the society, it is only fair to assume how efforts from both sides will tangle and crush on many occasions. While one sees the other as seeking belongingness somewhere because of their attitudes, the other may see the action of non-migrants as rejection, unfair and even intimidating to some extent.

\textsuperscript{8.5. Domains of Change in Returnees}
The level of openness of returnees to others in terms of how much they share information about their private life and experiences also came up as measures of negative or positive changes.

This is especially important because, for example, Mensah said:

‘At times, too, when they return, and you happen to ask them also to help you join them, they try to discourage you from travelling abroad, but meanwhile, they have been able to put up mansions.’ – Mensah (1:8)

This was a mutual understanding among many non-migrant discussants. According to Mensah, returnees often have two stories to anything they say especially when it concerns their positive individual experiences abroad. They are thus sometimes believed to lie about how it is in abroad. They expressed that it is difficult to understand returnees when they talk about some situations abroad without contesting the authenticity of such stories.

This brings us to the understanding that there are links between the level of intimacy and trustworthiness between returnees and non-migrants. For many non-migrants, it is pertinent to how returnees ‘made’ it abroad; serving as a guideline for potential migrants. The perception here is that there are some important tips hidden from non-migrant by returnees about their ‘successful’ migration abroad and that they are unwilling to share with non-migrants. This brings us back to the issue of trust and intimacy. Thus, the more a returnee is open about his or her personal and private migration experiences, the trust worthier the returnee. Non-migrants with the desire to migrate one day often share this notion. Just like Mensah and Mike, other members of the discussion were with the hopes of migrating someday.

Consequently, the main reason for getting closer to returnees is to get access to such information and tips on migration. Admitting that some of this information may be private and intimate – the measurement of positive and negative changes once again comes to bear on how much the returnee friend is willing to share. Therefore, one is considered to have opened to his or her private life when the person can share this repository of the known tips. Those returnees who do not share these experiences or are perceived to be holding back to these ‘tips’ are therefore branded selfish and deceivers. More importantly, becoming individualistic or inward-looking is a negative change.

At this point, what constitutes truth or lies, intimate or not about a returnee’s experience is measured by the non-migrant and judged based on the rate of change that he or she (non-migrant) sees in the returnee. Thus,
what brings such disparity in perceived truth and lies is what non-migrants see from the material wealth of returnees. For example, by considering how well off they have become upon return, it makes it almost unbelievable for non-migrants when returnees try to discourage others from migrating – just as Mensah puts it in the above quote. On the other hand, when non-migrants discussed harmful lifestyles (negative change) of returnees, the sexual lifestyles were not left out. All the members of the focus group discussion believe that returnee males are often ‘womanisers and heartbreakers.’ Talking to a group of female hairdressers, for example, the perception that returnees deceive women and make promises that they never keep was highly welcomed. Not only female discussants but also male non-migrant discussants shared a similar perception. For instance, let us reflect on how Osei describes a returnee he knows;

‘Yeah with the borga we citing as an example, he likes women...so even last night we saw him here with a different girl. They tend to live ‘high-time’ life more when they return’ – Osei (1:44)

It also surfaced that while acts like womanising and cheating on their partners with others came up often during the discussions, one thing that also came up was the fact that many women get attracted to returnee men because of the perception that they are successful and well to do. It was not womanising alone, but also public smoking and the use of drugs are also associated negative changes of returnees. Furthermore, to live ‘high time’ means to live a lavish lifestyle and waste money unnecessarily. The perception that returnees live ‘high time’ is not far-fetched but can also be accommodated when one considers the fact that most of these returnees can afford certain lifestyles that are usually marked as expensive by non-migrants to some point. The question, however, is not about why they tend to live the ‘high time’ but it is about returnees being able to afford. When non-migrants see returnees pursuing lifestyles otherwise considered expensive by the home society, they tend to not only wonder why returnees choose such a way of living, but it reinforces the perception that returnees are rich.

8.5.3. Change in defiance – the unacceptable change

Even though changes can be perceived as positive and negative, there is another type of change that came up during the discussions; the unacceptable change. For example, Vesta (a discussant) describes some changes that are unacceptable. The understanding that changes do ensue and the fact
that some of them may be negative was not enough in the opinion of Vesta. To her,

‘Once you are born and bred here, you’ve been here for some time, and you go even for 20 years, or for so many years, there are some basic things you won’t do… you still have it in mind. There are some basic things we grew up with which will always be with us…you can’t forget that or change those things’ – Vesta (2:34)

Unacceptable changes are about forgetting or pretending to forget the basic social norms and practices that a person grew up with as a Ghanaian before migrating. For example, greeting with the left hand is utterly unacceptable. Such social values are believed to be what makes one a member of the social structure. The description by Vesta can also be understood as intolerable changes. This implies that even though non-migrants could tolerate returnees who come back negatively changed to some level, those who portray some changes that are considered unacceptable are not tolerated. It further shows those values that are considered core and others that are not. In most of these cases, returnees who portray these unacceptable changes are perceived to be doing that on purpose. The idea that you can never forget those values alone suggests that those who flaunt these values do so on purpose and thus it is difficult for non-migrants ignore or tolerate.

On the other hand, Ama shows a different view. As a graduate teacher whose best friend travelled to the United States during their high school times, her tone and view show more of pity. According to Ama:

‘When they come back, they lack what they used to know. Especially with the culture and the way of life, the way of life we [are] use to here. Most importantly is the culture. They forget everything. They forget what they used to be and how we live’ – Ama (2:42)

Unlike Vesta, Ama sees an actual situation of forgetfulness among returnees. Whereas she sees returnees as forgetting everything including the basic cultural values, Vesta considers those values impossible to forget and thus unacceptable to forget. The two views here more entrenched position that does not accept change in or forgetfulness of culture and a less entrenched position that empathizes with returnees who forget the culture. However, unlike the forgetfulness that Mike talked about (which was more in the context of the level of intimacy and trust that a returnee and a non-migrants), the use of forgetfulness here by Ama and Vesta relates to something different – the cultural values. The perception that returnees forget
everything and their home culture, however, suggests that returnees have fewer roles to play in the forgetting process. Like this, it is not their fault to forget some basic norms of their society. This means that non-migrants like Ama who considers changes in returnees as forgetfulness of the culture are more understanding of returnees and are even willing to teach them the culture again. This can be seen from her statement:

‘I think I will give an example, I have this friend, she went to the US when we were in class 5 and then she came back say when we were I think in the tertiary and then she came, we were going to church and the kind of attire she wore, we were all like What? Do you wear this to church? You see, it’s not in relation to what we do here, what we wear hear. But she didn’t see anything wrong with it. You know she knew that was the perfect outfit to go to church with’ – Ama (2:26).

This extract reinforces the idea that some returnees forget and that they are ignorant about some of the cultural practices and those accepted and unaccepted way of life. Ama’s returnee friend in the above example has indeed been away for a long time. From primary school until the tertiary level is indeed a long period for one to lose touch with the home culture especially when there are no returnee visits during the time abroad. To gain more clarification, I asked if she (Ama) would react the same way to a non-migrant who wears the same dress to. She responded;

‘Yes of course. I will think the person is going nuts; she won’t even go there…well, some people do try, but you know everyone will go like she’s going insane or she’s going mad or something. But I mean if you’ve not travelled and you choose to dress like that people…you won’t even do that. I mean why? Where did you get that idea?’ – Ama (2:51)

Despite responding to the affirmative, the reaction expressed here is different to how it would be for a returnee. The idea for the person (non-migrant) to dress in such a manner that is different from the accepted way of dressing is questioned. This means for someone to dress in a particular way, that individual must be getting the idea from a different source either than the home society. The perception that foreign ideas go into how a person dresses still brings back the understanding as to why their way of dressing easily identifies them as returnees. Furthermore, although Ama accepts that people (non-migrants) try to dress in a particular way, she also believes that they will not even do it. This is not only a strong assertion, but it also goes to suggest that non-migrants are more conscious of the accepted so-
social norms than returnees – an understanding that is indeed commonly shared and reinforced.

Nevertheless, Ama further shed more lights on reactions towards returnees who are considered ignorant of the underlying social norms and accepted standards

‘But for those people, we sometimes understand them in a way; you get it. But that is when you try to talk to them. And I mean when they come back and they... You know you go to the church dressed some way, so different from everybody, the next week you will change the way you dress because you feel like very odd’ – Ama (2:52).

A sense of tolerance is depicted here. However, the case Ama establishes that returnees who listen to non-migrants can get back in line with the culture. Once again, the supremacy of non-migrants when it comes to the home standards is on display. The perception that returnees who listen to advice from non-migrants are able to get back in line with the home culture is strongly emphasised. This, however, goes back to whether non-migrants consider the broken cultural standards and the changes within the returnee a genuine case of forgetting the home culture or considers the change unacceptable.

8.6. ‘Same but different’ – consequences of changes among returnees

After exploring the various changes that returnees undergo in the eyes of non-migrants, the challenges of returnees were under the spotlight. Within this discussion, the social and cognitive understanding and explanation of why returnees face these reintegration challenges were paramount. Reintegration challenges are among the everyday phenomena that are researched into by many scholars who work or return migration (Cassarino, 2008; Kurekova, 2011; Mensah, 2016; Setrana & Tonah, 2014; Stefanovic, Loizides, & Parsons, 2014). This is because the reinsertion of returnees in the home country has never been exclusive of problems of personal networks of friends, neighbours, and relatives as well as problems of getting into social structures like associations and groups. In all these interconnectedness, social-psychological problems are common and constitute a significant part of reintegration challenges.

Non-migrants in my focus group discussions, however, perceive these challenges as consequences of the changes that returnees undergo upon their return.
‘If someone goes to live in the States for like 20 years and he or she comes back, you don’t expect to have that same person. The same person that you knew.’ – Araba (2:17)

It is obvious that non-migrants see reintegration challenges as a result of changes in returnees. The idea that returnees are ‘same but different’ is because of some of the changes in returnees already discussed. Nevertheless, it points towards what to expect and what not to expect from returnees. According to Araba’s comment, one should not expect the familiar person he or she knew before but expect an entirely different person. While this can offer a better way of sympathising with returnees by knowing that they have changed and therefore embarrassing these changes and re-teaching them if possible, for others, it presents returnees as complete foreigners deserving the treatments of ‘othering’ – denoting a sense of alienation to the home society. Furthermore, John adds:

‘You might see him as the same person that you knew before, but then even when you are with them, you can feel the difference between you and them. You could see him as ‘Yes that’s Kwaku, my brother,’ but his mannerisms and how he has become makes you feel the difference’ – John (1:34)

What John is saying here reinforces the view of Araba, that returnees cannot be considered as part of ‘them’ (non-migrants) any longer because of their new personality and mannerisms. In a way, John and Araba blamed the challenges of returnees on the changes that the returnees come back with. Osei92 exemplifies that non-migrants subject returnees to unfair treatments such as:

‘Inflating prices, using abusive words, and sometimes even telling them they are foreigners to the face.’ – Osei (expert interview)

Moreover, the changes in returnees and their subsequent suffering through the challenges they face during reintegration are perceived as a result of the culture with which they return. In the view of Grace, a discussant;

‘You don’t expect once you come with this culture that everybody is going to accept you. It takes time. It has to be; it takes time. It’s going to be long before you’re accepted’ – Grace (2:21).

92 Osei was contacted for expert interview on returnees. He used to work with an international organisation that engages in projects for migrants and returnees.
Seeing returnee as coming back with a different culture can be a reason for unfriendly reception towards a returnee. The description of returnees’ culture is a reference to the host country culture of the returnees. Usually, the foreign culture (in this study, the culture from western societies) is considered parallel and opposite to the home culture. Grace’s statement ‘it has to be’ presupposes that the non-acceptance by the home society of this returning culture should be considered a normal reaction as it takes time to get along again. What we see here is also that for acceptance to take place, both the home and the returning culture need to be renegotiated which usually needs some time.

Another dimension of the return reintegration challenges as perceived by non-migrants are because of the changes that non-migrants themselves have also gone through. Usually, when return migration and reintegration are discussed in returnee literature, the changes that returnees go through take centre stage. However, this is not entirely the case. For some non-migrants like Christina, it is essential also to consider the fact that the friends and relations who remain in the home country also go through different changes.

‘And I mean, when you left I was also busy doing stuff. I have new friends and all that, so I mean I’ve moved on and busy working doing something else, so I don’t see the essence of coming to sit with you and thinking you want to have that same thing we used to have before. I mean times have changed, so it really depends.’ – Christina (2:19)

Although Christina describes it as ‘moved on,’ she points to the level and intensity of change that non-migrants also undergo. Changes in terms of making new friends, working ethics, exposure, worldview, affiliations, and lifestyle are among the changes described by Christina. By referring to this, she opens up yet another dimension of the returnee-non-migrants’ relationship in the sense that we see change as reciprocal rather than unidirectional. Understanding that change is a ‘two-way affair’ between returnees and non-migrants is considered to encourage both sides to appreciate the transformation of the other. This is important because, on the surface, many actions and focus are directed towards returnees as the only party in the case that goes through changes. Even though changes in returnees may be obvious and somehow even more visible to see, the only reason why that is the case is the fact that they have been away from the society for quite some time. Non-migrants, on the other hand, constituting the mainstream, in this case, ‘the homeis’ – see themselves as the ‘stayers’ and the ‘housekeepers.’ The difference therefore among the returnees and non-mi-
grants with reference to changes in the latter’s consistency with the home culture, which makes them see themselves as ‘pure Ghanaians.’ By pure, the perception remains that they have not had any direct contacts with a foreign culture that has the potential to corrode their home culture.

Probing further, the perception that returnees suffer as a result of the consequences of their changes shifts the blame on returnees and may constitute rejection on the part of non-migrants who see the situation as such. In the end, attributing return challenges to changes in returnees reduces the sympathy of non-migrants towards the returnees and the challenges they face when they come back home93.

8.7. Successful and unsuccessful returnees

The expectations for owning a car, house, dressing in a certain way is no less a measure of perceived success of returnees. Connecting this to how non-migrants perceive change, lifestyle and possession of assets and many other materials among returnees go deeper into differentiating successful returnees from unsuccessful returnees. But success is much more than the evaluation of physical material possessions of returnees. In addition, other intangible possessions and how returnees tend to regard the home culture constitutes a significant part in non-migrants’ definition of success among returnees. For instance, according to Christina, some returnees are:

‘Far far ahead in terms of whatever, education, money, lifestyle everything. They’ve shot up just like that’ – Christina (2:14)

The kind of success Christina described of returnees transcend beyond monitory wealth. It also has to do with the calculated value of the returnee in terms of skill or knowledge accumulation while abroad. Furthermore, the accumulated knowledge and skill with which a person return has to be one that benefits society and his or her family.94 This is because by many standards, how a person is successful is measured by not only the physical counts of assets but also the transformation of the person’s family as a re-

93 This assertion could be seen from how discussants felt detached from some of the challenges of returnees. From their posture and other readable body languages, it was not hard for me to realise the lack of sympathy with which some of the discussants discussed returnees’ challenges.
94 Christina’s evaluation of successful returnee is her rational for distinguishing between those who should be called ‘borgas’ and those not. See the part on borgas.
sult of his or her migration experience. Even though in some cases, success is not assessed on the actual amount that a returnee comes back with but also the intangible resources like skills, networks and education, the ability to transform these intangible resources into tangles defines success or failure.

The perception that returnees come back and are far ahead of their non-migrant friends and relatives is in itself a definition of success. Here also we see success defined in proportion to the gap between those ‘who have’ and others ‘who do not have.’ It was not clear what Christina meant by far ahead, but one can assume that it refers to material and other achievements. Therefore, what Christina was pointing to is the social structure of achieved success, measured by how close a person is to achieving success within the Ghanaian context. Thus, academic achievement, financially stability, ‘good lifestyle’ a ‘good job’, material possessions like cars and houses are among the socially defined elements that need to be considered in accounting for success. This is in no way suggesting that these social achievements – constituting success – have limits. Success itself for that matter remains vague in terms of its achievability. Without a ceiling or a target point, one can never reach a level of completeness, as the measurement of success is still relative. With that aside and depending on what or whom, success is compared to, successful returnees can range from successful to highly successful and yet the quantum of possessions and material worth continuously is a deciding factor. In that respect, unsuccessful returnees, on the other hand, can be evaluated as those who fall below the expected achievements of success. Just as Stella explained:

‘They usually come back, and sort of they are far behind in terms of what... in terms of economy and stuff’ – Stella (2:11)

Still having in mind, the social competition to succeed, unsuccessful returnees become those who fall short of the conventional definition of success.

Another interesting point to put across here is with the level on the social ladder where unsuccessful returnees are placed. I would say that when non-migrants refer to unsuccessful returnees, usually the point of reference for comparison becomes not only with other returnees but rather with non-migrant friends and families who are considered not to have had the opportunities that the returnee had in terms of travelling abroad but have been able to climb higher on the success ladder. According to Kwame:

‘So, most of the friends I know who have been outside for long and come, it’s like they start all over again’ – Kwame (2:13)
Starting again points to the lowest level of achievement that is set by the society. It is the point where the returnee left behind prior to migrating. In some cases, this can even denote a point lower than the pre-migration period of the returnee. At the point of starting all over again, the returnee is instead a failure than less successful. It is a point where returnees, compared to non-migrant friends and relatives, are considered lacking behind. Another area that non-migrants evaluate success among returnees is with respect to the home culture and the values within this culture.

‘But we have other people who usually once they go there, they usually come down and are still in line. Always in line but for those who have been outside for 20-30 years and haven't been home for just once in a while, they really have that difficulty in associating with.' Ama (2:23)

‘Being in line’ as contained in Ama’s description is concerning the social expectations and cultural demands. To be in line (in that context) means to follow the statutes and norms of the home society. A returnee who is in line is one that returns while having the cultural values and accepted morals intact. Being in line also means staying as close as possible to the culture and to the people and their way of life. Hence, it is unacceptable when returnees are not to be in line.

Christina’s example about her friend who returned from the USA and went to church with unacceptable attire explains what Ama explains as what it means to be in line. In a society that abhors smoking (in public), having more than one partner, using drugs, spending a substantial amount of time in nightclubs, returnees who are engaged in such activities are regarded failures/unsuccessful. This is because such lifestyles are cogitated as dangerous, unhealthy, and irresponsible which only leads to wasting resources. The same can be said about non-migrants who also engage in similar lifestyles.

Non-migrants who engage in what is perceived as bad lifestyles bring disrespect and shame to their families. In the same way, due to the social recognition and social honouring and respect for returnees, their involvement is what is perceived as a negative lifestyle is seen as disappointment and failure. Regardless of the number of years that a person spends abroad, it is believed that one can only be in line if the person visited the home country during the time abroad. Return visits are therefore seen as an essential factor for a migrant to be in sync with the home country. From Ama’s explanation above, for example, being a successful returnee further means a returnee has been able to associate with the happenings in the home country. Association here is more than the returnees’ association.
with the home culture in terms of understanding or being aware of the cultural demands; it also refers to relations with friends and other non-migrants in the returnee’s society.

8.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the perceptual environment into which returnees return. The results of the focus group discussion with non-migrants revealed that the term ‘borga’ is particularly used for people who emigrate and return. Even though this understanding of ‘borga’ is the standard one, some discussants preferred not to categorize all returnees as ‘borgas’ because of the belief that ‘borgas’ are the illiterate and unskilled returnees.

Furthermore, the analyses show that non-migrants describe changes in returnees by taking into consideration physical changes in returnees (walking, accent, dressing, attitude, and way of life). In dealing with perceived changes in returnees, the chapter highlights three ways in which changes in returnees are discussed: (1) positive change, (2) negative change and (3) unacceptable change. Non-migrants perceive changes including good relationship with non-migrants, positive impact for society, professionalism and keeping to time, and law-abiding as positive while other changes like disregard for cultural practices, stinginess, selfishness, distancing self from non-migrant friends and family, womanising, and smoking were discussed as adverse changes. It became clear that change was measured based on how migrants use to behave before migrating and how they behave after returning home. Nevertheless, the study revealed that non-migrants refer to cultural traits as fundamental and essential; that changes to these core values and traits are unacceptable.

Successful and unsuccessful returnees are distinguished on the bases of how they change society with their migrating experiences and gains. While successful returnees are assets to their family and the entire society, respected and accepted, unsuccessful returnees are perceived as failures and disappointments. Interesting enough, for many non-migrants, returnees’ challenges are a consequence of the changes they have undergone.

Additionally, I have shown that some perceptions constitute public/general perceptions that are shared and transferred via everyday interactions including songs, movies and the media and is part of everyday conversations. These public perceptions include the assertion that returnees are wealthy and going abroad places a person on a higher social status.
Chapter 9. Life After Return

9.1. Introduction

This chapter describes and discusses the result of the analysis as the final part of the episodic chronicles of returnees’ experiences. As a continuation of the migration cycle, the after-return episode entails narratives on how returnees’ re-settle into the home society.

9.2. ‘Ghana now’ and Return Shocks

Section 6.2. ‘Ghana Then’ analysed returnees’ pre-migration experiences and memories, and the possible roles of these pre-migration elements in their entire migration cycle. In this section, the phrase ‘Ghana now’ connotes the present after-return situations and about the pre-migration ‘Ghana then’. Thus, within the context of the ‘new Ghana,’ the returnees described the differences and changes in the Ghana they used to know. The result of these differences between the two societies thus lead to the analytical category – return shocks.

When returnees come back to the country of origin, they are often confronted with unfamiliar situations, symbols, signs, and other social intercourses. The returnees find these social elements become unfamiliar, and the imagined home society, therefore, becomes different.

‘So, it was a culture shock because the Ghana I left wasn’t same Ghana I came back to.’ – Akwasi (4:66)

Indeed Akwasi’s ‘culture shock’ can be interpreted in Oberg’s (1960) description of culture shock – like the anxiety resulting from losing familiarity with signs and symbols of social intercourse.

For clarity, I construe the ‘culture shock’ that Akwasi mentioned in the context of a reverse culture shock. This is because, although he mentions ‘culture shock’, he was referring to shocks that are associated with readjusting into the ‘home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time’ (Gaw, 2000; p.84) – reverse culture shock. Even though reverse culture shock explains the experiences under discussion, I use the term ‘return shocks’ instead. Return shocks, thus accommodate returnees’
experiences that elicit emotional highs and lows associated with stress that is built up over time within returnees because of their dealings with unfamiliar contexts when they return to their home country.

Furthermore, return shock may be expressed in levels of intensity when one compares different situations where cultural shocks have occurred. By making an indirect comparison with the ‘Ghana then,’ we see a situation where Akwasi measures social changes between the ‘now and then Ghana.’

“Frankly, it was a culture shock. It was much more of a culture shock than me going to the US. Going to the US was less of a culture shock than coming to Ghana.’ – Akwasi (4:65 b)

Akwasi’s explanation here, therefore, takes another twist. He did not only mention how the ‘new Ghana’ has failed to improve, but he also compared the density of the return shock to the culture shock he experienced in the host country – the US. This comparison further stirs an interesting conceptual outlook. That is, on the one hand, the degree of intensity that Akwasi talks about here coincides with Berna’s (1976) explanation that such shocks can range from high stress to anxiety, therefore explaining why Akwasi sees his return shock as intense than the culture shock he experienced in the host country.

On the other hand, this proves that although people use the term culture shock, it may not be the appropriate theoretical term in some contexts. This is because what Akwasi alludes to in his narration has to do with expectation rather than lack of familiarity (which is the main backbone for many culture shock models such as Oberg, 1960; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1966; Brein & David, 1971; Barna, 1976; Befus, 1988). Hence, it amplifies the justification for using the term return shocks, which accommodates both a lack of familiarity and expectations alike.

Two varied factors may lead to returnees becoming unfamiliar with the home society and thereby leading to return shocks. In both factors the role of expectation is significant. Firstly, return shocks occur when returnees use their familiarity in the host country as the basis for experiencing the after-return home environment. For example, according to Akwasi;

“Simple example, Ghana where you pay up taxes, they can come back to you and say you haven’t paid your taxes for five months and you then you have to show them your records because they can’t even keep their own records and if you lost your records they would make you pay again. That is the culture shock that I am talking about.” Akwasi (4:70 a)
In this case, Akwasi’s experience from how things work in the host country was the fundamental factor which led to his shock about the way records are kept in the home country. For example, a returnee may lose the familiarity with regular water flow and electricity in the host country and therefore become shocked in the home country where these amenities are not reliable. Narrating an incident of return shock, Akosua tells the story of how she was robbed. In her story, the robbing itself was not the shocking incident that because she was familiar with people getting robbed in Ghana, but the return shock came from the difficulty and bureaucratic constraints that she had to go through to recover some of the items that were stolen.

“I had my UK driver's license, my Ghana driver's license, my Ghana cards, my Ghana bank cards in there. I made a phone call to the UK. I called DVLA in the UK; I called my bank Barclays to cancel all the cards and got replacement less than a week. It took Ghana 2 months to get me a cashpoint card.’ – Akosua (1:185)

For many returnees including Akosua, return shocks came from the unnecessary bureaucracy and the structural inconsistencies in the home society. These bureaucracies become challenges for many returnees. For example, Akosua shares her experience in starting a business in Ghana.

‘I mean it took me a long time to get my company registered. And there was this whole thing; you have to have a secretary, you have to have a physical location. They don’t make it flexible for business parties to start up in my case.’ – Akosua (1:56)

The constant comparison of the host and home countries in terms of administrative structures and amenities is one of the causes of return shocks among returnees.

Apart from return shocks that emanate from comparing the home society with amenities and functioning institutions in the host country, change in attitudes in returnees themselves, work ethics and other practices that are different in the home society also lead to return shocks. For example, Kwadwo describes that his return shock was about what he called the ‘Ghanaian views’.

‘I have always felt that maybe my views are different still from what the typical Ghanaian view is, but I mean I don’t really know if there is a typical Ghanaian view there shouldn’t really be; well there should be, but it should be more of a higher standard if there is one.’ – Kwadwo (3:80)
Ideally, Kwadwo interprets the ‘new Ghana’ distinctly – as the existence of a typical Ghanaian view. He describes himself as not having this ‘typical Ghana view’. By saying that ‘it should be of a higher standard’ presupposes that the Ghanaian view that he is referring to is presently not of a higher standard. Sticking to the point on return shocks as part of the after-return lives of returnees, we can see Kwadwo’s after return shock as coming from the fact that his views seem unaligned with the home society. Interestingly, Kwadwo does not explain these views or standards. Nevertheless, it is essential, to defuse the meaning of these so-called ‘typical Ghanaian views/standards’. Ekua’s description of her return shock relating to the ‘Ghanaian standards’ offers a more transparent image of what these standards or views seem to imply.

‘Now you’re willing to pay them, but they don't even want to work. Like the work ethics for the Ghanaian youth it just, it doesn't even exist. So here you are, you commit to employment or your career or whatever it is, and you have little kids, and they think you have somebody at home to help with them and then they show up one day, and they show up the other. So yeah it's not exactly what I had envisioned.’

– Ekua (5:32)

In her (Ekua) view, these ‘Ghanaian standards’ include the attitude of people towards work. As she explains, people do not seem committed to the work that they are paid to do. Also, the fact that these people are not punctual to work contributes to Ekua’s return shock on people’s general attitude toward career and work. To connect what Kwadwo refers to as the ‘typical Ghanaian views/standards’, Ekua’s experience provides a clue. Thus, the experiences that people do not want to work or do not take their work seriously may constitute a return shock, but the other part of their narratives offers the presupposition that such views and/or practices tend to be tolerated and accepted by the entire society thereby becoming a norm – hence, seeing it as an accepted standard. Adding to this, Akosua also shared similar views on working attitudes and standards in the home country and about timekeeping;

‘People not doing stuff on time. Having to chase people to do things. You know in a nutshell Kwaku, it's the urgency of people to do work to make your role, your job effectively. That's time. The urgency. That's the problem.’

– Akosua (1:200)

Furthermore, Akwasi also shares his experience with the Ghanaian standard;
‘And then somebody charges 5 Cedis you expect that he or she is going to do it. They do it, and they give you 1 Cedi worth of work, and they are actually angry at you for asking.’ – Yaw (4:67)

Again, the low standard that Kwadwo refers to can also be seen from Ako-sua and Yaw’s descriptions, respectively. The working ethics and low quality of services were mentioned as part of the prevalent ‘Ghanaian views/standards’ in the ‘new Ghana.’ The expression of these standards, are thus, based on the returnee’s experiences from the standards in the host country for which they expect the same for the home country.

Secondly, pre-migration memories can lead to return shocks. How one remembers the home society before going abroad and what one comes back from abroad to meet in the home society leads to return shocks often because of the changes that have taken place in the person's absence. In the case of the Ghanaian returnee, the framework lies on the presupposition that the Ghana that one comes to meet is different from the Ghana he or she left behind.

It is like nobody is accountable for anything in Ghana anymore. Everything is not my responsibility. So, that’s the culture shock that you sense when you come back’ – Akwasi (4:70)

In the text, the use of “anymore” presupposed that in pre-migration Ghana, people used to be accountable.

Hitherto, the analysis of returnees’ narratives on return shocks points to an absorbing reference to the ‘new Ghana.’ For instance, in this ‘new Ghana’ that Akwasi described, the activities and objects of familiarities that were left behind throw light on what stirs the return shocks that he pointed out. The ‘new Ghana’ therefore is the ‘new’ or diluted culture, practices, and social structures that Akwasi must deal with upon his return. Furthermore, the ‘new Ghana’ within this context is in a state of constant comparison to the old familiar pre-migration Ghana – ‘Ghana then’ – the one that Akwasi hoped to meet. However, it is essential to add that in the context of familiarity with social interactions in the home country, returnees do not lose all familiarities. That is, despite calling his experiences as culture shock, Akwasi is still familiar with the home society in many aspects; for instance, he is familiar with the home language.

Strongly connected to pre-migration experiences of the “Ghana then” and the experiences of the “Ghana now” is the issue of expectation.

Return shocks are also about expectations. When returnees’ expectations for the home society are not met, return shocks set in. For example, Kojo mentioned that;
‘I was disappointed, and I believe disappointment stems from expectation. How I expect the place to be and how I expect people to treat me and the things I expect to come to me, were totally the opposite.’ – Kojo (6:81)

Expectations can be in two forms; where the returnee expects the home society to improve on what existed in the before migration and; where the returnee expects that the home society keeps the social intercourses, signs and symbols that are know from the pre-migration society.

For example, Akwasi maintained that;

“Ghana is like going back two centuries when you come back.”– Akwasi (4:65 a)

In this example, Akwasi was amplifying his frustration that the ‘new Ghana’ did not improve in his absence. Undeniably, the reason for Akwasi’s return shock comes from his return expectation – to see the ‘new Ghana’ as better than the one he left behind.

Again, the expectation may be in the form of maintaining what used to be the practice in the home society before migrating. For example, this is how Ekua talks about her familiarity with the old/pre-migration Ghana;

‘When I was growing up it wasn’t like this for my mother. She had all the support and help in Ghana from family members, from paid help. Yeah, it’s different, I have to say Ghana is not same Ghana it was when I was growing up.’ – Ekua (5:31)

In Ekua’s account, some practices in the ‘old Ghana’ have changed – which serve as a return shock. Thus, her familiarity with the social intercourse on how family support systems use to work during the pre-migration times is not the same in the ‘new Ghana.’ Indeed, there still exist the practice of paid housemaids in current Ghana but what Mitchel was referring to was the practice that a family member stays with a couple and the couple pays for the upbringing of such family relative. Usually, such a family relative comes from the extended family line, but the most important thing is that there was a family connection in such arrangements. Also, the payment in such arrangements was not necessarily in wages but by taking care of that family member, such as paying school fees, hospital bills etc. It was part of the social arrangements and mechanisms through which wealthy family members take up some responsibilities from other members of the family by taking care of a child from such family member and getting household help in return. Ekua started raising her family while abroad in Canada and had always envisioned the continual existence of the family support system
that use to exist before she left. Seeing her mother get this kind of family support in Ghana while growing up, it was part of Ekua’s return expectations that she could get the family support she knew existed. However, upon her arrival, she realised the dwindling of such family supports; therefore, leading to a return shock.

Akosua shares a return shock on how respect seems to disappear among young people in the home society. Like Ekua, she also uses her childhood experiences on how respect in the pre-migration society was important. She described this culture of respect for the elderly as something that stayed with her throughout her time abroad and for which she considers valuable and unwilling to change.

‘You know our time in that age, there were a lot of things we did not preview too, but there are a lot of things nowadays that even beats me when I hear it and I feel like our culture, we’ve lost the sense of our culture. The culture where you can’t say you’re a fool to an adult. You learn manners. You know not to shake an adult with the left hand. If you do, you have to apologise. That’s what makes our culture.’ Akosua (1:261)

The lack of respect for elderly people in the ‘new Ghana’ thus constitutes a return shock for Akosua. She questioned how society had lost its culture. It is interesting to see how she uses her growing up times in the ‘then Ghana’ as a measure of how the society should be after her return. Thus, in her understanding, the social values and norms constituted the Ghana she is familiar with and not the ‘new Ghana’ she comes to meet. Hence, the new culture is seen as a deterioration of the old culture – the culture which in the view of Akwasi makes one feel belonged.

‘We have a beautiful African culture that we belong, but the culture that I remember is not the same culture that is today. It is a little bit different. I mean if you recall, if I used the ‘F’ word when I was little, I probably will get smacked, but my little brother uses it, and my dad just looks at him. Things have changed.’ – Akwasi (4:93)

In all the above experiences about the home culture, the returnees’ expectations were towards the maintenance of the culture they assert to be used to as children and during the premigration time in Ghana. However, the expected culture, according to them has changed and not for good – hence a cause for return shock.

In his reference to the African culture, Akwasi points to one of the frequent references among African diasporas (the diaspora situations). Thus,
the idea of an African culture suggests a single culture across the continent of Africa. However, just like Akwasi described here, when returnees mention African culture, they use Africa as an association rather than a distinct point of reference. This means, what Akwasi describes here, for example, is not to suggest that there is a difference between a Ghanaian culture and African culture. He used African culture due to his association with Ghanaian culture as part of the African culture.

Besides, return shocks may not be about prior experiences in the host country or even from pre-migration experiences. Some return shocks may also be because of certain practices that have evolved in the absence of the returnee. For example, Akosua tells another side of return shocks. Working in Ghana as a single woman, Akosua’s return shock also has to do with how married men mix professionalism with pleasure and asks for sex from her.

‘You go look for business, and you get married men asking in return for certain things. I remember one time I was going to look for a contract from a client and then he says to me you know I’ve always admired you; I’ve always liked you; why don’t you have a baby with me and I will get you a house in Pampram, a house in the airport area, a driver, a car, and I was just looking at him thinking so what? This was a huge business deal! He said yeah why not but even if you still don’t want to I still think you should think about it. I told him, you know what, I respect you very much you can take your business deal; Why should I even exchange certain things with you? When it's strictly business where you're going to benefit, and I'm going to benefit’ – Akosua (1:205)

The return shock that Akosua witnessed here is how married men sought after extramarital relationships in exchange for business contracts. Her concern is not about these married men making such demands, but as she explained, the idea that it is a ‘normal’ and acceptable practice for demanding sexual relations in exchange for business contracts in the ‘new Ghana’ society is the shock for Akosua and other female returnees as well.

A closer look at the data points to yet another important aspect of analysing return shocks – the length of stay abroad and the generational/historical point of the pre-migration home society. Thus, the social generation and the point in time that a person leaves the home country including how often the person visited or kept in touch with the home country all contribute to the nature and intensity of the return shock. For instance, Akwasi who left the country at a time where the country was in a different
political, social, and cultural stage in the 1990s had different expectations towards the home society before his return in 2010. Furthermore, Akwasi admits that the lack of limited communication platforms (no WhatsApp or Facebook and internet during his early times aboard) at the time contributed to his inability to stay in touch with the happenings in the home country coupled with the fact that he visited only twice in the entire 25 years abroad. Compared to Akosua who had been away for 12 years but had been visiting Ghana regularly and Kojo who spent three years abroad without a return visit, the experiences and intensity of their return shocks vary greatly. This is not to suggest that some return shocks are essential than others. Instead, the contextualisation of time is an essential factor in determining the issues and contents surrounding return shock experiences of returnees.

9.2.1. Summary and discussion

Return shocks, as part of after-return experiences, contrasts return expectations for the home society. It instead confirms the presupposition that actual home experiences may differ from return expectations and pre-migration memories of the home society. Within this layer of understanding of return shocks, the peak is the idea that the actual home (‘new Ghana’) experiences about the culture, standards and views are often different from the familiar pre-migration (‘Ghana then’) memories. As they go through their daily activities in the home country (especially during the early days of their return), elements of return shocks are still integral to their return experiences – something that usually takes some time for them to come to terms with and in some cases to develop strategies to cope.

Using the pre-migration experiences and memories as a point of reference, the after-return society becomes a constant scene of unfamiliarities that elicits return shocks. Apart from pre-migration experiences and memories, experiences from their time abroad coupled with the images they had in mind of the home society, further lead to return shocks. The analysis also indicated that return shocks are not only as a result of what returnees experience from the home society but also from the realisation of how much they changed while abroad.

So far, the result has shown that when returnees talk about return shocks, they mean different things. In this study, the use of return shocks has been categorized into three;

9.2.1. ‘Ghana now’ and Return Shocks
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- Shocks that emanate from variation in the host country and Ghana when the state of the host country is juxtaposed with that of the home country.
- Shocks from unmet expectations of massive development of the home country, Ghana.
- Shocks related to diversity between the pre-migration state of the home country and the current state of the home country.

The length of stay abroad and how often returnees keep in touch with the home society plays a critical role in terms of the intensity of the return shocks.

9.3. Returnees and Change

‘...you think that you are a Ghanaian, so you think you just come and fit in like a dwarf all right? But you forget that you have learnt a different culture altogether. Your mannerisms are completely different from all the first.’ – Akwasi (4:83)

In the quotation above, Akwasi acknowledges that returnees changed because of their migration experiences. Some returnees are often aware of the changes that have transpired in them while abroad. These changes included their mannerisms, their lifestyles and mindset;

‘I do know that definitely coming from a different mindset on how things are done. It's just mind-boggling to see how you react to certain things, and I think a lot of, and I can see that a lot of people who have not travelled at all and have lived all their lives here, I guess they are more lenient towards a lot of things you know they expect it, they are not surprised, and I just seem to always be like really? You know did they really do this or is this really happening?’ – Ekua (5:42)

For Ekua, her quick reactions to issues are what set her apart from non-migrants. Ekua realises how much she has changed when she observed how she is often surprised and sometimes angry at what non-migrants tend to be lenient or easy-going about. This change, according to her, is about the kind of mindset\footnote{Returnees own words} with which she returned. Many of the returnees admitted having a different mindset from the mindset of non-migrants in the

\footnotetext[95]{Returnees own words}
home country. According to the returnees from western countries, they returned to Ghana with a western mindset. Akwasi captures this well;

‘But I think some of the guys that grew up in Ghana, are handicapped because they don’t have that mindset that you have so when the race gets really tough, you have the mindset that will pull you through, but some of them will fall. I don’t think I will say my business is not doing well because of ‘abayifour’\(^\text{96}\), but I have some friends that tell me their business is not doing well because they feel that some evil spirit somewhere cast a spell on their building and they are spending money on pastors and all that stuff. So, whiles they are spending money you are thinking of creative solutions to problems. How do I make it work again? How can I attest to the game?’ – Akwasi (4:153)

The western mindset, according to Akwasi, includes his belief in solving problems and creating solutions rather than blaming supernatural forces for problems. Again, Akwasi suggested that with the western mindset, returnees tend to have a competitive advantage on non-migrants.

‘…if you do persevere long enough; you will become successful because you have the western background, so you [are] probably much more than most of the people that you are here. Do not lose what you learnt. You may not be able to exhibit it all time but don’t lose it let it be there because, in the long run, it is going to benefit you. In your work ethics because the Ghanaian culture is coming to work at 9, right? hang around, go home, not accomplishing much.’ – Akwasi (4:82)

At this point, Akwasi differentiates what he called Ghanaian ‘culture’ (lateness to work and unproductivity) from the western mindset. The western mindset, however, relates to positive working ethic such as creativity, reporting to work on time, working a lot daily, not wasting time finding a spiritual solution to business problems, being a problem solver and the ‘pulling through’ (not giving up) attitude.

Adding on, Kwadwo further revealed that having a western mindset is also about not compromising on the quality of work and to be open in sharing information.

‘Those types of things I definitely knew I had changed. I wasn’t willing to compromise on the quality of work or open communications; I

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96 ‘Abayifour’ in the Akan Language means witchcraft.
mean why are you secretive? Just share information; those types of things I knew I’d changed.’ – Kwadwo (3:74)

The Ghanaian mindset according to some returnees is about withholding information and secrecy. Here we see Kwadwo explaining how he recognises his change in mannerisms towards the home society by mentioning his demand for quality of work and service as well as becoming more open to sharing information. Again, it is not only about a comparison between these two societies but also a reflection on why some of the returnees choose to label their return-mindset as – western mindset – an equivalent to the mindset that exists in the host (western) country.

Returnees’ claims of having a western mindset also hold a sense of superiority. A closer look at the data suggests that returnees regard their western mindset superior to non-migrants’ mindset. Upon such a conclusion, some returnees therefore consider their mindset as a tool that they can use to influence the home society. That is, the notion of having a western mindset is considered a resource and capital that returnees can use to support the development of their home society.

Accent and language are other change factors that are visible among returnees. It has to do with returnees’ fluency in the host country’s language (especially the accent) and or a loss of fluency in one’s native language. The official language in Ghana is the English language even though there are dozens of native/home languages. Despite the fact that English language is not a native language in Ghana, there has been the emergence of a Ghanaian variety of English which comes with a Ghanaian accent. Within this Ghanaian English, there are other different varieties: For example, a southerner’s Ghanaian English is easily distinguished from a northerner’s due to the cultural and phonetical differences in the native languages of these groups of Ghanaians. In a similar manner, returnees sometimes use varieties of English that are high approximates of native varieties of English (like British/American English). The use of such varieties by returnees, nevertheless, easily raises eyebrows. Kwadwo explains this:

‘I still feel I’m different in that sometimes when I speak English people react differently.’ – Kwadwo (3:82)

For those who returned from English-speaking host countries, the changes in their English accent is easily seen upon returning to Ghana. Often, when Ghanaians hear others speak a variety of English that is different from the Ghanaian variety but somewhat close to the American or British),

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they typically consider the person is as a none Ghanaian\(^\text{97}\). The reaction of non-migrants to foreign English accent may be positive or negative if indeed the person speaking with the foreign accent is a Ghanaian. Within the Ghanaian context, speaking with a foreign accent as a Ghanaian can be construed as seeing yourself better than the rest who speak English with the Ghanaian accent. This may lead to the reaction of ‘he/she is not one of us’ among some people. The reaction can also be positive. It came up during the focus group discussions with non-migrants that in some cases when people hear other Ghanaian’s speaking with a different accent of English (rather than the Ghanaian accents), they tend to imagine the person as a ‘burger’ and thus accord the person with certain favours. That is, people show these favours in return for reciprocity from returnees. Some returnees also attested to this notion. For example, Kwadwo tells how people react when he speaks with a foreign accent;

‘Here in Ghana, I think if you have a foreign accent people kind of put you almost like on a pedestal. They want to treat you a little better. They give you a little more attention; for me, that is not fair’ – Kwadwo (3:84)

Some returnees may consider reactions from the home society towards their accent as unfair. This is because such reactions are assumed to reinforce a sense of an outsider rather than someone who belongs. Also, it may be unfair to non-migrants who do not get similar (favourable) treatments that are given returnees with a foreign accent.

It is not only about the variety of English but about the home language as well. Missing some phrases or speaking the home language with a different accent also attracts specific reactions from non-migrants. For example, when Kunadu was told that she was speaking the home language with the wrong accent, she realised she still has a changed accent after returning for two years.

‘Two nights ago, I went to buy some food, and for me, I like to speak the home language Twi. And the guy started speaking to me in English, and this is not the first time, it happens all the time. But this time I asked him: “why are you speaking to me in English when I’m speaking Twi?” He said, “Oh your Twi is not good.” Your Twi has an accent.

\(^\text{97}\) This is regardless of the person being black because there are many black American and black British people who might be visiting Ghana on ancestral visits because of the transatlantic slave trade or as expatriates in Ghana.
I’m like. Oh! So, until that point when he said that in my mind, I had a Ghanaian accent.’ – Kunadu (11:1-2)

We see here a clear ambivalent. Thus, on the one hand, having a different accent from the home language attracts signs of positive receptions among people who identify such returnees. At the same time, the same accent can attract negative receptions among people, and in cases where no direct adverse reaction is exhibited (as we see from Kunadu’s narrative), it still leaves some returnees with emotional loss and a feeling of not belonging anymore. This is important because we can see two distinct primary outcomes when returnees speak with foreign accents. It shows how people react to returnees while the second outcome shows how returnees deal with the reaction from others. In dealing with how others react towards them, the returnees usually try to use their knowledge of the home language (hence minimising the level of foreign accent) as a way to negotiate their re-entry and to exhibit their sense of belonging. Therefore, when such efforts (limiting speaking with foreign English accent and speaking home language often) still lead to reactions from others (positive or negative) a sense of alienation is felt by the returnees (as Kunadu explains). Also, it shows that change with respect to accent can become an obstacle for negotiating re-entry regardless of how different returnees tend to deal with such changes.

To restate, two types of changes in returnees have been identified: (1) having a western mentality and (2) having different accents. These changes that were mentioned by the returnees show that returnees often reflect on themselves regarding how much they have changed and what makes them different from non-migrants. The result of such changes, therefore, becomes positive or negative depending on how they either use the changes they return with or how they are treated because of these changes.

However, Kojo reflects on his post-return changes very differently. His narrative on change instead looks at his pre-migration and post-return personal ‘developments’ that have taken place because of migration.

‘Now I have changed, I have changed, am not happy, I have changed, and I can say that travelling has done more harm to me than good. I had changed in terms of confidence; in terms of the way, I see things. I have changed in terms of the way I see things, and now I see things differently, and because of the way I see things, most of the time I am afraid. But first, there was no tension, pressure, and fear in me.’ – Kojo (6:17)

Losing his confidence, becoming afraid are the changes that Kojo realised when he returned to Ghana. A more critical reading of his narrative shows
an unexpected change. In his view, migrating and the changes he returned with has not been a positive one but negative. The change he talks about here has nothing to do with the skills he acquired neither does he factor into account the social and cultural changes. His narrative points to an emotional change because of the personal development he has undergone – which is more of a psychological change than a normative physical change.

9.3.1. Summary

The result revealed that migrants are aware of changes they undergo while abroad. The returnees admit that the primary normative change that the returnees undergo relates to mindset. It came out that returnees’ mindsets, which they describe as Western mindsets, tend to be in direct contrast to the type of mindset they come to meet – the Ghanaian mindset. For some returnees, these Western mindsets set them apart from their non-migrant friends and families and constitutes positive change. The section also showed that changes in respect to having different accent upon return (which is not necessarily a change of mindset) attract different reactions from non-migrants which goes to the core of how returnees renegotiate their reintegration sense of belonging. Furthermore, it became clear that when returnees reflect on the kind of changes they come back with, they do so having to compare themselves with non-migrants and practices within the home society. But some returnees also talk about changes by comparing their pre-migration self with their post-return self. In the end, post-return changes can be negative or positive for returnees.

9.4. Returnees and Post-Return challenges

The return challenges are made up of those factors, elements, and situations in the home society that returnees find it difficult to reconcile. These return challenges are as a result of the socio-cultural norms and values that returnees have acquired in the process of migration. In this study, return shocks are differentiated from return challenges even though return shocks themselves are also part of the challenges. However, regarding return challenges, I particularly highlight those challenges that manifest themselves as a result of the returnees changed values and norms but not on the bases of loss of familiarity and expectations, as in the case of return shocks. Return
challenges are, thus, those challenges that arise particularly from established standards and expectations in the home society and the lack of clarity and meanings towards these home standards by the returnees. Furthermore, the return challenges are not limited to the ‘regular’ challenges of bureaucracy, housing, transportation and lack of services and amenities (what I call the everyday challenges) which are often experienced by many returnees. The return challenges, therefore, include emotional challenges that transcend these ‘regular’ challenges. In the analysis, some of these challenges were carried forward as in vivo codes because of their strong wordings and their deep meanings, for example, ‘society is vile.’ The following return challenges are thus discussed in this section: (1) fear of failure (2) fear of the unknown (3) the challenge in starting all over (4) the everyday challenges (5) society is vile.

9.4.1 ‘Fear of Failure’

Picking up from Kojo’s assessment of the changes he returned with – negative change, he also suggested that such a change constitutes a return challenge.

‘It has made me very emotionally imbalance and volatile. I get angry very easily and sometimes am getting impatience. Let me give you a scenario. When I came back in my early days, I think that was the second week in Ghana, I went to Sunyani where I come from; where I have more friends; so one of my friends, a very good friend of mine, he saw me, he was driving so he saw me and I gathered courage to go back to that place because when I went I know that a lot of the boys I left behind have gone far ahead of me. He saw me and was very happy, shouting, so he quickly parked and crossed the road so when he came, fear had gripped me. He was pulling me to hug me, but I was pulling away. I was afraid, and he said oh why? It’s been three years; I haven’t seen you [for a long time]. This is a typical scenario, and I think traveling has not done good to me’ – Kojo (6:35)

Kojo’s experience with his friend shows the psychosocial challenge that he faced during his early days of return. The challenge that we see from Kojo’s story above is not about ‘creating a scene’ or about changes in his attitude (seeing himself as better than his friend) or about having a western way of life/lifestyle. The constant anger, impatience is as a result the feeling that he had failed by social expectations. His fear of mingling with friends and
the lack of confidence to relate with old friends can be seen as a return challenge in sociocultural terms.

That is, delving deeper into Kojo’s scenario above, it is understandable to state that Kojo’s fear comes from the fact that he feels like a failure. That is, in Kojo’s entire migration story, he presented it as unsuccessful. He assessed his return as a failure because he could not achieve the migration goals he set for himself. Migration goals among Ghanaian migrants such as returning with enough capital and material wealth to settle back home are considered an important symbol of success from the migration journey (Grant 2007; Wong, 2013). Within the Ghanaian society, both migrants and non-migrants alike are aware of such migration goals, and therefore the inability to achieve such goals constitutes a failure in general. Therefore, with this sense of failure, Kojo’s return challenge, among others, was how to deal with this fear that he has failed in life and that all the friends he left behind are ahead of him in many aspects. The fear or feeling of failure can be daunting and confusing, posing as a significant return challenge as one navigates through the returning society.

Furthermore, Kojo’s return challenge is better understood when one considers the Ghanaian context on issues of masculinity and social race. Thus, the analysis deduced that the underlying reason for Kojo’s feeling of failure is the cultural notions of masculinity and what it means to be a man and most importantly as an Akan man like Kojo. According to Miescher (2007), accumulating and sharing wealth is considered the acme of achievements and masculinity among the Akans in Ghana. Mainly, Kojo’s fear came from the idea that he is ‘far behind.’ The Ghanaian society (and mostly the Akan group) considers success by certain standards and through certain social achievements and the inability to reach these standards measures a failure. Achievements such as owning a house, taking care of your family and the ability to support your extended family are considered not only as a success, but it also comes with honour and gratifications. The rate and gravity to which individuals strive to achieve these social achievements and status liken this phenomenon to a competition or race. That is, the social race that exists in the return society is entrenched by the social perception that returnees (including Kojo) are/ought to be successful and to be ahead of non-migrants. Thus, the ability to compete with peers plays a prominent role in defining a man and giving a sense of masculinity among

98 Akan is the biggest ethnic group in Ghana. They practice the matrilineal type of inheritance.

99 This understanding also came to light in non-migrants’ perceptions on returnees.
the Akans (Miescher, 2007; Wong, 2013). As a result, Kojo became intimidated by the success of his mate and thus felt ashamed and most impotently because he (Kojo) was the returnee in this case. The social race in the home society became a challenge for returnees like Kojo who saw themselves as unsuccessful returnees.

9.4.2 Fear of the ‘Unknown and Uncertainty’

Another category of return challenge evolved from the analysis – the fear of the unknown and uncertainty. This return challenge showed up in many of the returnees’ narratives especially relating to the early days of return. In the case of Akosua for example, she saw that;

‘It's the feeling. The feeling of the unknown can make you really go down or stay afloat. I didn't know what was going to happen tomorrow. You come back, ok where do we start from? I knew I was going to set up my business, but where am I starting? If I show you my business plan where I'm going to go and everything else, you will be amazed. Basically, it was the fear of the unknown. You know, is it going to work? Am I going to pack my bags and go? Am I going to stay? Am I going to do all sorts that I've planned out to do?’ – Akosua (1:146)

The fear of the unknown or uncertainty also creates a psychological challenge for some returnees during the early days of their return. This situation becomes critical after arriving; when reality starts to set in, and the real questions start knocking for answers. However, it is during the early return days that these questions become more pressing. Irrespective of the plans put in place before returning, some of the migrants still had to deal with this kind of fear – uncertainty about plans, job, business and unknown about the next line of action and to even stay or return to the host country.

‘On another level, too, it makes me think of what's the point of me being here? When someone who had returned starts thinking of moving back, then I'm like is this going to happen to me too. Is this worth it? Is it worth me being here in Ghana? Should I stay? So, there are moments where some of these things really hit you, but it hasn’t thrown me off my centre yet’ – Kwadwo (3:101)

Kwadwo’s remark indicates the psychological challenge that the uncertainty and fear about return decision have on returnees.
9.4.3. The Challenge in ‘Starting All Over’

The idea that life starts all over again for returnees was mentioned as a return challenge. That is, when returnees come back home, in many instances they must start life all over again in the ‘new-old-home society.’ Starting all over again implies starting to build up a life in the return society. It is a process of unlearning, re-learning, negotiating, and re-negotiating.

‘It is very difficult. I came and had to go back from the beginning because when I was going, I was staying in an apartment, had everything, but when I came back, I came to stay with a sister not having anything, just my laptop and a bag.’ – Kojo (6:15)

According to Kojo, starting over again for him meant returning with no financial capital or without any prospects in the home country. In his return story, Kojo mentioned that he had to stay with his sister, who had to feed him, cloth and accommodate him until he was able to find a job. One could conclude that finding a job, finding accommodation, and building a livelihood to maintain one’s desired standard of living sometimes constitute the challenge of starting all over.

‘I can say emphatically that we those who have travelled are now finding it difficult to get a job than those who have been in the system for some time.’ Kojo (6:51)

The notion that returnees find it more difficult to get a job than their non-migrant counterparts adds another layer to the experiences of starting all over again. In the sense that returnees like Kojo and Kofi migrated with the motivation of gaining an added advantage (professionally) in securing jobs upon their return; the inability to find jobs seem to have reduced their reasons for migrating to a waste of effort. Indeed, for other returnees, finding a job was not the problem but renegotiation certain standards and values meant starting all over.

Again, starting all over also implies building new social networks and or re-establishing old ones, and understanding the existing social, cultural, and economic systems in the home country.

‘You know that while you left, you broke that family dynamic that existed before you left. You know we’ve probably all seen this, your friends that you left when you went, will be much further than you when you come back. And they will blow your mind with that. You think that you came down with an extra amount of dollars and pounds
and they are buying cars with that kind of money. You don’t understand the system. I was gone for six years, and they are 50 years ahead of me financially. What just happened?’ So, when you come back, you start from scratch. Regardless of how much money you invest, you have [to] started from scratch.’ – Akwasi (4:89)

Starting all over again may not necessarily mean coming back unprepared or without accumulated capital. What Akwasi reveals here relates to the difficulty in ‘finding your feet’ in all the different facets of the home society. For example, the lack of information and access to valuable basic knowledge about how ‘a’ and ‘b’ work in the home society means starting life all over again. Although the expectation of starting afresh might be there the challenge is still enormous. The meaning of restarting all over again comes with the challenge of making mistakes and doing things the wrong way and ‘hitting walls’ before the returnee comes to the point where he or she begins to understand the business, professional, social, political and cultural environment he or she finds himself or herself.

In another instance, starting all over again means going through the same challenges as in the early days in the host country.

‘Yes. Yes. You find yourself going through some of the same psychological challenges when you come back. Why did I do this? You sit back wondering, what is going on? So, if you let those institutions, inefficiencies and everything that happens there bother you, then you [are] going to have a psychological trauma.’ – Akwasi (4:119)

Here, Akwasi was particularly referring to the psychological challenges that returnees must go through which are similar to the psychological difficulties they experienced abroad. Thus, by starting all over again, Akwasi was reflecting on the psychological challenges he experienced in the US when he could not get anyone to speak his home language within his school or eating any dish from his country and not even meeting other Ghanaians for over five years. He narrates that he had to practice his Ghanaian language in his room to overcome the psychological difficulties that he was going through. Yes, he did not say he does the same things now that he has returned. However, he recounts that he started experiencing the same psychological challenge as he did in the United States. The cause of this challenge, however, is what he recalls as institutional failures. What Akwasi puts across here is that both cases of missing the home country in terms of food and language and missing the host country in terms of how institutions work elicit the same psychological challenge that he had to go
through; thus, starting all over again to experience the same challenge upon return.

9.4.4. ‘The Everyday Challenges’

As part of the return challenges, the everyday challenges make up the daily situations returnees confronted with. It includes the tipping issue (bribery), dealing with bureaucracy, confrontations, and unprovoked arguments.

9.4.4.1. The tipping issue (Bribery)

The need to bribe civil servants and the police was a challenge for many returnees.

‘People who are supposed to be there to help you, take advantage of the fact that you need them for something and just abuse their power. It really frustrates me. I can’t do that tipping, even if I wanted to I find it so awkward.’ – Ekua (5:41)

By tipping, Ekua meant bribing. Returning from a society that does not tolerate the bribing of public officials (at least not on the same scale as experienced in Ghana), most of the returnees find it challenging if not awkward settling into the return society where these practices seem acceptable. Returnees such as Ekua question the rationale for paying people to do a job they are already paid to do. The widely accepted and tolerated act of ‘greasing the palm’ (this is how another returnee puts it) cut across diverse levels of the home society to the extent that in some cases it is even ‘naturally’ expected of people (not only returnees). The frustration that comes with tipping and bribing constitutes a return challenge for the returnees who often try not to indulge in such social canker but end up being punished with unnecessary delays, unwarranted bureaucracy, and confrontations.

9.4.4.2. Confrontations and Unwarranted Arguments

Many returnees find themselves in conflicting situations conflicts with other people – usually non-migrants. These clashes or ‘little’ conflicts are
in themselves the outcome of returnees trying to fight their way through daily encounters over the way of life in the home society. For example, Ekua narrates how these clashes come about:

‘Oh, it's frustrating. I get into arguments all the time. I don’t start off wanting to argue; I just feel like if I could just get the minute to get to this person and say it a particular way, they will get it that we're trying to achieve the same thing or just listen to my logic let's just figure this out. And so, as I’m passionate trying to explain myself, they also get defensive and next thing you know, it’s a full-blown argument. It gets very frustrating actually. {laughs}. It just, you dig a hole deeper and deeper, so I'm learning.’ Ekua (5:39)

What we see from Ekua’s explanation is that even though some of these clashes start as simple conversations in which two people try to explain themselves, it often leads to full-blown arguments.

According to Akwasi and Kwadwo, two reasons account for the confrontations and arguments of returnees – that returnees have a western mentality and that returnees tend to speak up often. Akwasi warns of the outcome when the western mentality is displayed.

‘They won’t accept you for the Western mindset you bring back. They will flatly reject you’ – Akwasi (4:76)

The quotation above explains the challenges that returnees face when they use the western mindset to get things done in Ghana; a situation we see from Ekua’s experience. Also, Akwasi suggested that the display of the western mindset is the reason for rejection from the return society, which leads to confrontations and arguments.

Moreover, in the view of Kwadwo, the return society frowns upon speaking up against things even when one is not satisfied, but for most returnees, this becomes unacceptable and therefore speak up against such issues.

‘They mostly say be patient this is Ghana you’ve got to be patient with people. For one I have changed in that. I speak up when I am not satisfied with something. I speak up when I have a problem. I would speak up, but that is a bit in contrast to our Ghanaian culture where when you are not satisfied just hush it; just don’t talk too much about it and just move on but I wasn’t willing to do that, so there were times where people were just like you know they would just try to calm me down
and say you know just try and bear it; just turn a blind eye to it, and that to me was a bit of an issue.’ – Kwadwo (3:75)

The results of such outspoken attitudes of returnees are arguments with other people, which again become a challenge for returnees. Such challenges lead to returnees thinking that no one understands them or mistreated in their home country. In comparison to what non-migrants said about returnees, however, one can also understand the reason why non-migrants perceive returnees as people who think they are better and know more than them (non-migrants) and hence look down on non-migrants. These different perceptions may explain some of the everyday challenges of returnees with non-migrants.

9.4.5. ‘Society is Vile’

‘Society is vile. You can quote me anywhere. Society is vile.’ – Akosua (1:237)

The above quotation – ‘society is vile’ – comes from Akosua and as a female returnee, she narrated her experience of how the society portrays returnees especially female returnees. Indeed, the issue of the home society’s view on gender roles and gender expectations cannot be left out in such narratives. Akosua points to some of these social pressure and expectations. The word ‘vile’ is a very strong word for describing one’s society. However, it is the word that Akosua chooses for describing what she considers unfair and unacceptable in the home society. The reason for describing the home society as vile cuts across many aspects – expectations, standards, mentality, and attitude towards returnees – of the sociocultural make-up of the society she came back to meet.

While talking about the vileness of society, Akosua sets off by describing the society this way:

‘I mean society has its way; Oh, she's a returnee, young girl, single, independent, very strong headed; so, before they even meet you, they’ve actually formed their own perception about you already. So, they judge the book by its cover already. They have this notion that returnees are snobbish, returnees we think we are better than the Ghanaians. But if you get to know people, we’re not like that yeah maybe some people are like that, but you have to get to know individually how people are. So emotionally yeah, it does drain you up. It really does drain you up. Somebody says to you, you are past 30 so you should be settling down
and getting married and forget about everything else and just keep going. But society here makes you feel that way sometimes especially when you’re a returnee because most returnees come back, single girls, single guys, they have a lot of focus. They want to get on with it, run with it no fluffing. I’m finishing university, and I have settled down, marry, and have kids then I can look at my career. For we rather did it the other way around and maybe concurrently.’ – Akosua (1:218)

A closer view of what Akosua presents here significantly reveals the reasons why she thinks society is vile. First, she rejected how returnees are homogenously perceived in certain ways (as snobbish and better than ‘the Ghanaians’) by the home society. It is interesting to point out how she refers to ‘the Ghanaians’ in such a manner that suggests the distinction between returnees and the Ghanaians. Such a description does not only suggest ‘othering’ between returnees and the Ghanaians. Such a description does not only suggest ‘othering’ between returnees and the people they come to meet back home, but it also questions the idea of whether returnees themselves are not Ghanaians. By distinguishing these two parties – returnees and the society- the society Akosua referred to are both returnee non-migrants alike.

‘When we talk about society it’s not just about friends and family and people around you. It's not just about friends and the people you meet; it’s actually family. Some families who are your blood also have this perception about you.’ – Akosua (1:238)

What she (Akosua) accounts for as some of the perceptions about returnees were also mentioned by the non-migrants in this study (snobbish, rude, better than us non-migrants), thereby suggesting that these perceptions are not just known to non-migrants but also returnees. The idea that returnees are aware of how others perceive them is interesting to see. Perhaps by referring to the society (non-migrants) as ‘the Ghanaians’ comes from the way non-migrants in some way suggest that they are the ‘real Ghanaians’ compared to returnees who are perceived to have lost some of the qualities that make them ‘real Ghanaians’ – as discovered in the analysis of non-migrant’s perceptions on returnees in this study. By challenging these beliefs about returnees, Akosua also points out the emotional challenges that such pre-judgments and perceptions have on returnees.

Secondly, Akosua sees the social expectations for returnees and especially for women above 30 years as vile. The social expectation of marriage especially for women is at this point called to question. She does not only find this social expectation challenging, unfair and unnecessary but also suggests that returnees have better things to focus on than just getting married and forgetting everything else. She seems to suggest that returnees do not
follow the standards that society expects in terms of getting an education, then getting married and then kids before her career. She offered that returnees do the opposite or concurrently – education, career, plus or minus marriage and kids.

Besides, she sees society’s notion that everyone (women) should marry and have kids as awful and argues that marriage is not for everyone.

‘I don’t know, but for women at least I can talk for women. I’ve come across some people who are Ghanaian they don’t want to marry, they don’t want to have kids, [and] they are fine. So, what does that say about them? Are they not part of human beings? Are they not part of women? But the society will think that you know this person is possessed. Once you’re on earth once you’re a woman you need to have kids, you need to marry. It’s nice but is marriage for everybody?’ – Akosua (1:245)

The point is, she specifically refers to the issue with single female returnees over the age of 30 whom society expects to get married as Ghanaian mentality (reinforcing the idea that returnees perceive the existence of Ghanaian mentality which they see as different from their Western mentality).

‘Yeah society might think, they call the over 30s ‘buy one get one free’. So, you call me ‘buy one get one free’ because they think that you’re 30, you’re competing against the 20 something-year-old, so if you’re 30, that’s the mentality. Unfortunately, that’s the mentality.’ – Akosua (1:240)

The idea of ‘buy one get one free’ indeed pointed out the challenges facing female returnees who are above 30 years of age and are single including herself. Thus, for someone like Akosua, her return migration challenges include navigating through this social vileness that surrounds her. Admittedly, none of the male respondents mentioned anything like what Akosua describes here. This draws a line and offers a peek into the different challenges that gender roles and expectations contribute to complicating the return process for different returnees.

But Akosua was not done in her description of society as vile. By describing herself as ‘a returnee, young, single, independent, and strong-headed’; Akosua suggests that the return society is not supportive on such qualities about returnees and women in general (including non-migrant women).

So, you know the problem that we have in this country is the fact that some people do not like females who are very independent and are
fighting their way through to the top to make a difference. They don't like that. We don't like our own people.' – Akosua (1:204)

The quotation above adds another gender factor into the return challenges because Akosua sees the returning society as being unfavourable for women like herself who return to make a difference in the society. After a closer interrogation, it is possible to conclude that such an understanding about the returning society does not only challenge the return process but in one way or the other affects the returnees’ feelings towards the home society leading to questions of inclusion.

Furthermore, Akwasi’s view that the home society expects returnees to fail shows the challenging attitude of the home society. It suggests how society is vile towards returnees.

‘I think everybody is looking at what you are doing and saying, ‘Uh I wonder if he is going to be successful’ but they won’t tell you, so you have to go through the trials and tribulations.’ – Akwasi (4:116)

Society’s lack of support or provision of less help to returnees and even wishing returnees to fail makes the home society unfair to returnees. Indeed, it describes the level of unfair treatment endured by the returnees, but it also shows that the level of help that Akwasi received from the home society was minimal.

‘So, they see you coming, and they say “Ahh you [are] just going to come to talk for a while, but you’re going to go back” They have a suspicion. They see you as part of the people that come and speak, talk about western, western, and in the long run, you run back when things are uncomfortable.’ – Akwasi (4:116/80)

In addition to society being described as not helping returnees, Akwasi goes on to suggest that the home society expects returnees to re-migrate. According to Akwasi, people in the society have seen many returnees come back and re-migrate again when things do not go the way they planned. As such, people are sceptical about returnees as to whether they would stay after their return. It exposes a distrust towards returnees, which goes to question their return intentions. Thus, for many non-migrants, some returnees are just putting up shows until when life becomes difficult, and then they (returnees) will run back abroad, leaving them (non-migrants) behind. In Akwasi’s view, non-migrants are suspicious of returnees and thus observe to see if returnees will stay or re-emigrate. It becomes a test for returnees and it is challenging and thus, qualifies the home society as vile.
Akosua adds that the vileness of society sometimes makes returnees want to return abroad and thereby abandoning the return idea completely.

‘It makes you feel like you want to go back. It does make you feel, at times when it comes like that it makes you feel like you want to go back because when you are over there, nobody judges you. When you are over there, nobody is going to tell you—you’re 35 so get married.’ – Akosua (1:224)

At this point, Akosua makes a comparison of the host and home countries on how these societies treat certain social issues for example marriage and the social expectations on gender roles. Another important and yet interesting twist is uncovered here relating to the question of returning to the host country. Thus, when I compare what Akwasi said (about the fact that society is anticipating that returnees will fail in resettling back home and therefore give up and re-migrate) and what Akosua disclosed (as sometimes having the urge to re-migrate), the latter view confirms the non-migrants’ suspicions about returnees. Apart from perceiving non-migrants as people who look forward to a returnee’s possible re-migration, the returnees also blame their post-return challenges on home society’s ‘vile’ demands and expectations.

But not all returnees are able to pack their bags and leave again to the host country or an entirely new country. For those without the possibility to re-migrate, they must deal with return challenges differently. As skilled returnees with migration experiences, even returnees without dual citizenships stand a chance of re-migrating. This point was substantiated when Akwasi remarked that some of his friends who returned have already re-migrated even though they did not have dual citizenships. Re-migrants often use previous migration experiences and their transnational networks (for example, getting invitations from friends) to facilitate re-emigration.

Of all the return challenges, psychological challenges constitute the greater challenge. Apart from the psychological challenges, the lack of professional psychological help is also a great return challenge.

‘But if you went to see a psychiatrist in Ghana people will probably think you are just crazy. And it’s a cultural dimension. They may just flat out crazy, so they think you probably belong at Ankaful to see a psychiatrist. So frankly you don’t have anybody to go talk to like that, and our culture doesn’t allow us to even speak to a psychiatrist or a psychologist. Our culture just doesn’t allow that’ – Akwasi (4:121)
The challenges surrounding the lack of psychological help can be understood from two angles. First, it is uncommon for people to access the help of professional psychologists in the return society – something Akwasi blames the culture of the home country for. However, people in societies such as Ghana often have large social networks of friends and families. Hence, people use these networks for psychosocial supports (social capital). Such assumed support makes professional psychological therapies unpopular in Ghana. This leads to the second angle of the situation. That the unpopularity of psychological therapies in the home society has led to a negative and stereotypical stigma attached to those who seek such supports to be called crazy – and therefore needs to be in a psychiatric hospital, Ankaful. Notions such as this further erode motivation for people to patronise professional help to psychological challenges.

9.4.6. Discussion

9.4.6.1. Return Challenges in Domains of Reintegration

Theoretically, the return challenges that are presented in this section can be further analysed along the domains of social reintegration, which was discussed in chapter 2 (see 2.3.2. Reintegration: Context-Dependent Dynamic of Integration). The assumption, however, is that while the respondents did not describe these challenges in specific domains of reintegration, the various strata of the society from which these challenges are experienced present itself within these dimensions. Therefore, I discuss return challenges as having structural, social, cultural, and emotional dimensions. The structural challenges include the challenge of getting a job, accommodation, education for children, starting/registering a business, unprofessionalism, low working standard and everyday challenge of dealing with bureaucracy. Here, the findings in this study are similar to other studies on return challenges (Cassarino, 2008; Hanna-Maija Kuhn et al., 2012; Setrana & Tonah, 2014).

The challenges posed by society such as the negative perception towards single returnee women and the expectations to marry and have children can be defined within the social domain of reintegration. Thus, in the efforts to settle, the social pressure and the expectation of failure present itself as an obstacle to achieving the social reintegration that returnees may

100 Ankaful is one of the largest psychiatric hospitals in Ghana.
aspire to achieve. Furthermore, the social contest/competition, which puts pressure on returnees to kowtow to certain social lifestyles, challenges social reintegration as well and the findings of Wong’s (2013) gender studies on elite returnees in Ghana.

Likewise, the cultural challenge came in the form of reverse culture shocks. These reverse culture shocks (I call them return shocks) leads to questions about the culture the returnee comes with and the home culture; often hindering achieving culture reintegration especially in the early days of return.

In Ammassari’s (2009) study on highly skilled return migrants, Ammassari identified four categories of reintegration challenges experienced by returnees. The first is about the employment and business sector that include both trials associated with being employed in the environment of return and obstacles to setting up ones’ own business. The second category is the local work conditions, which are assessed in terms of work attitudes and professionalism of colleagues. The third challenge is the local living conditions which includes contact with friends and family and gender roles. The final reintegration challenge is satisfaction with the return and the decisions to re-emigrate or remain in the country of return.

This study observed similar challenges except for the challenge with the satisfaction of return. What is not in Ammassari’s (2009) categories are the emotional challenges that are embedded in those challenges he found – the challenges that this study finds significant in returnees’ experiences. That is, in all the domain of reintegration challenges, the emotional domain tends to be dominant. Thus, the psychological challenges that are posed by treatment and expectations from the society, the lack of jobs, or the stress associated with tedious bureaucratic processes and all the other challenging experiences cannot go unnoticed in the analysis. Again, the emotional dimension of return challenges continues to remain fluid across all other dimensions, which lead to the questioning of belonging in the home society.

9.4.6.2. Engendering Return Challenges

Another critical lens with which to analyse the return challenges among the respondents is gender. All through the analysis, there were pockets of narratives that bothered on gendered views of returnees. Infect, during the interviews, there was no direct question on gender. However, working with the interview data revealed some gender aspect to return challenges. Thus,
while some challenges were similar for both male and female returnees, some return challenges are experienced in gender terms. Interesting though, married returnee respondents in my study did not mention return challenges relating to gender roles upon return to Ghana. Indeed there are works that have extensively outlined the challenges associated with gender roles among Ghanaian migrants in the host communities and some of these studies predict similar challenges in gender roles for returnees (Caarls, 2015; Manuh, 1998). Nevertheless, challenges construed on gender terms surfaced in the analysis. For example, challenges such as the social competition for male returnees to fulfil masculinity expectation and the pressure for female returnees to fulfil feminine roles (getting married and having children) are some of the gender-specific challenges. They portray the gender and social calibrations among returnees in the home society.

Also, the returnees discussed romantic relationships on a gender basis. For most of the respondents who were single at the time of the research, finding a partner was an important issue especially among the female returnees. The reason for this given by some of the female respondents is that the men they came back home to meet are backward and expect them to cook, wash and become housewives. These expected gender roles, therefore, become a barrier for many of the female returnees who have a different understanding of these roles. Furthermore, single female returnees explained that the level of independence, career achievements and strong-headedness of female returnees intimidate Ghanaian men. Therefore, being in relationships with these men pose challenges.

Interestingly, many of the skilled female respondents mentioned that their male counterparts do not face such relationship problems because they can get women easily. Single male returnees, however, refuted this notion. Instead, single male returnees explained that it could be easy to find women for sex. However, the challenge comes from finding a life partner. To elaborate on this, they explained the primary challenge facing single male returnees is the difficulty in finding partners who love them (male returnees). Accordingly, male returnees usually attract women who are interested in them for the reason of returning from abroad and the notion that they are rich. Another challenge the male returnees highlighted was that they find it difficult (because of their experiences) getting women who share similar interest and worldviews as this was stressed more as crucial than the sexual aspect of such relationships. On the later explanation, it was also the same for female returnees.

Contextualising these different challenges reveal the different expectations of male and female returnees regarding the choice of life partners.
What became clear is that often returnees come back with different gender expectations, roles, aspirations, and assumptions that are different from the gender dynamics in the home country. Overall, the power relation that encapsulates gender roles, norms and practices are contributory factors to return challenges. On the theoretical level, the result shares similar findings of Wong, (2013) and offer that the intersections of social status, class, marital status, level of education, career and gender emits different social, cultural, structural, and emotional challenges – that end up affecting reintegration efforts of returnees.

9.4.7. Summary

In conclusion, that there are return challenges are undeniable; however, the result so far presents these challenges as affecting returnees in two ways. The first pertains to their psychological welfare stemming from the emotional stress, which comes with side effects like anger, impatient, confusions and anxieties. Such emotional and psychological challenges can lead to health and mental problems, thereby affecting returnees’ productivity and contribution to the development and social change in the return society. The second effect of such challenges is that it questions the return decisions and thereby shakes the foundation of the return process. Thus, the notion that the home society considers them outsiders thereby rejecting them or denying them a sense of belonging and reintegration can result in re-migration. These return challenges, however, emanate from the intersectional factors surrounding returnees. However, it is important to note that some of the return challenges, especially those relating to gender roles and expectations, are not exclusive to returnees because some non-migrants also experience similar challenges; as it is society specific rather than returnees specific.

9.5. Return Strategies

Returnee strategies are still crucial to the aims of this study. It goes to the core of how returnees adapt to the new society within its different structures. Return strategies tend to show some of the reasons behind returnees’ actions and how they adopt a particular lifestyle over others. For instance, I was interested in understanding how returnees deal with return challenges. The challenges that were mentioned by returnees were such that
one would have to find ways to navigate them. The question I posed to returnees opened allowed them to share the different strategies that returnees adopt as a way to seek a re-entry into the home society. Return strategies further help to soften the effects of return challenges in the home society.

9.5.1. Dealing with Emotional Challenges

The returnees mentioned emotional and psychosocial challenges as one of the significant return challenges. Furthermore, the lack of or institutional establishments to help deal with these emotional challenges means returnees often must turn to other mechanisms in dealing with such challenges. For the female returnees, many mentioned that they resort to crying when they are emotionally challenged. Akosua described emotional challenges as feelings. She mentioned that to deal with these feelings, she cries sometimes or calls other returnee friends to talk about it.

‘When that feeling comes, you either cry or sometimes I call my two girlfriends who are my partners in the consortium that we formed, and I just blurt out.’ – Akosua (1:190).

Talking to friends and crying was Akosua’s primary ways of handling the unpleasant and frustrating return experiences. These friends are also returnees and women as well which means that they will appreciate her better than anyone else. Such social support systems among returnees exist not only for female returnees only but males as well.

Talking to someone, therefore, becomes the easiest way for many of these returnees. According to Akwasi, he makes use of the ‘informal counsellors’ with whom he speaks about his return challenges.

‘There are informal counsellors — my mum my dad and stuff like that. You know from a professional perspective I had much more professional advice from none Ghanaians. Assad, he’s Lebanese.’ – Akwasi (4:160).

Here Akwasi refers to these mediums from where he gets advice and speaks about his return experiences and challenges as ‘the informal counsellors.’ He calls them informal because he finds no formal avenues to get help for his return challenges. What we see as informal counsellors are made up of family and friend relations, but interestingly, Akwasi revealed that in his quest to deal with his return challenges especially regarding professional
challenges, his informal counsellor was a migrant (Assad, a Lebanese). The only reason for this is to be able to get someone who shares similar views and understanding and is in the position to appreciate his (Akwasi’s) situation better; hence family and close friends.

Kwadwo also mentioned how he communicates his challenges. However, for him, he prefers talking about issues that bother him. He added that voicing his opinion on matters helps him to deal with stress. This, he says, makes it possible for him not to harbour the stress and in his view, to be relieved from not being able explain himself as gives others the chance to understand his actions. By becoming vocal about things that displease him, Kwadwo creates for himself a strategy to overcome the burden of keeping all the stress within. Unlike Kwadwo, Ekua describes how her strategy of voicing out concerns lead to more stress for her because she is on most occasions misunderstood. For Ekua, therefore, learning to shut up was her way of dealing with these stresses. Thus, while Kwadwo prefers to be outspoken about situations that he finds unpleasant to deal with, Ekua resorted to keeping quiet under similar experiences.

The deference, as I interrogated these two narratives, is that many of the returnees in their early days towed the line of Kwadwo by becoming vocal and speaking against everything that did not make sense to them. This attitude of returnees, however, attracts the labels ‘too knowing’ or ‘perfectionists’ from non-migrants, and due to this, many non-migrants become very defensive and, in some cases, even aggressive towards returnees. Such confrontations often make it impossible for returnees to explain their logic under such circumstances, hence leading to arguments and conflicts. Ekua, having experienced these reactions, therefore, decided to adopt a new approach to deal with such situations: keeping quiet.

‘I don’t start off wanting to argue; I just feel like ‘just listen to my logic let’s just figure this out.’ And so, as I’m passionate trying to explain myself, they also just get defensive and next thing you know, it’s a full-blown argument. It gets very frustrating actually. But I’ve learned, I’m learning slowly to just shut up. It doesn’t; it won’t take you anyway. It just, you dig a hole deeper and deeper, so I’m learning to.’ – Ekua (5:39)

Ekua, in justifying her approach of shutting up, voiced that appealing to ‘logic’ became a fruitless endeavour and lead to frustrations when one pursues that strategy to deal with return challenges. Often returnees who have returned for a longer time adopt Ekua’s approach and ‘learn to shut up.’

9.5. Return Strategies
9.5.2. ‘Picking my Battles’

The notion that return challenges are battles was an exciting finding. Seen that way, Akwasi revealed that his strategy was to choose which challenge/battle to fight.

‘There are certain things that I ignore, to stay away from. If I go to church and they start talking about, we have this vision, I just get up, and I walk away. I may not believe in that, but I am not going to challenge it because that is their belief. So, I pick my battles when it regards to culture. I am not going to go challenge them, but I let my culture be my culture.’ – Akwasi (4:97)

Picking his battle means that he decides what to challenge, speak against or get worried about in the return society and the cultural challenges that present itself under certain circumstances. It is interesting to see how Akwasi mentions that he will not interfere in the culture of others while keeping to his culture. What he meant was that he was not interested in getting into cultural confrontations with others as far as no one challenges his culture. Without explaining what constitutes his ‘culture’, it was important to see how he uses the concept of ‘culture’ here – as something he owns that is different from the main stream ‘culture’. We can infer from what he says that his culture means the things and issues that he believes in and practices. For example, by his culture he does not believe in those ‘spiritual visions’ and that he chooses to stay away from those who believe in such practices.

This attitude of Akwasi – as he explains – saves him the energy to concentrate on relevant issues. Thus, by walking out of the church, Akwasi signals a peaceful way to disentangle himself from getting into a confrontation; a situation which is only possible if he stays in the church. Kwadwo adds to this approach by saying that;

‘When you realise it, just don’t try to keep wasting your energy. So, you just know which battles to fight which ones to just avoid.’ – Kwadwo (3:104)

Besides, choosing battles can also mean using feedback from other people and learning from them. As Akosua explains, feedbacks can be used, to arm one’s self on how to interact with the home society.

‘Circumstances can change you. You get feedback from people, you work on it, and then you go. So, that feedback then transcends into how you deal with people.’ – Akosua (1:176)
Thus, as a return strategy, feedback from friends, family and other people become relevant for understanding the home society. Working on feedbacks means taking remarks, criticisms, and suggestions from different people into consideration when planning the next line of action during return and resettlement. Akosua explains that this helps to avoid situations that can easily be circumvented and thereby reduce duplication of efforts and mistakes.

As the returnees talk about which issues to pay attention to and which not to, one can see the deliberate and cautious efforts that they put into accessing social interactions. As a return strategy, the returnees thus employ these issue-selective approaches and develop ways such as avoidance, ignoring or using feedbacks to reduce the psychological and sometimes physical challenges otherwise experienced during the return.

9.5.3. ‘Compromising Standards’

The results further pointed to the use of compromise as ways to renegotiate readmission into the home society. According to Akosua, sometimes to get things done means letting go of one’s standards.

‘Some will say as for Ghana; this is how we do it, so this is what you got to do; so cut your ‘obronisem’ [white person stuffs] and let’s stick to the Ghana way of doing things. Even when you refuse and do not want to stoop to their level, sometimes you have no choice than to stoop to their level because you want to get things done really quickly.’
– Akosua (1:249)

What Akosua means by ‘level’ is the same as standard. Thus, even though we have seen returnees claiming to have come back with western mindsets and standards, we see here that for some returnees it becomes relevant to let go of these standards and mindsets to be accepted.

One cannot argue that negotiations may not involve compromises in most cases and we see compromising here fashioned in a way that it serves as a strategy to avoid unpleasant return experiences. It is indispensable to add that reaching such a conclusion as to compromise usually comes with experience. What it means is that during the early days of return, compromising does not come up in the picture for many returnees as a strategy to negotiate a return. It only becomes relevant for many returnees when they realise it is the only way to achieve their goals in certain times. Even though it did not come up in the analysis as to the extent that this compro-
mise can go, one cannot stop to ask how far these compromising can go and for how long returnees still intend to pursue their return philosophy of impacting the home society.

Returnee’s influence thus becomes minimal on the return society should the compromises (as a return strategy) involve letting go of the returnee standards. But this also depends on what one compromises. For example, Akwasi maintains that his compromise was with his accent. He mentioned that it was difficult for people to understand him when he spoke English during the first two years after his return. Therefore, as part of his effort to resettle, he had to tone down his American accent to be able to interact with people. He also recalls that he prefers to speak the home language more often than speaking English as his way to blend into society. Admitting that he still has an accent even with the home language, Akwasi still chooses to speak the home language instead of English. In his view, Akwasi imagines it makes him accepted by the society, and it reduces the confusion that people have about him that he is not a Ghanaian and therefore treat him as a foreigner in his own country. Akwasi insisted that when it comes to his culture and standards, which he has acquired as a result of his experience abroad, he makes no compromises.

9.5.4. ‘Putting on a Thick Skin’

To put on a thick skin means to be defiant to return challenges and as a return strategy, it implies staying focus. In the view of Akosua, putting on a thick skin serves as the only way to avoid physical changes that comes with stress.

‘But you know, eventually, it dies down. So, you just have to have a thick skin, be focus on what you’re doing, and you get on with it. The rest will fall into place. That’s what you got to say to yourself otherwise you going to drown in stressed, depressed; you start seeing all sorts of change in your body, you start ageing. Eventually, you die. But the people who talked about it, you’ve left them, you’re in the coffin, but they are going about their normal duties.’ – Akosua (1:236)

Akosua’s understanding of putting on a thick skin can be interpreted on the point that she sees return challenges as something temporal, which needs time to calm itself down. It is upon this assumption that she implies putting on a thick skin at the time when it is needed most – during the early days of return. However, despite that idea from Akosua, that return
challenges are temporal, and that eventually things get better with time—which indeed can be undeniably true for some returnees – Akwasi sees the danger within these times. His strategy of putting on a thick skin was because, without it, one can abandon the return idea and re-migrate.

‘If you don’t have the endurance, there is the possibility that you will just fold and go back.’ – Akwasi (4:154)

The danger to re-migrate is identified here as the possible outcome of not putting on a thick skin and the only way to avoid this is thus through endurance.

Again, as part of the strategy of putting on thick skin, Kwadwo’s strategy was by ‘mind blocking.’ Kwadwo’s idea of mind blocking as a strategy to deal with return challenges implies having a mental firewall that to protect one’s self from getting bothered by things happening around him or her. Kwadwo explained that he does not allow himself to be bothered about some of the challenges that come his way as a returnee.

The metaphor of having thick skin is means not allowing challenges to weigh you down as a returnee. This also connects with the idea of picking battles. Thus, even though it is essential to pick one’s battles, it is likewise necessary to build personal walls/thick skin to withstand the effects of those battles that one picks.

9.5.5. ‘Maintaining Professionalism’

Another strategy that the returnees mentioned was the fact that to be able to negotiate re-entry; maintaining professionalism was vital. Commenting on professionalism, Akosua said she still goes about her professional duties as she used to do in the UK. She explained that with this attitude in her professional life, it sets her apart from others. Through maintaining her professionalism, Akosua also maintains her identity as a returnee with international exposure and familiarity creates a different working environment for her business and customers. In her business establishment, Akosua has inculcated this professional attitude into her working assistants who have never travelled abroad. In her narrative, she suggested further that the strategy which keeps her business growing relies on the maintenance of her professional lifestyle and attitude.

‘Because you are so used to the UK system or the system of knowing that things can be done effectively within a short space of time whereas here people will just be messing you about. I’ve never lost the way I
deal with things, the way I dealt with things in the UK and that is what I've instilled in my staff. – Akosua (1:250)

Seeing the maintenance of professional standards as crucial, Akwasi also suggested that it is suicidal to lose these standards and become like them – non-migrants. He explained that it is detrimental to the return philosophy of changing Ghana.

‘I think it’s very dangerous to become like them. Ghana will never change if you become like them. Ghana will never change if you become like that.’ – Akwasi (4:156)

Here, the use of ‘them’ refers to non-migrants and other returnees who have not maintained their professionalisms. In spite of creating a sense of ‘othering’ here, it is interesting to understand that maintaining professional standards is a strategy in itself to overcome return challenges. Thus, ‘becoming like them’ is not the easy way out. This return strategy, thus, contradicts the strategy of compromising standards.

The underlining position thus remains that when one maintains his or her professionalism, he or she can bring about change in the society, which in the long run will come to represent the kind of society that the returnee wants to see and thereby reducing possible future challenges. Thus, to understand this strategy, one must interpret this notion as a long-term strategy.

9.5.6. ‘Needing to have Own Network’

Social networks are vital for returnees, and as a strategy, returnees mentioned the need for creating one’s own network. It was interesting to find out that while some of these returnees cherish the idea of having returnee friends and networks, they also have networks, which involve both returnees and non-migrants. The strategy of having one’s network means establishing networks for a different purpose but also with different people. As strategic as it may sound, such networks are formed based on needs rather than on friendship. For example, having a police officer friend, a civil servant friend, a street hawker friend etc. is in anticipation that one may need the help of such people at certain times. Thus, for most of my respondents, having their own networks was also a way to maintain their professional standards.

Many returnees prefer maintaining a network of returnee because of the assumption that they share similar experiences. For example, Kwadwo de-
scribed his returnee friends as support groups because they understand themselves and share similar experiences.

‘It’s important for you to support or surround yourself with that kind of support group because they understand, they have been there, they have been through that experience before. So, that’s one of the reasons why and two they are also a bit more progressive in their thinking and more supportive. If you brought up an idea, they would more likely respond with enthusiasm than pessimism, and if you’re trying to move ahead if you’re trying to integrate into an environment, you want cheerleaders you don’t want people that will be bringing you down. So, this is some of the reasons why I surround myself with them.’ – Kwadwo (3:112)

Kwadwo drew a sharp contrast between having returnee friends and having non-migrant friends. What he meant by cheerleaders is that returnee friends are more likely to promote ideas. Many returnees in Ghana today, especially skilled professionals share similar notion. Such feeling and interconnectedness in one way or the other become a personal experience for returnees. For some returnees, like Kwadwo, surrounding one’s self with people with similar backgrounds and experience is a rational strategy to not only deal with return challenges but to keep the standards you acquired abroad.

The result further shows that for these different networks to be established, some of the returnees like Kwadwo needed re-establish contacts with old friends many of whom were non-migrants and occupy different positions in the return society.

‘There are two WhatsApp groups one for my junior high school one for my senior high school that I’m still on. When I was in America, the JSS one wasn’t that strong but came back reconnected reinserted myself in, and I’m still nurturing the ones that I built in America as well as the ones that I built here before I left.’ – Kwadwo (3:12-14)

Kwadwo further pointed out the role of social media in establishing networks. WhatsApp groups at the time of this study were becoming one of the common ways that returnees reconnect with classmates and other social networks. Upon his return, Kwadwo reinserted himself in some of these groups, especially old schoolmate groups. This was not the case for returnees like Akwasi, for example, because when he left Ghana in the ear-

101 Whatsapp is a social media application for messaging, calling, and video calls.
ly 1990s, there was no Facebook or WhatsApp. He could not have such social media contacts to his mates in Ghana. However, his way of keeping his own networks was to connect through his brother’s existing networks.

Returnees need social support after return. Hence social networks are essential for returnees’ reintegration efforts. These networks are in different forms and composed of different groups. For many returnees, becoming part of a network of returnees is important for sharing ideas, sharing information, and helping each other out with human and financial support in some instances. Also, returnee networks function as a psychosocial support group in which returnees share return challenges and experiences as a way to overcome these challenges. Apart from returnee-networks, many returnees also seek other networks that are often made up of both returnees and non-migrants or non-migrants only. These networks serve the purpose of re-teaching returnees how to function in the home society. These non-returnee-exclusive networks are professional groups, neighbourhood groups, sports groups, and old classmate groups. Many learnings, and un-learning take place in these ‘not only returnees’ groups as returnees get to understand how the home society works from these groups including becoming part of contacts and knowing people in higher positions in the home society. It is always up to a returnee to decide the kind of network to have and the composition of these networks. However, during the early days of return, returnee groups are more important for a returnee as a space to share the frustration and to also get know stories from other returnees and how they have survived the return process.

9.5.7. Summary and Discussion

To deal with emotional challenges, returnees adopt different mechanisms. The mechanisms include crying, talking to other returnees or close family members or friends, expressing their feelings or learning to keep shut. Furthermore, returnees also become selective with the issue to spend time on and learn to put on thick skins as a way to withstand return challenges. While maintaining their professionalism was mentioned as a strategy, some returnees were of the view that sometimes compromises have to be made to get things done in the home country. Apart from the number of strategies found in this section, the study also found that returnees constantly re-work and renegotiate power relations (especially family role and gender roles/norms). This is obvious from how they tend to create distinct kinds of social networks and use these networks as resource pools for demanding
power relation reconfigurations. Thus, from these pools of networks (professional groups, returnee groups, old-school groups, ethnic group, and gym networks) resources are drawn for social structural, cultural, and emotional reintegration efforts. For example, using professional network groups to secure jobs; using old-school group supports during funerals and marriage ceremonies. Besides, their social roles as an educated elite group place skilled returnees in a favourable position from where return and reintegration decisions are strategically made to their advantages (Mazzucato 2008).

9.6. The Returnee’s Philosophy

During the data analysis, a phenomenon was discovered. Initially, I treated the occurrences of such statements and expressions as part of the return strategies of the returnees. However, these statements became relevant in the subsequent understanding of returnees and their grounding in the home country. Therefore, it was analytically useful to separate these statements and notions from strategies returnees use to combat challenges and explore these occurrences at length. Furthermore, these statements were also traced to the previous chapter (chapter 7) about returnees’ time abroad and towards returning home. That is, in the course of the analysis, it became evident that in the narratives of the returnees, there were many occasions that returnees used certain phrases, statements and explanations to not only justify their decision for return but also as a guiding principle after return. This development, using a constant comparison, turned out to be a phenomenon that I have labelled return philosophy of returnees. These among other things include statements of believes and understanding that goes to justify and motivate pre-returnees’ decision and post-return actions of returnees. Despite returning and thus utilising the return decision, these statements represent the rationale behind a returnee’s choice to return.

These philosophies again serve as some self-motivating/justifications and guiding principles for seeking re-entry and settling back into the home society. Return motivations are those statements and mottos that returnees live by and from which returnees encourage themselves throughout the return processes. To some returnees, these phrases also function as shock absorbers for dealing with return complexities. The statements (philosophies) come in different forms and serve different purposes. I identified three key philosophies.
9.6.1. ‘No 100% preparations for easy return’

When it came to returnees’ preparations for return, some returnees believe that return preparations – regardless of how intense it is – cannot set a person up for a smooth return.

I don't think anybody could've have prepared me for the experiences I have gone through in the last 3 and a half years. It’s something you have to experience for yourself. I think it’s all part of life's journey. – Akwasi (4:118)

The return experience is presented here as something that no amounts of return preparations can alter. We also see how return experiences become personalised, that the person experiencing it is the only one who can understand. Akwasi’s response above was to my question on his return preparation and as to whether the preparations paid off. The notion that there cannot be 100% preparation for return puts Akwasi in a comfortable situation where he did not have to bother about whether he prepared enough for his return or not. With this notion, he justifies his return preparation as enough and sees return experiences as unique. In one way, we can see that he reciprocated his return preparations with the return experience, which in his view is fulfilling.

Relinquishing the idea that there is no easy return is suggested here to make every return challenge seem like a new experience – thus providing another view in which return preparations and return challenges are comprehended. Apart from Akwasi, other returnees including Kwadwo shared similar views. Kwadwo’s agreement that there is no 100% return was very stimulating because, among the respondents, Kwadwo appeared to have planned his return thoroughly. Thus, he negotiated his return with his wife before their marriage, engaged in several return visits to Ghana before the final return, and secured a job before finally moving back to Ghana. By agreeing to such a return philosophy, one can imagine the negotiating strength for arguing that no amount of preparation will result in a smooth return.

9.6.2. ‘Changing Ghana’

Most of the returnee believed in this return philosophy. The idea that they returned to contribute their quota to the development of the country (change Ghana) was not only explained as a reason for returning but also
as a guiding principle for many returnees. Akosua, on the one hand, sees the notion of changing Ghana as something that guides her actions. Thus, while talking about this as her primary goal for returning, she suggested that such a philosophy is closely connected to how she accessed her role in the Ghanaian society. For Akosua, her success is measured by how her goal to change Ghana has been achieved. That is, such a mindset ceased to become just a return goal the moment she portrayed it as something that motivates her actions in the home country. Interestingly, Akwasi in his narrative called on me to share this vision of changing Ghana by asking me to return and help change Ghana. He made further predicted that the home country will be doomed if returnees do not succeed in changing Ghana and instead re-migrate because of return challenges. Specifically, in the view of Akwasi, change is with respect to mindsets. He sees the Ghanaian mindset as needing a change, which he believed was his role to effect this change.

‘We need more people like us to help change where Ghana is heading. Unfortunately, most of us come and because we get banned and shut up, we go back into our falls or shells and we go back. So, there is never enough. But there needs to be a change in mindset, I mean you can’t have somebody scheduled at 9 O’clock, they show up at 11 am, and they think it is okay.’ – Akwasi (4:140)

The reasons for return change to return philosophy after return. Akwasi felt that by not abiding by this philosophy some returnees are unable to effect any change in the home society. Within such an interpretation, one can draw a line between return reasons and returns philosophies. While return reasons are those reasons that bring returnees back from abroad, the actual stay and reintegration efforts in the home country are shaped by the return philosophy of a returnee. For instance, from what Akwasi narrated, it is implied that despite the reason for return, a lack of philosophy (example contributing to change Ghana) may result in returnees re-migrating, hence making the return endeavour unsuccessful.

Return philosophies can be weak or strong. Akwasi described weak return philosophies as those that can be distorted by the home society, but the strong return philosophies live on. That is, it takes more than return reasons for returnees to actually stay after return- the motivation for the stay; however, resonates through the individual returnees’ return philosophy.

The reason why many returnees are motivated to contribute to changing the home society comes from the assumption that returnees have a sense of
excellence. This philosophy has a significant psychological strength for many returnees.

‘Yes. I think I had a sense of excellence. [if] You [are] going to do something you have to do it right.’ – Kwadwo (3:71)

Having such a return philosophy, according to Kwadwo, is a psychological reminder to exhibit a sense of excellence in whatever one does in the home country. What it means to have excellence was not clear from Kwadwo’s narrative, but throughout the data, actions like punctuality, creativity and professionalism were often regarded as unique features of returnees even though it may not always be the case. The point is that such a philosophy becomes a guideline for monitoring and evaluating one’s self as a returnee. With such a philosophy of excellence, positive actions and achievements of returnees become a self-fulfilling prophecy; that they are epitomes of excellence, which they are required to exhibit in their daily encounters with others. Such a philosophy also becomes a basis for forming bonds with other returnees on the assumption of such a shared sense of excellence. As to whether all returnees have this sense of excellence in practice remains debatable but some returnees like Kwadwo maintained that they live by such return philosophy. Sharing a similar philosophy, Akosua expressed optimism that she still stands a chance to give the return process a chance despite the challenges it brings. She believed that with the experiences and the excellence that she returned with, she is well composed to meet return challenges.

9.6.3. ‘Claiming reintegration.’

Ekua shares her understanding of what it means to settle back into the home society. That is, in her narrative, Ekua presupposed that reintegration is a claim that needs fighting. Expressed as a philosophy, Ekua underscores why she keeps up with fighting what she considers obstacles to her claim of reintegration.

‘I definitely integrate; try to claim what's mine or what I feel it's mine. Some days you have more energy than others to fight certain things, so every now and then you give in, and then you wake another time and decide I can do this and just push through it.’ – Ekua (5:36)

[Re] integration here is portrayed as a right that must be claimed. We can further explain Ekua’s reason for considering return challenges as a fight to
be related to her guiding philosophy to claim reintegration regardless of the challenges that return poses. Knowing that Ekua has such return philosophy explains her constant confrontations with non-migrants, which she also mentioned as challenging in the previous section under return challenges. That is, for some returnees, to renegotiate return and reintegration, one must fight for it and claim it as the ultimate price of return migration.

9.6.4. Summary and Discussion

The underlying thoughts behind the concept – category returnee’s philosophy – is that it forms part of the coping mechanisms/strategies that returnees adopt as part of their efforts to resettle in the home society. Within the context of reintegration, (see 2.3.2. Reintegration: Context-Dependent Dynamic of Integration), these statements or phrases can be explained under the emotional domain; serving as part of the psychological coping mechanisms. For example, by positioning themselves as coming back to change Ghana, having a sense of excellence, that reintegration needs claiming and that there is no 100% return preparation, the returnees psyche themselves as they approach the different dimensions of reintegration. The motivation, self-confidence and guiding principles that are transmitted through these philosophies, thus, are important factors to understand mechanisms of return, reintegration and belonging. Indeed, these return philosophies can be regarded as self-fulfilling prophecies or statements to make returnees feel good about themselves. Even so, it is a healthy psychological strategy to mitigate return challenges.

Moreover, the underlining effect of these return philosophies (for example changing Ghana) is that it motivates returnees to invest their capitals in the home society. Furthermore, some of the statements that relate to return philosophies have impacts on the sustainability of the return process and how the returnees will negotiate reintegration. For instance, to have the philosophy that reintegration needs to be claimed means that the returnee will negotiate reintegration as something that needs to be fought for or contested – reintegration becomes a right in this case. From such point of view, a returnee may see return challenges as part of the fight for reintegration and not a reason to give up.

To summarise this section, return philosophies differ from one returnee to another but regardless of the kind of philosophy that a returnee adopts in his or her reintegration negotiations, the final reward is an emotional
and psychological boost to deal with situations that one meets upon return. Thus, return philosophies constitute emotional/psychological reasons for a stay, in addition to other reasons (structural, social, and cultural reasons) for sustainable return. Return philosophies are also return strategies that are often employed by returnees to guide their mental and physical efforts towards resettling in the home society.

9.7. Social Network/Support Systems

Overall, there is the sense that all returnees have some core social networks from which social capitals are drawn. Indeed, some have a long list of distinguished family, friends, and colleagues than others. While comparing what returnees in this study spoke about and what I observed from returnee meetings and other social meetings, it was clear that returnee groups are becoming increasingly popular for many returnees. In Ghana, for example, Ahaspora (a returnee group) has become a noteworthy network that connects returnees. Over sixty per cent of returnees in this study turned out to belong to the Ahaspora network. Some returnees are also part of expatriate network groups. Many of such expatriate networks include expatriates from the host countries of returnees but also other countries. Returnees get attracted to expatriate communities and networks mainly because it gives them a sense of similarity to the kind of networks and communities they had in the host country. Also, for some returnees, it serves as a common platform of people who share similar experiences. Apart from dominant social network groups like Ahaspora and expatriate networks, there are other networks that either originate from these bigger networks or become a by-product of the popular networks. Some of these smaller (in size) social networks are formed for objectives that are mostly specific and less broad. In some cases, some of the social network groups are formed by returnees along the lines of gender. An example is the Accra Ladies which is made of mostly female returnees with the aim of changing some existing gender stereotypes in the home society as well as offering support (emotional and physical) in different forms to returnees and expatriates.

The social networks of returnees while abroad, however, comprises more friends than family and colleagues. This is understandable considering that many returnees do not travel with their families. Moreover, even for those who travelled to join their families, the entire extended family remained in Ghana. Another interpretation could be that while abroad, family networks were not considered important by returnees as friend networks.
These networks are necessary for getting jobs or understanding the host country’s culture and institutions better apart from providing the returnees with different exposure and experiences at the time. Besides, some of the names mentioned included other Ghanaians as well. Few returnees mentioned colleagues as important, representing those who worked in the host country or colleagues from schools. Social network groups were mentioned to be churches and African or ethnic associations.

Apart from returnee networks and expatriate groups, many returnees also get involved with other social groups in the home country. Interestingly though, few returnees mentioned church as a network group after their return to Ghana. What this means is that while abroad, some returnees found the church as an essential social network group but after returning, they found returnee groups like Ahaspora as crucial for social networking. One may take this variation to mean that while abroad, social groups such as churches were important for migrants as a social space for social capital. Some of these churches may have been international or even country based (Ghanaian churches\textsuperscript{102}). From these churches, migrants find the space for common identities, belonging and solidarities. Nevertheless, when they return, the composition of churches in Ghana becomes different as it includes non-migrants with different standards, perceptions, and experiences. As a result, returnee groups, replace the church with respect to the social space, identity and the subsequent belongingness that are based on everyday experiences.

Furthermore, the role of family and friends support is also an essential avenue for returnees. Indeed, many of the returnees admitted living with family relations or friends when they first returned. Existing support structures that returnees find at home are instrumental in the return process. Regardless of the existence of social expectations, standards and sometimes how returnees are treated by their non-migrant family and friends, it does not necessarily mean family, friends and other social support systems are not helpful for returnees. Mixing their frustration on social practices and perceptions towards returnees, and how returnees describe the significance of family and friend networks that they have utilised in their return endeavour will be catastrophic at this point. That said, the seeming contradiction ceases when one contextualises the differences between these sections and the complementing roles they play. Among other returnees in this

\textsuperscript{102} This is based on my personal observations and experiences as a migrant in Germany, coming across a variety of Ghanaian based churches with their branches in western countries like Germany, UK and the USA.
study, Kojo mentioned the different support structures that were offered to him by friends and relations. All along, Kojo’s return story has been retold under different sections of this study. Nevertheless, to put it into perspective, Kojo’s migration and return story are different from most of the returnees in this study. It is not only because Kojo blames his migration experiences in the UK for his after-return challenges, but it is also his comparison of life after return.

As his migration expectations did not turn out as he planned, Kojo continually reflected on his return and concluded that he has failed: he has become a failure to himself, his family and friends. Because of this, he stayed away from most of his friends in the early days of his return. His long-time girlfriend broke up with him because he was not around for a long time. The break up with his girlfriend shunned him from entering into any relationship because of his fear to open up to anyone else, for the fear that the person he opens up to will not even believe him that he is a returnee.

‘I am emphasising on this girlfriend thing because I was in a relationship before I went, and I had planned with the girl that I will be coming. But due to problems, I could not, and when I came, she told me it’s over. I blame it on the borga thing [migration] because I thought if I had been here things would have worked differently. But I met this person, and I think she believes in me, appreciate what I have been through, and she is very accommodating, and she doesn’t care what I have been through and what I have now. She just like me and believe in my prospects and what I can do, and I think it helps in my cooling down in a way.’ – Kojo (6:56)

In the narrative above, Kojo explained his challenge and rationale for not getting into a romantic relationship after his return. Nevertheless, his new relationship proved to provide some grounding for his re-entry into the home society. Indeed, he only assumed the possible dangers of opening up to other people, but he may not entirely be wrong for perceiving the challenges he foresaw in opening up to others. The kind of support that Kojo talks about here from his girlfriend can be described as emotional and psychological support. Thus, by accepting him as he is and disregarding the expected returnee status and what should come with it, the emotional support of trust and respect was enough to ‘cool Kojo down’ and help him to reintegrate.

Apart from the emotional support from his girlfriend, Kojo also recalled the role her sister played in his early days of return. As he returned with only his language and his laptop, the support of his sister in the form of
providing him with accommodation, food and money to rent his apartment was beneficial and much needed at the time. Such support from family is crucial for many returnees especially those who have not secured a job or build their own houses before returning. Akwasi’s family support came through the psychological support of his parents especially his mother. Akwasi explained how difficult and culturally strange to seek psychiatric or psychological help from a psychiatrist or psychologist respectively and since these are not common practice, his mother took on such role. Such social supports that exist in the home country became evident in the result in the role it plays for many returnees who have experienced such support structures in the home society. Also, Akosua mentions the use of her sister’s network in the early days of her return.

9.7.1. Summary

Despite the grieve and unhappy concerns about challenges in the return society, it is also interesting to see that returnees recognise the role that social support networks continue to play in these same arenas. The section has portrayed the significance of social support systems available in the home society to assist return-reintegration. The social network supports such as family, friends and other groups were mentioned as useful for reintegration. Indeed, all the returnee respondents have different family backgrounds and social statuses. Therefore, some returnees had more options than others when it came to social support systems within the Ghanaian society.

9.8. Returnees and Transnationalism (social networks continued)

During the interviews, returnees were asked about the kind of relationship they have with the host society. The responses acknowledged different narratives, revealing how returnees conceptualise their situation in the home country and the host country they returned. All the returnees admitted having contacts to the host country in one way or the other. The engagement with the host country ranges from social networks via virtual and personal mediums to professional cooperation.

Remaining transnational was for many of the returnees something important. Among the returnees, there were some who had dual citizenships
and others without dual citizenships. Physical access to the host country between these groups of returnees is therefore different. Take Kwadwo, Akosua and Afia for example, they all possess dual citizenships and therefore can travel abroad for short time visits and other activities easily. As part of their return strategies, those returnees with dual citizenships often shuttle between the host and home country on occasions where return challenges seem challenging to deal with. The transnational space thus becomes part of the survival strategy or coping mechanism through which different aspects of one’s life are fulfilled from different spaces and locations.

For example, Akosua mentioned that when she is stressed from return challenges, she would sometimes get a plane ticket and travel to the UK for a short time visit to calm down and then return refreshed. She likened it to a race; whereby she uses the UK as where she goes to get refilled and then come back to the race in Ghana.

‘Because you have, the percentage you’re missing. It is there, just to fulfil you and come back. It’s like a race. You need that ‘Lucozade’ or the ‘red bull’ to keep you going’ – Akosua (1:198)

From the quotation above, Akosua life is divided into percentages with one part of the percentage in Ghana and the other in the UK. The percentage in the UK can only be taken care of in the UK and the other part, in Ghana. This explanation of how she sees herself as a transnational person further enables the understanding that for some returnees their transnational status is considered positive and beneficial than just being thorn in-between two spaces and locations. Even for those who do not possess dual citizenships like Kojo and Kofi, they still see the connection to the host country as something beneficial. Kofi, for example, mentioned that he still gets professional updates and tips from his friends back in the US and UK. For many who studied abroad, their transnational horizon is broadened through the multinational friends and networks that some of them maintain. In that sense, transnationalism for the returnees was about having options. It was about having different spaces and locations where different support and capitals can be drawn.

Interestingly, in the lines of seeing themselves as transnationals, the returnees also see themselves as having multiple cultures. Here again, their multiple cultures provide them with options and advantages over non-migrants. To have multiple cultures for someone like Kwadwo meant he could relate very well with different groups of people. It was simply having different ideas and different ways of seeing things than someone with a
monoculture. With modern day technologies and communications, transnationalism may not necessarily have anything to do with having physical, social networks in the host country after return. Instead, people stay in touch through virtual practices with the host society.

9.8.1. Summary and Discussion

The result of how returnees conceptualise transnationalism affirms studies that show that transnationalism has becomes a blessing rather than a curse for returnees (J. K. Anarfi & Jagare, 2005; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Kuschminder, 2013; Luca & Filipopoulos, 2009; Pusch & Splitt, 2013; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011; White, 2014; Wong, 2013). The transnational option for returnees (multinational networks and transnational mindset) can be described as a return strategy than just a constellation of options. By strategy, the transnational identities and networks provide returnees with many resources to draw from during reintegration. Many of these returnees are thus able to shuttle back and forth between host and home countries because of having a transnational identity and ties (Pusch & Splitt, 2013). Additionally, the result shows that some (not all) returnees actually unpack their transnational resources by using transnational praxis to facilitate the return and especially resettling. For example, Abena at the time of the interview mentioned a group of business students from Harvard University in the United States who had come to support her business with market research and strategic management advice for free. With her transnational connections and support, she was able to grow her business which may either not be possible for a non-migrant business competitor or otherwise costly for such a non-migrant business person.

Transnationalism can also be seen as part of the negotiating tools that returnees have in the long run in deciding how the return process goes. For instance, many of the respondents mentioned belonging to the alumni associations of their universities abroad as a way to stay connected with their international cohorts and mates. Indeed, we have seen that some returnees have more access to this transnational space and locations than others; nevertheless, we cannot know for sure the extent to which these variations contribute to successful or unsuccessful return. Yet, from the analysis, regardless of its significance to the entire return process, the transnational identity, and the sense of belonging, described by returnees can significantly impact the return-reintegration process.
9.9. Chapter Summary

The results from Chapters 6, 7, and 8 are visualised in table 8 below.

**Table 8: Returnees Migration Episodes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episodes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Experiences (codes)</th>
<th>Theoretical categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before migration</td>
<td>Reasons for leaving</td>
<td>Few opportunities to higher degrees, Parental control</td>
<td>Memories and source of family to the home society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivations for migration</td>
<td>Education, Joining family, International exposure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Migration Expectations</td>
<td>Accumulation of resources (working experience, financial resources) to better self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While abroad</td>
<td>Return preparations</td>
<td>Securing a job, Regular visits, Step return, Regular communications with home-relations</td>
<td>Return Triggers Imagined Home Anticipations for Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Return Expectations</td>
<td>Easy access to jobs/employment, Expectation to belong, Family and other social responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Return Reasons</td>
<td>Give back to society, Prove people wrong, Better life, Children’s welfare, Claim for nativity, Setting up business, Romantic relationships, Lack of jobs abroad, Job opportunities in Ghana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chapter 9. Life After Return*
In table 8, the migration experiences of the returnees are summarised according to the analytical themes and subsequently into theoretical categories. The result found that during the pre-migration episode, the returnees’ reasons for migrating, motivations for migrating, and the migration expectations are rooted in the experiences of the returnees within the home society. These experiences become memories and familiarities of the home society, and it stays with an individual throughout the other episodes of migration.

The time abroad is characterised by meeting migration goals. Throughout this episode, the result indicated that as migrants, returnees had return intentions. It was also found that actual return is not accidental and that these intentions to return to the home society are made possible via return triggers. Also, the analysis found that the returnees’ return expectations and reasons for returning contained elements of imaginations about the home society. These imaginations resulted in returnees’ anticipations for the home society. The usefulness of the pre-migration memories and familiarity to the home society at this point is that it provides the returnees with
the sources for images and expectations towards the home society. The return expectations of returnees are therefore a culmination of pre-migration memories and familiarities from the host country. Return expectations also include the expectation to belong in the home society. The post-return episode represents the real-home situation for returnees. Here, unmet expectations and anticipations of returnees transform into return shocks. These return shocks have emotional and psychological aspects. The results also indicated that post-return perceptions from both non-migrants and returnees towards each other constitute a potential source of conflict between the stayers and the returnees. As well, post-return perceptions influence boundary makings and boundary maintenances between returnees and non-migrants, which affects returnees’ sense of belonging in the home society and their level of contribution to the home society.

Post-return challenges were also found to have emotional and psychological aspects and have gender dimensions. The challenges of starting life all over again, the fear of failure and uncertainty and the gender expectations and roles in the home society are among the emotional challenges apart from other structural, social, and cultural challenges. Strategies to mitigate return challenges and strategies for reintegration – including the returnees’ philosophies – are selectively employed along the dimensions of reintegration. Returnees return strategies include creating their own networks, maintaining professionalism, compromising some standards, and picking their battles.

Again, the result indicated that pre-migration memories and familiarity in the home society became part of the returnees’ tool for negotiating return, reintegration and belonging. In addition, migration experiences from the host country including transnational and other social networks of the returnees are useful for return and reintegration strategies.
Chapter 10. Belonging and Reintegration

10.1. Introduction

The goal of this study was to understand the mechanisms via which skilled returnees construct a sense of belonging as they reintegrate into the home society. To achieve this research goal, I needed to consider the meanings and conceptions of belonging and reintegration from the perspectives of returnees themselves. During the interviews, I found that returnees demonstrated working knowledge of the concepts of reintegration and belonging. Thus, the definitions and narratives relayed by the respondents suggested their familiarity with these concepts used to describe, manage, or define their experiences. Post-return belonging thus encompasses definitions of belonging, conditions for belonging, and actions by the home society seen as denying returnees a sense of belonging.

This chapter is sub-divided into three parts. The first two sections address what belonging, and reintegration meant to the respondents. These sections indicate how the returnees talked about experiences relating to belonging and reintegration during the various episodes of their migration encounters – pre-migration, migration, and return. In that sense, the first two parts demonstrate the underpinnings and the running themes of belonging and reintegration. They compare participants’ definitions and explanations with those found in the literature as a means of contextualising the study. More specifically, the first part of the chapter explores how returnees assign meaning to belong, how they relate to and perform belonging, and how different understandings of belonging interact with each other. The second part of the chapter examines the respondents’ explanations of what reintegration meant for them, as well as their perceptions regarding whether or not they had reintegrated.

The third part of the chapter delves into theory construction. The results are placed into a model of reintegration and sense of belonging. This model lays the foundation for interpreting the results of this study and identifying their relationship to the overall research goals. Also, the third part of the chapter also re-examines the conceptual framework from Chapter 2 to determine the contribution of this study to the existing literature.
Chapter 10. Belonging and Reintegration

10.2 Post-Return Sense of Belonging

The results presented in Part III of this study (Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9) highlight issues touching on returnees’ sense of belonging. For instance, returnees’ narratives regarding the degree to which they felt included in the host country, return philosophies, and the reasons for return may be understood as portraying different levels of belonging. In this section, I discuss how skilled returnees personally conceptualise sense of belonging. The conceptual distinction between (see 2.3.1. Belonging) individual belonging (place belongingness) and social/collective belonging (politics of belonging) are relevant in terms of explaining the meanings that the respondents attached to belonging.

10.2.1. Meanings of Belonging

During the interviews, I asked the follow-up question of what the returnees meant by the word belonging, and I often made this inquiry after asking whether or not they felt that they belonged in Ghana. Asking what belonging meant for the returnees was a way for me to identify how they understood and used the term belonging.

Belonging means not being treated as different

The first meaning of belonging connected the term to not being treated as different within the home society. For example, according to Kunadu:

‘When I say belonging, what I mean is being able not to be distinguished by my accent, by the way, I talk, how I dress’ – Kunadu (11:8)

From Kunadu’s point of view, belonging means that one is not singled out as a result of an accent or lifestyle. Interpreting this statement suggests that Kunadu’s understanding of the term reflects her personal feelings or wish to experience a sense of belonging. Kunadu maintained that she did not feel a sense of belonging in Ghana because of how others treated her due to her British accent. Thus, a sense of belonging can be dependent on how others relate to or treat a person. This understanding suggests that belonging requires two parties: (1) the returnee and (2) others (i.e., people in the home society, and especially non-migrants). The latter party’s actions and treatment of the returnee become a significant factor in determining that
individual’s sense of belonging. Thus, the level of acceptance or rejection demonstrated by people in the home society becomes instrumental in how a returnee feels—and thus, to whether or not he or she experiences a sense of belonging.

A further observation based on Kunadu’s understanding is that what sense of belonging meant to her and what she experienced were two different things. On the one hand, her definition of belonging may be considered the archetype that is yet to be achieved. On the other hand, what is required to achieve a sense of belonging seemed to be beyond her control, meaning that her sense of belonging was dependent on the actions (or lack thereof) undertaken by others in the return society. This factor introduces power relations to Kunadu’s conceptualisation of belonging. The inherent power relation—which involves one individual influencing another’s sense of belonging—thereby goes hand in hand with Antonsich’s (2010) conceptualisation of politics of belonging.

Nevertheless, the inherent message conveyed in Kunadu’s words can also be viewed as an expectation of what belonging should mean: not to be distinguished from others, but to be seen as similar. In describing this desire not to be singled out, Kunadu was referring to those aspects of the return society with which she was familiar—and that thus shared similarities with the society she had left behind—thus seeing herself part of the society to belong. When understood in this way, belonging is located in the place belongingness dimension, in which familiar elements and social symbols that prompt the same attachments and emotions among all members of society are called upon to assert belonging.

Belonging means being appreciated and accepted

Similar to Kunadu, who put forward an understanding of belonging that was dependent on the surrounding society, other returnees defined belonging as being accepted and appreciated. The respondents who shared this definition of belonging (e.g., Kwadwo) also mentioned having a sense of belonging to the home society. Thus, they felt appreciated and accepted. For instance, when I asked him what he thought about belonging, Kwadwo explained:

‘I think I am accepted for the most part because initially... I am kind of hard and uncompromising on certain things; people have a difficult time with me in the beginning, but... they realise that yes, I have a certain standard but I’m not a monster’ – Kwadwo (20:97)
Kwadwo seems to imply that to be accepted leads to a sense of belonging. However, more closely examining Kwadwo’s words suggests something more than mere acceptance. Thus, acceptance implies the home society’s tolerance of his standards and of the changes that took place within him between his departure and return. For instance, Kwadwo explained that he was accepted for who he was in terms of the different standards he espoused. To not accept him meant seeing him as a ‘monster’ because of his ‘uncompromising’ standards. Kwadwo’s words may be interpreted as saying that to belong means to feel accepted. This perspective also explains Kunadu’s earlier statement. That is, it highlights the importance of not being singled out or rejected for one’s accent or standards and of acceptance entailing belonging.

Once again, the party who signals the acceptance or rejection seems to be the return society, not the individual returnee. Thus, although a returnee can accept himself or herself or have a sense of belonging to a society, being accepted, and appreciated by others in the society matters in terms of this particular definition of belonging. The same holds for those returnees who mentioned that to belong means to be appreciated and recognised.

‘So, somebody recognises my efforts, you know, and the difference I’m making in people’s lives. I help them find jobs, mentoring the youth, coaching them, and stuff like that. So, in terms of being appreciated amongst my family, friends, social group, yes, I will say it’s on point.’ – Akosua (16:255)

Being recognised, appreciated, and accepted was once more, described as a prerequisite of belonging. Granting that approval was portrayed as the choice of the home society. Nevertheless, in this sense, acceptance of and appreciation for returnees does not reflect that the returnees are becoming similar to others in society or reverting to their pre-migration selves. Instead, the recognition, appreciation, and acceptance stem from what the returnee represents or does, with an emphasis on the differences evident in their professional and social lives. Akosua and Yawo eloquently made this point:

‘I’m doing exactly what I love doing. I love what I’m doing. There’s no way I will swap [my current profession] for anything else. I have a passion for what I’m doing now, so, yes, I think I feel appreciated.’ – Akosua (16:254)

‘I feel safe and comfortable enough to do the things that I love.’ – Yawo (15:18)
Akosua and Yawo’s explanations compliment the above conceptualisation of belonging in that the acceptance of the home society leads to feeling secure, safe, and free to do as one wishes without facing rejection or isolation. Taking Kwadwo as an example, he claimed the acceptance of his working standards had enabled him to achieve the best possible performance at his company. This factor implies that having a sense of belonging via the acceptance of the home society leads to improved professional performance. Thus, regardless of whether one is single or married, male or female, an individual’s sense of belonging may be ignited by a feeling of acceptance in terms of the social, professional, or cultural standards with which he or she may have returned. Furthermore, the same can be said of Akosua. The fact that she was able to work in her professional capacity and to be appreciated for that contribution was sufficient for her to experience a sense of belonging. During the interview, Akosua added that she had been recognised and awarded as a leading woman in her field of work. As someone who saw the home society as unsupportive of independent women, Akosua highly valued such professional recognition. That is, due to her perception that the home society was not a level playing field for men and women (9.4.5. ‘Society is Vile’), her experience of belonging emerged from her professional fulfilment and the societal recognition of her contributions as an independent woman. The same may be true for men; however, for the female returnees (e.g., Abena, Kunadu, and Yawo), receiving recognition for their contribution to society was significant, especially when they were single.

Moreover, for those returnees who spent most of their childhood abroad (e.g., Kunadu and Abena) or who stayed abroad for a lengthy period (e.g., Akwasi), the concern for acceptance is more about their accent or language. This statement is not to suggest that other returnees do not face similar accent issues, but for a returnee like Kunadu who completed all of her schoolings abroad, her ‘thick’ British accent and the fact that she does not speak eloquently in the home language are significant if people set her apart because of those traits. The returnees who stayed abroad for fewer than five years explained belonging in terms of factors other than accent or home language competencies. For instance, Yawo who did not have a British or American English accent, and was fluent in the home language, explained belonging differently than did Kunadu. That is, for Yawo, belonging implies feeling safe and comfortable and being able to do what she wants. These particularities among the returnees’ conceptions of belonging suggest that belonging can mean different things to different people or different things to the same person.
Until this point in the discussion, the central theme in terms of definitions and explanations of belonging has been linked to the hegemonic power relations that many scholars (Ann Marie, Joyce, 2010; Jones, 2009; Pedersen, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 2003) have agreed as central to the politics of belonging. The politics in such conceptualisation usually stem from boundary making and boundary maintenance. The idea behind recognising these conceptualisations of belonging in terms of boundary making/maintenance and the politics of belonging has two motivations. Firstly, Kunadu’s feeling of being marked as different by people because of her accent, Kwadwo’s feeling of being accepted, and Akosua’s feeling of being recognised and appreciated all have one thing in common: other people. The people could represent society in general (as in the case of Akosua) or individual non-migrants (as in the case of Kwadwo). It is established that the returnees’ explanations of belonging and their sense of belonging were dependent on the actions or lack thereof of people in the home country. In short, these other people seemed to influence whether these returnees experienced a sense of belonging. Secondly, Inherent in these experiences were the dynamic power relations between the return society and the returnees. One the one hand, non-migrants may not necessarily have direct power over returnees. As was highlighted in the discussion of non-migrants’ perceptions of returnees, some non-migrants feel that they are the targets of discrimination compared to the educational backgrounds and other resources of the returnees.

Nevertheless, the implicit influence of the return society on migrants’ feelings of belonging may be explained in terms of boundary making and maintenance. What John Crowley called the ‘dirty work of boundary maintenance’ (1999; p.30) produces the foundation on which acceptance or rejection thrives. In certain cases, it is only when these boundaries are ‘crossed’ (Yuval-Davis, 2003) that belonging is achieved; in other instances, these lines encourage rejection and alienation, as demonstrated by Kunadu’s experience with her accent.

Belonging means feeling at home

Home is a broad concept with different meanings, definitions, and connotations. The term home may refer to a physical/geographical location. For example, when migrants refer to a country as their home, they may be speaking of the geographical location bounded by national borders.
‘Home can be the domestic natural space, the immediate family, a private home, the refuge from the outside world. It can be the local space where every-day life evolves—the place where people always return. It can also be the country of origin, the symbolic Home, the source, or the highly symbolic and mediated transnational context, which shelters diaspora against exclusionary national spaces. More than any one of these, it tends to be all of the above.’ (Georgiou 2006; p.160)

This meaning of home is connected to belonging as the latter factor reflects the relationship between place, space, and time as attributes of home (Blunt, 2005; Blunt & Bonnerjee, 2013; King & Christou, 2011; Rapport & Dawson, 1998). Home may also refer to a place featuring in one’s memories of childhood. This means that home can lose ‘its fixed and foundational character and becom[e] re-imagined in terms of mobility and transformation’ (Ní Laoire, 2008; 46).

As another meaning of belonging, that of home as feeling a sense of belonging was explained by Akosua:

‘For me, home is a sense of belonging...what do I mean by ‘home’? What I mean is when I’m with my siblings and their families and their kids, for me, that is home.’ – Akosua (16:66/78)

In this context, the feeling of home is firmly connected to the family, and especially to the connection and bond between siblings. Indeed, Akosua was the only respondent who talked extensively about belonging as meaning ‘home.’ The relationship between Akosua and her siblings was characterised by a strong bond of ‘siblinghood,’ as she repeatedly emphasised. In this regard, being ‘home’ may only be possible when one is united with one’s siblings. This interpretation raised the question of whether returning to Ghana and consequently leaving behind siblings in the UK represented leaving home and whether Akosua could experience a sense of belonging in Ghana.

In response, Akosua described yet another facet of her understanding of belonging. While narrating her reasons for returning, she mentioned that she did not feel that she belonged in the UK. For her, despite her siblings living there, the UK was not home.

‘Home is more than just a family...when I was in the UK, apart from the fact that when I was with my family, I felt at home; only when I got out of that comfort zone, then I didn’t feel at home.’ – Akosua (16:84)

In contrast, Akosua mentioned in her narrative that Ghana, not the UK, represented home for her.
‘I lived in the UK for 12 years, but I never felt at home. No matter what they say, you will never feel at home. No matter what they say, you still find a bit of something missing. The homeliness of having the culture where you could just walk down the street, say ‘hi’ to people, people will smile at you when you say, ‘good morning,’ there will be a response, there is a big smile, and that could make your day.’ – Akosua (16:272)

In this sense, home is constructed as a cultural location—as a place rather than space. Home in Ghana thus becomes a place to which meaning has been ascribed (Carter et al., 1993; p.xii). It also represents imagined articulated movements in networks of social relations and understanding (Robins, 1993; Yuval-Davis, 2003). Moreover, the situation becomes more complex when one remembers that Akosua has dual citizenship. Therefore, the question of being at home in Ghana and being at home in the UK cannot be assumed to be simple and cannot be equal in meaning regarding home. In the UK, Akosua’s sense of home was limited to her social relations with her siblings, while home in Ghana represented the imagined cultural location and understanding, in addition to an assumed indigenousness\(^\text{103}\) taken to characterise Ghana as a place.

Furthermore, in his work on post-war Lebanese returnees, Pedersen (2003) analysed three different meanings of home: ‘home as a personal space of identification, home as ‘a nodal point of social relations’ (citing Olwig 1998:236), and ‘home as a physical place that exists within specific material and economic conditions’ (8). As a personal space of identification, the home that Akosua seemed to portray may be explained as comprised of ‘a routine set of practices, a repetition of habitual interaction, in styles of dress and address, in memories and myths, in stories carried around in one’s head’ (Pedersen, 2003;9 citing Berger in Rapport & Dawson, 1998 a:7). This meaning of home may shed light on why Ghana was home, rather than the UK. Home as a point of social relations suggests that the making of a home requires not only an individual but also relationships with other people. Akosua’s description of her sense of home in the UK as centred on the presence of her siblings exemplifies this principle. Home as the stable physical centre of one’s universe (Rapport & Dawson, 1998 a;6) is also reflected in Akosua’s statements connecting home with the

\(^{103}\) The assumption that one actually belongs to the land and to be ‘organically’ part of a place. See more from Yuval-Davis,’ (2003; p. 137) discourse on indigenousness.
idea of belonging to both the UK and Ghana. As demonstrated, the meanings of home that she offered relate to how home is defined in the literature.

Considering the three explanations of home offered by Akosua suggests different levels of belongingness to the UK and Ghana. In that sense, her siblings’ absence in Ghana did not make that country less of a home that is associated with a sense of belonging. We can also identify Akosua’s relationship with Ghana and the UK when it comes to belonging and home. On the one hand, Akosua maintained that overall, she did not feel that she belonged in the UK, despite the presence of her family, which represented home for her. On the other hand, she mentioned that she had a sense of belonging in Ghana, despite her immediate family not being present. The reason for the latter statement may have stemmed from Akosua feeling at ease to move in society without standing out due to her race and from the sense of having a connection with others in society; such factors may play a significant role in creating a sense of belonging. In this understanding of belonging, however, it seems to be the individual’s feelings towards a particular place, group of people or issues that generate a sense of belonging. Unlike in the previous examples, belonging does not hinge on whether others in society accept or reject one’s traits. Thus, the feeling of home can be conceptualised as an individual sense of belonging (place belongingness). The close association between home and belonging supports Pedersen’s (2003) claim that home is ‘plurilocal and may be ‘brought along’ to different places’ (9), and the same can be said of belonging. That is, the feeling that a particular place or relationship represents home and belonging can accompany one to different locations. Akosua carrying her view of home and belonging to and from the UK constitutes one example of this phenomenon.

In the same way, Kunadu, apart from saying she did not feel that she belonged in Ghana due to her accent, otherwise admitted to having a sense of belonging to Ghana. She likewise noted that this feeling had accompanied her to and from the UK.

‘I feel like I belong in Ghana. I think I’ve always—even in the UK; I felt like I belonged in Ghana. I was just, let’s say I was just making my life there. Education.’ – Kunadu (11:3)

Despite what may initially looks like a statement contradicting her claim to feel a sense of belonging in Ghana, Kunadu’s words suggest a different meaning of belonging than that which she originally offered. Her state-
ment suggests that belonging may have different meanings for the same person, and she explained using words similar to those of Ekua:

‘Once you’re a Ghanaian, you are a Ghanaian.’ – Ekua (17:24)

Many returnees used a similar phrase, which applies to all the perspectives on belonging that have thus far been described. This expression references the socio-cultural values and norms that they assumed every Ghanaian to have and that they expected would be difficult to lose. Additionally, such pronouncements can be interpreted as signifying nationality in terms of ancestral roots, which corresponds to the notion of indigenousness.

Interpreted via the lens of home, Ofiriwaa’s feeling of belonging in Ghana may reflect her attachments in Ghana in the form of family or memories. She explained further:

‘It’s family. Family in a sense [that] every two years, we came to Ghana. My grandmother, my grandparents, were all in Ghana. But it's because I grew up here. I knew what it felt [like] to grow up here. So, in that respect, I’ve always felt like I belonged here.’ – Kunadu (11:2)

Childhood memories and the presence of family members thus become factors generating feelings of belonging. A comparison between returnees like Kunadu, who lived her entire early life abroad and those like Kojo, who only spent three years abroad, did not reveal any differences in how these two groups perceived belonging. Likewise, they made similar statements regarding family attachments and ancestral connections to the home society. Thus, their words suggested that they saw Ghana as home, a place where a sense of belonging was achievable.

Belonging means having responsibilities and ownership

Belonging can also be explained by one’s responsibilities towards a place or group of people. According to Cudjoe, a returnee from the Netherlands:

‘Do I belong in Ghana? Yeah. I live in Ghana; I think I contribute my quota, I pay taxes, by helping to build that community, in that sense, I belong in Ghana, and still, I will say I belong to the Netherlands as well. I also have a house in the Netherlands. I also pay my stuff in the

104 This meaning is similar to the definition by the non-migrant (Vesta, 2:34) on page 238.
Netherlands; I also pay my health insurance in the Netherlands. So, belonging is a big word.’ – Cudjoe (14:4)

Cudjoe’s description of belonging is based on his responsibilities towards Ghana and the Netherlands. Paying taxes, contributing to society, paying for health insurance, and owning property gave Cudjoe a sense of belonging in these communities. Indeed, as he puts it, it was not necessarily those real commitments and payments that gave him this sense of belonging, but rather the underlining sense of membership and ownership conveyed by these responsibilities and attachments. This interpretation also emphasises sense of belonging as embedded in these responsibilities and commitments. Thus, it evokes the emotional feelings elicited from such activities in the home and host countries. The belonging that Cudjoe was referring to could be interpreted as social/collective belonging. This is because his claim of experiencing belonging in both the Netherlands and Ghana was based on identifiable and verifiable objects and activities. For example, his tax records and the deed of ownership for his house in the Netherlands represent valid documents that could be used to challenge people seeking to discredit his sense of membership (belonging) in these societies. Furthermore, this meaning of belonging is closely linked to the identification dimension of reintegration, which explains that people feel reintegrated because of the emotional satisfaction they gain from the opportunity to participate in the host or home society through property ownership, taxes, and other legal documents. I discuss this further in the conceptual model.

Moreover, Cudjoe’s explanation of belonging contrasts Yawo’s more abstract statement that ‘Once you are a Ghanaian, you are always a Ghanaian.’ Consequently, another difference between individual and social/collective belonging (politics of belonging) is highlighted: While individual belonging can be abstract and may not need to be justified or conclusively proven, social/collective belonging may still require evidence as a claim of belonging. For example, when it came to Yawo and Cudjoe, the former’s statement may not require proof beyond being able to claim ancestral and racial roots in Ghana. However, in the case of the latter, Cudjoe can provide other forms of proof (e.g., taxes receipts and house documents) to support his claim of membership in Ghana and the Netherlands. This also explains why Kunadu, despite seeing herself as belonging in Ghana because of her family and ancestral roots, still feels ‘othered’ due to her accent. Thus, beyond her individual feeling of belonging, Kunadu may not have the necessary proof (Ghanaian accent) for the social/collective sense of belonging.
Discussion and summary

Factors such as childhood memories, family heritage, ancestral roots, citizenship, national/ethnic attachments, and familiarity with the social order and home society symbols correspond with place belongingness. They represent an imagined and familiar ‘place in general and homeland in particular, as embedded in social relations and history around which narratives of belonging are woven’ (Yuval-Davis, 2003; p.134). The definition of belonging as entailing a sense of home also correlates with the expectation of belonging held by the returnees before their actual return. Defining belonging in terms of home may not necessarily imply the inherent power relations and politics typically associated with belonging. However, as Yuval-Davis (2003) has argued, that one should not underestimate the importance of boundaries and borders, even within such conceptions of belonging.

The findings regarding how returnees described belonging are thus in line with the conceptualisation offered in Chapter 2 (see page 14). That is, returnees who defined belonging in terms of how people in the home society treated them (accepting them, recognising their efforts, and not isolating them) appealed to the social/collective belonging (the politics of belonging) dimension. In contrast, those who described belonging in Ghana as independent of how others treated them and as instead hinging on memories and attachments (nationality and family heritages) affirmed the individual sense of belonging (place belongingness) dimension, as described by Antonsich (2010).

To conclude, the returnees offered four categories of meanings to explain belonging: not being treated as different, being appreciated and accepted, feeling at home, and possessing responsibilities and a sense of ownership. Belonging’s different layers of meanings suggest a range of ways in which the returnees understood what it meant to belong. Nevertheless, beneath these dissimilarities, the two main dimensions of belonging (the individual and collective) were manifested. As skilled returnees, these individuals inherently enjoyed a societal status that marked them as educated, and financially well off; this status stemmed from how the home society perceived them (i.e., as borgas). Factors related to this social status and background should not be downplayed in examining how returnees conceptualised belonging. However, regardless of the individual’s background, belonging plays a significant role in the reintegration process, relationships, and experiences.
10.2.2. Preconditions for Belonging

As mentioned in the previous chapter, some of the returnees – in their definition of belonging – mentioned that people in the home society treat them differently. A critical look at these treatments shows that the returnees had incompetency in some social and cultural factors in the home society, example accent. During the analysis, the social and cultural factors that required returnees not to be treated differently manifested under the theme, precondition for belonging. According to Kwame105,

‘A group of people think especially if you are a returnee, you must have certain attributes they expect from you to make you belong.’ – Kwame (12:06-7)

In explaining what belonging meant to him, Kwame offered a compelling elucidation. The above quotation from Kwame suggests that returnees’ social/collective sense of belonging is dependent on meeting specific criteria for acceptance espoused by certain people in the home society. That is, acceptance seemed to be conditional and hinged on the returnees demonstrating specific attributes. Kwame claimed that people in the home society expected returnees to exhibit specific attributes as a precondition for belonging. These criteria included having a Ghanaian English accent, being fluent in a Ghanaian language, and maintaining Ghanaian-ness.

Having a Ghanaian English accent

For example, Kunadu mentioned that people saw returnees as different because of the accents of the returnees. English is not the mother tongue of Ghanaians. However, since colonisation, English has been adopted as the official language. Nevertheless, the Ghanaian variety of English can be distinguished from other varieties spoken even in West Africa (e.g., Nigeria) and more so from native varieties like British English. Speaking a Ghanaian English has, therefore, become a symbol of nationality and part of what one may call being a ‘true’ Ghanaian. We see this from Abena’s statement:

‘As long as my accent is different, I will always be seen as a foreigner.’ – Abena (13:2)

105 Kwame is another returnee from the Netherlands.
Here we can see that the condition for not being a foreigner is to have the same accent as those in the home society. Speaking a form of British, American, or other native varieties of English is considered as undermining the Ghanaian variety. Ghanaians consider speaking in such a way as sheer exhibition of superiority over others who cannot speak and even over the Ghanaian variety of English and this in most cases is taken as a case of boasting. During the focus group with non-migrants, Christina (a non-migrant) explained that speaking with a foreign accent indicates that one does not belong to the society as a whole.

‘They say I’ve returned from abroad, so I don’t belong to this circle’ – Christina (2:25)

Furthermore, speaking the home language (e.g., Twi) with a foreign accent is part of what makes a returnee distinguishable from others. This was the case for Kunadu.

Being fluent in a Ghanaian language

Fluency in the home language is also an essential condition for acceptance and belonging.

‘When I came, I would go to work, and I would speak Twi. Somebody would hear me for the first time and be like ‘eiiiii na mennim se wo tumi ka Twi mpo’ [translated as ‘I thought you couldn’t speak Twi’]. I just didn’t want to be treated differently. I didn’t want to be seen as different. We are all Ghanaians; we should all be treated on the same level.’ – Kwadwo (20:86)

Some returnees (e.g., Akwasi) even felt that they belonged because they could speak the home language. The home language and its vocabulary (including jargon) and implications are held up as factors identifying one as a member of the home society, and therefore, fluency in it yields a sense of inclusion/acceptance.

Maintaining Ghanaian-ness

Another condition for acceptance/belonging is maintaining basic Ghanaian-ness.
‘I talk with my hands a lot, and then I found out that you can’t do that in front of elders, whether they are respectable or not. You can’t give things with your left hand; you can’t eat with your left hand. So, gesturing was one of the things you can’t do as a Ghanaian; using your left hand was one of the things that I learned you couldn’t do as a Ghanaian. Interrupting adults while they spoke, especially when they are saying something incorrectly—you should just let them finish whatever they are saying, no correction. It not Ghanaian to interrupt somebody to correct.’ – Yawo (01:16:40-3)

As Yawo’s suggested in the above quotation, specific social and cultural attributes are expected from all who maintain Ghanaian-ness. In addition to being unacceptable, a deviation from these attributes by a returnee is seen by the home society as an outright rejection and or isolation. This point was seen in the focus group discussions when non-migrants maintained that certain things make one a Ghanaian.

‘Once you are born and bred here, you’ve been here for some time, and you go even for 20 years, or for so many years, there are some basic things you won’t do...you still have it in mind. There are some basic things we grew up with which will always be with us...you can’t forget that or change those things.’ – Vesta (2:34)

What Vesta, a non-migrant, was saying confirmed Yawo’s experiences of what it means to belong as a Ghanaian. Interestingly, Vesta asserted that these attributes are inflexible; not even a long migration experience can alter them. The irony is that because of such notions, a returnee’s deviation from such norms is sometimes assumed to mean that that individual does not want to be considered as a Ghanaian. It is as if the individual who undermines these attributes also rejects who he or she is; as a Ghanaian.

Furthermore, another condition for belonging in terms of maintaining Ghanaian-ness is not complaining as a returnee. Complaining here means comparing situations abroad to the home country, or criticising services and some of the ways the home society function. Such behaviours may be seen as grumbling and as distancing oneself from the home society. Hence, it may lead to exclusion.

‘I get into arguments all the time because I somewhat feel like if I could just get a chance to say it a particular way, they will get it that we’re trying to achieve the same thing or just listen to my logic—let’s just figure this out. And so, as I’m passionate trying to explain myself,
they also just get defensive, and next thing you know, it’s a full-blown argument.’ – Mitchel (19:39)

The ‘logic’ to which Mitchel was alluding seems to be a reference to how well some things worked in the country from which she had returned. Often, returnees like Mitchel have been told that ‘this is how we do it in Ghana.’ Such statements are usually made when returnees complain about problems or issues; those in the home society see such assertions as an attempt by returnees to demonstrate that their Western mindset is superior. At the same time, returnees tend to remind non-migrants about how things are done abroad continually. To belong therefore means not to complain too much, not to regularly talk about one’s time abroad, and ultimately, and not to undermine the home society. Such actions lead to exclusion from the home society.

Furthermore, Yawo contested what it means to be Ghanaian (as a condition for belonging). Yawo, who comes from the northern part of Ghana, felt that the conditions for measuring one’s Ghanaian-ness were based on the culture of people in southern Ghana, especially regarding the culture of not complaining about issues.

‘The Ghanaian-ness is a problem for me because I come from the northern part of Ghana. When they say ‘Ghanaian-ness,’ it’s a very southern concept. When you go up north, we complain about everything. Corruption exists, but if I want something done now and I think it’s my right and I know it’s my right, you will do it for me now. That’s a very northern attitude.’ – Yawo (01:04:28-1)

According to Yawo, the idea that to be Ghanaian means not complaining does not represent her ethnic group (Wala). This is important because most of the issues mentioned above as related to conditions for belonging were predominantly framed in terms of the culture in southern Ghanaian. This is not to say that certain norms, such as demonstrating respect for the elderly and rules stipulating appropriate uses for the left hand, are not similar in other parts of the country. For instance, regardless of the ethnic group, greeting, giving, or receiving things with the left hand is seen as disrespectful and non-Ghanaian. However, the above quotation from Yawo challenges the apparent understanding of Ghana as homogenous regarding the culture and practices (example English accent). Yawo’s comment also served to challenge the notion that returnees come back wholeheartedly espousing Western or host-country-related norms and ideas. According to her, individual differences are ethnically based, and not as the result of migration.
Nevertheless, the notion of what it means to be Ghanaian has often been defined by the attributes of the dominant ethnic group, the Akans. For example, even though they are both not natives of the Akan group, Ya-wo and Kunadu mentioned that one was not considered Ghanaian should he or she speak Twi with an accent. However, because most of the respondents in this study lived in the southern part of the country, their experiences of conditions for belonging were based on community-specific attributes that were often loosely regarded as Ghanaian attributes; this holds regardless of whether they were ethnic Akans, even when they hailed from the south.

While studying Irish returnees, Ní Laoire (2008) arrived at a similar conclusion: For returnees, not complaining about services, having the correct accent, and avoiding talking too much about time abroad represented conditions for belonging in Irish society. This study’s findings likewise show that many returnees are aware of these criteria for inclusion and belonging. Moreover, while some may try to meet these conditions, others may choose to ignore or indirectly fight them, resulting in them being denied a sense of belonging.

10.2.3. ‘People Feel I Don’t Belong Here’—Denied Belonging

The inability of returnees to meet conditions for belonging may lead to a denied belonging. That is, denied belonging is situated within the domain of social/collective belonging and defined as a returnee’s perceived denial of recognition of membership or total inclusion in the home society by members of the society. For instance, according to Kunadu and Abena:

‘I can definitely tell you one-hundred per cent or whatever that people feel I don’t belong here.’ – Kunadu (11:15)

‘Oh yeah. I think people will always see me as a foreigner. I think I could be here for 50 years and people would. As long as my accent is different, I will always be seen as a foreigner.’ – Abena (13:1)

In the view of Kunadu and Abena, regardless of their feelings towards their home society (place belongingness), they may not be regarded by the home society as people who belong. Instead, the home society may see returnees as foreigners. Here, it is interesting to notice that regardless of how a returnee feels about belonging, there is always the issue of the ‘other.’ The attitude of the ‘other’ (people in the home society) regarding whether a returnee belongs or not is just as essential as how a returnee feels about his
or her belongingness to the home society. This understanding shifts the power of deciding who belongs in the home society from the individual (Kunadu and Abena) to a collective (people in the society). As single returnees who spent more than 15 years each in the UK and US, respectively, Kunadu and Abena both blamed their denied belonging on the fact that they had unique accents in both English and home languages. For many who stay abroad longer, language and accent become the primary factor standing between them and acceptance (belonging) in Ghana.

The other returnees who made statements suggesting denied belonging (e.g., Akwasi), however, gave reasons such as having gotten a different way of life and mentality (return changes) that would prohibit them from belonging to the home society for as long as they remained in place.

‘You have to go back. They won’t accept you for the Western mindset and lifestyle you bring back. They will flat-out reject you.’ – Akwasi (18:76)

This result showed few variations among those returnees who shared this view of denied belonging. Thus, returnees, regardless of marital status or any other social marker, may be denied belonging, but only if they show social, cultural, and structural standards that differ from those in the home society of which the members of the home society are not ready to accept. One crucial fact stays: the receiving society is seen as influential in this politics of inclusion and rejection, and that, the receiving society’s actions or inactions affect returnees’ sense of belonging. Thus, one can assume the psychological implications for returnees who experience denied belonging in the home country’s sociocultural environment.

These findings affirmed those of studies (e.g., Constable 1999; Long and Oxfeld 2004; Christou 2006a; Ní Laoire, 2008) examining other contexts and regions in terms of the feelings of alienation and denied belonging experienced by returnees. For example, Christou’s (2006b) research on second-generation Greek-American return migrants highlighted the exclusion and alienation of returnees in Greece. Such a reception often leads to disappointment on the part of returnees faced with actual practices and politics of belonging. In most instances, the reality is the opposite of the expectation to belong in the home society. The implication of such disappointment is what Markowitz and Stefansson (2004) called ‘re-diasporisation,’ namely, return migrants creating a home diaspora in the home country. The Ahaspora group in Ghana represents a typical ‘re-diasporisation’ situation (see 4.4.2. Returnees’ Mobilisations in Ghana).
10.2.4. Unilateral and Multilateral Belonging

As part of discussing their sense of belonging, the returnees also conveyed belonging as either to the home country or to both the home and the host countries. That is, some returnees possess a sense of belonging to either the home country or host country, while others feel that they belong to both. Belonging to either the home or host country is what I call unilateral belonging, while a sense of belonging to both the home and host societies reflects multilateral belonging.

In terms of unilateral belonging, some returnees admitted to having never experienced a sense of belonging in the host society, either while living there or after returning to Ghana:

‘I think I’ve always, even in the UK, I felt like I belonged in Ghana. I was just; let’s say I was just making my life there.’ – Kunadu (11:3)

‘I lived in the UK for 12 years, but I never felt at home. No matter what they say, you will never feel at home.’ – Akosua (16:272)

These returnees implied that they had carried with them their sense of belonging to Ghana during their entire stay abroad. This concept takes the form of attachments to the home country, (e.g., ancestral roots and family; see 10.2.1. Meanings of Belonging).

On the contrary, other returnees mentioned having a sense of belonging to both the host country and the home country. For example, when answering the question of where he belonged, Cudjoe explained:

‘I live in Ghana; I do my stuff. At the same time, the majority of my relationship contacts are still based in the Netherlands [sic]. I think I belong to Ghana; I belong to the Netherlands.’ – Cudjoe (14:3)

Multilateral belonging suggests that a person’s various senses of belonging can intersect with each other in many ways (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2013). Paying taxes, owning properties, and having relations in both the Netherlands and Ghana was enough for Cudjoe to say he belonged to both states. Indeed, the other returnees who shared such an understanding all pointed to some level of attachment to the two countries to which they felt connected.

Of those who mentioned making contributions in terms of taxes and owning properties in the host country, many, including Cudjoe, were dual citizens. Although these returnees were living in Ghana, they viewed these attachments as not only investments in the host country but also ties that kept them connected to that state. Again, those returnees who had dual citizenships but claimed only to feel a sense of belonging to Ghana may have
possessed similar attachments in the host country. Nevertheless, they discussed their sense of belonging as unilateral, rather than as multiple. For example, Akosua’s siblings continued to live in the UK, and she often visited that country. The same held for Akwasi, whose children and ex-wife still lived in the US.

The distinction between multilateral belonging and unilateral belonging only emerged in terms of how these returnees personally conceptualised their sense of belonging. Nevertheless, the concept of multilateral belonging refers to those returnees who explained having attachments in both countries in the form of responsibilities (e.g., Cudjoe) and full access without constraints. They appreciate this access due to being dual citizens or having the ability to shuttle between the two countries easily. Abena provided an example:

‘To the States, I go back often enough. At least once or twice a year, so I don't feel disconnected. I don't feel like I need to stay when I'm there.’ – Abena

Even though sense of belonging was not openly mentioned as multilateral belonging, a closer look at the interview materials revealed the interplay of multilateral belonging. This phenomenon took the form of host country-related activities in which returnees continued to engage when in Ghana. One such example was following sports or political news of the host country (e.g., Kwadwo, Cudjoe, Yaw, and Akua). Besides, a taste for specific foods and drinks from the host country on the part of returnees living in Ghana (e.g., Abena and Akosua) can also be interpreted as multilateral belonging. Another example reflects the respondents’ tendency to point to a sense of belonging in Ghana because of their families and their membership in the Ahaspora returnee group. Also, those respondents who belonged to the returnee community (e.g., Akosua, Abena, Kwame, Kwadwo, and Kunadu) told me that they felt accepted and ‘could be themselves’ when among members of this group.

For others, such as Abena, and Kobina, in addition to their membership in this returnee network, they mentioned other groups and associations that were not exclusively made up of returnees. They described these attachments and affiliations as significant for them in terms of having a sense of belonging in Ghana. As a result, even though these returnees may have expressed a unilateral or multilateral sense of belonging during the interview, Pfaff-Czarnecka’s (2013) statement that ‘from the point of view of individual persons, belonging is always multiple’ (pp. 21) seemed to
hold. In short, even in the home country, attachments can feature multiple forms and depths, and these variations may influence belonging.

10.2.5. The New Normal

Closely connected to multilateral belonging is the notion of the new normal. The narratives from respondents who mentioned multilateral belonging (e.g., Abena and Cudjoe) also mentioned that they belong to neither Ghana nor the host country. My further probing of such narratives revealed the idea of ‘the new normal’ as a conceptual underpinning. This conceptualisation grew out of Abena’s narrative in particular:

‘If you are in the States, a black American story isn't my history. I don't have the same level of intimacy or need for somebody to pay me back for slavery. I get that, but I don't necessarily get the full story. When I'm in Ghana, I get that ‘Oh, in Ghana you are sufferers, certain things are hard, certain things are great, and some better than the States will ever be.' But I will never understand going from primary school, through secondary school, university, solely in Ghana. So, I do feel like I'm in a different subset.... You don't feel at home in your home country, and the country that you've been brought up in isn't necessarily your home. So, I can't feel sorry for myself. If anything, in Ghana, I'm afforded the liberty of having so many people like me; I feel like I am the new normal. There are so many of us that [it] is very comfortable.’
– Abena (13:2)

Indeed, Abena was not alone in this new normal situation. Others, including Afia, were similar to her. This group primarily consisted of those returnees who spent significant parts of their lives growing up in the host country, but still did not associate themselves with the history and other identifiers of either the host country or Ghana. They claimed to belong nowhere, a scenario I deem the new normal. This category also described returnees who had no sense of belonging in the host society and thus expected to belong in Ghana but were disappointed. Returnees who experienced denied belonging also fell into this category. That is, some returnees acknowledged having a multiple sense of belonging to both the home and host society. In contrast, others saw themselves as belonging nowhere and as existing in in-between places.

However, to be in-between places reflects a new way of life, modernity, and even globalisation—hence, this identifier suggests that one is a global
Returnees such as Abena may rationalise their situation and create identities that do not resemble either the host or home country. For example, many of the returnees mentioned their involvement in the Ahaspora group and indicated that certain activities and cultural events (like happy hours, wine tastings, and balls) bestowed upon them a supra-national identity. These returnees pursue a different sense of belonging that extends beyond a particular geographical area. In other words, they possess a transnational identity and sense of belonging (cf. De Bree et al., 2010; Anthias, 2006). They see their current sense of belonging (i.e., multilateral belonging or belonging nowhere) as strategic in bringing them happiness and a sustainable lifestyle and find unilateral belonging narrow and limiting.

‘And I don’t like belonging to a particular group of people. I don’t want the case where people associate with just one group of people. I don’t want to associate to any of this.’ – Yawo (15:16)

The idea of being neither here nor there thus offers the opportunity to explore broader social spaces and to expand one’s social capital. For the new normal, returnees such as Abena and Yawo accepted this new way of life and tended to oppose efforts to push them towards a particular sense of belonging. Those returnees who held such views on belonging also defined reintegration differently, and the next section explores those perspectives in more detail. For them, reintegration took the form of a standard that needed to be fulfilled.

10.2.6. Summary

The analysis has illustrated that returnees assign three meanings to belonging: acceptance, home, and a lack of differentiation. The respondents’ explanations of what belonging meant to them indicated the criteria for experiencing a sense of belonging: feeling included, feeling at home, and sharing similarities with a place or a group of people. The belonging that the returnees described reflected either the personal dimension or the social/collective dimension of belonging and thus signalled agreement with Antonsich’s (2010) thoughts on the subject (see 2.3.1. Belonging). By examining how returnees conceptualise belonging, this chapter has thus far

revealed what seem to be the home society’s conditions for inclusion and belonging. These criteria are the following: speaking with a Ghanaian English accent, fluently speaking the home language, maintaining basic Ghanaian-ness, and not comparing situations abroad with those in Ghana in a complaining manner. When these conditions are met, the data suggest that a sense of belonging is likely. The opposite situation results in denied belonging. The findings also highlight the intense politics of inclusion and exclusion inherent in these meanings of belonging.

Furthermore, returnees’ conceptualisations of belonging may be plural in meaning. That is, returnees described their sense of belonging as unilateral (towards a particular place/country) or multilateral (towards the home and host countries), while others claimed to belong nowhere. Besides, this section has highlighted returnees’ maintenance of multilateral senses of belonging as needed. The returnees see the fluidity towards belonging as providing them with room to orientate their attachments and sense of culture.

### 10.3. Returnees and Reintegration

The interview data indicated that the difference between integration and reintegration was not important for many of the returnees. Their answers to questions about reintegration highlighted this finding, as they sometimes used the word ‘integration,’ not ‘reintegration.’ Analysing the frequency of such responses suggested that most returnees viewed reintegration as integration because the reintegration process is not dissimilar to the experience of being abroad. Akwasi mentioned that the process of reintegration was similar to integration. In other instances, the returnees used terms such as ‘assimilation’ and ‘adaptation’ while trying to describe their understanding of reintegration. On the one hand, these responses suggested that the returnees used certain concepts interchangeably because they had been exposed to such terms via their experiences. They, therefore, borrowed these words to explain other concepts. On the other hand, these word choices indicated that the returnees genuinely understood these concepts and consciously opted to use them to explain other processes. In this section, I use the words ‘reintegration’ and ‘integration’ synonymously in keeping with the perspective offered by the returnees.
10.3.1. The Meanings of Reintegration

During the interviews, I asked the respondents how they understood reintegration. The analysis of the responses resulted in three categories describing the different meanings of reintegration cited by these skilled returnees: (1) reintegration is vibrating at the same frequency, (2) reintegrating as adapting, and (3) reintegration is accepting differences.

In this section, I present and examine these categories. As part of the discussion, I reflect on some definitions of reintegration from the existing literature.

Reintegration is vibrating at the same frequency

The first category centred on the idea of embracing reality, vibrating at the same frequency as others in the return society, or fitting in.

‘Integration is fully embracing how things are and moving and being yourself like you used to be.’ – Kojo (17:26)

‘Okay, I take integration as vibrating at the same frequency at a point where you live like the people, and they live like you, and you feel everything is at par.’ – Kofi (5:1)

This definition of reintegration offered by Kojo and Kofi may be akin to the saying ‘When in Rome, do what the Romans do!’ In other words, the returnees who shared this view saw reintegration in terms of two main ways. First, the use of the phrase ‘fully embracing’ suggests accepting the return society without asking questions. Second, it implies adopting the norms and rules of that society without trying to change them.

The quotation from Kojo presupposes that reintegration is similar to putting on one’s ‘pre-migration jacket’ after one’s return; it seemingly suggests that an individual’s pre-migration self is like a garment that can be taken off and on upon migration and return, respectively. Also, Kofi’s definition implies that the returnee becomes similar to others in the home society. Vibrating at the same frequency thus means aligning oneself with local practices and ways of acting without demonstrating opposition. Kojo explained why this meaning of reintegration is appealing to some returnees:

‘There is comfort in being a Ghanaian, for following the status quo, for flowing with the system.’ – Kojo (17:22)
Kojo’s words suggest that he had the option of embracing the (Ghanaian) home society’s way of life once again. He described this option in terms ‘following the system’ or ‘being a Ghanaian’ again. However, another option also existed, namely, maintaining any transformation that took place while abroad while seeking to re-embed himself in the home society. But flowing with the system, according to Kojo, is the easiest path. It presumably means leaving behind what one has experienced abroad and accepting the status quo in Ghana. It may also involve tolerating positive and negative aspects of the home society without questioning them or changing them. This option of ‘following the system’ may be chosen by returnees characterised by what Cerase (1974) called the ‘return of conservatism’. Flowing with the system means arriving late at meetings, mixing professionalism with pleasure, hooting unnecessarily, dirtying around, and not speaking out against unfair treatment. According to Kojo, flowing with the system is helpful because returnees who opt for this approach hardly clash with the system and therefore experience a relatively smooth transition and acceptance from society. The choice of maintaining learned experiences, which Kojo had opted to do, thus remains a difficult option, especially during the initial stages of return.

Furthermore, the above notion of reintegration was criticised by the returnees. They proposed that such an understanding made reintegration seem unattainable and even impossible.

‘I don’t know, but for me, I think I can never be how I used to be.’ – Kojo (17:59)

In the above quotation, Kojo seemed to be equating ‘following the system’ as reverting to his pre-migration self. That said, the analysis indicated that this understanding of reintegration is problematic for some returnees. Kojo claimed that he would never reintegrate because of his inability to re-assume his pre-migration self. It is important to acknowledge that Kojo accepted the changes he had undergone while abroad and may, therefore, have returned with the intent to question existing practices and transmit changes in his society. However, his goal of altering the home society seemed to counter the idea of reintegration consisting of flowing with the system.

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107 The things mentioned are among the practices that were mentioned in various parts of the interviews as the Ghanaian standard or way of doing things.
According to Kwadwo, viewing reintegration in terms of an effort to conform implies a standard against which one is measured within the home society:

‘Fitting in presupposes there is a certain standard that you are measured against. I don’t think people should be measured against the same standard because somebody is an artist who draws very well; he thinks differently, and so if you measure him against someone who is an accountant, that’s unfair.’ – Kwadwo (20:89)

For Kwadwo, returnees and non-migrants differ. Similar to Kojo, Kwadwo viewed non-migrant standards as Ghanaian standards. Kwadwo understood his standards as different from those in the home society. To him, the home standard should not become the yardstick for measurement. In this context, the term *standard* refers to expected modes of behaviour enshrined as societal norms, values, and accepted practices across different dimensions of society. For example, in their work on returnees in Kumasi Ghana, Setrana and Tonah (2013) found that expectations from family, friends, and community; bureaucracy; work ethics; and excessive religiosity were among the standards and behaviours that challenged returnees. Based on this understanding of reintegration, Kwadwo also saw reintegration as a challenge because the failure to conform to home standards could lead to rejection.

A critical examination of reintegration as vibrating at the same frequency and embracing the status quo—a perspective reflecting re-assimilation—offers a challenge. First of all, describing integration as an effort to conform underpins only one route to reintegration. For returnees, this understanding plays a significant role in their efforts to achieve reintegration, and the need to conform may, therefore, constitute a burdensome expectation and require substantial exertion. Choosing a different route, therefore, runs counter to this expectation and results in pressure to conform.

The second issue is that this conceptualisation of reintegration can mean, not only a standard to be achieved but also a benchmark for evaluations by others. Conceding that reintegration means fitting in suggests that returnees will be evaluated in terms of the degree to which they have re-integrated. Thus, to re-integrate suggests a general checklist of expected norms, values, performances, behaviours, knowledge, skills, and practices that one must fulfil to re-integrate successfully. Overall, Kwadwo’s understanding of reintegration elicits more questions than answers. It raises the question of how far one must conform to achieve reintegration: At what point in the process of seeking to conform can we say that reintegration
has been achieved? Other issues, such as determining an appropriate measure for reintegration and deciding who should be responsible for evaluating one’s success in that regard, also come to the fore. The question of whether reintegration means conforming arises.

Returnees’ definition of reintegration – flowing the system and flowing the status quo – can be how the home society perceives reintegration. Opposition to this understanding of reintegration demonstrates returnees’ dissatisfaction with the meanings and presuppositions in such a definition.

Reintegration is about adaptation

The second category of meaning equates reintegration to adaptation.

‘You need to come to that point where you are comfortable in your environment. It’s about adaptation. [An] explanation of integration should be around adaptation where you are fine; you are [in a] comfortable ambience environment [sic]. There are still significant differences between how you expect things to be done and how things are done in the society.’ – Kofi (5:5)

Adaptation, according to Kim (2005), is the internal struggle of individuals to regain control over their life changes in the face of environmental changes (p. 378). For Kim (2005), the environment can be social, cultural, political, or economic. Examining Kofi’s description of reintegration in the light of Kim’s (2005) definition of adaption reveals that the ‘comfortable ambience’ of which Kofi spoke resonates with regaining control of environmental changes. Kofi also acknowledged these changes as he further correlated changes in returnees with their expectations of the home society. Again, adaptation was also considered a win-win scenario capable of avoiding the problems associated with reintegration. Thus, as Yoofi puts it:

‘You came back; you realised that the way things are done here [is] different from the way you were doing it outside. So, you need to try to adapt. Even though you think the way things are done here might not probably be the best, you need to adapt to certain things or the way things are done in Ghana.’ – Yoofi (7:1)

Understanding reintegration in terms of either assimilation or adaptation seems to suggest that the readjustment process is the responsibility of the returnee. The explanation offered by Yoofi therefore suggests a lack of choice and flexibility because the returnee is responsible for the adaptation
process. This understanding is problematic because it leaves out the return society in the reintegration processes regarding the responsibility to adapt to returnees.

The difference between the first conceptualisation (assimilation) and the second one (adaptation) is that while the former category presupposes that the home society expects returnees to embrace it or follow its rules, the second category suggests a level of compromise. As Kofi puts it:

‘This is how it is done on the other side; now this thing doesn’t work over here, so you have to unlearn it to learn how it is done over here. It doesn’t mean you [are] abandoning what you know, which is good.’ – Kofi (5:3)

Reintegration is accepting differences

The third understanding of reintegration considers it as accepting differences.

‘Integration is a two-way thing, to feel accepted and to feel also comfortable to identify with the new environment that you have. And I mean not cherry-picking or picking this is good, this is bad, but trying to live with the system, and you also have that feeling of acceptance, of belonging.’ – Kabelah (21:10)

This understanding of reintegration suggests that the return society has a role to play in the reintegration process. Thus, society has to accept the returnee. Feeling accepted means that the returnee feels comfortable in the home society and that others acknowledge this acceptance. Kwadwo shared such a definition when he challenged the idea that reintegration is a standard. Thus, according to Kwadwo, reintegration means that both parties maintain their standards. For example, although Kwadwo may have adopted certain standards of the home country, such as fluently speaking the home language, he continued to maintain his standards, as he viewed them as superior.

Chapter 2 indicated that this study adopted IOM’s (2004) definition of reintegration: ‘re-inclusion or re-incorporation of a person into a group or a process, e.g. of a migrant into the society of his country of origin’ (p. 54). However, the statements made by Kofi, Kabelah, and Yooﬁ about what reintegration meant for them—accepting differences—differed from IOM’s (2004) definition. This is because the re-inclusion or re-incorporation process, as outlined by the IOM, does not clarify what these processes
entail for the returnees and the home society. Delving deep into the data revealed that the ‘re-inclusion or re-incorporation of a person’ bears similarity to the first category of reintegration definitions (i.e., vibrating at the same frequency or flowing with the system)—a conceptualisation that Kojo, Kwadwo, and Kofi found problematic. The IOM definition also takes for granted that returnees bear the costs of this re-inclusion or re-incorporation.

Of the three conceptualisations of reintegration, the result found the third category the most relatable for the returnees—accepting differences. That is, challenging the underlying notions in flowing with the system and following the status quo was to offer an alternate meaning of reintegration as accepting differences. In addition, accepting differences involves an adaptation on both sides. Kyei’s (2013) definition of reintegration—the process of give and take in the home country as returnees learn to live with their families and communities—may shed light on why this perspective resonated with returnees. To further clarify the meaning of accepting differences, Kwadwo offered a metaphorical view of what reintegration is like:

‘It’s like a Venn diagram. There is an area of intersection where we all have that common ground, common experiences, or, you know, life experiences or what not, but then there are also experiences that are unique to me and unique to you—that I have to accept that you are different; you have also to accept that I am different.’ – Kwadwo (20:95)

The point of intersection may be ancestral heritage, ethnicity, nationality, similar pre-migration experiences, and shared historical memories associated with the home community. The differences entail the changes that have taken place within both the returnee and the home society during the former’s period of absence. This approach to reintegration means that returnees recognise changes in not only themselves but also the home society. So far, the result indicates that the adopted definition from IOM (2004) does not capture returnees’ meanings of reintegration. As such, based the returnees’ conceptions and meanings, I define reintegration as the meeting points of two groups of people at which civil interactions and dialogue take place based on different experiences that create an atmosphere in which both parties remain open to their own experiences.

Another exciting aspect of this description of reintegration is how it connects to the whole process of belonging. We can mainly see this from the quotation from Kabelah, in which he equates the feeling of acceptance with belonging. However, the way that Kunadu, Ekua, and Abena spoke about belonging and acceptance also exemplified this phenomenon. The
result from the interpretations of belonging and reintegration shows that acceptance is a significant factor for both reintegration and belonging. That is, the attitudes of non-migrants towards returnees, influence returnees’ sense of belonging and reintegration outcomes.\(^{108}\) (Cassorino, 2004; Ralph, 2012).

Discussion and summary

The three categories of reintegration conceptualisations offered by returnees were as follows: (1) reintegration as vibrating at the same frequency, (2) reintegration as adapting, and (3) reintegration as accepting differences. While it was clear that the third meaning appealed to the returnees, this preference by no means indicated that the returnees had adopted only one of these interpretations. For example, having mentioned that reintegration is about accepting differences, Kabelah also suggested trying to live with the system. Thus, depending on the circumstances, returnees may accept the status quo, adapt, and or demand acceptance of differences as they negotiate reintegration. Thus, no single definition of reintegration fits every returnee. Understanding reintegration this way operationalises the concept as performable and as a strategy in the return process that is available for both returnees and the home society in the post-return negotiations. Depending on the dimension of reintegration, returnees may handpick the meaning that they attach to reintegration. For example, during the interview with Kwadwo, he explained that:

‘So as much as possible, I speak Twi just to blend in.’ – Kwadwo (20:87)

Here, Kwadwo was opting to act per the norms (speaking the home language); however, when it came to his profession, he was clear that he would maintain his different ‘Western’ standards and thus seek acceptance. This may seem ironic in that although Kwadwo did not want to be measured by home society standards, he suggested wanting to influence the home society with the standards with which he had returned. That is, while refusing to be measured against home society standards, returnees (e.g., Kwadwo, Ekua, Kojo, and Akwasi) seemed to want instead to measure non-migrants against their own (Western) values as part of the process

\(^{108}\) The relationship between belonging and reintegration is discussed in detail in section 10.4. Relationship between belonging and reintegration.
of reintegration. Nevertheless, this conclusion is only relevant when we contextualise these different standards and definitions of reintegration.

As mentioned earlier, the analysis revealed that returnees might cherry-pick how they conceive reintegration across the different dimensions of the reintegration process. This leads to three conclusions: (1) a scenario in which they do not mind adopting existing standards in the home country; (2) a scenario in which they want their values to influence home society standards; and (3) a scenario in which the returnee and home society both maintain their standards, but do not influence or disturb each other. Within and across structural, social, cultural, and identification dimensions of reintegration, the analysis illustrated that returnees made conscious decisions regarding how to negotiate their reintegration. For example, when it came to the cultural dimension, returnees could easily conform to local norms and habits by relearning the home language and educating themselves about cultural practices, such as preparing local dishes. However, the same returnees may have opted to maintain their standards of professional etiquette. Meanwhile, in terms of planning major life events, and especially decisions regarding marriage and children, returnees and non-migrants tended to follow their standards. The question as to whether integration constitutes a standard or a required procedure is significant, especially for certain returnees.

Also, the above analysis highlighted that the meanings ascribed by the returnees were not explicitly based on gender, social status, profession, marital status, the identity of the host country, or the duration of absence from the home country. What this means is that even though these factors may have influenced their understandings of reintegration, these variables did not emerge as relevant in the analysis. Instead, I found that how returnees defined their readjustment process in the home country seemed to depend on how they viewed the intensity of the changes within themselves and the home society. These changes tended to involve factors such as gender, social status, profession and economic status, marital status, and the amount of time spent abroad. That is, in recognising that they and the home society had both undergone changes in terms of lifestyles, tastes, and standards, the meanings attached to reintegration tended to focus on the level of negotiation needed to allow these differences to coexist. Furthermore, the personal meaning attached to the readjustment process determined the approaches and mechanisms that the returnees employed to integrate.
10.3.2. Phases of Reintegration

As part of the interview, I asked the returnees whether, in their view, they had reintegrated in Ghana. This question led many of the returnees to reflect on their return experiences. The answers they provided shed light on how the relationship between reintegration and belonging was defined. Answers to this question fell into three clusters: (1) reintegrated, (2) still reintegrating, and (3) not reintegrated. Furthermore, the viewpoints of the returnees shed light on the relationship between reintegration and sense of belonging. It is crucial to note that while the returnees expressed their feelings regarding whether they had reintegrated, their responses resulted in the conceptual relationship between belonging and reintegration. I thus argue that the relationship between reintegration and belonging is twofold. While upholding the concept of belonging (individual/place belongingness and social/collective belonging or politics of belonging), I argue that individual belonging is an additional dimension of reintegration; and that social/collective belonging should be treated as an embedded feeling (subjective feeling of being accepted or rejected) generated via interactions with the social, structural, cultural, and identification dimensions of reintegration. I use the term embedded to refer to the inherent social/collective belonging experienced within these dimensions of social reintegration. In this section, I present these links between reintegration and sense of belonging.

Reintegrated

‘After all, I was born and bred here. I had my studies over here; I worked here for some time. So, even though I went outside, stayed there for almost 10–12 years, this is where I belong. My parents are here, my wife is here, and my brothers and sisters are here.’ – Yooﬁ (7:2)

It seemed apparent that Yooﬁ’s explanation for why he felt reintegrated was based on belonging to a certain extent. That is, even though I asked him about reintegration, he noted that his feeling of reintegration had arisen from a sense of belonging. A critical look at Yooﬁ’s statement reveals that he was suggesting that family ties and other relations in Ghana constituted the source of belonging. Having his family nearby produced a sense of familiarity with existing social structures and the corresponding attachments that generates a sense of belonging. This means that he did not feel
that he had lost anything significant or changed so profoundly as to experience denied reintegration. Yooifi was claiming that he felt he belonged to the home society and that he thus saw himself as reintegrated. His claim of belonging was significantly based on the proximity of his family and his attachments to the home country. From this analysis, sense of belonging does not seem to be different from reintegration.

Moreover, belonging, as we see from the above quotation, implies reintegration. This sets the stage for examining the relationship between reintegration and sense of belonging. Analysing Yooifi’s response thus suggests that a sense of belonging constitutes a dimension of reintegration. However, a critical look at Yooifi’s explanation suggests an individual sense of belonging (place belongingness), rather than a social or collective one.

Furthermore, by mentioning that he attended school and worked in Ghana before travelling abroad, Yooifi drew attention to the fact that he was familiar with the home society and still remembered its way of life. The narrative here may likewise be seen as a negotiation strategy. He appeared to be using his familiarity with the home country (i.e., drawing on his knowledge and competencies—acculturation dimension of reintegration) as further justification for why he felt reintegrated. Analytically, the number of years spent abroad did not play a significant role for Yooifi in terms of feeling reintegrated.

Moreover, Kofi mentioned another reason for feeling reintegrated.

‘You go to bed, and you not asking yourself, ‘Do I have a bus pass?’ You go to bed, and you are asking yourself, ‘When my visa is expiring?’ You go to bed, and you are not asking yourself all those immigrant questions. None of them is in your mind. And that is what makes it home.’
– Kofi (5:6)

In terms of the dimensions of reintegration, Kofi’s reintegration may be interpreted within the placement dimension. The granting of rights as a citizen of society illustrates how Kofi saw himself as part of society—not as a migrant, but as a citizen not needing to consider immigrant issues. Immigration-related questions regarding visa acquisition and the legality of stay are no longer of concern to returnees as a result of their social and legal position conferred by the rights of citizenship. The relationship between integration/reintegration and the challenges associated with being a migrant clarifies this point. For instance, Kofi felt reintegrated because he experienced a sense of membership as a citizen in the collective society. He felt at home (nationality). His citizenship in the home society (nationality) was, therefore, his basis for feeling reintegrated. Furthermore, the fact that
he no longer needed to worry about visa issues conferred a sense of comfort and security in the home society and hence encouraged him to feel reintegrated.

The idea of feeling at home (as nationality/citizenship) can generate a feeling of belonging (membership/collective belonging). This means that feeling at home (collective belongingness) was the basis of Kofi’s feeling of being reintegrated. In that sense, the relationship between reintegration and sense of belonging is yet again revealed. However, this interpretation of belonging implies social/collective belonging. Thus, Kofi’s sense of belonging was embedded within the benefits of citizenship (e.g., not needing a visa and not needing to consider immigration-related issues), a status that he could prove with his Ghanaian passport. In this case, we see that the legal rights and security conferred by nationality/citizenship or membership in an ethnic group are enough to make one feel integrated. In the end, indicators such as the nonexistence of immigration issues and a social/collective sense of belonging (feeling of being at home) explained why Kofi felt reintegrated.

Reintegrating

‘So, when you say you will reintegrate, you think you are coming back home, but frankly, it is just like going through the first five years abroad. You will go through the same trials and tribulations you went through when you first went to the UK or US.’ – Akwasi (18:85)

Akwasi claimed that he was still reintegrating because he viewed reintegration as more complicated than he had first imagined. He thus likened reintegration to the integration experiences that he underwent while abroad. From the quotation above, we see the significant role of timing. It took Akwasi five years to integrate while abroad, and he, therefore, expected reintegration to take the same amount of time.

‘Yes, I am still reintegrating because it doesn’t happen overnight. No way, nobody does that. It’s like you are unlearning to learn. This is how it is done on the other side; now this thing doesn’t work over here, so you have to unlearn it to learn how it is done over here. It doesn’t mean you are abandoning what you know, which is good.’ – Kofi (5:2)

The process of learning and unlearning require a significant amount of time when one is seeking to reintegrate. Kofi claimed both to have already
reintegrated and to still be in the process of reintegrating. These statements should not be seen as a cause for confusion. Instead, to interpret them, one needs to consider the context (the dimension of reintegration) of Kofi’s explanations of his reintegration experiences. When he admitted that he had reintegrated, Kofi was referring to the rights he enjoyed as a citizen in the home society (placement dimension). However, regarding the second instance, one can construe that he was referring to relearning lost competencies and knowledge in the home society—and thus, to the acculturation dimension. Although he was not specific, Kofi could have been referring to some lost competencies, such as accent, fluency in the home language, lifestyle, and social norms, as those in need of re-learning/unlearning. While it is clear that reintegration had taken place in the case of some dimensions, in other dimensions, the process may still be on-going for someone like Kofi.

Here again, the relationship (embeddedness) between reintegration and sense of belonging comes into play. That is, unlearning so that one can relearn specific competencies may represent a strategy for gaining acceptance and reintegrating in the home society. Such an interpretation would imply an entrenched social/collective sense of belonging. In other words, a returnee can anticipate acceptance in the home society after relearning how things are done in that society. This interpretation is linked to the politics of belonging, in which the social/collective group regulates inclusion and exclusion based on shared competencies.

Not reintegrated

‘I don’t feel reintegrated. It does not mean I don’t feel accepted. There are contradictions in this system; over there, the contradictions are different. There are still things that I miss—intellectual engagement. I have still not gotten those friends here, but to be honest, in my little world, I am enjoying it for now. I have the feeling that it will change, but for now, I am enjoying that transition before I get into the scene. I don’t feel reintegrated, but I know the practice of the reintegration itself hasn’t happened, and for me, it is an organic thing.’ – Kabelah (21:11)

The different worlds of which Kabelah was speaking were his world—which he believed had been influenced by his experiences in the host country—the outside world in the home country. However, five years after returning to Ghana, Kabelah still saw himself as in transition. Because of
his lack of a particular type of friends, Kabelah viewed himself as not reintegrated. The reference to friends suggests the social dimension of reintegration, and so one can assume that Kabelah did not see himself as reintegrated in a social sense.

A careful look at Kabelah’s words reveals contradictions in terms of how he positioned his feeling of integration and feeling of acceptance. He mentioned not feeling integrated, but yet claimed to feel accepted. This gap can be interpreted in a number of ways. Firstly, Kabelah’s sense of incomplete integration seemed to be limited to the social dimension since it hinged on friends. Secondly, considering that he had a secured job as a professional and was well regarded in his field suggests that Kofi had achieved structural reintegration, which may also explain why he felt accepted.

Furthermore, he did not seem to struggle with cultural competencies, and he was not an immigrant in Ghana. Therefore, although he did not explicitly say so, Kabelah’s feeling of acceptance seemed to have stemmed from a sense of social/collective belonging linked to the placement, acculturation, and identification dimensions of reintegration. These could explain why he felt accepted.

On an abstract level, if feeling accepted can also lead to a sense of belonging (as discussed earlier concerning returnees’ conceptualisations of belonging), then this case may reflect a situation in which Kabelah felt a sense of belonging but had not yet been reintegrated. Thus, regardless of the close relationship between reintegration and sense of belonging, one does not always seem to be the pre-requisite for the other. Thus, not feeling reintegrated does not automatically equate to not belonging, and vice versa. This conclusion further supports the idea that in some instances, belonging and reintegration are mutually exclusive.

10.3.3. Discussion: Role of Belonging in Reintegration

Delving deeper into the returnees’ responses regarding whether they felt reintegrated revealed that no returnee fit into only one response category. Rather, depending on the reintegration dimension, returnees’ answers could fall into any of the categories. That is, the returnees responded that they had reintegrated, were in the process of reintegrating, or had not reintegrated based on the dimension of reintegration that they had in mind at the time of the interview. For example, Kabelah maintained that he had not reintegrated because he still had not found his preferred kind of friend;
yet, he did not mention whether he had reintegrated with respect to other aspects.

The social position or status of the returnee may also influence the extent to which he or she feels about being reintegrated or not. For example, Kabelah mentioned that he missed intellectual engagement with friends, and hence, he had not reintegrated. In this respect, his social position and academic achievements may have been the responsible factors. Thus, Kabelah’s academic status, coupled with his social and economic status and position in the home society, may have influenced his expectations regarding, for example, intellectual engagement, but these factors may have also pushed others away from him. For example, his achievements and social status could have led to his childhood friends finding it uncomfortable associating with him, especially those friends who are perceived as lower than him in status and achievement wise. Furthermore, other people with lower academic achievements may feel intimidated associating with Kabelah.

In addition, the results revealed that returnees’ immigration experiences in the host country in terms of, for instance, legal status tended to influence their perceptions of the extent to which they had reintegrated in the home country. For example, Kofi never had a more extended residence permit in the UK and therefore never felt genuinely integrated into the host community; in contrast, Akwasi had U.S. citizenship. This factor marked a difference in the experiences of Akwasi and Kofi regarding the burden of renewing visas and other immigration issues.

Furthermore, it did not matter how long one had been away or how much time had elapsed since the return. For instance, Akosua, Yoofi, and Kabelah all spent at least ten years abroad; they claimed to be in the process of reintegrating, finished with reintegrating, and not reintegrated, respectively.

To conclude, another vital aspect revealed by the analysis concerned the fact that reintegration and a sense of belonging are not always achieved in unison. Indeed, one may feel recognised and accepted by the home society in terms of professional achievement, but this may not necessarily result in one feeling reintegrated. Thus, as we have seen from Kabelah’s narrative, a sense of social/collective belonging is not a dimension or necessary condition for reintegration since both can be achieved independently of each other. However, an individual’s sense of belonging often makes one feel integrated, as in the case of Yoofi. Therefore, comparing individual and social/collective belonging, the former may be considered a dimension of reintegration. Meanwhile, social/collective belonging functions as a feeling
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(intuited responses of inclusion/exclusion) generated via interactions with the dimensions of reintegration.

10.4. The relationship between belonging and reintegration

The analyses and subsequent findings on returnees’ conceptualisations of belonging and reintegration are summarised in Table 9 (below).

Table 9 highlights the conceptions of the characteristics/phases of belonging and reintegration making up the analytical categories employed in the data analysis. Given the prominence of different aspects of the return society, Esser’s (1999) conceptualisation of social integration (see 2.3.2. Reintegration: Context-Dependent Dynamic of Integration) and Anton-sich’s (2010) analytical framework of belonging (see 2.3.1. Belonging) are used as conceptual models for interpreting the categories.

**Table 9: Returnees’ Conceptualisations of Belonging and Reintegration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Conceptualisations</th>
<th>Characteristics/Phases</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Not being treated as different</td>
<td>Conditions to belong</td>
<td>Individual (place belongingness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being appreciated</td>
<td>Denied belonging</td>
<td>Collective/social (politics of belonging)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being accepted</td>
<td>Unilateral belonging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling at home</td>
<td>Multilateral belonging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having responsibil-</td>
<td>Belonging nowhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ity and ownership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reintegration</td>
<td>Vibrating at the same frequency</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td>Acculturation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adapting</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accepting differen-</td>
<td>Not achieved</td>
<td>Interaction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ces</td>
<td></td>
<td>Identification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, addressing the conceptual questions posed in Chapter 2 (see 2.3.3 Conceptual Gap in Reintegration and Belonging) requires conceptual clarification. Overall, returnees are not the same as migrants, even for the same individuals. In his famous 1944 and 1945 essays, respectively entitled ‘The stranger’ and ‘The Homecomer’, Alfred Shuetz offered a compelling distinction between a stranger (in this case, a migrant) and a homecomer (in this case, a returnee). As a stranger, a migrant joins a society that is com-
pletely new to him or her. Most of his or her actions are explainable in terms of his or her expectations regarding this unfamiliar world, which is organised differently from the country of origin (Schuetz, 1945; 1944). We see this principle at work in the accounts of this study’s returnees as well. Their interactions with their host communities resulted in anticipation of a future characterised by a few familiar features. Considering the stranger situation is also meaningful, considering that the migrants were of a different race and travelled from another country with different weather and a distinct social organisation. Migrants/strangers find that elements of the host society, ranging from the weather to the way that people make plans to meet friends, are organised differently than in the home society.

A stranger anticipates pitfalls and a difficult-to-master world (Schutz, 1944). Migrants as strangers, and as foreigners in the host society they continuously remain in anticipation of one day returning home. That is, while pursuing their migration goals and interests, migrants are often aware of how different they are and how hard it is to master the host world, which means grasping aspects such as language, culture, social dynamics, and social laws and orders. The host society in part also anticipates migrants’ difficulties to master the host society’s world. Such assumption also means that to a certain extent, the host society treats the stranger/migrant leniently on the grounds of ignorance—an attribute that attracts severe chastisement by the home society in the case of a returnee.

Driven by migration goals, migrants strive to ‘want a graduated knowledge of relevant elements the degree of desired knowledge being correlated with their relevance’ (Schuetz, 1944; p.500). This means that as strangers, they are only interested in information relevant for their navigation of the host community. Returnees, on the other hand, are the homecomers in Schuetz’s (1945) essay. A homecomer expects a known and unchanged environment and takes for granted public knowledge, expecting to still have intimate knowledge of the society that he or she has left behind (Schuetz, 1945; p.369). Returnees carry memories of the past and suffer return shocks during the reintegration process. Captured in this study as pre-migration memories, these recollections embody the state of affairs at the time of departure, and returnees expect the home country to maintain that sense of familiarity. Homecomers/returnees do not require knowledge to acquire completely new information, which may change with one’s migration plans (as is the case for migrants in the host society). For example, a returnee would not seek entirely new information regarding social responsibilities or gender roles in the home society. Instead, returnees seek to learn (e.g., re-learning the home language or fine-tuning an accent) as a
means of updating pre-existing layers of knowledge that may be needed to renegotiate the acquired knowledge with which they have returned from the host society.

Unlike strangers/migrants, returnees/homecomers are not usually interested in clarity of knowledge in the home society. On the one hand, these individuals already enjoy a certain degree of clarity. That is, a returnee does not need the complete introduction to every aspect of the home society’s way of life that a migrant would require, and this is especially true when it comes to insights into the risks and likely outcomes associated with specific actions. On the other hand, when returnees do seek clarity, they may do so to challenge the likely outcomes of their actions. In other words, returnees may seek clarity as a means of changing or resisting existing practices to impact the home society. For example, a migrant may seek clarity into gender roles to challenge such roles.

Returnees/homecomers may be characterised by the ‘thinking as usual’ or the ‘of-course’ phenomena. These are maintained as long as some assumptions hold; that the same problem requiring the same solutions will recur, and therefore our former experiences will suffice for mastering future situations; that we rely on knowledge handed down to us even if we do not understand its origin and real meaning (Schutz, 1944). Such perspectives also contribute to returnees’ intimate and emotional affection for the home society. ‘Thinking as usual’ also gives way to ‘we’ thinking and a sense of place belongingness.

In spite of the familiarity of the home society for the homecomer, he or she is not the same as someone who has never left home. Indeed, life at home means sharing in common with others a location in space and time (Schutz, 1944); it means shared interests, hopes, jokes, aspirations, and social references; it means being present (in time) and available for immediate access. However, according to Schutz (1945), all these factors comprising life at home remain the ‘social structure of the homeworld for the man who lives in it’ (p. 372): the non-migrant. That is, due to migration, a returnee loses the specific space and time of home, and he or she is no longer accessible (in space) and present (in time). Moreover, numerous aspects of the home society may evolve without the returnee being there to witness the change. The intimate relationship with the home world now rests on how that world looked like at the moment of departure and on friend and family relationships and the social structure.

The difference between a stranger/migrant in the host country and a homecomer/returnee in the home country thus emphasises that migrants’ experiences in the host country cannot be assumed to be the equivalent of
returnees’ experiences in the home society. Hence, integration for migrants and reintegration for returnees are not necessarily the same; the prefix ‘re’ is added for a reason. It is important to note, however, that the integration dimensions do not necessarily become obsolete when dealing with reintegration—hence the relevance of Esser’s (1999) dimensions of social integration. Having established this basis, Table 9 and the conceptual questions that were raised in Chapter 2 are reconfigured in Figure 10 (below).

Figure 10: Relationship Between Belonging and Reintegration

In Figure 10, individual belonging/place belongingness is depicted as a dimension of reintegration. This is due to the returnees’ conceptualisations of belonging (i.e., not being treated as different and feeling at home) and reintegration (i.e., vibrating at the same frequency) Taken as a whole, these explanations suggest that belonging is the same as reintegration. In other words, feeling at home (a definition of belonging) is not different from vibrating at the same frequency (a definition of reintegration). Thus, when a returnee and a non-migrant have the same feeling of being at home in the home society, both are vibrating at the same frequency. “To feel at home’ (p. 370) communicates the utmost degree of familiarity and intimacy towards a place (Schuetz, 1945). That is, for returnees, the relief in hearing their native language again; encountering familiar sounds, smells, symbols, people, and objects; and experiencing the local weather all transmit the feeling of being at home that constitutes place belongingness. Being able
to share the social space and time with the other members of the home society indeed reflects vibrating at the same frequency with the home society. Nevertheless, such interpretations are only meaningful when analysed within the dimensions of both reintegration and belonging.

Furthermore, in Figure 10, social/collective belonging is embedded in the dimensions of reintegration (acculturation, placement, interaction, and identification). The reason is that apart from the points where the circles intersect (Figure 10), all the other definitions of both belonging and reintegration imply the interplay of politics of belonging, displayed through the delineation of boundaries within the home society that returnees must continuously renegotiate.

Again, as homecomers, returnees must start from where they left off in terms of social relationships, and they must re-establish themselves as members of the home society. However, these efforts also imply belonging in the host society (Figure 10). Responsibilities and ownership (a meaning of belonging), for example, may be in the host society and the home society as well for a returnee. In the same way, the transnational networks of returnees on which they base their attachments and sense of social/collective belonging constitutes an item in the ‘backpack’ of the homecomer.

Unlike migrants seeking to integrate into the host country, returnees encounter an additional dimension of reintegration, namely, individual belonging/place belongingness. This result means that place belongingness becomes an extended dimension of reintegration in the case of returnees, and it refers to attachments to the home society that is different from the emotional and cognitive connotations that are found within the identification dimension of integration (as with migrants in the host country). The emotional attachments leading to an individual sense of belonging (place, belongingness), are, thus, based on nativity from shared commonalities, knowledge, and social goals within the home world. Social/collective belonging, on the other hand, functions as a perceived feeling (responses of inclusion/exclusion) embedded in the dimensions of reintegration. The demonstration of the relationship between belonging and reintegration suggests that belonging constitutes an integral part of the process of reintegration. This interpretation thus clarifies the existing fuzziness in belonging and reintegration literature in two folds; (1) that integration and reintegration differ in dimension and in terms of how they are experienced by migrants and returnees respectively; (2) that the role of belonging in integration of migrants in the host country is not the same for reintegration of returnees in the home society. And this interpretation thus differs from the
typical assumption that belonging only involves the migrant’s integration into the host culture

10.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the significant concepts of interest to this study, namely, reintegration and belonging. I analysed the respondents’ interpretations and definitions of these concepts and the ways that they reflected on these notions concerning their return experiences. The chapter has through this contributed the formulation of theory by laying the foundation for constructing theory via a grounded theory approach.

The chapter started by exploring how returnees understand and assign meaning to the concept of belonging. The following summarizes their views:

- Respondents’ definitions of belonging fell into four categories: (1) not being treated as different; (2) being accepted, recognised, and respected; (3) feeling at home; and (4) having responsibilities and a sense of ownership with respect to a place.

- These descriptions fell under two categories of belonging: individual belonging (place belongingness) and social/collective belonging (politics of belonging). Individual belonging was expressed via feelings of attachments to Ghana as a place via memories of cultural and family heritage. Social/collective belonging was observed from the returnees’ references to the people in the home society including or excluding returnees based on specific traits, such as accent and fluency in the home language, the degree of ‘Ghanaian-ness’, and the tendency to continually compare the situation in the home country with experiences abroad.

The analysis found that these explanations of belonging (social/collective belonging) implied certain power relations; these were evident in the decisions and attitudes of those in the home society regarding whether returnees were treated as foreigners.

- Belonging may be multilateral; it can be directed toward the home country, the host country, or both states. Furthermore, lacking a sense of belonging to any particular place is also an option when one does not share similar experiences with other members of society.

- Regardless of the meanings of belonging considered, these results have suggested that belonging is a fluid and dynamic concept that continuously evolves within and across space, place, and time for returnees.
Next, the chapter assessed what the returnees meant by reintegration. This discussion led to the following conclusions:

- For the returnees in this study, reintegration meant (1) flowing with the home country system or vibrating at the same frequency as the home society, (2) adapting to the home society’s standards while maintaining one’s standards, and (3) accepting differences.
- The returnees offered their perspectives on what it meant to reintegrate based on the dimension of reintegration most relevant to them at the time of the interview. That is, no single meaning of reintegration encompassed all the dimensions of reintegration.
- In explaining reintegration, the returnees closely linked that notion with the concept of belonging.

The last part of the chapter investigated the relationship between belonging and reintegration based on the returnees’ answers to the question of whether they felt that they had reintegrated. The analysis yielded the following conclusions:

- Some respondents claimed that they had reintegrated, were reintegrating, or had not reintegrated. Even though the respondents’ answers fell into one or more of the above categories, the analysis indicated that similar to how they conceived reintegration, the dimension of integration in mind at the time influenced their responses.
- The returnees’ socio-economic status, social roles, and host country experiences regarding immigration issues played a role in the returnees’ opinions concerning whether or not they felt reintegrated. This conclusion, however, did not depend on the amount of time they had spent abroad or on the amount of time that had elapsed since the return to Ghana.
- Regardless of the extent to which the returnee had reintegrated, the relationship between reintegration and sense of belonging manifested itself in two ways:
  - The individual sense of belonging (place belongingness) was equivalent to a dimension of reintegration—the achievement of place belongingness constituted reintegration.
  - Social/collective belonging (politics of belonging) served as an intuited feeling (responses of inclusion/exclusion) generated via interactions with the social, structural, cultural, and identification dimensions. The achievement of social/collective belonging did not necessarily lead to reintegration (dimension specific).

Based on these conclusions, the following chapter constructs the conceptual foundation of this study.
Chapter 11. Return, Reintegration, and Belonging

11.1 Introduction

This book aims to understand how skilled Ghanaian returnees conceptualise reintegration and sense of belonging, what these concepts mean to them, how and why they make return and reintegration decisions, and how their sense of belonging influences these choices. Numerous studies have already downplayed the assumption that return migration is the end of the migration cycle to underscore that return is not merely the equivalent of going home (Koser and Black 1999). Instead, going home is a challenging phenomenon because of the differences between imagined and actual home experiences, which are often the result of changes in both the home society and the returnee. The first has to do with the changes that have taken place with the returnees; these subsequently lead to different meanings and interpretations of the cultural and social structures in the home society (Hammond 1999; Ghanem 2003). The second change takes place within the home society itself as a result of social, cultural, political, and economic transformations.

This study offers two unique insights. First, it has disentangled the migration process into episodes and examined each of these in the light of returnees’ experiences. Thus, it has considered pre-migration memories, experiences in the host country, the process of returning, and the composition of return expectations as critical factors.

Secondly, the study has brought together those different migration episodes by drawing on underlining themes and their links to post-return experiences. Within these results, a sense of belonging is positioned as an analytical concept for understanding return and reintegration mechanisms. These unique insights critically examine returnees’ experiences, shed light on how reintegration takes place, and reveal how returnees’ sense of belonging is constructed and performed in the process. This chapter conceptually and theoretically positions the findings and visualises them in reintegration and belonging model (RnB model).
11.2. The Reintegration and Belonging Model

The Return and Belonging Model (RnB model) (Figure 11, above) visualises the results of this book. It frames and interprets them within Esser’s (1999) integration dimensions and Antonsich’s (2010) framework of belonging. Thus, this model brings together the categories that emerged from the data analysis and the conceptual perspectives raised in Chapter two.

The model features both primary and secondary elements. The primary elements are the following:

- Pre-migration (experiences and memories)
- Return trigger and return expectations (imagined home)
- Reintegration dimensions
- Peripheral factors (e.g., transnational engagement, gender, time, social networks, and social status)

The secondary features of the model are listed below:

- Real ‘home’ (return shocks, return challenges, and non-migrants’ perceptions)
- Reintegration mechanisms (reintegration strategies and reintegration philosophies)
The primary elements of the model are first explained. Next, the secondary elements are discussed with the primary elements in terms of how they affect or are affected by the entire return migration process.

11.2.1. Pre-Migration

In the migration literature, the pre-migration stage of the migration cycle is often scrutinised when migration motives are examined. This book’s focus on pre-migration, however, is different. The interview data did not indicate that the initial migration expectations of first-time migrants who had no family relationships in the host country included the hope of belonging in that state. This finding means that while it is possible for migrants to develop a sense of belonging in the host country, it is not usually a motive for migrating. The situation may be different for individuals with family relations or other attachments in the host country before migration. In those cases, a sense of belonging in the host country is anticipated, but these social and family ties comprise the basis of those expectations.

Upon return, pre-migration memories and experiences become a reintegration tool. As homecomers, returnees rely on memories of the past (Schuetz, 1945). On the one hand, these memories serve as a bridging mechanism to once again claim membership in the home society from shared experiences. Pre-migration social ties and networks also become essential tools when reactivated. Reassuming pre-migration memories, experiences, and social networks thus become a tool for claiming indigenousness and acceptance, which may translate into a sense of social belonging. Pre-migration experiences are important for renegotiating one’s entry into the home society while taking part in shaping its goals and development (Ammassari 2004, 4, citing Lowell 2002 a). That is, when returnees refer to pre-migration times in terms of cultural, political, social, economic, and structural practices and events, they do so to draw attention to their experiences and to portray their social knowledge and shared histories. Such references serve as the starting point of the renegotiation process, and they also communicate the returnee’s rootedness in the historical timeline of the home society. As stated above, returnees draw on their pre-migration experiences and memories of the home society as a tool for renegotiating return; these elements serve to justify their motives for migration, to refute perceptions that they abandoned the home society, and to demonstrate their continued ‘Ghanaian-ness.’ The issue becomes even more significant
in situations in which non-migrants see themselves as the pure and true native citizens and contest a returnee’s indigenousness.

11.2.2. Return Triggers and Expectations

Although return reasons are important for a return migration study, expectations towards the home society are critical in terms of how reintegration is pursued and how belonging is sensed. The reasons behind one’s return may be similar to that individual’s migration goals; for example, a migrant may return after achieving migration goal of higher education (Hope 1999; 2008; Alberts and Hazen, 2005; Carling, 2004). However, the study has illustrated that return intentions may not necessarily be actualized which is in tandem with the results of Carling and Pettersen (2014). Instead, the manifestation of return triggers which remind the migrant of return reasons play a significant role in the actual return. Return triggers inform how returnees assess both their experiences abroad (including a sense of belonging) and the situation in the home country, and they make actual return seem more appealing than remaining in the host country.

Return expectations are often based on pre-migration images of the home country and the available information about current conditions in the home society. Among the return, expectations are the assumption that one will belong in the home society (Ní Laoire, 2008). This expected sense of belonging is based on ancestral, cultural, and social attachments, familiarities, and memories of the home country. Upon return, these expectations guide reintegration and related decisions. For example, this study found that returnees typically expect their friendships to be as close as they were before departure. The differences between these expectations and reality can cause return shocks and return challenges. The more closely that return expectations resemble what is encountered, the less challenging the reintegration process is and the easier it is for returnees to achieve a sense of belonging through acceptance.

Return expectations also include assumptions regarding structural developments and advances in the home country. For example, in Ghana, return expectations may involve structural improvements, such as reduced bureaucracy, improved customer services, professionalism, high working standards, punctuality, and less corruption. Return expectations regarding development may centre on infrastructure, energy, the economy, professional/working standards, and employment opportunities. Often, in the case where the return was from a developed to a developing country, the re-
The returnee’s expectations of changes and improvements are a result of his or her experiences in the host country where social structures function more smoothly than those in the home country. Furthermore, changes that have taken place while in the host society may affect a returnee’s cultural values, tastes, and lifestyle (De Bree et al. 2010); in consequence, they may implicitly expect some level of similarity in the home society as well.

11.2.3. Reintegration Dimensions

Structural dimension (placement)

Within the structural (placement) dimension, reintegration implies access to positions in the job and housing markets of the home society. It involves access to social and economic capital in terms of fair treatment, mutuality, shared respect, appreciation, and acceptance (Esser, 1999). Challenges within the structural dimension may thus arise from the unfair treatment of the returnee as a result of his or her distance from mutuality and commonalities with the home society (Schuetz, 1945; De Bree et al. 2010).

In terms of structural reintegration, challenges of belonging are minimal. Challenges with home systems regarding a lack of jobs, bureaucracy, corruption, poor services, and a lack of professionalism do not necessarily make returnees question their sense of belonging to society. This may be the result of the rights granted through citizenship in the home society and the social status of, for instance, being borgas. However, returnees may likewise face challenges when searching for jobs because of the perception that they are overqualified and have been exposed to other cultures of and approaches to work. Nevertheless, within the structural reintegration dimension, returnees tend to maintain their standards regarding professionalism and work ethics as part of their reintegration strategies.

Furthermore, in this dimension, returnees demonstrate less of a tendency to compromise in terms of adopting home society standards during reintegration. This is because when homecomers return to a developing country, their agenda usually includes supporting their society to develop by using their acquired skills and capital, a goal that may explicitly or implicitly entail changing or challenging some of the home society standards. In some instances, compromises represent a strategy for meeting the home society standards in the middle while maintaining one’s Western mindset. The conceptualisation of reintegration as accepting differences and adapting is therefore crucial for the structural dimension of reintegration. Thus,
while insisting that the home society accepts their different structural approaches, returnees may have to adapt their competencies to the home country context.

Within the structural dimension, social/collective belonging constitutes an embedded feeling, generated via responses of inclusion or exclusion. When exclusion occurs, it can lead to re-migration to countries in which the returnee’s human resources and capital can be put to use, respected, and appreciated. In contrast, inclusion can result in feeling appreciated and respected, outcomes that may lead to high productivity, capital investment, and increased human capital for the home country (Faist 2007; Straubhaar 2000).

Social (interaction) and cultural (acculturation) dimensions

Social and cultural reintegration challenges may stem from lost competencies, such as the inability to fluently speak the home language and severed social ties and networks with old friends. In these instances, acceptance or rejection constitutes the politics of belonging, as it determines who does and does not belong. Non-migrants’ physical display of rejection towards returnees who have foreign accents (when speaking the home language and / or English) and towards returnees who exhibit certain practices considered contrary to the home culture communicate a sense of exclusion to returnees. When this happens, the returnee relies on factors such as a native/ethnic name, pre-migration experiences, and efforts to re-learn the home language or to make one’s accent more familiar to renegotiate acceptance and belonging. As Baraulina and Kreienbrink (2013) found among Russian returnees, the returnees in this study tended to use resources that they already possessed in the return society before migrating.

Reintegration in the cultural dimension is an adaptation or assimilation by returnees. It illustrates the readiness of returnees to adapt the acquired culture to the home culture – in other words, to assimilate – and if adaptation or assimilation is successful, a sense of belonging is likewise achieved. However, this interpretation of reintegration does not equally apply to the social dimension. This is because returnees may wish not only to establish new and different networks but also to keep their acquired social views and practices, which may be contrary to social practices in the home country. For instance, returnees may reject the home society’s social expectations, including gender roles (Rhoades 1978; Schrier 1958). As a result, a returnee may pursue a reintegration strategy based on forcing the home so-
ciety to accept return differences. However, implementing such an approach may not be a smooth process. It may lead to reintegration challenges, such as rejection by members of the home society.

One strategy that returnees employ for the social dimension is to form or join returnee groups. Social capital, as well as cultural capital, are drawn from such associations to supplement lost social networks and capital (such as non-migrant friends from the pre-departure era), creating a source of belonging. Again, a sense of belonging (social/collective) is embedded within the cultural and social dimensions of reintegration through the politics of acceptance and rejection. Furthermore, returnees may keep their transnational networks and ties—another source of belonging—intact and continue engaging in transnational activities. Hence, they maintain a multinational and multilateral belonging.

Identification dimension

In Esser’s (2008) work on social integration, the identification dimension referred to an individual’s identification with a social system: how that person sees himself or herself as part of a collective body. This concept mainly referred to a migrant’s possibilities in terms of participating in society’s core institutions by having the cultural competencies by which these institutions function (Heckmann & Wolfgang, 2006). Identification is a mutual cognitive and emotional relationship between an individual actor and the social system as a collective. Factors such as loyalty to society, institutions, value bases, the feeling of solidarity, and the approval of the social order are essential for identification (Esser, 1999), including for returnees. However, unlike migrants, returnees face minimal reintegration challenges in this dimension. The returnee’s participation in the home society’s core institutions is often not problematic in the home country. For returnees, identification is justified through their rights as citizens and ethnic affiliations. Indeed, the identification dimension carries with it certain emotional and cognitive aspects, and these may stem from their participation in the cultural, social, and structural dimensions. That is, one’s solidarity with the home society as an identification factor thus echoes the ‘we relations’ (Schuetz, 1945) between the returnee and the home society, generating an embedded social/collective belonging from which emotional and cognitive attachments are derived. One’s reintegration within the identification dimension is dependent on how he or she highlights the identifiable factors.
and show solidarity as a way of projecting the ‘we’ membership (politics of belonging) in the society.

Individual sense of belonging dimension

In addition to the four dimensions of migrants’ integration proposed by Esser (2000), this study has offered another dimension to reintegration, namely, the individual sense of belonging (place belongingness). The finding that individual belonging constitutes another dimension thus emphasises the difference between migrants’ integration and returnees’ reintegration. Place belongingness to the home society came from the returnees’ memories, familiarities, indigenous knowledge, and attachments to ancestral roots and other place-making factors (symbols) in the home society. These place belongingness factors do not necessarily require politics of inclusion and exclusion, yet they generate significant emotions. One’s ability to feel at home again (i.e., to experience a high level of familiarity and intimacy with the home society), to re-establish broken space and time constellations, to re-share common social goals, and to accept pre-existing social schemes (Schuetz, 1945) constitutes this additional dimension of reintegration for the returnee/homecomer.

Both the identification dimension and the individual sense of belonging dimension of reintegration imply emotional connotations. However, the goal of the identification dimension of reintegration is the achievement of acceptance in terms of membership in the home society. That is, the identification dimension requires the demonstration of one’s level of commitments (national identification, tax receipts, and other evidence of being a good citizen) in the home society as proof of or justification for emotional attachments. The individual sense of belonging, on the other hand, does not require commitments (institutional or cultural) to generate such feelings of attachments. The fact that one identifies with a group may not necessarily entail place belongingness to that group. In the case of migrants/strangers, one possibility is the achievement of identification as a dimension of integration in the host country with place belongingness feelings remaining oriented toward the home society. However, for the homecomer/returnee, achieving place belongingness in the home society is important reintegration factor just as identifying with the home society.
11.2.4. Social/Collective Sense of Belonging (Politics of Belonging)

As mentioned before, returnees’ interpretations and conceptualisations of belonging fell under two dimensions of belonging: individual belonging (place belongingness) and social/collective belonging. Individual belonging has been discussed above as a dimension of reintegration in the model.

The social/collective belonging (politics of belonging) is embedded in the dimensions of reintegration. Emotional reintegration challenges are dominant factors across the four dimensions of reintegration (social, structural, cultural and identification). These emotional challenges touch on issues of group attachments and the politics of inclusion and exclusion, and they can lead to denied belonging in the home society. Indeed, the social/collective dimension is often equated to the identification dimension of Esser’s integration conceptualisation. In truth, some similarities are owing to the fact that in both conceptions, the idea of having a ‘we feeling’ is important. However, while the identification dimension is about showing solidarity and having to participate in society upon the achievement of specific competencies, the social/collective sense of belonging goes a step further.

That is, the underlying factor in the politics of belonging is to gain inclusion and acceptance. The inclusion may come from the proof of membership through the ownership and responsibilities towards the home society. In this case, solidarity with the home society is not enough to generate a sense of belonging in this type of politics. Preferably, the home society may require material justification. The politics of belonging thus becomes the performativity of belonging. For example, the possession of a passport may not be enough if one does not pay taxes or contribute to the well-being of society in general. Thus, the performativity of belonging eventually leads to acceptance. To overcome the challenges that are posed by the politics of belonging, returnees adopt home (native) names and are often vocal about their contributions to the society (example paid taxes and ownership) as a strategy intended to give them a psychological edge in dealing with obstacles to belonging.

The different dimensions of belonging and their role concerning reintegration dimensions establish the relationship between these two concepts. More specifically, reintegration and sense of belonging complement each other, with social/collective belonging embedded in reintegration efforts, individual belonging constituting a dimension of reintegration.
11.2.5. Peripheral Factors

The roles of what I call *peripheral factors* are another vital element of the model. These peripheral factors refer to the following elements associated with returnees:

- Social network
- Transnational engagements
- Gender
- Time
- Social status
- Perceptions towards non-migrants

Social Network (home society)

In the analysis, social networks highlighted significant attachments for returnees. The relationships among family, friends, colleagues, and other social network groups were instrumental for reintegration and belonging. These social networks play a role in the overall dimensions discussed above, as they relate to how returnees explore and obtain social capital and other resources (Eborka, 2014). A typical example is the Ahaspora returnee group which many returnees described as beneficial for dealing with certain situations in the home society.

Transnational networks/engagements (host country)

For some returnees, the tendency to travel internationally after their return was helpful for reintegration in the home society. Travel offers returnees the space to be in-between two places, which helps with their conceptions of belonging as multilateral and integration (acceptance of multiple cultures). Some returnees directly benefit from their international networks for their careers while in the home country (Ammassari & Black, 2001; J. K. Anarfi & Jagare, 2005). These transnational engagements also relate to all the other dimensions of reintegration, and examples include travelling for holidays, engaging in activities and projects beyond the home society, using transnational social platforms (alumni groups), and adopting a lifestyle more closely resembling that of the host society than that of the home country. Having the means and access to the host country after the return is essential as it serves as one of the ways to deal with return chal-
lenges. It reduces the anxiety and tension that permanent return brings. Even though it may be easier for dual citizen returnees, others without dual citizenships can also benefit from this kind of mobility to reduce post-return tensions and challenges. The possibility to shuttle between the host and the home country in the process of reintegration is especially vital during the early days of return.

Gender

The gender orientation of a returnee is a critical factor to consider during reintegration and to the sense of belonging. As mentioned earlier, depending on their gender orientations, returnees may experience the dimensions of reintegration differently. A returnee may navigate the socially acceptable gender roles and expectations of the home society concerning his or her personal gender views and positions. Such processes of negotiation can result in conflicts, depending on the extent of the gap between the returnee and the home society in terms of gender views, roles, and expectations just as Wong (2013) found among elite Ghanaian returnees.

Furthermore, this model proposes that the construction of gender shapes returnees’ reintegration decisions and experiences in the home society. For many returnees, the non-alignment of their gender goals and expectations, including gender roles, with the home society is often a cause of actions and or inactions by members of the home society, which leads to return challenges. Returnees may be aware of the differences in gender orientations between themselves and the home society before returning. Upon return, gender challenges may be experienced in all the dimensions of reintegration. For example, issues related to pay gaps, and professional conduct of colleagues may be found in the structural (placement) dimension of reintegration while gender roles in the family and towards social institutions like marriage may be within the cultural and social dimensions of reintegration.

The perception of gender roles of male and female returnees in particular are entrenched in the social calibration of the home society and thereby often require advocacy and campaigns as reintegration strategies. For example, this study found that many female returnees who are part of returnee groups (such as Ahaspora and Accra Ladies Club) are often involved in such activities. The choice of group-based reintegration and belonging strategy for gender-related challenges is because gender challenges are not exclusive to returnees but the home society in general.
Social status

The *Akan* proverb – ‘*nsa nyinaa enye pe*’ – which means all fingers are not equal in height, could very well describe returnees. In particular, returnees differ in terms of social class, family background, and family resources. For individual returnees, social status, whether derived from professional capacity or family background, plays a significant role in explaining differences regarding reintegration and sense of belonging. That is, a set of social/economic/cultural/emotional/political resources may distinguish one returnee from another regarding their reintegration and belonging processes. Skilled returnees may be privileged in terms of class and social position and may exercise control over diverse resources provided by social networks, family ties and background, transnational mobility, and attachments (Wong, 2013).

Furthermore, a returnee’s social status as a ‘borga’ may have its consequences on reintegration. There are positive and negative facets of the ‘borga’ status. While certain returnees may associate with the label and even explore its social benefits, others reject this label. However, non-migrants’ attitudes towards returnees with ‘borga’ status define the level of inclusion or exclusion.

Time

The length of stay abroad and duration of return is crucial in how returnees conceptualise and experience reintegration and belonging. Staying abroad for a long period without regular visits and other forms of engagements in the home society can widen the gap between return expectations and actual return experiences. As such, many returnees may experience the domains of reintegration and belonging differently. For instance, while a returnee who was away for three years may be confronted with social and gender expectations, a returnee who lived outside the home country for over ten years may face a challenge through the nature of language use the home language and/or the English language.

Post-return challenges in the early days of return may be severe but the intensity of these challenges could wither as returnees stay longer and get accustomed to the home society. It may take less time for some returnees but for others, the time needed for readjustment may be longer.
Perceptions towards non-migrants

Just as non-migrants have perceptions about returnees, returnees hold views regarding non-migrants. The kinds of perception harbourred by the returnee towards members of the home society may be critical in terms of whether that returnee feels a sense of belonging and successful reintegration. For example, viewing non-migrants as tending to arrive late for meetings, exhibiting laziness, holding low standards, and demonstrating weak mindsets may hinder trust and genuine interactions and negotiations between these two parties. However, seeing non-migrants as people who understand the home society and who have valuable networks and the power to effect changes in the home society may lead to partnerships and collaborations. This approach may consequently result in reintegration and a sense of belonging channelled through mutual respect and acceptance. Returnees’ view of non-migrants is also critical for the entire return migration process and within the domains of reintegration. For instance, it denotes the kind of renegotiation that a returnee may pursue.

Returnees and Intersectional analysis

No returnee can be described using a single lens for analysis. That is the case for this study. The theoretical underpinning of the peripheral factors in the RnB model seeks to emphasise the different intersecting factors that constitute a returnee’s experiences. That is, the model posits that an individual returnee’s reintegration and belonging conceptions and experiences are shaped by factors including the density of one’s social network in the home society, the intensity of transnational activities and engagements, gender, time spent abroad and time after return, and social status. The intersection of the above factors among other factors such as age, marital status, level of education, number of children, religion, and ethnicity contextualises the individual returnee. It is therefore only through an intersectional perspective and approach that the individual returnee can be analysed regarding reintegration and belonging using the RnB Model.

11.3. Chapter Summary

The above discussion has highlighted that the lens through which returnees construct a post-return sense of belonging as part of reintegration
originates from two primary elements: (1) individual sense of belonging as a dimension of reintegration; and (2) social/collective belonging as an embedded element in the dimensions of reintegration.

The relationship between reintegration and a sense of belonging is a complimentary one. On a conceptual level, the goal of reintegration is to achieve belonging. However, reintegration should not be conceptualised as something that can be fully realised before returnees feel a sense of belonging because belonging itself is a continually changing and regularly negotiated construct.

Acceptance, as conceived and explained by the returnees in this study, therefore took the form of inclusion, rather than re-inclusion. This was made evident from the fact that the returnees’ definitions of reintegration and sense of belonging maintain that acceptance means appreciating and accommodating differences in standards and other factors between the return group and the home society. Therefore, by using the term ‘inclusion’ rather than ‘re-inclusion,’ the model suggests that reintegration is the responsibility of both the home society and the returnee group.

Again, re-inclusion suggests the power held by the home society. This concept is logically flawed because it suggests that returnees have not changed since their departure and hence need to be re-adopted by the home society as if no evolution had occurred. This understanding also explains why such a perspective erroneously treats reintegration as merely ‘going home’ (Koser and Black 1999). Furthermore, re-inclusion suggests an end to the migration cycle, similar to how Gmelch (1980) used the word *resettle* when defining return migration. The study sees return migration and reintegration as not necessarily the end to the migration cycle.

The RnB model illustrates the different factors, dimensions, and elements of return migration, reintegration, and sense of belonging. However, it does not homogenously apply to all returnees. The model does not suggest steps or criteria for reintegrating but instead offers a comprehensive overview of how individual returnees may approach the interplays and underpinnings of belonging and reintegration during post-return based on their specific experiences, and especially within the peripheral factors.
Chapter 12. Conclusion

12.1. Introduction

International return migration is a key aspect of the international migration cycle. However, it has somewhat been neglected in the migration literature (King, 1978), received less attention (Ghosh 2000; Arowolo 2000). In recent years, a significant number of studies have taken the phenomenon of return migration seriously (Cohen, 1995). Over the past decades, return migration researchers have focused on return and development (Ammassari 2004; Ammassari 2009; Böhning 1972; Bovenkerk 1974; Gmelch 1986; Khadria 2004; Rhoades 1978; Rodriguez & Piore 1981; Swanson 1979; Wiesbrock 2008; Wiest 1979), challenges of return migration and reintegration (Baraulina & Kreienbrink 2013; Boger 2010; Dorling et al. 2008; Hooks 2009; Martin 2005; Setrana & Tonah 2014), and the transnational practices of returnees with respect to belonging (Bhimji 2008; Brouwer 2006; Cerase 1974; Christou 2006; De Bree et al. 2010; Golob 2009; Long and Oxfeld 2004; Padersen 2003; Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013; Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011; Ramji 2006; Stefansson 2006; Teo 2011). In spite of these contributions to the knowledge base on return migration, reintegration, and belonging, the concept of return migration remains a complex and inadequately explicated.

This book has sought to contribute to the literature on this complex phenomenon by focusing on how return migrants construct a sense of belonging during reintegration and offering an analytical conceptualisation of a post-return sense of belonging within the domains of reintegration. By doing so, it has filled a knowledge gap left by earlier works on return migration. More specifically, employing a qualitative research methodology, this book has explored how skilled Ghanaian returnees construct a sense of belonging as they reintegrate. This final chapter summarises the findings, provides a critique of this study, offers suggestions for future research, and outlines recommendations.
Chapter 12. Conclusion

12.2. Summary of Findings

The summary of the findings is split into two parts in consonance with the primary research question. The section begins by answering the research question and then turns to related findings. Thus, the first part outlines the results that led to the answer to the primary research question. The second part summarises other elements of the data analysis that created a foundation for the main findings.

The methodology and approaches adopted in this study do not permit the generalisation of the findings. Therefore, the findings summarised herein only apply to the context of Ghana and to the respondents who participated in this study. General references to actors such as returnees and non-migrants are still limited to the experiences and memories of the participants of this study.

12.2.1. Key Findings

The primary question guiding this study was: What are the mechanisms via which skilled Ghanaian returnees construct a sense of belonging as they reintegrate socially, structurally, culturally, and emotionally? This study adopted a qualitative research methodology for data collection and analysis. To answer the research question, the first step was to understand the definitional and contextual background of reintegration and a sense of belonging.

Following a comprehensive literature review of migration, return migration, integration, reintegration, sense of belonging, and transnationalism, the study arrived at definitions for reintegration and belonging and proposed some conceptual perspectives and questions underpinning their relationship. A working definition of reintegration was also adopted as part of the literature review: ‘Re-inclusion or re-incorporation of a person into a group or a process, e.g. of a migrant into the society of his country of origin’ (IOM 2004, 54).

The adopted definition from the IOM (2014) was, however, found to be inconsistent with how returnees define and understand reintegration. Analysing returnees’ interpretations and conceptions of reintegration identified three problems with the IOM definition. First, it seemed to suggest a one-way process of adaptation in which it is the returnees’ responsibility to readjust. Secondly, the definition seems to imply that reintegration is a standard to which returnees must adhere. Thirdly, the definition of reinteg-
12.2. Summary of Findings

In contrast, this study found that returnees’ conceptions of reintegration to entail a two-way process of adaptation in which both the returnee and the return society must act for reintegration to occur.

Moreover, reintegration is not a single standard but implies the acceptance of standards different from those of the home society. Importantly, the study observed that any definition of reintegration should take into consideration the different dimensions associated with reintegration. By this finding, returnees revealed their agency and commitment to maintaining their migration experiences, and they further demonstrated that they were in a position to choose their reintegration strategies.

Based on these factors and the returnees’ accounts, the study redefined reintegration as the meeting points of two groups of people at which civil interactions and dialogue take place based on different experiences, and that create an atmosphere in which both parties remain open to their own experiences. This definition sees returnees as having different experiences and as having changed as compared to both their pre-migration selves and the home society. This means both the returnee and the home society have undergone different cultural and social developments that must be accommodated. Similar to Esser’s (1999) integration dimensions, my definition recognises reintegration as possessing structural (placement), cultural (acculturation), social (interactions), and identification dimensions. The analysis has also found that reintegrating in these dimensions is not a homogenous process for all returnees.

Moreover, the dimensions are not mutually exclusive. Thus, returnees reintegrate within these dimensions on an individual level based on other equally important factors, such as status, gender, family, and other social networks. In consequence, reintegration is different for each returnee.

Nevertheless, as concerns returnees’ reintegration processes, the central point of reference is no longer the pre-migration society. Rather, the willingness of the home society, including its institutions and government, to accept returnees and their cultures, social identities, and belongings. Failure to do so leads to feelings of denied belonging, alienation, and exclusion, as other studies (Cerase 1974; Long and Oxfeld 2004; Christou 2006) have identified.

The returnees defined sense of belonging as being accepted, feeling at home, not being treated as different, and having responsibilities and ownership. In this study, returnees’ conceptualisations of belonging served as the analytical categories for belonging. Nevertheless, the returnees’ mean-
ings of belonging aligned with Antonsich’s (2010) classifications of belonging into an individual sense of belonging (place belongingness) and social/collective belonging (politics of belonging). In their accounts, the returnees pointed out the inherent power relations that determine whether returnees are accepted or rejected based on vague conditions for belonging. These conditions (speaking Ghanaian English, demonstrating fluency in the home language, maintaining basic Ghanaian-ness, and avoiding excessive complaining about the home society) determined the level of acceptance by the home society. This speaks to the politics of belonging. Besides, the study found that returnees experience a sense of belonging to the home society that does not require the society’s approval and that is instead based on their memories, familiarity, and attachments to ancestral roots or other elements of the home society. This sense of belonging represents the returnees’ place belongingness. The study also revealed that belonging could be multilateral and hence agrees with Pfaff-Czarnecka (2013) that belonging can be multiple. Another element of returnees’ sense of belonging is transnational belonging, which refers to a feeling of being at home that crosses the borders of nation-states (Vertovec 1999). In this context, the study identified a definition of feeling at home which is identical to interpretations of sense of belonging in past analyses (Carter et al.1993; Yuval-Davis, 2003). However, this study went further and demonstrated that this feeling of being at home resonates with an individual sense of belonging.

Furthermore, I have argued that regardless of whether belonging is unilinear or multilinear, returnees actively determine their sense of belonging during the post-return adjustment process. That is, irrespective of how a returnee’s sense of belonging may seem multiple for others; the onus lies with a returnee to define belonging as unilinear or multilinear. This finding represents a unique contribution of this study in that these concepts are defined based on the meanings and interpretations put forward by returnees themselves. Thus, these concepts are contextualised via a bottom-top approach.

The second step to answering the research question was exploring the role of belonging in reintegration. Considering definitional factors in examining the connection between reintegration and belonging, the study illustrated that the individual sense of belonging constitutes another dimension of reintegration for returnees; hence, the analysis extended the existing Esser’s (1999) dimensions of social integration in the case of migrants. At the same time, the social and collective sense of belonging was found to be embedded in the other dimensions of reintegration (structural, social,
cultural, and identification). This finding gives meaning to the relationship between reintegration and sense of belonging. Place belongingness is treated as a dimension of reintegration because the study found that not all the emotions and attachments of the returnees towards the home country are dependent on exclusion or inclusion on the part of the home society. This finding is distinct from the politics of belonging, which determine the level of inclusion or exclusion by the home society via the cultural, structural, social, and identification dimensions of reintegration. These roles of belonging in the reintegration process further explain why the returnees sometimes used the terms reintegration and sense of belonging synonymously. The returnees especially tended to do so when referring to acceptance, which was treated as an outcome of both reintegration and belonging. However, these findings challenge the idea of disregarding belonging in the reintegration process, because the role of belonging is too significant to ignore in a process as complex as return migration. This finding represents a unique contribution of this study. The findings in this book confirm that return migration should be understood as a new phase in which belonging to a ‘place’ and ‘community’ must be renegotiated (as stated by De Bree et al., 2010) as part of reintegration, but has further indicated the various significant aspects that are needed for such renegotiation.

12.2.2. Other Findings

Having stated the key findings of this study, I now proceed to highlight other crucial findings of the study which relates with the key findings. These secondary findings involve pre-migration, return triggers, return expectations, return shocks, return challenges, return perceptions, return strategies, and return philosophies. The findings cut across the different migration eras used in the study: pre-migration, the period spent abroad, and post-return migration.

The study found that returnees’ pre-departure memories of the home society are essential in terms of how they opt to pursue reintegration and belonging. For the pre-migration era, the study found that returnees mostly migrate to improve themselves or to join family abroad for educational purposes. While studies have claimed that before emigrating, potential migrants evaluate the real income differential between their home country and the destination country, along with their likelihood of finding a job that could meet their initial expectations in the destination country (cf. Todaro, 1969), this study did not come to the same conclusion. However, al-
though the returnees did not explicitly indicate that they had gone abroad to find work, many of them had indeed worked in the host country. For those returnees who were not adults at the time of departure or who could not afford the costs of migrating, the decision to migrate was made by their parents. After the completion of their first degree, those migrants with sufficient financial resources usually, migrated of their own accord. The study found that the information gathered by the returnee during pre-migration determined the extent of his or her migration expectations.

While abroad, the returnees demonstrated a high level of place belongingness towards the home country (Ghana) through the notion of home. I found that the returnees’ conception of Ghana as a home was synonymous to ‘the stable physical centre of one’s universe (house, village, region, or nation), and a principal focus of one’s concern and control’ (Rapport & Dawson 1998 a; p.6). It was also clear that the home was multi-sited and meant different things for different returnees. From this finding, it was clear that in terms of dimensions, the migrants’ sense of social/collective belonging favoured the host society as the individual belonging was towards the home country. This result significantly contributes to existing literature on the role of belonging in migrants’ integration in the host country.

Another intriguing finding of this study concerned the construct and role of return triggers. These return triggers fall between return intentions and actual return decisions. A return trigger is a particular event or situation that stimulates the ‘sleeping return intention’. The presence of a return trigger hence encourages final preparation for the actual return. The study also identified return expectations as meaningful for understanding the reintegration challenges and strategies of returnees. One important return expectation was the assumption that one would belong; in short, the returnees expected to be accepted in the home society. That expectation seemingly arose from the fact the returnees understood home as ‘a sense of community, associated with family, social networks, and place’ (Ní Laoire, 2008; p38) and most importantly from pre-migration memories and familiarities of the home society.

The returnees mentioned the desire to give back to society, to demonstrate that others’ assumptions of migration were incorrect, to provide a better life for their children, to claim belonging, to avoid the need to compromise one’s lifestyle, to be closer to a partner in Ghana, and to start a business in Ghana as underlying reasons for return. Of these reasons, the goal of giving back to society complements the structuralists approach to return migration, which views returnees’ opportunities to utilise their acquired resources in a socioeconomically advancing and politically stable
home country as a reason for return (Lewis & Williams, 1986; Diatta and Mbow, 1999; Hope, 1999). This motivation is also similar to that demonstrated by those returnees who mentioned starting a business as a reason for return. In these cases, their reasons for returning were motivated by the aim of investing their skills in the country of origin. The timing of the returns demonstrated in this study also augmented these reasons for return. Thus, many of the returnees moved back to Ghana after 2001, during a period when the country was experiencing strong economic growth as a stable democracy.

However, the desire to return to demonstrate the inaccuracy of others’ expectations more closely supports the New Economics of Labour Migration theory on migration than the views espoused by neoclassical economists. This is because some of the returnees returned after completing their studies abroad only to find themselves unable to obtain jobs in the host country; the lack of employment prompted them to return. In these situations, the initial migration goal—education—had been achieved. According to the New Economics of Labour Migration school, this outcome represents success, while neoclassical economists would view it as a failure.

The other reasons for return provided in this study—giving one’s children a better life, claiming belonging, avoiding the need to compromise one’s lifestyle, and having a partner in Ghana—tended to support the social network theory of return migration. The reason is that the returnees anticipated social relations and social resources/capital in the home country.

The post-return lives of the returnees were accompanied by real-life situations characterised by return shocks and return challenges. The study found return shocks as tending to encompass three dimensions: (1) returnees’ comparisons of the host country and Ghana, (2) returnees’ expectations of improved systems and structures in Ghana, and (3) returnees’ comparisons of the pre-migration home society with the post-migration home society. The return challenges identified in this study included fear of failure, a fear of uncertainty and the unknown, the need to make a new beginning, the strong social and gender demands of the home society, bureaucracy, corruption, poor working standards and services, the job search process, and confrontations with non-migrants. These challenges were found to cut across all the dimensions of reintegration. Return challenges also manifested in gender-specific ways, with male and female returnees experiencing different return obstacles. For male returnees, it is the fear of failing to meet social requirements such as building/owning a house and
possessing an expensive car. And for the female returnees, the challenges are about society’s gender expectations such as the need to be married, having children, and having to exchange a career for being a housewife. Some of these gender-related challenges, however, are not unique to only returnees. Rather, they also apply to non-migrants and especially single people. These factors also affect returnees’ reintegration and sense of belonging in terms of the power relations between themselves and the home society concerning inclusion and exclusion.

To address these return challenges, returnees employ two methods: strategies and philosophies. Returnees’ reintegration strategies include compromising on standards, paying little attention to the opinions of others, maintaining professionalisms, establishing their networks, and using vacations and holidays to relieve emotional stress. I define return philosophies as certain phrases, statements, and explanations that returnees use to justify their decision to return and to guide them through the return and reintegration process. In this study, return philosophies included the idea that one can never adequately prepare for return, the desire to change Ghana, the possession of a sense of excellence, and the claiming of reintegration. The results illustrated that returnees used such phrases or statements to motivate their renegotiation with the home society for acceptance and belonging.

Also, the study found that existing social networks of family and friends play important roles in returnees’ reintegration and belonging. Moreover, similar to De Bree et al.’s (2010) work on Dutch-Moroccan returnees, this analysis indicated that transnational activities influence returnees’ post-return lives. Another essential finding demonstrated that pre-migration experiences and memories of the cultural and social makeup of the pre-migration home society become a dynamic tool for returnees. In particular, returnees use these stories and events to convey their way in society’s history and their origins within the home society.

The final key element of this study was an examination of how returnees are perceived by non-migrants and of how returnees perceive non-migrants in the home society. First of all, non-migrants acknowledge returnees as people who have changed as a result of their migration. The study found that non-migrants recognise three changes in returnees. The first change is a positive one exhibited through punctuality, novel ideas, professionalism, and good relations with non-migrants, and regard for the home culture. The second change is negative and involves elements such as selfishness; disregard for the home culture; habits such as smoking and womanising; and distancing oneself from non-migrants. The third category encompasses
unacceptable changes; that is when returnees seemed to have forgotten certain basic social norms and practices they grew up with in Ghana before migrating. The non-migrants considered positive and negative changes as the result of returnees’ experiences abroad.

In contrast, the non-migrants regard unacceptable changes as purposeful on the part of returnees. Moreover, the non-migrants categorised returnees who demonstrated positive changes as successful returnees, and hence they tend to be accepted. In contrast, negative and unacceptable changes point to failure and may lead to rejection.

Non-migrants’ acceptance of returnees result in positive outcomes, such as investment in the home society by returnees, achieving reintegration, and a sense of belonging. Conversely, rejection can lead to negative outcomes, such as exclusion and lack of belonging. Non-migrants’ descriptions of acceptable and unacceptable conditions complemented returnee’s narratives on conditions for belonging and denied belonging. Again, the study found that in the context of reintegration, the interpretation of ‘acceptance’ is inclusion but not re-inclusion.

The analysis also revealed that returnees perceive non-migrants as having Ghanaian mindsets and thus, lacking a Western mindset. Returnees perceive the Ghanaian mindset as the reason why non-migrants are successful and influential: They possess a clearer understanding of home society systems. Nevertheless, some returnees saw non-migrants as suspicious and in possession of an inferiority complex. Returnees’ perceptions of non-migrants fell into two main categories: (1) treatment of non-migrants as partners/collaborators or (2) demonstration of ‘we are better than them’ attitude. In turn, such outcomes lead to returnees’ acceptance or rejection by the non-migrants. They also represent a cause of returnee/non-migrant conflicts during reintegration.

Concluding this section, an extensive literature review (see Chapter 4) has shown that the label, borga was for those returnees who had left Ghana and returned. The it was further clarified in the review that the label is often applied to all returnees regardless of their destination country, even though the label was initially for returnees who had lived in Germany. The present study however found that the non-migrants differed in terms of how they employed the term borga. Less-educated non-migrants used the term for all returnees, while skilled non-migrants exempted skilled returnees from the borga category. In the same way, some skilled returnees rejected the borga label because they had not returned from Germany or did not dress like borgas. However, returnees from Germany were not concerned about the borga label, even though they distanced themselves from
the physical attributes of the label, which primarily centre on one’s style of
dress and manners.

The findings of this study are unique to the social and cultural conforma-
tions of Ghana in terms of its specific social expectations and responsi-
bilities towards returnees. Furthermore, the social status of returnees in
Ghana as borgas and the respondents’ statements and views are highly
country specific. Nevertheless, pre-migration memories, return prepara-
tions, return expectations, return reasons, and return challenges are com-
mons domains for returnees of all kinds—hence, the utility of the RnB
model.

The primary and secondary findings of this study were used to formulate
a conceptual model. The RnB model highlights the migration episodes of
a first-generation migration cycle. From pre-migration to time abroad and
post-return migration, the RnB model identifies critical elements in these
episodes of migration and how they are related in analysis return migra-
tion, reintegration, and sense of belonging experiences of returnees. Al-
though the study focused on skilled Ghanaian returnees, the conceptual
components of the RnB model are proposed for all kinds of return migra-
tion and different contexts. Furthermore, the RnB also has a methodologi-
cal benefit by prompting different arenas for migration data collection and
analysis.

12.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite the findings that this study has presented, it also faced some limi-
tations. The study only focused on skilled returnees, individual with ‘suffi-
cient’ capital to achieve smooth reintegration. Exclusively concentrating on
skilled returnees meant excluding other groups of returnees, such as less
skilled and repatriated returnees, whose conceptions and experiences differ
from those of skilled returnees in terms of reintegration and belonging.

Although the analysis examined skilled returnees’ reintegration and
sense of belonging, it did not consider the impact of return migration on
the home society. That is, the types of contributions of returnees towards
the home society regarding the economic, social, and cultural capitals they
invest were not included in this study. Furthermore, this study did not as-
ssess successful and unsuccessful returnees. Despite assuming that incom-
plete reintegration and an inadequate sense of belonging may be unpleas-
ant for both the returnee and the home society, the study did not yield data
on how returnees succeed or fail. And also, for reintegration and sense of

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belonging, what this means in terms of whether the returnee remains in the home society or opts to re-migrate is missing in this work. On the methodological side, I could not follow the networks of the returnees in sufficient detail to demonstrate how they influence the social lives of returnees.

For future research, there is a need for a longitudinal study on return migration, reintegration, and sense of belonging. Such a study would shed more light on returnees’ conceptions on return, reintegration, and sense of belonging over time, and the findings would strengthen the RnB framework developed within this study. As reintegration and its related sub-processes can take time, a longitudinal analysis would allow for an in-depth understanding of how returnees process reintegration and to perform belonging. Such a study would also allow returnees to redefine and re-conceptualise critical aspects and factors regarding their readjustment. Policy initiatives would benefit from more detailed data and findings on how to attract returnees with their corresponding capital, to promote national development.

The conceptual model developed in this study needs further testing. For instance, more work needs to be done to disintegrate the complexities of reintegration, sense of belonging, and identity. Moreover, the understandings of the relationships between these concepts and linking them to the return migration process must be further developed. For instance, the question remains of how identity affects reintegration challenges and vice versa. Such an analysis may shed further light on reintegration for returnees and result in stronger theories because, at present, the question of whether we can treat reintegration as similar to integration remains open to debate. Also, researchers could consider the different types of returnees in the effort to offer more plausible explanations to the complex process of reintegration and the construction of belonging. For example, skilled and unskilled returnees and voluntary and involuntary returnees exhibit unique patterns as both groups and individuals; investigating these differences may be beneficial for conceptualising a comprehensive framework for return, reintegration, and sense of belonging.

Furthermore, this research has hypothesised the role of belonging integration of migrants in host countries. Therefore, exploring such relationship for migrants’ belonging and integration in the host country will further disentangle the fuzzy assumptions towards these concepts. Such a study will also compliment the current study or challenge the results of this study. Thus, such a study will convey the perceptions of migrants who may or may not return.
Ghana represents a country with plans for improving the social situation of returnees. Hence, this study could be replicated in countries with programmes aimed at improving return migrants’ situations, such as Senegal and other African and Asian countries. Such a study could compare returnees with and without government-initiated support structures and their approaches to return, reintegration, and belonging.

During the interviews with the skilled returnees, some mentioned other returnees who could not reintegrate and who instead re-migrated. A study exploring successful and unsuccessful reintegration would, therefore, be beneficial. That study could follow returnees were unsuccessful in reintegrating and re-migrated to understand the factors contributing to such an outcome. Such a study may answer the questions of what constitutes successful and unsuccessful return and how the degree of success impacts the home society.

Finally, returnees and non-migrant interactions could be examined to fully comprehend how these groups view each other in terms of access to resources in the home country, hierarchies, and power relations. Existing power relations between homecomers and non-migrants are worth exploring to understand how these groups use their unique resources to mobilise and access shared resources.

12.4. Recommendations

Based on the findings and the detailed impressions of migrants and non-migrants, the following policy-oriented recommendations are made:

First, to maximise the developmental impact of returnees, government policies should aim to establish counselling centres across the country for returnees. Such centres could employ professional psychologists and counsellors. The centres would serve as a debriefing space which returnees can turn to during the initial stages of return. Where applicable, these counselling services should be extended to children and foreign spouses of returnees. Overall, the psychological and social counselling supports must be designed to cogitate different groups of returnees such as children returnees, youth returnees, returnees who have come for retirement and different generations of returnees. Besides, such centres should provide pre- and post-return migration counselling. Apart from psycho-social supports, such establishments should also engage returnees in cultural relearning and awareness for returnees to be able to keep up with some professional and social cultures in the home country. The centres may be set up by
home country governments in partnership with other international organizations. Where partnership with the home country government is not possible, international organisations working on migration projects (for example IOM) could aim to provide psychosocial supports for returnees and their foreign spouses. Also, this centre should be attached to a department that coordinates migration supports in Ghana. Currently, Ghanaian governments waste resources on duplications. This problem may be attributed to the existing political system that has created the platform for new governments to start their own offices/department/units/bureau to deal with the same or similar issues for which existing offices are already in place. Such a practice reduces the effective implementation of any migration policy.

Second, the study recommends that return migration policies of host countries facilitate transnational mobility and transnational activities of returnees. Transnational mobility and engagements by returnees were found to be crucial for the return process especially during the early days after return. Such activities enable the achievement of a transnational sense of belonging among returnees. That is, host countries return migration policies that centre on the essentialist ‘going home’ philosophy should be revisited to accommodate the after-return experiences of return migrants. In other words, return migration policies of host countries must not seek to restrict the re-entry of returnees to the host countries. Doing so may obstruct returnees’ maintenance of transnational practices that can affect the personal wellbeing of returnees, especially during the early days of return.

Third, home countries should provide technical business support and consulting services for returnees intending to invest in the country. With such support in operation, many returnees can utilise the services of such consultants as part of their return preparations to obtain advice on investing in the home country. Apart from professional and investment consulting, home country government policies should include supports for returnees in the form of tax incentives, grants, and subsidies. Such supports will help reduce the initial cost of return and reintegration (which also results in the waste of capital and resources).

Fourth, the lack of repository of readily available and updated information on governmental and non-governmental services and formalities is a significant challenge for return migrants. Many returnees return with investment plans. However, they are often frustrated by the lack of available, reliable, and consistent information. As part of a comprehensive and collaborative migration policy, the study recommends for home country governments to establish a one-stop-online platform where returnees can ac-
cess information on different kinds of support. That is, an interactive web portal dedicated explicitly to returnees is long overdue. Although similar portals exist for different groups and institutions, a policy to synchronise all these platforms into a comprehensive system is needed to serve not only returnees but also non-migrants. For instance, information such as the process of marriage registration, passport renewal regulations, resident permits for foreign spouses among others should be made readily accessible.

Fifth, extensive education on the reintegration process is necessary to benefit both the actors who are directly involved (returnees and non-migrants) and stakeholders (governments and institutions) of both the home and host countries. Individual efforts and government policies should be directed towards measures aimed at reducing stigmatisation within both (return migrants and non-migrants) groups. Such initiatives should seek to mitigate anxiety among returnees and non-migrants and to reduce conflicts and stratifications in the home society. Home governments should see returnees, especially skilled returnees, as human resources because of their experiences and potential contributions. This means that attitudes suggesting that returnees ‘owe the home country’ as a result of their citizenship should be reconsidered.
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Appendix

A.1. Interview Guide

Introduction

In this interview, I am interested to know from you how you are adjusting to coming back to Ghana after your return from abroad. Specifically, I want to know from you how it was before you went abroad, while you were overseas and when you returned, how you are resettling in Ghana and how it feels like to be back in Ghana.

Before we begin, please tell me something short about yourself? If I should ask you who is Mr/Mrs./Dr./Prof./……., what will be your response?

Episode 1: Before migration

• So, I want to cast your mind back to before you went abroad. What were the reasons for going abroad?
• How was it in terms of how you felt at home in ‘Ghana then’?
• Tell me about how it was with your friends and family back then?
• Who were the people you considered important for you back then?
• What was your occupation, and did you get along with your work and your colleagues?
• Were you in any association or group? What was your membership standing in these groups?

Episode 2: While abroad

• Please tell me about your time abroad? Was there anything you missed home?
• Did you feel lonely? And what made you feel that way?
• Did you get the chance to work there? Was it easy to get a job? What kind of work and how did you feel among your colleagues?
• Please tell me about the education or training you got while abroad? How were you treated during these training?
• Were there situations where you felt like you are part of that society and cases where you felt like you don’t belong there? What made you feel that way?
• What is it about the way of life there that you like or don’t like?
• Can you tell me about things or persons in the host country that you consider important and who made you feel like you belonged there?
Appendix

- In general, how do you feel about the country from where you returned?
- Why did you return?

Episode 3: return and reintegration
- Can you please take me through your first few days after returning?
- How is it like to return to Ghana?
- Which aspects of your life do you think needed readjusting or resettling now that you are in Ghana?
- Tell me about your friends and family after you returned? If you compare your relationships with friends and families before and after your return, what can you say about it?
- How about finding a job, accommodation, and things like that?
- How is your professional and financial situation like after return?
- Bearing in mind the different ways of life you have encountered; do you encounter situations where you feel like there is a clash with the Ghanaian way of life?
- If yes, how do you deal with such situations? (Push for responses on these different issues)
- How do you feel now after returning to Ghana?
- Do you still practice some culture of the country you returned from and why do you do that?
- What connects you to the country where you returned from or any other country except Ghana?
- What will make the return easier and make you feel more at home in Ghana?
- What does it mean for you when you say you belong to Ghana or somewhere else?
- What does it mean for you when you hear reintegration of returnees?

Probes
- Please tell me more about these challenges you faced when you returned? (If interviewee mentions challenges)
- How did you overcome these challenges if you have overcome them in the first place?

Note: Use stories from previous interviews and remarks from non-migrants to probe for more stories. Example, on gender and what it means to be a successful returnee.
A.2. Focus Group Discussion Guide

Kwaku Arhin-Sam

Focus group discussion guide

Topic:
Return Migration, Reintegration and Sense of Belonging: The Case of Skilled Ghanaian Return 'Burgers'

Focus group discussion guide

Introduction
- The purpose of this discussion is to learn about people who travel outside Ghana and return, in terms of how they have changed and how they get back into the society.
- I will not associate your name with anything you say in the focus group.
- I would like to tape the focus groups so that we can make sure to capture the thoughts, opinions, and ideas that I hear from the group. No names will be attached to the focus groups.
- You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at anytime.

The focal stimulus
- Song from Sarkodie titled "Borga, Borga" (moderator sings part of the song)

Questions
1. What do you think about people who traveled and lived outside Ghana for sometime and came back home?
2. What do you understand by the term “burger”?

Probes for Discussion
- How was it with them before they travelled?
- Were you in contact with them?
- Are they the same as they left?
- Do you think they have changed?
- In what ways did they change?
- How do observe these changes?
- Do you think they will fit back into the society? How?

1. Sarkodie is a Ghanaian “hiplife” artist. The song questions return migrants on their time abroad and portrays some of the situations of migrants in the host country which according to the song can be worse than what non-migrants face back home in Ghana.
A4. Interview Transcription Guidelines

• 1. Change as little as possible. Accurately represent each speaker's words, conversational quality, and speech patterns. Type contractions as spoken (I'll, not I will). Exceptions: disregard filler/ crutch words like ‘er’, ‘um’, ‘and then’ and other redundant false starts. Also, leave out comments like ‘how interesting’ or ‘really?’ or ‘wow!’ which the interviewer made only to show that he/she was listening.

• 2. Make it easy to read and understand. Use correct (not phonetic) spelling of words, even if they have not been pronounced quite that way (but do not try to improve on the sentence structure and grammar).

• 3. Be complete. Be careful to transcribe all the words and transcribable sounds (including guttural sounds like ah, but with the exceptions noted in 1. above), and in their order of occurrence. Use parentheses () with discretion to indicate audible expressions of emotion such as (laughs) when one speaker does, (laughter) when both do, or (pounds fist on table).

• 4. Work with the tape. Use the time tags provided by F4 transcription software anytime the enter key is pressed. Words that are not understood after listening repeatedly should be placed in a bracket with the time tags.

• 5. Twi slangs and terminologies used by returnees are to be maintained without translation to English.
A6. Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES (ECH)
P. O. Box LG 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana

11th September 2015

Mr. Kwaku Arhin-Sam
Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences
Jacobs University
Campus Ring 1
28759 Bremen - Germany

Dear Mr. Arhin-Sam,

ECH 001/15-16: RETURN MIGRATION, REINTEGRATION AND SENSE OF BELONGING: THE CASE OF SKILLED GHANAIAN RETURN ‘BURGERS’

This is to advise you that the above reference study has been presented to the Ethics Committee for the Humanities for a full board review and the following actions taken subject to the conditions and explanation provided below:

Expiry Date: 08/03/16
On Agenda for: Initial Submission
Date of Submission: 22/07/15
ECH Action: Approved
Reporting: Quarterly

Please accept my congratulations.

Yours Sincerely,

Rev. Prof. J. O. Y. Mante
ECH Chair

CC: Dr. Mary Boatemaa Setrana, Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana

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