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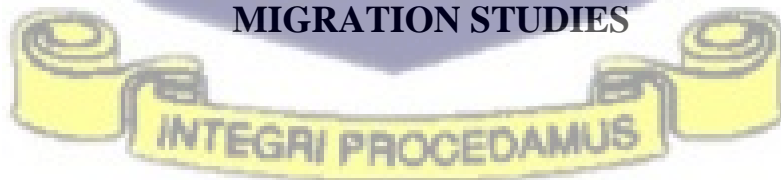
**(IM)MOBILITY, COGNITIVE MIGRATION AND RETURN IN  
GHANA**

**BY**

**ADOLF AWUKU BEKOE**

**(10001389)**

**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,  
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT  
FOR THE AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN  
MIGRATION STUDIES**

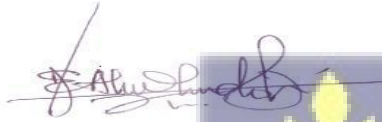


**CENTRE FOR MIGRATION STUDIES**

**DECEMBER, 2021**

**DECLARATION**

I, Adolf Awuku Bekoe, Hereby declare that except references to other people's work which have been duly acknowledged, this thesis is the result of my independent research conducted at the Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana, under the supervision of Prof. Akosua Keseboa Darkwah, Prof. David Lackland Sam and Dr. Mark Kwaku Mensah Obeng. I also declare that as far as I know, this thesis has neither in part nor in whole been published nor presented to any other institution for an academic award.



.....  
**Adolf Awuku Bekoe**  
**Student**

Dec 15, 2022

.....  
**Date**



.....  
**Prof. Akosua Keseboa Darkwah**  
**Principal Supervisor**

Dec 15, 2022

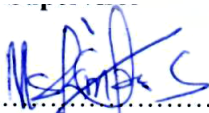
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**Date**



.....  
**Prof. David Lackland Sam**  
**Co-Supervisor**

Dec 15, 2022

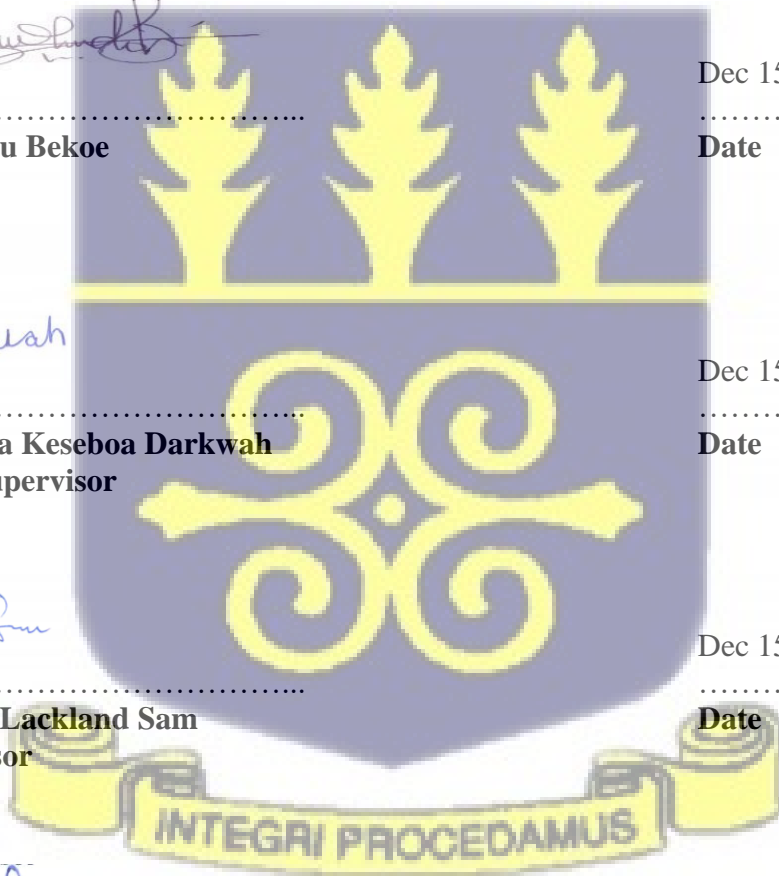
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**Date**



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**Dr. Mark Kwaku Mensah Obeng**  
**Co-supervisor**

December 18, 2021

.....  
**Date**



## ABSTRACT

The study explores cognitive migration and return using in-depth biographical interviews of 21 failed migrants in Accra and Kumasi to understand the role of the mind in imagining a future away from home; how the mind travels ahead of the body to the imagined destination, the different trajectories of failure encountered and their effects as well as the process by which the mind returns to the origin in pursuit of a homeward future. The study finds evidence for cognitive migration in Ghana. Secondly, the study establishes the salience of imagination as the true essence of cognitive migration and not necessarily the intense planning and preparation that migrant aspirants undertake. The study shows that the effects of failing a migration project in situ, transcends monetary and temporal losses; cognitive migrants see failure as a disruptive event with life-altering implication for their wellbeing. To this end, psychology's understanding of migrants' social integration and psychological well-being can no longer be consigned to destination countries. Thirdly, the study finds the reconfiguration of imaginations not to be only a spatio-temporal process but a spatio-temporal-cognitive process. By clarifying how cognitive migrants return their minds to invest in a homeward future in the wake of failure, the study extends the current concept of cognitive migration to cognitive return migration and delineates the cognitive return migrant or the immobile cognitive returnee as a new immobility category. The study recommends the incorporation of immobile cognitive returnees into migration praxis to make migration an intrinsic part of broader social processes of development, social transformation and globalisation. Migration statistics, it is strongly recommended, must make cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees visible by counting them. Other policy implications have been fully discussed.

**DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to Aba, Papa Yaw, Kwadwo and Kofi Awuku Bekoe



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I am very grateful to the Almighty God for helping me reach this stage in my educational journey. Indeed, He has been the lifter up of my head and a light on to my path. My sincere thanks go to my wife and my three boys: Papa Yaw, Kwadwo and Kofi, whose encouragement and support have been critical to my progress. My siblings have been supportive shielding me from many extended family duties. My supervisory team comprising Prof. Akosua Keseboa Darkwah, Prof. David Lackland Sam and Dr. Mark Kwaku Mensah Obeng have been phenomenal in being accessible, critical and resourceful; three important ingredients in the doctoral formation process. With them, supervision has been a delight and more collegial. The director, faculty, staff and colleagues at the Centre for Migration Studies have been very helpful and I say a very big thank you to them.

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In the end, this is the doing of the Lord and it is marvelous in our sight.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

When Bashiru, a 34-year old government employee completed school and his National Service in 2013/2014, the job situation in Ghana was dire. Consequently, the idea of travelling abroad in pursuit of greener pastures, dominated his thinking. He started calling his uncles abroad to help him travel. His aim was to work and further his education abroad. His resentment for a future in Ghana worsened in the wake of the public-sector freeze on employment which resulted in a backlog of unemployed university graduates; going back five years. Bashiru was an avid internet user who surfed the internet daily. He was enchanted by images of people going to see off their relatives at the departure lounge at airports - amidst crying, hugging and good-byes via YouTube. He was equally moved by images of arrival formalities at airports. Bashiru recounted these images with palpable emotions: "I mean, you could really experience the feelings in it. I wanted to experience all these to know them firsthand". Bashiru therefore resorted to the use of brokers to facilitate his travel abroad, but without success. His obsession with travelling abroad was so strong that he could not pursue any homeward future. As he aptly described it: "my mind was abroad, it was my body that was in Ghana". Being refused a visa was a terrible experience for Bashiru: "you see, if you're refused for three consecutive times, you would think the world has betrayed you". Bashiru went through varied physical, behavioural and psychological reactions as a result of being denied a visa. In his own words he said: "I could be holding food and the food would just fall to the ground". The most painful of the losses was money. "It's the money that I have lost that hurts me, because I could have used this money to run a big business", he says. The failure was also a turning point for Bashiru to imagine a homeward future. He said: "the time I failed and failed and failed, I said to myself: "to hell with abroad". When I failed, I lost hope, but when my focus changed from abroad to Ghana and I got a job in Ghana and I brought my mind to Ghana, then I started observing the opportunities.



The vignette above is a snapshot of Bashiru’s story of cognitive migration and return. Cognitive migration, according to Koikkalainen and Kyle, (2016, pp. 759-760) is a process which occurs when prospective migrants visualise: “themselves in a future time and place prior to making the actual move”. It is also rendered semiotic (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015) or symbolic (Zittoun, 2020) mobility, in contrast with geographical mobility. Bashiru desired or imagined travelling abroad when he perceived conditions at home as making it difficult for him to secure a job. His aspirations for a better life were thus channeled through migration and became a cognitive migrant (Koikkalainen et al., 2020; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016) in the process, when he said: “my mind was abroad, it was my body that was in Ghana”. His mind was therefore displaced to the imagined destination. While he was actively preparing to travel physically, he could not invest in a homeward future. Unfortunately, his body was not able to travel in the way of his imagination because his visa applications were turned down on three occasions. His reaction to the visa denials was analogous to trauma reaction. The sight of his passport evoked anxiety, he had palpitations, was diagnosed with low blood pressure and lost appetite. He lost time and wasted money as well. In spite of this negative experience, Bashiru was eventually able to shift his mind to Ghana and became a cognitive return migrant or immobile cognitive returnee.

Bashiru’s experience of cognitive migration and cognitive return migration serves as the focus of this thesis. Through detailed biographical accounts of participants, the thesis explores the role of the mind in imagining a future away from home; how the mind travels ahead of the body to the imagined destination, the different trajectories of failure encountered and their effects as well as the process by which the mind returns to its origin, in pursuit of a homeward future.

Bashiru is among a global population of 750 million adults who desire to move permanently to another country, according to the Gallup World Poll (Esipova et al., 2018). However, the percentage who actually plan to move is lower than the percentage who desire to move (Esipova et al., 2018). The number of international migrants in the world in 2019 is 272 million - an increase of 51 million, since 2010; representing 3.5 percent of global population as compared to 2.8 percent in the year 2000 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2020). The desire to migrate jumped from 30 percent in 2010-2012 to 31 percent in 2013-2016, ending at 33 percent in 2015-2017 for Sub-Saharan Africa. For the same period in North Africa and Middle East, it is 19 percent, 22 percent and 27 percent respectively. During the same period, Latin America and Caribbean witnessed 18 percent, 23 percent and 27 percent respectively (Esipova et al., 2018). Desire or intention to migrate does not necessarily (or often) translate into actual migration. The figures reduce dramatically however, when it comes to migration plans (66 million) and to actual preparations (23 million or 0.4% of the world's adult population) (Mcauliffe et al., 2017).

Tjaden et al. (2019) found the link between intentions and flows to be weaker for potential migrants in developing countries, in comparison to Europe and other parts of the world. Such statistics support the argument that we live in an 'age of involuntary immobility' rather than an 'age of migration' (cf. Carling, 2002; Carling & Schewel, 2018) at least, for citizens in the Global South. The share of people who want to migrate varies greatly by region and country. Nowhere is it greater than in West Africa (39 per cent). Other regions with a high proportion of potential migrants are the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa (29 per cent), Non-OECD European countries (24 per cent), North Africa (24 per cent) and South and Central America (21 per cent) (Carling, 2017, p. 5). Thus,

although the world opens up to other regions, it paradoxically shuts other regions from this global circulation enabled by globalisation (Alpes, 2014).

It is important to note that the socio-economic context of globalisation that fuels the international movement of people, suffers internal contradiction. The free circulation of goods, capital, technology and information, enables easy comparison because many people can compare their lived realities to those in other parts of the world (Appadurai, 2000). In other words, globalisation fires people's imaginations, making imagination worthy of social scientific inquiry. Consequently, information from both global and local media sources create a widespread idea that immigrants with resident permits in Europe are living 'the good life' (van Bommel, 2019, p. 11). The increased reach and accessibility of communication, media and transport technologies globally lead to people in many parts of the world being exposed to 'visions of the good life elsewhere' (Kleist, 2017, p. 1). Similarly, growing inequality in the midst of restrictive mobility regimes excludes a vast majority of people in the 'Global South' from the circuits of legal mobility (Kleist, 2017). While visa acquisition is a nightmare, resorting to irregular pathways is dangerously risky, resulting in "mobility paradox" (Kleist, 2017, p. 1). For example, globalisation through social media, easily exposes visions of the 'good life elsewhere' - but restricts mobility to many Africans. It is therefore important to better understand this in the context of migration studies; particularly, since immobility has remained a neglected and 'under-theorised aspect of migration' (Gaibazzi, 2015, p. 9).

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Many potential migrants are unable to embody their migration aspiration. Thus, they become physically immobilised or involuntarily immobile (Carling, 2002, 2014, 2017; Carling & Schewel, 2018; Schewel, 2015, 2019; Setrana, 2021). In spite of being physically immobile, their minds travel ahead to the imagined destination (Kokkalainen &

Kyle, 2016; Mescoli, 2014) with the hope of uniting their bodies and minds to embody their future. Cognitive migration, according to Koikkalainen and Kyle (2016, pp. 759-760) is a process involving prospective migrants “visualizing themselves in a future time and place prior to making the actual move”.

Across recent (Setrana, 2021; Van der Meij et al., 2017) and earlier (Carling, 2002; Lubkemann, 2008) studies however, there is no extensive exploration of the cognitive dimensions of (im)mobility. Setrana (2021) and Van der Meij (2017) show in different settings how some Ghanaian youth cope with their involuntary immobilisation. Carling (2002) recognises that while many young people in developing nations have the aspiration to migrate to better themselves socially and economically, there are few opportunities for this to happen, resulting in ‘the age of involuntary immobility’ (Carling, 2002, p. 5).

Essentially, the terminology “involuntary immobility” underscores the dissonance between hopes and dreams of prospective migrants who are unable to produce transnational mobility by securing a visa to travel abroad. In other words, the involuntarily immobile fails to cross a border to the imagined place away from home.

From the foregoing, every potential migrant is a cognitive migrant, until they successfully move physically to embody their imagination (i.e. unite mind and body) at the imagined destination to become a migrant in the default understanding of migrant in terms of migration studies. A distinction between the involuntarily immobile as put forward by Carling (2002), Lubkemann (2008) and recently by Setrana (2021) in the Ghanaian context and the cognitive migrant, therefore needs some clarification. These authors focus on the physical limitations that immobilise the migration aspirant. They do not, however, highlight their ability to travel to the destination country mentally or cognitively. Setrana (2021, p.254) for example, calls a group of failed migrants in her study, involuntary immobile:

As indicated in the literature, “staying behaviour” could be analysed across either involuntarily or voluntarily (Schewel, 2015, p. 330) by identifying factors influencing staying-decision making. The decision to stay is influenced by layers of factors such as economic, social and personal traits. The underlying frustrations experienced during the migration process propelled the participants who were involuntarily immobile to think about staying and moving into the category of voluntary immobile. The initial migration process cannot therefore be detached from their current voluntary immobility decisions, because experience has taught them lessons.

In this regard, Setrana does not to make a distinction between the stayer or the voluntarily immobile whose migratory thought, if any, has not reached a threshold to instigate an outward future orientation and the involuntarily immobile whose physical immobilisation does not preclude his or her cognitive agency. This analytical impasse is resolved by cognitive migration and its subject - the cognitive migrant. Lubkemann’s (2008) explanation of the idea of involuntary immobilisation seeks to demystify or correct the ontological invisibilisation of a whole population in war zones as displaced people, because they remain in place. He clarifies, however, that those who are really displaced in times of war are those who do not get the opportunity to move; they become displaced in place because the war does not allow them to engage in their usual livelihood pathways. Lubkemann (2008) again makes no reference to the mind as a mobile agent that is free to travel out of war zones.

The term involuntary immobility captures the prospective migrant’s physical immobility, but not what happens mentally to the involuntarily immobile. Being physically immobile but mentally mobile, is incongruous and has not received much consideration in migration discourse. Although the concept of cognitive migration is not new, empirical understanding of cognitive migrants in terms of their motivations, imaginations and mindset and how their imagination influence their behaviour, is not well-articulated in the literature. I do this in response to the call by Koikkalainen and Kyle (2016) for “more empirical and conceptual work; not to mention raising epistemological

and research design” to understand why “logically, there are many more ‘cognitive migrants’ than actual migrants” (p.767).

Koikkalainen et al. (2020) and Womersely (2020) study cognitive migrants who are already at the imagined destination physically to unite their minds and bodies to embody their imaginations, but fail their asylum application. Mescoli (2014, p. 300) focuses on the preparation of aspirant migrants and their displacement in situ, but does not follow up “to learn whether these young people have indeed left for Italy or not”. The realities of cognitive migrants who fail in situ, but return their minds to invest in a homeward future remains invisible to migration scholarship. How then do cognitive migrants bring their minds back to the country of origin to invest in a homeward future? I am interested in the process of becoming a cognitive migrant, the mindset that produces a cognitive migrant and their behaviour, as well as those who abandon their obsession their dream of international mobility that “works like a kind of opium” (Salazer, 2011, p. 587) and return their minds to invest in a homeward future.

The invisibility of cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants results from a corporeality bias in migration studies. De Haas (2021) lists several factors – receiving country bias, methodological nationalism and epistemological divide, disciplinary and methodological divides (in)voluntary divide and (inter)national divide – contributing to the lack of progress in our generalised understanding of migration. What is conspicuously missing however, is the corporeality bias or mind/body divide that impedes imaginative and cognitive dimensions of migratory behaviour. The philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu cited by (Csordas, 1990, p. 36), argue that on the level of perception, it is not legitimate to distinguish between mind and body. According to Pink (Pink, 2011, p. 345):

Such a distinction in its various forms had informed understandings of human experience and the senses in ways that distinguished between ‘flow’ of everyday life experience (body) and the rationale knowledge through which it was understood. This shift towards embodiment allowed the recognition that knowledge was not simply something of the mind, but that ‘knowing’ is embedded in embodied practices, and cannot necessarily be expressed in spoken words.

Insights from Boccagni (2017) show that migrants can shift, re-signify or re-shape their future aspirations overtime. It is therefore important to empirically clarify whether this affects the aspirations of those who do not succeed to move across a geopolitical border to a destination country. Boccagni (2017) explores this idea with “successful” migrant domestic workers in a destination country, using the biographical approach to reconstruct the aspirations of immigrant domestic workers in Italy from their past to their future. He also notes that the fact that migrant aspirants or migrants say there is no future for them at home, does not mean a flattening of their aspirations. Individuals can displace their aspirations, if there is an outlet that helps in their cultivation instead. What is the direction of this shift homeward or outward? For both cognitive migrants and migrants, this shift goes either way. What differs is the mechanisms by which this shift takes place. While it is physical for migrants who embark on chain migration from their destination or return home voluntarily or involuntarily, cognitive migrants make this shift mentally. I address the question central to this thesis: “how do cognitive migrants bring back their minds to the country of origin to invest in a homeward future?” by focusing on three sub-questions in the next section.

### **1.3 Objectives of study and research questions**

The main objective of the study was to have an in-depth understanding of the perceived cognitions or imaginations, meanings interpretations and behaviours of cognitive migrants and the processes involved in re-engaging with their homeward future. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

- Describe the mindset, the behaviour and the process of becoming a cognitive migrant in Ghana
- Explore the phenomenology and effects of migration failure in situ
- Clarify the process and enablers of cognitive return migration

#### 1.4 Research questions

1. (a) How does one become a cognitive migrant?  
(b) What are the characteristics of the mindset of a cognitive migrant?  
(c) How does the mindset of cognitive migrants influence their behaviour?
2. How does a failed migration project affect prospective migrants?
3. (a) How are cognitive migrants able to return and invest their minds into a homeward future?  
(b) What are the enablers of cognitive return or emplacement?

#### 1.5 Significance

Migrants' aspirations, as purposeful constructions of the future which evolve over time, are a fascinating and relatively neglected research subject (Boccagni, 2017).

However, thus far, this has been approached from the context of embodied migration (Carling, 2002; Chambers, 2018; Collins, 2018; Boccagni, 2017; Koikkalainen et al. 2020; Setrana, 2021; Wang & Collins; Wormesley, 2020; Zittoun, 2020) that perpetuates the corporeality bias in migration studies, resulting in the invisibilisation of a category of migrants who are physically immobilised, but cognitively mobilised.

By centering the mind and highlighting the re-configuration and re-direction of migration imagination (i.e., migration aspiration and desire) homeward, the study makes a number of theoretical and methodological contributions to migration discourse.

Theoretically, the study extends the spatio-temporal consideration of migrant aspirations to a spatio-temporal-cognitive phenomenon, because the study unambiguously clarifies

that even in the context of spatial fixity, there is temporal and cognitive flow. Previous studies (Boccagni; 2017; Wang & Collins, 2020) situate the aspiration-temporality nexus in varied geopolitical settings, requiring physical movement. Transcending the mind/body duality, makes the conceptualisation of migration as an “intrinsic part of broader social processes of development, social transformation and globalisation” (Castles et al., 2014, p.51) possible by incorporating hitherto invisibilised groups, whose experiences are structured by migration (i.e. cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees).

Secondly, by eliminating the corporeality bias, migration studies is able to address the age-long challenge of its inability to explain why people move (Schewel, 2020).

According to De Jong and Fawcett (1981), this inability is due to the failure to ask the question: “why do people not move?” To move or not to move however goes beyond spatial and temporal frames to include a cognitive frame. Thus, a large part of those “left behind” in migration studies may comprise those who have “travelled” and “returned” mentally.

Methodologically, by studying cognitive migrants (initially displaced in place) who abandon their outward future orientation in favour of a homeward future orientation and become cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees invested in local futures, I contribute to subverting the dominant Westernised narrative of movement as development and progress. Consequentially, the counter narratives presented by the hitherto non-existent cognitive return migrants – a new immobility category – is a Global South reality that valorises the call for the decolonisation of migration studies. The story of the Global South cognitive return migrant shows that, immobility “itself is not an impasse but another form of mobility” loudly projecting the counter-narrative that, “viable futures are indeed possible outside of Europe’s borders” (Palladino, 2018, p. 87). The

corpus of migration literature cannot, therefore, be said to be complete if it does not reflect lived migration experiences from the Global South. The study also problematises the taken-for-granted notion of movement as progress, a socio-cultural logic that is so prevalent that it is embedded in the framing of the good life as in: “Wo te faako a, wo te w’ade so”.

## 1.6 Organisation of thesis

This thesis comprises eight chapters, articulating the story of cognitive migrants who physically fail to embody their migration imagination but return their minds home, becoming cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees in the process, to invest in a homeward future. Chapter one sets out the problem of the study. Chapter two outlines the context of Ghanaian experience of migration within its political economy and socio-cultural logics. Chapter three grapples with theoretical anchorage of the study, while highlighting the gaps in the literature. The chapter also centres the mind and lays the foundation for transcending the corporeality bias. Chapter four details the methodology and methods employed in this study. It also highlights my positionality, as well as provides in-depth reflections on the entire process of the study. I also discuss some challenges and limitations of the study in this chapter. Chapter five broadly discusses the theme: “sending the mind abroad”. It begins with the elucidation of socio-demographic factors driving the cognitive migration and return process; subsequently it empirically delineates the process of becoming a cognitive migrant and examines the motivations, imaginations and mindset of cognitive migrants. This is followed by a consideration of the relationship between migration imagination and the dailiness of cognitive migrants. Chapter six follows with a phenomenology of failure under the theme: “the body failing to travel abroad”. It also considers the meaning of failure to cognitive migrants, by describing their narratives of failure and the types of failure consciousness driving these

narratives. It follows with the trajectories of failure and subsequently, the effects of failure. Chapter 7 describes the process of cognitive return under the theme: “returning the mind home”. The chapter explores the various turning point(s) consequent to failure, which begin the cognitive return or emplacement process. It also entails a discussion of enablers of cognitive return or emplacement and delineates the cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees as new immobility category and compares the mindsets of cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants. In chapter 8, I tie it all together with the summary of the findings and conclusions of the study as well as recommendations for theory, policy, practice and future studies.

### 1.7 Conclusion

The chapter shows that not every potential migrant becomes a migrant. The stock of actual international migrants is smaller, compared to potential migrants. This discrepancy results from potential migrants who imagine migration, but fail to embody it. The structural limitations in the way of potential migrants engenders a phenomenon Carling (2002) describes as involuntary immobility. Instead of the age of migration put forward by Castles et al. (2014), Carling (2002) believes we live in an age of involuntary immobility where mobility has become the most stratified element. An immigration context that imbues foreign lands with limitless opportunities for upward social mobility, while simultaneously prohibiting physical access and emigration contexts which migrant aspirants perceive to be structurally undermining of general life aspirations, creates physically immobilised but cognitively mobile citizens, who live their dreams in their imaginations. This category of migrants remains invisible in migration studies because of an entrenched corporeality bias. I transcend this corporeality bias by highlighting the lived experiences of these “physically failed” but “cognitively successful” migrants.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION EXPERIENCE IN GHANA

#### 2.1 Introduction

The phenomenon of cognitive migration, return and reintegration in Ghana must be understood within the context of migration history on the continent, the history, culture and the political economy of Ghana.

#### 2.2 History of migration in Africa, West Africa and Ghana

It is important to put the share of potential and actual migrants in sub-Saharan Africa in perspective. This is because, migration in Africa is inundated with a lot of misconceptions. Maher (2017) asserts that the evolving migratory pattern in Africa has a historical affinity with Europe:

That migratory patterns have been evolving over time suggests that there is something of a historical continuity that ties Europe to Africa in meaningful ways. More recent immigration laws, and the border enforcements they underwrite, are not immutable and self-evident, but should be seen as the product of internal and external political dynamics both in African and European contexts (p.78).

It is important to state *ab initio* that this relationship is often misunderstood and narrated with a lot of misconception. Bakewell and de Haas (2007) present a comprehensive review of the complexity and diversity of migration patterns across Africa, with the aim of debunking pervasive myths about migration on the continent. Contrary to the perception that African migration is unidirectional (i.e. from Global South to Global North), migration patterns across Africa is diverse (Bakewell & de Haas, 2007).

In 2017, 53.4% of African migrants did not leave the continent, while 25.7% travelled to Europe and 12.2% to Asia. While the overwhelming majority (almost 90.0%) of North African migrants moved to Europe or Asia, 70.3% of sub-Saharan African migrants moved within the continent. Migration in Africa involved large numbers of

migrants moving both within and from the region. In 2019, over 21 million Africans were living in another African country – a significant increase from 2015, when around 18.5 million Africans were estimated to be living within the region. The number of Africans living in various regions increased over the same time period, rising from over 17 million in 2015 to almost 19 million in 2019. (UNDP 2020). South Africa was the country receiving the largest share of African migrants (6.1%), followed by Côte d'Ivoire (5.8%) and Uganda (4.4%). Among the 36.3 million migrants originating from Africa; almost 80.0% are estimated to migrate voluntarily and not involuntarily due to war (Mo Ibrahim Foundation (MIF), 2019).

According to Afrobarometer surveys from 34 countries, the large majority of Africans who would consider migrating, would do so for economic reasons: finding a job or better work opportunities (44.0%), fleeing economic hardship (22.0%), poverty or destitution (7.0%), better business prospects (4.6%) or lower taxes at destinations (0.4%). The five largest shares of people wanting to migrate for economic motives are found in Malawi (93.7%), Zimbabwe (92.1%), Niger (90.4%), Lesotho (87.4%) and Mali (87.2%). High levels of unemployment are also among the drivers of youth migration (Appiah-Nyamekye et al., 2019). For the purposes of my work, I focus on migratory patterns in West Africa and Ghana (see Bakewell & de Haas, 2007, for details of migratory patterns from other parts of Africa).

The colonial presence in coastal regions of West Africa facilitated the emergence of nascent extractive industries (e.g. plantation agriculture and mining) and urbanised cities such as Accra, Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Abidjan, Lomé, Dakar and Cotonou). These developments drew migrants from the Sahel region; the ethno-fiction *Jaguar*<sup>1</sup> on seasonal

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<sup>1</sup> The title 'Jaguar' expresses this feeling of success and prestige of the travellers in the film, as it refers to the contemporary ideal of a clever and elegant young man (Stoller, 1992, p. 143).

migration in West Africa by Jean Rouch (1957 – 1960), which re-enacted the process of seasonal migration in the Sahel region, is a classic example of this. This initiated major rural-rural and rural-urban migration (Adepoju, 2005; Arthur, 1991). After independence, migratory patterns did not detract from that established under colonial rule (Yaro, 2008). However, the sub-region experienced mass expulsions due to economic hardships in post-independent Ghana (1969) and Nigeria (1983 and 1985) (Bakewell & de Haas, 2007; Yaro, 2008). Conflicts in Liberia (1989 – 1996), Sierra Leone (1991 – 2001) and Côte d'Ivoire (2002 – 2004) resulted in significant internal displacement and large refugee populations throughout the sub-region, with Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire hosting majority of immigrants (cf. Anarfi & Kwankye, 2003). Nigeria hosted equal numbers of immigrants in the wake of the 1973 oil shock (Yaro, 2008). Migration landscape in the sub-region changed with the formation of The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 with the adoption of the ECOWAS protocol of 29th May, 1979 on the Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment.

The total number of emigrants in West Africa has more than doubled in the last 30 years, though their share of the population has remained largely stable, ranging from 2.8% in mid-year 1990 to 2.6% in mid-year 2020. This percentage varied greatly among countries, ranging from 0.8 per cent in Nigeria and 1.7 per cent in Niger to 7.758 per cent in Burkina Faso and 33.7 per cent in Cabo Verde (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2020). Migrants from more prosperous coastal areas increasingly emigrated outside the region, including Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. The percentage of Western African migrants in Europe also grew from 12 percent in mid-1990 to 19 percent in mid-2020 and the share in North America increased from 3 percent to 10 percent over the same period, with destinations driven in part by residual colonial ties and common languages (United Nations Department of Economic

and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2020). The conflict that ravaged the sub-region therefore engendered new migration poles – Libya, South Africa, Gabon and Botswana – emerged (Adepoju, 2000, 2004). Due to increasing trans-Saharan migration to Libya, other Maghreb countries and the EU, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, Niger and Chad have developed into transit countries (de Haas, 2006). Countries such as Cape Verde, Senegal and Mali enjoyed a long standing guest-worker relationship with their colonial masters in much the same way as North African countries in the 1960s and 1970s. (Carling, 2001). Since the late 1980s, however, there has been a remarkable increase and diversification of migration to Europe and North America, principally from Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. This comprised both highly-skilled migration – for instance, of health workers to the United Kingdom, the United States and the Gulf and relatively low-skilled, often irregular migration – in particular, to the informal economies of (mainly Southern) Europe (Adepoju, 2000). Increasing immigration restrictions in Europe, however, have not led to a decrease in emigration but rather its increasingly irregular character and growing costs. This has made migrants more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. In particular, trafficking of young women who work in prostitution in Europe, is a subject of major policy concern (Carling, 2006).

Anarfi et al. (2003) have classified Ghana's migration history into four phases, describing it as dynamic, complex and embedded in historical antecedents. During the first period (pre-colonial to late 1960s), Ghana experienced minimal emigration and a high level of immigration from many West Africans due to the buoyancy of Ghana's colonial and post-independent economy. The second phase (1970-1980) was characterised by economic hardships and resulted in accelerated international migration involving teachers or lecturers, lawyers and administrators, to countries like Uganda, Botswana, Zambia and Nigeria (because of the oil boom), where their services were in high demand. By the third

phase (1980-1990), migration had become a coping strategy for individuals and families, as many skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled Ghanaians emigrated to many countries including Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria (Anarfi et al., 2000). In addition to labour migrants, there were many Ghanaian migrants who fled the country as a result of political persecution, confiscation of property, imprisonment without trial and executions. According to Bump (2006), UNHCR registered over 90,000 Ghanaian asylum applications between 1982 and 1991, making Ghana one of the top ten countries of origin of forced migration at that time. The final phase, the period of intensification and diasporisation of Ghanaians (1990s), saw increased emigration to Europe and North America. Nevertheless, migration to West Africa and other African countries remained the most important - in terms of numbers. This could also be ascribed to the decline of Nigeria as a migration pole.

Ghanaian emigrants are well dispersed across the globe. Historical data shows that Nigeria, the United States and the United Kingdom constantly ranked as the top three countries of destination. In 2019, almost one out of every four Ghanaian emigrants (24.0% or 233,002) was living in Nigeria, making it the top country of destination. The top country of destination outside of Africa and second globally, was the United States – home to 17.9 per cent or 173,952 Ghanaian nationals. The United Kingdom hosted the largest Ghanaian population in Europe and the third largest globally, with 140,920 or approximately 14.5 per cent of Ghana's total emigrant stock (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2019).

### **2.3 The political-economy of migration in Ghana**

An encounter in 2017 between France's President, Emmanuel Macron, and Ghana's President, Nana Addo-Dankwa Akufo-Addo (Africa Web TV, 2021, 6.06) set the tone for

interrogating the political-economics of migration in Ghana, in particular, and in Africa as a whole, in relation to the relationship with Europe. Nana Addo-Dankwa Akufo-Addo:

But our main responsibility as leaders, as citizens, is what we are going to do to grow our own country. What are the institutions that work that would allow us to have good governance, to have accountable governments to make sure that the monies that are placed at the disposal of leaders are used for the interest of the state and not for those of the leaders. To have systems that allow for accountability, that allow for diversity, that allow for people to be able to express themselves and contribute to fashioning the public will and public interest.... we have to get away from the mindset of dependency; this mindset about what can France do for us, France will do whatever it needs to do for its own sake.... African youths are embarking on this hazardous trip because they don't believe they have opportunities in our own countries. I believe that if we change that mindset, that mindset which is contingent on aid and charity we would see that in the decades ahead of us the full flowering of the African people will take place. And the new African personality that was talked about at the time of independence will become real and imminent in our time.

The president of Ghana made these remarks when the President of France paid a working visit to Ghana in 2017. His views echoed the neo-classical understanding of migration flows. This economic consideration was at the heart of Ghana's migration governance goal, as articulated in its migration policy, thus: "to promote the benefit and minimize the cost of internal and international migration through legal means with the rights and security of migrants well respected in order to ensure socio-economic development in Ghana" (Ministry of Interior, 2016, p. 13). This economic logic was supported by remittances sent home by Ghanaians living abroad; remittances constituted a substantial part of Ghana's GDP. The World Bank showed that the amount of remittances to Ghana was USD 2.1 billion in 2016 (World Bank Group, 2017). In addition, the Ghana Living Standards Survey revealed that remittances contribute 2.3 per cent to the total household income of Ghanaians (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014, p. 151). Internal and international migration were both valued in Ghana because they were thought to significantly contribute to the socioeconomic development of Ghanaian households (Awumbila et al., 2014; De Haas, 2010; Teye et al., 2017, 2019).

Ghana's population currently stands at 30.8 million, with females constituting 50.7 per cent. The Greater Accra and Ashanti regions remain the most populous regions in Ghana with a population of 5.4 million each. The country boasts of a significant growing youth population, with 57% of this demographic category under the age of 25 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). Ghana has the advantage of comparatively high levels of education and human development. The country's Human Development Index rose 31.4% (i.e. from 0.465 in 1990 to 0.611 in 2019), resulting in Ghana being ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in Africa and 138<sup>th</sup> in the world. Poverty levels show a steady decline during this period (UNDP, 2020). Ghana's rising level of educational attainment and affluence as a lower-middle income country could generate high levels of both migration aspirations and actualisation because, emigration rates in middle-income countries generally, are much higher than in poor countries (Carling & Talleraas, 2016; Clemens, 2014; Dao et al. 2018; de Haas 2007). Ghana thus remains both an attractive transit and destination country for most West African migrants. Ghana's lower-middle income status obfuscates its growing inequality. However, despite the continued economic growth and significant poverty reduction, income inequality has been growing steadily for a number of years in Ghana. The country's Gini co-efficient grew by 3.3 percentage points between 1992 and 2013 (from 37 in 1992 to 41 in 2013) (Oduro et al., 2018). Recent trends also suggested that the very richest were capturing an ever larger share of the growth. The wealthiest 10% of Ghanaians shared 32% of Ghana's total consumption—more than was consumed by the bottom 60% of the population combined, while the very poorest 10% of the population consumed only 2% (Oduro et al., 2018). The parallel existence of affluence and poverty therefore calls for the examination of both the economic and socio-cultural logics of migration in Ghana.

## 2.4 The economic and socio-cultural logics of migration in Ghana

One must look beyond economic reasons to explain the high propensity of West African nationals who migrate outside the sub-region to the Global North, since only two countries in West Africa are among the ten poorest countries in the world (International Monetary Fund, 2021). I therefore explore Honwana's (2012) *waithood* and the culture of migration (Ali, 2007; Kandel & Massey, 2002) to provide some economic logic as to why migration is probably an answer.

*Waithood* is symptomatic of the growing inequalities being experienced by the youth across the globe and Africa in particular. According to Honwana (2012, p. 4):

The majority of African youths are today grappling with a lack of jobs and deficient education. After they leave school with few skills they are unable to obtain work and become independent—to build, buy, or rent a house for themselves, support their relatives, get married, establish families, and gain social recognition as adults. These attributes of adulthood are becoming increasingly unattainable by the majority of young people in Africa. They are forced to live in a liminal, neither-here-nor-there state; they are no longer children who require care, yet they are not yet considered mature social adults.

African youth are experiencing *waithood*, a prolonged and uncertain stage between childhood and adulthood, showing their inability to enter the labor market and attain the social markers of adulthood (Honwana, 2012). Young people on the Continent remain in a liminal space in which they are neither dependent children nor autonomous adults. In the midst of this stuntedness, without much opportunities for attaining adulthood however, young people are not helpless, hapless and passive; they are creatively exercising their agency in coping. *Waithood* thus illuminates our understanding of the position of contemporary African youth, by not situating their problems within chronological age categories, but in the reality of their lived experiences. The agentic option of migration therefore becomes a counter-balancing phenomenon to *waithood*; a way of escaping the anomie of youth, as they confront their inability to become adults within their socio-cultural settings. However, for most turning to migration as an adaptive strategy, it is

increasingly becoming impossible for them to physically cross over into destination countries in the Global North especially. Hence, most can only imagine their future away from home. I extensively quote Adepaju (2010) to illustrate the lived experiences of most youth in Africa which fuel their desperate imagination of a home away from home:

Africa's disillusioned, unemployed youth faces difficult choices between being apprenticed to trade, farming, or going to school, only to join, at the end of it, the queue of job-seekers roaming the streets, seeking unsuccessfully for months for even lowly-paid jobs. For most, migration in pursuit of higher education or wage employment is urban-centred, although that may be preparatory to migrating abroad. By migrating, many youths simply exchange misery without hope for misery with hope, [...] since the late 1980s, when the region experienced negative economic growth and a deteriorating well-being of its people, such migration has been strictly for survival; as the effects of economic restructuring bite harder, migration has become a coping mechanism of a last resort. [...] Unemployment in Africa's urban areas is essentially among youth. Initially localised among primary school leavers in the early 1960s. The pool of the unemployed now includes secondary school leavers as well as university graduates who constitute a dormant labour force socially and economically dependent and disillusioned. (pp. 10-11)

In desperation, most of these youth become easy prey to scams, risk their lives in hazardous journeys to countries of the North assisted by bogus agencies, in search of the illusory green pastures (p.11). Some movements can only be potential; as desired destinations remain a figment of prospective migrants' imagination. This is more the reality in Ghana, where desired destinations are imagined as: 'lands flowing with milk and honey'<sup>2</sup> while at the same time, immigration policies of these imagined destinations make actual movement only a dream or an exercise in mental travel or cognitive migration (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016).

In a setting such as Ghana where there is a 'culture of migration' (Ali, 2007; Kandel & Massey, 2002), migration is seen as an important livelihood option (de Haas, 2010; Awumbila et al. 2014; Teye et al. 2017, 2019) that many young people exercise in

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<sup>2</sup> How Europe is constructed in the minds of potential migrants in Ghana against Fortress Europe, an obvious reference to a bible verse Exodus 3:17. "...And I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey."'

order to escape perceived crisis of annihilation to better their lives and that of their families for any upward social mobility. Ali (2007) conceptualises the culture of migration “as those ideas, practices and cultural artefacts which reinforce the celebration of migration and migrants. This includes beliefs, desire, symbols, myths, education, celebrations of migration in various media and material goods” (p.39). The culture of migration thus posits migration as a learned behaviour. Kandel and Massey (2002) observe the phenomenon (i.e., the culture of migration) among Mexican migrants to the United States, where they identified that as migratory behaviour permeates through a community, it increasingly enters the calculus of conscious choice and eventually becomes normative.

Young people who grow up and come of age increasingly expect to migrate internationally in the course of their lives. For young men, especially, migration becomes a rite of passage and those who do not attempt it are seen as lazy, unenterprising and undesirable as potential mates. In communities where international labour is fully integrated into the local culture, young men seeking to become adults literally do not consider other options; they assume they will migrate in preparation for marriage and that they will go abroad frequently in the course of their lives, as family needs and personal circumstances change.

Young people in Ghana have a strong mobile habitus. Habitus is “the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them” (Wacquant, 2005 cited in Navarro, 2006, p. 16). The Ghanaian, particularly those belonging to the Akan ethnic group, who constitute majority of participants in this study, possess a deeply-rooted culture of migration which places a high premium on internal and transnational mobility; culturally and economically (Tonah, 2007; Quartey, 2009). This mobile habitus or the migratory disposition of the Ghanaian birthed out of the materiality of their culture, offers a socio-cultural logic, evident in their proverbs.

Proverbs belong to a body of cultural products including myths, poems, crafts, visual art, songs, folktales, books, magazines and advertisements thought to contain valuable cultural information symbolising the uniqueness of a specific society. By embodying the footprints of the social context that produces them, they mirror the long-term cultural dynamics defining the society. Thus, as a cultural product, proverbs are useful in explaining human behaviour within a cultural context ( Dzokoto et al., 2018). Among the Akans, the framing of the good life itself instigates movement as in: "Wo te faako a wote w'ade so". To wit, staying at one place denies one of livelihood opportunities. Another proverb: "Nkurow dɔso a, wɔntena faako nnye animguase." To wit, "If there are many towns to choose from, one does not stay at one place to suffer disgrace". The benefit of travel is therefore captured by the proverb: "Kurow koro mu nni nyansa". To wit, "There is no wisdom in a single town." This means that someone who travels gains more experience than a 'stay-at-home' (Appiah et al. 2007). This worldview fires the imaginations of the youth to want to eke out a livelihood abroad. Akyeampong (2010) aptly captures this social imaginary of the Ghanaian youth as follows:

Ghanaian youth are obsessed with finding "a connection" that would take them "abroad" to Europe or North America with the firm belief that they would "succeed" in life once they get there and return as "big men" and "big women." People dress up to go to the airport as a social event just to witness those returning from overseas and traveling abroad. They imagine themselves traveling and draw comfort from their proximity to the "been-tos" and the "going-tos." Television programs such as "Greetings from Abroad," which aired on Ghana Television about ten years ago, and the more recent "Back Home Again" feed the social imagination about opportunities outside Ghana and possibilities on return. (p. 2)

The hurdles involved in getting a visa have made the need for good connections vital and led to the emergence of a visa industry which helps potential migrants to find or forge the documents required for a fee (Twum-Baah, 2005). Other young people embark on dangerous journeys across the desert and the sea in search for a better life abroad. No matter the route, many of those who do succeed in leaving Ghana end up in low-status

low-paid jobs in European cities (May et al., 2007). In a recent study of risk perception in the context of unauthorised migration in Ghana, a participant captured the alluring pull of Europe as:

If you are in Europe and you don't have any document and you are hiding from the police, I think it is better than living in Ghana. Because in Ghana, even if you are working, you can't get any money. (van Bommel, 2019, p.11)

Involuntarily caught between the alluring pull of Europe and the increasingly impenetrable borders of Europe on one hand and the repulsive push of the perceived hopeless situation at home, many youths in Ghana who are strenuously looking for opportunities to escape the threat of permanent social stagnation (van Bommel, 2019), can only do so in their imaginations. In spite of a socio-cultural logic that privileges travel, the reality of the global world order is that the international mobility regime stratifies along many variables. Thus, many from the Global South are denied entry into the Global North. Nevertheless, citizens of the Global North or the West have unrestricted access to countries of the Global South. Mata-Codesal (2015, p. 2276) succinctly opines:

Currently, global capitalism and human mobility are closely linked, but in complex ways. At the same time that the capitalist mode of production encourages the free movement of capital and goods, it has established filtering mechanisms to select, control and discipline worker mobility (Aquino and Varela 2013, 7). Restrictive immigration policies are not used to block but to filter who is legally entitled to cross national borders and who is not. In the present context of international migration, the most obvious mobility barriers—destination countries' restrictive immigration policies—are not monolithic but are applied selectively to specific groups. The range of authorised and unauthorised movements applies differently to different people, beyond their nationality. The global mobility regime stratifies according to several variables; nationality and socioeconomic status are probably two of the most relevant.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Ghanaians have a strong mobile habitus. This stems from both the political economy of migration that privileges remittances from abroad and a world view that celebrates migration. The Ghanaian experience is deeply steeped in colonial history, where prospective migrants mostly imagine the United Kingdom, followed by Europe and North

America. However, the lived reality of most Ghanaian youth desiring to travel abroad is that they are caught in what Kleist describes as “immobility paradox”; they are thrust into a liminal space where their minds travel to their imagined destination, while their bodies are stuck in Ghana because they fail in their attempts to bodily travel abroad due to restrictive immigration context policies.



## CHAPTER THREE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1 Introduction

The chapter presents a theoretical and empirical review, focusing on migration potential and outcomes. I proceed by first looking at migration as a phenomenon from a social science philosophical perspective. I then follow this up with the historical evolution of migration, theorising with special emphasis on the mind as a critical element in migration studies. Subsequently, I present the theoretical basis for my work, before concluding the chapter with some related empirical studies which highlight the gaps in the literature that form the basis for my work.

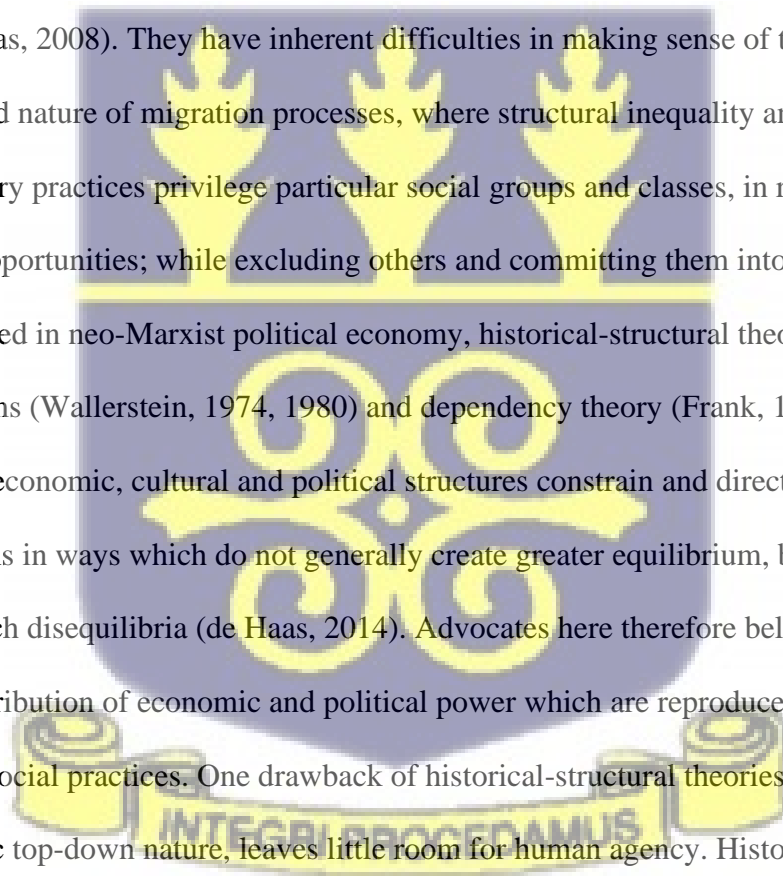
#### 3.2 Migration and Philosophy of Social Science

Social scientific theorising about migration has been traditionally situated within an agency or structure dualism which sees the agency of individual human actors as distinct from social structures. The free will to realise desires and the extent to which they are constrained by social ‘things’, society or social institutions, mirrors this duality debate. This bifurcates the field into functionalist social science and “interpretative” social science. The functionalist paradigm conceives society as a system – a set of interdependent parts, with an inherent tendency towards equilibrium. It originates from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century social science; pioneered by Comte and his contemporaries, aimed at emulating the natural sciences in a philosophical orientation known as positivism.

The positivist orientation believes in objective social reality, measured “objectively” by empirical observation to formulate social laws. Neo-classical equilibrium theory and related methods of mathematical modelling and econometric analysis, focusing on proving causality, are a good contemporary example of functionalist social science. Right from its beginnings in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, functionalists’ views have been

contested by the ‘interpretative’ social scientists who argue that, societies cannot be compared to natural phenomena because there is no “objective” social reality outside of people’s perceptions, interpretations and active construction of social reality via language (discourse), culture, and more generally, symbols. At the same time, critical theory, rooted in Marxist political economy, criticises the unrealistic assumptions of functionalist theories; particularly because of their ignorance of structural inequalities and their related assumption of free rational choice (de Haas, 2014).

The functionalist paradigm of social theory however, does not adequately mirror socio-cultural factors shaping migration in developing contexts, riddled with unpredictable economic markets and structural constraints influencing people’s decisions (cf. Carling, 2002; de Haas, 2008). They have inherent difficulties in making sense of the socially-differentiated nature of migration processes, where structural inequality and discriminatory practices privilege particular social groups and classes, in respect of legal migration opportunities; while excluding others and committing them into exploitative labour. Rooted in neo-Marxist political economy, historical-structural theories – such as world systems (Wallerstein, 1974, 1980) and dependency theory (Frank, 1969), emphasise how social, economic, cultural and political structures constrain and direct the behaviour of individuals in ways which do not generally create greater equilibrium, but rather reinforce such disequilibria (de Haas, 2014). Advocates here therefore believe that, there is unequal distribution of economic and political power which are reproduced by cultural beliefs and social practices. One drawback of historical-structural theories is that, their deterministic top-down nature, leaves little room for human agency. Historical-structural views thus tend to depict migrants as passive pawns or victims of capitalism who have no choice, but to migrate for survival. This picture of the migrant is however inconsistent with the numerous successful livelihood stories produced out of migration. Depicting all



migrants as passive victims of capitalism or rational actors is therefore extremely unrealistic. This shows that, neither functionalist nor historical-structural theories provide realistic accounts of migratory agency.

Migration as a phenomenon is complex and diverse. Early attempts at theorising migration are rigid and disconnected from each other. However, recent efforts blending deductive with inductive reasoning lead to a variety of middle-range theorisations which resonate more closely with the realities of migration today (King, 2012). These complexity and diversity undermine comprehensive or universal migration theorising (Castles & Miller, 2009; Salt, 1987). According to Arango (2000): “migration is too diverse and multifaceted to be explained by a single theory” (p. 283). This notion, according to de Haas (2014), leads to the abandonment of theorisation altogether. But the complexity cannot be the reason to abandon efforts to build better theories, since most social phenomena are complex by nature.

This complexity has not stood in the way of other fields of social inquiry, progressing in their social scientific theorising. Although social phenomena are chaotic and messy, they still maintain some regularities, patterns or structure which are elaborately constituted in many parts and in multi-layered arrangements. The work of Mabogunje (1970) and Lee (1966) attests to the regularities inherent in migration, where most migrants move along spatially-clustered trajectories between particular origins and destination, when the phenomenon is viewed from a micro-perspective. Other scholars, Zelinsky (1971), Skeldon (1990) and Hatton and Williamson (1998) have observed clear long-term regularities between demographic, economic and social transitions on one hand and the emergence of particular forms of internal and international migration on the other hand, from a macro-perspective.

The quest for elaborating new concepts of human mobility which account for both agency and structure concurrently is therefore on. Hein de Haas (2021) however acknowledges the difficulty in practice, but proposes a meta-theoretical conceptualisation of migration which envisions migration as a function of aspirations and capabilities. This benefits migration theorisation in three ways: (1) it expands the theoretical concept of human mobility to include movement and non-movement, (2) it improves our ability to develop a richer and more realistic understanding of the ways in which macro-level change affects people's migratory agency and (3) it enables us to elaborate new, theory-derived migration and mobility categories. This therefore calls on migration researchers to be imaginative in explaining migration as a phenomenon. It is against this background, that I centre the mind in theorising migration.

### 3.3 Centering the mind on migration studies

All migration starts from the mind. Subsequent to this, then all other things some scholars tend to focus on, follow. A core function of the human mind is to predict and prepare for the immediate and distant future (Bulley & Irish, 2018). Tillich (1937) in his article: "Mind and Migration", asserts the centrality of the mind in migration:

it is my intention to show that there is not simply an accidental but an essential relationship between mind and migration that mind in its very nature is migratory and that human mental creativity and man's migrating power belong together. (p. 295)

This does not mean the mind has been absent. Mobilities are produced by different mindsets; making mindsets an important site for exploring migration decision-making.

Centering the mind on migration studies means addressing two obstacles – territoriality and corporeality bias. The conceptualisation of cognitive migration and the cognitive migrant calls into question notions about territoriality and bounded nation states. Transnationalism deconstructs the territorial equation between state, nation and society (Nedelcu, 2012) and offers serious arguments for changing the lens through which social

scientists perceive and analyse the world. The heuristic value of the transnational paradigm thus resides in its ability to encapsulate the disconnection between state, national, cultural and geographical borders (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). As a constructivist approach, transnationalism aims to understand

[b]oth the social scientists observing the social world as well as the effects that this has on this world and how, at the same time, the forces of the social world shape the outlook of the social scientists. (p. 302).

The experience of time and space influences people's physical mobility and sense of identity. Thus, the changes in time and space from media technologies, provoke heated debates between theorists; 'Time-space distancing' (Giddens, 1994, p. 2) and 'time-space compression' (Harvey, 1990, p. 426). This debate results in the re-organisation of time and space within social life, that consider the presence and action of the 'absent other' (i.e. one who is 'locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction' (Giddens 1990, p. 18). This implies looking at how informational proximity within a permanent regime of digital ubiquity, transforms the very significance of geographical distance, identity and social ties for both migrant and non-migrant populations, which in turn leads us to consider the transnational practices of migrants, in relation to the broader process of socialisation of new generations, whereby social representations, social networks and the imaginary, go beyond local and national contexts. The advent of the digital revolution launches a new qualitative phase of transnationalism (Nedelcu, 2012). ICTs enable new forms of migrant transnationalism, transforming the significance of the territorial rooting of migrants' social life. Many migrants therefore move easily within transnational social spaces and frame new social configurations, by creating new social and political geographies.

Corporeality bias is the second obstacle. Cognitive migration is an act of cognitive displacement, where the mind travels to the receiving country, ahead of the body.

Personal, structural and socio-cultural motivations enable this displacement. A potential migrant identifies the need to change a place of livelihood because in comparison to other places, it cannot ensure successful livelihood. This perception of place as imbued with poverty or well-being, is at the heart of neo-classical economic explication of migration. However, existing theories in their varied iterations, maintain the understanding of mobility in its bodily form. From Ravenstein's law of migration to Lee's push and pull framework through to dual market segmentation to new economics of labour migration, homo-economicus has to move from one place to another for rational instrumental reasons. Where these theories even expand to accommodate non-economic reasons as in Lee's intervening variables, NELM's appreciation of the household level micro contexts, homo-economicus still moves physically across geographical space, to be deemed a migrant. Not even the behavioural turn in migration research, with its emphasis on perception, attitudes highlighting the potential migrants' nuanced embeddedness in a sociocultural context (cf: Golledge, 1980), gives up the lingering ghost of the rational and physical conceptualisation of migration.

### **3.4 Theoretical Positioning**

My theoretical positioning starts with the conceptualisation of aspiration and desire as imagination. This is followed by brief reviews of the two-stage theory of migration aspiration, socio-cultural model of imagination, Lubkemann's (2008) displacement in place model and Dzokoto's (2020) Akan theory of mind.

#### **3.4.1 Conceptualising aspiration and desire as imagination**

The rationale for choosing imagination is to overcome simplistic mechanistic models of migration by employing a more culturally-sensitive approach that recognises the role of agency, aspirations and emotions in migrants' pathways (Cohen & Jonsson 2011; Bal & Willems, 2014; Carling & Collins 2018). Furthermore, imagination unifies

aspiration and desire; aspiration and desire are synonyms in common parlance and matters of individual cognition and emotion (Carling & Collins, 2018). As outcomes of individual cognition and emotions, I conceive both as originating from imagination. Cognition and emotions are features of imagination. As Salazer (2011) notes: “earlier research on mobility also tended to separate the imagination, as being an external impact, from practice. Yet imagining is an embodied practice of transcending both physical and sociocultural distance” (p.577).

According to Ray (2006), aspirations are the ‘social grounding of individual desire’ (p. 209). But whereas Ray sees desire as inherently individualistic contrast to the social, Collins (2018) explicitly foregrounds desire ‘as a social force’. Inspired by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1983), he argues that a subject’s interest in migration only exists within a particular social context and is only possible because of desires invested in that social formation. Collins’ (2018) conception of desire as a social force in Deleuzian terms, is also expressed by Ingold (2013) using imagination. Ingold argues that imagination is active in carving out ‘paths’ or ‘ways’ and that imagining is not an act of absent-minded pondering, instead, it directs engagements with the material and is itself shaped through such engagements (Chambers, 2018; Ingold, 2013). Imagination and reality are therefore mutuality constitutive (Thompson, 2017). Furthermore, desire itself is imaginative (Collins, 2018). According to Cangia and Zittoun (2020):

Imagination can support in understanding how the potential to move is not only embedded in socio-political dynamics, but can also relate to people’s desires, aspirations and imaginations of mobility. Migration, for example, even before the physical move itself, entails the experience of existential mobility, a feeling that life is ‘going nowhere’ (Hage, 2005), and as a result a reflection on the multiple possible directions of our lives as well as the projection of a potential life elsewhere. (p. 9)

Imagination is a faculty of a social mind that locates itself in the body as embodied cognition and proceeds from historical, social contexts and places (Smith, 2006). Yet

while imagination is an important factor in the fundamental human desire to better one's future circumstances and drives migration, the capacity to realize these desires and future plans is dependent on "(...) access to economic resources and powers of symbolic legitimation, neither of which are distributed equitably" Smith (2006, p. 54). It also depends on the social support systems and interpersonal trust networks available to migrants (Tilly, 2007). Individuals seek maximum satisfaction in as many areas of value in their lives as possible, but the simple desire to move does not equal real intentions as "perceived constraints intervene" and the intention to move does not necessarily result in actual migration, as "real constraints intervene" (Gardner, 1981, pp, 65-67). In short, for migration to occur, one has to perceive better opportunities elsewhere, possess the capacity to aspire towards those opportunities and have the capabilities to realise their aspirations (Carling 2002; de Haas 2011, Czaika & Vothknecht, 2012).

### 3.4.2 Two-stage model of migration aspiration

Carling's (2002) two-stage model of migration aspiration (aspiration or ability) and its recent revision (Carling & Schewel, 2018) provides for my evaluative framework for the formation of migration imagination and its outcomes. The model suggests that migration is an outcome of the aspiration to migrate and the ability to do so. The conviction that leaving is preferable to staying, thus defines migration aspiration and coupled with the ability to do so, makes one an embodied migrant. Not everyone who aspires to migrate however, has the ability to do so, hence the category of involuntary non migrants. There are also those with the ability to migrate, but prefer to stay; they are voluntary non-migrants. I use the two-stage model because of its consideration of evaluation of conditions at home which produce migration aspirations and failure in situ, which results in a migrant aspirant failing to leave and therefore becoming involuntarily immobilised. The two-stage model in all of its iterations: aspiration/capability (de Haas,

2010, Schewel, 2020) is seized with corporeality bias and linearity bias which make it impossible to apply them to cognitive migration and return. However, the notion of involuntary immobilisation is very important to my work and needs further clarification as put forward by Lubkemann (2008).

### 3.4.3 Displacement in place

I use Lubkemann's (2008) concept of "displacement in place" to explain the displacement of the involuntarily immobile, although they remain physically immobile in the country of origin. Lubkemann deems the conflation of migration and displacement as problematic and theoretically re-examines it by analytically decoupling migration from displacement. Using the civil war in Mozambique as a case study, Lubkemann contends that the civil war's most devastating effects include the disruption of labour migration and mobility-based strategies for coping with ecological duress. As a result, those who suffer are not those who flee the country and become refugees or who relocate elsewhere within Mozambique (IDPs), but those who involuntarily remain 'in place' throughout the war's entire fifteen-year span. This population, comprising mainly of women, children, conscripted young men and the elderly, remain in place because of the immobilising effects of the war. In a similar situation, my participants were not physically restricted from accessing coping strategies; they are however restricted from accessing their imagined home away from home. Lubkemann's position thus highlights the corporeality bias, because his notion of immobilisation addresses only the physicality of immobilisation; it does not explore cognitive or imagined mobility.

### 3.4.4 Socio-cultural model of imagination

My theoretical inspiration derives from a developmental view on imagination from a socio-cultural perspective (2020). Imagination, according to Zittoun (2020), is the process of temporarily unfastening from the here-and-now; a process which demands the

use of various resources, so as to take some distance from the current present and situated experience. Such an approach emphasises the importance of non-linear temporality in the context of migrants' changing subjective current realities. Migrants weave together images of the past, present and future, to cope with situations of trauma, confer meaning to their current situation and re-define or re-position themselves towards the future. This includes tracking the processes of change in imagining alternative possible lives. From a socio-cultural perspective, imagination is culturally-informed and shared. Imagination is thus theorised as being significantly shaped or contested by the collective imagination of entire communities. For example, from the shared imaginary expectations of life in Europe; among communities in countries of origin, to the constantly-developing situated imaginaries of refugee communities, on arrival in Europe. As such, imagination is inherently cultural (Zittoun & Glaveanu, 2018).

The model reasons that, individuals who imagine life elsewhere, draw on communal cultural resources, which form part of a collective semiotic guidance system; a system which they create together and is dialogical (Valsiner, 2000). This includes drawing on cultural symbols, patterned practices such as storytelling, mental time travel and other forms of mental projection, in order to imagine (Kirmayer & Ramstead, 2017). Imagination among individuals is therefore constantly evolving across the life course, in relation to the socio-cultural environment. Zittoun (2020) explains imagination as a process which creates "loops" out of the present, here-and-now of experiences connected to the material reality of the current environment. She conceptualises the process as being triggered by some disrupting event, which generates a disjunction from the person's unfolding experience of the "real" world and as unfolding as a loop, which eventually comes back to the current, actual experience (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013).

Zittoun assumes the embodiment of one's imagination at a point. It is this embodiment that belies the assertion: "so, a person's life can at one moment be seen as a configuration of proximal and distal spheres of experience across which a person moves without particular difficulties" (Zittoun, 2020, p. 658). It is the possibility of moving from the proximal sphere (i.e. experience in the here-and-now of one's embodied location) to the distal sphere (i.e. experience that is partly or fully detached from the embodied and material here-and-now) that accounts for the change in the status of the sphere of experience. Thus, a current proximal sphere of experience, will become in the future, a past current one (Zittoun & Gullepie, 2016). An imagination of life away from home, therefore becomes a distal sphere of experience, awaiting embodiment. Proceeding by this logic thus makes consideration of the emergence of new imagination after embodiment epistemologically valid, as Zittoun quizzes: "[T]he person will have to change some distal spheres of experiences, too: what was once a project or imagination of the future has now become actual, so what new imagination does emerge?" (Zittoun, 2020, p. 659). In the context of failed migration, at least for those who fail in situ, this question does not arise.

My interest is not alternative imaginations that emerge, subsequent to actual migration. My focus is the failure to realise the imagination to pursue the good life abroad. The current conceptualisation of imagination from a socio-cultural perspective, does not envisage the involuntary disruption of the process of becoming an embodied migrant. The looping out or uncoupling from the "here-and-now" in the context of migration, ends up in an embodied migration. But failing a visa application process curtails the uncoupling or looping out process; resulting in disembodied proximal experience. Mescoli (2014) describes young people initiating migratory process as living within three concurrent space-time circumstances: "here", "there" and "in between". The "here" being the origin,

“there” denoting the destination country and the “in-between” representing the place where these people live; in their own country, but dreaming of another one.

The complex representation of the “elsewhere” or the “land flowing with milk and honey” incorporates return to the homeland (Mescoli, 2014). According to Zittoun (2020), we loop out, yet come back and recouple to our proximal experience. In the context of failed migration such as being bounced a visa, I argue that the recoupling process proceeds in two directions: either by reconstructing the break in the looping out process and still pursuing an outward future or accepting the break in the loop, healing from its traumatic consequences and returning the mind home to pursue a homeward future. It is however worth noting that, failing to secure a visa to travel to the imagined destination, is a rupture in the imaginative process. Nevertheless, because a displacement (Mescoli, 2014) occurs cognitively, the involuntary disruption of the process of becoming an embodied migrant, results in disembodied experience. The mind remains at the destination without a “body”, while the body remains at the origin without a “mind”. This makes the uncoupling or looping out process, an act of cognitive displacement and the recoupling process, an act of cognitive emplacement. It is therefore important to understand the mind that engages in the displacement and emplacement process, so I turn to Dzokoto’s Akan theory of mind.

### 3.4.5 Akan theory of mind

Dzokoto (2020), continuing in the writings of the philosophical tradition of Wilhelm Antom Amo (1738), Wiredu (1987) and Gyekye (1995), observes an emphasis on a mind that is action-focused, enabling one to do, as well as outward-focused and pragmatic. She surmises that, this action-orientation role of the mind leads to a sense that minds matter, because of the actions and the patterns of actions they produce and therefore should be judged morally. She discerns an Akan narrative of consciousness that integrally includes the body and the spiritual components; “*sunsum*” and “*akra*”. She also notes that

for the Akan, the mind does not situate itself in a headspace principally, but spreads out more. From the perspective of Akans, the mind does not focus on interior experience of the individuated self, but influences other members in the social setting, as they in turn influence it. In addition, the mind is partly bodily-focused in architecture and porous to spiritual forces in disposition.

### 3.5 Review of previous studies

The review covers three (3) broad strands of researches in migration studies. These are studies with cognitive, imagination or imaginaries as their theme, studies that focus on migration outcomes and temporalities of aspiration and (im)mobility studies. The goal therefore is to establish the centrality of the mind in migration outcomes.

#### 3.5.1 Imagination studies

Recent studies show that the number of aspiring migrants continue to be on the increase worldwide; not only in the typical emigration countries in the South, but also in the usual destination countries in the North. Yet, while migration theorists have recently included the micro perspective of individual agency and socio-cultural logics in their search for the engine behind migration flows, far less research has been done on the socio-cultural embeddedness of the imaginations of aspiring migrants; most of whom will never migrate (Willems, 2014, p. 320). Imagination thus features prominently in a current review of the literature on subjective and intangible factors that shape migration decision-making (Hagen-Zanker & Hennessey, 2021). Research on imagination is therefore an interdisciplinary endeavour emerging out of sociology, anthropology, cognitive neuroscience, psychology, languages and culture studies and geography.

Research themes on imagination however vary. While some studies examine geographical imaginations of migrant aspirants (Akyeampong, 2010; Marcus, 2009; Thompson, 2017), others focus on the mind's travel as cognitive migration or mental time

travel (Koikkalainen et al., 2020; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016) and imagined mobilities (Cangia & Zittoun, 2020; Womersley, 2020; Womersley & Kloetzer, 2018). These imaginations can relate to all aspects of the decision-making process, including the mental thresholds of whether to migrate (referred to by van der Velde and van Naerssen (2011) as the ‘indifference threshold’), trajectory (how to travel) and location (where to go) (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2016; van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011). Most importantly, imagined mobilities have ‘real-life consequences’ and can slow down, accelerate or prevent mobility (Cangia & Zittoun, 2020; Raitapuro & Bal, 2016; Salazar, 2020). Critically, these imaginations may not be realised and as a result, ‘there are many more cognitive migrants than actual migrants’ (Kyle & Koikkalainen, 2011, p. 9). Cognitive migrants are those who are willing to potentially leave and are explicitly considering the option (Kyle & Koikkalainen, 2011).

Many scholars have engaged with imaginaries of would-be migrants in Africa, in West Africa (Akyeampong, 2010; Schewel, 2015; Suso, 2019; Vigh, 2009), in North Africa (Mescoli, 2014; Palladino, 2018) and Central and Eastern Africa (Alpes, 2014; Belloni, 2020; Salazar, 2011). Since my focus is on Ghana, the review focuses on imaginaries in West Africa; not that they differ in content from other parts of the continent, but in order to reflect that imaginaries are grounded in geographies. Although these regions are united by their experience of colonialism, the practice of colonialism differed; based on who the colonizer was. Nowhere in the sub-region is this the reality than the West Africa sub-region. Here, you have Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone influences.

These imaginaries are united in their articulation of decadence, stagnation and precarity in the countries of origin which deny and block any pathway to ‘social becoming’, as described by Vigh (2006) in his extensive study of Guinea Bissauians. Both

Gaibazzi (2010) and Conrad Suso (2019, 2010) have documented the inevitability of the desire to travel among the youth of Africa as the product of an actual or imagined exit options from situations characterised by “abjection and by a lack of perspective in relation to self-realisation at home” (Gaibazzi, 2010, p. 19) represented by the dailiness of Gambian youth. The Gambian context as well as the everydayness of Senegalese youth (Schewel, 2015) and the Sonke of Mali (Jonsson, 2011), provide ample examples of migration as tied to rites of passage and what the implications are, when those rites remain unfulfilled. One can also discern a racialised representation of difference in the imaginaries. This is not surprising, due to the Othering of Africa.

In their work in Cape Verde, Carling and Akesson (2009, p. 136) also found that visions of the outside world as a place where you can get all you want if prepared to work hard, is deeply-rooted. In his work in Cameroon, Jua (2003) likewise noted that image of the West that permeates the media, have caused many to believe that life there is a ‘fairy tale come true’ (p. 22). What all these studies have in common is the negative tone of these imaginaries for the definition of selfhood. Although this eagerness for self-definition and social becoming is agentic, a praxis Vigh (2009) calls *social navigation*<sup>3</sup>, it fails to capture situations where the negative narratives about self and place are transformed into opportunity and prosperity.

Koikkalailen et al, (2018) apply the term transnational mindset differently. While previous literature on global mindsets do imply the significance of mental mobility, due to its origin within business and management studies, it has been restricted to only one kind of transnational actors occupying a position of privilege in the social mobility ladder – the top managers, entrepreneurs, business elites and their transnational firms. Notice also the

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<sup>3</sup> Social navigation, according Vigh (2009) underscore “motion within motion” (p.420). It relates to moving in a wavering and unsettled setting. It focuses our attention on the fact that movement in the social setting occurs in the midst of actants, individuals and institutions.

temporal ordering of mindset to mobility among this group of actors. The dominant narrative is that, the managers first develop a transnational or global mindset, before acting transnationally. For example, Levy et al. (2007) find that there is a stream of literature on global mindset with primary focus on the cognitive abilities of managers which is considered as a prerequisite for the success of transnational firms. “Accordingly, these studies describe the properties of global mindset in terms of high cognitive abilities and information processing capabilities that help managers conceptualize complex global dynamics (...)” (Levy et al. 2007). All these studies are plagued with the problem of corporeality bias. People imagine and they must physically move and leverage their cognitive flexibility to adapt.

Many studies (Belloni, 2020; Crawley & Hagen-zanker, 2019; Koikkalainen et al., 2020; Mallett et al., 2018; Marcus, 2009; Robins, 2019; Schewel, 2015) have examined imagined destinations and the formation of geographical imaginations. Marcus (2009) and Robinson (2019) find that geographical imagination in Brazilian migration becomes a projection of migrants’ conceptions of place. The participants’ accounts therefore provide insights into place perceptions and spatial behaviour (de Haas, 2021). Brazilians are thus ‘seduced’ by the geographical imagination first; when they decide to migrate and again when they decide to return to Brazil. Robins (2019) employs a qualitative, biographical approach through the optic geographical imagination to explore the motivations and subjectivities behind migration of middle-class Brazilians to London. Robinson finds societal alienation as the social imaginary, motivating migration of many middle-class Brazilians; in contrast to the usual material alienation. Societal alienation is the feeling of distance from the place of origin; resulting from lack of identification and trust in its institutions and the very culture of the place itself, while material alienation connotes migrating to access a higher level of material consumption or to acquire financial capital to use “back home.”

The literature also considers how these geographical imaginations are formed. They draw on a multitude of sources: education, media, pop culture, personal experience and social networks (Thompson, 2017). The role of the media, particularly television, comes out particularly strongly for Albanians imagining life in Italy (Mai, 2004); with television programmes promoting an urban lifestyle to rural Nepalis (Piotrowski, 2010) and perpetuating images and ideas of migration to the West in Tanzania (Salazar, 2011), in Senegal (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, 2016; Willems, 2014), in Bangladesh (Dannecker, 2009) and the Gambia (Conrad Suso, 2020). A number of studies also highlight the role of social media on geographic imaginations (Koikkalainen et al., 2020; Kölbel, 2018). Post-colonial linkages may shape migrants' imaginaries of destinations. For instance, colonial imaginations of the United Kingdom among Sri Lankan and Somalians, influenced the decision to claim asylum in the United Kingdom, due to perceptions of a strong historical bond and shared linguistic and cultural understanding (Robinson & Segrott, 2002). Finally, word of mouth and rumours can also fuel imaginaries (Belloni, 2020; Koikkalainen et al., 2020; Koser & Pinkerton, 2002).

Many scholars (Chambers, 2018; Ingold, 2013; 2006) underscore the primacy of agency-structure dialectics of imagination, arguing that, the materiality of imagination should not be dissociated from its formation. In a qualitative research among Nigerian expatriates in Scotland, Smith (2006) interrogates the extremely complex question of the role an individual's imagination plays in deciding the course of his or her life; or more particularly, his or her migration. He argues that, we need to be cautious about migration narratives privileging subjective factors, while downplaying the question of economics. Ingold (2013) reflects that:

Bacon's injunction, which modern science has taken to its heart, has had fateful consequences for human life and habitation, cutting the imagination adrift from its earthly moorings and leaving it to float like a mirage above the road we tread in our material life. (p. 735)

Imagination, as Ingold (2013) clarifies, is not an absent-minded contemplative process, but a process that directly engages with the material and it is self-shaped through such engagement. Chambers (2018) also situates migration as an ongoing process of ‘envisioning and becoming’— a process rather than a relationship between imagined possibilities and achieved outcomes. Through a more subjective account of labour migration between India and the Gulf, Chambers utilizes ‘the imagination’ as an umbrella term encompassing a range of more affective considerations, but also attends to culturally specific understandings of imagination. In addition, as an affective terrain, the imaginations of potential and current migrants, as well as those of returnees, are shaped not just through engagement with the material, but also within a landscape of multiple and at times competing visions of what should be imagined and what should be desired.

Koikkalainen et al. (2020) examined the nexus between hope and imaginations of Iraqi asylum seekers who journeyed through Europe in search of an idealised version of Finland, which they had imagined, based on word-of-mouth and social media information. Through cognitive migration, the act of pre-experiencing futures in different locations, Finland was seen to offer both subjective hope of personal growth and advancement and objective hope of safety and physical security. Data was collected, using participant observation and semi-structured interviews with 25 Iraqi asylum seekers who lived in reception centres in Northern Finland in 2016. Twenty-four (24) interviewees were male and only one was female. Thus, the views expressed in the data are predominantly those of men. Many had engaged in cognitive migration before departing for Europe. So, they pre-experienced a future studying or working in Finland, starting a family or seeing their children grow up in a peaceful Nordic democracy. Information received via social media also reinforced the image that Iraqis would be welcomed in Finland. The imagined futures were thus filled with optimism and hope on one hand and the absence of fear, uncertainty

and injustice on the other. However, as such a high percentage of Iraqi asylum seekers received negative decisions in 2016 and 2017, this new beginning in a safe country with plentiful work and educational opportunities, was not to be realized for a majority of those who arrived in 2015. Most of the Iraqis who had journeyed to Finland were therefore to be disappointed, because their claim for asylum was rejected. They would therefore have to redirect their hopes and dreams towards futures in other destinations or return to Iraq; the place they thought to have left for good. Koikkalainen et al. (2020) worked with actual migrants who had moved with the hope of uniting mind and body and embodying their imaginations. These migrants however failed in their aspirations and desires (Carling, 2017); this was after they had “successfully” made the journey to their imagined destination. Nevertheless, the imaginations of those who fail in situ, remain invisible to migration studies.

### **3.5.2 Migration failure and temporalities of aspirations**

Two important research gaps are discernible from the review of the literature on migration outcomes. First is the near absence of pre-migration trauma discourse on prospective migrants who fail to cross geopolitical boundaries in pursuit of their migration project; in spite of the preponderance of studies at the intersection of migration and mental health. Second is the inherent fixation of migration studies to conceive migration as a spatio-temporal phenomenon, while consigning the cognitive to the periphery of migration theorisation.

There is preponderance of scholarship on trauma and mental health broadly (Ahmed & Bhugra, 2007; Gambaro et al., 2020; Siriwardhana et al., 2014). Nevertheless, pre-migration mental health has not been examined on its own; if it is examined at all, it is in relation to how it enables or undermines travels to and settlement at the destination (Chen et al., 2017; Sangalang et al., 2019). How migration impacts mental health

negatively is however well-established (Gambaro et al., 2020). Many factors which impact mental health include: traumatic event exposure, daily stressors and impoverishment (Siriwardhana et al., 2014), separation from parents and friends and difficulties adjusting to new stranger environment (Ahmed & Bhugra, 2007). The nexus between migration and mental health has mainly focused on the post migration phase of the migration cycle. Specifically, interests have centred on the arrival and adaptation of immigrants spawning the whole field of acculturation psychology (Sam & Berry, 2010). Refugees and internally-displaced persons (IDPs) (Chen et al., 2017; Dowling et al., 2019); involuntary return and the precarity of migration journeys across the Sahara and the Mediterranean and the Caravan into United States from Latin America (Keller et al., 2017; Nickerson et al., 2017; Zbidat et al., 2020).

The most current review of emotions and feelings in migration decision-making (Hagen-Zanker & Hennessey, 2021) however omits a critical mass of potential migrants who have failed to cross a geopolitical boundary into a destination country. This notwithstanding, these studies (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015; Brown et al., 2017; Khan, 2018; Mai & King, 2009) illuminate our understanding of the nexus between emotional and economic motives in migration decision-making. Brown et al. (2017) for example assert that, decision-making is emotionally charged; factoring the emotional aspects into the calculus of decision-making is therefore imperative (Mai & King, 2009). Taking aspirations as a specific example, aspirations involve a specific object (e.g. better job, safety), but are also dispersed within emotional layers of 'vague expectations and unarticulated implications' (Collins et al., 2014). Chakraborty and Thambiah (2018) argue that, emotions are both expressive and instrumental in decision-making; an outcome of the migration experience and a driver of mobility respectively.

Shame and failure (Kleist, 2017) are recurrent themes in studies of post deportation. Returning empty-handed to one's family and local community with nothing but debt and worries galore, represents the epitome of failure, aggravated by public ridicule and shaming from other people in the hometown (Kleist, 2017). Womersley and Kloetzer (2018) describe the trauma of migration as a "double" rupture – one rupture that relates to traumatic events migrants experience in the country of origin and subsequent forced migration. The second however, relates to issues of displacement and social isolation which displaced people experience. Womersley (2020) thus explores the imagination (im)mobility nexus through the imagination of refugee victims of torture in Athens, as they weave together images of the past, present and future to confer meaning to their current situation and imagine new possible futures. Womersley's participants are already at the destination country to embody their imaginations. The realities of cognitive migrants who are unable to embody their imaginations by crossing to the other side, still remains invisible to migration scholarship.

Different aspirational strengths and abilities or capabilities produce varied migration outcomes. While some have the capacity to aspire, others do not. Whereas some are thought to have the pre-disposition to migrate, others have the inclination to stay (Carling & Schewel, 2018; Czaika & Vothknecht, 2013; Kalir, 2005; Schewel, 2019). Emigration and immigration contexts therefore shape these aspiration or capability outcomes. Thus, the aspiration or ability continuum produces different mobility or immobility outcomes (Setrana, 2021). The inherent assumption for analysing these processes (i.e. cognitive and preparatory processes) is a stepwise logic (Carling & Schewel, 2018; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016; van Naerssen & van der Velde, 2015; Willekens, 2017) that adopts a two-step model which breaks migration into two linear processes: 1) the formation of migration aspirations and 2) the conversion of migration

aspirations into actual migration (Carling, 2020; Carling & Schewel, 2018). This notion flattens time in the unfolding of migratory behaviour (Boccagni, 2017; Wang & Collins, 2020), conceiving migration as occurring between two singular time points. Although Boccagni (2017) connects migration aspirations to the field of temporalities and injects a bit of dynamism, this dynamism does not go far; as pointed out by Wang and Collins (2020):

Boccagni's (2017) more emotionally rich and future-oriented account of contents, relations and horizons comes closest to our argument in this article but we also suggest that there is a need to go beyond these relatively individualised times to consider a more relational and multidimensional account of time. (Wang & Collins, 2020:4)

Wang and Collins (2020) explore the nuanced relationship between migration aspirations and time; reinforcing the idea that migration is a spatio-temporal phenomenon. However, these studies do not address the implication of failing in situ for the re-configuration of aspirations (Boccagni, 2017; Wang & Collins, 2020). Although these recent studies make major contributions to the temporal distribution of aspirations, they do not directly explore the cognitive dimensions of the temporalities of aspirations within geospatial boundary.

### 3.5.3 (Im)mobility studies

Carling's (2002) seminal work outlines three mobility categories: 1) mobility (i.e., having both the aspiration and ability to migrate), 2) involuntary immobility (i.e., having the aspiration but not the ability to migrate), and 3) voluntary immobility (i.e., having the ability but not the aspiration to migrate). Carling's work has thus directly churned out two strands of work relevant for my work. One strand of work (de Haas, 2003, 2014) inserts the concept of capability to Carling's aspiration/ability and makes two important contributions: 1) the concept of capability invigorates the aspiration/ability model by more explicitly connecting (im)mobility outcomes to development processes and 2) the concept

of capability more explicitly links the ability to migrate (and the ability to stay) with the notion of “freedom” and thus, human rights. The second strand of work (Schewel, 2015; 2020) however expands Carling’s categories. Building on Carling’s seminal work, Schewel (2015) proposed the category of 'acquiescent immobility' to describe situations in which people are both unable to migrate, but neither do they desire to do so. I agree with de Haas (2014) that the category acquiescent immobility is theoretically challenging. Mata-Codesal’s (2015) research on “different ways of staying put” in rural Ecuador shows that immobility is “involuntary” for some, but “desirable” for many others (p. 2286). Nevertheless, Setrana (2021) and Van der Meij (2017) show in different settings, how some Ghanaian youth cope with their involuntary immobilisation. Bosiakoh (2019) explores (im)mobility at the cross-border, using Nigerian immigrants in Ghana. In a three-theme analysis, he shows three intersections in mobilities, immobilities and borderland (i.e. mobility or borderland, trapped or living in a borderland space and immobility in temporal-spatial borderland). Breines et al. (2019) explore the spatio-temporal underpinnings to why students choose to remain at home while studying abroad and how this is arranged. They also outline the infrastructures of reach that enable student immobility and how their incomplete nature means that students have to rely on extensive systems of mobilities of other people and objects to ensure that their study progresses without their own educational mobility. Zickgraf (2019) situates environmental immobility within mobilities studies and highlights the importance of how political factors respond to, but also result in (im)mobility, in the context of climate change. These studies highlight the diversity of (im)mobility research. What is consistent across these studies (Bosiakoh, 2019; Breines et al., 2019; Zickgraf, 2019) however, is their focus on the spatio-temporal framing of (im)mobility, but not the cognitive dimension of immobility.

### 3.6 Conclusion

Currently, migration scholarship is aware of those who have physically moved voluntarily, those who want to move but cannot move – the involuntarily immobilised, those who can move but have the aspiration to stay – the voluntary immobile or stayers and the acquiescent immobile – those who do not want to move; though moving will be beneficial to them, but do not have the capacity to move. Migration studies is also aware of those who return voluntarily and those who return involuntarily. However, those who initially desire to travel and mentally travel to the imagined destination; but fail to embody their migration and return their minds to invest in a homeward future – cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees – are not known to migration studies.

The essence of cognitive migration is that, potential migrants imagine themselves in their destinations and literally “travel” there mentally (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016) or project themselves into the future and they systematically complete all the essential tasks to reach the desired status of being a migrant (Mescoli, 2014) before they travel to unite the mind and body. In the event of failure, no distinction is made between physical or corporeal mobility – the default understanding of migration and cognitive migration. Nevertheless, although potential migrants cannot physically move for varied reasons – economic and non-economic, making them involuntarily immobile (Carling, 2002, 2014; Carling & Schewel, 2018; de Haas, 2011; Schewel, 2015, 2019), their minds can travel ahead to the imagined destination (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016; Mescoli, 2014) with the hope that their bodies will eventually unite with their minds, so that they will embody their future. There is however, no consideration of the reverse scenario, where the body fails – for myriad reasons; including economic and non-economic (Schewel, 2019), to unite with the mind. This area therefore presents a fertile site for unravelling some difficult questions in migration studies. How do cognitive migrants bring their minds back to the country of origin to invest in a homeward future?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe how I carried out the research project. The chapter provides details regarding my epistemological positioning, method and its justification. I clarify the various stages of the research comprising participants' selection, the data collection process and the process of data analysis. The chapter further discusses the ethical issues which shaped the study; highlighting reflexively, the role of the research, the researched and conclusion.

#### 4.2 Research design

Given my interest in the process of becoming a cognitive migrant, the mindset that displaces cognitive migrants and emplaces cognitive return migrants as well as the overall objective of the study to explore, describe and understand their motivations, imaginations, meanings and lived experiences or behaviours, my choice of research design fell on qualitative research. Qualitative research design because, its ends are consistent with my research interest. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), qualitative methodologists describe three major purposes for research: "to explore, explain, or describe a phenomenon of interest" (p. 33). I therefore need a research design which offers researchers the opportunity to have an attitude of openness to journey into the area being explored on a discovery mission (Finlay & Evans, 2009). My choice of research design therefore derives from my philosophical positioning.

#### 4.3 Philosophical positioning

A philosophical stance, according Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013, p. 54): is a philosophically informed view about reality, knowledge and ways to gain knowledge that

serves as a guide for a particular study; it is a guiding perspective about the nature of truth and human behaviour and thus, is the very foundation of research.

It therefore raises questions about ontology and epistemology, which map on to the study of being and what constitutes reality and the theory of gaining knowledge respectively. Ontology asks the question: “what is there to know?” It concerns itself with one’s place in the world and their experience within it (Willig, 2013). Epistemology however, provides a philosophical background that regulates the legitimacy and adequacy of types of knowledge (Gray, 2013). An epistemological perspective is therefore quite important, as it helps the researcher to decide on the most suitable research design for his or her intended research. Cognitive migration and return constitute knowledge that proceeds from an individuals’ interpretation of experience. This makes phenomenology my philosophical orientation. A brief historical account of phenomenology and its varied iterations therefore elucidate my rationale for choosing it.

Philosophy and method are inextricably connected in Phenomenology. It is a research approach that seeks to uncover what several participants who experience a phenomenon have in common (Cresswell, 2007). It thus reduces this experience to the description of a universal essence or the very nature or essence of something. Phenomenologists however, uncover both what individuals experience and how they experience the phenomenon. In the case of cognitive migration and return, my goal then is to understand the phenomenon in its outward manifestation (e.g. scope, process, nature) from objects and actions, as well as in its inward form (e.g. thoughts, images and feelings). Phenomenology therefore has strong historical antecedents.

Phenomenology traces its roots to the philosophical tradition of Edmund Husserl (1907/1964). At the heart of this tradition is consciousness, which to Husserl, emanates from lived experience or the lifeworld. The centrality of the mind in cognitive migration

and return thus resonates with this philosophical tradition. The reality of cognitive migration is a product of the conscious mind to be uncovered through the exploration of consciousness which proceeds from the lived experience or lifeworld of cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants. Any attempt to separate this reality from the lived experience or lifeworld of participants, as in the case of using objective scientific method (i.e. positivism), results in a Cartesian split or corporeality bias. The concept of Cartesian split sees the mind and body as separate and distinct entities (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p.213). Husserl however disagrees with the mind/body split. To him, the conscious mind's engagement of the world affirms an already-existing relationship. Many variants of phenomenology have also developed, since the days of Edmund Husserl. I therefore describe the three types of phenomenology and argue for an eclectic phenomenological framework for my work. These types are transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology and interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Transcendental phenomenology, as proposed by Moustakas (1994), retains the essential features of Husserlian phenomenology which are intentionality, essences and bracketing. Husserl however advocates the study of consciousness through the performance of *epoché* (i.e. bracketing), during which researchers set aside their experiences as much as possible, in order to understand the phenomenon under investigation, from a fresh perspective. Husserl's thinking is that, the only objective knowledge humans can have of anything, is attainable through processes of consciousness. Intentionality connotes the idea that, the mind is directed towards the object of study, while essences capture the descriptive study of the subjective. Intentionality and essences are thus fundamental to my work. I explore the mind in order to appreciate the essence of cognitive migration and return. Intentionality, in the way Husserl uses it, however,

constitutes the idea that what makes the mind different from things is that, mental acts are always directed at something beyond themselves; making consciousness relational.

Objects, therefore, are not spatial entities; so the meaning of being a subject implies a relationship with an object and to be an object means being related to it subjectively.

Reality, in Husserlian understanding, derives from a verb which means: “to think” and in that sense, approximates the meaning of reality to “what is thought about things in general, rather than what things really are, when thought is removed” (Larkin et al., 2006, pp.105-106). This understanding of reality is of particular interest to me because, it is the starting point of my proposition of cognitive migration. However, thought and the lifeworld are inseparable. I now turn to Heidegger who initially follows Husserl, but parts company with him at a point.

Hermeneutic phenomenology does not separate consciousness from the world; because they are mutually constitutive. It however argues against bracketing; reasoning that, it undermines a more holistic view of humanity. Heidegger on his part, sees the person as continually and forever a ‘person-in-context’. It is therefore an erroneous belief that sometimes, we do elect to relate with the several somatic and semantic entities composing our world, because such a linkage is a fundamental part of our constitution. Heidegger thus represents this character of human beings in terms of *Dasein*; which means ‘there being’ (or ‘being there’), by which he implies that, our very nature is to be there, always somewhere, always located and always amidst and involved with some kind of meaningful context. Hermeneutic phenomenology therefore focuses on shedding light on taken-for-granted experiences which facilitate meaning making and interpretation, with the goal of attaining deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Heidegger also maintains ‘intentional directedness as essential to human activity in his phenomenology, but [in contrast to Husserl], refutes the notion that, [such]

intentionality is mental' (Dreyfus, 1995, pp. 50-51). The implication for my study therefore is that, although I seek understanding of my participants through the exploration of their conscious mind, completely setting aside my experience as a psychologist whose pre-occupation is with the scientific study of the mind to understand human behaviour; with many years of clinical practice, is not possible. In short, Heidegger's position recognises that, nothing is ever revealed as anything; except when we encounter it and hence, when it is brought meaningfully, into the context of human life (see Polt, 1999). It is thus the collective we, which decides what is allowed to count as real and what is not; in the context of human endeavour. The central goal of phenomenology is to therefore approach and deal with any object of our attention, in a manner that allows enormous opportunity for the object to manifest itself "as itself". Put differently, the phenomenologist aims to reveal any subject-matter on its own terms (i.e. not according to the imposition of any pre-conceived set of assumptions and expectations). This demand is inevitably unattainable because of Dasein. It is also impossible to escape the 'pre-conceptions' that our world brings with it. For the goals I seek in this research, I defer to interpretative phenomenological analysis.

The methodological orientation that is fit for purpose for me, is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Smith et al. (2009) describe IPA as 'an approach to qualitative, experiential and psychological research which has been informed by concepts and debates from three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge namely: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography' (p.11). IPA draws on Husserl's phenomenology to examine and understand lived experience. In this regard, IPA sees phenomenological research as 'systematically and attentively reflecting on everyday lived experience, which can be either first-order activity or second-order mental and affective responses to that activity - remembering, regretting, desiring, and so forth' (p.33). IPA is

also interpretative in affirming the researcher's role in making sense of the experience of participants. Smith (2004) refers to 'double hermeneutics', where both participant and researcher are into the business of meaning-making. Thus, as the participant tries to make sense of their personal and social, the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their personal and social world' (p.40). The researcher's point of access to participants' experience is through their accounts and through the researcher's own 'fore-conception'. The challenge for the researcher therefore is 'to critically and reflexively evaluate how these pre-understandings influence the research' (Finlay, 2008, p.17)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) emphasises the experiential claims and concerns of the persons taking part in the study (something which clearly distinguishes it from discourse analysis, for example). Hence, an IPA researcher must approach his or her data with two aims in mind. The first aim is to try to understand the participants' world and describe 'what it is like'. Typically, this aim leads to a focus on participants' experiences of a specific event, process or relationship. In doing so, however, we need to immediately recognize that access to 'experience' is both partial and complex (Smith, 1996). In other words, the analytic process cannot ever achieve a genuinely first-person account; the account is always constructed by the participant and researcher. Consequently, the objective during this initial stage is to simply produce a coherent, third-person and psychologically informed description, which tries to get as 'close' to the participant's view as is possible. The second aim of the IPA perspective is to develop a more overtly interpretative analysis, which positions the initial 'description' in relation to a wider social, cultural and perhaps even theoretical context. This second-order account therefore aims to provide a critical and conceptual commentary on the participants' personal 'sense-making' activities (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This interpretative analysis

also affords the researcher an opportunity to deal with the data in a more speculative fashion; to think about ‘what it means’ for the participants to have made these claims and to have expressed these feelings and concerns in this particular situation. Aspects of this interpretative work may also be informed by direct engagement with existing theoretical constructs (something which distinguishes IPA from grounded theory approaches) and the process is sometimes directed towards answering a pre-formed research question. IPA has thus been developed specifically, in order to allow the researcher to produce a theoretical framework which is based on, but which may transcend or exceed the participants’ own terminology and conceptualizations (Smith, 2004). IPA researchers may also draw on considerable ‘interpretative range’ to achieve this. The approach therefore has a clear primary focus on generating an insider’s perspective, but states no single, closed, a priori, theoretical assumption about how that insider’s perspective may be interpreted. This can be a great strength, provided the phenomenological account is: (a) central and (b) contextualised. This epistemological openness is quite unique among qualitative approaches in psychology. Due to this, IPA researchers can make cautious inferences about discursive, affective and cognitive phenomena (Smith, 1996).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is also influenced by the phenomenological and existential perspectives of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, which consider the person as embodied and embedded in the world, in a particular historical, social and cultural context. These philosophical perspectives – phenomenological and existential – perspectives, combined in IPA, are crucial for making sense of the phenomenon of cognitive migration, return and reintegration. Not only must the cognitive migrant and cognitive return migrant or immobile cognitive returnee be understood as persons in-context, but their very consciousness and imaginations are products of their unique lifeworlds. IPA thus operates within these

intellectual currents of phenomenology in the context of psychology, as it is concerned with exploring human lived experience and the meanings which people attribute to their experiences.

Given the overall objective of the study to explore, describe and to have an in-depth understanding of the motivations, imaginations, meanings and lived experiences or behaviours of cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees and the process involved in re-engaging with their homeward future, I need an epistemological positioning which offers breadth and depth. There are however, not many people willing to share their migratory experience of cognitive migration, failure, return and reintegration and therefore, I resort to IPA because it ensures producing a “highly intensive and detailed analysis of accounts produced by comparatively small number of people” (Larkin et al., 2006, p.106), who are willing to share their experience.

Phenomenology as an epistemological position, also affords me the opportunity to explore the lived experiences of cognitive migrants. Going by the African Proverb: “He who feels it, knows it”, I proceed with the assumption that the experiences of imagining life abroad and failing to embody this dream at the imagined destination, can only be shared by those who have experienced it in their lifeworld. Phenomenology is therefore a fitting methodological home. A researcher applying phenomenology thus focuses on the lived experiences of the people (Greene, 1997; Holloway, 1997; Kruger, 1988; Kvale, 1996; Maypole & Davies, 2001; Robinson & Reed, 1998) now in the past, in relation to the subject under investigation.

#### **4.4 Study area: Accra and Kumasi**

The study’s preference for Accra and Kumasi as the study areas is informed by population and urbanising features of the two cities. They are the respective capital cities for Greater Accra Region and Ashanti Region. Accra doubles as the capital city of Ghana

and houses all diplomatic missions in Ghana. The Greater Accra Region is 91.7% urban and 8.3% rural. While the Ashanti region is 61.8% urban and 38.4% rural. The total population of these two regions are: 5,455,692 and 5,440,463 for Greater Accra Region and Ashanti Region respectively (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Kumasi, on the other hand, is the second largest city in Ghana. In addition, the people in Kumasi are steeped in the culture of migration. Thus, most youth in the city aspire to travel outside the country in search of greener pastures. The rapidly-urbanizing feature of these two cities however, has implications for international migration; which is a stepwise phenomenon. Many prospective migrants first move from the rural to the urban centres (i.e. internal migration), before accessing the necessary migration infrastructure for regular or irregular international migration (Awumbila et al., 2017). In a study of remittances from abroad to Ghana (Mazzucato et al., 2008) found out that, the Greater Accra and Ashanti Regions were the most recipients of foreign remittances. Based on this, they concluded that “most Ghanaian migrants located outside Africa come primarily from these regions” (p.111). Other scholars have also established Kumasi as a hub for international migration in Ghana; with most Ghanaian diasporan populations tracing their root to the city (Dankyi et al., 2015; Manuh, 2000; Manu et al., 2010; Setrana & Tonah, 2014). Others have also established that inhabitants of Kumasi played a pioneering role in international migration from Ghana to other parts of West Africa, Western Europe and North America in the second phase of migration of outmigration from Ghana in the 1970s and 80s (Anarfi et al., 2003). Interestingly, the term “burger”, that has gained popularity for referring to Ghanaian return migrants from overseas, originated from Kumasi.

#### **4.4.1 The Akan people of Ghana and their cosmology**

The Akan people are the majority ethnic group in Ghana. They make up 44.7 per cent of the Ghanaian population according to the recent population and housing census in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). The rest of the ethnic representations in Ghana

are Mole-Dagbani (18.5%), Ewe (12.8%), Ga-Dangme (7.1%), Gurma (6.4%), Grusi (2.7%), Mande (2.0%) and others (1.6%). With these ethnic representations, I focus the analyses predominantly on the worldview of Akans; who constitute majority of my study participants. The cosmology, habits, practices and institutions of the other ethnic groups does not markedly differ from the Akan majority (Gyekye, 1997, p. 44). There is the belief that, during conception, the woman (mother) transmits her blood (“mogya”), the man (father) transmits the spirit (“sunsum” or “nton”) and God gives the soul (“okra”). These three elements in the Akan anthropology and cosmology simultaneously constitute the “individual” person: the spiritual from God, the community from the woman and individuality from the man (Appiah, 2014). The individual is thus, ontologically relational. Additionally, the Akans inhabit central and southern Ghana and comprise of: the Fante, Wassa, Asante, Nzema, Ahanta, Assin, Twifo, Sefwi, Denkyira, Bono, Akyem, Aowin, Kwahu and Akwapim. All of them, except some parts of Akwapim, are matrilineal (Onyinah, 2002).

#### **4.5 Sampling technique and recruitment of participants**

Consistent with the techniques for researching hard-to-reach populations, I used the purposive and snowball sampling techniques. I chose purposive sampling because, according to Silverman (2014, p. 70):

Purposive sampling allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested. However, this does not provide a simple approval to any case we happen to choose. Rather, purposive sampling demands that we think critically about the parameters of the population we are interested in and choose our sample case carefully on this basis.

Denzin and Lincoln however underscore the relevance of purposive sampling for qualitative research generally: “many qualitative researchers employ... purposive, and not random, sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings and individuals where ... the processes being studied are most likely to occur” (1994, p. 202). Purposive sampling is considered by Welman and Kruger (1999) as the most important kind of non-

probability sampling, to identify the primary participants. My judgement and the purpose of the research (Babbie, 1995; Greig & Taylor, 1999; Schwandt, 1997), thus guided me to look for those who “have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched” (Kruger, 1988 p. 150). The purposive sampling technique also informed my selection of Accra and Kumasi, following which I deployed the snowball sampling technique to reach participants. In her recent study focused on nationals from Ghana who lost interest in pursuing migration dreams to Europe and North America after failed attempts, Setrana used the snowball technique to recruit her participants. She surmised that failed migrants were hard to reach, because the topic of failed migration is sensitive and difficult to talk about (Setrana, 2021).

After deciding on the purpose of the study and research question(s), the next step was to determine who would provide the best information to answer the research question. Participants best fit for my study were prospective migrants who had outward future cognitive orientation to eke a livelihood abroad; who, after failing to embody their imagination, either retained their outward future orientation or developed a homeward future cognitive orientation and returned their minds home to invest in local futures. Participants were therefore recruited through personal networks and contacts; using different modes of recruitment, to ensure sample diversity (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). In Kumasi, for example, a pastor friend connected me to a couple of his church members who met the inclusion criteria. In Accra also, I followed up with referrals I got from friends and made contact with participants. After ethical clearance was approved, I developed a short announcement (see Appendix III) inviting people who had ever abandoned their plans of travelling abroad after being refused visa in favour of making a future here in Ghana to contact me. The announcement had my ‘WhatsApp number’, cell phone number and e-mail; specially created for my project. I posted the announcement on ‘WhatsApp’ platforms I belonged to and encouraged the group members to share. I also contacted colleagues at the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS), University of

Ghana and some church members. I then started calling participants who were recommended to me by my contacts; as and when I received their contact details. The call reiterated the purpose of the research to these prospective participants. In the course of the preliminary interview, I found out that, some of them were voluntary return migrants who had no history of failure and therefore did not meet the inclusive criteria. Twenty-four (24) out of the forty recommended participants remained for an in-depth interview.

#### **4.6 Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

The study showed fidelity to its inclusion and exclusion criteria as part of the process to ensure trustworthiness of findings.

##### **4.6.1 Inclusion criteria**

To be included as a cognitive migrant in the study, a participant should have first imagined or dreamt of an outward future abroad in search of livelihood options. This imagined future had to be clearly conceptualized (i.e. joining the army, going to school, marriage or working). Secondly, the imagination should have been actively pursued through a number of actions; including procuring a passport, identifying a broker, learning a language or an art form and applying for a visa. This active pursuit could also be as a result of believing and being persuaded by a promise to be sent abroad by a benefactor (who could be a family member or not). Thirdly, this imagined future abroad should have been so strong to significantly regulate daily actions or inactions which undermined investment in a homeward future (e.g. disinterest in working or schooling). Fourthly, participants should have failed to embody their imagination at the destination; either through a visa denial or 'bouncing' at one or multiple times on one hand, or unfulfilled promise to be sent abroad by a 'promisor' on the other hand. Subsequent to failure, participants should have either retained an outward future cognitive orientation or brought their minds back home to invest in a homeward future, by transforming an earlier outward cognitive future orientation, into a homeward cognitive future orientation.

#### 4.6.2 Exclusion criteria

A strict exclusion criteria was also implemented after interviews were concluded. Imagined destinations within the ECOWAS sub-region were not included because, a community citizen does not need a visa to travel within the ECOWAS sub-region.

#### 4.7 Methods of data collection

The main method for data collection was the biographic life history interview. According to Hycner (1999, p. 156) “the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participants.” There was also an opportunity to examine visa application documents. Some participants came to the interview with their documentation, while others dashed into their rooms and brought them in the course of the interview. This presentation of documents was done voluntarily, as a way of validating their stories. Documents examined included passports, marriage certificates, pictures, and e-mail correspondence.

##### 4.7.1 In-depth interviews

I used a flexible in-depth biographical life-history interview guide (see Appendix II) to conduct all interviews, because it provided data on the experiences, perceptions, emotions, beliefs and the behaviour of participants (Teye, 2012). The life history interviews captured “life as a whole” (Atkinson, 2002, p. 123) and did not only narrate life stories but also explored memories and experiences of social change; emphasising participants’ perceptions in a way structured questioning would have omitted. They also highlighted aspirations and regrets —both crucial ingredients when trying to understand temporality, vulnerability and livelihood choices (Kothari & Hulme, 2004). I therefore used the life history interviews approach to have an in-depth appreciation (cf. Eastmond, 2007) of my participants’ migratory experience. The technique also enabled me to gain individual subjective evaluation of their social experiences; including their own failed migration aspirations, migratory processes, the material and non-material dimensions of

immobility and the decision to pursue (im)mobility. This allowed for the unearthing of commonalities or variations within and across the participants' unique social experiences. While each grand tour question was followed up with more specific questions as appropriate, interviews were conducted as natural conversations to evoke authenticity (Grbich, 2013). Additionally, I approached every interview from a mindset of 'tabula rasa,' in order to derive the unique experiences of participants, without any pre-suppositions from past interviews. As a result of this, questioning and probing did not follow the same format, tempo and texture. This was done so that I could access the phenomenological experience of participants. I have expanded on the rationale for this, under section 4.7.3 on reflexivity.

Interviews were conducted in two stages. These were the initial introductory interviews done on the phone to introduce myself, the project and for scheduling appointment for the in-depth interview, for those who met the inclusion criteria. The second stage involved the in-depth interviews which were conducted between November 2019 and May 2020 in two Ghanaian cities; as previously mentioned. With the participants' permission, they were audio recorded. The initial interviews were short lasting between 1 to 2 minutes. The second interviews were 60 to 120 minutes long and transcribed verbatim. Interviews were held face-to-face pre-COVID-19 in homes, shops, church auditoriums and via phone (two interviews) in the wake of COVID-19.

#### **4.7.2 Positionality**

I use three experiences in my life to reflect on my positionality. In so doing, I agree with Mason-Bish (2019) that "...positionality is a transitory and dynamic situation"(Mason-Bish, 2019, p. 264). Growing up, I lived in the same compound house with a senior in Junior Secondary School. The period was in the 1980s during the heady days of the 31st December Revolution, led by the late President Jerry John Rawlings. It was a time, when many young people were being sponsored to go and study in Cuba. My

senior had the opportunity to go to Cuba, but his parents refused to let him go. He never stopped blaming his parents for denying him a future and never got to do anything worthwhile with his life. The second experience was when I was training to become a clinical psychologist. During my field placement at the Accra Psychiatric Hospital in 1999, one of the patients referred to me had resorted to doing drugs and giving his grandparents whom he was staying with, many problems. This was because the parents, who were by then domiciled in the United States of America, had refused to let him join them. The third experience was with a client who had lived in Europe for years. She decided one day that if staying in Europe for almost twenty years could not change her fortunes that much, then staying two years longer would not make a difference. She therefore decided to return to Ghana. In her own words: “my mind came to Ghana before my body joined later”. On the other hand, on her return to Ghana, she met a Ghanaian man who was living in the United States of America at the time. On his visit to Ghana, he got acquainted with my client, expressed interest in her, to which she agreed and they eventually got married. The man however decided to relocate to Ghana for good. Within two years of returning to Ghana, he relocated to the United States and the marriage broke down irreparably. My client thus reasoned that, her husband’s body returned to Ghana, but his mind never did; resulting in their marital problems. The first two experiences undoubtedly, may have influenced my decision to explore the lived experiences of potential migrants who did not succeed in realising their dreams. The third experience on the other hand, occurred in the course of my research, helping to validate my thoughts on cognitive dis(em)placement. It was an ‘aha’ moment for me.

I am an Akan and Akans are the majority ethnic group in Ghana. Their mother-tongue is ‘Twi’. Although the language for the interview was predominantly English, most of my participants could speak ‘Twi’ and English fluently. So, in the many instances where the interview was interspersed with ‘Twi’, I did not struggle to understand it.

### 4.7.3 Reflexivity

Every interview is unique, but it depends on the identity and history of the interviewee. In view of that, it will be quite problematic if the questioning and the probing follow the same format, tempo and texture for all participants. If one is aiming at a phenomenological experience of participants, then the nuance must characterise the interviewing process. An attempt to follow similar interviewing processes with all participants may therefore reveal a universalising relic in anyone who is quantitatively trained or pursuing the discovery of universal truth. The interviewing process also transforms the interviewer; for someone trained in positivist epistemology for my Undergraduate and Master's Degrees, it was a process of exorcism, as interview after interview chipped away the remnants of positivism in me; as I immersed myself deeply in the process and gained more epistemic validity as the journey unfolded.

At the recruitment stage, I realised that how I was introducing the research was being perceived as stigmatising. At a meeting with my supervisors on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2019, I raised the concern and it was suggested that I reframe the introduction, to make it more empowering. The meeting also helped me to gain clarity on research objectives and questions. One important revelation was how I was proceeding with my qualitative process. This was found to be couched in positivistic terms; even in how I framed my questions. At the recruitment phase, the use of the word: "obsession" with travelling, denied me potential participants.

As some of the themes started emerging, they pointed me straight to literature I had already read. As I moved between data and literature and with data illuminating written work and birthing new and deeper understanding, there was the temptation to be stuck on an "analytical treadmill", oblivious of the objectives of the study and the time within which the study must be completed. In a conference meeting with my supervisors, this was pointed to me, with my supervisory chair remarking: "We would have to stop you at a point, else you will go on and on". This was a reflection that brought to me the

need to constantly proceed; fully conscious of my objectives, to prevent straying. The consciousness of time was also very important to me, because students do not have an ‘eternity’ to complete their work. In a similar vein, where the ‘Twi’ content was so much and needed translation, it was done between the transcriber; who had both proficient writing and spoken abilities in ‘Twi’ and I. These triangulation and peer de-briefing were to ensure credibility, dependability and confirmability of the findings (Guba, 1981).

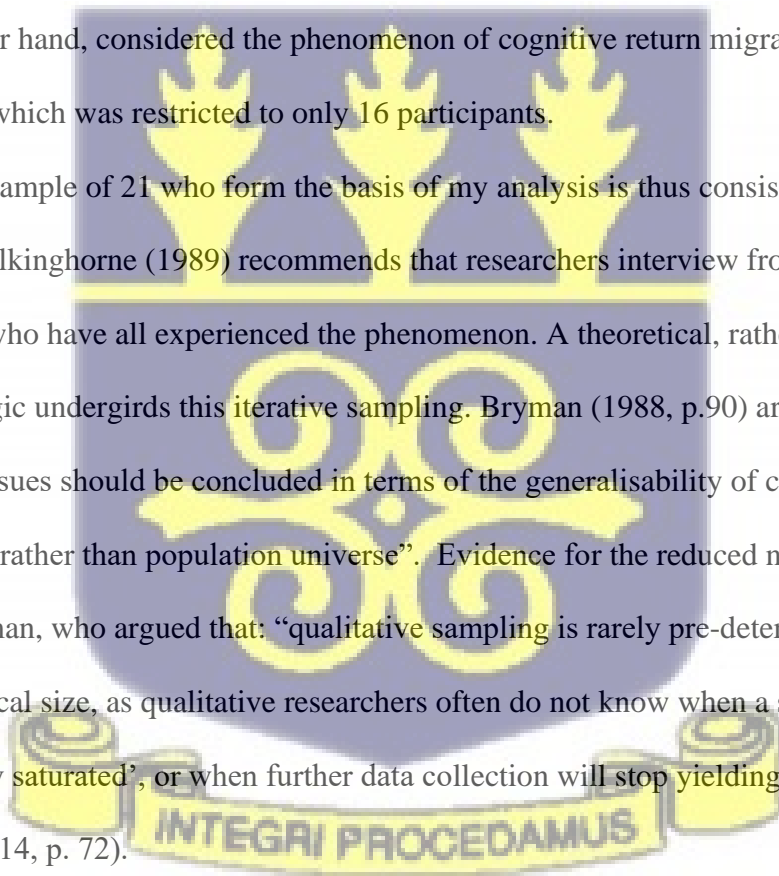
#### 4.8 Data Processing and Analysis

I pursued two aims in my data analysis: 1) thicker description of the lived experience of my participants and 2) accurate interpretation of this lived experience. These two aims naturally drew me to phenomenology. However, phenomenology is not a unitary epistemological and methodological stance. Based on the aims of one’s research, the investigator may adopt varied phenomenological positions. Descriptive phenomenology postulated by Moustakas (1994) and Giorgi (2009), could not be relied on because, descriptive phenomenology emphasises description from the position of the respondent and bracketing; that is, setting aside one’s experiences, in order to facilitate and capture participants’ actual or real experiences (Peters & Berkeley, 2020). I have also chosen the interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) because of its interpretive strength. More so, as a Clinical Psychologist, I was not going to be able to completely bracket my interpretive tradition (see section 4.7.2 on positionality above) (Hosseini & Punzi, 2021).

Given the stratified nature of the sampling process and the objectives of the study, the analyses were based on a final sample size of 21. The 24 participants who met the inclusion criteria at the recruitment stage were theoretically whittled down to 21. This was because, at the analyses stage, I found out that, three of the participants neither had an outward future orientation nor homeward future cognitive orientation. So, they were

neither cognitive migrants nor cognitive return migrants; they had an ambiguous future orientation and therefore had to be excluded. All the 21 were initially cognitive migrants. However, after physically failing to embody their imagination, 5 participants retained their outward future orientation (active cognitive migrants) and 16 participants resigned to a homeward future orientation (i.e. return cognitive migrants or immobile cognitive returnees). Consequently, the analyses in Chapter 5 and 6 were based on all the 21 participants, while the analyses in Chapter 7 were based on 16 participants. This analytical logic was informed by the fact that, Chapters 5 and 6 explored the phenomenon of cognitive migration, its subject, the cognitive migrant and the phenomenology of failing a migration project respectively; which comprised all the 21 participants. Chapter 7 on the other hand, considered the phenomenon of cognitive return migration and re-integration, which was restricted to only 16 participants.

The sample of 21 who form the basis of my analysis is thus consistent with the literature. Polkinghorne (1989) recommends that researchers interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. A theoretical, rather than statistical logic undergirds this iterative sampling. Bryman (1988, p.90) articulates this logic: “the issues should be concluded in terms of the generalisability of cases theoretical propositions rather than population universe”. Evidence for the reduced number comes from Silverman, who argued that: “qualitative sampling is rarely pre-determined or finite in its numerical size, as qualitative researchers often do not know when a study will be ‘theoretically saturated’, or when further data collection will stop yielding new theoretical insights” (2014, p. 72).



I followed the underlisted steps for my data analysis:

1. After every interview, I listened to the audio tape.
2. I transcribed verbatim, two of my star interviews. These interviews were those I conducted which gave me an in-depth appreciation of the lived experiences of my participants, because they gave thicker descriptions of their experiences. These two participants are Donald and Bashiru. Donald's experience was fresh. His visa 'bouncing' experience happened in September 2019 and I interviewed him in November 2019. He had an outward cognitive orientation and at the time of the interview, was wreathing under raw emotional pain of disappointment and disorientation. Bashiru, on the other hand, epitomised the typical cognitive return migrant or immobile cognitive returnee, whose homeward cognitive orientation and re-integration were yielding positive results for him. I however need to clarify that, I conducted all the interviews personally, but did not transcribe the interviews alone. Nevertheless, to ensure trustworthiness and fidelity to my participants' voice and lived experience, I listened to the audio again, to crosscheck all the transcripts and where there were omissions, I inserted them.
3. Based on these two transcripts, I developed codes and had a preliminary sense of which themes could emerge from their narratives. By the way, these transcripts in my mind, mapped out the boundaries of the phenomenon I was studying.
4. I coded the entire set of transcripts, based on the codes developed in point three above; using the QDA Miner free edition.
5. I examined the codes and grouped them under preliminary themes.
6. This was followed by further titration towards global abstraction, where some themes were excluded or merged, as new ones were developed. It was an intensely iterative process (see table 4 below).

**Table 1: Overview of themes**

<b>SUPERORDINATE THEMES</b>	<b>SUBORDINATE THEMES</b>	<b>BASIC THEMES</b>
1: Sending the mind abroad	a. Becoming a cognitive migrant	i. Migration exposure and sources of information
	b. The mindset of cognitive migrants	i. Imagination
		ii. Motivation
		iii. Qualities of the mind
	c. Preparation and lived experience of cognitive migrants	i. speech
		ii. walk, dress
iii. eat		
2: The body failing to travel abroad	a. Meaning of failure	i. Narratives of failure
		ii. Failure consciousness
	b. Trajectories of failure	i. Bounced visa
		ii. Unfulfilled promise
	c. Effects of failure	i. Pre-migration trauma
		ii. Money lost
		iii. Time lost
		iv. Failure as a catalyst
	3: Returning the mind home	a. Turning points
ii. Series of events		
b. The return process		i. Reflective and decision making stage
		ii. Return or emplacement stage
c. Notions of wellbeing subsequent to return and integration		i. The true essence of wellbeing
		2: Purpose of wellbeing
		3: Temporality of wellbeing
		4: Relativity of wellbeing
d. Enablers of cognitive return and reintegration		i. Economic
		ii. Socio-cultural
		iii. Social support
		iv. Posttraumatic growth
		v. Self-regulation
e. The cognitive return migrant		i. As a new immobility category
		ii. Theorising cognitive return

The above superordinate themes (see table 4 above) constitute the three empirical chapters of the thesis that follow. Chapter four looks at the superordinate theme: “sending the mind abroad” and the process of becoming a cognitive migrant. Chapter five engages with all that happens in the event of “the body failing to travel abroad” which is superordinate theme 2. Finally, Chapter six grapples with superordinate theme 3: “returning the mind home”, the turning points, the sense of well-being that it engenders, enablers of the return process and the category of cognitive return migrants.

#### **4.9 Ethical Issues**

The University of Ghana Ethics Committee for the Humanities' guidelines for ethical clearance shaped my ethical commitment to the study. Approval with reference number ECH 010/19-20 was given after all requirements were met (see Appendix I).

##### **4.9.1 Informed consent and confidentiality**

To secure the consent of participants, a brief outline of the objectives of the study was made. The outline detailed the aims of the study, the risks or benefits of the study and contact details of a senior psychologist and the chair of my supervisory team that participant can reach out to; in the unlikely event of any physical, emotional or psychological risks. The brief outline further assured participants that although no physical, emotional or psycho-social risk was envisaged, sharing the migration story could be very traumatic and therefore in the event of painful memories coming to the fore during interviews, there was the need for psychological support to help participants to deal with such memories. I therefore adopted a trauma-informed interviewing techniques to deal with any of these unexpected eventualities. Most of the interviews were uneventful, with the exception of Donald, who exhibited signs of acute trauma; for example, long intermittent silences, teary eyes among others because of the proximity of his experience to the day of the interview.

##### **4.9.2 Anonymisation and Representation**

Although anonymity is 'normalised through well-established ethical codes of practice' (Tilley & Woodthorpe, 2011, p. 118), it is also being undermined in a multitude of sites, including visual and community-based research. Re-use can be understood as another such site. Participants' information will not be shared or made available to others, except to the principal researcher and supervisors. To further ensure the anonymity of

participants, pseudonyms have been used for names, addresses and any identifiable markers that can be traced to individual participants.

Representation in research is an affective experience for both participants (Pilcher et al., 2016, pp. 697–698) and audiences (Mannay, 2016, p. 119). As such, this is a deeply ethical arena, requiring of researchers' reflection, consideration and the weighing up of multiple – often conflicting goals, in order to represent others ethically. How researchers represent others and how it is ethically determined does not however, feature much in ethical social scientific considerations compared to others (Pickering & Kara, 2017). The authorial powers of the researcher is thus on trial, when it comes to representation of one's research findings.

My interaction with William presented a dilemma of representation. Having assured William of confidentiality, he went to the room to bring a horde of documents in a bag. These documents consisted of marriage certificates, photos, e-mails and Facebook chats with his wife; a British national, who has since gone back and insisted I could publish them. So, here I was with a participant's green light to go public with these personal details; yet I needed to exercise my authorial power to determine how this story was re-presented. Bakan (1996) argues that in matters of truth and writing, there is a useful distinction to be made between literal and real truths – and that letting go of representation of literal truth opens up spaces to creatively engage with ideas that allow for real truth to emerge. Bakan's notion of real, rather than literal truth is grounded in empirical 'data', but simultaneously protects participants' identities and opens up a space for exploring real truths of sorority life. Such an approach can work to protect against failures of anonymising, but also raises questions about what work anonymising does and for whom. Recently, scholars such as Moore (2012) and Hammersley (2015) have begun to question what they see as the default assumption of anonymisation of participants as a

straightforward ethical good. To talk through Josselson's terms, they argue that ethics committees and consequently individuals seeking ethical approval, are not addressing the competing goals of differing forms and levels of anonymisation to identify the most appropriate approach, but rather see anonymising participants' identities as an inherent, unassailable 'good' (see also Clark, 2006; Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015).

Moore (2012) in particular argues that, anonymising can operate as a form of silencing, drawing on feminist analyses of historical forms of anonymising to argue that

For much of history anonymity did not protect the vulnerable, but excluded women and others from authorship and ownership of their own words, erasing them from the archive, even from history, and in the process creating vulnerability through rendering people nameless. (2012, p. 332)

#### 4.10 Challenges and limitations of the study

I encountered a number of challenges in the course of the study that are worth highlighting. The first challenge was getting access to participants as a whole, but especially women. It was difficult finding women who were willing to share their botched migration experience. Three women eventually participated in the study. This is however consistent with the literature as reported by Setrana (2021, p. 249):

A key challenge for this study is related to difficulties in identifying failed female potential migrants because, in addition to not wanting to share their own experiences, Ghanaian women do not take much risk when it comes to migration to Europe or North America through dangerous irregular channels.

To the extent that only three women participated in the study, the study is thus limited in elucidating the perspective of women. The limited number of women notwithstanding, their participation provided deeper insights into the experiences of such females who are either cognitive migrants or immobile cognitive returnees. The implication of this insight for future studies has been discussed in section 8.4.4.

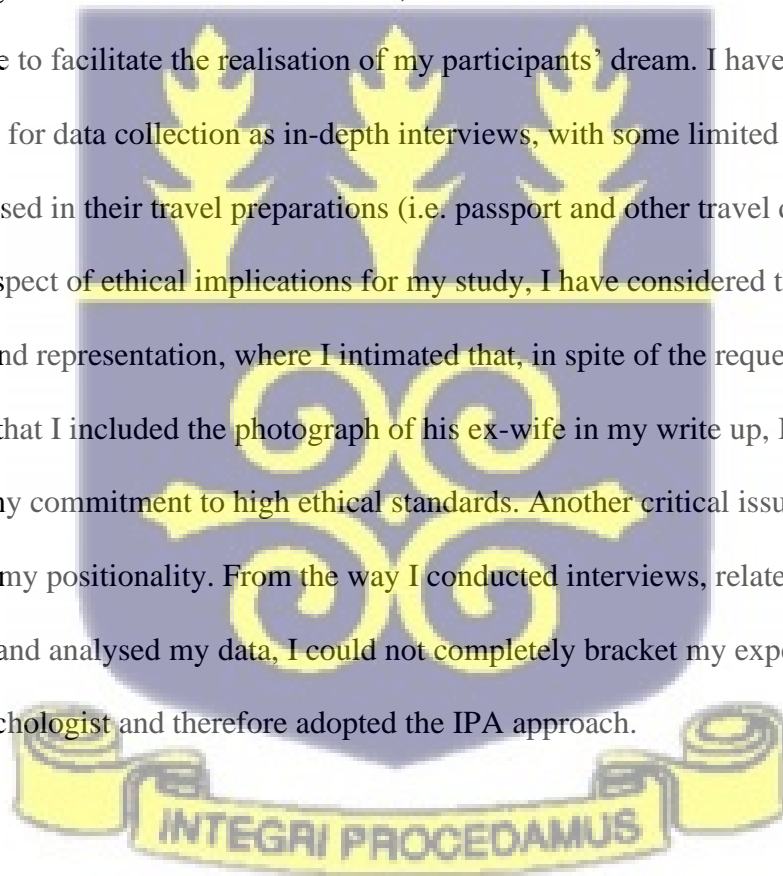
In addition, most interviews were based on experiences which occurred in the past so that the recall of events would suffer some memory lapses and limit the extent of

disclosures and the passage of time would also have worn out the mental health effects of the bouncing experience. Although conscious of this, an attempt was made to select participants at different temporal stages of their experience, to triangulate experiences, in order to account for memory lapses; I therefore acknowledge its limitation on recall and impact.

#### 4.11 Conclusion

Positioned within the phenomenological research tradition, I have described the study areas carefully chosen, in order to provide context to the phenomenon of cognitive migration. Pursuing the good life abroad features strongly in the social imaginaries of people living in these two cities. In addition, these two cities have the necessary infrastructure to facilitate the realisation of my participants' dream. I have clarified the method used for data collection as in-depth interviews, with some limited verification of documents used in their travel preparations (i.e. passport and other travel documents).

In respect of ethical implications for my study, I have considered the issues of anonymity and representation, where I intimated that, in spite of the request of one of my participants that I included the photograph of his ex-wife in my write up, I declined; because of my commitment to high ethical standards. Another critical issue I have discussed is my positionality. From the way I conducted interviews, related with participants and analysed my data, I could not completely bracket my experience as a Clinical Psychologist and therefore adopted the IPA approach.



## CHAPTER FIVE

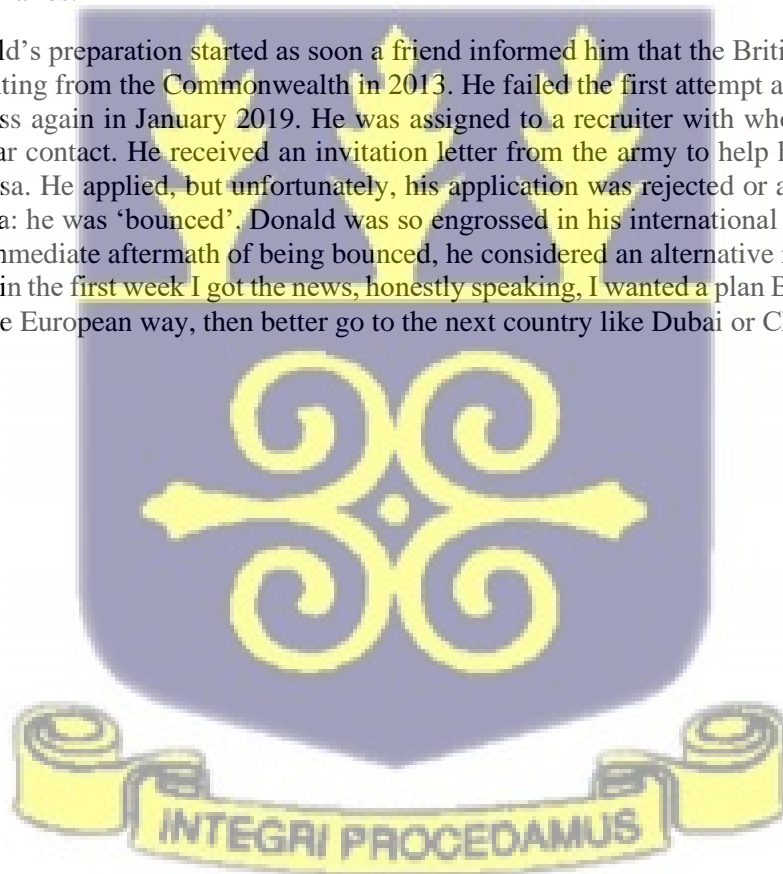
### THE MIND TRAVELLING ABROAD

#### 5.1 Introduction

Donald is a 33-year old university graduate who completed school in 2014 with a B.A in Rural and Community Studies. He was working as a facility manager in real estate business “before this visa migration process”. He resigned from this job in order to focus on the realisation of his bigger dream. “I’m not officially employed, I resigned to take the risk to attain a bigger dream”. But it failed”. His motivation to travel abroad was his dream of joining the “international army” and not the “local army”.

This ambition was fired by the imaginaries of what joining the international army corps had to offer: “the packaging, the money, the incentives in general and knowing that when you join, the family you raise are sort of protected; they will have dual citizenship. Whatever happens to you, your family will be taken care of like the system promises you”. Even though he could not ascertain whether it’s true or not, he convinced himself that it was possible because “the system brands itself as a potential ground to make you somebody; whatever job role you choose or you find yourself in, you can be better off”. The internet and friends were the main sources of his migratory imaginaries.

Donald’s preparation started as soon as a friend informed him that the British Army was recruiting from the Commonwealth in 2013. He failed the first attempt and started the process again in January 2019. He was assigned to a recruiter with whom he was in regular contact. He received an invitation letter from the army to help him apply for his visa. He applied, but unfortunately, his application was rejected or as it is said in Ghana: he was ‘bounced’. Donald was so engrossed in his international dream that in the immediate aftermath of being bounced, he considered an alternative route outside: “within the first week I got the news, honestly speaking, I wanted a plan B; if I couldn’t get the European way, then better go to the next country like Dubai or China”.



Donald, whose story is in the insert above, is a cognitive migrant. He has an outward future orientation because his mind is domiciled or displaced abroad. Consequently, he is not invested in any local or homeward endeavour. Any engagement with a homeward future is transitory; a period for mobilising financial resources to invest in his dream of joining an international army corps; most probably, the British army. The chapter's objective is to describe the mindset, behaviour and the process of becoming a cognitive migrant in Ghana. To achieve this, the chapter answers three empirical questions: (a) how does one become a cognitive migrant? (b) What are the characteristics of the mindset of a cognitive migrant? (c) How does the mindset of cognitive migrants influence their behaviour? Before delving into the answers for these questions however, I present the socio-demographic factors driving the cognitive migration process.

## 5.2 Socio-demographic drivers of cognitive migration

Cognitive migration and return is a complex process enabled by diverse factors; including socio-demographic factors. Table 1 below shows the demographic profile of participants. Twenty-one participants constitute the analytic base of the thesis. The socio-demographic drivers include gender, age, employment, education, religion, marital status, children, number of attempts, imagined destination and cognitive future orientation.

Participation is however skewed in favour of males. These consist of 3 females and 18 males; clearly showing limited female participation. In spite of the limited number of female participants, their involvement in the study highlights deeper insights into the experiences of females who are either cognitive migrants or immobile cognitive returnees. In addition to their liminal experience, just like others, their experience throws out inherent power dynamics that limit the agency of women in marriage. This is explored in details in section 5.2.6. Furthermore, their limited participation, underscores a known characteristic of women for not being enthused about sharing their own experiences

(Setrana, 2021). The few females who participated were averagely older in age, compared to the males.

The average age of all participants is 44 years. Participants' average age of first attempt is about 24 years. Thus, most actively pursued their dreams while they were young. The youngest age of first attempt was 19 and the oldest age of first attempt, 40 years. The mean ages of males and females are 43 years and 51 years respectively. This put therefore participants in the adult category; per the 2021 Ghana's population and housing census (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). However, Donald, Bashiru, Akyeampong and Perterson with an average age of 32.5 years, fall within the young people's category. The realisation that growing out of preferred livelihood option (e.g. joining British or US army) by the time they succeed in travelling abroad, enables the return of the mind to invest in homeward option. Thus, employment drives their decision to cognitively return home or become immobile cognitive returnees. Twenty of the participants are currently working; four work for the government, seven for themselves and nine work for private entities. Chapter six addresses employability as an enabler of cognitive return and reintegration; which is largely dependent on the level of education.

With respect to education, 13 participants are holders of tertiary education; two (2) postgraduates and eleven (11) undergraduates. One is a basic school certificate holder and the remaining six (6) are graduates of secondary, technical or commercial education. The effects of failed migration in terms of time lost, manifest in delayed education (cf: section 5.4.3). Education also reportedly increases the social and cultural capital of participants and drives the process of cognitive return and reintegration, through the creation of economic opportunities for participants. In addition to their level of education, participants' faith, mostly Christian, is also instrumental in helping them weather the initial storm of joblessness.

All the participants are Christians. According to the 2021 population and housing census, 74.7% of urban Ghanaians profess the Christian faith. Ghanaians in urban settings

who do not belong to any region is 0.9% of the population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). This is consistent with the literature on religiosity in Africa which characterises the African as “intensely religious” (Gyekye, 1996). The centrality of belief in God is therefore a recurrent theme in participants’ lifeworld. This is so true that Kwame Gyekye, a renowned Africanist Philosopher, considers it appropriate to begin his introductory book on African cultural values, with a discussion on African religious values and attitudes:

Religion – the awareness of the existence of some ultimate, Supreme Being who is the origin and sustainer of this universe and the establishment of constant ties with being – influences, in a comprehensive way, the thoughts and actions of the African people. I consider it therefore appropriate to begin this introductory book on African cultural values with a discussion of African religious values and attitudes. It would be correct to say that religion enters all aspects of African life so fully – determining practically every aspect of life, including moral behaviour – that it can hardly be isolated. The African heritage is intensely religious. The African lives in a religious universe: all actions and thoughts have a religious meaning and are inspired or influenced by religious point of view (Gyekye, 1996, p. 2)

Participants’ faith ties in closely with the socio-cultural imperative to marry. Readiness to marry is evidence of fidelity to one’s faith.

In terms of marital status, fifteen (15) are married while six (6) are never-married. Out of the six never-married participants, two are females. Marriage manifests in two forms: genuine and contrived or bogus marriages. Contrived or bogus marriages are arranged marriages by a resident or citizen of an imagined destination who is paid huge sums of money to enter into a marriage contract with a prospective migrant, just to facilitate regular migration and settlement. Section 5.3.1 discusses marriage as one of the motivations driving participants’ decision to seek greener pastures abroad. As section 2.4.1 hints, the inherent power dynamic in the marriage context restricts the women’s decision-making agency. I describe these nuances of marriage in the narratives of Bridget and William. Delayed marriage demonstrates one of the effects of losing or wasting time in the process of trying to travel abroad (see section 6.3.4). Marriage as a form of

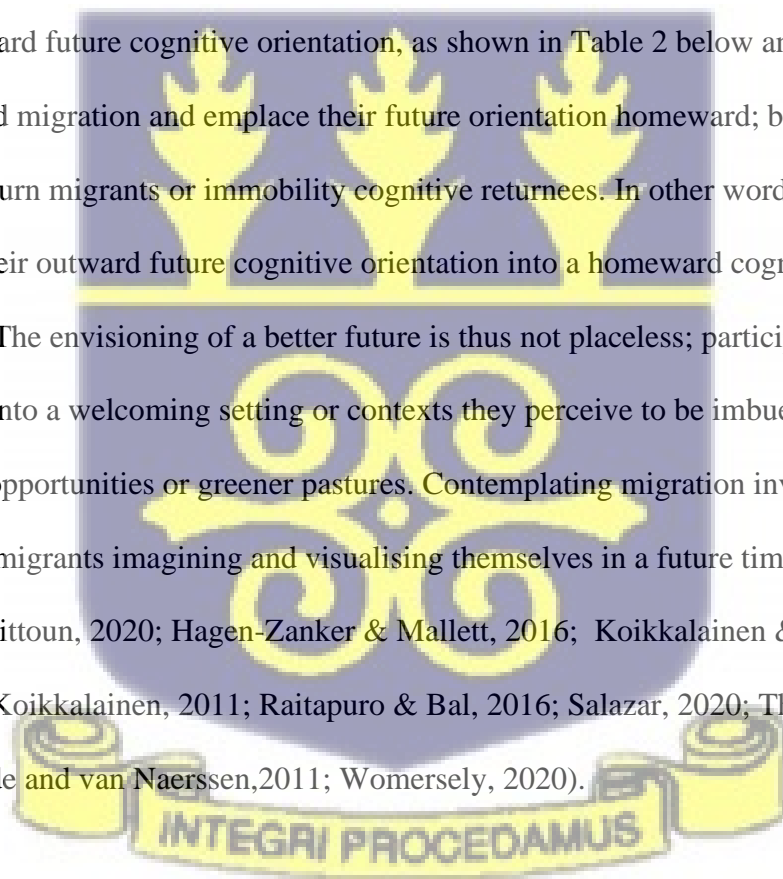
interpersonal and family relationship is also a strong social support enabler of cognitive return and re-integration in section 7.4.3.

The average number of children per participants are 2.4 with the highest number of children participants being five (5). Five (5) of the participants do not have children; incidentally, they are all never married. Three (3) of the participants never-married with no children still have a cognitive outward future orientation after failure (i.e. cognitive migrants). Two of them however, have their cognitive future orientation pointing homewards (i.e. cognitive return migrants). The presence of children may diminish migration aspirations, if migrating would mean leaving them behind. Alternatively, the presence of children may accentuate migration aspirations; because leaving would mean creating a better future for them (Aslany et al., 2021).

Attempt is the number of times participants tried travelling, before resigning to a homeward future. The average number of attempts is 2.1. This also represents a turning point, which is section 7.2 fully discusses. Thus, after an average of two attempts and failing, participants decide to return their minds home. In other words, they abandon their dream of travelling abroad for livelihoods and decide to invest in a homeward future. However, not every participant who is a cognitive migrant tried to travel. Section 6.3.2 therefore discusses the experience of John and Jeremy who make no attempt, yet are cognitively displaced and became cognitive migrants. Nevertheless, while John returns his mind homeward to become a cognitive return migrant or immobile cognitive returnee (see chapter 7), Jeremy retains his cognitive migrant status. Participants' imagined destination are mainly United Kingdom, Europe and North America, as shown in Table 1 below. This is consistent with the literature that asserts that post-colonial linkages may shape migrants' imaginaries of destinations (Robinson & Segrott, 2002). Indeed, there are many West African migrants in Europe and North America, because of residual colonial ties and

common languages (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2020)

Future cognitive orientation represents the context in which study participants emplace their migration imagination. When imagination is emplaced outward (i.e. in the destination country), it results in cognitive displacement; which is at the heart of cognitive migration (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016). On the other hand, when it is emplaced homeward (i.e. in the country of origin), it results in cognitive emplacement which is at the heart of cognitive return migration. In all, 21 prospective migrants (i.e. cognitive migrants) constitutes the analytic base of the study. However, after failing to embody their migration imagination, 5 prospective migrants continue to be cognitively displaced; still having outward future cognitive orientation, as shown in Table 2 below and 16 abandon their outward migration and emplace their future orientation homeward; becoming cognitive return migrants or immobility cognitive returnees. In other words, they transform their outward future cognitive orientation into a homeward cognitive future orientation. The envisioning of a better future is thus not placeless; participants displace their future into a welcoming setting or contexts they perceive to be imbued with flourishing opportunities or greener pastures. Contemplating migration involves prospective migrants imagining and visualising themselves in a future time and place (Cangià & Zittoun, 2020; Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2016; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016: 12; Kyle & Koikkalainen, 2011; Raitapuro & Bal, 2016; Salazar, 2020; Thompson, 2017; van der Velde and van Naerssen, 2011; Womersely, 2020).



**Table 2: Demographic profile of all participants**

ID	AGE	SEX	MARITAL STATUS	ETHNICITY	RELIGION	ATTEMPTS	CURRENT EMPLOYMENT	EDUCATION	NO. OF CHILDREN	IMAGINED DESTINATION	COGNITIVE ORIENTATION
Donald	33	M	Never married	Ga-Dangme	Christian	2	Unemployed	first degree	0	Europe/UK	Outward
Capito	51	M	Married	Akan	Christian	4	Self-employed	Secondary/ technical/ commercial	4	US/Canada	Homeward
Richie	53	M	Married	Ga-Dangme	Christian	3	Self-employed	Secondary/ Technical/ commercial	4	US/Canada	Homeward
William	42	M	Married	Ga-Dangme	Christian	1	Private entity	First degree	2	Europe/UK	Homeward
John	51	M	Married	Akan	Christian	0	Private entity	First degree	3	Europe/UK	Homeward
Peter	39	M	Married	Ga-Dangme	Christian	2	Government	First degree	3	Europe/UK	Homeward
Ivan	51	M	Married	Akan	Christian	2	Government	Postgraduate	3	Europe/UK	Homeward
Kwadwo	48	M	Married	Guan	Christian	2	Private entity	First degree	3	US/Canada	Homeward
Manu	41	M	Married	Akan	Christian	3	Private entity	Postgraduate	3	Europe/UK	Homeward
Jeremy	52	M	Married	Guan	Christian	0	Self-employed	Secondary/ Technical/ Commercial	2	US/Canada	Outward
Nakie	45	F	Never married	Ga-Dangme	Christian	2	Private entity	Secondary/ Technical/ Commercial	0	Europe/UK	Homeward
Regina	56	F	Married	Akan	Christian	2	Government	First degree	5	Europe/UK	Outward
Bridget	52	F	Married	Akan	Christian	3	Self-employed	Secondary/ Technical/ Commercial	2	US/Canada	Outward
Bashiru	34	M	Never married	Akan	Christian	4	working for government	first degree	0	US/Canada	Homeward
Akyeampong	34	M	Married	Akan	Christian	2	self-employed	first degree	3	US/Canada	Homeward
Victor	49	M	Married	Akan	Christian	5	working for private entity	first degree	3	US/Canada	Homeward
Jonathan	33	M	Married	Ga-Dangme	Christian	1	(missing)	first degree	0	Europe/UK	Outward
Peterson	29	M	Never married	Akan	Christian	1	self-employed	JHS	0	Europe/UK	Outward
Bensson	48	M	Married	Akan	Christian	4	self-employed	first degree	2	US/Canada	Homeward
Anane	52	M	Married	Akan	Christian	3	working for private entity	secondary/ technical /commercial	2	US/Canada	Homeward
Matthew	40	M	Married	Akan	Christian	2	Work for private entity	First degree	3	UK/Canada	Homeward

**Table 3 : Demographic Profile of Cognitive Migrants (after failure)**

ID	AGE	SEX	MARITAL STATUS	ETHNICITY	RELIGION	ATTEMPTS	CURRENT EMPLOYMENT	EDUCATION	NO. OF CHILDREN	IMAGINED DESTINATION	GOGNITVE ORIENTATION
Donald	33	M	Never married	Ga-Dangme	Christian	2	Unemployed	first degree	0	Europe/UK	Outward
Jeremy	52	M	Married	Guan	Christian	0	Self-employed	Secondary/ Technical/ Commercial	2	US/Canada	Outward
Bridget	52	F	Married	Akan	Christian	3	Self-employed	Secondary/ Technical/ Commercial	2	US/Canada	Outward
Jonathan	33	M	Married	Ga-Dangme	Christian	1	(missing)	first degree	0	Europe/UK	Outward
Peterson	29	M	Never married	Akan	Christian	1	self-employed	JHS	0	Europe/UK	Outward



### 5.3 Becoming a cognitive migrant

The main pathway to becoming a cognitive migrant and embarking on cognitive migration is to imagine a future or destination away from home; and for this imagination to be so strong that it causes cognitive displacement from home to the imagined destination. The process of becoming a cognitive migrant starts with the mind's exposure to migratory thought via varied information sources. Thus, all migration starts from the mind. All other drivers of migration are preceded by the mind's evaluation of the propriety of migration or not. A "conviction that leaving would be better than staying"(Carling & Collins, 2018, p. 915) results in cognitive displacement which produces an outward future orientation. Carling (2014, p.6) understands migration aspirations as a "form of attitude" that enables the prospective migrant to evaluate places. This accords with the definition of attitude as a "psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour (Eagly & Chaiken 1993, p. 1 cited in Carling, 2014, p. 6). This cognitive displacement is irrespective of physical inadmissibility at the point of departure (through visa denial or 'bouncing' or unfulfilled travel promise). Thus, cognitive displacement initiates the rest of the processes which give birth to migration.

As shown in figure 1 below, when conditions at home are adjudged as not being conducive for the attainment of people's general life aspirations, these conditions interact with the prospects for change to engender a desire for change. This desire for change culminates in migration aspiration (Carling, 2017). In figure 2, I refer to this migration aspiration as migration imagination, because aspirations and desires are both an outcome of human imaginations. Desire for change also branches into many possibilities, depending on the context, with the imagination of migration as one of them (cf: Carling, 2017 for details). According to Hirschman (1970), conditions at home could generate

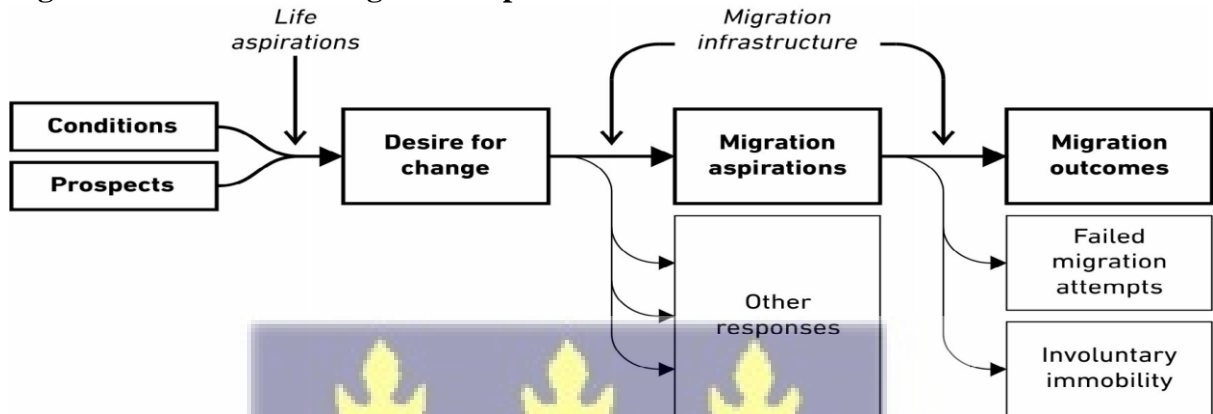
three options: “exit, voice and loyalty”; while exit involves migration imagination and its embodiment, voice and exit, produce migration resistance that could result in a regime change or support for the regime respectively. According to Boccagni (2017, p. 8)

[T]his resonates with what MacLeod (2009, p. 63), in an ethnography of youth groups in a disadvantaged housing estate, calls ‘a deeply entrenched cynicism about their future’. As one reads between the lines, cynicism is exactly the attitude of most interviewees towards their home country as they were about to leave it. It is also, in several cases, their prevailing way of framing homeland politics right now; a point which is often neglected in grand narratives of diasporas, migration and development. However, as migrants’ life experience demonstrates, a deep-rooted sense of no-future-at-home need not entail a compression of individual aspirations. Rather, it may result in their displacement, if an exit option is available as a way ahead for cultivating them.

The exit option however depends on varied aspirational or imaginative strengths and capabilities producing different migration outcomes. While some have the capacity to aspire, others do not (Appadurai, 2000, 2001). Whereas some are thought to have the predisposition to migrate (Czaika & Vothknecht, 2013; Kalir, 2005), others have the inclination to stay (Carling & Schewel, 2018; Mata-codesal, 2017; Mata-Codesal, 2015; Schewel, 2015, 2019; Setrana, 2021). These aspiration or capability outcomes are therefore shaped by the emigration and immigration contexts (Carling, 2002; Carling & Collins, 2018; Carling & Schewel, 2018; de Haas, 2010, 2021). A cognitive migrant is the outcome of a failed desire to exit. As demonstrated in figure 1, there are two possible outcomes to the decision to migrate. You could either succeed or fail. Success means reaching the destination country of your choice; while failure represents inability to physically reach the destination; resulting in involuntary immobility at home. There are also people whose obsession with migration commits them to live in a liminal space, sandwiched between the imagined destinations (cognitively) and the country of origin (physically). Figure 2 shows a red vertical line separating the emigration context (country of origin) from the immigration context (imagined country of destination). A successful

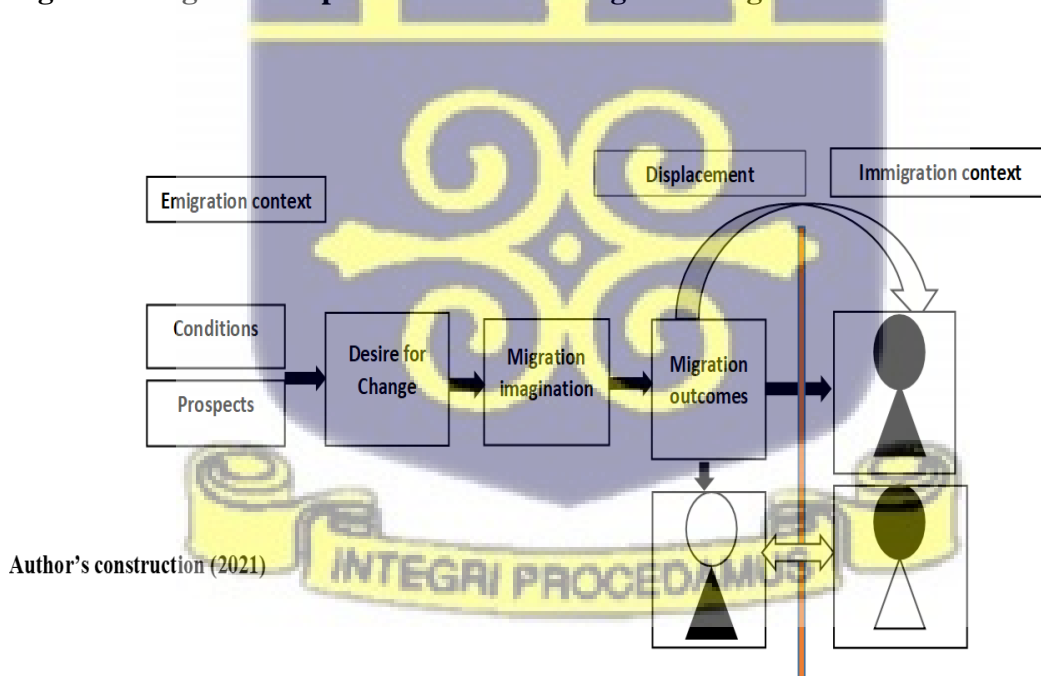
migrant (the embodied migrant) applies for a visa, becomes successful and eventually travels to the imagined destination as an immigrant. Alternatively, he could have an irregular route with all its attendant dangers. The cognitive migrant on the other hand, fails to physically cross to the imagined destination, but travels there cognitively, through cognitive displacement shown by the curved arrow facing downwards.

**Figure 1: Formation of migration aspirations and outcomes**



Carling (2014)

**Figure 2: Cognitive displacement and the cognitive migrant**



Author's construction (2021)

The notion of aspiration or ability (Carling, 2002) or aspiration or capability (de Haas, 2010, 2014, 2021), highlights the importance of agency-structure dialectics.

Although the mind drives action, it cannot be divorced from the materiality of its formation (Chambers, 2018; Ingold, 2013; Smith, 2006). Thus, a context's history, socio-cultural and economic logics, as well as its general political-economy, plays a crucial role in deciding the course of life or more particularly, the migration of its citizens. So both the emigration and immigration contexts determine the preparations which are undertaken to realise this migration imagination and the exposure to migratory thought and information sources produce cognitive displacement.

### 5.3.1 Migration exposure and sources of information

Cognitive displacement is enabled by the ubiquitous access to online resources and new media. This has provided people all around the world with new materials to develop geographical imaginaries of Europe or to imagine new possible life courses (Appadurai, 1996). Improved access to information, images and lifestyles, transmitted through education and media tend to broaden people's mental horizons, change their perceptions of 'good life' and increase material aspirations (de Haas, 2014). The macro-immigration context through its penetrative globalised culture, remotely acculturates nations of the Global South or peripheral nations, fires the imagination of their citizens to pursue the 'good life' abroad, but increasingly and discriminatively, refuses physical border-crossing. For all participants, their exposure to migratory thoughts are through the internet and the network of friends and relations abroad. Donald, representing the view of most participants explains his exposure:

Fortunately for me I had these friends, way back in secondary school who used to receive parcels from relations in US, Canada, Germany and the UK. I asked them to tell me more about these places and enquired whether they'd been there before? They responded in the affirmative. We were by then in SSS 2<sup>4</sup>. They even said since we were in school and under 18 years, the process of travelling there would be easier. So that was when I thought I could be there if I could find ways and

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<sup>4</sup> Ghana operates on a 6-3-4-4 educational system. Primary school is 6 years; Junior Secondary/High School-3 years; Senior Secondary School (SSS)-3 years (now Senior High School (SHS) entrants from 2007 to 2009 – 4 years; University Bachelor's Degree – 4 years.

means by which they got there. So that's when the interest came. Then I realised I also had the urge. It's based on little research because you see we live in a global village so you can read here and there what's happening in someone else's economy; I'm the type that likes researching on the internet a lot. So, in my spare time you think I'm WhatsApping or making a call or sending a message it's not so. You see me on google typing US Army, British Army and what you can do to get to the country aside the job itself through the visa lottery and visa applications.

Growing up, William had seen many in his vicinity going abroad and nurtured the imagination to travel too. This thought became strong when he encountered Miss C on Facebook through a friend:

As a young growing man I saw so many people in my vicinity going to abroad and coming back. I met her through a friend; a friend introduced her to me because I saw a picture which she had taken with a friend abroad. As soon as I saw the picture I said I like her. I wanted to be a friend to Miss C. So we had a conference call and from there I got to know to her. So we now started to link together through Facebook. Mostly we chat on Facebook and through few telephone calls. Those times we were not on WhatsApp. Some of my siblings traveled to Libya. Some returned and they have gone back, others returned and have not been able to go back.

Peterson also shares his experience:

My friend and I met a certain man who opened our eyes to traveling. Since 2013 my friend and I decided to travel and we were working at it until my friend got the opportunity in 2019 and travelled to the US. Sometimes, I work for people who stay abroad. I have the contacts of many of these people. Some are in UK, Amsterdam and elsewhere. So, because I have the mind that I want to travel, any time we converse, I take the opportunity to enquire from them how life abroad is. I enquire about work and remuneration, hours of work, difficulty level and how people are treated. All of them encourage me saying as for abroad it is good.

Capito traces his migratory exposure and source of information to his uncle. Capito's network abroad (i.e. uncle and sister) and particularly, the role of his uncle, makes his uncle a migration pioneer in his family (Bakewell et al., 2011). Capito recollects his experience:

I remember when I was in secondary school form four my sister went to the US as soon as my dad passed away. My dad passed away when I was in form two and my sister went the following year. I remember she wrote a letter to me stating that I will definitely have to come to the US one day to better my grades or continue my education because if I stay in school in Ghana it will not be of any help to me. She said she will send me an invitation when I complete to come to the US. So just

after form five she liaised with our uncle who was by then a professor in the US to send me the invitation to continue with my education in the US.

Cognitive migrants' cognitive displacement is therefore not sporadic; it occurs with addictive regularity as Bashiru demonstrates:

Those who have gotten to abroad take selfies, some are in Paris and be posting them on Facebook. When I saw these pictures, I would say to myself 'so truly these people have arrived abroad and I'm still here in Ghana? What is going on?' I went to YouTube most to search for Canada, UK and Holland, I could be watching, I could type in Canada and I will be watching there, I could type in UK and Holland just to watch their environment at night, how their train stations looked. But because traveling abroad was in my thought every day and I wanted more education, I was searching consistently on the internet. I go to google. Sometimes the whole day. Me, if I want something, I search for it. Be it physical or internet or to ask a friend. If I want something, I search for it. Because as for google there is nothing you type in that it wouldn't open for you to look at. There is nothing it wouldn't open for you to look at. So I search very well. As at now that I don't focus on traveling, whatever I'm doing here in Ghana, I search for it 24 hours. Once I have time and pick a phone, I search; if I don't have data for even one minute, it's like I have disappeared from the world. I'm addicted to [the] internet.

Manu's migratory thought and exposure come from two sources. He comes from the Bono region of Ghana, which until recently, was part of the Brong Ahafo region; a region noted for "a long tradition of mainly irregular international migration to Libya and Europe" (Kleist, 2017, pp. 323-324). This is consistent with the socio-cultural logic of the culture of migration, where internal and transnational mobility is highly prized culturally and economically and a significant proportion of the population pursues this actively (Tonah, 2007, Quartey, 2009). This socio-cultural logic inspires Manu to take advantage of the many opportunities which tertiary education offers, for regular migration. He narrates his exposure this way:

Just like what I told you, I come from Bono region and then most of the time, Bono people we travel a lot. Some people even take the risk by going through the desert. When they travel and come back the kind of property they build with the kind of things that they do. So when we got here [the university] and we got to know there was the opportunity for students to travel outside, I saw it as the greatest opportunity that had come my way. I grabbed the opportunity hoping that I would travel abroad and come back to Ghana.

Ivan, like William above, traces his exposure to his childhood. However, upon entering the University, he realizes there are opportunities to travel most of the long vacation. This strengthens his imagination. The most important thing is how he internalises his imagination. From Ivan, migratory thoughts are so ubiquitous that they penetrate the unconscious:

Being a kid you heard stories from around, the environment, everywhere about people going abroad. From school also people travel; you know students go and also come and tell you stories. While during the long vacation these rich kids were in London working (those times we called them diaspora). So we were also calling ourselves “ahaspora” because we are here (laughs). People were lucky to travel and come back and from reading, from stories in fact it was all around you that abroad is far better than being here. So unconsciously you have conceived the idea that you want to go out of the country when you finish.

Exposure to migratory thoughts and information sources aids in the development of migration imagination, leading to a trajectory and locational cognitive thresholds (van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011), resulting in cognitive displacement. From the narratives above, participants have access to a wide array of information sources, including return migrants in communities and networks abroad (Setrana, 2021), the school setting, as well as the culture of migration pertaining in a community. The central feature of cognitive migration is thus the displacement of the mind. The literature explains that the formation of imagination draws on varied sources: education, media, pop culture, personal experience and social networks (Thompson, 2017). The media, particularly television, comes out particularly strongly (Conrad Suso, 2019; Dannecker, 2013; Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2016; Mai, 2004; Piotrowski, 2010; Salazar, 2011; Willems, 2014). Some authors stress the important role of social media on these imaginations (e.g. Koikkalainen et al., 2019; Kölbel, 2018). The formation of these imaginations is therefore crucial because imaginations are active in directing engagements with the material, while the material in turn shapes imaginations through such engagements (Chambers, 2018; Ingold, 2013). In other words, while imagination is an important factor in the fundamental human desire to

better one's future circumstances and drives migration, the capacity to realize these desires and future plans is dependent on "(...) access to economic resources and powers of symbolic legitimation, neither of which are distributed equitably" (Smith, 2006, 54, see also Ong 1999, pp. 10-11). It also depends on the social support systems and interpersonal trust networks available to migrants (Tilly, 2007). Chapter 7 looks at some of these interpersonal networks that facilitate cognitive return and reintegration.

#### 5.4 Characteristics of the mindset of cognitive migrants

The mind that travels must have a reason or desire to do so. In other words, there must be clear motives. Motivation, as a desire, was first articulated by Ravenstein when he said that "... of all the motivations for migration, none surpasses the desire inherent in most men to 'better' themselves in material respects" (1889, p. 286 cited in Collins, 2018, p. 966). Desire is also imaginative. This "better" self must be envisioned or imagined clearly. The envisioning ends in an evaluation. Cognitive migration therefore becomes a phase of the migration decision-making process:

in which the experimental, always-on, imagination actively, though not always consciously, negotiates one's future social worlds and, hence, emotional states converging around a core destination. This mental time travel into a possible future in a different country constructs a narrative on how one's life is likely to proceed if one chooses to migrate, not in the abstract, but under specific conditions in specific destinations. The importance of focusing on individual imaginations as integral to a 'decision', which we have advocated in this article, does not negate the importance of migration networks and cultures (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016, p.967).

Therefore, mindset, which is a product of cognitive migrants' agentic relationship with structural factors within the socio-cultural settings they embed, dictates their motivations and the formation of their imagination. Zittoun (2016) reflects on imagination as both personal and socio-cultural; nourished by social and cultural resources, which, from a Vygotskian perspective, is a higher mental function. I therefore turn to a socio-cultural psychological definition of imagination by Zittoun and Gillespie (2016). They defined imagination as the process by which our consciousness temporarily uncouples from the

here-and-now of an unfolding proximal sphere of experience, to explore past, future or alternative distal spheres of experiences. Imagination, or more precisely, imagining, is thus ‘an embodied practice of transcending both physical and socio-cultural distance’ (Salazar, 2011, p. 577). I therefore explore participants’ motivation and imagination below.

#### 5.4.1 Motivation

Three factors instigate the inherent desire for bettering one’s self in material respect. I examine personal motivation (motives for desiring to travel), structural motivation (structural factors pushing respondents to travel – economics, health, unemployment) and socio-cultural motivation (sociocultural beliefs that drive the pursuit of the good life). Scholars describe these factors as push factors (Lee, 1967) or repel factors (Carling & Schewel, 2018; Schewel, 2015, 2020; Setrana, 2021). I call them displacing factors or enablers of displacement. At the personal level, participants construct motivation as a dream, passion, urge, desire and idea: “I really had the desire to visit because when you look at the living there, it is a bit better compared to Ghana” (Bashiru). Mescoli (2014), writing about the migration of Moroccan youth to Italy, underscores the motivational role of imagination, by saying that young people living in Morocco “.... learn to yearn for migration by starting to imagine a move and the consequences it could have” (p.293). Williams long-cherished dream to marry a White woman, nurtures his imagination:

As a young man my dream was to travel abroad, work for money and marry a white lady. I have been pursuing this for a very long time until it almost became reality when I got married to a British woman from Wales.

Besson’s dream of marrying his girlfriend who emigrates to the US backfires:

I had made up my mind to marry my girlfriend who had travelled to the US. I even performed the knocking ceremony. So, we were communicating very well. That was what motivated me to want to travel.

Bridget presents a more complex personal reason, motivating her decision to travel abroad. She joins her husband in Japan and they return home voluntarily, but now she is a

cognitive migrant because her desire to join her husband in the US fails repeatedly. The complexity here has to do with the fact that she feels a certain "compulsion" to join her husband. As she clearly indicates, she cannot force her husband. Bridget's wish, however, is for her husband to return to Ghana so that together they can pursue a homeward future. However, within the Ghanaian socio-cultural logic of marriage, she has to defer to the man in decision-making. Bridget:

But I cannot force him. There are several businesses we can venture into, from spare parts, washing bay, cooking utensils etc. but I cannot force him. If you get the opportunity to travel, that's fine. But if not, there's no need. If not for the fact that my husband is there, I wouldn't even bother because the work is stressful, bearing in mind what I went through in Japan. There's no time to rest. You have to wake up very early because of money. Over here I go to work when I want. I don't have to report to anyone. That's one advantage of doing your own work here in Ghana.

This is consistent with the literature on women's decision-making in Ghana:

Clearly, women were expected to have lives that were far from independent. They were expected to rely upon their extended family and/or their husbands. While the role of the extended family is acknowledged in some proverbs, a more prominent message captured by the corpus of proverbs reviewed is one of dependence on men (If the soup will be good, it is because of a man #3912), attribution of women's success to men (If a woman does well (i.e., becomes rich), it is because of a man #102), and the linking of women's socially desirable attributes to men (If a woman is beautiful, it is because of a man #54)(Dzokoto et al., 2014, p.5).

On the other hand, Regina, another married woman whose husband is in the United Kingdom and wants to join him, does not feel this much compulsion. What motivates Regina to travel to the United Kingdom is: "Umm one thing was that I wanted to go and see how the place looked like, the environment more like an environmental change, adventure". After failing a couple of times, however, she returns her mind homeward, to invest the country of origin (see chapter 7). For some participants, their motivation is education. Capito captures participants' rationale for desiring Western education:

I still have the feeling that if you are young and you are able to travel, in terms of education if you are able to educate yourself there it is best than here. Because in Ghana if someone educated abroad comes down we look at him or her in a

different perspective but if you are educated in Ghana and you go abroad you cannot get the sort of employment you want there unless you go back to school before you can get something you want. But here in Ghana if someone with a masters from abroad comes down, they will employ him here.

The story of Bashiru, whose experience opens the introductory chapter, highlights two structural difficulties; unemployment and corruption which displace young graduates abroad, in search of greener pastures. In Bashiru's particular experience, he stays home for five years without a job. As he put it: "I didn't want the Ghanaian system". Bashiru attributes his unemployment status to the constriction of the public sector, due to a loan conditionality from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The extensive quotation from Peter below mirrors the general and structural motivations which displace the mind from home to a foreign land:

The whole primary essence for people like me is to go abroad, work and get money. Because just look at it, you are in a country, you've schooled to a certain level, you work, you are taxed and taxed and taxed. However, to even move from your house to the nearby road is challenging because of bad road and traffic; nobody seems to care, littering, everything and the basic social amenities the ordinary fellow is difficult for him or her to access and even when they access it, they can't pay. But you will find both government and opposition involved in wanton dissipation of state resources. Sometimes, you look at it and then 'I have had enough of this' excuse my language 'nonsense'. Let me just go where the system works better. Example you go to UK; I know one of the best things they have there is their health system. Once you are a citizen and you are sick, just go to a nearby hospital, you are catered for. My niece some years back had a major surgery on the spinal cord, if that thing they said what is it pneumonia or tuberculosis of the spine or something like that. If that thing had been done in Ghana it's going to be huge cost and one nurse or one doctor who is not even paid well, who nobody is even ensuring that they are doing the right thing would have a whole lot of frustration, but they were there and because they were citizens the system sorted her out. If she is standing here and I am telling you my niece is the one who went through surgery; at a point in time her spine was like this. If you see her now and we don't tell you, you will not know. Why, their system is working; so even if you are being taxed you can't complain too much. Because you know your tax money will come back to you. If I know I am being taxed and I will go to hospital and I will not have to pay, I wouldn't talk. I have a good transport system such that when I want to move, I can move without a problem, I wouldn't even drive all the way to Accra doing my rounds. So, these are some of the disincentives and the things that really drive people away. Some may say the people are not

being paid well; yes, I don't think all of us will be satisfied even if we are paid a house full of money because we will always want more.

Peterson gives a practical view of structural motivation as an artisan:

If by coming to work, I meet a lot of people placing orders such that I am even overwhelmed by the demand that would mean earning money. Why do we want to go to abroad? Is it not for money? If I have finished building my house and staying in it with my wife and children, what else will I need? That will be all. *The back of your teeth does not taste sweet, but you lick there just the same.* (You have to accept circumstances as they are). It is working hard and not succeeding that creates the mindset that imagines travelling abroad. It the difficulty with work that causes us to have the mind to travel abroad.

Bensson enumerates a number of structural factors which motivates his desire to travel:

Finding a job after school was difficult. The education we had was too theoretical. Getting capital to start a business was very difficult to come by. If you were not lucky to receive financial support from your family, it was very tough. For those of us in Santaase, we realized that people who had the opportunity to travel were able to mobilize enough money to start businesses. They had enough money to acquire properties. It was very common when we were growing up. So we realized that it would be difficult to stay here and build a house of our own. Our grandparents were cocoa farmers so they had enough money to build, but the situation wasn't the same when we were growing up. Times were hard and it would be difficult for us to go back to our villages to farm. Times had changed. Those who were able to travel were able to buy plots of land, build houses and buy commercial vehicles which were operating. So looking at all this, we thought the best thing to do was to travel outside if finding a job here was difficult. People were even assisting their neighbours financially to travel because of the benefits.

This desire to 'better' themselves, coupled with images and narratives abroad, feed the imaginations of cognitive migrants.

#### 5.4.2 Imaginations

Cognitive migrants frame abroad or the destination country, using a number of imaginations. They frame abroad as a land flowing with milk and honey and think about it with much adulation. Donald says:

I have big dreams. I see the place to be a golden opportunity for everyone to make a very meaningful living. If you want to make a very meaningful living, if you want to have a very good healthcare, if you want to have a very good educational background, I think that's where I see the place. I see the place to be a solid foundation for me to have a meaningful life in Africa

This adulation comes with what Atance and O'Neill (2001) describe as episodic future thinking for some participants. Episodic future thinking occurs when one projects the 'self' into the future to pre-experience an event, especially when this event is new to them. Donald's recollection of how he felt when he thought of going abroad thus describes the feeling of most participants:

Wow (eyes opened wide, elated) wow (giggling) I can't even use the word elated (laughing) more from the way I'm laughing you can tell (still laughing and even louder), the Western dream, the home for the brave. You see I like where the youth are allowed to take action, I like the system where the youth are allowed to take action.

Bahiru:

Eish, I had passion. I had my aburokyire luggage packed in my room. At night, I would open it, spread the things and I would be just looking at them, close it and open it again. "The day I will get there". The very day I will get there, I will take photograph and post it on Facebook. Look, aburokyire hmmm. Aburokyire when I watch YouTube, I see those going to see off their relatives at the departure, some will be crying, some will be hugging one another and bidding farewell saying bye [laughter]. When I watch YouTube I see instances where somebody is arriving and another person is flying a flag [waving the hand] "so there are people in the plane?" And the plane will land and come to a stop and the gate will be opened for them to get down and they will go for their luggage and there is place you will find that when you place your bag it will be moving by itself (carousel). I mean, you could really experience the feelings in it. Eeiiii hmmm. You know what I really admire? When they come to Ghana and going back "oh I will go next week" "my plane will take off next week oo". "I'll fly in the night" "I came home on Lufthansa, when it landed at Accra it flew to Lagos". "Oh we dropped at Lagos before coming to Accra".

Bashiru's show of emotion, as he recounts what excites him about abroad, literally transforms him to someone giving an experiential account, confirming Atance and O'Neill's (2002) notion of episodic future thinking, where there is a projection of the self into a future time plane, to pre-experience an event.

A plethora of resources both social and cultural, thus nurtured the imagination of research participants. Images of abroad even filtered through bereavements and funerals.

Mazzucato et al. (2006), examined funerals in the context of transnationalism and submitted that it is one of the institutions impacted by transnational phenomena in developing countries, including Ghana. Thus, funerals were not only multi-sited events in which migrants overseas keenly participated, but were also adapted in the home country, to accommodate and include transnational elements. In a particular instance that was so poignant, migrants' involvement in the performance of funeral rites fired the imagination of Bashiru as follows:

I have long thought about going abroad. It is very much on my mind. Because I realised that in Ghana, you see a particular house, you ask and you're told it belongs to a burger. This woman, her children are abroad. When a family is bereaved and you look at the obituary announcing the performance of the funeral rites, you see printed Osei-Bonsu, Canada, So and so, USA (Asemasi, USA). You would hear people saying this funeral has a nice fragrance, look, all the participants are abroad. In another funeral, you will see Kwadwo Mensah, Ankaase, Someone else, Beposo. This is a funeral of the poor. Even Khebab sellers don't patronize such funerals.

Those who sold 'khebab' read obituaries as they moved about, looking at participants and countries of residence, to determine which funeral had a 'nice fragrance', so as to regulate the quantity and quality of production:

Don't you know that those who sell Chinchinga (Khebab) read obituaries as they move about? They look at the participants and the country of their residence. So, they could determine this funeral has a nice fragrance and therefore increase their chinchinga production and make it posh

The desire to travel abroad and the imaginaries it had created in the minds of potential migrants, literally appeared in their dreams. This was consistent with an 'Akan' proverb: "Asem a ewo aniso no, na ye de ko dae mu". To wit, "a problem that is on the mind, is what we dream of". This dream means that, we worry about what concerns us most. Again, Bashiru reported a dream that was so characteristic of most cognitive migrants:

I would dream and in the dream, I would be abroad. I would meet my friends and they will scream in excitement hugging and asking me when I arrived. I would wake up and find myself in Ghana. There was a time I dreamt one hot afternoon. In the dream, one of my uncles had picked me [up] from the airport telling me ‘Bashiru, here is very cold so put on your winter cloth before you disembark from the plane. My wife and I are at the airport to pick you [up]. I’m waiting for you, my wife and I are in our car waiting for you right now’. Do you know I couldn’t get down from the plane? All I would hear was a loud bang at the door. My aunty opened my door and I asked why. She replied I had some visitors. I couldn’t disembark from the plane [breaks into laughter]. I got stuck in the plane. It hurt me so much.

The country of origin was viewed disparagingly in the imaginaries of participants. The worse version of the receiving country was however seen as better, than the country of origin as, intimated by Ivan: “you know that idea of no matter how bad it is, it is better than Ghana. You could find something doing; even the worse job there is better than being here”. Regina, a teacher, whose husband was abroad and had tried three times to join him without success, also provided a more graphic comparative account of why living abroad was better than being in Ghana:

My own good friend I used to live with in this house; she was living with another friend and I decided she could move in here with me, there was a spare room. She used to sell oranges right in front of my gate; I used to buy food stuffs for her. Fortunately for her one of her sons who was in his second year at Cape Vas<sup>5</sup> was convinced by another friend to apply for the American Visa Lottery. Fortunately for him he won the lottery and travelled and later joined the army, he came for his mum; 18<sup>th</sup> March was exactly one year since she left. My friend has bought 3 pieces of land at GH¢35,000 (\$5,709.62) at Pokuase<sup>6</sup>, she has a storey building where she is currently fitting some tiles. Just a year, no it’s been two years now. Before she traveled she promised to give her first salary as thanksgiving to God; she sent to me a little over GH¢3000 (\$489.40) through western union, I put it in an envelope and sent to church explaining to them that before Doris left she promised to give off her first pay to God. I was shocked because while living with me I knew she only had capital of about GH¢10 (\$1.63). She used to go to Agboglobshie<sup>7</sup> to buy oranges in a sack; she carried the heavy sack from Darkuman<sup>8</sup> home. The profit she makes in the long run, she goes to Tabora<sup>9</sup> to buy bread at dawn and sells in addition to the oranges. Yet she has been able to raise GH¢3000 in a month because she said she was going to give her first salary as

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<sup>5</sup> Cape Vas stands for University of Cape Coast one of the public universities in the Central Region of Ghana

<sup>6</sup> Pokuase is a fast developing suburb of Accra, the capital city of Ghana.

<sup>7</sup> Agboglobshie is one of the largest markets in Accra

<sup>8</sup> Darkuman is a town in Accra

<sup>9</sup> Tabora-Alhaji

thanksgiving to God, she sent a little over GH¢3000. This means that the amount is her monthly salary. She worked as a nanny for the children of a Ghanaian living abroad; she mentioned that the Ghanaians living abroad were very smart because they know the unemployment situation in the country and they know an illiterate like her cannot earn that amount of money. They were taking advantage of her but now as a result of undergoing some training for 3 or 4 months while living with the Ghanaians she got a job with an old age home. She is not computer literate but her son taught her some basic things to be able to go through the training and get the certificate to care for the aged. She is paid that GH¢3000 per week. What shows that [being] abroad is not better than Ghana?

Ivan, however, gives a more illuminating cultural reason for wanting to travel abroad that borders on othering. He admits that the conception of the ‘Whiteman’ in the social imagination of the Ghanaian is such that the Whiteman’s country is synonymous with positive well-being. His social imagination, stresses superiority of the Whiteman to the Ghanaian. Thus, there is negation of self and place. This could be a legacy of how slavery and colonialism ‘constructed’ the Ghanaian. Ivan:

I was trying here and wasn’t getting any good results so obviously you just had to leave. There was this idea that privileged travelling abroad so much that it was as if without abroad one won’t make any progress in life. So that was what was initially pushing me to either go, ‘abroad or suicide’. If you’re unable to travel abroad, then forget it; whatever you do can nothing compares to the Whiteman. That idea of even of you are going to church and you meet a white man you have to return because you have met God (in Twi) is deeply ingrained in our mind. That kind of thing was there. So it was like we are doing something here but then it’s nothing compared to what you can gain outside. And that initially was what was driving me to make sure you go out.

#### 5.4.3 Mindsets

The narrative of William captured the essence of cognitive displacement: “yes my mind, my soul, everything was there I am just waiting just to board the plane and be there. I see myself there actually, yes I see myself there, I see myself there actually”. Similarly, although Regina was in Ghana, she already saw herself abroad: “I was seeing myself there already”. “This displacement could be as a result of a confirmatory bias, a cognitive illusion related to thinking. It was the tendency of participants to only look for evidence that supported their own hypothesis (e.g. that moving to a certain destination was wise)

and the ‘illusion of control’, where participants overestimated their own role in producing certain outcomes (e.g. that one could survive a risky boat trip across the Mediterranean).

For example, Donald was certain he was joining the British Army: “Very optimistic!

There is nothing you tell me that will make me feel 1% short of how I felt for myself

during the process”. Donald called this thought of travelling abroad an ‘obsession’: “*my*

*category yeah obsessed yeah*”. He was literally ‘possessed’ by the thought of travelling

abroad. Peter shared the same sentiments of finding himself already in the United

Kingdom, but his body being on Ghanaian soil: “Yes! In fact, in fact that’s how best you

can..., my body was here on Ghanaian soil but my mind was already in [the] UK before I

even applied”.

Bashiru was passionate about his conviction that life abroad was going to succeed and would not have had any difficulty ascribing an evil intent to a pastor who dared to foretell his failure:

So, the passion was so strong; in fact, if at the time a pastor had told me I wouldn’t succeed with this travel, I would have accused the pastor of witchcraft because he has no prophecy from God. I wouldn’t succeed with my travel? Is the faith I have in my travel a joke for you to say it wouldn’t work? Hmm at the end of the day, at the end of the day

Dzokoto (2020) described this feature of the ‘Akan’ mind, porous, in that, it was malleable

to both thoughts of beneficence and malevolence. The same mind that believed in the

beneficence of God, also believed it was possible to be under the influence of a spell.

Kwadwo explained:

When I sit down and ask myself is it me that this has happened to me then I believe that perhaps he cast some spell. Because I went straight and gave the money and as at now, I still can’t believe it.

When Bashiru eventually got a job and showed gratitude to God through singing

and dancing, he refused to break the news to his aunty, for fear of not succeeding.

Bashiru:

So my aunty came to enquire what was going on. I just told her I was worshipping because I said to myself, I wouldn't let anybody in on my connection again. Maybe it was because they were aware that was why I wasn't succeeding.

One can also discern a 'Salvationist' mindset. Everything is going to be alright, as soon as I set foot in my imagined home away from home: "It wasn't easy because in my mind I think if I travel then everything will be ok for me; that's how I am seeing it" (Richie). However, at the heart of push-pull thinking is this alluring pull of the destination country, the thought of which is viscerally felt. This relates to what has been described as episodic future thinking. With this cognitive orientation, the cognitive migrant knows neither defeat nor risks. It is this certainty with the future and the greener pastures it offers, that ruptures the subjectivity of the cognitive migrant, resulting in the adoption of the behaviour of a migrant.

Another feature of the cognitive migrant's mind is that at home, it is "mindless" and at the destination country, it is disembodied. Dzokoto's (2020) exposition on the Akan theory of mind helps to make sense of my participants' behaviour, as they fail to unite their mind and body at the destination. Once it is the mind that is involved in agentic behaviour (i.e. planning, judgement, movement) and without the body it cannot have agency, there is little wonder then that so long as participants displace their minds to the destination country, they do not involve in anything worthwhile at home. Zittoun's (2020) assertion that imagination helps to resolve the gaps and contradictions that arise from both biological and historical constraints placed on our psychological functioning, thereby enabling a better coordination between thought and action, is thus true, to the extent that it drives preparation towards achieving the goal of becoming a successful migrant. It is, however, not consistent with the reality of potential migrants who fail to physically cross geographical borders to embody their migratory aspirations. Imagining life abroad and cognitively or mentally travelling there, results in a disconnect between thought and action. While thought domiciles itself in the destination country, action maroons itself in

the origin. Consequently, imagination is unable to unite thought with action for the cognitive migrant. This leaves prospective migrants cognitively “disembodied” and bodily “mindless”, hence unproductive at the origin. Bashiru:

I wasn't doing anything because of the desire to travel. Even when I applied for a job, I didn't follow up because I said to myself Ghana is not a place I would want to settle, I have to leave the country. I have to leave the country because I knew there was a better life somewhere compared to Ghana.

This I call cognitive displacement. This *mindless-body-disembodied-mind* experience results from failure or inability to migrate:

There was a time I applied for a job and I was called but because my mind was not in Ghana, I told them I had not applied for any job why should I come for an interview because then I had a week to attend an interview at the Royal Norwegian Embassy at Labone, Accra. So, then my mind was there so when I was called for the interview, I told them I hadn't applied for any job because I knew I was going abroad, all did not amount to anything.

The mindset of the cognitive migrant was also characterised by hopelessness and place negation. This resonated with what Carling (2002) found among the youth in Cape Verde, where although the country was relatively doing better, the youth perceived their place of origin as poor. My participants did not have hope in Ghana and this resulted in a lot of place negation. This is exemplified by Bashiru:

During the run up to the 2016 elections, I told my aunty that fire should engulf Ghana so we all become refugees and leave Ghana. There should be an outbreak of war in Ghana so that we can all flee Ghana on the grounds of being refugees so we can settle in someone else's country because I didn't have hope.

In Deleuzian terms, cognitive displacement or migration is a “*voyage in situ*” (Palladino, 2018, p. 81). Remote acculturation sustains this embeddedness in the virtual space of the imagined destination. Remote acculturation also contends that intermittent and or indirect contact with geographically and historically separate cultures, as facilitated by modern globalisation mechanisms, can also produce acculturation (Ferguson &

Bornstein, 2012). Acculturation, on the other hand, can be defined as the “process of learning and incorporating the values, beliefs, language, customs and mannerisms of the new country immigrants and their families are living in, including behaviour that affects health such as dietary habits, activity levels and substance use (Mody, 2007, p.515). Some of the behaviours cognitive migrants have been acculturated into in situ are described in section 5.5.1 below.

### **5.5 Preparation and lived experience of the cognitive migrant**

As already intimated, the thought of travelling abroad could dictate present behaviour (Seligman et al., 2013). The thought of travelling abroad however, ended in varied actions (Mescoli, 2014; Zittoun, 2020). Becoming a cognitive migrant required feverish preparation. There was active pursuit of the imagination through procuring a passport, identifying a broker, learning a language or an art form and applying for a visa. Imagination, according to Zittoun et al. (2020), was able to resolve the gaps and contradictions that arose from both biological and cultural-historical constraints, placed on our psychological functioning, resulting in a better coordination between thought and action. As part of their preparation towards realising their dream, potential migrants began living their lives as migrants. In fact, as part of this preparation, they projected themselves into the future and systematically completed all the essential tasks to reach the desired status of being a migrant (Mescoli, 2014). In other words, thought and action became united, through the power of imagination.

The status of being a migrant that Mescoli (2014) describes, finds expression in Collins’ (2018) theorisation of desire as a social force. Collins (2018) grapples with three conceptual issues, with a focus on desire: temporality, assemblage and becoming. Instead of desire, I use imagination because, desire itself is imaginative. Imagination as a force, inspires action in much the same way as the desire is self-sustaining. However, what

propels desire is imagination. I therefore unify aspiration and desire in imagination.

Potential migrants become their imaginations, right at the origin. The actualisation of migration however, articulates the complex interplay between these expressions of desire, strategic planning and opportunism that manifests in movements to achieve or avoid certain kinds of futures. Migration in this respect, is never singular in its temporality, but rather, an ongoing process, where past, present and future fold together in the emergence of migrant lives (McCormack & Schwanen 2011). Richie's experience with a broker, popularly known in Ghana as "connection men", also demonstrates the extent of preparation that cognitive migrants undertake. The "connection man" presents Richie as a member of a dance group to the American Embassy. Although he is not a professional dancer, he has to become one, through rigorous dance rehearsals:

There was this connection man who wanted us to be part of a musical group going on a tour in US. The idea was that we would disappear on arrival. I don't even know how to sing. So we went for rehearsals from 9pm to 12 midnight. The thing was connection; we had one of the popular Twi musicians. I have even forgotten his name. We were taught how to sing and play the drums. I was playing *konkokonko*<sup>10</sup> (laughs). So, they did the passport for us then we went to the embassy they bounced us. We went for this rehearsals every day for about 3 months.

Some participants also take foreign language classes, as part of their preparation to travel.

Kwadwo:

You see, you know because of that even during my national service do you know that I enrolled in German language [training] at Goethe Institute? I felt the need learn German Language because I had in my mind that I would travel. Unlike others, I did not have any relative anywhere, I was doing everything by myself. So the during my national service at the Tema Oil Refinery, the little that I got, I used it to go and pay for learning the German Language. Whenever I closed from work, I would attend go for classes.

Ivan shares a similar story regarding attaining proficiency in the German language, to increase his chances of succeeding at the visa interview. In addition, Ivan demonstrates the

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<sup>10</sup> It the sound of Frikyiwa bell. A Ghanaian metal pod bell with ring striker

agentic maneuverings which constitute part of the assemblages that make migration occur.

While doing all of these however, Ivan gives us a peak into the sense of desperation that is driving him:

I was almost everywhere, in fact I had to even start German classes. Somebody was helping me with German because I couldn't pay. So the whole idea was to do whatever it was that could help you leave. So if it was about learning the language so that even at the interview you perform well that had to be done. Whatever it was for you to leave the shores you were ready to do. So we finished and it was like after National service... even before national service we had this idea of going out. We had conceived this idea before leaving school so everything was towards going out of the country and so we were looking for scholarships. By those times the common ones were the German scholarships, DAAD I don't know if...D-A-A-D scholarships and then we realized that the age limit too was something else that was catching up with you. In fact, you don't qualify for some of the scholarships because of your age. So then we had to reduce our age; do a new birth certificate and I had to reduce my age by 2 years. Although I was born in Accra I was in Kumasi then when I was trying to do this thing so I had to do a new birth certificate and state in it that I was born in Kumasi. This was because it looked like if you are saying you are from Accra then go and do the birth certificate in Accra which I wasn't ready to. So I was born in Kumasi and then I did it. And then I started pursuing this scholarship thing, wrote so many applications and the rest. And there was this particular time that I had something from I think De Montfort University. They came down to Ghana. Now it was finding a way to going out of the country. So I heard of these people coming down to do some meetings with the potential students at one of the... I think it was the British Council. I went there and then it was like oh I have finished first degree, they will interview you one on one and then... in fact we were even given admission there and there. Now I have to do my documents, whatever it is I had admission, in fact I had the admission here. And I know I had to go out, I didn't really know what I was doing but then I had done all my documents, gotten all, reduced my age so now I fit into the age bracket and now I was using that birth certificate for everything I was doing then. So I was pursuing this De Montfort University thing, we had to go to the British embassy and you know those times it wasn't this electronic thing that we do now. We have to go and queue, we wake up at dawn, go and queue; at times you have to pay people to queue for you so that when you come in you just take their place and then they go home. At times we even use stones... People will put stones down, I am after this, you pick a stone and you make a mark. We go there at dawn, around 2 am people have started queuing already and that was what we were doing. Yes, at that time, 2 am you have to be there before the embassy opens around 6:30 – 7am. In fact, I was so bent on going outside that there was nothing else I wanted to do. It was abroad or maybe death or whatever it is.

Akyeampong's account also represents the effort that participants whose choice is education abroad, invest into their migration project:

Yes, umm first I went to the net, looked for schools that were having courses I was interested in so I applied and I had my I20; that was before mission so I did all the processes, paid all the things I had to pay for. So it was time for interview so I went but then I had everything, I had every document they needed but I don't know they just said they could not allow me to go because reasons I was not told.

Matthew leverages a kinship relationship in the US:

At that time, I had a cousin who was in America. He was a practicing surgeon. So, we did talk. He gave me websites to go and visit to broaden my knowledge. Since I planned to go to school, he would give me some schools' websites to visit.

Bensson narrates the preparation he put into making his dream of travelling abroad come through:

Usually when you have been invited by someone, the documents you present may not be genuine. It is difficult to get a statement. Sometimes you have to pay monies to people who may not even get you a genuine statement. The embassy is aware of such things so sometimes, when you decide to reapply you are scared they will hold it against you because they have your records. Sometimes they can check your number and conclude that you have no good intentions and you will not return if they grant you your visa. So it put fear into us. So it became the norm to register for different passports with different names and dates of birth. I have also done visa connections for a lot of people. That is why I thought that, if I have been able to do it for other people, why not myself. My intention was not to go and stay there, I wanted to be able to go there frequently. But unfortunately, all my attempts failed.

Thus, their imagination of life abroad changes them into mobile subjects. Although they are still in their home country, their practices are equivalent to displacement. This is because imaginations influence participants to project themselves elsewhere and as such, they imply a real change of personal traits (Mescoli, 2014). Mescoli (2014, p. 295) calls the agentic investment in learning a language more than an investment in a migratory project:

Learning the language is not only an investment in the migratory project but also a journey in itself. It brings the students closer to a series of sounds, topics and images belonging to the 'elsewhere'; previously only imagined but at that point physically experienced.

Bashiru's experience resonates with Mescoli's (2014) description of young people starting a migratory process from Morocco to Italy. By initiating this process, they inhabit

three concurrent space-time circumstances: “here”, “there” and “in between”. The “here” being the origin, “there” denoting the destination country and the “in-between” representing the place where these people live; in their own country but dreaming of another one. It is worth noting that failing to secure a visa to travel to the imagined destination, is a rupture in the imaginative process (I discuss this rupture in situ in chapter six). Nevertheless, initially, because a displacement (Mescoli, 2014) occurs cognitively, the involuntary disruption of the process of becoming an embodied migrant results in a disembodied experience. The mind remains at the destination without a body, while the body remains at the origin without a mind. How the mind returns to inhabit the body at home, is the pre-occupation of chapter seven.

### 5.5.1 The nexus between mind and behaviour

The structuring of cognitive migrants’ lives, as a result of imagining a better life abroad is evident in the way they begin to talk, walk, dress and eat. The ambition of these young people to realise their migration dreams, transforms into actions trigger preparatory practices for the journey. These practices are equal to a displacement, as such, they imply a real change of personal traits (Mescoli, 2014, p. 295). Imagining life abroad also results in anticipatory behavioural changes that would make acculturation manageable. Some cognitive migrants change the way they talk; they slang purposefully. Regina:

So, I started slanging, I was not teaching well because I knew I was going to leave shortly, you see. I knew I was going to leave so I was soft headed and my way of walking. I needed to start slanging so when I get to maybe an office I begin to slang and all that because I saw myself there already.

The appearance of cognitive migrants, changes; convinced of their trip abroad, some cognitive migrants such as Richie, invest in not only buying clothes, but actually adorning themselves in these clothing:

That’s why I am saying that almost every day I am wearing t-shirt; the little money I got, I would go and buy canvas [sneakers], American polo shirt and dress like them. I was even behaving like an American because I made [up] my mind that when I go to America that’s the way I was going to behave. Because if the

guys come, our friends who travel, aha when they come you will see them wearing this canvas [sneakers] and these things so ahaa that's my mind.

Bashiru believes that holding a face towel and a branded bottle of water is sufficient proof of his "social becoming" and views this behavior as a status symbol, hence doing so is a step towards reaching his "wannabe-status": "I could just fill an empty Voltic bottle with pure water and take [a] face towel".

The lifestyle changes also affected the eating habits of some cognitive migrants. The presence of William's wife; a white British lady in Ghana, alienated him from his cultural delicacies of kenkey, hot pepper and fried fish: "because she was here, I couldn't eat kenkey, you know, we ate rice, fried rice, small salad, chicken and then we all take one coke that's all". William's experience with drinking water was recounted with deep sadness:

To cast my mind back, the most painful aspect was that when you had a wife, a white woman who said I will not drink your water and I will not drink ordinary water so you needed to take a soft drink like mineral or coke or something or flavoured water whereby you were using your money as a young growing man, you were using your money to buy all these things. The woman was taking all these things without water and you apply for [a] visa and you're refused. See, it's frustrating.

Cognitive migrants from the above narratives are therefore cognitively displaced. In other words, they are involuntarily immobilised (Carling, 2002; Lubkemann, 2008; Setrana, 2021). However, it is evident from their narratives that, their involuntary immobilisation does not extend to their minds. Their minds freely engage with the virtual space and images of their imagined destinations. Dzokoto's (2020) Akan theory of mind posits that, the mind is action-focused. In other words, it "enables one to do", making it "quintessentially pragmatic" (p.79). From this, I surmise that to the extent that the Akan mind projects a particular future, it is able to initiate actions towards its realisation. The agentic maneuverings which cognitive migrants engage in, are exclusively aimed at embodying their migration imaginations. The flurry of activities therefore, end in a complete disaster, when the body fails to travel to the destination country. The question

that however, needs to be asked and answered is that if the mind has agency, at which point does it lose its agency? According to Dzokoto, the mind loses its agency when it becomes broken. A broken mind loses its agency and consequently, its planning capability. The body becomes “mindless” to the extent that it is disconnected or displaced from the context which forms it. A mindless body therefore, is a broken mind. Dzokoto however, asserts that the mind is vulnerable to external forces and influences. I also argue that, this includes the mind’s vulnerability to the “imagined destination”, which is so accessible to the mind and yet completely inaccessible to the body. This vulnerability is possible due to the “porous” quality of the mind. The porous mind, as she clarifies, reflects a more fluid relationship between mind and body, self and other, physical and the cosmos. This nexus between the porous self and the mind is thus

associated with a permeability, a bleeding into one another, such that the self and the other, the physical and the cosmic, and the mind and the body cross over into each other and influence each other, often with discernible phenomenological impact. (p. 79)

The imagination of abroad, acts in the same way, as a thought of witchcraft is believed to impact the outcomes of one’s life. The imagined future is thus so powerful that it displaces the mind from the body. Once the mind becomes disembodied, it becomes broken and loses its agentic and pragmatic abilities. One consequence of this is that, they are not even able to see opportunities at home.

Zittoun’s imagination model also unites action and thought. I therefore present a more nuanced position by elucidating Zittoun’s (2020) position that imagination unites thought and action, by clarifying that this is true in the mobilisation of all efforts towards the realisation of migratory dreams. Nevertheless, in respect of cognitive migrants, there is a split between thought and action, due to the body becoming mindless at home, while the mind is disembodied at the foreign location. With an outward future cognitive orientation, cognitive migrants are less invested at home; leading to the realisation at some point - fully discussed in chapter six, that time and money have been wasted. Failure instigates this realization and becomes a turning point, which begins the return of the mind home.

This process, gives birth to the cognitive return migrant or the immobile cognitive returnee (fully discussed in chapter seven), who is an agentic embodied failed migrant, invested in a homeward future.

## 5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have delimited the category cognitive migrant, distinguishable from the involuntarily immobile, voluntarily mobile (stayer), a migrant and the involuntarily mobile. I clarified that Carling's (2002) involuntary immobility category focused on the physical limitations which immobilised the migration aspirant, without recourse to the possibility of mental travel into the future, (i.e. imagined home away from home) structuring their behaviour at home. Also, I have problematised Lubkemann's (2008) explanation of the idea of involuntary immobilisation that sought to correct the ontological invisibility of a whole population in war zones, who were not considered displaced, because of their enforced immobility. Lubkemann (2008) however, made no reference to the mind as a mobile agent that was unfettered and therefore could travel out of war zones. In other words, he addressed the physicality of their immobilisation. Carling (2002) and Lubkemann (2008) however, failed to transcend the corporeality bias in migration. Cognitive migration and the cognitive migrant have been ontologically delineated or visible in this study because the study has transcended the corporeality bias.

From the lived experience of my participants, I derive some features of the mindset of cognitive migrants that, their mind is 1) displaced; 2) porous; 3) salvationist; 4) disembodied at the destination; and 5) hopelessly negates self and place. In addition, I have also established the fact that, prospectively and actively pursuing a migratory dream, starts a transformation process in situ. This transformation is evident in the way cognitive migrants talk, dress and carry themselves. They model their behaviour in the way of their imagination. This gives credence to the nexus between thought and action.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE BODY FAILING TO TRAVEL ABROAD

#### 6.1 Introduction

##### 6.1.1 The bouncing experience of Bensson

Bensson is a 48-year old church worker; native of Ejisu, near Kumasi in the Ashanti Region. He is married with two children and has a first degree in Accounting and currently works for himself. Bensson wanted to travel to join his girlfriend, but was bounced three times. He intimated that, the visa application process was costly; considering the visa fee, cost of getting a bank statement and transportation. “Within a few minutes at the embassy, you would realise your money has gone down the drain”. He left every job he was doing because as he put it: “I had made up my mind not to return”. He invested in the preparations with money from his lotto business, but failed three times and was very disappointed. Bensson wasn’t serious finding a job because: “I didn’t want to start and leave after a short while, when I got my visa. I didn’t want to also block anybody’s chance. So I decided to take my time to make preparations”. When he was bounced, “everything came to a standstill. I wasn’t even in the mood to look for work, because that was not my focus. It was difficult and very painful. The money involved; imagine selling your property to make preparations and it doesn’t work, it would be very painful. I spent a lot. If I had invested that money, it would have accrued some interest. You become fed up with staying in Ghana. You begin to have divided attention, focusing more on the travel at the expense of your work here and you begin to lose gradually. Some things become less important to you. Because your focus has shifted, you become lazy towards certain things. You begin to ignore certain opportunities. You put all your efforts and attention into making preparations to travel. So when you are refused the visa, you may not even want to come out any longer because you may have told some people about your travel plans. When I was refused the visa, I was hiding because I did not want people to ask why I was still around. Your confidence level goes very low. I wanted to live in isolation but it made me more depressed. I did that for about 2 months. It got me thinking because I invested a lot in her travel expenses. I did so much including paying for her ticket. But that wasn’t even my worry. I just wanted to join her. It affected my interaction with people. I was bitter and people thought I was mentally ill. Sometimes, people met me and asked why I had lost so much weight. I really lost weight. So, you can imagine what was going through my mind from the moment I was refused the visa, to realising I won’t see my girlfriend again and later getting to know she was pregnant.

INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

To be “bounced” a visa is a Ghanaian colloquial expression for visa denial. Denying a cognitive migrant visa means that their bodies cannot travel abroad to join their already displaced mind. Bensson’s experience of visa denial thus sets the context for exploring the phenomenology of failing a migration dream; the main pre-occupation of this chapter. I interrogate the implications of failing to physically migrate through visa denial or unfulfilled promise. The chapter’s objective therefore is to explore the effects of failing a migration project in situ. I provide insights into the failure of participants under three main themes: 1) meaning of failure 2) trajectories of failure and 3) effects of failure. I discuss two trajectories of failure. These are bounced visa and unfulfilled promises. Under the effects of failure, I explore pre-migration trauma, money lost, time lost and failure as a catalyst for cognitive return and reintegration.

Certainly, potential migrants either succeed or fail at their migration attempts. Broadly, speaking, this falls under migration outcomes. I situate this discussion within the context of Carling’s (2017) delineation of migration outcomes, to offer a nuanced discussion of failure to migrate. Carling (2017) delineates three outcomes for aspiring migrants; they may 1) succeed and become migrants (when they physically travel to the destination; 2) fail in their attempt after leaving the origin country (miscarried migration dream) by dying on their clandestine journeys, getting stuck in a transit country and being apprehended and involuntarily returned; and 3) fail to leave right from the outset (spontaneous abortion of migration dream), becoming involuntarily immobilised at the origin (Carling, 2002, 2014, 2017; Carling & Schewel, 2018). The bouncing experience of Bensson above, aptly describes this third outcome. The prospective migrant in the wake of failure, is presented with two options: 1) to continue pursuing an outward future cognitive orientation by considering alternative routes or 2) resigning to a homeward future orientation and pursuing livelihood options at home. I discuss option one and two in

chapters 5 and 7 respectively. Nevertheless, failure means so many things to prospective migrants.

## 6.2 Meaning of failure

The objective reality of failure is the body's inability to travel to the imagined destination, as Akyeamong clearly explains: "the body couldn't make it (laughs)". Four narratives of failure and four (4) consciousness of failure however define participants' subjectivities to their bounced visa lived experience. The narratives are 1) failure not as an end in itself; 2) failure as Divine orchestration; 3) failure as an outcome with both circumscribed and globalised or expansive impact and 4) failure as destiny. The four (4) types of consciousness feeding the narratives of failure are internalised failure consciousness, externalised failure consciousness, ambivalent failure consciousness and pragmatic failure consciousness.

A central theme of participants' understanding of failure is the consideration of failure as not an end in itself. Failure, though disruptive, is not seen as causing fatal injury to one's life's aspirations. Peterson enunciates:

Immediately I was told I hadn't been successful, I told myself the down fall of a man is not the end of his life. Failing once does not mean I don't have any chance again. So long as I have life going abroad will be therefore everyone; aburokyire (abroad) doesn't expire.

Matthew agrees: "so I said to myself that my failed travel is not the end of me. Was I the first person to be denied a visa? No. So I asked myself why I wanted to live a miserable life". Kwadwo adds: "your failure is not the end of you. I took inspiration from Church and people's advice. People are going through worse situations".

The view of some participants is that, their failure is due to divine orchestration. Victor says: "I have failed in a couple of attempts to travel, umm I even felt that well the Lord is telling me to go and do my mission before proceeding to do anything else". As a

member of the Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, serving on a mission after high school is an obligation cherished by the Church. Victor however, sees his failure as a message from God to honour his mission obligation, before any decision to pursue a personal mission. Kwadwo therefore believes that his failure is consequential to his inability to pray to God about his decision to travel:

With something that will worry me too much, I just go to my closet and tell God to help me quickly. Yeessss because I interrogate things, before I will make that move I will interrogate it well and when I pray over it my instinct should tell me something but this one I didn't pray over it

Another narrative of failure that emerges from Peterson and Regina has to do with the extent to which the effects of failure are circumscribed to the isolated experience; or expanded to cover every other domain of life. While Regina generalises her failure to every aspect of her life: "so in fact I realised everything of mine was in a mess", Peterson circumscribes it to only the bounced visa experience; saying all other aspects of his life remain on course: "if this doesn't work, it doesn't mean everything of mine has come to an end".

Finally, Capito and Nakie view their failure as an act of destiny. Capito admits that human beings have different destinies and wonders whether his failure does not present him the opportunity to try something else. He says:

Yes, I think that umm we all have our unique destinies; I don't know if that statement is true and if you do something and you do not succeed, change your hand and do it in the other way. For instance someone tries to learn carpentry and fails, why not go into tailoring or any other thing like dressmaking to see if you will be successful there.

Nakie thinks failing is indicative of the fact that, traveling abroad is not her destiny; especially, after failing twice: "so after a year, we applied and still it didn't work so I thought that maybe it was not my destiny to travel". Both Capito and Nakie are not categorical in their view. However, considering their view within the wider contexts of African religions, cosmologies and systems of thought (Fortes, 1959, 1983; Jackson,

1988) and specifically within the Akan belief system, it is unsurprising for them to have this trope about their fate. God, according to Professor Kofi Asare Opoku, in the context of Akan belief, “gives ‘nkrabea’ (destiny) and this fact relates God directly to the individual. So then, every individual has the right of direct access to ‘Onyame’; hence, the maxim that: no man's path crosses another man's” (pp. 48-49). Thus in the framing of Capito and Nakie, God gives unique “nkrabea” to everyone. So, if it is not your ‘nkrabea’ to travel, you cannot. To be visa-bounced is thus not a verdict on one’s future livelihood aspirations. Your ‘nkrabea’ may be pursuing a livelihood at home. Incidentally, these two participants are cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees, whose stories are the focus of chapter 7.

The above narratives of failure originate from four (4) types of consciousness. These are internalised failure consciousness, externalised failure consciousness, ambivalent failure consciousness and pragmatic failure consciousness. *Internalised failure consciousness* attributes failure to self with an emergence of “failure identity”. Donald’s experience throws light on this:

Seriously I didn’t feel bad for anyone around me, no I didn’t. I felt bad for myself; I felt that I have let myself down. I felt I’m the failure; I started blaming myself internally. It didn’t show for others to see but I know I can be smiling, I can be walking but I know what’s going on in me.

He, however, manages to conceal the interiority of his feelings, in order to escape the accusatory posturing of family members who disagree with his migration route as a livelihood option. Similarly, Peter perceives himself as a failure: “I saw myself more or less like a failure, it was like the travelling or nothing”.

Jeremy’s experience demonstrates *externalised failure consciousness*. There is no personal attribution of blame. It has been over thirty years since Jeremy’s experience. However, in recounting his life’s trajectory, which to him, is not in good shape, he blames

his uncle for the totality of his negative lived experience. The globalised or expanded impact of failure, therefore undergirds Jeremy's experience:

Yes, that is what I am saying that it has drawn me backwards in terms of my life; the level I wanted to be in life I have not been able to get there. It has drawn me back a little. I would be a liar if I don't say it; initially it really made me sad. I wasn't so sad until I heard what my grandfather said, that brought some kind of sadness to my life but for my uncle, he regretted later. That has brought some kind of hurt in me because I don't know what kind of offense I have committed to merit this kind of life. I sit down and think about it; I can sit here for 2 hours, sometimes I go to the tabernacle and pray in tears. If I am not home then I am at this premise

John shares similar failure trajectory with Jeremy (see section 6.3.2 below) and by attribution of blame, externalised failure consciousness. However, John's subjectivity is slightly different. Although John blames his inability to travel on the death of his promisor, Mr. Adu, he exhibits a feature of pragmatic failure consciousness, as he looks to the future:

Like I said I was sad, one that my dreams had been shattered, two the fact that somebody that I know was going to help me has passed on. So of course umm if one door closes I believe there are other doors that are still opened

Another type of consciousness that is discernible is *ambivalent failure consciousness*. After framing his bounced experience as a lost battle ('nkoguo'), Bashiru proceeds with dual attribution of blame. First, to himself and then, to a third party. The third party, in Bashiru's conception, is a family member who he suspects to be a witch. Bashiru:

Ah, you've lost the battle (w'adi nkoguo). You're a loser. You're a loser, you're a loser. Someone applies once and gets the visa, what again? As for me, since I came into this world if I do something and it doesn't succeed (or it fails), I attribute the failure to myself ( I blame myself for the failure) first before I extend it to a third person. So I realised that I had lost the battle (m'adi nkoguo). Secondly, at that time there was resurgence of the activities of pastors in Ghana, witchcraft (abayisem) so I targeted some family members for preventing (obstructing) my travel When I failed (me dii nkoguo).

Ivan also demonstrates ambivalent failure consciousness with dual attribution of blame to himself and to the spirit world:

I was bounced several times, I didn't get the visa because frankly speaking I didn't have any good account to back me up. You start to look at it from all angles; spiritual, like spiritually somebody doesn't want you to progress, spiritually umm you could hear all those stories on somebody's... you are a male and they get to know you are at the embassy and your picture has changed to male.

The belief in abayisem “witchcraft” is central to the worldview of Africans in general and Ghanaians in particular. Mbiti asserts that: “the spiritual world of African peoples is very densely populated with spiritual beings, spirits, and the living-dead” (2011, p.75). Similarly Parrinder 1969, p. 47) describes the African worldview as full of living things “everything in nature is living, or at least preliving, and there is no such thing as absolutely dead matter”. In other words, in the African worldview, there are a host of different spirits that exist in the universe (Mbiti, 1969, pp. 75–81; 2011, p. 75). In Akan cosmology, the spirit world and the physical world are intertwined (Parrinder 1969, p. 26). This leads Mbiti to conclude that, the awareness of the spirit world “affects their [Africans] outlook and experiences in life for better and for worse” (1991, p. 81).

The third type of failure consciousness is *pragmatic failure consciousness*. Pragmatic, because, they are realistic and practical about the bounced experience. This shows up in the narratives of Peterson. Peterson and his friend acknowledge their vulnerability, project the likely outcomes and anticipatorily address them before going for the visa interview. The cognitive illusions which are evident in the narratives of Donald and Peter are however absent from Peterson's. Although Peterson retains his cognitive outward future orientation, he uses a proverb “ɔbosom anim, yekɔ no mpɛnsa” literally meaning: “One has to consult a spirit medium, at least three times”. Thus, one needs to visit the ‘ɔbosom’, at least three times. So if he applies for a visa for the first time and fails, he can try again and again. Three is a lucky number in ‘Akan’ cosmology. Peterson therefore describes his failure as an outcome of a gamble, being mugged or stillbirth:

I took it like you could even give birth and the child will die and also just take it like someone pulling a knife at me and snatching my bag full of this money, what am I going to do? So I took it out of my mind. Even our elders say “ɔbosom anim, yekɔ no mprensɔ” so if I have tried once and failed, I take it that the money is completely missing. I have lost it (ahye). So I did not allow the loss to overwhelm me that I have spent money in vain. I have put everything behind me as if I have not done anything. When my friend was around and we were making plans to travel, we kept saying to ourselves that the place that we’re desiring to go neither our mother nor father stays there so you could be denied entry what can you do? So, we took it that we were playing a raffle and you’re playing a raffle, you can’t put all your hopes in it that you will win. If you win, you’ve won, if you don’t win, it’s a raffle that you played.

Capito refers to his grandmother’s advice from the past, in order to put his bounced visa experience into a pragmatic perspective like Peterson:

Just as I have already explained to you, one of my grandparents used to say ‘whatever will happen has already happened’ whatever will happen is already past, they had already taken my money so it is up to you to, do you look back? What is past is gone, the money is gone so just move ahead and see what you can do with life that’s all.

Kwadwo does not brood over his losses for long. A pragmatic failure consciousness therefore drives how he processes his bounced visa experience and integrates it into his world:

Just imagine having in mind that you will go to abroad then you feel like you’re on top but you’ve not gotten there but that one didn’t keep long with me because mine is, if one thing I’m trying doesn’t succeed, I don’t waste my time on it; I have to move on to get a better one. When I get it, I forget about what has happen and I think that has helped me. Yes that has helped me, other than that this two thousand [\$2000 lost to a broker], I tell you, it was a serious matter. I just looked at it and said let me move on because it will waste my time.

These types of failure consciousness are not mutually exclusive. They can exist at the same time and progress from internalised, through ambivalent to pragmatic consciousness; with the passage of time, as one processes the full impact of the bounced experience and begins to consider the means to “just move ahead and see what you can do with life”; as Capito intimates in the quote above. Bashiru however, reaches this point eventually and shows the malleability and temporality of failure consciousness when he says: “look, failure ‘ahweaseɛ’, it is said that ‘ɔbarima hwe ase a, ennye n’awie ne no’. This means “the downfall

of a man is not the end of his life”. The body’s inability to physically move to unite with the mind at the destination therefore signals failure. At this point, a cognitive migrant decides what to do next; and what drives these next steps is the mindset of pragmatic failure consciousness. Two failure trajectories also engender the above failure narratives and consciousness; to which I turn next.

### 6.3 Failure trajectories

I discuss two trajectories of failure. Failure, from the narratives of participants, is conceived as the inability to embody migration imagination at an imagined destination. They consider it a failure because of the enormous preparation that the process entails. Since the preparatory process transforms participants into mobile subjects in situ (cognitive migrants), as the previous chapter demonstrates, failure truncates and either strengthens the existing course of the imagination or re-directs it homewards with renewed vigour. In other words, the process of becoming an embodied migrant in an imagined destination is continued or abandoned. Failure is costly in terms of its traumatic outcomes, money and time lost. But it also propels cognitive return and the re-integration process in situ, which is the focus of the next chapter.

#### 6.3.1 Bounced experience

The Ghanaian colloquial lexicon used for failing or being refused a visa application was ‘*bounce*’. Majority of my participants’ pathway to failure was through failed visa applications or bouncing experiences. Almost 79% of potential migrants had applied for a visa to enable them travel, but they were all bounced. The bounced category however had two sub-categories: self-application and broker application. About 58 % of visa applicants went through the process from the beginning to the end themselves; mainly as students, workers and wives. Two of the 11 participants, William and Matthew, who applied for visas themselves, did so through genuine and arranged marriages

respectfully. Regardless of the route chosen, an applicant could be granted or refused a visa application.

Donald, in the course of pursuing his “passion” for joining an international army corps, applies for a visa, so that he can travel to the United Kingdom to begin his enlistment process, but fails to secure a visa. He understands however that the United Kingdom military that is inviting him, cannot influence his visa application process:

They asked me to go to the embassy so I can secure my visa. Once I'm able to secure the visa to their country then they will take over from there. But they can't intervene because they have a different department. You still go through the normal procedure of visa acquisition so if you fall short anywhere, they don't care about the money you spent, they will deny you. Yes, so, I guess that's why the army pre-informed me that they are not into helping financially to secure the visa; it's up to you to go through the visa section. It comes with a lot of money because at that time, I had about only one month to put everything together and make sure I'm able to get my visa so that I can get to the country [UK] on time. I was supposed to get to the place a week before my assessment date and my assessment date was 11<sup>th</sup> October and I received my army invitation letter somewhere September 4<sup>th</sup>. So I booked my visa application online on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September and I made it priority I got the feedback exactly one week. I got the email reply that I have not gotten the visa due to a, b and c and they will refer you to the clause or the paragraph or the part they think you went wrong and those parts were parts given the chance on one-on-one interview like the former days, you can clarify and go through. But this case it is based on only your documents so you couldn't clarify but they will state the reason why you were not given the visa and will tell you should you decide to apply next time and you repeat similar thing you will be refused but note that your next application or visa application will not be judged by what happened to you this time; it will be judged by your current circumstances by then.

Donald attributes his failure to his meagre earning and his inability to meet his tax obligation:

I'm being paid commission and commission doesn't come with a payment slip; commission is given on your work on the field or something so it doesn't come with charges or tax obligations so you can put that there and the person will say oh ok that's I can see this amount there. When you put everything in figure, this is the money I have in my accounts, this is the money I spent and you can't document everything with receipt and proof, or may be tax and everything has to do with money then there will be a question mark and they will use that against you.

Regina has a brother in the United Kingdom, who, according to her, has strong economic and social ties. Despite showing this evidence as part of her visa application, she still fails on account that she does not personally have enough money in her bank account as proof that she will return to Ghana, when she travels to the United Kingdom. She admits however that, a broker or “connection man” is responsible for her failure. Regina narrates her experience:

I did not get the visa when I went because they said my salary was too small. I waited for a while and went for a second time; that was just three years ago when I had made up my mind to go again and I also had an invitation from my brother. My brother is a citizen for about 30 years with his own shipping yard of about 7 acres in the UK. When you Google Sam Shipping Yard, he is my younger brother and he was the one who was going to accommodate me and take care of everything. When I went to the embassy they told me my bank statement indicates my salary is too small. But honestly that mistake was from the agent who filled my forms. The amount he quoted vis-à-vis my salary, it was impossible to have that amount of money especially as a mother with children. So after assessing those issues they did not issue the visa once again; I went for an appeal stating my mum was over 82 years old and there was no way I was going to remain there. That was the truth because I had a lot of issues to deal with at home so I was just going for a visit. Yet still they turned me down so I decided to hold on and wait for the right time to reapply. When you are dishonest you are able to get the visa but when you are honest you will not get the visa. Because even if my salary was small my brother was the one accommodating me, he was the one buying my ticket and taking care of everything so what was the reason why they did not give me the visa? As for the British honestly speaking I see them to be wicked people.

Matthew shows his discomfort with the United Kingdom consulate’s decision to bounce him. He feels helpless, dealing with a country that refuses you entry visa in spite of meeting all requirements and therefore rejects the offer of appeal. He notes:

I felt they were hindering my progress because I had all the resources at my disposal, so, I wasn’t comfortable with their decision. I gave up because I felt even if I could appeal, their stance wouldn’t change. It is like they do not need you in their country even though the school needs you and the person who must allow you to enter the country doesn’t want to so I gave up

The experiences of Donald, Regina and Matthew represent a collective reality of the immigration politics of Western countries. Each of them however, experiences this reality from their lifeworld. The outcome of Regina’s appeal to a large extent, validates

Matthew's decision rejecting the offer of appeal. Regina says: "I went for an appeal stating my mum was over 82 and there was no way I was going to remain there... still, they turned me down". Matthew says: "I gave up because I felt even if I could appeal, their stance wouldn't change". The subjectivities of Donald, Regina and Matthew, in relation to the objective of United Kingdom visa application, thus illuminate the larger reality of European Union immigration apparatus and the disruptions it is wreaking in the world of citizens from the Global South. (See section 6.3 below for some of these disruptions). Their lived experiences in relation to visa failure, also speak to the larger question of agency-structure conundrum in the social sciences. Do applicants have control over either outcome of the process? (i.e., acceptance or denial)

The answer to this question is inextricably linked to the immigration politics and policies of the imagined destination countries, which the visa regime embodies. Visas, according to Tanelorn and Anderson (2019), enable and disenable global travel. However, visas do not give equal access to peoples of the world; especially to those belonging to the non-Western world, global travel is a luxury. Obtaining a travel visa to the United States can be expensive and the outcome uncertain. Visas have thus become key element of the immigration tool box, which is seen as an efficient "upfront" way of preventing migrants from entering in the first place. Visa restrictions therefore represent an important deterrent to would-be immigrants. Firstly, there is the additional cost and hassle of applying for the visa; either via post, which can take weeks or months, or in person, which implies travelling to the embassy or one of the few consulates and waiting in the queue, possibly for hours. Secondly, the issuing consulate or embassy can of course deny the application without giving any reason. According to Torpey (1998, p. 252):

At a time when substantial but unknown numbers of people become 'immigrants' simply by overstaying the legally-prescribed duration of their stay, limiting ingress is the best way for states to avoid entering into a series of potentially costly obligations to non-nationals. Passport and visa controls are crucial mechanisms for this purpose, the 'first line of defense' against the entry of undesirables.

Visa regimes are a particularly attractive as instrument for states. This is because they can generally be imposed through directives, decrees or other administrative measures.

Moreover, they usually do not require cumbersome legal changes and can therefore be implemented rather quickly (Czaika & de Haas, 2017). Visas are not a concern for all participants; two participants have no bounced experience yet are unable to embody their migration imagination.

### 6.3.2 Unfulfilled promises

Two participants, Jeremy and John, were promised a journey abroad by a family relation and a non-kin benefactor respectively. Their desire to travel abroad did not however materialise because their promisors could not honour their assurance. Jeremy's uncle promised him a trip to Japan at the time Jeremy was in his 20s and had expressed the desire to travel. The trip did not materialise and Jeremy was affected by this experience. This happened about 20 years ago, but he remembered it with nostalgia:

I studied auto mechanics, I wrote the sitting exams and failed one paper so I couldn't get my certificate. So it was after that I decided to travel abroad. My uncle had also got a connection to go to Japan and he wanted me to go instead. He discussed it with another relative, who discouraged him from letting me go. So the travel didn't take place. I knew that as young as I was if I could travel and work hard I could become like an uncle who had returned from Germany. So I had hope that I will travel one day. So when I couldn't travel it really affected me. It affected me in the sense that I had all my hopes on travelling, even the paper that I failed I had the opportunity to rewrite but I took my mind of because of the travel, so it really worried me.

Jeremy hailed from a fishing village in the central region of Ghana, where outward migration across the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean to Europe was well-established (Lucht, 2012). He also recounted the experience of some friends who used this route to get to Europe:

They went through the desert; they were four people, two were able to get to their destination but the other two did not. It was even after 4 years that one of them returned to tell us what happened. One died on the desert and the other when they arrived at Libya they were crossing to Spain when he drowned in the ocean.

John's promise was from an acquaintance; Mr. Adu, a Ghanaian, resident in the United Kingdom at the time. John also explained his encounter with Mr. Adu:

By then I was finding my feet in the Lord and had the opportunity to speak to a man who was visiting neighbour next door from UK. He smoked a lot. I used to go to him next door to share the little knowledge of the word of God concerning his smoking. He was surprised a young man could walk to him and speak the word of God with such boldness. So he made a promise to me that whenever I wanted to travel to UK he could be of help. So after writing my A level exam and failing twice, I decided to travel so I started communicating with Mr. Adu. He was very supportive and he guided me to put the documents I needed together. The neighbour informed that Mr. Adu had taken ill and was recovering in a London hospital. The next news that came to me was that he had passed on. That was a big blow because like I said I had stopped learning, I stopped everything concerning education because my mind was that I was going to go to the UK.

John and Jeremy also present an interesting dimension to the cognitive migration narrative. "They did not go fishing, but they caught fish", as an 'Akan' saying goes. Their accounts, at the face value, seem a contradiction from the default narratives of cognitive migrants. This is because unlike their counterparts, they do not engage in the flurry of activities which transform cognitive migrants into mobile subjects. However, an active pursuit of one's imagination can be as a result of believing and persuading oneself that a promise by a benefactor to facilitate one's travel shall succeed. From a phenomenological perspective, these two contribute to establishing the psychological essence of the structure of cognitive migration and return which is an imaginative process. By not showing the kind of active and intense preparation the 19 others invest in their bid to "transport" their bodies to the imagined destination, does not mean they are not cognitive migrants who are cognitively displaced and disembodied at home. According to Giorgi and Giorgi (2003, p.249) in scientific psychological phenomenological reduction,

the objects or state of affairs experienced are reduced, but not the acts of consciousness with which the objects or state of affairs are correlated. To say that the object toward which the acts of consciousness are reduced are correlated is to say that they are taken exactly as they present themselves except that no existential status is assigned to them. In the scientific reduction, the acts of consciousness are taken to be acts of human beings who are related to and influenced by the world.

In this regard, although John and Jeremy's failure trajectories depart from the 19 others (i.e. those with bounced experience), their behaviour are equally intentional and directed to a situation (i.e. better livelihood at an imagined destination) that transcends their behaviour itself, like the others. With these two, a key requirement for establishing essence – free imaginative variation – in phenomenology, is achieved. What is poignant about the lifeworlds of these two is that, they suffer the effects of the disruption the others experience albeit, to varying degrees. I explore the effects of this disruption next.

#### 6.4 Effects of failure

I unpack empirically, the four effects of failure, as experienced by participants, namely: pre-migration trauma, money lost, time lost and failure as a catalyst for return. These effects have a temporal dimension to them. The first three are immediate, while the turning point is latter. These effects highlight the important contributions failure to migrate physically, but not symbolically or cognitively, makes to migration scholarship; in terms of the continuity of migration, its traumatic outcomes – whether one fails to move physically or not and its potential, as a tipping point for returning the mind to invest in a homeward future.

Experiences of potential migrants who fail in situ and consider their experiences variedly as “traumatic”, “death” and “depressing”, have not been explored much in the literature. Given the fact that future thoughts or imaginations structure present behaviour (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016; Seligman et al., 2013) and these experiences have implications for how failed potential migrants or cognitive migrants pursue their

envisioned good life at home, it is a lacuna that needs urgent attention in migration studies; especially, at a time when there is an urgent call to account for “the multiplex componentry of migration; in terms of the way it is situated in imaginative geographies, emotional valences, social relations and obligations, politics and power relations; as well as in economic imperatives and the brute realities of displacement” (Carling & Collins, 2018, p. 912).

The framing of the migratory project as an all-or-nothing affair, made the bouncing experience traumatic for some prospective migrants. Peter’s framing of his bouncing experience, therefore represented majority of participants:

So the long and short is that I was denied; in fact, for me, it was like the heavens had come down or had come upon me Umm I saw myself more or less like a failure. It was like the travelling or nothing. So when I was not able to make it, it was like my world has come to an end...But I think that if I had had somebody to mentor me at that early stage, to guide me that you don’t have to go to abroad just to make ends meet, just to be who you want to be, you can still make it here, you can still do this, you can also do that; have you looked at this option, have you looked at that option; you can do all those things here and abroad will just even be calling you and you may even then choose whether you want to go or not to go. Umm maybe I wouldn’t have gone through that emotional trauma I went through, aha. It was very traumatic for me, it wasn’t easy and like I said it took me days or let’s say even weeks to even recover.

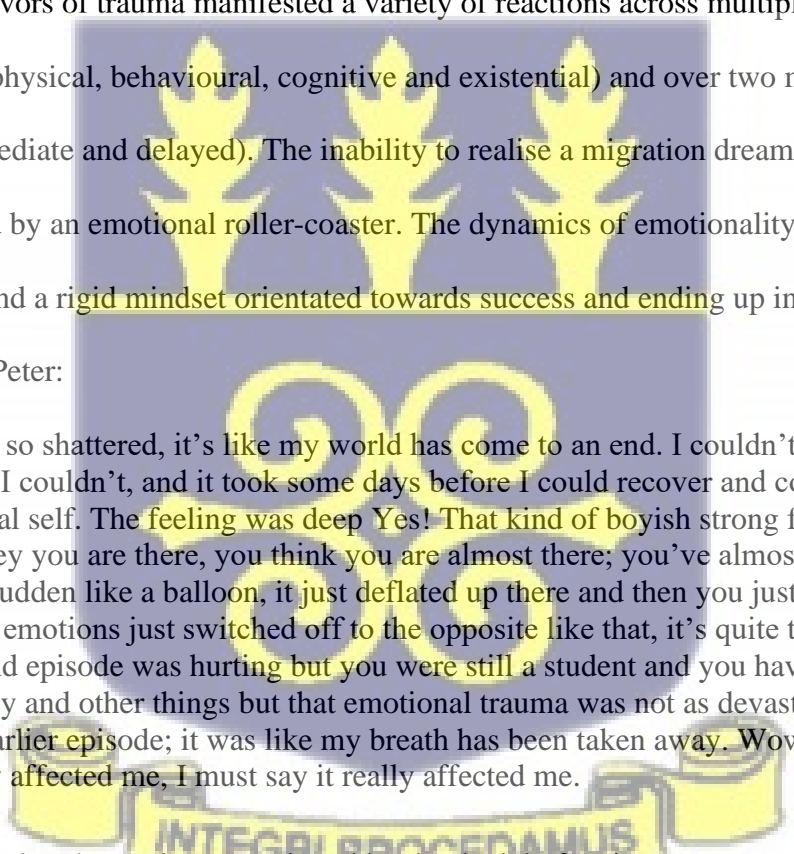
#### **6.4.1 Pre-migration trauma and mental health**

I proceed by considering physical and psychological outcomes of the inability to realise their migration dreams. I however give primacy to participants’ subjective experience, since it is not the objective circumstance that determines whether one’s experience is traumatic or not, but the subjective emotional experience. Trauma has often been conceptualised through the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013) definition of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which focuses on traumatic experiences involving actual or threatened death or injury or witnessing such events. However, scholars advocate an understanding of traumatic experiences that is ecosystemic, to enable researchers and

counsellors to identify and address the complex sources of trauma, which may not clearly fall within the DSM – 5 definition (e.g., Burstow, 2003; Danieli, 2007; Goodman, 2013; Kira, 2010). Burstow’s definition of trauma for instance, does not pathologise trauma. Burstow (2003) defines trauma thus: “trauma is not a disorder but a reaction to a wound. It is a reaction to a profoundly injurious events and situations in the real world and, indeed to a world in which people are routinely wounded” (p.1302). I adopt Burstow’s (2003) definition and characterise the experience of participants as “a reaction to profoundly injurious event” (p.1303). This reaction, however, has a temporal element.

#### 6.4.1.1 Reactions and temporal dimensions of trauma

Survivors of trauma manifested a variety of reactions across multiple domains (emotional, physical, behavioural, cognitive and existential) and over two main time frames (immediate and delayed). The inability to realise a migration dream was characterised by an emotional roller-coaster. The dynamics of emotionality of having high aspirations and a rigid mindset orientated towards success and ending up in failure was depicted by Peter:



I was so shattered, it’s like my world has come to an end. I couldn’t think through well, I couldn’t, and it took some days before I could recover and come to my normal self. The feeling was deep. Yes! That kind of boyish strong feeling and charley you are there, you think you are almost there; you’ve almost arrived and all of a sudden like a balloon, it just deflated up there and then you just drop like that. Your emotions just switched off to the opposite like that, it’s quite traumatic; the second episode was hurting but you were still a student and you have used the money and other things but that emotional trauma was not as devastating in fact, as the earlier episode; it was like my breath has been taken away. Wow because it really affected me, I must say it really affected me.

To the extent that the anxiety occasioned by the denial of a visa was generalised to other Caucasians, is indicative of some fear conditioning taking place. This was not uncommon in the context of traumatic experiences. Regina shared a similar experience:

In fact, it affected me so much so that even when I see a white person my heart skips a beat. You cannot concentrate, you cannot do anything, you cannot eat, and you cannot do anything you see just because you can't go abroad. I am not the only one who has experienced that, it happened to my son.

Although suicidal ideation as a reaction to being denied a visa was not a dominant reaction, some participants thought about suicide, as captured in the reaction of Richie.

After reviewing the suicidal thought to be so devastating, he resorted to alcoholism as the lesser of two evils. It was not unusual to hear this refrain from potential migrants in Ghana: "America or suicide". This all-or-none thinking was a cognitive distortion that conceived progress as a binary; you either made it or not. Participants' reaction mirrored this cognitive distortion. Failing their migration aspirations became synonymous with death and hopelessness. In Richie's words:

That's what I am saying that as for that one, different, different things come like to kill yourself, to forget about everything you see so as for the killing, it came to my mind but then I thought if you kill yourself... no, no, no, I won't kill myself, so the only thing that I do is the drink, [it's] the drink that keeps us.

Physical reactions reported by participants included sudden perspiration and bizarre breakage of the bridge of a spectacle. Bashiru for instance described his sudden perspiration as follows:

In fact, while seated, all my clothes got wet then they said no. That was my last application, my last visa application because in a year I could apply for visa three times in 2015 for example. I have even shredded my passport and have gone to write a police report that it's missing because I don't want to see the things in it.

And Capito in Accra recounted his experience in the following words:

Honestly, that day was one of my errrm how do I put it, the saddest days in my life because that time a young boy like me I had a nice haircut with my glasses on. The moment the white man denied me, my glasses broke.

In the immediate aftermath of being denied visas, signaling to them the end of their migration dreams, some participants reported physiological changes; comprising loss of appetite, weight loss and low blood pressure. For Besson, it was loss of appetite:

So, when you go and you are denied a visa, you may even lose your appetite (...) sometimes, people meet you and ask why you have lost so much weight. I really lost weight. My cousin later told me he felt sorry for me when he met me at that time, but he couldn't ask if I was ill. He had to ask my mum what was wrong with me and she told him I wasn't ill.

Cognitively, what appeared to be sudden disorientation and absent-mindedness, resulting from the shock of the visa denial, were reported by participants. Regina shared a personal experience:

When I was returning home, I was nearly knocked down by a car around Movenpick because in fact I saw that my life had ended; that's the second time but the first time too the same thing, I nearly collapsed because I had all my hopes in travelling abroad.

One of Regina's son also suffered the same fate. She explained: "you cannot concentrate, you cannot do anything, you cannot eat, and you cannot do anything you see just because you can't go abroad. I am not the only one who has experienced that, it happened to my son".

Behaviourally, some immediate and delayed reactions were observed. In the immediate aftermath of being bounced, some participants exhibited sleep and appetite disturbances and increased use of alcohol. These reactions lingered on for some time. Bounced prospective migrants also engaged in withdrawal and avoidant behaviours, including avoidance of event reminders. Bashiru's experience throws more light on this:

I have even shredded my passport and have gone to write a police report that it's missing because I don't want to see the things in it. Yeah, I don't want to see those things again (...). Because any time I see it, my heart beat rises. I had BP, they said it was very low; I could be holding food and the food will just fall to the ground.

Participants reported varied feelings in the wake of being bounced or denied. The denial of visas to participants engendered a move towards self-quarantine. Akyeamong, who originally imagined making a future in the United States put it this way:

Well I don't remember doing anything umm something bad, but I decided I have to be quiet; I have to stay away from everybody. I had no appetite to eat that very moment. When I got to Kumasi too, I had to lock myself in my room.

Peter tried on three occasions to migrate to the United Kingdom, but failed on all three attempts. He was working with a government agency as a paralegal, while pursuing a professional law degree. In discussing his immediate response to ‘being bounced’, he said:

I went home; it was difficult for me to even move from the embassy to the house; when I got home I couldn’t talk to anybody, I went straight to the room, I laid down I sobbed for a while.

Richie also attempted three times and failed. He also had to self-quarantine and live in isolation, as a result of the shame he felt, having told some close friends about his imminent travel to the United States:

Yes, I relocated because the thing is it’s a crown<sup>11</sup>, it’s a very, very crown thing because you have made too known. Because I told everyone, my friends that I would be going soon, when I was bounced, I said if I stay there it will be crown so let me move from here. This was one is big, big shame (laughs) charley, this one was big one. I bragged that I would be going soon; so my mind was like one leg was in US, so the time the thing bounced, I quickly had to come and hide at Sakaman for so long.

The race to becoming “somebody” is deeply-entrenched in the Ghanaian socio-cultural setting (Langevang, 2008); this became more pronounced, as one approached adulthood (Coe, 2012). The inability to fulfill these socio-cultural markers of adulthood which would have conferred respect and prestige on participants, created a deep sense of shame and embarrassment that could only be dealt with in the short-term, by hiding or self-imposed quarantine. Participants however, did not hibernate forever, but managed to come out from their traumatic experience and embraced their future at home.

#### 6.4.1.2 Stages of the traumatic experience

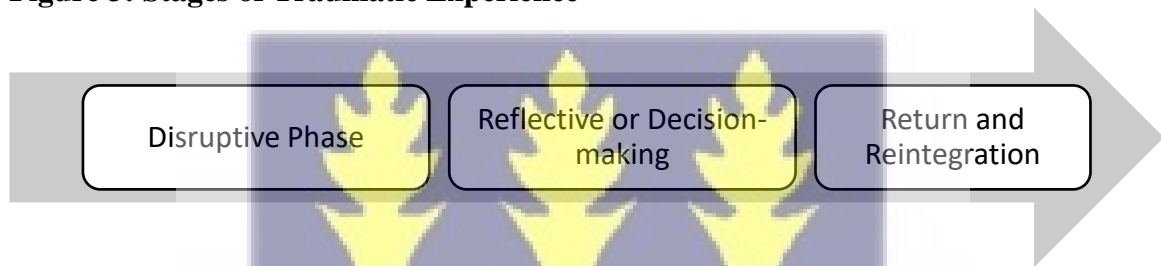
The trauma literature identifies different courses or trajectories, in respect of the reaction to trauma. Herman (1992) delineates three stages in survivors’ reaction to trauma; these are establishing safety, retelling the story of the traumatic event and reconnecting

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<sup>11</sup> Crown among a section of Ghanaians refers to shame.

with others. Failing a migration project, either through being bounced serially or unfulfilled promise, engenders a series of steps which eventuate in cognitive return and reintegration. As shown in Fig. 3, the process starts from a disruptive or rupturing stage that shares similar symptoms with acute traumatic stress (i.e. confusion, disorientation, isolation, loss of appetite), tapering into a reflection or decision-making stage and then, a return and re-integration stage. In reality, these processes are not neatly cut out like it is being presented here, but overlap. I discuss the first stage here and then the next two stages in chapter 7 because, they are consistent with the chapter's theme of cognitive return and re-integration.

**Figure 3: Stages of Traumatic Experience**



#### **6.4.1.3 The disruptive or rupturing stage**

The acute disruptive or rupturing stage comprises of the immediate aftermath of being bounced (i.e. reactions and temporal dimensions of trauma extensively described in section 6.5.1.1 above).

#### **6.4.2 Money lost**

Besides the traumatic consequences of failing a migration dream, the next big effect was money lost. Participants reported different sums of money they invested in their migration project which they lost. The cost elements mentioned by participants included brokers' charge or fees, visa fees, passport, air ticket, school fees abroad, transportation from residence to the various embassies in Accra, hotel accommodation and payment for

bogus marriages. Bashiru also gave a detailed insight into some of the cost elements involved in the preparatory stage and the dynamics involved when engaging a broker:

There is no application that you do not spend. They proceed in quick succession. Some will say they want 50% down payment before they start; others will collect processing fees and some too will demand full payment before they start. So at times you have to let them know that the money is lodged in your account so they should accept part payment backed by statement of your account to prove that there is money in your account so he should take part payment to start the process for you. Because some of the connection men think you may not have money and that when he helped you to secure the visa payment will be problematic so they would want to be assured of who your sponsor is, if it's self-sponsorship too, you have to demonstrate to them that you have the money. If it's a relation outside sponsoring the process, they will insist talking to that relative for assurance. One connection man told us the processing fee was GH¢2000.00 (\$326.26); one also told us the entire process including visa would amount to GH¢35,000.00 (\$5709.62) and would take an advance payment of GH¢15,000.00 (\$2446.98). We paid but we didn't get the visa and the money also did not come back. She was the one I was telling you about that she sent GH¢1000.00 (\$163.13) via mobile money yesterday. I had no choice, I have no choice. As for debt, there was a huge debt. Even the hotel I stayed anytime I visited in Accra. I could spend two weeks in Accra to prepare before going to the embassy, each night, I paid GH¢180.00 (\$29.26) so for the two weeks how much did it come up to?

To find out the magnitude of monies lost, I examined the next best alternative for the monies invested in the botched migration project. In other words, what could have been the change or improvement in the welfare of participants, if they had invested the monies in the next best alternative project at home? In addition, I examine the sources of the monies; were they borrowed and at what cost? Furthermore, I explore some unquantifiable costs to lay bare the magnitude of financial loss to cognitive migrants.

Firstly, the next best alternative (i.e. the opportunity cost of monies spent). Participants themselves were conscious of the next best alternative. They kept asserting the fact that, they would have been better off if they had invested the money in a homeward venture as in for instance, investing in an ongoing business. In the case of Jacob: “you see, I could have thought of new ways of expanding my business” and in the case of Capito buying a plot of land:

I had realised that I worried myself by allowing these people to take my money when I could have used the money to do something. Because those days seven thousand dollars, during Kufuor's<sup>12</sup> term, the dollar was around two cedis or so, so seven thousand dollars was about fourteen million old Ghana cedis. The first guy took six thousand dollars; I could have bought a plot of land with that then the second one, the seven thousand dollars, would have built something. I would have been more successful than this.

For some cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees, the next best alternative dawned on them when they started exploring opportunities back home.

Bashiru, for instance, realised the magnitude of the money lost, when he started joining a friend's mother, who brought merchandise from Togo to sell in Kumasi:

But it was the money I lost that hurts me because I could have used this money to run big business. It was when I entered Togo that I realised that if I had the money wasted on me, I would have been a rich man. The women who went for merchandise from Togo didn't have big money; some had only GH¢2000.00 (\$326.26) but made profit. I have wasted this money.

The sources of money invested in the migration project also varied. Consistent with the findings of Awumbila et al. (2019), participants used their own savings; after working for some time, while others secured support from relations abroad. Although loans were frequently mentioned in the migration industry and infrastructure literature as a means of financing potential migrants' journeys, none of the participants mentioned a loan as a means of financing their botched travels. Besides using their own savings, some participants like William also sought support from the family:

So we did all they asked us to do. I invested most of my salary from my casual work into this marriage because I wanted to travel abroad. It was a terrible experience, honestly I must tell you. It was very terrible, the frustration alone. I almost sold a piece of land I had to raise money for my visa fee. I sold some petty, petty thing I had instead and with the help of my family members we were able to raise the money. Lo and behold, I was refused the visa. Elizabeth lived with me for a year instead of the 3 months so I needed to pay money to immigration before she could leave Ghana to her place, to the hometown. So it was very terrible, very frustrating and very terrible.

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<sup>12</sup> John Agyekum Kufour was the president of Ghana from the year 2000 to 2008

Monies paid to brokers always left a sour taste in the mouth of participants. Some like Kwadwo wondered whether a spell had been cast on them by brokers, as they were still in a state of disbelief that out of their own volition, they parted with these monies:

I tell you they chopped<sup>13</sup> my money, 2000 dollars cash, fresh money. I just remembered this thing ahaaaaaa God. You see in my difficulty I did a job for somebody; this was a consultancy job and they paid me two thousand dollars! In the midst of famine, I was having nothing, no money and this one came. Just imagine, this opportunity of traveling to Australia that offered abundant opportunity presented itself and I fell for it not knowing it was a scam. The connection man was a thief. He himself didn't know Australia and you see I didn't want to talk about this. When I sit down, I ask myself, 'was it me that this has happened to?' Perhaps he a cast spell on me. Because I went straight and gave the money and as at now, I still can't believe it.

Brokers played a key role in helping migrants to navigate through restrictive migration regimes and to realise their migration dreams. Placement in the area of destination, was especially crucial, in the mediation risk and risk management strategies of migrants. The choice of a "good" broker and the ability to utilise social networks, was therefore key to minimising risks and failed migration (Awumbila et al. 2019, p. 4).

The third factor I considered, in order to establish the magnitude of the financial loss suffered by prospective migrants generally, was the unquantifiable costs of monies lost. Matthew suffered double jeopardy; his father, who had invested so much in the project, suffered a cardiac arrest in the wake of his first failure. His second failure also resulted in a family feud when his senior brother in United Kingdom who invested so much in his migratory dream, felt let down: "To be honest, I would say it partly contributed to my dad's illness. The news took him

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<sup>13</sup> To chop in Ghana is to eat. But "chopped" in the context being used here relates more to a disingenuous way of getting money and squandering it.

by surprise considering how much money he had spent. Not everyone can take that kind of news and live normally”. Similarly, Besson, whose bouncing experience opened the chapter, lost money, as well as the girl friend he wanted to marry. As he indicated, after investing in buying air ticket for the girl friend to travel to the United States, he lost her to another man in the United States because he could not join her.

The imminence of moving abroad and the unshakeable conviction that it offers better opportunities than whatever pre-occupation one was into at home, resulted in a situation where every type of capital (i.e. money, brain and brawn) was diverted towards pursuing the livelihood option abroad. The pursuit of a homeward future was thus suspended in favour of the pursuit of an outward future. This was a recurrent theme in all the interviews and so well-typified by Besson’s experience; one experience that also reckoned the irredeemable loss of time.

#### **6.4.3 Time lost**

Beyond the problems associated with immigration policies (Carling, 2002; Spijkerboer, 2018), other forms of frustrations, such as time wasting and personal energy drain, were hardly accounted for in the discourses surrounding migration processes. They may broadly be referenced within costs and risks, but in such contexts, time may lose its significance, because calculating time spent, may be a difficult task, compared to monies spent (Setrana, 2021). For some, the focus on travelling and the irresistible allure of the imagined home away from home, meant that, they could not do anything else. They virtually became unresponsive and passive towards any homeward opportunity. There was thus a certain fixation which dwarfed both their economic and social ‘becoming’. It was as if their personal clock had stopped ticking:

In some cases, the dream of cosmobility works like a kind of opium; reality is no longer confronted and fewer people undertake concrete steps to migrate. The creative construction of this imaginary, as a state of mind, is one important factor leading some to even accept long-term unemployment as they anticipate an eventual opportunity to journey abroad. (Salazer, 2011, p.587)

The notion of delayed education and delayed marriage also featured in their articulation of how time was wasted. Analogous to involuntarily returned migrants, participants, in the wake of failing to leave, were thrown back into a situation of “waithood” – what Honwana (2012) called the extended phase between youth and adulthood, that does not allow young people to follow the established paths to gain social status, as their preceding generations did. Participants were thus in a race to nowhere (instead of a race to somewhere or to becoming somebody), while conscious of the passing of time, with implications for upward social mobility within the socio-cultural milieu they were embedded in. Focusing on aspirations and their complex temporal unfolding, provided scope to address concerns about social mobility and prosperity and ways in which migration could be framed as a desirable undertaking, to achieve these outcomes (McGee, 2019). Bensson noted:

I wasn't really serious finding a job because I wanted to travel. I didn't want to start and leave after a short while, when I get my visa. I didn't want to leave a bad impression. I didn't want to also block anybody's chance. So I decided to take my time to make preparations. So everything came to a standstill. I wasn't even in the mood to look for work because that was not my focus. Because your focus has shifted, you become lazy towards certain things. You become lazy. You begin to ignore certain opportunities due to this. Focusing too much on travelling will make you lose many opportunities to work. Due to what happened I married late.

Bashiru recounted a similar experience:

I wasn't doing anything because of the desire to travel. Even when I applied for a job, I didn't follow up because I said to myself Ghana was not a place to settle (Ghana *ennyɛ me tenabea* – Ghana is not my place of abode), so I had to leave the country. I had to leave the country because I knew there was a better life somewhere compared to Ghana.

Participants reported a lag in their education, because of their preoccupation with travelling abroad. Victor, currently a business executive, recounted how his educational aspiration almost got thwarted by his desire to have his university education abroad:

You know what, it nearly got the best of me you know or out of me or probably if I should put it in the best way, I did waste some time. Because my grades from the sixth form wasn't bad; I could easily have entered the university at the time if I had wanted to but then because I was poised to go and do it abroad especially America I didn't give heed to doing it here at all. And umm it actually delayed my university education. It delayed my university education.

For those who had already enrolled at the University, not only was money wasted, but the desire to travel abroad undermined their resolve to study hard, as captured in the transcript of Manu, who is a twin and was pursuing this dream with his twin brother:

I quite remember, I used one of my semester fees for visa application so I told myself that enough is enough so I changed that perception that I am no more wasting my time on that one again, I will stay in Ghana. And from that day till now I have been through that decision I am moving on in life. As a young guy when you work somewhere to gather some few amount of money instead of you to invest the money, you just want to use the money to travel and then you are rejected. It wasn't easy for me; it was so sad. It took me a month or two to recover. Upon my mother's advice and other people talking to me that it will be well, I had to forget it. I quite remember it even affected my whole semester studies because I told myself ... everything was genuine, so I thought that now I was going so I didn't even prepare the whole semester. I didn't do well at all academically because I thought oh, I was leaving; I thought that was the end for me in Ghana. So, I didn't even prepare well towards my exams and I had to trail some of my papers. I wanted to travel, all my life was trapped in travelling, travelling. I didn't take my academics seriously.

The lack of livelihood opportunities at home 'imperiled' their future in the same way the civil war in Mozambique endangered the lives of the population by restricting their movement, thereby cutting them from their usual livelihood options (Lubkemann, 2008). Although participants could physically pursue some livelihood options at home, they could not see opportunities as a result of being "blinded" by the desire to pursue the good life away from home. Asked about whether the thought of traveling abroad held him captive, Bashiru answered thus:

It blinded me. When the thought of traveling abroad was strong, I thought one was worthless, if he did not travel abroad. I thought it was honourable to travel abroad; Africa was a place where nothing happened. Africa was very disgusting to me. I did not want to see the face of Africa. I was staying in Africa, but my mind was not here. During the run up to the 2016 elections, I told my aunty that fire should engulf Ghana, so we all become refugees and leave Ghana. There should be

outbreak of war in Ghana so that we can all flee Ghana on the grounds of being refugees so we can settle in someone else's country because I didn't have hope. Oh Bashiru in the past, even if you promise to give me work, I got angry. When I was called in response to my applications, I did not respond because I was eager to travel abroad. I thought abroad was everything; I thought abroad was heaven.

Donald explained that sometimes, the mind could prevent one from seeing reality. He juxtaposed reality with expectations that were too high to the extent that they could create an imbalance that might throw one off. Donald:

So with all that I think that the mind also has a way of not letting us know or blocking us from what we can see as reality and what we cannot see as expectations too high so the imbalance there if you're not careful may throw you off guard because it might be better in here but because of the mind not letting you settle down to know that you're good or you can be good here. I can't fail at something I know I'm good at; psychologically it made me feel like oh I'm wasn't tough after all, it dawned on me that like I wasn't invisible after all. I wasn't tough after all as I had believed myself before starting this. I was very, very optimistic. There was nothing you tell me that will make me feel 1% short of how I felt for myself during the process.

This "imbalance" and being "very optimistic" about his abilities to succeed, were indicative of two cognitive illusions (Pohl, 2004). The cognitive "imbalance" represented confirmation bias, the "tendency to only look for evidence that supports one's own hypothesis (e.g. that moving to a certain destination is wise), while his being "very optimistic" about his abilities, mirrored illusion of control; "where individuals overestimate their own role in producing certain outcomes (e.g. that one can survive a risky boat trip across the Mediterranean) (cited in Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016, p. 768).

For some, the number of times they tried and got rejected, brought a certain consciousness of growing out of the age range required to pursue the livelihood options they had envisaged for themselves. The experiences of Victor and Donald who wanted to join the military illustrated this. Victor:

I felt if I had to keep trying and while, I was getting bounced and stuff I would become an old man and probably not get to the university. So, I needed to just forget about the travelling. I needed not to waste any more time because I felt at a point in time, that even if I had the opportunity to go to America for my education and applied to the military (which I was a fan of), I could be denied on the account of age. Because by the time I would be done with university, there could be a clause that I was pass the age limit.

And for Donald:

Per my age the army will not be ok for me in the next 4, 5 years because they also have their age limit for enlistment, so it won't be appropriate or right for me next because if I want to recover financially or economically for myself, not now.

They both had eyes, but could not see. The mind that perceived was no longer resident in the body, which was an integral part of the mind. At home, they had a “mindless” body, while at the imagined destination, they had a disembodied mind. Their minds were thus displaced onto the cyberspace of the imagined destination. As Zittoun (2020) clarifies, they were so much invested in the distal sphere of experience such that, they could not embody their proximal sphere; the here-and-now of their embodied location. I reference Dzokoto's (2020) exploration of the ‘Akan’ theory of the mind, to explicate the role of the mind in my participants’ imaginative expedition or cognitive migration. I already alluded to the centrality of the mind and by extension, imagination in migration (Koikkalainen et al. 2018).

As the mind gets displaced across national borders, it encounters institutional settings and discourses – including state governance and regulations around migration and labour market, that could be evaluated as constraining life course and career aspirations (as in the case of Victor and Donald). Consequently, they may dictate a review of one's aspirations; eventually redirecting it homewards, in order to synchronise them with default temporalities. This is significant, when viewed in the light of an argument made by Bakewell that: “people do not aspire to migrate; they aspire to something which migration might help them achieve” (cited in Carling & Collins, 2018, p. 917). So, realising that the

“something” that they aspire to is attainable at home, they make a ‘U-turn’ homewards, in order to achieve this “something”. Even in the context of spatial fixity, there is a temporal flow. The non-linearity and complexity of migration aspirations, however, mean that they are amenable to re-crafting, re-adjustment, re-signification and emplacement. Participants’ failure therefore brings time into sharp focus and illuminates their space enabling them to choose a cognitive mobility trajectory heading homewards to invest in a homeward future and not outwards, to pursue an illusionary future.

#### 6.4.4 Failure as a catalyst for cognitive return and re-integration

Migration is a transformative process – one in which migrants’ place in the world, their ideas about themselves and possibilities for the future, is work in progress (Castles, 2010). Failure thus unveils the mind to the present and situates it in the life course. Failure is the shock which returns the disembodied mind to the unconscious or mindless body. Failure therefore becomes a converter – a catalytic converter of a sort. Although the experience of failure in its immediate aftermath, leaves one disillusioned, dejected and traumatised, as the lived experiences of participants attest to, it possesses the power to rupture up new possibilities, which the past fails to examine. This is because one’s life can be put on hold while an imagined future hijacks his or her present. For my participants, failure or inability to materialise their migration aspiration, starts their cognitive return process (which I comprehensively address in the next chapter).

The ‘Akan’ worldview, through its proverbs, envisages the failure of migration projects. Failure becomes a rapturous event that begins the whole process of return because: “kuntu hwan a, esan kɔ n'akyi”. The failed trap returns to base. This is possible because: “wo se akyi nnyɛ wo dɛ a, ɛhɔ ara na wo tafere. “if the back of your teeth tastes sour, you still lick there anyway”. (You have to accept circumstances as they are). The proverb: “anomaa antu a, ogyina hɔ” also captures the mobility-immobility dialectics.

Thus, human beings, like birds, are flying to a destination (i.e. on the move) or are staying at one place. This, however, does not mean a curtailment of aspiration; it is rather re-configuring, re-signifying (Boccagni, 2017) and emplacing of aspiration.

## 6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the meaning of failure to cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees. The chapter also highlighted four narratives undergirding this understanding of failure and the four types of failure consciousness, engendering it. In addition, two types of failure trajectories have been discussed. The phenomenology of failure discussed, has established the essence of cognitive migration as the salience of imagination and not necessarily, the activities one indulged in. This therefore diverged from Mescoli (2014), who ascribed the ensuing subjectivity, exclusively to the extensive preparations which prospective migrants engaged in. Secondly, from the narratives of participants, the inability to travel to embody their migration imagination, was not just an ordinary failure, but an extreme failure with life-altering ramifications which undermined their psychological well-being for some time. To this end, psychologists' understanding of migrants' social integration and psychological well-being, could no longer be consigned to destination countries with the current evidence of pre-migration trauma in situ. Psychological understanding that catered to migrants' internal experiences and their effects on migrants' health (Walsh & Tuval-Mashiach, 2012), must therefore be extended to cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees.

Additionally, participants' failure brought time into sharp focus and illuminated their space; enabling them to choose a cognitive mobility trajectory heading homewards. After all, "Atiti-atiti-ne-brafooti; obi mpe wo agoro a, tena w'ase (Na akoto bo pem a, osan n'akyi) to wit, "if someone does not want to play with you, keep to yourself. (For if the

crab falls over, it returns to base). According to this proverb, one had better return to where you came from, if the place you were headed to was not welcoming. The process leading to this cognitive return, or emplacement, has been described in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### RETURNING THE MIND HOME

#### 7.1 Introduction

##### 7.1.1 Victor's story of cognitive return and reintegration: The thrill of carrying American people in a car bought in Ghana

Victor's decision to return his mind to Ghana was a response to his employer's challenge to show a certificate of university education if he wanted higher pay. After realising that he loved teaching, he re-considered his decision to further his education abroad consequent to being bounced five times in favour of doing it in Ghana. Subsequently, he sought assistance from his siblings abroad. He also realised that advancing in age could disadvantage his employability abroad. Through his own personality and interpersonal relationships, Victor secured many job offers, as a pupil teacher, debt recovery professional and administrative and marketing professional. The decision to invest in a local or homeward future yielded many benefits for Victor. His current company gave him a loan to buy a car. He needed a bigger car because his sister and her family including their mother were visiting from the US. "I felt the thrill so much when I got to Tema and put all of them in the 7-seater car; even though I didn't say it to them right in their faces but that was the feeling. I said look at the man who initially felt that he was rejected because he didn't travel to America, look at him rather carrying the American people along in his car in Ghana". Victor has become more socially and culturally embedded in Ghana: "I mean the very first time that I sat in a meeting with Otumfuo<sup>14</sup> I was like how could this happen that I find myself in the presence of Otumfuo not just in his presence but I shook his hands". Victor invited to his former school as a special guest of honour: I was once a teacher now I am a special guest for a programme in the same school and it was thrilling. And I felt maybe if I had even gone to America probably I wouldn't get that privilege of meeting great people, big people". On his wellbeing, Victor said "the definition of prosperity or wellbeing is subjective. I am not a millionaire, I am not a 'thousandnaire' if there is anything like that (laughs) but so far as I am able to put food down for my family, so far as I am able to put a shed over their head, so far as I am able to take my children to school, educate them and of course, to even help others who are in need, I think that it's the best life that I have. If anything comes after this, I would accept that as a blessing from God. But I am so grateful to God that I am not a burden on anybody and I am able to take care of myself and my family".



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<sup>14</sup> Osei Tutu II is the 16th Asantehene, enstooled on 26 April 1999. By name, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II is in direct succession to the 17th-century founder of the Ashanti Empire, Otumfuo Osei Tutu I.

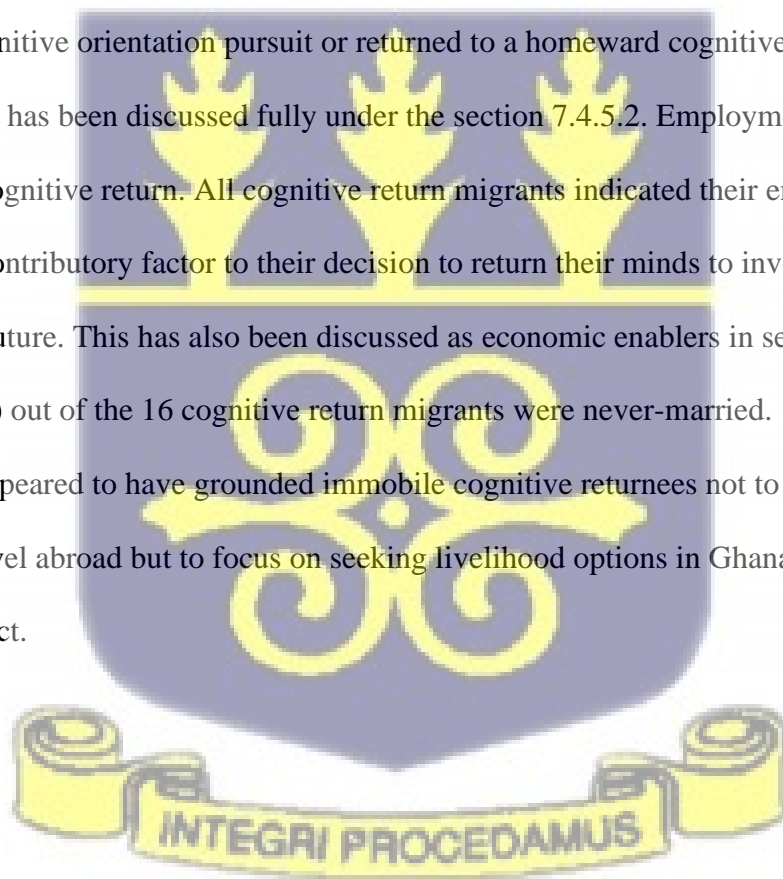
The story of Victor above, represented the lives of many cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees who failed to make it to their imagined destination abroad but made a U-turn, in the wake of being bounced and invested in a homeward future. Victor had two options after being bounced: to have persisted in pursuing an outward future abroad or to have re-directed his imagination of a better life homeward. He chose the latter. This means that Victor replaced his mind in Ghana. Abandoning one's desire to travel abroad for greener pastures in favour of pursuing same in the country of origin, indicated a process of cognitive emplacement.

The aim of this chapter is to clarify the cognitive return or emplacement process and its enablers for Victor and many other cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees like him. Specifically, the chapter addresses objective three of the thesis, which is to clarify the process and enablers of cognitive return migration and reintegration. This objective translates into two questions: 1) How are cognitive migrants able to return and invest their minds into a homeward future? 2) What are the enablers of cognitive return or emplacement?

The chapter is organised as follows; first, I discuss the socio-demographic profile of cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees. I subsequently explore the turning points that initiated the whole return or emplacement process and define the cognitive return or emplacement process. Subsequently, I examine the enablers of cognitive return or emplacement. This is followed by the delimitation of the cognitive return migrant or the immobile cognitive returnee. Finally, I conceptualise the cognitive return or emplacement process and conclude.

## 7.2 The Demographic Profile of Cognitive Return Migrants or Immobile Cognitive Returnees

Sixteen (16) prospective migrants or cognitive migrants abandoned their desire to travel abroad and resolved to eke a livelihood at home as shown in Table 3 below. Thus they returned their minds homeward shifting from an outward cognitive future orientation to a homeward cognitive future orientation. They comprised 14 males and 2 females. The under representation of females in this group underscored a general reluctance on the part of women; to participate in risky migration decisions as enunciated by Setrana (2021). As already alluded to, only three (3) women participated in the study. For majority of cognitive return migrants, age was a factor that determined whether one persisted in their outward cognitive orientation pursuit or returned to a homeward cognitive orientation pursuit. This has been discussed fully under the section 7.4.5.2. Employment status was an enabler of cognitive return. All cognitive return migrants indicated their employment status as a contributory factor to their decision to return their minds to invest in a homeward future. This has also been discussed as economic enablers in section 7.4.1. Only two (2) out of the 16 cognitive return migrants were never-married. Being married therefore, appeared to have grounded immobile cognitive returnees not to waste more time trying to travel abroad but to focus on seeking livelihood options in Ghana to keep their families intact.



**Table 4: Demographic Profile of Cognitive Return Migrants or Immobile Cognitive Returnees**

ID	AGE	SEX	MARITAL STATUS	ETHNICITY	RELIGION	ATTEMPTS	CURRENT EMPLOYMENT	EDUCATION	NO. OF CHILDREN	IMAGINED DESTINATION	COGNITIVE ORIENTATION
Capito	51	M	Married	Akan	Christian	4	Self-employed	Secondary/technical/commercial	4	US/Canada	Homeward
Richie	53	M	Married	Ga-Dangme	Christian	3	Self-employed	Secondary/Technical/commercial	4	US/Canada	Homeward
William	42	M	Married	Ga-Dangme	Christian	1	Private entity	First degree	2	Europe/UK	Homeward
John	51	M	Married	Akan	Christian	3	Private entity	First degree	3	Europe/UK	Homeward
Peter	39	M	Married	Ga-Dangme	Christian	2	Government	First degree	3	Europe/UK	Homeward
Ivan	51	M	Married	Akan	Christian	2	Government	Postgraduate	3	Europe/UK	Homeward
Kwadwo	48	M	Married	Guan	Christian	2	Private entity	First degree	3	US/Canada	Homeward
Manu	41	M	Married	Akan	Christian	3	Private entity	Postgraduate	3	Europe/UK	Homeward
Nakie	45	F	Never married	Ga-Dangme	Christian	2	Private entity	Secondary/Technical/Commercial	0	Europe/UK	Homeward
Regina	56	F	Married	Akan	Christian	2	Government	First degree	5	Europe/UK	Outward
Bashiru	34	M	Never married	Akan	Christian	4	working for government	first degree	0	US/Canada	Homeward
Akyeampong	34	M	Married	Akan	Christian	2	self-employed	first degree	3	US/Canada	Homeward
Victor	49	M	Married	Akan	Christian	5	working for private entity	first degree	3	US/Canada	Homeward
Bensson	48	M	Married	Akan	Christian	4	self-employed	first degree	2	US/Canada	Homeward
Anane	52	M	Married	Akan	Christian	3	working for private entity	secondary/technical/commercial	2	US/Canada	Homeward
Matthew	40	M	Married	Akan	Christian	2	Work for private entity	First degree	3	UK/Canada	Homeward



### 7.3 Turning points

Different experiences with failure or inability to secure a visa to travel to their dream country, created different turning points for participants. The brute fact was that majority of them were all denied visas indicative of failure to make it to their dreamland. Nevertheless, participants' subjectivity dictated the circumstances ushering them to their turning points. For some, the number of times they tried and got rejected brought a certain consciousness about growing out of the age range required to pursue the livelihood options they had envisaged for themselves. The experience of Victor who wanted to join the military illustrated this. Victor:

I felt if I had to keep trying and while, I was getting bounced and stuff I would become an old man and probably not get to the university. So, I needed to just forget about the travelling. I needed not to waste any more time because I felt at a point in time, that even if I had the opportunity to go to America for my education and applied to the military ( which I was a fan of), I could be denied on the account of age. Because by the time I would be done with university, there could be a clause that I was pass the age limit.

The death of John's benefactor who promised to facilitate his travel to the UK was his turning point:

I think when I was told of the death of Mr. Adu, the one that has promised me and it was him alone that I was relying on. The person I was waiting on to help me come to UK to help me school and work and the person is no more; that was what hit that look I need to forge ahead. I need to look at a different door as this one has closed and closed forever so I think it's the death of Mr. Adu, the person who promised to help me. So if the one who promised me is no more then, actually the death changed my mind.

Richie reminisced about the mother's buffering in his life and how her death changed the course of his life:

I cry ooh charley I cry more than everybody because I know the thing that this woman has done for me. Charley, right now that I am getting money for mum to come and chop some but the woman has gone, oww; so that time too the woman died then I changed my life Hmm Ahaa because if I am saying charley that time me I am a bad boy, I am bad (laughs) I do things like trouble, causing trouble and these thing all charley. So when this thing happen every day she is the one who will go and talk; they can sack me from school and she will go and talk so the moment this woman died I said charley if I didn't change...but the time I start

earning money from the ministry [contract with the ministry] then this woman pass away aha so that's the thing that change me and I said no I have to change my life because the person who will follow me if I have a problem the person has died.

William disclosed a hidden event (i.e., a deep wound cut from his British Caucasian wife) as his turning point:

Let me tell you one secret that umm sometime I keep hiding from people; I have never had this experience [the cut and the threat of death from Mrs. C] in my entire life until the time I married Mrs. C. It changed my mind one time!

Peter's turning point was enrolling at the University and seeing improvement in his grades in spite of experiencing hunger and lack of concentration:

I must say that when I entered university. Especially getting to my latter days when my grades started, doing well, I would have made just a pass or a third class. Because my grades were that bad, I couldn't even concentrate, sometimes I was very hungry in class.

According to Ivan, an encounter with school mates working at the mines with good working conditions and salary was what changed his mind:

In fact my mind about this abroad changed when I met colleagues at a gold mine in Ghana. We were doing our practicals on these environmental things and then we went to one of the mines to stay overnight and in fact I was surprised people [Ghanaians] were treated like expatriates there.

Manu shared a similar story to that of Ivan. However, he made the point that he was better academically than these friends who were working at home and doing well. Interaction with these friends changed his perception [about abroad] to stay at home:

There were some guys who had the opportunity to work at the bank at that time; I quite remember they were not good, I was even better than them in class but because of that mindset that I want to travel, I want to travel, all my life was trapped in travelling, travelling. I quite remember somewhere in 2004 they made it. The things that I saw they were doing there [bank], I told myself that no I have to stay here. I would change that perception, I must change that perception I must bring my mind back to Ghana. And then from that time that I took that decision, it worked, it worked well.

Regina's care giving roles, assurance from his brother in the UK that any time she wanted to try again, he would give her an invitation letter as well as her confidence in God, were turning points:

My brother was even telling me his friend tried six times so I should not lose hope because I don't have to lose hope with just one try, that's not how it is. Every time I try he would send me the invitation and everything but I decided to stay back and take care of my children, In future in God's own time through even my children I can still go; so that took my mind off it.

Akyeampong's epiphany at the US embassy during his visa interview was his turning point:

I overheard others being told that why do they want to travel to America, their place is here, America doesn't need them, they should concentrate on what they are doing here in Ghana. So all these things they will tell you just to.... sometimes you will feel very bad, sometimes it belittles you; I just told myself enough is enough and pounced on my backup plan.

In addition to all of the above turning points, financial loss as a result of employing the services of brokers or connection men, serves as a turning point. Connection men are middlemen who are part of the migration industry. They are also called visa contractors. They offered one-stop migration services comprising passport and visa services and charged exorbitant fees for their services. These high fees notwithstanding, they had an unenviable reputation of being fraudulent. Capito recounted his experience:

Oppong [connection man] had been arrested in Accra and sent to Kumasi, this means that he had duped me. So I went to Kumasi and truly he was at the Central Police Station. All what I wanted was my passport. I suspected that my visa was also likely to be fake. You know then I was still young and anxious full of ambitions so umm Oppong's bag was in the possession of a lady whom I thought was also traveling. He had also taken her money so her passport was with him. So when I met the lady I asked her to give the bag since my passport was in it and she refused. So I snatched the bag from her hands and she went to report that I had taken her bag. So one of the police men said I had acted foolishly and locked me up in the cell. Someone who had been duped and was trying to get his passport they locked me up. My wife had to travel from Accra to Kumasi because I don't know how it happened but the bag found its way to Accra. She had to bring the bag to Accra for the lady to get her passport before I was released. Actually, I tried several times to go abroad but was not successful; I went through genuine means, but they said my uncle who travelled on government scholarship did not come back so he could not sponsor my trip. Through foul means, these guys also took my money. Someone had taken the little money you had. So there was no place like home. I had to stay here and focus on myself. I was hurt and I didn't think that if I tried again, it was going to work so I decided not to invest in travels but rather stay and find something to do.

A single event, at a single time point, can represent a turning point. As John's experience shows. The death of his promisor is catalytic enough to begin a return or

emplacement process. On the other hand, a number of events occurring at different times, although united by the goal they seek (i.e. moving the body where the mind is), may culminate into a salient turning point. The case of Capito illustrates this. Capito fails a number of times, comes into conflict with the law, loses huge amount of money to a connection man before reaching a salient turning point. This accords with the notion that situates social actors in multiple time frames that make them have multiple temporal orientations. Thus social actors are:

embedded within many such temporalities at once, they can be said to be oriented toward the past, the future, and the present at any given moment, although they may be primarily oriented toward one or another of these within any one emergent situation (Emirbayer & Mische, 2002, p. 964).

Be that as it may, now a future at home beckons and a return or emplacement process begins.

#### **7.4 The cognitive return or emplacement process**

Heuristically, I describe the return process as a series of steps; in reality, however, these processes are not neatly cut out like it is being presented here. The stages overlap. The previous chapter makes the point that failure catalyses the return process by becoming a turning point, which the preceding section adequately clarifies. Now I turn to the stages of cognitive return or emplacement.

##### **7.4.1 Stages of cognitive returned or emplacement**

In all, I delineate three stages in the cognitive return or emplacement process. These comprise disruptive/rupturing stage, the reflective and decision-making stage and the return and reintegration stage. The previous chapter clarifies the acute disruptive or rupturing stage as comprising shock, disorientation and confusion as well as the timing of these effects. I look at the reflective and decision-making and the return and reintegration stages in this chapter.

The reflective and decision-making stage, involves taking stock of one's life. It is a metacognitive process resulting in the evaluation of decisions. Victor recounts his five times bounced experience. He describes the experience as not too pleasant. His is not the classic manifestation of trauma as he does not report the shock, disorientation and confusion. His reflective moment, however, occurs while on admission at the hospital receiving treatment for jaundice. He reads the Bible and does a lot of reflections while recovering and comes to the realisation that everywhere is home and so not getting the opportunity to further his education abroad should not prevent him from doing it in Ghana:

I reflected on so many thing while at the hospital. In fact, I took that time to read the scriptures even more. I had the understanding that everywhere is home and so if I wasn't getting the opportunity to go and further my education outside, I should do it here in Ghana. So all the other factors calmed me down a bit you know and gave me the confidence that I needn't go outside Ghana, precisely America, I could do that in Ghana. Other people have had the opportunity to study here in spite of the rampant school closures due to strike action by students and lecturers.

According to Bensson, it takes determination to make a shift from the conviction that travelling is the only way to making it in life: "so I had to return my mind and that was difficult. I had to retune it from believing that travelling abroad was the only way to make it with determination. It was difficult and very painful". In a similar vein, Matthew calls the reflective stage, a process of reorganisation that starts with beginning to think like a Ghanaian. This shows the extent to which cognitive displacement disengages with the country of origin. The reflective stage equally involves re-imagining how one is going to live with people. Matthew explains as follows:

Let me just say it was tedious because you had seen yourself at a certain height and now you were no more there. I needed to reorganise myself. Yes, beginning to think like a Ghanaian. I had to come home now because I couldn't go. So now I had to imagine how I was going to live with the people here. It wasn't an easy task though. When that happened I wasn't going anywhere, I was home. It came to a day that I didn't have one cedi on me even to buy food to eat. So I called a friend. I knew very well he had money, but he told me he didn't. So I said to myself that my failed travel is not the end of me. Was I the first person to be denied a visa? No. So I asked myself why I wanted to live a miserable life. As soon as I thought of these things, the next day I called a friend of mine. I told him what had happened and that I wanted to do something.

The return and integration stage is the stage where cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees settle and appreciate the benefits accruing from the decision to stay at home. There are many enablers of cognitive return and reintegration which I discuss in section 7.4 below. But, first, I explore cognitive return migrants' or immobile cognitive returnees' sense of how their return and reintegration, translate into their wellbeing. Overall, cognitive return migrants' verdict is that they do not regret returning their minds to Ghana and pursuing a homeward future. A key indicator of this is how they adjudge their wellbeing. There are four (4) notions of wellbeing that emerge from participants' narratives. These are 1) the true essence of wellbeing, 2) purpose of wellbeing; 3) temporality of wellbeing and 4) relativity of wellbeing.

First, I discuss cognitive return migrants' notion of the true essence of wellbeing. Bashiru starts off with a definition of wellbeing that he contradicts with material indicators of wellbeing such as money. He distinguishes between money and wellbeing. Wellbeing he says, is not money but *ahotɔ*<sup>15</sup>. Having money is not synonymous with wellbeing, he argues. You can be well in material (worldly) terms but your soul may be grieving. What is striking here is that Bashiru compares a grieving soul to the outcome of his former status as cognitive migrant. *Ahotɔ* has a nonmaterial essence Bashiru likens to being able to laugh and an attitude of conducting business that makes those who are materially endowed jealous. He reflects that this nonmaterial essence of *ahotɔ* is the reason why someone commuting to work on foot will attract the envy of another driving to work. Bashiru here tries to differentiate the true essence of *ahotɔ* from its nonessential features. Bashiru reasons that commuting to work in a car does not insulate one from problems. In fact, he considers this an enigma: that someone with a room full of money will be envious

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<sup>15</sup>The closest word in the English language that the Akan word *ahotɔ* can be into is peace. The word *ahotɔ* appears in the authoritative compendium of Ghanaian proverbs by Appiah et al, (2007) (i.e. proverbs number 384, 2318 and 2575)

of one who does not have anything. In the end, he resolves this irony by positing that such one's strength and brains may be the object of this envy. Finally, Bashiru also renders wellbeing as *asomdwoe*<sup>16</sup> which means peace of mind and says that he is well off (m'adi yie). One indicator of being well off is his ability to pay his tithe, a sign of his fidelity to God for doing so much for him. Bashiru:

I couldn't be there but in the same way I hadn't been there but believed that there was life there, it is in the same way when I awoke to this reality, I have believed that it's a bomb! It is not easy. It is not easy o, it is not easy at all. Look, it is not easy for them over there. Kofi told me, Kofi is in Virginia. He works at a very big company he earns a big paycheck but his soul doesn't have happiness. He is well in terms of some worldly indicators. But his soul, in the same way that my soul was grieving some time ago, his soul is grieving. He has money but his soul is grieving. Wellbeing is not money, it is *ahoto*. When we say someone has *ahoto* (obi ho ato no a) he would not even have one cedi but the way he would laugh and conduct his business, you with money will even be jealous of him. Someone will be walking to work, the other will be driving but will be envious of the one walking. The problem he has even with the car he's driving, left to him alone, he would have exchanged his car for walking. Someone has a room full of money but is envious of the one who doesn't have anything. Why? The person is jealous of your strength and brains; he's even jealous of your thatched-roofed room you live in. *Eye asomdwoe* [It is peace of mind]. Yes I have improved (M'adi yie). Today, I am able to go to Church and pay my tithe at GH¢300 per month, ask yourself in Ghana? I'm truthful to God because he's done so much for me, He's done so much for me.

Matthew sees wellbeing as not being dependent on somebody. Similar to Bashiru, he differentiates the materiality (i.e. car or building) of "okayness" from the essence of being "okay". He admits not everybody can achieve the materiality of okayness and that having materiality of okayness is a bonus. In other words, not its true essence. Not begging for food and being able to provide for family and children are the essence of being okay. Matthew, however, does not deny the materiality of being okay; in fact, he looks forward to a set time that God will bless him with the materiality of being okay. He says:

For me, I think, when a person doesn't become totally dependent on somebody, I think that is okay. You don't necessarily need a car or build a home before you can say you are quite okay. Not everybody would be able to do that. If I have those things, it will just be a bonus. That is what I believe in. I don't go to people to beg

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<sup>16</sup> This is an Akan word meaning peace. *Asomdwoe*, therefore is synonymous with *ahoto*

for food. I am able to provide for my family and my children, so for the life I am living now, it's quite okay. I know a time will come where God will open doors and say, "Let me bless you with this".

Victor says he is neither a millionaire nor a "thousandnaire" but being able to feed his family, shelter them and educate them, even being able to extend a helping hand to others, show he has the best of life:

I am not a millionaire, I am not a thousandnaire if there is anything like that (laughs) but then so far as I am able to put food down for my family, so far as I am able to put a shed over their head of my family, so far as I am able to take my children to school, I am able to educate them umm and to of course to even help others who are in need ok I think that it's the best life that I have, yes. If anything comes you know after this I would accept that as a blessing from God but I am so grateful to God that one I am not a burden on anybody and umm yes that is it, I am able to take care of myself and my family.

In contrast to his former situation as a cognitive migrant, Akyeamong claims that he is now better. Today, he is cognitively emplaced and ready to start life at 40 years in Ghana. But even before he turns 40 years, he is improving by achieving certain indicators set by the Church. He has a wife and three wonderful children and in addition, runs a small business in order to be self-sufficient and not become insolvent. Akyeamong:

I am better now; they say life starts at 40 (laughs) I am not yet 40 but umm I have umm I know I have been giving all that I need now to make life happy and wonderful so I think it is a work in progress. I am religious and in my religion as a young man growing up if you want to see that you are improving, you have to make a family and I have a family; I have a wife and three wonderful kids. Umm they are all well, we are taking care of them, we try to give them all they need so they will not lack and I have also this small business that I am doing that is also moving very well.

Although all cognitive return migrants consider the purpose of wellbeing, Ivan gives a more detailed account of it:

Whilst in those times it was like what do I get personally for myself and forget about anything. It was about me, me, me. Maybe I wasn't even too matured to even think about the fact that you can play a bigger role in the nation than you just looking for something for yourself and your immediate family. Yes, I mean umm the way you think about things; the way you see life, the way you see... sense of purpose what you are in here to do on earth, your contribution towards other people's life, towards the nation that you were born into. A sense of belonging to a

nation, you calling yourself a Ghanaian, the role you play instead of I am a Ghanaian. I am a citizen of this world and anywhere I find myself life goes on. It is matter of, I believe, there is a purpose for which I am a Ghanaian. Yes for me frankly speaking I look at the future brighter here; I see a bright future. I see myself in a system that I can contribute to develop it and then I will have some sense of recognition. Umm a sense of having contributed towards the building of a nation, having imparted something to younger generation and then being satisfied that my being on earth has not been just to umm ... work and take salary and just being about yourself and your immediate family but about you having contributed because you found yourself in a system that had a lack and you are contributing, ok and your contribution is acknowledged ok and even if not acknowledged you see that you are making contribution to a system that needs to be developed.

Capito provides a more introspective account of his lived experience as a cognitive return migrant or immobile cognitive returnee, highlighting the continuities and discontinuities in his identity. Capito thinks of wellbeing as responsibility towards children and family. He brings a temporal focus to his growing responsibility when he compares his early adulthood to middle adulthood. Thus “Capito the boy” is qualitatively different from “Capito the man” in terms of his thoughts and actions. He makes reference to a Bible quotation<sup>17</sup> to drive home this point. Capito evaluates the first half of his life and gives himself a pass being successful by drawing on the analogy of taking exams

Even though I don't know and in this world that I find myself, I think you have to make good use of every situation that comes your way. I didn't go abroad, I did not live there but currently if I want to go I can. Sighs! I don't know how to say it, I don't know how to say it. I have not regretted staying in Ghana and I don't know what would have happened if I had gone that early in life so whatever stage the Lord has brought me I love that and I appreciate it (...) I feel I am able to take care of my children. I have family and people look up to me. Because I also have dependents but those days the young guy who attended people's parties to have a drink. That time I didn't have any responsibilities but now when I am eating I have to remember that next week I will go and visit my ward in school so I have to think about him as well so you have to keep changes. As you age your responsibilities become bigger, yes that's how I think. So now I am old, when you go to my home and there is an assembling of the wise I will be called. Those times Capito was a young guy because even till date if you check my WhatsApp I have written 'Capito the boy'. The last time, I was telling one lady that I am no more Capito the boy but now I am 'Capito the man' because now I am old and I think like an older person and just like the bible says 'when I was a child I used to do things like a child but now I am old so I have to do things like an older person'. Hmm currently I will say

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<sup>17</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:11 “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (New King James Version-NKJV).

that I am at the second half of my life and I think if you lived a successful life you can see. It is like writing an exam and reading the question on the paper. You read the questions and you are required to answer three and you know you don't have any idea about all the five questions. Right in the exam room you will know you have failed, you won't wait for your paper to be marked. And I think that I have done well. And I am still doing it not like I have given up or completed. My father built two houses, one at Abeka, one in the hometown of his second wife at Ingleshie but I think I have got more than that today. What I may not be able to compete is the fact that he had nine children as at the age of fifty one when he died. That is the only thing that I think I cannot ... I have four children at the age of fifty one.

The sense that wellbeing is relative, permeates cognitive return migrants' account.

Bashiru, for example, comes to his *ahoto* essence of wellbeing by comparing himself to his friend Oppong in the US. Regina and Besson are more explicit with this notion of relative wellbeing. For Regina, looking young in the eyes of peers who are abroad is an indication of wellbeing. She attributes her youngness to her being in Ghana unlike her classmates who are abroad:

I have some classmates abroad when they come to Ghana and we go for our old students association meetings, I look better than them. We are all above 50 but they look older because of the nature of work they do. They have been saying it and they tell me I still look young.

Besson compares his life to friends both at home and abroad and concludes that he is better than most of his peers in material wealth:

I am better than most of my peers, so why should I let what happened draw me back. I had to rise up and make the best out of my life. The changes are not significant, because I didn't dispose of all of my land. My friends tell me I have more property than some of the people abroad so why am I worrying myself?

Putting all together, cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees are saying that their decision to resign to a homeward future is a good decision. They come to this conclusion by articulation of wellbeing that emanates from their lived experience as cognitive return migrants. Their sense of wellbeing, however, comes from different conceptions. For example, while Bashiru talks about *ahoto* and *asomdwoe* as the true essence of "yiedi" which translates as prosperity (Akrofi et al., 1996, p. 212), Matthew

associates wellbeing with being “okay”. Bashiru’s use of *m’adi yie* connotes a state of being prosperous. “Yiedi” is a noun while “di yie” is a verb meaning “to prosper”. So essentially, what Bashiru is driving at by saying *m’adi yie* means he is prosperous since to prosper means *di yie* (Akrofi et al., 1996, p. 212). Wellbeing from the perspective of cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees describes a state of being that generates *yiedi* whose purpose transcends the self, reaching out to others, community and nation at large. Its essence is nonmaterial (ahoto and asomdwoe). In other words, it has both transcendental and psychological essence as it structures behaviour in a context. Thus, cognitive return/emplacement and reintegration ensure the prosperity of cognitive return migrants.

I contend that the reconfiguration of imaginations is possible with potential migrants who have not crossed physical borders and clarify that the process of potential migrants reconfiguring their imaginations homeward is equally a temporal one. As the narratives of participants make clear, the transformations, disruptions as well as the discontinuities that are intrinsic features of migration imaginations, are not only true for “successful” migrants who cross geo-political time zones. Again, the multidirectional mobility trajectories that undergo constant reconfiguration (Boccagni, 2017; Wang & Collins, 2020), cannot only be rendered physical mobilities, but cognitive as well. Cognitive displacement ensures that the mind encounters institutional settings and discourses, including state governance and regulation around migration and labour market that are perceived to be antithetical to a potential migrant’s life course and career aspirations. This instigates a cognitive return process that emplaces the mind homewards in order to synchronize them with default temporalities. This ensures that even in the context of spatial fixity, there is temporal flow. This is an extension of Boccagni's (2017) and Wang and Collins’ (2020) migration aspirations and temporality nexus within varied geopolitical settings and the default physical mobility paradigm in migration studies to spatial constancy and cognitive mobility

paradigm. Thus, the process of potential migrants reconfiguring their migration imaginations homeward is spatio-temporal-cognitive occurring within a context. This diverges from the default conceptualisation of migration as a spatio-temporal phenomenon since Ravenstein at the twilight of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Bijak & Czaika, 2020; Collins, 2018; King, 2002), thereby contributing significantly to the ongoing cognitive turn in migration studies (Koikkalainen et al., 2020; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016; Vari-lavoisier, 2020; Womersley, 2020; Zittoun, 2020). I now turn to the enablers of cognitive return/emplacement.

### 7.5 Enablers of Cognitive Return or Emplacement

I identify sixteen (16) enablers of cognitive return from the narratives of participants (see Appendix IV). I further abstract these into five (5) comprising economic, socio-cultural, social support, posttraumatic growth and self-regulation (see Appendix V). The first six factors, namely job/economic, interpersonal relationships, the God factor, conscious awakening that rejects travelling abroad, positive outcomes and re-storying the narrative of self and place, contribute significantly to their respective clusters shown in Appendix V. Although imagination (Chambers, 2018; Ingold, Smith, 2006; Zittoun, 2020) or projectivity (Emirbayer & Mische, 2002) drive cognitive return and reintegration, they do so within the structural constraints of a given context. The act of cognitive return and reintegration reflect the agency-structure conundrum in the social sciences. The five (5) enablers of cognitive return or emplacement work within the different temporalities and unfolding multiple contexts that cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees as social actors embed.

### 7.5.1 Economic enablers

The analysis classified gainful employment and further education as economic enablers. Participants recounted being gainfully employed as the most important factor that facilitated their cognitive emplacement. Participants' economic opportunities were enhanced as they ventured into pursuing further education in Ghana. Employment was a key factor ensuring cognitive return. Current employment status comprised working for self, government entity and private companies. For some participants, the search for employment was a tedious process characterised by show of industry and failure before landing a government job. Bashiru after trying many times and failing, was introduced to a friend's mother who imported merchandise from Togo to sell in Ghana. He also tried his hands at poultry with a friend and run at a loss because of lack of support. When he had reached his wits' ends and was about to retire to the village for the second time, an elder sister connected him with someone who worked in Ghana's security apparatus. This connection eventually secured him a job in a government agency. The life-changing moment offered by securing this job is aptly described by Bashiru as follows:

So we were there waiting for some time then a number called me "are you Bashiru?" I said "yes", "ok your letter is ready for medicals" the caller added. I had also heard that once you were called for medicals, it meant you had the job. I also knew I had no HIV and I didn't have any other health condition. So as soon as they called me, I said "oh thank you God". I had earlier told God that if He blessed me with a job, I would offer my first pay as a sacrifice unto Him. So when they called me for the medicals and I went through, then I realised at the time that as for me and Ghana, we had become one like the cripple and the ground.

There were different pathways to securing employment. However, there was always an interpersonal connection to make this happen. For Matthew, a disappointment from one friend for money to buy food instigated him to deeply reflect about his condition and resulted in him calling another friend through whom he eventually got a teaching appointment in a private school that enabled his cognitive emplacement. Matthew:

It came to a day that I didn't have one cedi on me even to buy food to eat. So I called a friend. I knew very well he had money, but he told me he didn't. So I said to myself that my failing to travel is not the end of me. Was I the first person to be denied a visa? No. So I asked myself why I wanted to live a miserable life. As soon as I thought of these things, the next day I called another friend of mine. I told him what had happened and that I wanted to do something. By then he was teaching in a private school so I asked if there was any vacancy. He said to me there was one person who has left and if I could teach the subject he was teaching, then he could help me get employed there. I told him not to worry, that even if I couldn't, I would read to broaden my knowledge. Then he asked me to write my application letter and bring it on Friday. So I went and submitted it on Friday and I was called for an interview on Monday morning. I hadn't taught before. What I had done was teaching Sunday school. The interview was such that, they took me to a class and I was asked to teach anything because they hadn't given me a subject to teach. So they took me there and I started talking. After 5 minutes of teaching, I was called later in the evening that I had been employed. So I went the next day. At that point, I began to reorganise myself.

### 7.5.2 Socio-cultural factors

For some cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees, cognitive emplacement was enabled by non-economic factors such as place attachment and access to some social capital. Cognitive return migrants' social embeddedness within kin relations yielded some benefits that could not be attained abroad making the emplacement of the future in Ghana a worthwhile undertaking. Bashiru explains:

I have my freedom. I can see my family and my mother to comfort her. When his [Bashiru's friend] father died last two years, I had to send the body to the morgue. I was there one late night and his mother called me saying that she could not wake her husband, her husband was not responding to her call to wake up at 11pm. So I walked there and went upstairs. Where the father was lying was not good; so I called Uber, He was pronounced dead on arrival when we got to the hospital. So I called Yaw and informed him of the demise of his father. He called a doctor friend at Tech to come and confirm. As soon as the doctor friend confirmed to him that the father was dead, he intimated "Bashiru help me, this is what is wrong with traveling. I didn't see my father's face before he died. Bashiru did you give him water to drink on my behalf?" To which I answered "yes, I gave him water to drink on your behalf". "Bashiru, hmmm as for being domiciled in somebody's country; my friend cried and cried during the night. So I assured him that I would do everything for him. So I made sure everything was taken care of for his father to be put in the morgue. When he wrote to his company that he had lost his father, the company told him that he wouldn't get the time he was looking for because it was their peak. The man had also indicated early on that when he dies, he should not be kept in the morgue for more than a month. But because of traveling issues, we violated the wishes of the man. "Hmm I obey every rule of my father, I ask for a

pardon from him. I want to see his face before he's buried. So he had to be in the morgue for about three months. My father should forgive me". He cried and cried and cried and cried. I tell you, until this very day, he had vowed to return to Ghana because of his mother. This is because the father died without being able to have a parting conversation with him, he dreads the same fate befalling his mother. *Akwantuo mu abrabo*<sup>18</sup>. Yaw was advising me. But I said he shouldn't because I had seen everything. 'You're staying among your kinsmen you were not welcome? Go, go and try it!

Reflected in the narratives of cognitive return migrants was the desire to live in close proximity with aging parents. This, they believed would afford them the opportunity to be of service to their aging parents at the time they needed them most. John captured this concern of cognitive return migrants so well:

Me not travelling or having taken my mind off travelling or work outside is because of two things; my mum and my grandmother. My 71-year old mum and my 91-year old grand mum and you know just the 25th of October my 75-year old dad passed on. I want to be around so if anything they call me I am there personally. I know everything is in God's hands but I want to offer the help that is within my power; when it comes to financials, bring this or that, I am there to pay.

According to Schewel (2019) embeddedness in a setting has both social and economic dimensions, producing social retain factors such as family and community relations in origin countries that are important drivers of the preference to stay. These retain factors help explain why people may come to see "home" as a better place to be than "elsewhere." However, even when local conditions deteriorate, people may still choose to stay out of a sense of "loyalty" or to exercise "voice," to use Hirschman's terms (1970). Consider, for example, the rebel fighters in Syria who refuse to flee (Hall, 2016) or a young educated woman in Senegal with the opinion that "we must stay and develop our country" (Schewel 2015, p. 23). This commitment to place, especially when staying goes against self-interest, presents another challenge to rational-choice paradigms in which the maximisation of personal advantage is taken as the orienting principle of decision-making.

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<sup>18</sup> The life of a sojourner or traveller

A second socio-cultural factor that played a role in cementing participants' resolve to return their minds to Ghana was the locational advantage of Ghana. The beauty of the fauna compared to the experiences of the family relations abroad, who lament the environment they live in, was enough reason for a decision to cognitively emplace in Ghana. Moorings, defined by Moon (1994) as "those social expressions which not only allow a person to materialise his or her physical, psychological and emotional well-being but also serve to bind a person to a particular place" (p. 514), is referenced as a sociocultural enabler by Peter. Moorings encompass a range of issues whereby people gain meaning to their life.

Peter explained:

Look at where we are sitting, you look around, the beautiful scenery, the wood the plantains and what have you. You and I know what happens there, hardly would you see plants, little plants here and there; I remember when my nieces came to Ghana in 2013 for the first time, the eldest among them said we should give her one of the chickens to take to UK because she's not seen chicken before. They only see chickens on TV and what they eat in the house but live chicken, birds walking around they've not seen some before.

Victor's return was enabled by a deepening social capital he could now leverage at his base in Kumasi. Heading the branch of a private company that had set up in Kumasi, he had the rare opportunity to meet the overlord of the Ashanti Kingdom. He wondered how this could have been possible if he had not returned his mind to invest in a homeward future:

Exactly, exactly! I mean the very first time that I sat in a meeting with Otumfuo I was like how this could happen that I find myself in the presence of Otumfuo not just in his presence, but I shook his hands ok. And it was because I have gone to school, I have attained a certain level of position and customarily we wanted him to know that we have set up a company and it is in Kumasi; that was not the only time, after that I have had series of encounters with him because of my position.

Ivan was more philosophical arguing that the environment we grew up in endowed us with intelligence. Essentially, the growing-up process and the challenges, which Ivan described as a building-up process, adequately prepared us for life within Ghana; migrating out of this

environment was wasteful as you would have been alienated from a context in which these set of experiences were useful. He explained:

The idea then was I couldn't be here and become anything; until I went into the European system or the American system, I could never achieve my dream. If I even had the dream, the dream was supposed to materialise out there but then after so many years or so of being around you realise that you have developed a sense of dignity for yourself that you are an African, you were born here and for a purpose and that most of the things that you have grown up with here are supposed to make you who you are and then maybe your life is supposed to develop around that environment. All your childhood experiences are supposed to build you for this particular place for you to be able to overcome the challenges you are going to face in the future. And frankly, speaking of all those challenges you face as a child, they come to play in one way or the other in your life now. That you are able to overcome some things here because you have gone through some challenges before. I don't see how relevant those experiences will be out there. So all your childhood, all the difficulties that you had, even whether to call them difficulties, now I see them as a building up processes. That it was building you up for the environment that you are supposed to be in. So there was going to be a waste if you had gone out there; so now you are here you will benefit from all those experiences that you have been through just to make you a better person and to contribute to the society.

Put together, the socio-cultural enablers that emerge from greater community engagement, reinforce the aspiration to stay. In the United States, Myers (2000) introduces the concept of "location specific religious capital" to explain his finding that involvement in a religious community discourages migration over time. Irwin et al. (2004) argue that certain configurations of local community-oriented institutions foster a greater likelihood of staying: the presence of churches, local gathering places, and local businesses are all indicative of higher probabilities that individuals will remain where they are.

### 7.5.3 Social support

Social support, an external resource ensuing from our relationships, enhances our ability to cope with difficult work transitions (Harrison et al., 2019; Zikic & Klehe, 2006). Social support comprises the subthemes of interpersonal relationships, relationship with

network abroad and their feedback loop, successful local champions and peers as role models and family relationships.

#### 7.4.3.1 Interpersonal relationships

Cognitive return migrants' embeddedness in positive interpersonal relationships helped them deal with the traumatic sequelae of their visa failure that signaled the end of their migratory dreams. These interpersonal relationships soothed their pain and enabled their cognitive emplacement. Richie's girlfriend offered him succor and courage when he was bounced. As he put it:

My girlfriend at the time I was bounced gave me courage; she was the one talking to me and saying I should forget. She encouraged me that I should not think about the thing too much. I changed my mind that I won't travel again during Kufuor's time. I met one of my friends who knew I had done some computer training so he asked me to go and do some installation at ministries. So I went there and I did all the installation and as a result of that we won a contract and so from there I decided not to travel and then things started for me. I said no I was not travelling again because it was not my luck to travel. I didn't want to travel charley because the man removed the travel from my mind.

William's pastor and a female stranger who later became an acquaintance, a girl friend and a wife, were also very instrumental in William's ability to heal from the trauma of failure and cognitively emplacing. William explains:

I got over it when I met my new wife Adiza. I didn't know her at first, she used to pass by house often; anytime she passed by and I was sitting down quietly, she asked 'why are you always sitting down here quietly like that, why you have nowhere to go or no place to go?'. For months I didn't mind her; so one day she came to me, sat by my side and said 'today whether you like it or not you need to respond to me'. I told her about my experience and she said it is not the end of the road. So that's where I started to have confidence and she started telling me that I should be by myself, this was not the end of the road. With the help of my pastor, Rev Cosmos who counselled me about it that it was not the end of the road, and that he knew I could make it.

These interpersonal relationships also secure cognitive migrants jobs that contribute significantly to their cognitive emplacement. Beyond these, interpersonal relationships

also provide strategic career support. Bashiru recounts the instrumentality of a former school mate and a senior colleague at work in respect of this:

It was at this point that it affected me so much that my classmate suggested I went to work with her mother. She used to help me with food at the university. So it got to a time I was not picking her call and the few times I picked, I was evasive. She asked what was going on and I gathered the courage to brief her about the things I was doing but not succeeding. Then she said no in order not for this to result into some sadness that I couldn't manage, I should be working with the mother so that I could be a bit busy.... Nobody knows me at work but as for Aunty Jolinda she knows me quite a bit because she is elderly. I converse with her a lot; in addition I don't have HR background so she helps me a lot with understanding procurement because I have to procure some items. She's helped me to learn a lot of things.

#### 7.4.3.2 Relationship with networks abroad and their feedback loop

Relationship with network abroad and the feedback participants got from them facilitated their emplacement. Schewel's (2020) *repeal factors* – negative perceptions about the migration process and imagined destinations that diminished the aspiration to migrate – often gleaned from migrant networks (Mabogunje 1970), were crucial in the decision to stay. In the formation of prospective migrants' imagination, feedback from relations abroad as well as news about the happenings in the destination were very important constitutive elements (Sladkova 2007). While some narratives were positive, others were negative. For some prospective migrants, however, the resolution of this conflict was in favour of staying because these negative aspects of life in other places could dampen the allure of leaving (Sladkova 2007; Mata-Codesal 2015). Some cognitive return migrants anchored their decision to abandon their pursuit of an outward future orientation on information they received from their relations abroad. Besson:

There are even some people from Santaase<sup>19</sup> who traveled and have not been able to return. Some are even dead. As I speak to you, we are celebrating the 1 week of a family friend who died abroad. I can tell you about four people I know who travelled and did not return. When you look at the work they do, and also whenever you speak to them, they tell you they are stressed out. They say the weather isn't favourable and your job is not secure. So even though some are able to make some money, they also complain about a lot of issues. Some people don't

<sup>19</sup> Suburb of Kumasi the capital of the Ashanti Region of Ghana

get their papers early. So I used to wonder whether I will find myself in the same situation. People were illegally giving their papers to other people to use and that also came with its issues. In some cases, you may have to give part or all of your salary to the person whose papers you are using.

Some cognitive return migrants also vicariously learned from the experiences of return migrants. Capito's encounter with a friend's brother who returned after many years in the UK was enough repellent:

Just about two weeks ago, one of my friend's brother who has been in the UK for more than twenty years came down. When I saw him you could see he was a total waste for someone coming from the UK; they had to buy ticket for him to come back to Ghana.

Bashiru's conversations with his immigrant friends offered an extensive take on how the feedback loop worked:

Meanwhile, if you also listen to feedback from those who got the opportunity to go when you call them, they complain of not having legitimate papers. Even as we speak, there is a guy, Ebenezer, I attended two interviews with but for his last interview, he changed the destination country so he could go but up until now, he hasn't gotten his papers. While in Ghana, he was gainfully employed; he run his own big spot<sup>20</sup> and he was making money, now he says he has turned into a slave. In a conversation with relations abroad you could get a glimpse of what they're going through and in comparison, you would realise that we've gotten it easy in Ghana. Some call you and they will be lamenting "ei the weather is cold, my fingers have become frosty I can't open my gate, even my keys have fallen down and I can't feel it, the weather is cold, there is pressure here". I also tell them there is pressure everywhere. They will urge me to stop saying that because Ghana is good, Ghana is good. I will then say it is the same here in Ghana, something I have not heard before [laughter]. There is pressure here too, even in the work I do. "Bashiru stop, stop, stop, the White man doesn't even respect you". Then I'll say "it's everywhere just be patient, it will be well". "Bashiru, if I had my own way, I would come back to Ghana o but what am I coming to do?" They'll ask. The brother who brought me this phone that is what he says. He says "Bashiru, I work at Amazon, wealthiest person in the world but I want to come home; I have stayed in America for 20 years, I want to come back to Ghana but when I return, what I am coming to do? What am I coming to do Bashiru?" So I said "you can come with money and start business". Hmmm then he said "what if it doesn't work?" "That is your problem" I intimated, "do you know the number of people who have failed in Ghana?" Then he said, "Bashiru, if I use all this money in Ghana and it doesn't work out then I will be back to zero that is my problem". He flew back yester night. He called to inform [me] and I said God should grant him travelling mercies. Whilst preparing to return, he said "eei Bashiru whenever I come to Ghana and I'm going back it hurts me so bad". Then I said "I thought you were

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<sup>20</sup> A place where drinks, especially alcoholic drinks are sold and drunk

excited because at first I thought you were excited going back”. Not knowing it was a very painful experience for them. If I had gone abroad, I would have encountered the same problem arriving in Ghana and going back. He made me realise how painful the experience is. Last Saturday we went to buy smoked fish that he would be taking away. When we got to my house, I went to harvest fresh plantain and kontomire<sup>21</sup> and prepared it for the two of us. Then he said “Bashiru you’re eating fresh o, as for us by the time the plantain reaches us from Brazil (na etwetwam<sup>22</sup>). You could see that he would prefer Ghana to [life] abroad but what was he coming to do? He has no foundation here. “At least, Bashiru, I have built my foundation here in Ghana. What helped me to take my mind off abroad are many. Some of which are that Yaw (the one I have been referring to) gave me an example that someone has been abroad for so many years without securing his papers and has suffered stroke and is now back in Ghana. In some situations, you have to use your penis for your papers by marrying an African-American. Even now, this option is difficult because the African-American women have become wiser in that they demand a lot of money so if you do not have that money, your life would be miserable. When you go to work, there is no respect there. The Whites see you as nobody meanwhile he is a citizen of the US. He has bought a house there but still does not have freedom. Where he lives in Virginia, there is no single day you wouldn’t hear gunshots that have killed someone. Can you imagine, a country like this and you’re rushing?”

These repelling factors have not received much attention in theoretical explanation of immobility (Schewel, 2020). Repelling factors span social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions — ranging from the prospect of unemployment (Todaro, 1969) to the perceived moral deprivation of Western countries (Gardner, 1993) to the physical dangers and risks of the migration journey itself (Sladkova, 2007). Research on migrant networks tended to focus on how networks facilitated migration, influenced destination-selection, and perpetuated migration flows (Epstein & Gang, 2006; Epstein, 2008; Haug, 2008), but there was also evidence for “negative feedback mechanisms” (Faist, 2004; De Haas 2010). As Mabogunje (1970) stated in relation to rural-urban migration,

Migrants are never lost . . . to their village or origin but continue to send back information. If the information from a particular city dwells at length on the negative side of urban life, on the difficulties of getting jobs, of finding a place to live, and on the general hostility of people, the effect of this negative feedback will slow down further migration from the village. (p.12)

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<sup>21</sup> Kontomire is cocoyam leaves; it is used in preparing stew and very popular in Ghanaian cuisine.

<sup>22</sup> Twi word for withered

In recent decades, some governments and international organizations have attempted to amplify the weight of repel factors in potential migrants' decision-making by employing information campaigns that broadcast the dangers and difficulties of the (particularly irregular) migration process (Pe'coud 2010). However, their effectiveness has been contested; personal networks were often more credible sources of information about conditions elsewhere (Pe'coud, 2010; Browne, 2015).

#### 7.4.3.3 Successful local champions and peers as role models

Cognitive return migrants were also inspired by stories of successful local entrepreneurs. Looking up to these local champions helped transition their minds back to Ghana with the hope that if people stayed in Ghana and became successful, then they could emulate such pathway to success. In Bensson's words, "I realised there were locals who were working here and were comfortable. So I began to see things in a different light". In this regard, Capito named a well-known business man as an inspiration:

At times I hear people's stories like Despite, he is not well educated, he began by selling at Kantamanto but today look, he can employ a graduate, he can employ a master's holder who works under him and he pays them. So I think they are all inspiration.

For some cognitive return migrants, the realisation that their peers, those they sat in the same class with and were even better than academically, could do well in Ghana, enabled their cognitive return. Manu and Ivan described the sentiments of cognitive return migrants. Manu:

I read a lot and also listened to people who went through the same process. Some I can even say I was better than. Listening to their stories and seeing where they came from and where they have gotten to, encouraged me. All is not lost 'Massa ebe ye yie'<sup>23</sup>. That 'ebe ye yie' spirit is always keeping me too at times. There were some people that I saw when in school. They made it in Ghana, they didn't have that mindset of traveling and they did well in class academically, they excelled. And then they got work to do, they got better job to do here in Ghana and were able to make it. So I sat back and reorganised my thought.

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<sup>23</sup> "Everything is going to be ok". An optimistic outlook towards life

And Ivan continued:

I met a few guys who were doing well who have also come from the same course. I met people who were doing well and those times I was fascinated by the fact that you have finished school, a young engineer and you had a pick up. I went to school and then we had people coming from the mining environment who were mine supervisors and environmental managers at the mine coming around and as you conversed, you could see the money they were making in Ghana. Yes, actually getting to know that there were people here making it in life so to speak; they had not been outside, the only thing was maybe you didn't get to know that early. In fact, my mind about this abroad changed. We were doing our practicals on these environmental things and then we went to one of the mines to stay overnight and in fact I was surprised that Ghanaians were treated like expatriates there. It depended on where you found yourself and these guys were living good. Those times the Tarkwa, Takoradi boys they were living good. So, my dream was if I was able to land one of those jobs then charley forget about this abroad for now. So knowing that people here were making life and they had also gone through the same schooling system and had done the courses that I was thinking would not take you anywhere, (at least that was my perception and the reason I wanted to go abroad). And then going through this master's programme and knowing people who were doing very well then the narrative changed to everything is possible here. Yes, there people who had gone through the system we have gone through, done the course we have done and then they are making it. So these were the things that along the line shape your thinking and you sit back and you realise it is true.

#### 7.4.3.4 Family support

Social support also came through directly from family. Key actors in the family whose support was crucial included parents, wives and siblings. Nevertheless, not all family support were without problems as already noted in the previous chapter. When Akyeamong discussed his decision to disengage from pursuing his future in America, he had the blessing of his parents. As he put it:

When I told my family I was no longer going to pursue that American dream again they also understood, they did not give me pressure to still continue as others are told to do. So they supported whatever I wanted to do and that gave me encouragement to move on.

Victor's parents were equally supportive of his decision-making process:

I have had tremendous support from my family. I remember when I was doing pupil teaching, my mum and dad called me sometime and said well we know it's been difficult, you have struggled all this time to travel abroad but it is not working, we also realised that while we go to church and you teach in Sunday school, we have seen that you have very strong teaching skills so why wouldn't you go to training college and come and be a professional teacher? I actually told them well I see teaching as a gift, as my talent but I am not sure I want to use that

as a profession and they said well fine you decide what you want to do. Ok, so my parents have been very supportive, they haven't been like some parents who would always want to put you in a straight jacket and say do as they wanted you to do you know but they gave us the free range to do what we thought we could do. Yes, so I would say they were kind of very supportive, they didn't give up so easily, they decided to help me to the best of their abilities and I think they did right.

Marriage and children were critical enablers of the cognitive emplacement of participants.

The stability they required at the most turbulent period in their migration pursuit was provided by their wives and children. According to Jacob, the wife was supportive "I would say that the first support was from my wife because when I arrived that night, she was the first to meet me". In respect of Akyeampong, being married and having children enabled him to return his mind to Ghana:

Looking at finding a wife and making children, if I had been abroad I wouldn't have found my wife now (laughs) so that has been a blessing. (Clears throat) I learnt this as I was growing up, to be honest it is very difficult to take those hard decisions in Ghana, we always want the easy ones. For example after national service I decided to marry, it wasn't easy; I had no job even I had no room (laughs) but I decided to marry and that decision to marry and stay married made me to take hard decisions, made me to work extra hard and to look for opportunities but I believe if I had not gotten married then I would have lived that single life like when it comes I take if it doesn't, I stay. That decision pushed me to do things that I could not imagine because I knew definitely I will have a child, I will have a wife, I will have bills and it will not be right running to my parents for money to pay for my child's school fees or those things.

#### **7.5.4 Posttraumatic growth**

The theme captures participants' realisation that their negative experience has resulted in something positive. This theme comprised participants' acknowledgement of the role of God in their experiences, consciousness that rejects travelling abroad and the development of insight that results in re-writing the narrative of self and place from worthlessness to worthiness. Posttraumatic growth "is the tendency on the part of some individuals to report important changes in perception of self, philosophy of life, and relationships with others in the aftermath of events that are considered traumatic in the extreme (Tedeschi, 1999, p. 321). Posttraumatic growth, as used here, comprised the

factors cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees identified as enabling them to cognitively return.

#### 7.4.4.1 The God factor

Most participants attributed their turnaround circumstances to God. Thus transcending the pain of their botched migratory aspiration would not have been possible but for God who intervened. According to participants, their reliance on God enabled their cognitive emplacement. Although the entire experience of failing their migratory ambition was traumatic, their reliance on God turned what could have been a miserable situation into a good one. They therefore did not regret returning their mind from abroad and investing in a homeward future. Kwadwo was sure that the God he knew had come through for him:

When I encounter something that will worry me too much, I just go to my closet and tell God to help me quickly. Others who don't know what I know that when you come to that crunch, I have to turn to God and talk to Him and when it happens like that He always listens to me to be honest with you. Oh to be honest with you it does not matter how bad the situation is, I'll leave it to God. Once I pray that prayer, I know that something will happen. So that's what has saved me. So the God factor, I don't joke with it.

For Regina, the grace of God helped her put her life back on track after being bounced twice. She sought God's plan for her life and through that was able to weather the storm and return her mind to the classroom as a teacher because she found that to be the purpose of God for her and not travelling abroad. In her words:

So little by little by the grace of God as the days went by and as we say time heals wounds so I was able to gather from the pieces and get back on track and started working till recently when I tried again. When things happen one, what is God's purpose for me in this situation; if you are able to ascertain God's plan for you regarding the situation you would relax when things don't turn out because you know God's purpose for you. Please do you understand? I made up my mind to get back to my classroom and my classroom work and do it well. If I am able to do it well and take good care of people's children, and I teach them well; other people have done it, some are directors of education, some are ministers of education and I can become one of them in the near future.

God saw Peter through the most difficult time of his life. Having failed three times to secure a visa, he was also implicated in a robbery incident that got him remanded in prison custody for almost a year. Peter:

It was difficult but like I said the Lord saw me through. So that experience really helped me in that second episode. So such is life, sometimes we all need opportunity and I have learnt that we don't need to judge people by what we see, you never know even the strength that lies within you. Sometimes God uses these things to make us aware of the power and strength in us, how we can withstand certain things. Umm had it not been God I am sure I would have been dead because that experience was traumatic; the military men could have killed me.

Bensson travelled to Israel as a missionary where he was put in charge of Child

Evangelism:

God brought us here not by mistake, so he will surely see us through. Before my vacation in Israel, I made up my mind to pursue the word of God. So I was put in charge of child evangelism in Israel. I got to appreciate the fact that God is a God of restoration who makes things work. All you have to do is to focus. I realised God's work gave me encouragement. For someone as smart as me I didn't see why I should let this draw me back. I believed I could stay here and make it. When our friends who got the opportunity to travel return and they see how well we are doing, they get impressed. The word of God gave me hope that all was not lost. That was where I realised that it wasn't God's will for me to travel. It was possible things may not work out when I join her. So, considering all these things, I came to the realisation it's not the will of God for me to travel. Now, I have decided to settle down. I even got married. At a point I wasn't even interested in marriage. But I realised I had to focus and move on in life. So that gave me strength to settle and now I am married with kids. At that time, I realised I had backtracked. I wasn't working, I was home. It changed me a lot. Now, I have become somebody. I am doing more of church work. I am the evangelism coordinator in my church. I have also gotten a certain inner peace as compared to those times. If there is a scar, you have to undergo a surgery for it to disappear. But if you leave it as it is, it becomes a testimony. If it wasn't there, I won't be sitting with you now. Yes. If I was still hurting from what happened, I won't speak about it to anyone because I wouldn't want to bring back such painful memories. The fact that I have been able to speak to you about it means I have moved on. It all depends on what your priorities are. God put us where we are not by mistake. Upon thorough reflections and meditations, I realised God did not make a mistake by putting us in Ghana. Whichever boundary in which you find yourself is to fulfil God's purpose because God's purpose for us is good. So I can stay here and even do better than if I decide to travel outside the country. Later I came to understand that not everything in this country was made by the whites. There are better prospects for local people here than abroad. You don't know what the future holds, God could even make me a big time business man here. In church we are told that God took the Israelites to the Promised Land. I believe it was just to punish them. Despite all the things people had told me about the stress and unfavourable weather, I still wanted to go. Many a

time, people like us just want to experience certain things for ourselves. I knew I could stay in Ghana and make it, however, I still wanted to go. So that was it.

#### 7.4.4.2 Conscious awakening

The rupture of failure, as traumatic as some participants put it (cf: chapter 6), engendered a re-awakening process that rejected travelling abroad in favour of pursuing a homeward future. Failure thus, became a cathartic conduit, not only bringing time into sharp focus, but becoming an act of resistance, empowerment and agency (Palladino, 2018) to confront their displacement in placed or enforced immobility. Peter explained:

As for travelling I would say it has evaporated from me because I ask myself, 'ah if you travel what are you going to do?' Seek greener pastures as we call it but I believe if I work hard given the opportunity, I can make it and even make it big here. So we felt oh once I go to abroad and work and get money, I can come, build a house, buy a car, 'if anyone needs money I can help, I can help someone', the society will see you are contributing to helping society or 'you go to church and there is something going on, you can give money to support' or the society or your community or something but you don't need to go abroad. I have now come to realise you don't need to go abroad to do all that, you can still do that if you are here. I go to church, we do contributions to help Godly work, I contribute; I drive, I brought this car here, there is another one in the house.

#### 7.4.4.3 Re-writing the narrative of self and place

The development of insight enables the cognitive emplacement process, resulting in re-writing the story about self and place. For the cognitive return migrants, their before and after narrative about self and place support the fact that there has been some posttraumatic growth experience. Regina:

We have to stop that thing in Ghana; when we have plans to travel and live our lives like we are already there, we put all the hopes in travelling. The God abroad is the same God we have here so whatever He plans to do for you over there He can do same for you here. There are so many people who have made money here without going abroad.

#### 7.5.5 Self-regulation

As individuals regulate their behavior based on information received from their environment, goal establishment and planning require awareness of opportunity structures and barriers in the environment, of our personal and social limitations and resources for

handling these situations (Frese & Zapf, 1994; Zikic & Klehe, 2021). Self-regulation can be defined in various ways. In the most basic sense, it involves controlling one's behavior, emotions, and thoughts in the pursuit of long-term goals. More specifically, emotional self-regulation refers to the ability to manage disruptive emotions and impulses. Self-regulation as a theme comprised the subthemes of recognition and deployment of existing strength, the life course and personal attributes and work ethics. All these subthemes put together represent self-regulation that represents both personality and cognitive endowment that enabled the mind's return home or cognitive emplacement.

#### 7.5.5.1 Recognition and deployment of existing strength

Closely related to mindset that their future was possible in Ghana, was the recognition and deployment of existing strength cognitive return migrants had. Existing strength was deployed to further education, classroom work and farming. Victor remembered that he had always been a good student and that he could leverage this strength to continue his education:

I remember one thing that actually pushed me to going to the university was while I had taught for almost close to about 4 to 5 years, we were agitating for a pay rise, and the proprietress of the school had a meeting with us and she said if we wanted more pay we should produce big certificates for that, "you have to produce the corresponding certificate for what I can pay you". That actually pushed me, that actually pushed me and I said I am not dump, I can study so let me go and do the study, get the certificate and come and get the more pay.

As a trained teacher who had developed a lackluster attitude to her work, Regina had a renewed dedication to her classroom work:

I made up my mind to get back to my classroom and my classroom work and do it well. If I am able to do it well and take good care of people's children, and I teach them well; other people have done it, some are directors of education, some are ministers of education and I can become one of them in the near future.

### 7.5.5.2 Growing old and losing opportunities

The narratives also showed considerations for growing old and losing work opportunities in deciding to return their minds into a homeward future. The reality of persisting in their effort at travelling abroad overtime without success and losing out on some opportunities both at home and abroad because of aging, aided their cognitive emplacement. Matthew for example thought this way: “I felt I was growing up and I had to leave home to find a place of my own. I had to struggle to find a job at that time. So I began to teach in a private school”. Kwadwo too was perceptive of growing out of opportunities:

Don't forget that day-in-day-out, we're growing and time is going. If you don't get it and you don't sit to quickly realise and get the reality and set yourself here then it means that you will get behind because time will be moving and you see that your educational career what you have to get, the certificate you have to get to enable you have a job will be delaying and it will cost you.

Growing out of opportunities was not limited to education. Age requirement for some job opportunities abroad meant that if participants did not make a U-turn, their future would elude them by the time they succeeded in traveling abroad to pursue their dreams. Victor was concerned:

I felt if I had to keep trying and while I was getting bounced and stuff I would become an old man and probably not get to the university. I needed not to waste any more time because I felt at a point in time if I had the opportunity to go to America and had my education and decided to pursue my passion of becoming a soldier at the time, the likelihood there would be a clause that would put me beyond the age limit for recruitment would be high.

### 7.5.5.3 Personality

In challenging circumstances, people vary in respect of how they take control of their lives (Chen & Lim, 2012). Trait proactivity has been implicated in lifelong learning, initiation of changes and management of new opportunities (Brown et al., 2006; Seibert et al., 2001). Some cognitive return migrants exhibited proactivity, a personality variable involved in self-initiation and taking charge of one's life (Bhagat & London, 1999; Frieze

et al., 2006). In other words, participants who cognitively emplaced or returned were proactive, taking their destiny into their own hands. Victor's sociability and proactivity helped him secure a job:

I am the person who will want to you know, mingle with people, get to say a word or two or get to make new friends if I should say everywhere I got to so while we were conversing I just told the accountant there in that company that well I am a graduate and I am looking for a job and he said well, you can put in your application and I made it so serious so as soon as I got back home that day I put my cv together and then I sent it to them. I think the following day or two the owner of the company himself called my number and said well if you can come for an interview we will be waiting.

In addition to proactivity, some cognitive return migrants demonstrated the trait of conscientiousness. This personality trait reflects the tendency to be responsible, organised, hard-working, goal-directed, and to adhere to norms and rules. Bashiru's experience epitomised such tendency:

If you ask, she will tell you; I'm very punctual at work. When I was about to go on leave the accountant and the manager told me "ah Bashiru, you can't go on leave the way you're obsessed with work, can you stay at home?" I laughed saying to myself in my head that this work neither belongs to my mother nor father. But being a job that gives me money, I have to be committed to it. If I have to go home and rest, I have a lot to do. I have a lot to do in the house. Since I came on leave from the 25<sup>th</sup> I have not stepped my foot at the workplace. Auntie Jolinda is my witness. She once remarked "you've surprised people at work". "For what reason?" I enquired. My coming to work is because it is my work and I have to do it because I'm paid. If someone works for me and fails to deliver, I'll die with that person, I'll have issues with that person. So I won't say the work I do belongs to government and government does not know me because government is in Accra so I won't deliver. I work from the bottom of my heart knowing very well that because of this attitude, whatever I'm doing for myself shall prosper.

These enablers were context specific; they were available to both cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants. What set the two apart was the mind that facilitated their varying agentic maneuverings using these contextual factors that fed their imagination.

## 7.6 Comparing cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants

In this section, I compare the mindsets of cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants or immobility cognitive returnees to show the centrality of the mind in the

displacement and emplacement of prospective migrants. To highlight the transformative nature of the dis(em)placement process, I compare previous cognitive migrants (disembodied migrants) with those who have now become embodied cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees. Table 5 below, shows the then and now mindsets of previous cognitive migrants who are now cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees. The mindsets of Richie, William, Matthew, Manu and Ivan before return provide empirical support for the cognitive migration hypothesis. As their narratives show, their minds were not in Ghana; in other words, they were “mindless”. Their minds, as Koikkalainen and Kyle (2016) posited travelled ahead of them. They were completely disinvested in Ghana; everything they were involved in was to facilitate their eventual embodied migration to the imagined destination.

In contrast, when they made the “return journey” home in situ, their focus changed. Matthew for example, had to literally “go for his mind” after “fixing” it into images he was encoding from movies and pictures abroad, to be able to emplace and be reintegrated through his own agency and support he had from friends. The characterisation of their previous mindsets was revealing once they were finally emplaced. Victor and Ivan described their displaced thoughts as boyish and childish respectively. While Victor thought he was probably “following people” an experience most likely to be the case given the entrenched culture of migration he was embedded in, Ivan questioned the propriety of such thought and wondered how he could have conceived such thought.

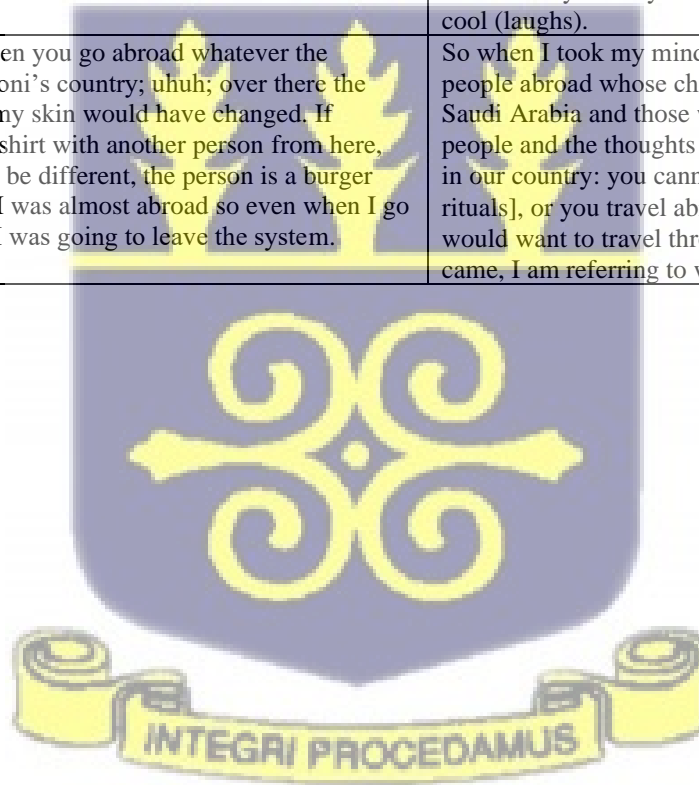
The invisibilisation of Victor, Ivan, Bashiru and the rest of cognitive return migrants whose phenomenology serve as the basis for the arguments in this thesis, have not been absent in migration canon only because of the corporeality bias earlier elucidated but also because of the pervasive marginalisation of Global South experiences by the hegemonic Western academy (Palladino, 2018; Palladino & Woolley, 2018). By highlighting the stories of cognitive return migrants, the study contributes to the movement to decolonised migration scholarship.

**Table 5: Within mindset changes**

	Cognitive migrant (displaced mind)	Cognitive return migrant (emplaced mind)
Kwadwo	Over here I'm burning I'm not having anything so if that one will facilitate for me to get there then the sky will be the limit	Later I realised that my thinking was fine but it wasn't based on any objective reality. This is because having admission did not guarantee funding. It's fantasy
Peter	'Me too I have a passport' It was quite a good feeling just going to fill forms; at the back of your mind 'charley burger was about coming to town'.	When I took the decision, I started convincing myself that I could make it here, I needed not go outside to make as the initial presumption was. So let me just focus on my academics and other important things; let's see how far God would take me
Richie	All my mind since I was a young man has focused on one thing: travelling to America; the word America was enough inspiration because I used to watch a lot of American movies; seeing their hairdo and the way they dress	So you see, the mind, at that time you couldn't tell me anything to change my mind because I wanted to go outside and make it
William	Yes my mind, my soul, everything was there; I was just waiting to board the plane and be there	I decided not to venture into that thing
Bashiru	As for traveling abroad, in fact, it was like I was here but my mind wasn't here. My mind was abroad, it was my body that was in Ghana. During the run up to the 2016 elections, I told my aunty that fire should engulf Ghana so we all become refugees and leave Ghana. The should be outbreak of war in Ghana so that we can all flee Ghana on the grounds of being refugees so we can settle in someone else's country because I didn't have hope.	When the thought of traveling to abroad was strong, I thought one was worthless, if he did not travel to abroad. But today, when you attack Ghana, you attacked me. I'm building, I'm building. Presently, if someone tells me there are no jobs in Ghana, I look at that person quietly and says "you don't have vision". No job in Ghana, who should create these jobs? Today, today if we are told NLA has collapsed, in fact Aunty May always tells me that I'm wasting my time in NLA.
Victor	I thought that you had to travel to be successful and even amongst all the other countries I felt that it was America that you had to go to be very successful in anything you want to be.	I think that I was being boyish at the time, probably following people and they the idea they had about travelling
Bensson	During that period, I had started making plans to leave every job I was doing, because I had made up my mind that I wasn't going to return.	But it's past, I have moved on. I don't have to dwell in the past otherwise I cannot move on in life. That's the more reason why I had to refocus.
Matthew	When I was preparing, my mind wasn't here at all, let me be frank. I thought once the school has accepted you nothing was going to stop those at the embassy from giving you the visa. So let me just say when I even submitted my documents, all I knew was that it was left with my ticket. I was reflecting on how the place was, how I would even sit in class probably with my colleagues, how the environment there would be like. That was what I was thinking about. From pictures I see to movies I watch...fixing yourself into these images was what was going through my mind.	So, I had to go for my mind. I needed to bring my mind back here. Let me just say It was tedious because you have seen yourself at a certain height and now you are no more there. You need to reorganize yourself
Manu	All my mind was in the UK (repeats twice) so I didn't even take my studies seriously.	Now I will never rely on this kind of so called 'aburokyire'. You can have a future here, I do not need to waste my time elsewhere. If the opportunity comes for me to go do something and then come back, fine but then to go there and depend on solely on 'aburokyire' for my future, no because my mind now is in Ghana. You can make it in Ghana, there is no need to waste that time over there unlike what I thought earlier. I told myself that 'Masa' enough, is enough so I changed that perception and I am no more

		wasting my time on that I will stay in Ghana. And from that day till now I have been through that decision I am moving on in life.
Ivan	In fact I was so bent on going outside that there was nothing else I wanted to do. I will say I didn't even have up to 80 percent here, my mind was abroad in fact majority of it, 80 percent plus of it was abroad because I saw like everything is possible abroad. So I was here but my mind wasn't in this country. All idea about life was so myopic that it is like either abroad or I am dead. I didn't see myself here and I thought I will be going soon. In fact I didn't even have a reason to even think I should be given the visa yet just the fact that I wanted to go blinded me	It was childish then, I look back and it was childish because after all what was it. My perception about abroad started fading away that was when my mind changed that you could still be here and be doing well. When I look back on those days and what my thoughts were at times I just laugh it over that how could anybody think that way? We may be condemning too much than we should. So those are the ideas that now run through my mind that no it is not like you thought; at times you even feel shy discussing what you thought those times.
Capito	So I went to the embassy as a young boy thinking that my life had just began because I was going to the US and I had my ticket and I knew definitely they will give me the visa so I just had to book my date. I knew the US was a place that if I arrived I will be ok so I did not want anything from Ghana.	I needed to psyche your mind that whatever worse thing has already happened. I don't know but what I see is that wherever you are if you want to succeed you can succeed. You just have to focus.
Anane	Because we were eager to travel at all costs, we turned a deaf ear to all these things. You are so gullible you will believe anything someone tells you. When your friend tells you there is an opportunity to travel, you become so fired up you fail to consider some of these things. If there was an opportunity to travel and the person assisting you demanded GHC 5000 and you had 10,000 you would ignorantly pay the money without hesitation without thinking of the effect.	People come to their senses after they have experienced all these things. You come to your senses after you have experienced the things you were advised could happen to you. If someone tells me he can help me travel abroad, I will ask all the necessary questions about how he hopes to do that. I will only believe when I do my due diligence to ascertain whether it is genuine or not. Remember when you called me I asked you how you got my number. I very careful now because I have gone through that experience and I wouldn't make that mistake again. You cannot make the same mistake repeatedly.
Nakie	Hmm you see that when you get to know that you are going to travel there is kind of joy that feel within that after all you are also going to ravel; your friends will see you have changed and all that No, it didn't even occur to me that I would be denied because mostly when you are given an invitation and you go definitely you know you they will give you the visa because you hear stories of people who were given invitations and were given the visa for six months or one year or multiple visa.	But I don't have it in mind to travel, to go and look for greener pastures, no, not at all.
Akyeampong	So I wish I will be there to go through their sports like the football, the basketball, and those things; so I always dreamt of it. So I had these things in my mind. So when I realized that it will not happen I was very hurt.	It is about doing all I can to grow my family, my kids; even become more that I am and looking for opportunities, growing my small business (laughs) so I can take care of everything But what I want to say is when you get the opportunity to travel, fair enough but when you are struggling, when you are not getting it like my situation I think you have to sit down, plan our live, set goals. I know sometimes we say that Ghana we don't have a lot of resources or it is not easy but I believe if we set goals, plan our lives, look for opportunities even the smallest as it may be just take them and as you work on it, as we plan our lives do the little, little things we can build a good future for ourselves. We should not, one thing we should not build our lives around politics All laugh Most of the youth like myself that's what they do, they build their lives around politics but you should try and make things for ourselves, we should plan, we should look for opportunities; there

		are a lot of opportunities in Ghana so when you get the smallest of them work on it and it will become beneficial as you move along.
John	My mind was that I was going to go to the UK and Mr. Adu had promised me he was going to help me come to the UK. So my mind was full of I wanted to travel. 'I am coming there, I am coming to the UK, UK here I come, be waiting for me, wait for me'. <sup>24</sup>	So when this thing did not come through, I shifted the thought because I had the opportunity to work in [company A] so now it was oh if you work in [company A] why don't you build your life and those things. I can tell you I have not regretted anything. So just like I said, if I look back I have not regretted. Sometimes man want to travel, we talk about it but not to travel in a way, to stay there, live there. I am not that... maybe some holidays but travelling is out of my mind and time. I am gainfully employed, I love the company that I work for; besides, with friends I have made, the church I attend, some roles I play in the church and all these things, is what has made me to reconsider years back not to travel again but stay here. And like I said a word that I have heard from my spiritual father that you can make it here, who told you that you can't make it in Ghana but it is only when you travel that you can make it. And even though I need more but I am cool (laughs).
Regina	I was so desperate because I had heard that when you go abroad whatever the situation you can make it. I wanted Akwasi Broni's country; uhuh; over there the place is nice so by the time I even come back my skin would have changed. If someone from the UK wears the same kind of shirt with another person from here, the skin tone of the person from the UK would be different, the person is a burger but the other is a Ghana burger. I was abroad; I was almost abroad so even when I go to the classroom I don't write because I knew I was going to leave the system.	So when I took my mind off that and I worked hard and also trusted in God... There are people abroad whose children cannot study petroleum engineering.... You see that in Saudi Arabia and those who go through the desert and all that it is that urge that takes over people and the thoughts that nothing can be achieved here in Ghana. There are two things in our country: you cannot make it unless you are involved in sakawa <sup>25</sup> , [money from rituals], or you travel abroad. If we are able to take these things out of our minds, no one would want to travel through the desert to Europe. So when I am talking about when I came, I am referring to when I came back to my normal being.



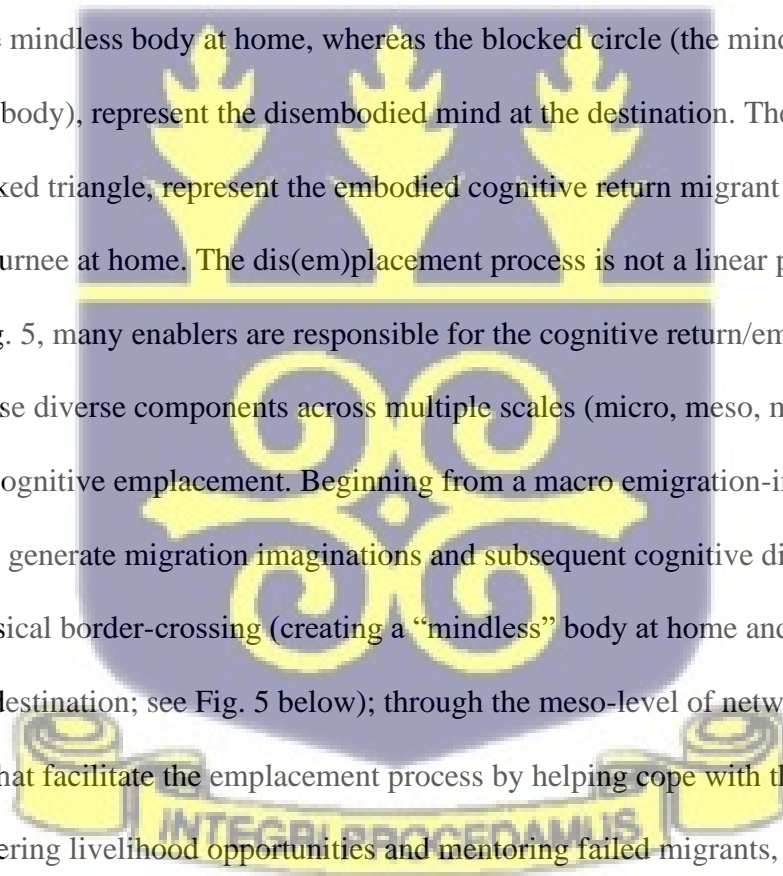
<sup>24</sup> Name for the Whiteman

<sup>25</sup> Name for internet fraud

### 7.7 Conceptualising the cognitive dis(em)placement process

Cognitive dis(em)placement occurs when the mind first travels (or is displaced) ahead of the body to the imagined destination and is subsequently brought back (or is emplaced) home after embodied migration fails. Embodied migration is when the body successfully crosses a geopolitical border to unite with the mind at the imagined destination. The failure (i.e. visa bouncing, promisor not honouring a promise) signals an imaginative rupture resulting in premigration trauma, loss of time and money and beginning the return process. As already noted in chapter six, failure becomes a turning point that starts the cognitive journey back home.

In Fig 5 below, the empty circle (the mind) and the blocked triangle (the body) represent the mindless body at home, whereas the blocked circle (the mind) and empty triangle (the body), represent the disembodied mind at the destination. The blocked circle and the blocked triangle, represent the embodied cognitive return migrant or immobile cognitive returnee at home. The dis(em)placement process is not a linear process. As shown in Fig. 5, many enablers are responsible for the cognitive return/emplacement process. These diverse components across multiple scales (micro, meso, macro), interact to generate cognitive emplacement. Beginning from a macro emigration-immigration contexts that generate migration imaginations and subsequent cognitive displacement, yet refuse a physical border-crossing (creating a “mindless” body at home and a disembodied mind at the destination; see Fig. 5 below); through the meso-level of networks at home and abroad that facilitate the emplacement process by helping cope with the trauma of failure, brokering livelihood opportunities and mentoring failed migrants, to cognitive return migrants’ biographical experience of bouncing and how individual agency helps in leveraging opportunities that the rupture of failure opens up. The enablers of cognitive



return or emplacement “overlap with and feed into one another, interacting in an open-ended, recursive, and synergistic fashion” (Emirbayer & Mische, 2002, p. 988).

The rupture of failure results in a decomposition of imagination that helps to heal the brokenness of the mind (i.e. displaced mind) caused by the external powerful imagination of life abroad. In Table 5 above, Regina describes migration imagination as “urge that takes over people and the thoughts that nothing can be achieved here in Ghana”. According Dzokoto (2020), external agents and mediums can influence the Akan mind due to its porosity: “the porous nature of *adwen*<sup>26</sup> allows not only for minds to act on the world, but also for forces and influences external to the self to seep into and influence (and in some cases take over) the *adwen*” (p. 84). The process of healing involves a re-composition of imagination through “subjective and/or narrative reconstruction of the self through self-interpretive activity during critical life transitions (Cohler, 1982 cited in Emirbayer & Mische, 2002, p. 1010). This self-reflective and reconstructive process is facilitated by posttraumatic growth processes.

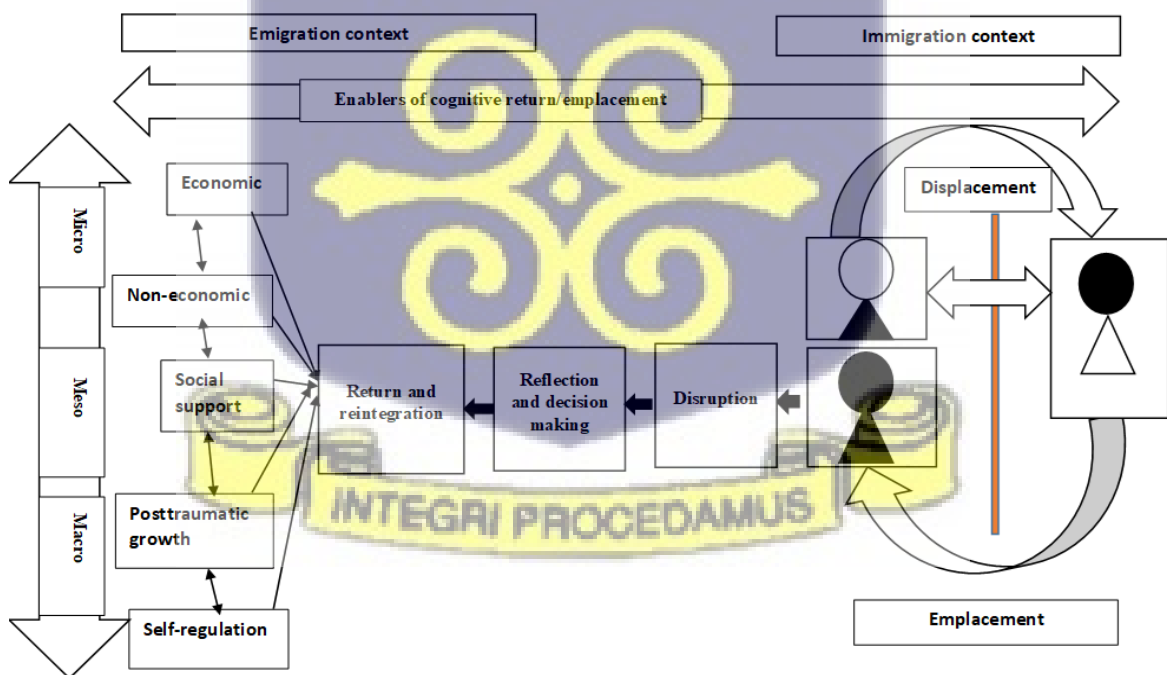
With the exception of posttraumatic growth that results from the body’s failure to travel abroad, all the other enablers are existing contextual factors that cognitive return migrants, in their earlier state as cognitive migrants, perceive as not conducive to the pursuit of a homeward future. This starts the whole cognitive displacement process giving birth to the cognitive migrant (see chapter 5). For example, Bashiru refuses to attend a scheduled job interview for fear of securing the job and this eventually, interfering with his travel plans. Bensson and Regina adopt a lackadaisical attitude towards their jobs because of their migration imaginations. Again, there is no appreciation of existing strengths. Participants access social support to facilitate the realisation of migration imaginations. In the wake of failure however, they interpret all these enablers in a way that

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<sup>26</sup> Akan word for the mind

ensure cognitive return/emplacement. Thus, the rupture of failure and the ensuing “healing”, reconnects the mind to the context of its formation and becomes embodied in the process. In other words, the mind resumes its “to do” and “pragmatic” quality and evaluates existing constraints positively. Thus, cognitive return migrants subject “their own agentic orientations to imaginative recomposition and critical judgment” and thereby “loosen themselves from past patterns of interaction and reframe their relationships to existing constraints” (Emirbayer & Mische, 2002, p.1010). Ricoeur (1970) suggests that this process is projective and compares it to how “temporal orientations are intermingled (and undergo changes) in the course of therapeutic processes” (cited in Emirbayer & Mische, 2002, p. 1010). This process also resonates with the notion of “cognitive liberation” in the social movement literature (McAdam, 1982). The concept of cognitive return or emplacement extends the concept of cognitive migration and the cognitive migrant Koikkalainen and Kyle (2016) and imagined mobility (Zittoun, 2020).

**Figure 4: Cognitive return/emplacement model**



Source: Author’s construct (2021)

### 7.8 Cognitive return migrant or immobile cognitive returnee: A new immobility category?

The migration decision-making process, results in varied (im)mobility outcomes. Thus far, I identify five (5) immobility categories. The first is the voluntary immobility or stayers (Carling & Schewel, 2018; de Haas, 2021; Haas, 2008, 2013; Mata-Codesal, 2015, 2017; Schewel, 2015, 2019; Setrana, 2021); the second is involuntary immobility (Carling, 2002; Carling & Schewel, 2018; Lubkemann, 2008); the third acquiescent immobility (Carling & Schewel, 2018; Schewel, 2015, 2019); the fourth is voluntary return immobility (Setrana, 2021; Setrana & Tonah, 2014) and the fifth is involuntary return immobility (Kleist, 2016).

The acquiescently immobile never desires or imagines, nor has the resources to pursue a migratory dream. On the other hand, the voluntary immobile has the resources but not the desire and therefore decides to stay. Thus, staying is preferable to moving. The involuntary immobile has desire and aspiration but no ability or capability. So the question is, where does the involuntary immobile return to in the event of migration failure? I submit that they return to an agentic immobility unlike any of the previously identified immobility categories. It is my contention that the involuntary immobile in the event of failure can either continue to pursue an outward future or revert to a homeward future. Choosing the latter means that they sublimate their aspiration/desire into a homeward future. This operation though a mental process, embeds the material culture of the cognitive migrant. It is not an absent-minded exercise; it is an embodied process. Carling and Schewel (2018) surmise that the involuntary immobile returns to an acquiescently immobile state that enhances their wellbeing. Given the definition of the acquiescently immobile category by Schewel (2015, 2020), the involuntarily

immobile, cannot transition into a state where there has never been aspiration to travel. I argue that the involuntarily immobile returns to a new immobility category, cognitive return immobility or immobility cognitive return that requires delineation. This immobility category produces the cognitive return migrant or the immobile cognitive returnee. This category is invested with desire, which according to Collins (2018) is a social force that propels; in other words, they possess what Appadurai (2004, p. 76) describes as the “capacity to aspire” which is ability to read ‘a map of a journey into the future’. They are imbued with imagination that drives their social becoming. The envisioning of a better future is no longer tied to a particular place, unlike before but neither is it placeless. It is now tied to a welcoming setting. After all aboard no didi kɔ deɛ n’asom bedwo no to wit every animal eats where it is free from disturbance. This means, we cannot thrive if we are constantly disturbed.

## 7.9 Conclusion

The chapter clarified how cognitive return migrants emplace their minds home to invest in a homeward future. Firstly, I elucidated the turning point(s) in the wake of failure, that began the process to return the mind home. A turning point could be a single factor (i.e. failing once), occurring at a single point in time, or multiple turning points occurring at multiple times culminating a grand turning point, salient enough to begin an emplacement process (i.e. failing many times, losing money and securing employment). Secondly, the chapter discussed cognitive return migrant’s notion of wellbeing, which to them, was the outcome of their returned and reintegrated life. Thirdly, I have outlined and clarified the factors that enabled the return or emplacement process. These factors, namely economic, socio-cultural, social support, posttraumatic growth and self-regulation,

work together to facilitate the mind's journey back home. Fourthly, the chapter explained the emplacement process and consequent to that, delineated the cognitive return migrant or immobile cognitive returnee as a new immobility category.

Turning point in a context of spatial constancy sounds contradictory. Turning point connotes movement; this movement however, is not physical, but cognitive, imagined or semiotic (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016; Womersley, 2020; Zittoun, 2020; Zittoun et al., 2020). The turning point represents reconfiguration of migration aspiration within the context of physical mobility (Boccagni, 2017; Wang & Collins, 2020). In addition, I argue in this chapter that the process of potential migrants reconfiguring their migrations imaginations homeward is spatio-temporal-cognitive occurring within a context. This ensures that even in the context of spatial fixity, there is temporal flow. This is an extension of Boccagni's (2017) and Wang and Collins' (2020) migration aspirations and temporality nexus both situated in varied geopolitical settings.

The phenomenon of cognitive dis(em)placement, I describe here, helps to delimit a new immobility category. I identify five (5) immobility categories in the migration literature as follows

1. Voluntary immobility (Carling, 2002; Mata-codesal, 2017; Mata-Codesal, 2015; Schewel, 2015, 2019);
2. Involuntary immobility (Carling, 2002; Lubkemann, 2008)
3. Acquiescent immobility (Carling & Schewel, 2018; Schewel, 2015, 2019);
4. Voluntary return immobility (Setrana, 2021; Setrana & Tonah, 2014)
5. Involuntary return immobility (deportation) (N Kleist, 2016)

Cognitive return immobility is unlike any of the above immobility categories.

Cognitive return migrants have a history of outward cognitive future orientation unlike the voluntarily immobile; although living in Ghana, they have a record of acculturating remotely to life abroad unlike the acquiescently immobile; they no longer have the inclination for an imagined life abroad like the involuntarily immobile whose cognitive orientation is still outward; they are unlike voluntarily return migrants with a history of embodying their migratory dream abroad but willingly deciding to return; and finally, they are unlike involuntarily return migrants with a background of “successfully” crossing a geographical boundary into their imagined destination.

In a cognitive return migrant, two strands of research – immobility and cognitive migration – come together. The cognitive return migrant category recognises both the physicality of failure that produces immobility and the cognitive that produces the displacement and eventual emplacement. While immobility researchers (Carling, 2002; Lubkemann, 2008; Schewel, 2019) do not focus on the cognitive, cognitive researchers (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016; Koikkalainen et al., 2018; Wormersely, 2020; Zittoun, 2020) do not emphasise the physicality of failure at home.

Contrary to how some scholars present imaginaries of would-be migrants in the West African sub-region (Vigh, 2006, 2009; Lucht, 2012; Conrad Ruso, 2020), where agentic maneuverings of potential migrants in a deprived socio-economic environment does not result in their social becoming both at home and abroad (i.e. after successfully regularly or irregularly crossing to the imagined destination), I present a narrative of hope, where failure transforms a hitherto hopeless and hapless lifeworld of a group of young men into an existentially optimistic and productive lifeworld. These men, who feel no connection to the world due to their past experience, now feel so much connection in situ.

Connecting to the world is no longer just having glimpses at its materiality or just being befuddled by its constructed static imaginaries, but a real embeddedness that makes the cognitive return migrant an actor.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 8.1 Introduction

The thesis' central question, "how do cognitive migrants bring their minds back to the country of origin to invest in a homeward future?" was occasioned by the conspicuous absence of cognitive return migrants in migration studies. Cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees were potential migrants who in the wake of their failed bid to travel abroad in search of greener pastures, resigned to a homeward future. In this chapter, the summary of the entire thesis, the findings and conclusions drawn from them and the recommendations for theory, practice and policy are presented.

#### 8.2 Summary

Through an extensive literature search on migration aspirations, desires, imagination and outcomes, I identified a number of both theoretical and empirical gaps. First, the theoretical gaps. The term *involuntary immobilization* (Carling, 2002; Lubkemann, 2008) captured the physicality of being displaced in place and not what was happening mentally to the involuntarily immobile. The fact that one could be physically immobile but mentally mobile was incongruous and had not been given much consideration in migration discourse. The few recent exceptions were concepts that collectively described the psychological processes people undertook when contemplating migration, imagining and visualising themselves in a future time and place (Cangià & Zittoun, 2020; Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2016; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016: 12; Kyle & Koikkalainen, 2011; Raitapuro & Bal, 2016; Salazar, 2020; Thompson, 2017; van der Velde and van Naerssen, 2011; Womersely, 2020). All aspects of migration decision-making process were affected by imaginations of the mind. However, not all these

imaginations were realised creating a situation where there were “many more cognitive migrants than actual migrants” (Kyle & Koikkalainen, 2011, p. 9).

The displacement brought about by this mental travel or cognitive migration created two bodily outcomes: disembodied mind at the destination and a “mindless” body at the origin. Some scholars (Koikkalainen et al. 2020; Womersely, 2020) worked with “actual” migrants who had moved with the hope of uniting mind and body and embodying their imaginations. There was no consideration of the reverse scenario; in the event of failed migration, no distinction was made between physical – the default understanding of migration – and cognitive migration. Theoretically, it was apparent that the age-long focus on the mind/body duality in migration studies, a bias I have designated as the corporeality bias had not only hampered the development of theory in migration studies, but had also invisibilised a category of migrants. I have contended that migration scholarship remained limited by the absence of cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees. This development, as I have argued, could be attributed to an epistemological pursuit that minimised the centrality of the mind in the imagination and execution of migration as a phenomenon, especially for would-be migrants who were not able to physically embody their migration aspiration.

To capture the lived experiences of cognitive and cognitive return migrants, I deferred to the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) as my methodological orientation due to my positionality as a clinical psychologist, who could not completely bracket off my interpretative lens. I have highlighted the fact that my geopolitical positioning as a citizen of the Global South might have contributed to identifying this category of migrants. My Global South citizenship obviously sensitized me to this phenomenon and endowed me with the requisite “optics” to see. By way of methods, I used the in-depth biographical interview and inspected of documents made available to

me at participants' own volition. Interviews were conducted in Ghana's two big cities – Accra and Kumasi – for two main reasons: 1) in respect of Accra, for its proximity to consular services of foreign missions in Ghana and for being the host of the only international airport in Ghana. Thus, for most regular international travels, Accra was the exit or departure point. 2) Kumasi was the heartland for the Akan ethnic group in Ghana and known for having a culture of migration. Pursuing the good life abroad featured strongly in the social imaginaries of people living in these two cities. In addition, these two cities had the necessary infrastructure to facilitate the realisation of participants' dream.

### **8.3 Findings and conclusions**

The question central to the thesis, “how do cognitive migrants bring back their mind to the country of origin to invest in a homeward future?” branches into many sub-questions. In this section, I present the questions investigated, the findings and conclusions drawn from them.

#### **8.3.1 Sending the mind abroad**

The thesis initially delineated the category cognitive migrant empirically and described three cognitive characteristics pertaining to them. It further clarified the process of becoming a cognitive migrant and explained how the thought of traveling abroad influenced the daily behaviour or dailiness of cognitive migrants. The study found empirical evidence for the phenomenon of cognitive migration and the cognitive migrant (Koikkalainen et al., 2020; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016). The study identified five (5) characteristics of the mindset of cognitive migrants. The mindset of cognitive migrants were found to be 1) displaced; 2) porous; 3) salvationist; 4) disembodied at the destination; and 5) hopeless and negative about place, what Boccagni (2017) calls entrenched cynicism.

Consistent with the literature, the study found support for cognitive migration as *voyage in situ* (Palladino, 2018, p. 81) that cognitively displaced the prospective (cognitive migrant) in place. It was a process driven by the ubiquitous access to online resources and new media (For all participants, their exposure to migratory thoughts came through the internet and network of friends and relations abroad) that enabled the development of geographical imaginaries of Europe or the imagination of new possible life courses (Appadurai, 1996). This remotely acculturated nations of the Global South or peripheral nations (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012). In this process, prospective migrants were turned into mobile subjects. Although they were still in the home country, their practices were equal to a displacement, as they tended to get those involved to project themselves elsewhere and as such, implied a real change of personal traits (Mescoli, 2014). For example, Kwadwo's enrollment in a German Language and Richie's participation in a dance rehearsals to acquire dancing skills to facilitate his visa acquisition as a "professional dancer". In agreement with Mescoli "mobility actually occurs, prompting us to reconsider the very definition of migration and migrant" (Mescoli, 2014, p. 301).

The thought of traveling abroad also influences the daily behaviour or dailiness of cognitive migrants. Prospectively and actively pursuing a migratory dream, starts a transformation process in situ. This transformation is evident in the way cognitive migrants talk, dress and carry themselves. They model their behaviour in the way of their imagination. This gives credence to the nexus between thought and action (Seligman, 2013; Mescoli, 2014). I, however, present a more nuanced position. I expand Zittoun's (2020) position that imagination unite thought and action by clarifying that this is true in the mobilisation of all efforts towards the realisation of migratory dreams. Nevertheless, in respect of homeward and outward future there is a split between thought and action due to the mind becoming disembodied at home.

### 8.3.2 The body failing to travel abroad

The phenomenology of failure and its implications for prospective migrants' mental wellbeing and aspirational reconfiguration are the next issue the thesis addresses. What motivates this undertaking is the minimal engagement with the cognitive dimensions of failure in recent studies (Sentra, 2021; Van der Meij et al. 2016). The study identifies two types of failure trajectories: bounced experience and unfulfilled promises (cf: section 6.3). The study finds four (4) narratives undergirding this understanding of failure and the four types of failure consciousness engendering it. First, the narratives of failure: 1) failure not as an end in itself; 2) failure as Devine orchestration; 3) failure as an outcome with both circumscribed and globalised or expansive impact and 4) failure as destiny. The four (4) types of failure consciousness are: internalised failure consciousness, extenalised failure consciousness, ambivalent failure consciousness and pragmatic failure consciousness.

The study has established the essence of cognitive migration as salience of imagination and not necessarily, the activities one indulges in. This departed from Mescoli (2014) who ascribed the ensuing subjectivity exclusively to the extensive preparation that prospective migrants engaged in. Secondly, from the narratives of participants, inability to travel to embody their migration imagination, was not just an ordinary failure but extreme failure with life-altering ramifications that undermined their psychological wellbeing for some time.

### 8.3.3 Returning the mind home

Finally, the thesis grappled with the concept of cognitive return or emplacement. The thesis' central question, "how do cognitive migrants bring their minds back to the country of origin to invest in a homeward future?" hinged on this. The inconceivability of this phenomenon in migration scholarship thus far, may be attributed to the corporeality bias that has congenitally, plagued the discipline for some time now. The concept

emplacement is not new to migration studies (Schiller & Çağlar, 2016; Vigh & Bjarnesen, 2016). Findings in relation to the cognitive return process included turning point(s), enablers and process of cognitive return or emplacement, the cognitive return migrant or immobile cognitive returnee category and the comparison between cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants.

The study argues that turning point(s) represent reconfiguration of migration imaginations. Previous studies, however investigate this using people who physically move to the imagined destination (Boccagni, 2017; Wang & Collins, 2020). The study finds that the process of failed potential migrants reconfiguring their imaginations homeward is spatial, temporal and cognitive. Thus, reconfiguring imagination homewards is spatio-temporal-cognitive process occurring within a sociocultural context. This ensures that even in the context of spatial fixity, there is temporal flow. This is an extension of Boccagni's (2017) and Wang and Collins' (2020) migration aspirations and temporality nexus both situated in varied geopolitical settings. The study also identifies five clusters of enablers: economic, socio-cultural, social support, posttraumatic growth and self-regulation that work in concert and at multiple ecological levels to drive the cognitive return or emplacement and reintegration process.

Conceptually, the study collapses two the concepts – aspiration and desire – into one construct, migration imagination, to enable the exploration of the homeward reconfiguration of failed migrants' imagination. The study uses Zittoun's (2020) sociocultural imagination model because of its reversibility quality of looping out from the proximal sphere to the distal sphere and looping back from the distal setting to the proximal setting of embodied experience. I extend the model to understand cognitive return as a dis(em)placement process. A number of analytical advantages accrue from taking this route. First, it helps clarify the process of cognitive return or emplacement.

In addition, it facilitates the conceptualisation of a new immobility category. The study argues that cognitive return migrants belong to a new immobility category, cognitive return immobility. The cognitive return migrant category, transcends the corporeality bias in migration studies and contributes to subverting the hegemonic Western narratives about migration and movement as progress by incorporating Global South experience into migration discourse.

#### 8.4 Conclusion

The thesis establishes the power of migratory thought; migratory thought or imagination displaces the mind and influences the daily lives of prospective migrants. Migration imagination is salient enough to engender cognitive displacement without feverish preparation. However, in the wake of migration failure, there is a disjuncture between mind and action that renders prospective migrants unproductive in the country of origin. Thus, so long as the desire to travel is unfulfilled, the migrant aspirant continues to be redundant at home until there is that conscious awakening that starts a cognitive return and reintegration process, resulting in an investment in a homeward future.

Failure to embody migration imagination eventuates in life-threatening outcomes that undermine psychological wellbeing; it further serves as a catalyst that instigates the mind's return home. This cognitive return process, extends migration from a spatio-temporal to a spatio-temporal-cognitive phenomenon by highlighting the primacy of the mind in migration decision-making. Most importantly, it introduces the concept of cognitive return migration as an extension of cognitive migration and problematises the current immobility categories by delineating the *cognitive return migrant* or the *immobile cognitive returnee* as a new immobility category.

## 8.5 Recommendations

The thesis question (i.e. how do cognitive migrants bring back their mind to invest in a homeward future?), its methodological positioning (i.e. the phenomenology of “failed” prospective migrants) and the findings generated have implications for migration theory, policy, practice and research.

### 8.5.1 Theory

It is my contention that the epistemological anchorage of migration studies must be expanded to include cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees. It is obvious from the findings of this study that migration studies must transcend the corporeality bias. The mind must be centred more forcefully by engaging the cognitive as recently put forward (Koikkalailen et al., 2016, 2018). Paul Tillich in 1937 also underscores the centrality of the mind in migration:

it is my intention to show that there is not simply an accidental but an essential relationship between mind and migration that mind in its very nature is migratory and that human mental creativity and man’s migrating power belong together. (p. 295)

Transcending the mind/body duality is crucial if the suggestion that migration should be conceived as an “intrinsic part of broader social processes of development, social transformation and globalisation” (Castles et al., 2014, p.51) is to be realised. Migration structures the lives of many who are currently invisible to Migration Studies. This ontological blindness in Migration Studies mainly affects people in the Global South whose narratives are excluded from the canon of the discipline due to the pervasiveness of hegemonic Western or Global North narratives in migration scholarship. The corpus of migration literature cannot be said to be complete, if it does not reflect lived migration experiences from the Global South. These experiences could be embodied at the destination to produce the default definition of migration and migrant. However, it could also be disembodied (displaced) as is the case of cognitive migration and cognitive

migrant on one hand, or re-embodied or emplaced, as demonstrated in the lives of cognitive return migrants.

The delineation of cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants, contributes to the cognitive turn in migration studies. It further problematises the spatio-temporal conceptualisation of migration that privileges the linearity and spatiality of movement. Spatial fixity does not encumber temporality; in other words in the context of spatial fixity time ticks and structures our lives. For cognitive return migrants, the ticking or flow of time is not in relation to their physical immobility but their cognitive mobility which displaces their mind to engage with institutional time (Wang & Collins, 2020) both at abroad and home, to enable their homeward emplacement. Institutional times refer to the “temporal dimensions of migrant lives defined and regulated by a set of historical and heteronomous factors, such as a period of political and economic change, migration policies or time-length of work contracts” (Wang & Collins, 2020, p.6).

The experience of Victor and Donald who wanted to join the US army and British army respectively, reckoned at a point that while time passed and they were still struggling to regularly travel to their imagined destination to fulfill their dreams, they would not make the age limit to be recruited, even if they eventually made it to their respective destinations. This impasse, yielded two outcomes, Victor quickly emplaced his mind in Ghana to further his education in order to reintegrate. Victor did not regret his emplacement and reintegration in Ghana. Donald, on the other hand, was at the time of the data collection, brooding over his failure with outward future cognitive orientation. Both have not physically moved out of Ghana but consequential to cognitive migration and return, their lives have been influenced by their migration imaginations. From the foregoing, migration could best be described as a spatio-temporal-cognitive phenomenon.

The study also theoretically contributes to bridging the gap between immobility and cognitive migration strands of research in Migration Studies. As currently, these two strands of research are proceeding in theoretical silos. Researchers working on the immobility strand (Carling, 2002; Lubkemann, 2008; Mata-codesal, 2015, 2017; Schewel, 2020; Setrana, 2021) do not forcefully highlight the cognitive. For example, the concept involuntary immobilisation (Carling, 2002; Lubkemann, 2008) captures the physicality of being displaced in place and not what happens mentally to the involuntarily immobile. On the other hand, scholars researching migration aspirations and imaginations who engage the mind in explicating how future thoughts transform would-be migrants into mobile subjects, to mentally travel across both emigration and immigration contexts (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016; Koikkalainen et al., 2018; Wormersely, 2020; Zittoun, 2020), fail to incorporate failed migration projects. They assume that all cognitive migrants will at a future date unite body and mind at the imagined destination.

Incorporating failure in situ into the cognitive understanding of migration and considering the cognitive in immobility or specifically, involuntary immobilisation, results in the achievement of a more unified understanding of migration. This unification also helps to delineate the cognitive return migrant or the immobile cognitive returnee whose reality contributes to the current understanding of return migration. What is so physical about “international” such that only those who physically move across borders are defined as international migrants? In an era where there is constriction of distance and intense interpenetration of cultures, evolving varied mobilities, I contend that potential migrants are only potential in terms of their physical geographies but in relation to their cognitive geographies, they are migrants, their minds having travelled back and forth their origin and destination countries many times.

Failure to account for the cognitive migrants in Migrations Studies, mirrored an age-long problem – Cartesian dualism – that plagued the psychological sciences for years. In concert with Merleau-Ponty (1971, p. 53) who reasoned that “psychology did not begin to develop until the day it gave up the distinction between mind and body), it must be argued that Migration Studies would suffer a similar fate, it transcended the mind-body duality so prevalent in many of its theories. Many iterations of migration theories did not recognise migration as a cognitive process without accompanying bodily process because of their fixation on mind-body distinction.

### 8.5.2 Policy

The process of migrant categorisation, deeply embedded in both social science and policy (Bakewell, 2008; Crawley & Skleparis, 2017), have been problematised for not being neutral. It was fraught with the subjectivities of people’s perception of others’ spatial positioning that directed how society dealt with them within varying milieus and temporalities (Crawley & Skleparis, 2017). It was a power tool, nonetheless that shaped the construction of our world. Different framing of migrant engendered different policy response (for details cf: Carling & Hernández-Carretero, 2011; Crawley & Skleparis, 2017; Dekker & Scholten, 2017;(Knoll & Weijer, 2016; Snow & Benford, 1992). Two narratives guided the policy implication of the research: 1) the migrant as a securitised other and 2) the migrant as a criminalised, helpless, victimised other in need of help, protection and rehabilitation.

The above two narratives pathologise the migrant; especially migrants from the Global South. The cognitive return migrant or immobile cognitive returnee disrupts this condescending narratives pathologising non-movement and securitising movement at the same time. There is the need for a home-grown policy that celebrates and popularises the stories of cognitive migrants and cognitive return migrants. Celebrating and popularising

cognitive return migrants or immobile cognitive returnees, means making them visible in national statistics. Knowing the number of people in a particular country that imagine, pursue their migration imagination but fail, yet return their minds to invest in a homeward future, helps us to appreciate the extent to which migration broadly shapes social and developmental processes.

Secondly, to be able to address the root causes of migration as envisaged by the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals that calls for “orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people”, the global community cannot abandon those who face the harsh, agonising realities of visa bouncing to their fate. This is important given the link between failing a regular migration project and resort to irregular, more risky and clandestine journeys to the imagined destinations in the Global North. Subsequently, the investment being made to stop migration at the root must be channeled into developing the cognitive return or emplacement as an alternative model to information campaign that has been found to be ineffective.

### 8.5.3 Practice

I see the near absence of mental health response at the pre-migration phase of the migration decision-making process in relation to those who fail in situ, as a failure of migration praxis. Currently migration praxis focuses mainly on the post migration phase and concerns itself with making migration journeys safe and ensuring positive acculturation. Specifically, interests centre on arrival and adaptation of immigrants, spawning the whole field of acculturation psychology (Sam & Berry, 2010); refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Chen et al., 2017; Dowling et al., 2019); involuntary return and the precarity of migration journeys across the Sahara and the Mediterranean and the Caravan into US from Latin America (Keller et al., 2017; Nickerson et al., 2017;

Zbidat et al., 2020). There is heavy investment in addressing the “damage” to the mind at this point. Cognitive return migrants highlight the need for immediate psychosocial support to help them deal with mental health consequences resulting from the failure to travel abroad. The findings of this study have implications for providing psychosocial support for cognitive migrants. Now that we know about the possibility of cognitive emplacement, as well as some of its enablers, we have some psycho-education material that can be used in cognitive restructuring intervention for cognitive migrants in the immediate aftermath of failing their migration dreams. I demonstrate how this will work in a dialogue with one of my supervisors (see Appendix VI).

#### 8.5.4 Future studies

Consistent with the literature on women and migration, it was difficult to find women who were willing to share their experience of cognitive return migration. In all, three women participated in the study; two of them were cognitive return migrants and the other, a cognitive migrant. Future studies must endeavor to sample more women in order to explore the power dynamics between left-behind wives and their husbands abroad. This is because the cognitive migrant appears to be a cognitive migrant under “compulsion”; but for marriage, she would have preferred becoming a cognitive return migrant or immobile cognitive returnee to pursue a homeward future.

Moreover, future studies must endeavour to address the limitation of memory lapses by recruiting participants with both proximal and distal temporal experiences of migration failure in situ. Being able to triangulate the temporalities of failure, will help capture the extent to which migration could be considered traumatic. Future studies must equally strive to improve on the methodological design for studying failure in situ. A mixed method design would enable the estimation of both time and money lost using some econometric models without losing the phenomenology of the experience.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Ethical Clearance



**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**  
**ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES (ECH)**

Ref. No.: .....

Adolf Awuku Bekoe  
Centre for Migration studies  
University of Ghana  
Legon

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE**  
**(ECH 010/ 19-20)**

November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

On October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019 the University of Ghana – Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH) at a full committee meeting reviewed and approved your protocol as follows:

TITLE OF PROTOCOL: **IDENTITIES AND WELLBEING OF YOUNG COGNITIVE  
MIGRANTS IN GHANA**

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR: **ADOLF AWUKU BEKOE**

Please note that the final review report must be submitted to the Committee at the completion of the study. Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation. Any modification of this research project must be submitted to ECH for review and approval prior to implementation.

Please report all serious adverse events related to this study to ECH within seven (7) days verbally and in writing within fourteen (14) days.

This certificate is valid till 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020. You are to submit annual reports for continuing review.

Please accept my congratulations.

Yours Sincerely,

**Professor C. Charles Mate-Kole.**  
**ECH Chair**

Cc: Prof. Akosua Keseboa Darkwa, UG.  
Prof. David Lackland Sam, UG.



COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

## Appendix II: Interview Guide

My name is Adolf Awuku Bekoe, a student from the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) University of Ghana. Thank you very much for accepting to talk to me about your life. As explained to you earlier before this recording, all information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality and every quotation used for the purposes of writing will be anonymized. In other words, anybody reading will not be able to identify or associate any detail with you.

1. Can you please tell me about yourself? Highlighting key developments since you were born?

- Probe for the following socio-demographic details when they don't come out from the self-narration: Age, Educational level, Religion, Occupation, Marital Status, Family Background (including family migration history)

Interviewees were asked to talk about:

1. Key events in their life starting from when they were born
2. Education
3. When they started earning
4. Significant turning points
5. Probe significant decision to identify who made decision and why and to understand the factors enabling and driving life choices
6. Significant life events before contemplating migration and after abandoning the migration dream

2. How did you develop the interest to travel abroad to make a living?

- Why did you want to travel?

3. Can you please describe your future in the immediate aftermath of your inability to migrate abroad?

4. How did you overcome the strong urge to pursue your future abroad and chose to settle in Ghana?

5. What keeps you going in life?

- Probe: Are there songs, proverbs, folktales, religious practices that come to mind?

6. Looking back from when you started thinking about going abroad and now would you say you have changed?

- Can you please describe this change?
- How did this change come about?

7. Initially when you thought about traveling abroad how did you feel? And now that you have not succeeded in leaving the country how do you feel?

- What thoughts run through your mind as you think about not being able to travel?
- And how does that make you feel about your future?



Appendix III: Announcement

# **RESEARCH! RESEARCH!! RESEARCH!!!**

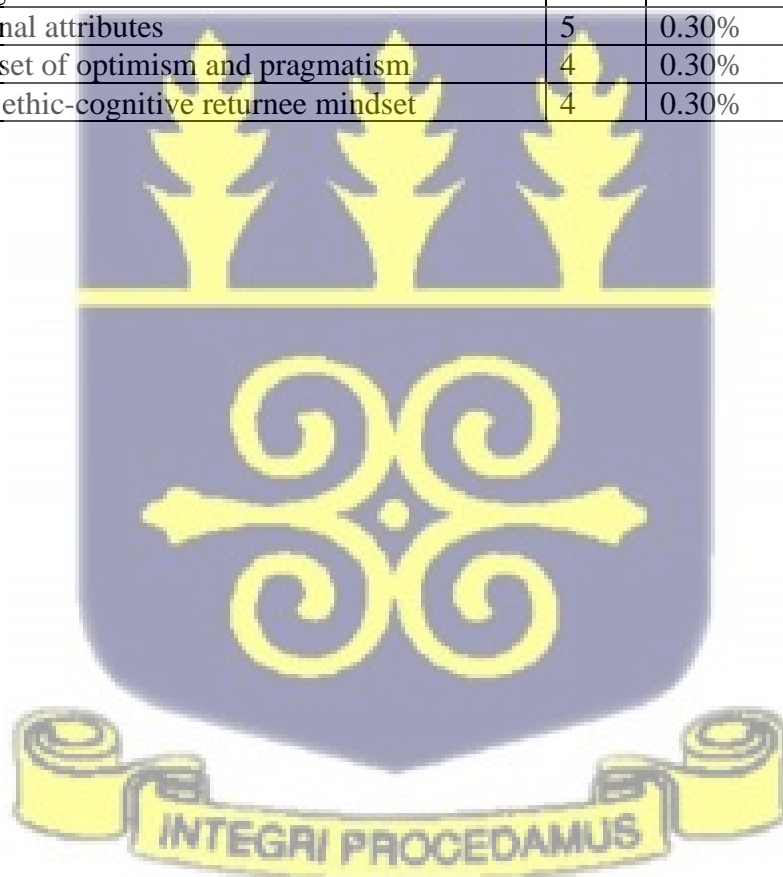
Have you ever abandoned your plans to travel abroad after being refused visa many times in favour of making a future here in Ghana?

If your answer to this question is yes, then I am interested in your story. I would be grateful if you could share your story with me.

Kindly contact Adolf Awuku Bekoe, a student researcher from the Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana on **0244670698** or send e-mail to [futureathomeghana@gmail.com](mailto:futureathomeghana@gmail.com) (you may also indicate your interest via WhatsApp and I will gladly call you back).

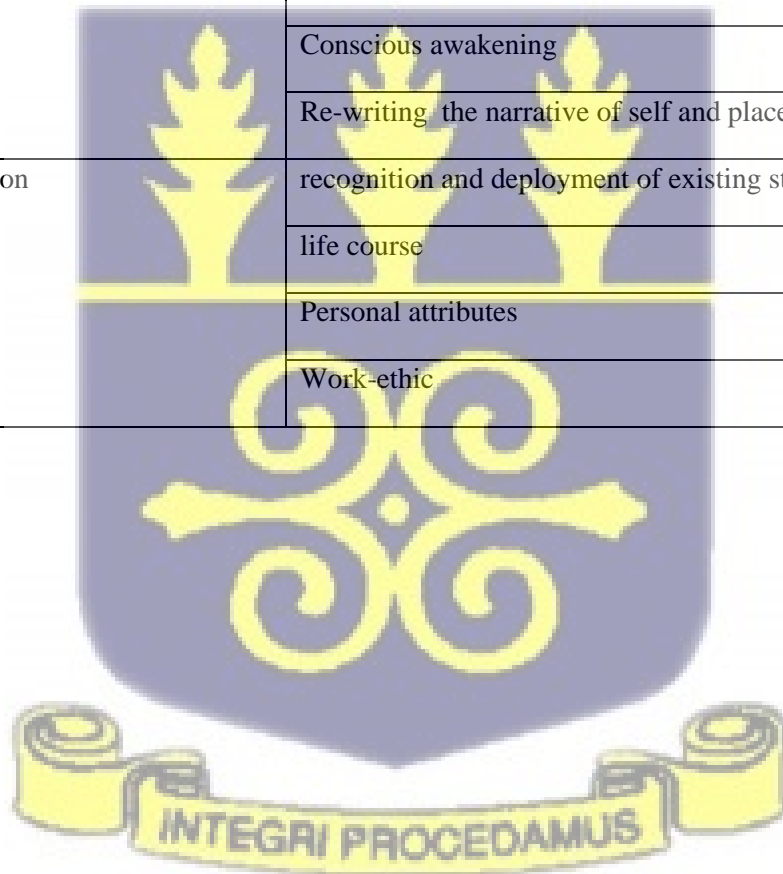
**Appendix IV: Enablers of Cognitive Return/Emplacement**

No.	Code	count	% codes	cases	% cases
1	Job/employment	58	3.80%	19	79.20%
2	Interpersonal relationships	52	3.40%	14	58.30%
3	God factor	46	3.10%	16	66.70%
4	conscious awakening the rejects traveling abroad	46	3.10%	15	62.50%
5	Positive outcomes	33	2.20%	13	54.20%
6	Re-storying the narrative of self and place from worthlessness to worthiness	31	2.10%	6	25.00%
7	Further education in Ghana	20	1.30%	8	33.30%
8	feedback from Network abroad	20	1.30%	8	33.30%
9	successful local champions as role models	19	1.30%	9	37.50%
10	noneconomic factors	16	1.10%	8	33.30%
11	life course	11	0.70%	8	33.30%
12	family support	11	0.70%	6	25.00%
13	recognition and deployment of existing strength	10	0.70%	4	16.70%
14	personal attributes	5	0.30%	3	12.50%
15	Mindset of optimism and pragmatism	4	0.30%	2	8.30%
16	work ethic-cognitive returnee mindset	4	0.30%	3	12.50%



**Appendix V: Abstracted Enablers of Cognitive Return/Emplacement**

Theme	Subtheme
Economic factors	Job/employment
	Further education in Ghana
Socio-cultural factors	Social embeddedness
	Locational advantage
Social Support	Interpersonal relationships
	Family support
	Successful local champions as role model
	Feedback from network abroad
Posttraumatic Growth	God factor
	Conscious awakening
	Re-writing the narrative of self and place
Self-regulation	recognition and deployment of existing strength
	life course
	Personal attributes
	Work-ethic



## Appendix VI: WhatsApp Communication between Supervisor and Adolf

Supervisor: Good evening, Adolf. I hope you are doing fine. I have a question for you, which you may want to "answer" as a form of recommendation for your thesis. I recently met a Nigerian lady, whose sole aim is to travel to either Canada or to the US. She is here in Ghana doing nothing, and she does not think there is any future for her in either Nigeria or Ghana. But Ghana is a better place than Nigeria. Her goal is to secure documents as a Ghanaian and then go to the US. She does not want to do anything in Ghana, for the fear that if she starts a business or something, and her "US/Canada" plans go through, she will have to abandon them. So she is not doing anything to secure a good living. No matter what I tried to tell her that overseas is not everything to life, she did not see it at all. What advice will you give to people who are so determined to travel overseas for their future?

Adolf: Good evening Sir. I'm well by God's grace. At this stage, it's an obsession; she has a mindless body at home. She's "doing well" imaginatively in US/Canada. The mind is domiciled abroad. How often has she failed or tried? Where are the people who were once in her situation but have successfully returned to a homeward future?

Supervisor: As far as I know, she was in Dubai and was repatriated to Nigeria just before the COVID. Then after 6 months or so later moved to Ghana (again). She was previously in Ghana before going to Dubai. The question is, what concrete advice will you give to someone whose mind is domiciled abroad? I saw how fruitless it was to try and convince her to make the best of her time in Ghana into something good

Adolf: Seriously thinking about it Sir. But she wouldn't listen to you. Reality check: she must understand why she's not invested in anything at home. Some psycho-education about cognitive displacement

Supervisor: Hmm, the next time I talk with her, I will see if some psycho education will help. I can very well understand that people invest all their future in overseas life and waste precious resources.

Adolf: Again, a homeward investment does not foreclose opportunity to travel abroad. It helps one to build a socioeconomic profile that sending countries are looking for. Some of my participants now travel abroad anytime they want. Exactly what I refer to as temporal-economic effects of failing a migration project. Viewed from a life course perspective, it becomes a turning point that enables cognitive emplacement. So she must be made to appreciate this dynamic. I guess there are critical periods where social support can make a dent. In the immediate aftermath of failing when options are being considered, friends and loved ones may introduce an investment homeward future as an option. Kind of striking when the iron is hot.

