The complexity of belonging and empowerment: Narratives of Ghanaian women in Bergen, Norway

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ABSTRACT

Studies on migrant womens' experiences of belonging and empowerment have for the most part remained separate, as two distinct fields. This study attempts to fill that gap by examining the experiences and perceptions of belonging and empowerment among Ghanaian women in Bergen. This includes the implications of the role of empowerment on their overall experiences of belonging. This study also presents a counter-narrative study to existing migration studies in Norway that focus less on African migrant groups, suggesting instead that there is a need for more research on Ghanaian migrants, even though they make up much less of the total number of migrants in Norway. The focus on lived experiences of this minority group in this study gives these women a voice, with the hopes that the insights from this research will aid the transformation of structures and policies in Norway. The study specifically explores the role of self-identity in Ghanaian women's perspectives and experiences of belonging. Whilst highlighting their perceptions and experiences of (not)belonging and dis(empowerment), and their interactions, it also examines particularly their agency, illustrating the various strategies they utilize as a response to the experiences of not-belonging and disempowerment, through the use of "home-making" practices, among other factors.

Data was collected through in-depth semi structured interviews and observations with 8 Ghanaian mothers. The data was analyzed using the theories of "belonging" (Antonsich, 2010), "gender accountability" (Zimmerman & West, 2009) and "empowerment" (Mosdale, 2010), along with relevant literature reviewed. Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis was used for interpreting, analyzing and defining common themes, as conceptualized by the Ghanaian women.

The study found that the experience of belonging and empowerment is not a homogenous experience, even among a common group with similar national and cultural identity. Despite their diverse and complex accounts, it was widely accepted that belonging was perceived as an empowering resource, and vice versa. Therefore, even though there was some sense of not-belonging and disempowerment experienced, that comes with being a migrant, the women continue to utilize ways in which they can make Bergen "home" for themselves. The study highlights that the continuity of Ghanaian cultural practices provides a route to empowerment, and consequently some sense/form of belonging in helping them and their families adapt to the Norwegian environment. The role of their internal sense of self or rather, "power within"

remains central in their overall perceptions of their daily lives in Bergen. All women revealed that their internal sense of self had increased in comparison to when they were in Ghana. Ghanaian women are therefore not merely powerless victims due to the various and intersecting social, cultural and political challenges experienced as African and Black migrants in Bergen, which implicates their sense of belonging and empowerment. They have developed coping strategies, providing a route to empowerment, as they continue to thrive and define success whilst negotiating some sense of empowerment and belonging for themselves in a different social, political and cultural context.

This study contributes to discussions on identity, empowerment, belonging and Ghanaian culture and minority ethnic migrant women/mothers. Revealing how the sense of Otherness (as migrants who are Black and African) disrupts notions of belonging and empowerment, and how the utilization of cultural continuity, and their internal sense of power (power within), among other avenues of 'belonging' and 'being', is central to adapting in Bergen. By bridging empowerment and belonging, through research on a minority ethnic population, this study therefore creates new visibilities by bringing forward the complex realities of migrant experiences.

Key words: *agency, belonging, Ghanaian women, empowerment, identity, Norway, race*

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ACRONYMS

IMF - International Monetary Fund

CWS - Child Welfare Services

GSS - Ghana Statistical Service

NOK - Norwegian Krone

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research background

With the increase in migration research, empowerment (Parrado & Flippen, 2005; Yu, 2007) and belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Gilmartin, 2008) have been on the agenda. Despite the importance of women's empowerment, migration studies today can still be male biased or gender blind (Goulahsen, 2017). Gendered perspectives on migration are important because women and men engage in migration, and are affected by migration, differently (Morokvasic, 2014). However, the importance of intersectional approaches which go beyond gender to include other dimensions (e.g. race, ethnicity, nationality, class and sexuality) in examining women's experiences have also been acknowledged by various authors (Crenshaw, 1991; Morokvasic, 2014; Parrado & Flippen, 2005). This study usefully illustrates the significance of using an intersectional lens when examining ethnic minority migrant women's' experiences. Especially in Norway where they are currently under-represented in migration studies. Women's empowerment refers to the process through which women redefine and extend their possibilities in situations that they are restricted, relative to men, from being and doing (Mosedale, 2005). Within the context of migration, empowerment is useful for examining the interactions between social structure and individual / collective agency (Yu, 2007). This is very important because most studies focus on long term institutional reforms that address inequalities, overlooking women's ability to make choices as well as the ability of migration to offer transformatory and emancipating opportunities (Parrado & Flippen, 2005; Yu, 2007).

Research on Ghanaian women indicates that they are in many ways influential, highlighting the dynamic nature of gender roles although gender inequality is still prevalent in many areas of their lives, limiting their options (Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010; Bosak, Eagly, Diekman & Sczesny, 2018). Since Ghana's independence in 1957, the country has undergone significant social, cultural, political and economic changes including increased gender equality (Bosak et al, 2018) although gender disparities still remain in many aspects of life (Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010; Bosak et al, 2018). Legislations such as the Domestic Violence Act (Wrigley-Asante, 2011), gave rise to the new era of "African Feminism", which promotes social, political and economic empowerment, highlighting changes toward gender equality (Bosak et al, 2018). Although women's employment and education has increased from 54.5% to 70% and 9.6 % to

38.6 % respectively, between 1960 and 2010, some traditional practices (e.g. early marriage for girls, polygyny, and greater female responsibility for domestic chores) still limit many women's options (Bosak et al, 2018). The issue of empowerment is significant to Ghanaians in Norway, especially where the gender ideologies between Ghana and Norway differ, creating opportunities for the modification or reconstruction (or reinforcement) of gender practices among Ghanaian women, and consequently, their conceptions of empowerment.

'Belonging' refers to a desire or longing for someone or something, and it is a process of becoming and not a status of being (Antonsich, 2010). Research shows that any conceptualization of belonging should take into consideration both personal feelings and social contexts in which individuals are immersed, because an individual's subjective sense of belonging is to be understood as dynamic, and grounded in power relations embedded in socio-political contexts (Antonsich, 2010; Parrado & Flippen, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006). According to Kyllingstad (2017) the context of race relations in Norway for ethnic minorities is one in which issues such as social integration, cultural and religious tolerance, among others, are rarely conceptualized as "racial issues" in the immigration policy and public discourse. This symbolizes the socio-political context within which Norway's immigration policy is founded, having the ability to potentially influence an ethnic minority's sense of belonging. Although most literature acknowledges the complexity of migrants' subjective experiences of belonging and empowerment, nuanced accounts of the multiple ways in which they understand and narrate identity is limited, especially from pre-migration circumstances to their countries of settlement (Gilmartin & Migge, 2016; Parrado & Flippen, 2005). This study aims to fill this gap.

1.2. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research question among Ghanaian women in Bergen:

1. *How do the Ghanaian women in Bergen construct belonging and empowerment?*

It is important to note that by "construct" I refer to the meanings they attach to their experiences and perceptions of belonging and empowerment, and how these meanings are created. The primary question is divided into secondary interrelated research questions which guide my study:

1. How do the Ghanaian women construct 'home', and how does this affect their experiences and perceptions of belonging?

2. In what ways does (dis)empowerment affect the Ghanaian women's perceptions and experiences of belonging and not belonging, and vice versa?
3. In what ways do the Ghanaian women respond to the constraints or conflicts they experience?

1.3. Organization of the thesis

This thesis consists of 9 chapters. Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter, providing a description of the context and the overall background of the study. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework which includes the following: *the theory of belonging* (Antonsich, 2010), Zimmerman and West's (2009) *theory of gender accountability* and Mosdale's (2005) *theory of empowerment*. This is followed by Chapter 3 that includes a critical review of relevant literature particularly on empowerment and belonging within the context of migration, the gaps in literature and presents what this research intends to fill. Chapter 4 includes the research methodology which consists of the research design and methods of data generation. Chapter 5 is the introductory chapter of the empirical findings, where a table of themes which illustrate key findings will be presented, which will be discussed in chapters 6, 7 and 8. Chapter 6 discusses the implications of self-identification on the perceptions and experiences of belonging, Chapter 7 presents the critical role of empowerment on feelings of belonging, and Chapter 8 presents the various ways in which "home-making" practices are utilized to expand notions of 'belonging' and 'being' in Bergen, contributing significantly to their lives in Bergen. Chapter 9 is the conclusion chapter. This includes the summary and critical discussion of key findings. This also includes the limitations and recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, I use three theories to guide my overall research: framing the research questions, review of the relevant literature, as well as analyzing and interpretation of the empirical findings. The theories include Antonsich's (2010) *theory of belonging,* Mosdale's (2005) *theory of empowerment* and Zimmerman and West's (2009) *theory of gender accountability*. The theories will be critically discussed, as I illustrate and relate their significance to my study.

2.1. Belonging - Antonsich (2010)

The main theory that informs this research is 'belonging' as conceptualized by Antonsich (2010). Antonsich (2010) offers a relevant analytical framework for analyzing migrant experiences of belonging, distinguishing between 'place-belongingness' and 'politics of belonging'. *Place-belongingness* is emotional and affective: to feel 'at home', rooted in and attached to a place (Antonsich, 2010, p. 646). Arguing against the prevalent conceptualization of 'home' as a domesticated material space that produces and reproduces patriarchal relations and gendered inequalities, Antonsich (2010) offers an important characteristic of 'place-belongingness', that 'home' is a symbolic space of comfort, familiarity, security and emotional attachment. At this point he proposes that belonging can be conceptualized at multiple scales: it can be the local neighborhood, one's home, or national homeland; bringing to the forefront the variations in the geographical scales at which individuals may feel to belong (Antonsich, 2010, p. 646).

The presence of five factors that generate an individual's feelings of place-belongingness include the following: *autobiographical* (the continued presence of elements from one's past history e.g. relations from the place of birth), *relational* (long-lasting, stable and positive social ties), *cultural* (e.g. shared language and religion), *economic* (e.g. financial stability) and *legal* (e.g. resident permits and citizenship) (Antonsich, 2010). *Legal and economic factors* are important for contributing to security, which has been proposed as an essential element of belonging. *Politics of belonging* refers to the socio-spatial processes of inclusion and exclusion, constituting boundary practices that separate 'us' versus 'them' (Antonsich, 2010, p. 649). This positions belonging as not only a personal matter, but also a social one, as belonging becomes synonymous with both social and individual identity (Antonsich, 2010). This means that if an individual does not feel welcome, their sense of belonging is most likely negatively affected (Antonsich, 2010). The significance of this dimension is that an individual's personal feeling of belonging should align with the discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion in the place of settlement, as this directly impacts on their sense of place belongingness (Antonsich, 2010). Belonging is further conceptualized as belonging to a place and to a group of people, conveying meanings of inclusion and exclusion; by reproducing a specific order of discourses and practices as well as an idea of cultural unity and wholeness (Antonsich, 2010, p.650).

Very important to this research, Antonsich (2010) suggests the paradox of the presence of politics of belonging for ethnic minorities: that it does not necessarily generate a sense of place-belongingness. This is because factors such as equal treatment and equal rights are unable to respond to the needs of each person to feel accepted and respected in their diversity or 'authenticity', because in order to belong, people should feel that they are able to express their identity (Antonsich, 2010 p. 650). Assimilation would mean that other dimensions such as place of birth and skin color would prevent 'full sameness', exposing the individual to discourses and practices of exclusion (Antonsich, 2010). This suggests explicitly recognizing the context of the particular subjects of this study: Black, African and Ghanaian women, and being aware of the nuances that may implicate their politics of being, whether imposed by themselves or the Norwegian society, sub-consciously or not. As a result of physical/external characteristics that have the ability to prevent 'full sameness', due to providing an external tool of exclusion of who belongs and who does not.

Generally, this theory exemplifies how 'belonging' is not separate from social dimensions and illustrates the multiple scales at which 'belonging' is conceptualized. Therefore, it is significant for holistically exploring the Ghanaian women's subjective experiences as grounded in the context of social, political and structural factors. In order to expand our understanding of the ways in which people experience belonging, this theory will help me to pay close attention to the place-based experiences of migrant mothers, with a particular focus on their experiences of belonging and not belonging. This will be made possible by exploring Ghanaian women's lived experiences by focusing on their everyday lives, particularly on the various ways in which they develop a sense of belonging through everyday practices in Bergen, which might be in conflict with their politics of being.

2.2. 'Gender accountability' - Zimmerman and West (2009)

Accounting for Zimmerman and West's (1987) publication on *'Doing Gender',* Zimmerman and West's (2009) theory of "gender accountability" reinforces the interactional, situational and circumstantial nature of gender, illustrating the implications of the inevitable performance of gender in everyday life; necessitated by the various institutions and ideologies in a given society. In *'Doing Gender'*, Zimmerman and West (1987) propose that gender is not a biological trait, but a routine accomplishment attained through everyday interactions. This is because people do

gender in that they are situated in specific contexts and held accountable through constant assessment by society, and therefore modify or adjust their behaviours according to what is perceived as gender appropriate or inappropriate. The political implications of the social construction of gender are that the gender attributes deployed as a basis of maintaining men's hegemony are inherently social products, and thus subject to social change, however challenging the change may actually be (Zimmerman & West, 1987).

This is the point at which Zimmerman and West (2009) account for 'doing gender'. The authors argue against the normative perception that individuals have the capabilities to 'undo gender', proposing that what changes instead are the "accountability structures". This signifies a shift in gender accountability because gender itself is an emergent feature of every society, as it is interactional and routinely performed and therefore cannot be forgone, or rather, 'undone' but 're-done' (Zimmerman & West, 2009). This is because "the normative system in gender accountability, including the patriarchal system cannot be regarded as "free floating" since changes in it involve both changes in a person's orientation to these norms and changes in social relations that reflexively support changes in orientation" (Zimmerman & West, 2009 p. 118). Therefore, gender ideologies and practices (which are emergent features of any given society) are both circumstantial and contextual, socially constructed and influenced by the ideologies and institutions in any given society (Zimmerman & West, 2009).

I find this theory relevant in that it defines, explains and contextualizes the social (re)production of gender, through the Ghanaian mother's reinforcement and/or subversion and modification of inequitable gender roles. Given that 'doing gender' is presented as unavoidable (Zimmerman & West, 2009), and thus cannot be 'undone', since it is a socially required practice, this study will illustrate how the Ghanaian mothers navigate changing "accountability structures", particularly the household division of labour, as they continue to do gender or re-do gender in a totally different cultural context. The significance of this conceptualization of gender, is that the notion of 'gender accountability' determines the possibilities and consequences of both action and inaction. The theory therefore provides a useful way for understanding the situated gendered mechanisms that may impact the Ghanaian women's experiences of belonging and empowerment.

2.3. Empowerment - Mosedale (2005)

I utilize Mosedale's (2005) framework for assessing empowerment within this specific study. Due to the issue of page limits, I will focus on a few of the key elements of this framework, particularly how it has been used in this study. Women's empowerment is the process through which women redefine and extend their possibilities in situations that they are restricted, relative to men, from being and doing (Mosedale, 2005, p. 252). This contrasts with disempowerment: being disadvantaged by the way power relations currently shape wellbeing, choices and opportunities (Mosedale, 2005). Such a conceptualization of empowerment presupposes the gendered nature of disempowerment, with the analysis of women's empowerment as a group beginning at the analysis of gender relations, i.e. how power relations between men and women are constrained and maintained in both their private and public lives (Mosedale, 2005). This is because women are constrained by 'the norms, beliefs, customs and values through which societies differentiate between women and men (Kabeer, 2004, p. 22). However, Mosedale (2005) argues that gender relations vary culturally and geographically and therefore they should be analyzed according to context. Additionally, criteria such as class, nationality, race, ethnicity, and age etc. must be considered as additional dimensions as a women's level of empowerment will vary according to such factors (Mosadale, 2005). Central to this research is Mosedale's (2005) assertion that although the gendered identities of women disempower them in both public roles and in their private homes, women have an ability to actively challenge gender roles individually or as part of a collective group.

2.3.1. Analytical framework for assessing the Ghanaian mother's empowerment

For assessing empowerment for the Ghanaian mothers, Mosedale's analytical framework (2005, p. 252-256) will be utilized in this study. The model of *power* proposed by Mosedale (2005, p. 251), is one that is complex and fluid, including structural fault lines based on for example nation of origin, sex and race, were membership to a certain group (women, migrants, Black) has implications for the shape of power structure within which the Ghanaian mother's operate. It is important to note that defining the shape of the power structures doesn't necessarily negate recognizing their individual or collective agency, rather, it is to accept how group membership has the potential to constrain or necessitate their possibilities and boundaries for action (Mosedale, 2005). However, the extent to which they subvert or reinforce these boundaries, and

the extent to which the change is opposed contribute to the durability of these boundaries (Mosedale, 2005). The analytical framework will be used to:

(i) ***identify the constraints to action*** - identifying the state of gendered power relations before and after their settlement in Norway. The *three faces of power* (see Mosdale, 2005, p. 254-255): *power over (*for example, in the case of wanting to negotiate traditional gender roles, but their husbands or cultural norms act as to prevent them); *power within (*for example, are they conscious of whatever may be limiting their constraints to action? Are they able to question, analyze and think of how to improve, believing that their actions have the potential to bring about needed change?); *power with* (for example, do they have any potential allies for example their families and friendship networks that are sympathetic, encouraging and supporting them as they do 'empowerment' for themselves?), will be used. The Ghanaian women's *agency* which refers to possibilities for action, is enhanced when possibilities for action are increased and vice versa (Mosedale, 2005), will be assessed through utilizing the three *faces of power*; and *social values and norms* that may limit or allow the Ghanaian mothers' choices about various issues concerning their perceptions and experiences of belonging and empowerment in Bergen. In the interview guide (Appendix 1) questions that examine open, suppressed or avoided conflict were also included as follow up questions by asking the *who* and *why* questions, and if the *faces of power* are positively transformed, then *how.* This includes the consequences for inaction. (It is important to note that this is where Zimmerman and West's (2009) theory of *'gender accountability'* complements such inquiry). Central to this study, as argued by Kabeer (2004), is therefore the exploration of the agency and achievements that suggest a greater ability to question, analyze, and act on the structures of patriarchal constraints in the women's lives, by acting on the restrictive aspects of these roles and responsibilities in order to challenge them.

(ii) identify how their agency has developed - identifying the actual actions pursued, at individual and/or collective levels.

(iii) ***identifying how the women's agency changed constraints to action*** - This involves analyzing how constraints have been loosened. If it is a result of the women's actions then it is considered as empowerment - as they would have expanded the realm of what is possible to them, as empowerment cannot be bestowed but rather, won (Mosedale, 2005 p. 255).

Mosedale's (2005) conceptual framework provides an essential tool for understanding the pathways that represent the dynamic nature of how (dis)empowerment is experienced by the

Ghanaian women. Even though disempowering effects of migration will be highlighted, this research will primarily focus on the empowerment that emphasizes the changes within (*power within*) that constitute the consciousness and agency of women as an important starting point for the processes of empowerment (Mosedale, 2005). This is very important because most studies focus on long term institutional reforms that address inequalities, with less attention given to how individual women's sense of self-worth and sense of agency is influenced by circumstances, influencing their sense of empowerment, particularly within the context of migration (Yu, 2007). Interview questions for the Ghanaian mothers (Appendix 1) are therefore centered on identifying the state of gendered power relations (particularly the household division of labour) and/or gender ideologies pre-migration and post-migration, how their agency has developed, and the actual action pursued in terms of challenging the structures of patriarchal constraints in their lives. In general, this theory will be used to explore the (dis)empowerment of the Ghanaian women.

2.4. Concluding remarks: Usefulness of the proposed theoretical framework for this study

In general, the three theories are especially useful for this particular research, as they complement each other in ways that facilitate a holistic understanding of the dynamic nature of empowerment and belonging, within the context of migration. This will be done by illustrating how the Ghanaian mothers' agency has transformed within the context of changing gender practices and ideologies, and notions of belonging in the context of migration. Mosedale's (2005) conceptualization of agency as grounded in *'power within'* will be utilized to enable the assessment of empowerment that goes beyond gender relations, to the wider inclusion of various factors within the context of migration that may limit or allow the *three faces of power* to be positively transformed. This has the potential to influence the Ghanaian women's overall experiences of belonging. Therefore, in this study, Mosedale's (2005) conceptualization of empowerment and Antonsich's (2010) theory of belonging are used to examine and explain how their agency has transformed, by looking at three key factors: a) strategies used to overcome constraints, b) strengths and achievements of the Ghanaian women and, (c) the consequences for action or inaction. It is important to note that this is where Zimmerman and West's (2009) theory of gender accountability complements such inquiry. The three theories will therefore allow me to not only explore the Ghanaian mothers experiences of belonging and empowerment,

but to also explore the relationship between (dis)empowerment and (not)belonging for the women, by looking at how their conceptualization and experiences of (dis)empowerment influences their notions of (not)belonging and/or vice versa. Such theories will therefore be extremely useful in this particular research, contributing to the current literature on migration, identity, gender, empowerment and belonging. Even more in Norway, where research among ethnic minorities is very limited. Therefore, this is my contribution to Gender and Development, myfield of specialization.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will present a critical overview and discussion of the literature relevant to this study. The literature helped to contextualize this study and provided the basis on which gaps were made evident, thereby informing the research purpose and aims for this study. There has been a lot of research that has been done on the concepts of empowerment and belonging, however research pertaining to particularly African, or Ghanaian women in Bergen, or even Norway, is very limited. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, I will firstly provide a broad overview of literature on empowerment and belonging. Secondly, I will contextualize the research for the Ghanaian women in Bergen by looking at the Norwegian and Ghanaian contexts.

3.1. The literature search process

I primarily used *Oria*, the University of Bergen Library database. To widen my search process I also utilized Google Scholar and the Google search engine that led to other various databases (for example, *Science Direct*) which was very significant as it allowed me to have access to research not only across various disciplines, but also interdisciplinary research. To begin my research process I started with broad key terms such as “migrants”, “belonging”, “empowerment”, “gender and empowerment”, and “integration of foreign nationals”, and from then on I would find key research areas in these and then develop other search words based on those, and then search for more related literature. Such a search process allowed me to later scale down to more context specific research by adding search terms such as “in Africa”, “in Ghana”, “ in Europe” and “in Bergen”, to the aforementioned primary broad search words.

Searching for literature was a cyclical process because the literature review process and the data and analysis of the findings of this study continued to reveal various areas of interest throughout the research process. Reference lists from the literature obtained were used to get more related research. Research was limited to articles written in English. However, for research published in Norway that is not published in English, I managed to substantiate information on the Norwegian context with information from relevant websites for national and local institutions (for example Statistics Norway and Bergen Kommune) to include key relevant information. It is important to note that specific literature that illustrate the key ideas that informed this study will be included. This includes gendering migration, intersectionality, dis(empowerment) in the migration context, identity and belonging, and lastly the context for Ghanaian women in Bergen, Norway.

3.2. Women's dis(empowerment) in migration: gendering migration and empowerment

3.2.1. Gendering migration

The phenomenon of 'gender' that has been historically understood as 'a meaning that people give to the biological reality that there are two sexes' is significant as it shapes and influences everyday human life and phases (Pessar, 2005, p. 2). Indeed, pioneering feminist author, de Beauvoir (2010) conceptualised the phrase *'the second sex'* as a way of denoting the domination of women by men, by arguing that women are historically disadvantaged by the way normative traditional gender role expectations reinforce and perpetuate men's hegemony[1] both in their private homes and public spaces. This is because men are the 'object', whilst women are the 'subject' of gender, as the meaning of what it means to be a woman is given by men, which contributes to women always being the 'other', affecting their decision making power and their potential to make choices on significant life matters (de Beauvoir, 2010). This suggests not only women's subordination to men, but their disempowerment as they are viewed through a particular lens, in reference to men. Similarly Connell (1995, 2009) offers a contemporary conceptualization of the institutionalization of gender by proposing that masculinity is defined through a system of symbolic difference in which 'masculine 'and 'feminine' places are contrasted, with masculinity defined as practices and behaviours that are 'not feminine'.

Within migration studies, research has historically paid no or little attention to gender, but recent research is characterized by an influx of studies that focus on women's experiences.

[1] Hegemony as defined by Connell (1995, p.78) refers to "cultural dominance in the society as a whole".

This is because according to Morokvasic (2014) migration patterns, migration discourse and underlying representations, migrants' obligations, experiences and duties as well as their expectations regarding their migration are gendered. Therefore, as argued by Pessar (2005) bringing gender into the field of migration represents an attempt to remedy many decades where the field of migration paid little or no attention to gender. This is because men and women engage with migration and mobility differently, inducing differential impacts on men and women (Morokvasic, 2014). The centrality of gender in migration was due to pioneering feminist authors (e.g. Anthias, 1983 & Morokvasic, 1984) questioning the stereotypical use of men as the universal frame of reference in both knowledge production and experiences pertaining to migration studies (Morokvasic, 2014). This has resulted in the increase of literature seeking to understand women's perspectives and experiences of what migration means for themselves and their lives.

With the advent of postructuralism, the conceptualization of gender has evolved beyond comparing males and females and their corresponding gender roles, to include a more dynamic and fluid conceptualization of gender as both situational and relational (Pessar, 2005). This is because as argued by Morokvasic (2014), there is a tendency to separate "woman" and "migrant" into two separate epistemologies, reproducing essentialist and monolithic visions of what it means to be a woman and a migrant. Thus, Morokvasic (2014) argues for bridging migration and gender in order to create new visibilities by including research that highlights other gendered dimensions of the complex realities of migrant experiences. In this regard, prominent Black (and other ethnic minorities) feminist researchers (e.g. Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1989 and Hooks, 1990) have therefore argued against the predominant Western Feminist scholarship on 'women' and particularly on Third World women which overlooks the existence of the multiplicity of cultural privilege and oppression beyond and before gender (Beloso, 2012). Within the context of the West's hegemonic position (that of scientific knowledge creation and production), Mohanty (1988) utilizes the term 'third-world-difference', to conceptualize how a sizeable amount of Western scholarship participates in the homogenization and systematization of the oppression of Third world women. Monolithic interpretations and assumptions of patriarchy or male dominance have continued to be questioned, particularly by Black feminist and postmodern literature, suggesting that Black women (and other ethnic minorities) are not only disadvantaged,

as women, but other aspects such as their race, age, social class can conspire to contribute further to their marginalization (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1989 and Hooks, 1990).

Ampofo and Arnfred's (2009) and Oweyumi's (2005) studies on African women's experiences, and Khader's (2013) study on Indian surrogates (concerning the moral acceptability of transnational surrogacy, which illustrated a moral dilemma due to the prevalence of surrogate poverty as the multiple identities of minorities co-constitute each other, making their interests different from privileged women) are examples of studies which illustrate the complex nature of gender across different dimensions. Additionally, these constitute examples of studies that reflect how feminist knowledge should be diverse and situated. Such research also illustrates *'multiplicities of femininities'* (Morokvasic, 2004) that highlight the importance of being aware of how the various dimensions of 'gender' have the potential to influence and shape how different women perceive, experience and navigate different issues in life.

In light of the above discussion, in this particular research, in contrast to essentialist conceptualizations of gender rooted in biological determinism, the conceptualization of the term 'gender' as defined by Ridgeway and Correll (2004) will be utilized in this study. According to Ridgeway and Correll (2004, p. 1), "gender is not primarily an identity or role that is taught in childhood and enacted in family relations. Instead, gender is an institutionalized system of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and organizing social relations of inequality on the basis of that difference." This suggests the social construction and reproduction of gender and the implications this has on everyday life, particularly on women. The specific gender theory used in this study, which is Zimmerman and West's theory on *gender accountability* will be discussed in the theoretical framework. Furthermore, Crenshaw's (1991) concept of *'intersectionality'* that highlights the need to go beyond gender to include factors such as race, socio-economic class, and culture, among others; to holistically contextualize and understand the complexity of the experiences of ethnic minorities is employed in this research as an analytical tool.

3.2.2. Dis(empowerment) in the migration context

'Empowering women has become the goal of many development interventions, and research shows that 'empowerment' has been conceptualized in various ways, although there are still difficulties concerning how women's empowerment can be defined and evaluated (Kabeer, 2004;

Mosedale, 2005). A rapid review of the term suggests that this term has been defined in many different ways (for example Batiwala, 1994; Kabeer, 2004; Mosdale, 2005 and Sprietzer, 1995). However, according to Mosedale (2005) the common aspects that seems to be accepted in literature concerning women's empowerment includes the following elements: (i) to be empowered one has to have been disempowered (and women as a group are disempowered relative to men), (ii) it can not be bestowed by a third party as those who are empowered should claim it, (iii) being able to make choices on significant matters and carry them out, and that the process of reflection, and (iv) analysis and action are involved in the process at either individual and collective level. Such a comprehensive conceptualization of empowerment is used in this study. Important to this research, with regard to assessing empowerment especially among Third world women, Nussbaum (2000) writes in defense of analyzing women's empowerment that it should begin at the realities of their lives than the general assumption that they are oppressed. Nussbaum's (2000) findings present an argument for culture, diversity and paternalism, which have been historically Hindu and Islam values. Such values are also true for some women in other developing countries. Suggesting that normative values such as the integrity of the body, dignity of the person, political and economic liberties etc., should not be appropriate norms to be used in developing countries which have different historical, cultural and social contexts (Nussbaum, 2000). Such a view helped me to understand how the Ghanaian women in this study were situated in contrasting gender and cultural ideologies and practices, which therefore has an influence on how they might experience or define empowerment for themselves.

Past research reveals how migration has differential impacts on women (Morokvasic, 2014; Yu, 2007). According to Gilmartin and Migge (2016) research on female migrants addresses the ways in which migration influences female subjectivity within two distinct bodies of work: female empowerment and female subjugation. Migration is liberating because of the changes in the economic and employment status of migrant women (Gilmartin & Migge, 2016; Pessar, 2005), and egalitarian gender norms (Espin, 1999; Parrado & Flippen, 2005) whilst female subjugation is often because of their migrant status and cultural differences in migrants destinations (Gilmartin & Migge, 2016). However, Parado and Flippen's (2005) study on Mexican women in the U.S and Mexico and Erdal and Pawlak's (2018) study on Polish migrants in Norway (2018) highlight how gender roles have the potential of being both reproduced or contested in countries of settlement. For example, research by Yu (2007) presents an

empowerment approach to migration, that proposes the importance of highlighting the significance of agentic choices despite structural factors that have an ability to hinder an individual's potential, as most research focuses on the disempowering effects of migration. Yu (2007) uncovers how Chinese rural women employed in China's manufacturing industry gained *power over* economic and social resources through work, after leaving their farms behind due to more 'promising' prospects in cities' factories. Even though this is a presentation of rural-urban migration, research has shown that most migrants' decisions to migrate are due to the need to attain better living conditions, whether economically, socially or politically (e.g. GSS, 2012). This suggests the innate need of humans to live in a place where an individual feels that they can thrive and prosper (Basu, 2013).

Parrado and Flippen's (2005) study of Mexican women in the U.S and Mexico highlighted the impact of the social and cultural process that determine how gender relations (for example household characteristics and social support) evolve during the process of migration. Results showed that against the normative expectation that migrants assimilate the cultural values in host countries, they however adopt selective assimilation in determining how to incorporate specific behaviours and cultural values (Parrado & Flippen, 2005). This illustrates the variations in the maintenance or deconstruction of traditional gender norms that accompany migration. Other research that highlights the diversity of changes in gender relations because gender roles are not simply challenged but rather negotiated in the new social and cultural contexts include (Morokvasic 2014 & Zentgraf, 2002). Migration is therefore gendered (Morokvasic, 2014) and has both disempowering and empowering effects, with examples of literature which address the theme of (dis)empowerment among migrant women include Parrenas (2001); Parrado and Flippen (2005), Pessar (2005), Yu (2007) and Zentgraf (2002).

3.3. Migration and belonging : Identity, belonging and the immigration experience

3.3.1. Identity, multiculturalism and transculturality

Goulahsen (2017) argues against dominant conceptions of identity as 'ready-made' and 'fixed', which however is what most European policies are founded on since discourses and practices on the integration of foreign nationals relate to assimilationist notions, of assimilating into a social fabric on subordinated terms (Anthias, 2013). The intersectionality of factors such as race, religion and culture are often overlooked in the European context (Goulhasen, 2017), as well as

the possibility of members of ethnic groups to take on multiple identities as well as affiliations of cultural hybridity (Webner, 2013). This study utilizes Glick Schiller's (2003, 2005) conceptualization of identity. 'Identity' is examined by considering "how a person feels they belong to the community of the country of origin and/or residence and the interaction between their subjective positions and social and cultural situations that give a person a sense of personal location, which may be locally situated, extend nationally or transnationally and shouldn't be contained within borders of individual nation states" (Glick Schiller, 2003, 2005, as cited in Goulhasen, 2017, p. 162). Such a conceptualization of identity acknowledges the possibility of migrants to take on transcultural identities that suggest the co-existence and hybridity of cultures and identities, and thus permeable and not fixed; as opposed to interculturality (multiculturalism) that views identities and cultures as opposed to one another and thus polarized and fixed (Goulhasen, 2017). Benessaieh (2010) reflects on how trans culturalism characterizes transnational migrants. This is because they embrace the 'identiary-continuum', 'plural sense of self' and 'cross-cultural competence, which symbolise multiple ways in which the self can be categorized as they are able to compare and contrast their identity to others. The mix of or hybridity of cultures developed by migrants symbolizes transculturality (Benessaieh, 2010).

3.3.2. Belonging and migration

The concept of belonging is particularly useful for understanding human relationships and experiences within the context of migration by providing ways of grounding the relationship between identity and processes of exclusion (Gilmartin & Migge, 2016). Although scholarship on belonging acknowledges both dimensions, the predominant focus has been on the politics of belonging (power relations) and not the subjective emotional sense of belonging (Astonstich, 2010; Gilmartin & Migge, 2016). Antonsich (2010) argues that scholars should examine both dimensions by engaging with experiences at the intersection of politics of belonging and the subjective and emotional sense of feeling 'at home'. Yuval-Davis (2006) suggests similar concepts of belonging and politics of belonging. Gilmartin and Migge's (2016) study on migrant mothers in Ireland provides a relevant example of how belonging is situated and experienced at the intersection of politics of belonging and the emotional sense of 'feeling at home'. Women's ability to experience a sense of belonging is compromised by the politics of belonging in the context of Ireland (Gilmartin & Migge, 2016). Women use various strategies such as being

entrepreneurial to overcome the structural barriers to employment and the limited role of the state in childcare provision in Ireland (Gilmartin & Migge, 2016).

Research has also revealed various factors that can contribute to migrants' feelings of belonging and not belonging in a place. Cultural and language barriers (e.g. Arthur, 2016; Basu, 2013) absence of extended kin networks especially in providing support with childcare (e.g. Gilmartin & Migge, 2016; Parrado & Flippen, 2005), racialized experiences (e.g. Asante, Sekimoto & Brown, 2016), and identification with nation of origin (e.g. Goulahsen, 2017) are some of the factors that have the potential to implicate migrants' feelings of belonging in host countries. Research has also shown how migrants incorporate everyday home practices such as engaging in the preparation and the consumption of food from their home countries (e.g. Mankekar, 2005; Petridou, 2001), religious practices (e.g. Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003; Kogan, Fong & Reitz, 2019) and the cultural transmission of values from nation of origin to their own families (e.g. Arthur, 2016) and decorating their houses with artifacts from their home countries (e.g. Phillip & Ho, 2010; Salih, 2003). This includes engaging in cosmopolitan practices and attitudes, which enable a sense of community (Bell, 2009) and consequently that of belonging through 'embodied belonging' (e.g. Goulahsen, 2017). In this regard, research has begun to move beyond territorialized notions of belonging to consider 'multiplicities' of belonging by highlighting the role of transnationalism in impacting on migrants sense of identity and that of belonging, as their sense of self can be questioned and disrupted (e.g., Antonsich, 2010; Benessaieh, 2010 and Goulahsen, 2017).

3.4. The context for Ghanaian women in Norway

3.4.1. The Norwegian Context

Bergen is culturally diverse. The top nationalities among immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents coming from Poland, Lithuania, Somalia, Iraq, Germany, Syria and Vietnam, among others (Bergen Kommune, 2020). In terms of religion, Norway is quite diverse, with most Norwegians subscribing to the Lutheran Church of Norway. Only 678 433 people in Norway are members of religious and life stance communities outside the Church of Norway, of which most subscribe to Christianity (365 851), followed by Islam (175 507) and Human centered ethical Philosophy (96 276) (Statistics Norway, 2020). According to Statistics Norway (2020), with a population of just over 5 million, Norway has a GDP of 663 693 NOK per capita, and an

unemployment rate of 3,5%; and is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, as it ranks second after Luxemburg.

Additionally, the social welfare system in Norway, like some other European countries, remains a significant part of society. For example, as of 2018, there were 133 140 individuals who received social assistance, and of those, 54 920 had social assistance as their main means of income (Statistics Norway, 2020). With regard to family-friendly policies, according to UNICEF (2019), Sweden, Norway and Iceland are among the top 3 countries among 31 countries, with regard to paid leave reserved for fathers and the share of children under the age of three in childcare centers. Norway also offers longer paid leave to mothers in comparison to Sweden and Iceland, in terms of both actual weeks and full-rate equivalent (UNICEF, 2019). According to Bø (2008) mothers have the right to paid parental leave (56 weeks at 80% pay or 49 weeks at full pay) and fathers are entitled to zero and 10 weeks, based on how much their wives earn. Bø (2008) also suggests that either parent is allowed to stay at home in the event that a child is sick, as part of the degenderizing "home allowance", and parents are also offered subsidized child care services (Bø, 2008). Considering that Norway upholds gender equality, it is no surprise that the national policies reflect this.

According to Daly and Abela (2007), in Europe (and Norway) it is widely believed that corporal punishment breaches children's human rights as they are people who have their own rights, and this is thus prohibited. The human rights perspective includes raising children, with emotional warmth so that they receive the essential care they need (Christopoulou, 2018). The Norwegian Child Welfare Services (CWS), the Barnervern is obliged by law to act when they feel that a child's rights have been impinged (Christopoulou, 2018; Fylkesnes, Iversen & Nygren, 2017), including the option of taking the children and putting them in foster care (Christopoulou, 2018). However the manner in which children removals are conducted has led to an internal outcry as some parents who had their children taken have felt that they have been victims of perceived prejudice and harassment, suggesting the need for the conceptualization of 'safety and welfare' to be revised, and to be inclusive of the diverse population in Norway (Christopoulou, 2018) that is characterized by ethnic minority parents. In this regard, Fylkenes et al's (2018) research on ethnic minority parents narratives about encountering CWS in Norway revealed that the strong focus on parents "parenting skills" and bureaucratic and economic structures positions the parents as deficient and thus as "lacking", with regard to skills and

knowledge thereby providing powerful mechanisms for their marginalization. Lacking a normative set of knowledge and skills threatened the parents' opportunities to participate and their perceptions of their deficient positioning were negotiated and contested through learning how to parent, contesting expert knowledge and learning to be a client, among others (Fylkesnes et al., 2017).

Even though the study highlights both the impact of institutional factors and the resources that ethnic minority parents draw upon during their encounters with the CWS (Fylkesnes et al., 2017), it would be insightful to further explore in depth how such marginalization affects ethnic minority parent's sense of belonging and empowerment, and the resources they utilize, whether individually or as a group. In this research, this will be done by exploring Ghanaian women's sense of agency and belonging, especially when they are faced with contrasting and conflicting ideologies with regard to parent and parent-child relationships. Such factors (e.g. social welfare, stable economy, job prospects) present a significant opportunity for migrants seeking employment and financial relief, among other factors that influence their decision to migrate to Norway, particularly Bergen.

3.4.2. The Ghanaian Context

Ghana is located on the Atlantic Ocean, and borders Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Burkina Faso. Accra is the capital of Ghana. As of 2018, it has a population of about 29.6 million and the GDP per capita amounts to approximately 2,202.31 USD (World Bank, 2020). It has been reported that as of 2019, the unemployment rate in Ghana is 6.78% and above the worldwide unemployment rate, and also compared to other Sub-Saharan African countries as well as other regions (Statista, 2020). According to the World Bank (2020), although two and a half years after being elected president in a peaceful election, President Akuffo-Addo has successfully implemented some of his promises, he however faces challenges fulfilling some of his election pledges such as providing free high school education and jobs. In terms of the diversity of the Ghanaian population, Ghana is a multi-ethnic society comprising five ethnic groups, consisting of the Akans who make up about 47.5% of the total population, with the Ga-Dangme being the smallest group with only 7.4% (GSS, 2012).

In terms of religion, Ghana is mostly a Christian society with 71.2% of Ghanaians professing the Christian faith, followed by Islam (17.6%), traditional religion (5.2%) and then

5.3% who are not affiliated to any religion (GSS, 2012). Osei-Tutu, Dzokoto, Adams, Hanke, Kwakye-Nuako, Adu-Mensa and Appiah-Danquah's (2018) research on Ghanaians who belonged to either traditionally Western mission churches or charismatic Christian denominations in Ghana on what it means to be successful among Ghanaians, revealed that factors such as: social (e.g. marriage, children), material (basic needs such as economic independence and material wealth); (3) educational and religious (e.g. relationship with God) were determined as measures of success. It would be insightful to understand how such measures of success are maintained or reconstructed in a new and different social and cultural setting, that may have an ability to influence migrant's perceptions and experiences, especially those of belonging and empowerment. According to Arthur (2016), in Ghana, as well among Ghanaian migrants in the United States, children are expected to conform and not challenge parental authority. Discipline and the social control of children's behavior is therefore used to ensure that children remain grounded in both social and cultural norms (Arthur, 2016). With regard to family patterns, most Ghanaian families are patrilineal with fathers and boys holding more respect and authority in comparison to mothers and girls (Siegel, 1996). For women, their respect is generally earned after marriage and bearing children, suggesting the nature of a Ghanaian woman's essence being that of marriage and motherhood (Siegel, 1996), which reflect ideals of femininity. However, in Ghanaian culture the institution of marriage entails the continued domination of women. As noted by Siegel (1996), "a wife, at the time of her marriage, exchanges the authority of her father for that of her husband" (p. 9). This reflects how cultures routinely reinforce gender inequality.

Due to the unfavorable economic conditions among other factors, past research (GSS, 2012) has shown that in 2012, as many as 250,623 people emigrated from Ghana, with most destinations being in Europe (37.7%), followed by Africa (35,8%) and then the Americas (23.6%). Additionally, in terms of employment, most emigrants (76.2%) were gainfully employed, 14.0 percent were students and the rest (6.1%) were unemployed (GSS, 2012). Such statistics present an opportunity to conduct more research on the experience of Ghanaians in Europe, particularly Bergen where they are under researched, which is also due to their small number compared to other migrants (Bergen Kommune, 2020).

3.4.3. The context for Ghanaian women in Bergen

There is very limited research relevant to Ghanaian migrant experiences of issues that have the ability to impact on their experiences of belonging and empowerment in Norway and/or Bergen. However, research has focused on other matters, and I was able to come across literature that can give an insight to factors that seem relevant to this study. A quick overview of research reveals that it has covered issues such as: the integration of Ghanaian immigrants into the labour market in Bergen (Badwi, Ablo & Overå, 2017) and Ghanaian migrants' desire for dual citizenship, including the effects of the renunciation of original citizenship in Oslo (Kassah, 2014). However, research that illustrates nuanced accounts on the overall experiences of belonging and empowerment of Ghanaian migrants and their intersections on the ability to hinder or promote their successful integration in Norwegian society as a whole, has not been conducted and this study intends to fill that gap.

Badwi et al's study (2017) focusing on the importance and limitations of social networks, highlighted the role of immigrants' ability to obtain jobs as determined by not only having the appropriate educational and language qualifications, but largely depends on being embedded in social networks beyond the Ghanaian immigrant community. Norwegian networks played a crucial role with regard to opportunities and for potential Norwegian employers' perception of their employability within both professional and semi-professional jobs. There is a need for more studies that highlight other factors that affect the integration of Ghanaians into the whole of Norwegian society, beyond the labour market, especially among women and mothers who have unique personal and structural challenges. Kassah's (2004) study revealed the importance of dual citizenship for Ghanaian migrants, as denouncing it caused challenges, mostly pertaining to identity issues associated with the renunciation of their Ghanaian citizenship. Although the research was significant in highlighting the consequences of Norwegian non-dual citizenship rules for Ghanaian immigrants, times have changed. Norway has since relaxed rules for dual citizenship from January 2020 (The Local Norway, 2020). Therefore, Ghanaian migrants now have the opportunity to seek dual citizenship. There is still limited understanding on the recent development of dual citizenship in Norway, especially what this might mean for the nexus between citizenship and belonging, particularly for Ghanaian migrant's daily experiences in Bergen, as well as how this may affect individual understandings of their own identity.

Relevant to this study, Kyllingstad's (2017) research is very significant as it emphasizes the political and social context within which the Ghanaian women are situated in Norway. According to Kyllingstad (2017) the immigration policy in Norway is controversial. This is because discussions concerning racism, ethnicity, national identity, social integration, cultural pluralism, cultural and religious tolerance are rarely conceptualized as "racial" issues in the public sphere (Kyllingstad, 2017). It is uncommon to use the term "race" in political or public discussions or in social scientific research regarding Norwegian society, and racial categories are absent in statistics (Kyllingstad, 2017). In line with this study, such racial ideology which prevents or undermines the recognition of difference forms the basis of the nature of the political and social climate in which these women experience migration in Bergen, as not only migrants, but Black women. This reveals how a skewed focus on gender roles as the main determinant of assessing women's empowerment within migration discounts how for ethnic minorities, their racial identity also has the potential to impact on their agency, especially in Western societies (and Norway). This study aims to fill this gap, by highlighting the voices of Ghanaian women, who are not only African but Black, suggesting the need to bring "race" to the forefront and facilitate discussions on "racial issues". As argued by Arthur (2016) Ghanaian immigrants have followed different pathways towards constructing images of race, gender and ethnicity. The negotiations of these pathways to those identities are determined by both the nature and form of contact between minority and majority groups, as well as the degree of inclusiveness or exclusiveness present in the host society (Arthur, 2016).

Other past research significant to this study include Arthur's (2008; 2016) studies on Africans in Europe which illustrates how migration has the potential to contribute to the subjugation of migrants as a result of cultural differences in countries of settlement, serving as a major source of conflict to their own cultural values and practices. For the Ghanaians in the United Kingdom, they were constantly faced with competing cultural ideas between Ghana and the United Kingdom, which affected their sense of identity (Arthur, 2008). However, this same literature suggests the importance of Ghanaian women's agentic role in the preservation and transmission of Ghanaian cultural values in the Diaspora, as a means of continuing their cultural values and traditions, in completely different cultural contexts (Arthur, 2008; 2016). This also served as a way of establishing and preserving the Ghanaian community in the Diaspora.

3.4.5. Concluding Remarks: Research Purpose

This research aspires to contribute to the literature on belonging, empowerment and migration by focusing particularly on Ghanaian women in Bergen, Norway. I intend to explore the interactions between (dis)empowerment and (not)belonging, which have remained polarized as two separate and distinct discourses or practices in migrant research. This will be made possible by looking at how their conceptualizations and experiences of (dis)empowerment influences their experiences of belonging and / or vice versa. Norway as a spatial context that has gender equality on its agenda, is a useful site for this study because it cannot be taken for granted that this indeed is the reality for Ghanaian women. Given their position as not only migrants who are female, but also African and Black, they represent a significant area of inquiry in migration studies, especially in Bergen, in which they are underrepresented.

The theories of *belonging* (Antonsich, 2010), *gender accountability* (Zimmerman & West, 2009) and *empowerment* (Mosedale, 2005) will be very useful in this particular research. I intend to represent the Ghanaian women's experiences holistically by exploring their migrant experiences through such a grounded understanding of belonging (as constituted at the intersection of subjective experiences and socio-political environments), as well as the dichotomy between empowerment and constraints (and not-belonging). Most importantly I seek to understand how migration has transformed their lives, with regard to how it has affected the women and their families in an empowering sense, as argued by Yu (2007) "situated at the center of the empowerment discourse, migration has significant implications on the molding of women's selfness and internal sense of power" (p. 17038). This is because whilst acknowledging that Third World women might be constrained by structural and local factors, it should be acknowledged that they embrace a diverse kind of subjectivity and thus have the potential to exercise choice, illustrating their political, economic and social agency (Yu, 2007). Therefore, although this study seeks to understand the constraints they face as female and Black migrants, it primarily focuses on how they develop(ed) empowering strategies to overcome these difficulties.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I aim to provide the reader with a clear and detailed explanation of the procedures undertaken for the study. This includes the rationale for the chosen research design and methods of data collection and analysis, in relation to the challenges met during the research process.

Trustworthiness, reflexivity and ethical considerations are also discussed as quality assurance measures.

4.1. Epistemology and Research Design

4.1.1. Epistemology

The research epistemology that I adopted is an interpretive-constructivist approach based on the belief that the experiences, meanings and realities of the participants are subjective and constructed within a broad range of discourses operating within a society (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study therefore acknowledges the primacy of meaningful social action, personal choices, value relativism, as well as subjective and multiple realities (Neuman, 2014). Such an epistemology is useful to this particular study, to both reflect reality and unveil the surface of the realities (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Due to the varying contexts of migrant mothers, it cannot be taken for granted that the experiences of empowerment and belonging is a common experience. However, a person's approach to their identity as a migrant mother is dependent on the context (social, economic, cultural and ethnic), and hence necessary to engage with individual accounts by exploring their lived experiences of belonging and empowerment. Additionally, this includes the various ways in which the broader social context impacts on those meanings and realities, as well as on an individual's ability to exercise their agency and personal choices.

4.1.2. Research Design

I chose a qualitative phenomenological design to understand participant's subjective experience of belonging and empowerment, which allowed for participant-centered data collection and analysis. According to Gilmartin and Migge (2016) despite the extensive research on migration, more in-depth qualitative research involving co-resident migrant mothers is required. Therefore, in order to understand belonging and empowerment within the context of migration, a qualitative approach was chosen to address the research questions and purpose. According to Skovdal and Cornish (2015) qualitative research seeks to explore social and personal experiences, practices and meanings, as well as the role of the context in shaping these. This approach therefore suits the research purpose as it can help to explain 'how', 'why' and 'under what circumstances' does a particular phenomenon occur (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). A phenomenological study provides a description of several individuals shared or common meanings of a certain phenomenon or

concept (Creswell, 2013), in this particular case, Ghanaian women's experiences of belonging in relation to empowerment. Therefore, I collected data from the participants and developed a rich and detailed description of the essence of the experience of the individuals, with regard to "what" they experienced and "how" they experienced it. The 3 themes and the respective sub themes (Table 2) identified during the data analysis and interpretation process exemplify the essence of the women's experiences. A phenomenological study therefore allowed me to specifically engage participants' personal reflections of their migrant experiences, and thus suitable for the research questions. It is important to note that although common understandings were sought, I also highlighted differences in opinion or experiences to ensure that the experiences of participants were adequately represented. In-depth semi-structured interviews, unstructured observations and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which will be explained shortly, align with the chosen interpretive phenomenological approach as it emphasizes the generation of meaning through the co-creation of both the researcher and participants, and not just the interpretation of the researcher, as I might have different contextual factors or agendas influencing the descriptions.

4.2. Research Setting

The research was conducted among Ghanaian women in Bergen. Bergen is the second largest city in Norway, located on the west coast of Norway, and it is a municipality in Vestland (formerly Hordaland) County. As of 1 January 2019, there are 41, 549 immigrants, making up about 17.8% of the total population of 281,190 in Bergen (Bergen Kommune, 2020). There are about 5335 African immigrants in Bergen (Bergen Kommune, 2020). According to Statistics Norway (2020) in Norway and Bergen there are about 2125 and 226 Ghanaians immigrants and Norwegian born to Ghanaian immigrant parents, respectively. Bergen is therefore a significant geographical area for this study. Even though Europe is one of the highest destinations for Ghanaians (GSS, 2012), limited research has been conducted in Norway, particularly in Bergen, where a considerable number of immigrants from diverse backgrounds live in the city (Bergen Kommune, 2020). Therefore, the limited research within the field of migration focusing on Ghanaians located in Norway, especially Bergen, makes Bergen an interesting and relevant choice of study.

4.3. Recruitment of participants

Various sampling methods were utilized to recruit participants for inclusion in the study. Recruitment and interviews were done between 23 October 2018 and 7 January 2019. Purposive sampling was used to select 8 Ghanaian women, who live in Bergen. According to Creswell (2007), purposive sampling involves deliberately selecting participants whom the researcher believes have experienced the phenomenon to be researched, and thus relevant and valuable for the research purpose and aims. With regard to this, I communicated with a couple of my Ghanaian colleagues with the hopes that this would facilitate my initial contact with Ghanaian women. A Ghanaian colleague invited me to their church, which is predominantly Ghanaian in composition. The first 4 potential participants were recruited through this route, although 1 later withdrew for unknown and personal reasons. Another participant was attained through a friend's recommendation. Two participants were recruited through recommendations from direct participants. I had to expand my recruitment methods, and therefore made further attempts by using the Facebook page group *"Africans in Vestland"*, that I had been a member of for more than 1 and a half years. I sent out a couple of personal messages to individuals who met the inclusion criteria. 1 individual responded positively, and a research interview was scheduled for the same week. Since the Ghanaian community in Bergen is relatively small and close-knit, the remaining 2 participants were achieved through recommendations from people that I interacted with during the church services that I attended for approximately 2 months. The implications of such involvement in the church will be discussed in the methods of data collection, particularly under the use of Observations. The implications of having a predominantly religious sample that identifies as Christian, is made evident in the research findings, which however is significant for this study, since as reported by the Ghana Statistical Service (2012), Ghana is predominantly a Christian society.

4.3.1. *Inclusion criteria*

Attempts were made to recruit Ghanaian mothers who bring up their children in Bergen and have been in Norway for a minimum of 3 years and are married to (or cohabitating with) Ghanaian men. I narrowed the inclusion criteria for significant reasons. The uniformity amongst participants in terms of motherhood, nationality, husband's nationality as well as the number of years in Norway ensures that the focal point of analysis, which is empowerment and belonging**,**

is maintained. This was attained by making sure that findings were not implicated by different contextual factors, and consequently, dissimilar personal and structural challenges. This is because the study seeks to establish whether common understandings of belonging and empowerment exist, including the nature of how belonging and empowerment are experienced. Additionally, homogeneity of the sample is very important in a phenomenological study as common meanings and experiences inform the basis of describing the essence of a specific phenomenon.

However, it proved difficult to attain 8 willing individuals who met all the initial aforementioned inclusion criteria. During the recruitment process I realized that for 1 specific participant, I had to critically think about which criteria I could forgo, in terms of its significance in relation to some of the issues I explained briefly in the paragraph above. Ruth met other criteria, with the exception of being currently married (or cohabitating). She separated from her Ghanaian husband, with whom she raised children together in Norway. Ruth has been separated from her husband for 4 months. However, her account proved significant to the research purpose as her account covered experiences she had whilst raising children together with her ex-husband, for the past 16 years in Norway. As a result, even though the inclusion criteria were adjusted as fitting, it still ensured that this did not negatively affect common perceptions and experiences of empowerment and belonging, due to vastly contrasting contextual factors and experiences.

4.3.2. Participants

The table below provides a clear illustration of the profile of the participants who participated in the study. It is important to note that I used pseudonyms to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the participants. All the participants were aged between 32 years and 56 years and had at least 2 children. Most participants worked in the health and social services sector, with the exception of one who is a kindergarten teacher, another who is a student and part-time worker, and two who are currently unemployed. Additionally, as previously explained, all participants were married to Ghanaians, with the exception of 1 who had recently separated from her Ghanaian husband.

Table 1: Participant Profile

Name	Number of years in Norway	Marital Status	Employment Status
Rebecca	5	Married	Employed
Sarah	6	Married	Unemployed
Mercy	10	Married	Employed
Mary	11	Married	Employed
Ruth	16	Separated (4months)	Unemployed (2 years)
Martha	20	Married	Employed
Dorothy	22	Married	Employed
Sophia	22	Married	Employed

4.4. Methods of data collection

The main methods of data collection included in-depth semi structured interviews and observations. Past literature and journaling throughout the research process were also included. Having multiple data collection methods is significant as this facilitates credibility and dependability of findings.

4.4.1. In-depth semi structured interviews

Interviews lasted approximately between 1 hour 15 minutes and 1 hour 38 minutes, with the exception of 1 interview that was 45 minutes long. All the interviews were conducted in English, in the privacy of the participants' homes, with the exception of one interview where the participant suggested that we use the local library instead. Semi-structured interviews which involve the use of open-ended questions (Creswell, 2013) based on the notions of geographies of belonging (Antonsich, 2010), and the analytical framework of assessing empowerment (Mosedale, 2005) were used. The interview schedule also included questions centering on participants' background, motivations to come to Norway, work and family characteristics and coping strategies, among others.

As the primary method of data collection, such interviews facilitated an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants as they enabled participants to discuss in detail issues that mattered to them, based on their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). It is important to note that although I had an interview guide, this served as a basic guide, as participants had a lot of room to speak freely about issues that were relevant to them, as I probed and paraphrased questions for clarity purposes. To ensure that no power imbalances were incurred, I spoke moderately, non-directively, stayed neutral and maintained good rapport with participants to ensure that they freely vocalized their perceptions and experiences honestly (Yin, 2011). Notes based on my own personal feelings and experiences during the research process, especially interviews, were taken to aid reflexivity.

4.4.2. Observations

To supplement the in-depth semi structured interviews, I utilized observations during each interview. My approach to observations was unstructured. Unstructured observations do not use predetermined categories and classifications as observations of behaviours and practices occur in a more natural and open-ended way (Punch, 2014). According to Skovdal and Cornish (2015) the main added value of observations is that researchers are able to learn about participants behaviours and practices in their natural contexts, that is, what people *do*, unlike in-depth interviews that focus on what people *say*. As a result observations are significant in that they have the ability to increase the credibility and reliability of in depth interviews as participants are most likely to give answers they believe the researcher might want to hear during in depth interviews (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015).

Accordingly, during the interviews I was able to observe not only non-verbal gestures, but issues such as decorations and artifacts from Ghana, preparation of Ghanaian local dishes, interactions they had with their children and husbands, and communication in Ghanaian dialects with their families, which represent significant parts of the participants' culture that they still valued and continued to practice in Bergen. After most of the interviews I was invited to partake in dinner, where they had prepared local dishes, and a couple of participants asked me to also participate in preparing one of the dishes. The observations validated the information participants shared with me as I had the ability to witness some of the behaviours and practices they mentioned during interviews, in context. The prolonged stays and conversations after the

interviews facilitated more informal conversations related to the study, as I was able to clarify certain issues and have more in-depth conversations. This necessitated the collection of more valid information as participants' openness increased.

In addition to the observations in participants' private homes, I also attended the local church services for approximately 2 months, where 3 of the participants attended regularly. The services lasted for approximately 2 hours. This was significant as this is an important element of the participants' lives as they attended the services with their families weekly. This was very helpful for the research as I was able to observe interactions participants had with their families and other members of their community. Furthermore, the prolonged visits I made to the local church, which is predominantly Ghanaian, allowed me to obtain a vivid picture of the Ghanaian community, which helped me to obtain highly informative information (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). Attending the church services proved beneficial in the long run as I was not perceived as an intruder, but a fellow member of the church. This helped to establish some trust and familiarity between me and the participants, which also contributed to attaining more recommendations from direct participants and other members of the community. The observation data was collected through field notes. The observational notes that I took helped to aid my reflexivity in that I was able to distinguish mere observations from my individual interpretations and reflections, which helped me to monitor the extent to which my own biases and interpretations shaped the data generated, to ensure that the findings represented participants' perceptions and experiences (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015).

4.5. Data management

Data management is a very important element in qualitative research because research rigor and quality assurance are dependent on the secure storage and retrieval of the data (Creswell, 2013). Audio recordings, transcriptions and written notes were stored on my personal student account, on the University's computers, which is password protected to enable the secure storage of the data. Such ethical considerations were undertaken to guarantee participant anonymity.

4.6. Data analysis and Interpretation

The data analysis and interpretation method employed in this research involved the description of the themes that emerged from the data by using the framework identified by Braun and Clarke

(2006). Thematic analysis is a method of the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Attride-Stirling (2001), thematic analysis facilitates the understanding of an issue or meaning, including the implications of an idea. The framework was used to identify and analyze the data collected, in which relevant statements and phrases (themes) relating to theories of belonging and empowerment as well as other issues that emerged as important from the data. This method of data analysis was chosen as it is compatible with the phenomenological design and the research purpose, providing rich, detailed and complex data thus suitable for this research. Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis framework allowed me to unpack the individual accounts by organizing and indexing the data into themes, through 6 phases to develop meaningful patterns. The phases included: (i) Familiarizing myself with the data, (ii) Generating initial codes, (iii) Searching for themes (iv) Reviewing themes, (v) Defining and naming themes, and lastly (vi) Producing the report.

As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), it is important to note that even though steps were followed, the data analysis was not a linear process, but rather an iterative process as the steps provided a basic guide as I moved back and forth as needed throughout the phases. Considering that I had prior knowledge and preconceived notions about the research topic, the participants became the focus of analysis as I entered into the participants' world through active engagement with the data. I also focused on how each participant understood their experiences, by paying particular attention to significant meanings and patterns which occurred. Thematic analysis allowed for flexibility and openness, ensuring that any preconceived notions I had about the data did not influence the data analysis process. Such a framework that privileges understanding participants' experiences from their viewpoints and contexts was therefore compatible with the research purpose.

4.7. Trustworthiness of the research

To ensure the quality and credibility of this study, the framework of criteria for quality assurance provided by Yilmaz (2013, p. 322) which highlights various considerations be taken throughout the research process was utilized as a reference. For example, credibility was secured by searching for rival explanations and providing context rich descriptions of participants accounts. Providing evidence of the participants' understandings and experiences of belonging and empowerment, through examples of relevant quotes, in relation to the identified themes; ensured

that findings are truly representative of participants' accounts of migration. This also ensured confirmability. Furthermore, rival or alternative explanations were considered, and additional relevant literature consulted during the data analysis stage in order to develop a deeper understanding of issues; to ensure that conclusions drawn were truly representative of their experiences (Yilmaz, 2013). Dependability was accomplished by providing clear explanations of my role as the researcher as well the theoretical frameworks and the methods of data collection and analysis used. Transferability was established by providing sufficient information about the research context, the participants, and myself that the reader is able to make an informed decision about how the findings of the study may be made relevant in other contexts.

4.8. Reflexivity

Power imbalances inherent in qualitative research, particularly in the researcher-participant relationship influence the research outcomes (Finlay, 2002; Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). Accordingly, I assumed reflexivity throughout the research process as a response to any biases that may arise as a result of the limitations of the researcher-participant relationship and ethical dilemmas (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015) to ensure quality assurance. To reduce researcher bias, I met in person with my peers and supervisor to discuss several issues and receive feedback on my drafts. These processes proved significant as they allowed me to monitor when and how my values informed the study, so that participants' perspectives were not overshadowed. From the onset I sought to reduce the power imbalances between me and the participants. Interviews were planned in advance, according to times and locations most suitable for participants and the researcher, which set the basis for two-way communication. All interviews except for one were conducted in their homes, which participants expressed appreciation. Most mentioned that they hoped that I had obtained valuable information considering the distance I had travelled, the length of the interviews, and the nature of the research project being a master's thesis. Such factors contributed to participants' openness and willingness to share their experiences, as they understood the importance of the interviews, which enabled them to give valuable information.

Phenomenological research allowed both the participants and I to be involved in the data construction, as I regarded them as partners and not 'subjects' but as equal contributors, ensuring that my own biases did not overshadow participant narratives and meanings. As a Zimbabwean I am aware of how my nationality might have positioned me as an 'outsider' since I lack in-depth

knowledge and experience about the Ghanaian culture. This could explain the hesitance of some individuals who had initially expressed interest in participating in the research. Although I sensed some initial discomfort from some participants before interviews, this was not lasting. This is because I navigated this by introducing myself in terms of my nationality, culture, academic interests as well as my personal interest in the research topic. I expressed my own concerns about my experiences upon the completion of my studies as I intend to seek employment. This opened the door to participants sharing their initial experiences of staying in Bergen with regard to employment. This significantly reduced perceived power imbalances between me and the participants, as they regarded me as a younger woman seeking their experiential advice on issues they had experienced since their initial settlement in Norway.

Additionally, engaging in discussions with them over coffee, or a local dish they had offered me naturally created a space in which the interviews became less interrogative and made the participants warm up to me, which seemed evident through their relaxed nature and increased openness by the time of the start of the interview. Interviews therefore seemed like regular conversation, the only difference was that participants shared their stories as I listened more and asked a few guiding questions and follow up questions as the interview progressed. Being an 'outsider' was also a positive. For example, this allowed me to be more neutral and understanding of their accounts or experiences. This was significant during the data analysis process, in that in some way it gave me a perspective that they (or another Ghanaian researcher) simply do not have.

I am aware of how differences in terms of life stages (e.g. marital status and age) might have created some distance between the much older participants and me. However, I noticed that these participants took on more "caregiving" roles, which is very common in some African cultures, as they were more hospitable, and repeatedly asked me about my general well-being, my academics and if I had older figures from the African community to reach out to in times of need. Additionally, being an African woman might have also created a sense of comfort, trustworthiness and ease with participants, which facilitated a level of openness and honesty required for the study to be credible and dependable. The assumed sense of "common-ness" and familiarity, in this case that of being a Black, African and female migrant, allowed participants to talk about issues openly with less restraint, positioning me as a "friend". Therefore, my positionality facilitated a collaborative participant-researcher relationship. This ensured a deep

understanding of participants' lived experiences through visiting their context, and thus presenting a true account of their lived experiences**.**

4.9. Ethical considerations and challenges

4.9.1. Ethical considerations

To protect the interests of the participants, I ensured that ethical standards were adhered to. According to Skovdal and Cornish (2015), revealing people's ways of living that may deviate from what is considered as the norm may incur harm to the participants. As a researcher, it was therefore imperative for me to be aware of research-specific ethical implications, which includes the principled deliberation about courses of action and moral salient issues (Punch, 2014; Ryen, 2011). Accordingly, throughout the research process, I was aware of the variations in the basics of ethics, including what is considered 'ethical' within the context of Norway and the cultural background of participants. Prior to recruitment of participants, I obtained ethical clearance from the Norwegian Centre of Data Research (Appendix 3). Avoidance of harm, informed consent and anonymity, as suggested by Skovdal and Cornish (2015) also informed the ethical considerations that guided the study.

For informed voluntary participation, I gave participants a verbal and written explanation (Appendix 2) so that they understood the nature of the research and made an informed decision concerning participation. This includes information about research objectives and the potential benefits and risks of their participation (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). The consent to audio records the interviews was also given by each participant. Seeing that the Ghanaian community in Bergen is relatively small and close-knit, extra care pertaining to the personal information revealed about individual participants was considered, to ensure avoidance of harm. I guaranteed the privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of participants through the secure storage of audio recordings, the use of pseudonyms and not revealing any harmful information during the write up that can be easily identifiable (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). The write up was undertaken at the University library, and as a result, all the digital recordings and written notes were safely stored on the University personal computer, with a personal individual account that is password protected. Audio files, transcriptions and written notes were deleted by the time of completion of the report writing to ensure that confidentiality and data protection were adhered to.

Additionally, I utilized Creswell's (2011, p. 93-94) framework of ethical considerations at various stages of the research process to ensure that the study is ethical.

4.9.2. Challenges

I encountered three main challenges during the research process. The first challenge pertains to the research context itself. The Ghanaian community in Bergen is relatively small, and particularly, Ghanaian mothers who bring up their children in Norway and are married to Ghanaian men constitute a small demographic. Some of the Ghanaians I had interacted with (prior to recruitment) were raising their children in Ghana and were married to Norwegian men. Additionally, a couple of potential participants dropped out for personal and unknown reasons. This made the recruitment process challenging and time-consuming, which also explains the minimum variability in the marital status of the participant sample. Second, I noticed that a couple of the participants spoke unrestrained about negative events or experiences that had bothered them after the interviews, when they knew that they were not being recorded. Although this is a naturally occurring experience, I understand how this might have affected the data generated. However, I made some additional notes as soon as I arrived at my place of residence to ensure that all the information we had discussed during and after the interviews was noted, which strengthened the validity of the data generated. I understand how this might raise ethical concerns, however, the use of pseudonyms and revealing minimum specific personal individual information, allowed me to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

Finally, upon realizing the academic nature of the study, most participants required a lot of affirmations (verbal or otherwise) that they were giving me the "right" answers. I therefore assured them in such instances so that their confidence or willingness to talk openly was not affected. However, I was aware of how this "pressure" to give right answers might have impacted participants' responses during the interviews. This explains why I repeatedly assured participants during the interviews that there were no right or wrong answers as I wanted to hear their stories in terms of their own individual lived experiences.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

The next 3 chapters aim to answer the following research question: *How do the Ghanaian women construct belonging and empowerment in Bergen?* The chapters therefore offer a critical discussion of the factors that affect how they make sense of and experience 'belonging' and 'not-belonging', and (dis)empowerment in Bergen. To understand how the Ghanaian mothers construct belonging and empowerment, it was imperative to highlight their subjective understandings (of belonging and empowerment), within the context of the structural factors that impact on these meanings and experiences. This includes exploring the everyday practices they engage in, by exercising agency to create and negotiate a sense of belonging. Therefore, I identified 3 interconnected themes relating to Ghanaian mothers' daily experiences in Bergen, which are factors that aid their construction of belonging and empowerment, namely;

- The elusive nature of belonging,
- The role of empowerment.
- Finding home: avenues of belonging and avenues of 'being' in Bergen.

The table on the next page illustrates the main themes and the respective sub-themes, which are interconnected and underpin all participant accounts.

Table 2: Themes and Sub-themes: Ghanaian women's experiences and perceptions of belonging and empowerment

Theme	Sub-theme
The elusive nature of belonging	● The role of self-identification as Ghanaian on perceptions of belonging. ● 'Living in Bergen' and 'Being Ghanaian and African' ● Home as both Ghana and Norway ● 'Living in Bergen' and factors that contribute to feeling at home in Bergen.
The role of empowerment	● The inequitable household division of labour ● The experience of racial discrimination ● The transformatory nature of migration
Finding home: Avenues of 'belonging' and avenues of 'being' in Bergen	● "Home" as a physical space to practice and transmit Ghanaian cultural values ● "Home" as a place for political resistance ● Regular visits to Ghana ● Christianity ● Motherhood as a source of empowerment

CHAPTER 6: THE ELUSIVE NATURE OF BELONGING

This chapter answers the following research question: *How do the Ghanaian mothers construct "home", and how does this affect their experiences and perceptions of belonging?* This section therefore offers a critical discussion of how they make sense of 'belonging' and 'not-belonging' in Bergen. The findings illustrate a high homogeneity among the Ghanaian mothers' sense of not-belonging, as most participants' narratives reveal a lack of place attachment to Bergen. Of the 8 women, 5 expressed that they do not have any place attachment to Bergen, primarily due to their self-identification as Ghanaian, which makes it difficult for them to generate a sense of

belonging in Bergen, whilst only 3 of them (Mary, Rebecca and Sophia) consider both Bergen and Ghana as home, indiscriminately.

In relation to this, for those 5 women, although contextual factors in Bergen (e.g. the presence of an immediate family, being employed and financial stability, among other factors) made their day to day lives in Bergen worthwhile, that didn't necessarily contribute to generating feelings of place attachment. Interviews revealed struggles with feeling a sense of belonging in Bergen rooted in their perceptions of Bergen as a transitory place, as they repeatedly mentioned that no matter for how long they had stayed in Bergen, they were still Ghanaian. As pointed out by Ahmed et al (2003), home has been conceptualized as a single, localized place often associated with migrants' countries of origin, instead of the country of settlement which remains 'a strange land', which is evident for 5 of the Ghanaian mothers. Such dispositions reveal how for most of the Ghanaian mothers, "living in Bergen" contrasted with "Being Ghanaian", which was central to their perceptions of not-belonging in Bergen, revealing the complex nature of identity on migrants' sense of belonging in places of settlement.

However, in contrast, for Mary, Rebecca and Sophia such economic and contextual factors made them feel at home in Bergen, as the absence (or limited nature) of these factors in Ghana necessitated the generation of a sense of belonging in Bergen. Unlike the other 5 Ghanaian mothers, they indicated that they considered both Norway and Ghana as "home", indiscriminately. This raises the question of whether such old notions of "home" as "here" as opposed to "there", truly represent all migrants lived experiences (Phillip & Ho, 2010), inviting more explorations highlighting the "co-presence of plurality in forms and of belonging" (Antonsich, 2010). Therefore, to holistically represent how all of the Ghanaian mother's construct belonging, it was imperative to highlight their subjective understandings (of belonging), whilst highlighting the role of self-identification in these narratives. Therefore, I identified 4 interconnected sub-themes relating to the Ghanaian mothers' perceptions of belonging which are factors that aid their construction of belonging, made explicit through their conceptualization of "home", namely.

- The role of self-identification as Ghanaian on perceptions of belonging.
- 'living in Bergen' and 'being Ghanaian and African'.
- "Home" as both Ghana and Norway.
- "Living in Bergen" and factors that contribute to feeling at home in Bergen.

6.1. The role of self-identification as Ghanaian on perceptions of belonging

Past research has shown that every individual has an existential desire to belong to something or someone (Antonsich, 2010). According to Antonsich (2010), belonging to a place becomes one and the same with belonging to a group of people, and thus belonging becomes synonymous with identity, both social and individual. In relation to this, Arthur (2016, p. 76) proposes that "identity connotes an individual's sense of belonging. It is the product of self, the social environment, culture, race, genetics, physical characteristics, and kinship connections." Considering the heterogeneity in the Ghanaian mothers' sense of self identification, identity was examined by looking at how they feel they belong to Ghana and/or Norway and the interaction between their "subjective positions and social and cultural situations that give a person a sense of personal location, which may be locally situated, extend nationally or transnationally, and shouldn't be contained within borders of individual nation states" (Glick Schiller, 2003, 2005, as cited in Goulhasen, 2017, p. 162). This suggests how the Ghanaian mother's sense of self identification has the potential to implicate their sense of belonging when nations of origin are considered. Findings suggest that there is no single factor shaping their self-identity, as both multiculturalism and trans culturalism best describe these Ghanaian mothers, with self-references to belonging signifying first a Ghanaian national heritage, and then an African-centered continental heritage, and for 3 others this includes their Norwegian citizenship. Their narratives revealed questioning, disruption and consolidation of their Ghanaian identities, and for some of the Ghanaian mothers this included their Norwegian identity that was facilitated by their Norwegian citizenship; whilst they tried to make sense of their day to day experiences of belonging in Bergen.

6.2. 'Living in Bergen' and 'Being Ghanaian and African'

Within the context of migration, "feeling at home" is very significant for migrants as it might result in an individual leading a life that is worth living and meaningful (Antonsich, 2010), having an impact on their overall experiences in places of settlement. When I asked participants about what makes them feel at home in Norway, their initial reactions indicated that their conceptualization of "home" was primarily tied to a geographical location. Most participants' notions of home are for the most part laden with a sense of both love and loss for their native

country, Ghana, which also extends to Africa in general, signifying how their identification as both African and Ghanaian affects their experiences of belonging in Bergen. Their motivations to settle in Norway, despite feelings of not-belonging, were attributed mostly to the transformatory nature of migration to create better opportunities (e.g. stable employment and income) that would not have been made possible in Ghana. Consequently, this sense of love and loss for Ghana (and Africa) is interconnected with their idealization of "home" and "returning home" in the future:

> *"I am not from here* (laughter). *I have a house to live in. I have my kids; I have my job and everything. If I had everything like this in Ghana, then I wouldn't feel like going to any place. I will think like oh, but I have everything here that's have to make it like home. But then I just ... I still feel like it's not home, it's because in my mind, I know I come from somewhere and I have to go back maybe that's it but then it never feels like home".* ***- Ruth***

Similarly, Martha had this to say:

> *"We will never feel at home because we just have to put it in our minds that we are here for a purpose the day is coming we will go home… If God did not come and pick us up tomorrow, of course Africa. Back home sweet home.* (laughter)." - ***Martha***

Sarah mentions how Africa and not Norway, is home:

> *"The thing is I am not from here. We are from Africa. I just came here to find money or something to go back to our country. I do not feel like here is my home. I feel like Africa is my home".* ***- Sarah***

Even though when I had asked Dorothy if her feelings about "home" had changed since settling in Norway, she initially indicated that her ideas about "home" primarily constitute a physical private space (in Ghana) where she could *"relax and start the new day"* as well as the presence of her nuclear family and having a job. Her parents' death, and her siblings relocation to other countries made her question what home was, whenever she travels to Ghana, revealing how for her the continued presence of one's nuclear family is a prominent factor contributing to one's sense of belonging in a place. However, her inability to feel rooted in Norway due to her skin color, made her still regard only Ghana as home, in spite of her initial reservations. When I asked her about the factors that make her feel like she does not belong in Bergen she responded:

> *"the color of my skin, my plans are to go back home in the future. I am here now with my kids and husband. We are here in Norway, we have lived here for long, but you know you will never be part of them. You do not belong here. In Ghana even though I feel empty when I come home, I feel at home, that this is my country as soon as I step out of the airplane, I feel that I belong here".* **- *Dorothy***

The previous quotes by the Ghanaian women reflect that there is some level of security and comfort that comes with factors such as the presence of one's immediate family and securing employment in Norway. However, for the majority, Norway is not perceived as "home", but a transitory place that offers certain opportunities, which explains their future plans to return home - to Ghana, as emphasized by most participants even if only at retirement. This is the point at which they differentiate between "being Ghanaian" and "living in Bergen". Their birthplace, Ghana retained the central perceptions of their identity, and consequently, that of place attachment and belonging. This shows how for these women, their identity is rooted in their birth and heritage, and thus absolute (Skrznecki, 2004), and settling in Norway did not expand their notions of identity, despite how post identity theories (e.g. Glick-Schiller, 2005) suggest otherwise proposing that the self can be reinvented as cultures become more diverse. The previously mentioned quotes also reveal how their lack of place attachment to Bergen was also tied to their awareness of their migrant status, that of being an "outsider", which also exemplifies how the subjective feelings of belonging can also primarily manifest as a state of mind or way of thinking making it difficult to feel at home regardless of the contextual factors in the place of settlement, in this case Bergen. Moreover, this corresponds with Antonsich's (2010) suggestion that belonging is used more or less consciously as synonymous with identity, particularly national and ethnic identity. Correlating with Goulhasen's (2017) study, these women's assertions also reveal the structural link between belonging to a group of people and belonging to a place (Pollini, 2005) by differentiating between 'being Ghanaian' and 'living in Bergen', highlighting how identity becomes synonymous with social identity.

It is interesting to note that in Rebecca's case, she juxtaposed belonging in Ghana with belonging in Norway. Unlike Ghana were belonging constitutes an innate sense due to birth or national identity, in Norway it is not fixed, if not inherently impossible, then potentially attained through the process of adjusting to a certain level, which seems somewhat far-fetched or rather unending and thus elusive:

> *"At home in Ghana we are all the same. We all have ... how do I call it? The same culture in the same society. I understand them, they understand me. We understand our norms, we have the same, I mean ... But here you move, here everything is different. Different skin tone, culture, everything is different. Then you have to go through the process of adopting different processes of adjusting just until you get to the level of now, I think I got. I am part of this society. But then in Ghana I am born into it. I am part of it already. I am always feeling at home"* - ***Rebecca***

Mercy expressed similar sentiments about the need to "adjust" to attain some level of feeling at home in Norway, which she still felt was difficult to attain:

> *"In fact, let me tell you, you only have to adjust. But feeling at home? There is nothing better than home. Home is home. Home sweet home. You understand?"* ***- Mercy***

The fact that most participants have been in Bergen for over 9 years, whilst some over 20 years, but still do not feel at home, reveals how as a migrant, as illustrated by Mercy and Rebecca, a sense of belonging in a place of settlement is in itself particularly difficult to attain owing to a multitude of factors, and most particularly their self-identification as Ghanaian. Being Black and Ghanaian essentially made them visibly different (e.g. see Rebecca's previous quote), and therefore "othered" in ways that made them not blend in. Such external differences, including cultural differences among others validated their Ghanaian roots, suggesting how difference becomes a signal for exclusion (not only by themselves, but by the Norwegian society as well, as discussed in Chapter 7), revealing the impact of nations of origin on cultural identities and differentiation. As argued by Antonsich (2010), the paradox of the politics of being is that even when an individual seeks or attains assimilation, external differences may act in ways that prevent "sameness" by providing an external validator of "difference', and thus "otherness". The ability to understand others and to be understood conveying a sense of community, which is an integral part of any culture, as expressed by Rebecca, is important to her sense of place-belongingness, which was a common sentiment across all participants. This aligns with Antonsich's (2010) argument that culture plays an important role in an individual's ability to feel at home in a certain place.

Therefore, no matter how long the Ghanaian mothers had stayed in Bergen, it appears as if for these women, seeking place attachment in Bergen is not the goal, as it seems elusive, but what remains at the core of their long term settlement in Bergen is *"adopting different processes*

and adjusting", regarded as one of the ways of "successfully" 'living in Bergen'. Such ways of 'living in Bergen', including avenues used to create a sense of belonging, along with avenues of 'being', (which will be discussed in Chapter 8) have become essential to their daily lives as a method of responding to unpleasant factors in Bergen that threaten their sense of belonging. Goulhasen's (2017) study also suggests how migrants' notions of belonging are implicated by their self-identification with nation of origin and thus they might not necessarily have a sense of belonging in host countries, rather they consider themselves as merely living in the host countries.

6.3. "Home" as both Ghana and Norway

In comparison to other participants who faced conflict between considering both Norway and Ghana as home, or rather Norway as home, and thus had future plans to "return home" to Ghana, even if only at retirement, Sophia, Rebecca and Mary spoke in detail about how they consider both Norway and Ghana as home, indiscriminately:

> *I feel like I have two homes. Here in Norway and in Ghana. So, I tell myself that I have two homes. ... Actually here, I live here. You are not born here, you just moved here because you want to live a life which is a little bit better than one would live in Ghana, but not that the only difference is your finances that you get are usually higher than in Ghana. I do not see any difference in that, that is my view*. - ***Sophia***

Mary mentions how she has some sense of belonging in both Norway and Ghana:

> *"When I am in Ghana, I miss Norway. And when you are here you miss it. So right now, it is like I have two homes".* ***- Mary***

For Rebecca, home was Ghana, as well as Norway:

> "*When I go to Ghana, I am Ghanaian and when I am here, I am Norwegian".* ***- Rebecca***

Unlike the other Ghanaian mothers, such expressions reveal that they feel that they belong to Norway and Bergen at the same time. In terms of identity, it is clear that their feelings of belonging to a place and processes of self-formation are mutually implicated, since belonging becomes a "personal, intimate and existential dimension which narrates and is narrated by the self" (Antonsich, 2010, p.7). This explains how for these women, their sense of self (identity) and belonging is mutually rooted in both Ghana and Norway as they feel rooted in both places. Additionally, such sentiments reflect that "home" is not necessarily a single fixed geographical

place. However, it is contextual and based on multiple factors that contribute to an individual's sense of belonging to both the country of birth (Ghana) and settlement (Norway). Thereby uncovering how migration has the potential to expand notions of identity, as it can transcend national and ethnic identity, necessitated by their Norwegian citizenship. This suggests the "co-presence of a plurality of forms of belonging, variously constituted in relation to the permeability of their identity boundaries" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 653). This shows that unlike other participants (e.g. Ruth, Martha and Mercy) how a "community of belonging" as conceptualized by Probyn (1996) can actually exist outside of a "community of identity", revealing the blurry lines between cultures as relational webs in active interaction with each other. For these three women, "home" is Ghana and also Bergen, as it depends on the location, and thus not fixed to territorialized notions of belonging. As Yuval-Davis (2011, p. 5) claims, it is clear that their conceptualization of home involves the sense of rootedness in a socio-geographic site and it can be constructed as an "intensely imagined affiliation with a distant locale where self-realization can occur".

Goulahsen's (2017) study on French female migrants in Manchester and London proposes a refined notion of transculturality as a useful concept in highlighting the various processes in which migrants renegotiate their identities as they navigate social and cultural challenges in countries of settlement, which is very relevant to Mary's, Sophia's and Rebecca's experiences. It became clear that just like the French female migrants in England (Goulahsen, 2017), for Sophia, Rebecca and Mary there exists a hybridity of cultures and identities, revealing that instead of the normative view of cultures as being dualized and polarized as essentially different, cultures are mobile flows in close interaction with one another. Therefore in comparison to other Ghanaian mothers, for these 3 women it seems as if their ability to acquire stable full time jobs, speak Norwegian and "adjusting to the Norwegian system", although it proved to be tiresome and sometimes frustrating, was regarded as a manifestation of both "cross-cultural competence" and the "identiary continuum" (Benessaieh, 2010) which were important for their sense of being both "Ghanaian" and "Norwegian" in some way, important for their sense of belonging not only in Ghana, but in Norway as well. Strategies of self-identification, for example through the use of avenues of belonging and 'ways of being' particularly in Bergen will be discussed throughout the rest of the following chapters, revealing how they attempt to construct and reconstruct identities as they negotiate social, cultural and structural challenges in Bergen. It is important to note that such factors (e.g. the ability to acquire jobs and the presence

of their own immediate families) in Norway allow them to feel like they have a stake in Bergen, especially for the majority of the Ghanaian mothers who do not consider Norway as home. For those who consider Norway as home, these factors contribute to their sense of place belongingness in Bergen.

However, the complex nature of identity and belonging is also evident as other participants explained the conflict they experience between the home of the present (Bergen) and the home of the past to which they plan to return (Ghana):

> *"One funny thing about now is that when I go to Ghana, even when my kids are not with me, I can go like a month. And then I will be thinking you have to go home. But when I am here it is like I want to go home. By the day I am here - is like I want to go home. I mean I do not know where home is".* - ***Ruth***

Rebecca had similar sentiments:

> *"There are a lot of people that see me as different now. Do you get it? I was in Ghana for 5 or 6 months ago and my friends' classmates could not even come. Because they do not know who I have been for the past few years. So, it's very challenging when we are not close anymore because they feel like okay, she is coming from abroad, maybe she got a lot of swags* (style) *you know?"* - ***Rebecca***

It is clear that Ruth's and Rebecca's internal struggles with their sense of belonging in Ghana and Norway, even after initially emphasizing that Ghana held primary notions of their identity as Ghanaian, and therefore place attachment, reveals how self-identification implicates belonging especially in instances whereby the sense of belonging is attached to a geographical location (Ghana). Such contestations of their own identities reveal the "plural sense of self" (Benessaieh, 2010), highlighting how for them identity is plural and cultures as not fixed but permeable. Ruth's inability to "know where home is", after initially emphasizing that Ghana and not Bergen was "home", illustrates that identity is also a psychological dimension that presents itself as internal conflict. This is because identity is underpinned by feelings of belonging as it transcends geographical location, a factor participant had primarily considered as determining "home".

Rebecca's initial emphasis on having some sense of belonging in both Norway and Ghana, is followed by the immediate questioning of her "place" or identity in Ghana whenever she travels. Being Ghanaian becomes less about how an individual personally feels, but

interactional as it consists of how the people that surround you position you or consider you as "one of them". Therefore, Rebecca's and Ruth's sentiments reflect the interconnectedness of identity and belonging, as well as the complex nature of identity and belonging, especially in the context of migration and multiculturalism, and transculturality. These women's perceptions of belonging in Bergen brings to the forefront the usefulness of both transculturality (in the case of Mary, Rebecca and Sophia) and interculturality (the other 5 Ghanaian mothers) as concepts in holistically understanding their construction of "home", and consequently their sense of belonging in Bergen. This is because even though they all come from a common group (Ghana) they still have different processes of self-identification, revealing the importance of not merely considering ethnic minority groups as homogenous.

6.4. 'Living in Bergen' and factors that contribute to feeling at home in Bergen

Even though most women indicated that they struggled to have a sense of place-attachment in Bergen, it was a common perception among all the Ghanaian mothers that certain contextual factors make living in Bergen worthwhile, whilst for Sophia, Rebecca and Mary these factors provided them with some level of place-belongingness. For all of these women, such factors include the presence of their own families, employment opportunities, low crime rates, being proficient in Norwegian, "free" education, and the social welfare system that create a sense of comfort and security:

> *"I feel like my job, that's the most important thing for me that I have my job, that's what I get my daily bread from. So that makes me comfortable".* ***- Sophia***

For Mary, feeling secure in Norway in comparison to Ghana, made her feel at home Bergen:

> *"When I am home, I miss the security, here I can come back anytime you want without thinking of anything bad happening to you. At home you think about it a lot"-* ***Mary***

Ruth suggests how her nuclear family contributes to feeling at home in Bergen in some way, as it makes her life in Bergen worthwhile, even though she maintains that Bergen is not home:

> *"I have all my kids here; they all live in Bergen it's the only thing. But it has never felt like I am home. But it's always like I have somewhere to go home".* ***- Ruth***

Rebecca mentions the prevalence of low crime rate and social welfare in Bergen, which make her feel secure and stable as contributing to feeling at home in Bergen:

> *"I think I am very safe. No criminal activities. Unlike Ghana. You can't even walk through the streets with an iPhone or something like that. They will just grab it. The financial benefit. If you stay here for a certain number of years, you are entitled to certain benefits. Like when you are pregnant, when you have such a number of kids ...benefits from it, which is not in Ghana. Free school. I can now speak Norwegian now".*
>
> ***- Rebecca***

For Sophia, Rebecca and Mary, the presence of such positive factors contributes to their sense of place-belongingness in Bergen. This supports Antonsich's (2010) claim that the presence of economic factors such as financial stability creates a safe and stable material condition for the individual and their family and can make them feel attached to a place that they live. Such factors are also regarded as having empowering effects, and thus making them feel like they have a stake in Bergen, despite the predominant feelings of not-belonging experienced by most of the Ghanaian mothers. The findings reveal that for the other 5 women, where, in contrast with Antonsich's (2010) assertion that economic factors have the potential to contribute to generating a sense of place belongingness, their self-identification with Ghana however overrides their place attachment to Bergen. Such economic factors simply make their settlement in Bergen worthwhile, constituting positive factors that come with living in Bergen, even if they don't necessarily feel at home. This supports Antonsich's (2010) claim that an individual's place of birth, especially where they grew up, remains a central place in their life. This is particularly the reality for this sample seeing that their narratives on their past lives in Ghana were filled with emotions and experiences regarding the presence of their extended families and parents. In these narratives, Ghana was perceived as a place where they could truly belong and be themselves, which contributed to feelings of not-belonging in Bergen.

In relation to the discussion above, it is important to note that the next chapter on the role of empowerment, explores in depth how for all of the Ghanaian mothers such economic and social factors made them perceive their migration as constituting empowering effects, as they felt that their agency had increased in comparison to when they were in Ghana, owing to various factors within the Norwegian context. Thus, even for those Ghanaian mothers who didn't express any place-attachment to Norway, feeling empowered provided a resource for belonging as they felt that in some way, they were attached to Bergen as they felt that their quality of lives had been enhanced when they settled in Bergen.

CHAPTER 7: THE ROLE OF EMPOWERMENT

Throughout participants' accounts, it was evident that feeling empowered was critical to their overall feelings of place attachment and political belonging in Bergen. All of the women suggested that they felt empowered in that they experienced a stronger sense of self, personal independence and confidence, as they negotiated gender roles and a sense of belonging in their daily lives in Bergen. They expressed that in some ways their agency had increased in comparison to when they were in Ghana, although findings also suggest that a few elements of disempowerment were present. This correlates with Mosedale's (2005) argument that empowerment is not a destination, but a journey that is not linear but fluid, reflecting the complex nature of empowerment. With regard to this, in order to illustrate how empowerment affects the women's experiences of belonging in Bergen, these findings suggest the primacy of the reinforcement of inequitable household division of labour, the experience of racial discrimination and the transformatory nature of migration in offering better opportunities, in impacting on their agency, and ultimately, their experiences of belonging in Bergen. For these women, migration therefore had both empowering and disempowering effects, owing to various factors within the Norwegian context.

This section therefore answers the following question: *In what ways does (dis)empowerment affect the women's perceptions and experiences of belonging and not belonging?* The following sub-themes (of which the first two factors are intertwined with cultural and language barriers), as conceptualized by the women; are manifestations of factors that primarily influence their sense of agency, and consequently their ability to sustain a sense of belonging in Bergen:

- Inequitable household division of labour.
- The experience of racial discrimination.
- The transformatory nature of migration.

7.1. Inequitable household division of labour

7.1.1. The gendered nature of disempowerment

Useful to this study, Mosedale (2005) proposes the gendered nature of women's disempowerment, suggesting that women can act to challenge gender roles through redefining and extending the limits of what is possible for doing and being in situations. In this vein, Zimmerman and West (2009) argue that changes in gender interaction are made possible, as

men's hegemony is actively (and socially) constructed, making it subject to social change. Shifts in gender interaction are thus facilitated through shifts in gender accountability as "gender is not "undone" but redone" (Zimmerman & West, 2009, p. 118), which is evident in the narratives of these participants. Despite the advancement of gender equality in Norway, in contrast with other studies (e.g. Parrenas, 2011) that highlight how gender roles are reconfigured after migration upon settlement; these findings illustrate, to a greater extent, the reinforcement of traditional gender roles that are deeply rooted in the women's religious (Christian) and cultural (Ghanaian) values. As a result, traditional gender roles are for the most part not transformed, although they contain a few elements of change, as will be briefly discussed. This correlates with Parrado & Flippen's (2005) study on Mexican women in the United States, that challenges the expectation that migrant women easily incorporate the behavioral patterns and cultural values in places of settlement, but rather, they instrumentalize selective assimilation in the reconstruction of gender roles.

In contrast with Astonsich's (2010) argument against the conceptualization of "home" as a physical, private domain were patriarchal norms are reinforced and maintained; these women's primary perceptions of "home" transcend geographical space, emphasizing the role of socio-cultural background and religion in being manifested and centralized in participants' traditional conceptualizations of "home". Conceptualizations of "home" became synonymous with a nuclear family embedded in a private, physical and patriarchal space where Christian and traditional gender roles of "head of household" and "helper" were maintained and practiced. When I asked participants about their daily routines, with the aim of understanding the division of labour within their households, findings suggest that most women's domestic units are configured according to the norms of a heterosexual, patriarchal family as espoused by Connell (2009); as they retained highly masculinized features: their husbands made most of the household decisions and insisted on the maintenance of traditional gender roles, whilst the women carried out all, if not most of the domestic chores. Apart from their self-preparation for work, daily routines consisted of main activities such as preparing their children for school, cooking breakfast and their children's lunch, and then preparing dinner and cleaning the house upon their return from work. It was the women's main responsibility to see that this ran

smoothly, as their husbands only assisted in a few particular cases. For example, Mary had this to say:

> *"Sometimes I am back by 2 o'clock or 5 o'clock. And If I get here earlier than him then I prepare the food, and sometimes he prepares most of the food, him maybe 30% me probably 70%" -* ***Mary***

Ruth, who recently separated (for 5 months by time of the research interviews) from her husband had this to say when I asked her if there was any significant difference in her daily routine in comparison to when she was still together with her ex-husband:

> *It's the same, no difference from when I moved because it wasn't like we were sharing household activities. It was me doing everything so when I am here it's like the same what I have been doing since I had my children. It's very interesting because with some people it's different. Some of the men help, but with my situation it wasn't like that so it's the same for me. It's not like I am having problems now. It's like even a little bit stress free now. Because you know someone is there who can help you and the person does not. So, it was stressful. Right now, I know nobody is there, so I have to do it. -* ***Ruth***

Ruth and Mary's sentiments support West and Zimmerman's (1987) assertion that gender relations are maintained when doing housework because it is an interactional activity at which both men and women hold each other accountable as "masculine" and "feminine". For these women, "doing femininity", in this case performing most if not all of the household tasks, was an essential part of enacting their womanhood, providing their competence as women, as well as mothers, echoing Simone de Beauvoir's (1973, p. 295) assertion that "one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman". In this regard, for these women, household work was mostly perceived as "traditionally woman's work", and thus their husbands claimed lighter or no household responsibilities, revealing how the household division of labour itself is a site at which gender inequalities are created and reinforced on a day to day basis as "naturally" existing and thus justified (Zimmerman & West, 1987). Household activities were therefore regarded as inherently feminine, that is, what women are. By routinely engaging in inequitable household division of labour, these women's narrations raise the question of the ambiguous nature of their agency, when their culture and traditions influence how they themselves think and perceive of what it means to be a woman, or rather a good mother, of which according to Simone de Beauvoir (2010), is actually given by men. Their gender norms that are inherently patriarchal continue to

inform the basis on which they were not only raised but continue to run their households and also train their children the same values. This is because according to Mosedale (2005), for people who are oppressed the ideology that supports their domination shapes their own perceptions about their own experience, and thus perceiving such situations as fair or "natural", although it is important to not regard these women's own perceptions as unchallengeable. However, such an approach to identifying a normative (cultural) constraint to action in determining their empowerment contrasts with postcolonial researchers (e.g. Mohanty, 1988; Nussabaum, 2001 and Oyewumi, 2005). These scholars applaud the importance of cultural relativism and sensitivity especially in studying Third world countries, because Western constructs, in this case "gender equality", have different implications for African subjects as gender systems hold specific cultural, social and historical significance. In this regard, it was important to also look at other factors that the women considered as empowering to them, which will be discussed in this chapter.

7.1.2. Implications of marriage migration on the sustenance of traditional gender roles

Other manifestations of patriarchal households include the fact that although some women tried to increase the gender parity within their households, it was met with resistance from their husbands. This then led to conflicts and consequently resorting back to traditional gender norms as a means of stabilizing their families and marriage. This seems particularly linked to the fact that all of the women's primary motivation to come to Norway was marriage migration. Similarly, past research has revealed how marriage migration has the potential to reproduce gender inequality (Morovasick, 2014; Pessar, 2005) or rather female domesticity, disguised as "cultural norms". Indeed, for some of these participants, their husbands seemed to hold this against them as a way of sustaining traditional gender ideologies. Some of the women personally felt that since their husbands had facilitated their settlement in a country that they felt improved their living conditions compared to Ghana, they owed it to their husbands to sustain traditional gender ideologies. Thus, resorting to traditional gender roles appears to symbolise going back to their "roots", that is Ghanaian norms, which they felt truly represented their identity and where they truly belonged. Ruth explicitly illustrates how marriage migration weakened her power within the household, seemingly a common sentiment shared by most participants who maintained inequitable division of household labour. She suggested that her persistence on

reforming traditional gender norms was met with resistance and conflict from her ex-husband, ultimately contributing to the collapse of her marriage in the last 4 months:

> *"It has a lot to do with many things* (her separation from her ex-husband). *Gender inequality is one of them. It's just like what I was saying. Just because I am an African woman, I have to be pulled down and I don't like that so that was a lot. It's like 'I brought you from Africa to here, so you have to accept what I say'. And that I won't allow (...) I felt like my opinions were not recognized. There were many incidents that made me feel like I am not important, the man is important, and that's what I don't like."* - ***Ruth, unemployed for two years***

Ruth mentioned how, since her divorce she now had been able to freely engage in hobbies like styling African migrants' hair, a niche within the hair salon industry in Bergen and thus she felt brought more satisfaction and meaning to her life. It can be concluded that the reproduction of traditional gender roles, although disadvantageous, could not be transformed due to their husbands' resistance; even with contextual differences (e.g. lack of extended kin networks and stable full-time jobs) in Norway. The Norwegian context however requires their husbands' increased involvement, which is not the reality in their households. Therefore, they are disempowered relative to their pre-migration stages due to increased domestic responsibilities as a result of lack of social support from their extended families, increasing their burden. Such a manifestation of subjugation reflects power imbalances with regard to how marriage migration provided the basis on which they were expected to maintain traditional gender roles.

7.1.3. The impact of the lack of extended kin networks on social isolation

Following the above discussion, past research has shown the implications of the lack of extended kin networks in contributing to migrants' inability to have place-attachment in countries of settlement (Antonsich, 2010; Gilmartin & Migge, 2016). This is because as suggested by Antonsich (2010, p. 648), such relational strong ties "are sufficient to generate a sense of connectedness with others, on which belonging relies", and thus having the ability to enrich these women's lives in Bergen. The women talked in depth about how the absence of such relational factors contributed to feelings of social isolation as they also had very weak ties with their Norwegian colleagues (due to cultural and language barriers), which meant that they *"had to do everything"* by themselves. Basu (2013) argues that an individual's sense of belonging in a

society is a decisive instrument for enhancing, capability and/or supporting economic progress, because “once people are treated as marginal over a period of time, forces develop that erode their capability and productivity, and reinforce their marginalization. Such people learn not to participate in society and others learn to exclude them, and this becomes a part of “social equilibrium” (2013, p. 324).

In relation to the above, it was evident that such feelings of social isolation had disempowering effects in some ways as it meant that they are/were excluded from employment opportunities and other social resources in Bergen, as all of the women mentioned the primacy of social connections (particularly with Norwegians) in any migrants' ability to attain jobs in Norway. This is because they felt that upon their initial settlement in Bergen, it was very difficult to gain full time employment. All participants indicated how it took many years for them to become gainfully employed, owing to their lack of strong relational ties with Norwegians, which could have given them the needed support to navigate resources targeted toward professionals better. Badwi et al’s (2017) study also illustrated the importance of social networks especially with Norwegians with regard to the attainment of jobs by Ghanaian migrants in Bergen. Resorting to their own Ghanaian communities (church community and friends), although considered as significant for their emotional and physical well-being, seems to further necessitate their exclusion from the Norwegian community as all women emphasized the primacy of the Ghanaian community in Bergen to their feelings of place-belonging and thus they had begun to seek out Norwegian social spaces less. It seems as if such learnt behavior, although well meaning, has become a routine and justified way to participate in Bergen, further marginalizing them**.** In the same vein, Norwegians whether consciously or not, have also learnt to exclude them in the process. This illustrates the cycle of the reproduction of the social exclusion of the Ghanaian mothers in Bergen.

7.1.4. The contextual nature of gender role expectations

For some of the mothers, their gender roles expectations and practices about marriage were context specific as they contrast with their pre-immigration expectations of themselves and their husbands with regard to domestic sharing responsibilities. In contrast with the rest of the participants, when I asked Rebecca, Mary and Sarah if there was any shift in their gender ideologies and practices from when they were in Ghana in comparison to their settlement in

Norway, they indicated the presence of more egalitarian gender roles. They attributed this mostly to the willingness of their husbands to understand their lack of social support (e.g. from their mothers and extended family members), and therefore the need for more involvement from their husbands. As a result, it wasn't merely a matter of choice but circumstance as they still believed in traditional gender roles, but felt that these were incompatible within the Norwegian context, and therefore their husbands had no choice but to help, as they had no one else to assist them. Rebecca perfectly illustrated this predicament, when I asked her if there were any particular differences with regard to how she considered the role of mothers, in terms of "woman's" and "men's" work in Ghana and at the present moment:

> *"I don't see any difference actually. But then in Ghana it's more like you have your own education as a wife but then you still have to take hold of home, cooking, cleaning, shopping everything is your job. But here we share. He cleans, I clean. He cooks, I cook, takes care of the kids and even on Saturdays he has to take care of the kids. But in Ghana he wouldn't be like that. Even if I am going somewhere my mother is there. I would have to go to my mum. But then we share. We try to involve ourselves in everything we do. It's not like me cooking and him sitting, he can cook I can cook, he can shop I can shop".* **- *Rebecca***

Sarah also expressed similar sentiments of shared household activities as a consequence of lack of social support (from extended family), at the same time highlighting that even though she followed her husband when their first child was 10 months old, had they both remained in Ghana the division of labour would have been less egalitarian. Furthermore, she felt that in comparison to Ghana, upon her settlement in Norway, her responsibilities as a mother had therefore increased and burdened her due to lack of support from her extended family as most of the household chores fell on her, despite her husband's involvement:

> *"In Ghana, as a woman you have to take care of your children, take them to school, cook for them. But because my husband was here, it was only me and my daughter. When you are in Africa actually, even if you have one child you get at least your sister and brother to take care of the child. Here it's only you and your husband. You don't have anyone else; everyone is busy. But in Africa even if everyone is working you get help from outsiders. But here in Europe it's like everything is only you and your family. Your*

husband has to help you. In Africa you got your mother, your sister. But here, no mother, no father. It's the two of you alone. God is helping us".- ***Sarah***

Therefore, these women's husbands' increased involvement is a result of unfavorable contextual factors in Bergen which require that they participate more in household chores. Other research has also shown similar findings (e.g. Parrado & Flippen, 2005), reflecting how contextual differences in terms of social support have the ability to impact on the maintenance or renegotiation of traditional gender roles. However, seemingly, their persistent and successful negotiation of the household division of labour with their husbands was regarded as a way of "reclaiming" their agency. When I asked these women how their husbands responded to their need of more involvement, they indicated that initially it was very difficult as they had to *"ask all the time"* until they did not have to anymore, as it had become *"a part of them"*. In comparison to other participants, the willingness, persistence and the ability of Rebecca, Mary and Sarah to renegotiate gender roles with their husbands can be regarded as the beginning of the exertion of their agency, which proved empowering to them as it allowed them to reject traditional gender roles which placed enormous burdens on them, disadvantaging them in comparison to their husbands. It is at this point that the West and Zimmerman's (2009) argument against conceptualizing changes in gender roles as the "undoing of gender" instead of "redoing of gender" becomes relevant for these mothers. Their ability to successfully renegotiate household activities reveals the changes in gender "accountability structures" particularly the household division of labour (in comparison to when they were in Ghana), now that they were settled in Norway, however as women they are "redoing" gender as their activities are still assessed, just in a different context.

As suggested by Mosedale (2005), the assessment of empowerment starts at the analysis of gender relations, and in relation to these specific participants (Rebecca, Mary and Sarah) it can be concluded that they are empowered relative to themselves during their pre migration stage. Migration therefore provided the channel for these women to reassess the traditional gender norms and negotiate what benefited them better and made more sense to them within the Norwegian context. In comparison to other participants who maintained traditional gender roles, Rebecca, Mary and Sarah expressed more freedom in that for example, they managed to now dedicate more individual/self-time to spending time with their friends, pursuing further education, involvement in hobbies outside of the confines of their home and going for walks as

their husbands were more involved. Other participants (who maintained traditional gender roles) emphasized the role of personal initiatives such as time management, planning, involving their children in household activities which weren't always successful, and "relying on God" as ways of managing the workload and stresses. It should be noted that the emphasis on God is particularly important amongst most of these women, as the use of religion to justify and rationalize the maintenance of gender roles as the "norm", even to their detriment sometimes, explains their contentment and acceptance of gender disparity in their homes. This issue will be explained further in the last chapter (avenues of belonging) to illustrate how for these women, belonging to a wider, global network of Christians, that transcends geographical space, provides more fulfillment, helping minimize the effect of unpleasant factors within the context of Bergen that may threaten their sense of belonging and empowerment.

7.1.5. The influence of personal gender ideologies

It is important to note that for some participants, (e.g. Sophia and Martha) the maintenance of traditional norms was also a decision that they themselves upheld, as it wasn't simply demanded by their husbands. This is because they emphasized the centrality of traditional gender norms in their Ghanaian culture (and Christian faith), and thus to their "womanhood". Therefore, they rejected the promotion of gender equality in Norway as they felt that it disrupted traditional notions of what an ideal family is, that is patriarchal. Sophia recounted how through the socialization of traditional gender roles from a very young age, necessitated by her mother, impacted on her gender ideology with regard to "manly" versus "womanly" behaviours and practices:

> *"As a mother I am used to taking care of the kids and I was used to learning all those things from my mother before I came here. So, it's not that difficult to take care of my kids (...) A woman has a lot of responsibilities to take care of. First you have to take care of your kids, then your husband (...) As a mother it's difficult, but if you plan your routine it will be easier for you."* ***- Sophia***

Similarly, Martha revealed the same sentiments of ongoing practices and individual belief in traditional gender norms, from Ghana, contributing to her disregard of gender equality in Norway:

> *I do not compare myself* (*t*o Norwegian women). *I do not see a Norwegian woman respecting their husband. They do not respect their husbands, they can just divorce. Of course, I will want my husband to respect me and I will want to respect my husband but not like here, the culture of "I'm being a man at home"* (head of the household). *Yes, they do not. Everything mama decides. No, I will not let my brother, or anyone treat my brother like that. Or anybody treat anybody's brother's like that. Because you will not bring peace home, it does not bring peace home". -* ***Martha***

Although Ruth indicated that she believed in gender equality, she felt that in Norway women were primarily advantaged, and thus it was problematic as she viewed Norwegian men as subjugated, a perspective that was shared by a couple of more women. It could be that coming from a culture were the subjugation of women is normalized through cultural traditions and norms, settling in Norway were women are more bold and unapologetic in the ways in which they live their lives, was seen as problematic, since it seems that to these participants the only way to be a woman is to adopt ways of life that do not disrupt men's hegemony. This is not surprising as Siegel (1996) examined how the gender normative ideals inherent in the Ghanaian culture reinforce the subordination of women. Therefore, for these participants, Norwegian gender ideologies proved to be the most threatening to their own Ghanaian culture, which was made evident from their quick denouncement of the importance of gender equality, when I probed them about their perceptions of the advancement of gender equality in Norway. This seemed to contribute to their feelings of not belonging in Bergen, as they felt that they did not identify with the advancement of gender equality, which is a prominent feature of Norwegian society, in contrast to Ghana. As a result, they fought to maintain their cultural values and behaviours of Ghana (where they felt they truly belonged, and longed to return rather than Norway which presents itself as a transitory place, where they experienced some level of not belonging). Similarly, Parrado and Flippen (2005) suggest that the reinforcement and maintenance of cultural traits is very significant in the aspect of gender as the disruptive effects of migration, especially networks of support might force migrants to return to idealized and rigid gender behaviours as resistance against massive loss. The reinforcement of women's traditional gender roles becomes the symbolic demonstration of continuity and tradition, especially for people who experience a lack of control over their daily lives (Espin, 1999; Parrado & Flippen, 2005). This is particularly true for these women as they expressed a need to remain true to their

Ghanaian culture and preserve the traditional gender norms, as they *"would never be Norwegian"*.

7.1.6. The impact of gender accountability on legitimizing inequality

Failed attempts at "doing gender", for example by Mary and Ruth by asserting themselves which resulted in resistance from their husbands, demonstrates the aspect of "gender accountability" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, 2009). Challenging their long held normative gender beliefs was at the risk of gender assessment by their husbands as they appeared as not adhering to the normative expectations of "femininity", which for these women inherently require being primarily if not individually responsible for household activities. Although individual agency still plays a role, it was interesting to note that cultural norms and past individual experiences inform their gender ideologies, informing how they "do gender" at home. The process of negotiating gender norms and whether these women were successful or not, demonstrate Zimmerman and West's (1987, 2009) theory of the gender as an interactional achievement, and not something that an individual naturally possesses, revealing the social construction of gender as it is a socially situated performance informed and influenced by the various institutions and ideologies present in a given society.

The participants' (some) emphasis on depending on internal strength, individual planning techniques and "relying on God" particularly in the absence of their husbands' support, suggest how they routinely find ways to manage household activities as they seek to adhere to normative expectations of "femininity" in their culture. The ability of these women's husbands in primarily dictating the nature of the change in "accountability structures" (household division of labour), suggest the disempowering nature of their gender roles in Bergen, as they are left with no choice, but to conform as a way of stabilizing their marriages, even to their own detriment. This is because gender inequality is then reproduced according to the "essential natures" of the two sexes, creating differences between masculinity and femininity in a hierarchical way: "with the gender attributes deployed as a basis of maintaining men's hegemony" (Zimmerman & West, 2009), and thus subjugating the women in the process.

7.2. The experience of racial discrimination

7.2.1. *The context of race relations in Norway for Ghanaian mothers*

According to Kyllingstad (2017), since the influx of immigrants during the last four to five decades, the immigration policy in Norway is among the most controversial topics in Norwegian public and political debates. This is because even though Norwegian public sphere is characterized by discussions concerning racism, ethnicity, national identity, social integration, cultural pluralism, cultural and religious tolerance, such issues are rarely conceptualized as "racial" issues (Kyllingstad, 2017). In line with this study, such racial ideology which prevents or undermines the recognition of difference forms the basis of the nature of the political and social climate in which these women experience migration in Bergen, as not only migrants, but Black women. This reveals how a skewed focus on gender roles as the main determinant of assessing women's empowerment within migration discounts how for ethnic minorities, their racial identity also has the potential to impact on their agency, especially in Western societies.

After detailing her frustrations with not being able to establish a sense of belonging in Bergen, I asked Martha why it was important for her to have a place that she could call "home", to which she responded:

> *"Because in Norway there is discrimination, like you are not my color (...) their culture does not accept foreigners. (...) You can be with them for 100 years and they still want you to see that you are nothing."* - ***Martha***

Dorothy had this to say when I asked her what factors make her feel like she did not have a sense of belonging in Bergen after she had mentioned that Ghana rather than Bergen, was "home":

> *"The color of my skin. Even though I speak Norwegian I do not have their dialect, I speak like a foreigner who is speaking Norwegian. As soon as you pick up your telephone and you are speaking to them, they will be like "she is not a Norwegian", even if you speak good Norwegian, they will look at you differently. There are many Norwegians, when they meet you: "Hi, where do you come from, when are you going back? How long have you lived here?" Haven't you noticed? Some even ask, "Why did you come here?" What is the reason? "What are you doing here?" So, they have always been like that. This is not my country, even if I have my family here, my husband and my children".* - ***Dorothy***

Dorothy's and Martha's sentiments reveal how the loss of a sense of political belonging negatively impacts their place attachment in Bergen, which is also common among most of the participants. Of the 8 participants, 6 indicated that they/and or their children experience(d) racial discrimination in Bergen. During these participants narrations of such negative experiences in Bergen, the contradictions inherent in their narrations promoted my own critical reflections on the impact of race relations, particularly on migrant people of color in Norway. Their narrations would begin with laughter and sometimes end in sadness, or even ambivalence, which was the most prominent reaction. According to them, such narrations of perceived racial discrimination symbolise the pervasiveness of stereotypes based on skin color, which seemingly made it difficult to decipher what is ignorance attributed to malicious intent or lack of knowledge and education seeing that Bergen / and or Norway is less multicultural in comparison to other societies / countries.

7.2.2. "Proving oneself"

For these women, their belonging (to particularly Norwegian professional and social spaces) was solely dependent on having to "prove oneself" as worthy of being and belonging in Bergen's social and professional spaces. According to them, this was attributed to the need for Norwegians to "adjust" to their foreign-ness, a difficult process which required their perseverance and patience. For Mary, she attributes the feeling of not belonging in Bergen to the racial discrimination that she has experienced. She explained how in her profession (kindergarten teacher), she was the only Black teacher, and as a result her credibility was questioned on the basis of her skin color. Another parent's child adoration of her deemed her trustworthy and capable, hence just as qualified as the other teachers:

> *"That's the general thing, if you are Black, they ask themselves: "Why is she here?" But still some of them want to know who you are unless they know "oh she is a nice person", then they will relax. They can ask "is she qualified to be with our kids?". When I started some didn't want to leave their kids with me, then there was this woman who would wait for a Norwegian* (teacher) *to come. Strangely enough this boy loved me* (...) *so one day his mother came to pick him up and the son was sitting on my lap and she wasn't happy, then he said, "I am not going home". I had to talk to him to go to his mum (...) the mother was just standing and listening. The next day she came there was this Black face again*

(laughter) *and the boy just ran to me: "Mary!" So, the mum saw that this person is nice and not harmful to my child. That's what they need to know. So slowly they get used to it. But it's not easy. –* ***Mary***

Ruth's experiences as a nurse (although she has been unemployed for two years now) working with elderly people, illustrate similar sentiments of having to prove oneself, simply on the basis of being a foreigner, particularly Black:

" In the beginning she told me, "I don't like Black people I know you people steal a lot", but once I was going there for a long time she got that trust and even the White people who were, we were six in the group, she didn't have a trust for anybody, even her own children. I was the only one who was able to take her card and go to the shops and get money and buy things for her and bring the card back, so you have to get the confidence. If I could have been very down and she told me all this (...) but then I didn't do that I kept on going back to her and later on I gained her trust, that it's not all that Black people do (...) I have to have this confidence and go back again not to withdraw not to stop working because of what other people have told me (...). That's the confidence I want to put in my kids, okay?" - ***Ruth***

Ruth explained further, how for her, the change in the attitude and behavior of the patients, illustrates the motif of "proving herself":

You don't just have to give up, that this is what they've told me, so I am not going back. You don't know it. It happens in the next place that you go to, so you have to be there and prove yourself that this is not it. It is difficult. Proving yourself is not easy. (...) You have to prove yourself all the time and then you have to be firm. Yeah, in the beginning I was crying. But crying won't help, even Norwegians when you start crying they will tell you that you are stupid (...) Since then I decided to never to cry in front of a Norwegian (laughter), *if you do they think that you are stupid". -* ***Ruth***

When I asked Dorothy if she felt valued and respected in her workplace, she had this to say:

"In the beginning I had issues with racism. Now everything is okay because I have been there for a long time and everybody knows who I am, what I do" - ***Dorothy***

For these participants it seems as if belonging is utilized as a fundamental resource sought to enhance their sense of agency. Belonging becomes an accomplishment bestowed by external factors (the Norwegian society), enacted through the women's ability to remain patient and

persistent by utilizing ways to be perceived as "one of them" as political belonging is granted. This finding supports Antonsich's (2010) assertion that every politics of belonging consists of two sides: the side that claims belonging, and the other side that has the power of 'granting' belonging; with a process of negotiation, violation and rejection and transgression at an individual or collective level, underlying this process (Croucher, 2004; Skrbis et al, 2017). The ability to feel at home as not only a personal individual issue, but also a social one was revealed by how their lamentations regarding the inability to be accepted as worthy and capable at face value - and having to work harder in comparison to their Norwegian colleagues - affected their self-esteem and confidence as it informed their loss of a sense of belonging in such situations. This affected their power and well-being within their professional spaces/relationships as they were subjugated on the basis of their skin color, reflecting the relationship between agency, empowerment and belonging.

It seems as if "proving oneself" was also tied to their perception of discrimination as an emergent, natural element of multiculturally diverse societies, and thus a "nonthing" that needed to be magnified, but something ethnic minorities just had to conquer, as they themselves had made the conscious decision to leave Ghana and stay in Norway. Rebecca's sentiments illustrate this, a sentiment that was widely shared by most of the participants. When I asked her if there were any situations in which she felt like she did not feel valued in professional spaces or other social settings, she gave an example and then had this to say:

> "*Discrimination* (shrugs), *but it happens everywhere. You know, so if you have immigrant background discrimination is a part of your life. And you have to embrace it. It makes you stronger.(...) Sometimes it worries me. But I have decided to live here. We could leave and go back home, but we chose to stay here, so it's my choice, I should be able to handle it myself."* **- *Rebecca***

7.2.3. "Meeting them where they are"

It is interesting to note that after highlighting several incidents of perceived racial discrimination, Mary is quick to note that it is important to not be quick to mark such unpleasant experiences as symbolic of racial discrimination. Rather, as a Ghanaian/ethnic minority, it is about giving oneself time to understand the Norwegian system (cultural and social values) and *"meeting them where they are"*. Similarly, for Sophia, when I asked her if she had any negative experiences in

Norway, she emphasized the perceived innate value some Black foreigners (or other ethnic minorities) learn, as a result of experience: being able to decipher between blatant racism and ignorance, which seems indicative of maturity and education, which comes with life experiences. Remaining calm, studying the system and then responding accordingly therefore becomes a learned response:

> *"Not really, not physically, but maybe I do not know. Being African people, you know how to deal with people. You don't have to be too harsh, you know? You study the system, the way the people are. So, you deal with them the way they are. That's how I deal with my things. I don't deal with it like: "oh you are racist" or anything. I don't deal like that. I just see how the whole situation is and then I decide".* ***- Sophia***

However, Sophia's insistence on *"dealing with them the way they are*" could be a way of coping through tolerance, by acceptance of discrimination, and thus her refusal to dwell on it, if nothing positive came out of it, which was a common sentiment among all participants. For example, her next remark, when I asked her the difference between Norwegian values and Ghanaian values, she was quick to suggest how Norwegians place significant emphasis on skin color and nationality, contributing to "marked differences", creating gaps between migrants and Norwegians, leading to social exclusion / isolation of the former. This is further illustrated by how she describes ways of dealing with such situations: the onus is on her to "do the work" of not being seen as too aggressive and thus furthering stereotypes of Black people, contributing to further stigmatization and social isolation. Ruth had similar sentiments, when I asked her if she thinks such racial attitudes are now changing:

> *"One guy asked me one time, "Have you experienced racism like the way they do to people?" I said, "many times" he asks, "What do you do? When does it happen like that?" I said nothing. There are some people who are very ignorant of us Blacks, and some of them know about our existence but they just refuse to accept it. And you have to just leave it with them. You don't have to take it up with them. You don't have to get angry or something they will try to irritate you and if you get angry, then you are aggressive. So why take it up? I'll just leave it, I will just let you know that you are nothing as you think I am. So, racism is nothing that I think of."-* ***Ruth***

7.2.4. The implications of avoidant racial attitudes on experiences of empowerment and belonging

It is evident that for these women such negative experiences reinforced the sense of powerlessness, as it reinforced how they were "outsiders" (Antonsich, 2010), having to observe and process in order to avoid reacting in ways deemed as inappropriate, furthering stereotypes of Black people and negatively impacting their professional and social positions/status in the process. However, what does this mean for these women's sense of agency and belonging? Tolerating perceived racial discrimination does not advance any active resistance (Hooks, 1990) as argued by Freire (1973) "conceptualization": a process whereby subordinated women should develop a 'critical consciousness' and struggle actively for change, is required for any social change. In this line, empowerment therefore entails both self-respect and challenging social structures (Batliwala, 1994; Yu, 2007). As the research interviews progressed it was easy to see that it wasn't that they purposely tolerated discrimination. Rather, their responses appear to raise the issue of the power of institutions in limiting their sense of agency in ways which make it difficult for them to confidently and effectively challenge racial discrimination (Hooks, 1990) but instead reconcile the loss of a sense of belonging with the various social and economic benefits accrued from settling in Norway, in comparison to Ghana (which will be discussed briefly in the next sub theme on the transformatory nature of migration), as put by Rebecca, "*Worse things are even in Ghana, discrimination is everywhere. People sleep with others to get jobs* (in Ghana). *So those things are minor issues that we can overcome."* It can be said that the quest for being granted political belonging by their Norwegian colleagues thus reinforced a sense of powerlessness, driven by seeking greener pastures best highlighted by the previously stated quotes from Ruth and Rebecca.

7.2.5. Stylish nihilism and the complexity of the reproduction of racial inequality

Avoidance dispositions such as having to "prove oneself", self-censorship and "dealing with people the way they are" even at their own detriment, align with Hooks' (1990) concept of *"stylish nihilism"*. Hooks (1990) describes this as Black people's routine engagement in their own domination through subscribing to the ideology of White supremacy: by seeing themselves through pervasive biases and stereotypes, blurring their ability to clearly know and define instances of oppression (p. 155). Therefore, reinforcing their domination. Any critical

consciousness entails heightening the reality of contradictions, as focusing on them reveals their complicity and the reality of their inability to resist such domination, as they are sometimes compelled by circumstances outside of their control to collude (Hooks, 1990). For these participants, it is evident how disempowering it is to find ways to censor both their speech and behavior in order to "fit better" in spaces that they are deemed as not belonging, in order to be granted political belonging. Being in such spaces meant tolerating the discrimination they experienced as "the way of life", reinforcing a loss of a sense of agency. This is because it renders them unable to face reality and effect change (Hooks, 1990). As their existential need for political belonging prevents them from engaging in any effective political resistance, rather finding solace in their own families, church community and friends. The tolerance of racial discrimination, therefore, symbolizes subjugation (Hooks, 1990) as it was regarded as the most viable way to respond to such discrimination. According to Hooks (1990) the biggest expressions of Black people's complicity has been self-censorship, which includes the reluctance to speak about aspects of their reality that negate the furthering of assimilation or ethnic and / racial uplift, which seemed evident in this sample as it was particularly true for most of the participants. My interview questions about whether the women felt valued in Norwegian society, resulted in hesitance or reluctance to engage in discussions of perceived racial discrimination, with Sarah and Sophia, quick to mention that they do not remember any significant instances, and if they truly had happened, then it was insignificant.

In spite of the limited research on racial relations in Norway which has become increasingly multi-ethnic over the past four decades, according to Kyllingstad (2017, p.8), "skin-color and external physical features invoke notions about ancestry, identity and belonging, and affect the interaction between people". As a result, in spite of the presence of Black Norwegians, and measures to raise social awareness against racism, an ambiguous conceptual connection between whiteness and Norwegianness is still prevalent in Norway (Kyllingtad, 2017). This reveals how little the measures to combat racism have done to alter the way ethnic minorities are seen by White Norwegians (Kyllingstad, 2017). In line with this, Zimmerman and Fenstermaker's (1995) and Festermaker's (2002) publications on *"doing difference"* make relevant the systematic nature of racial discrimination as well as the prevalence of bias and stereotypes and the influence of institutions and cultural norms. This reflects how for these Ghanaian mothers, the institutionalization of racial discrimination enacts particular constraints

for action, consequently impacting on their sense of agency and belonging in Bergen. It was therefore a common sentiment by the participants that raising more social awareness was therefore required to combat issues of racial discrimination in Bergen, as racism / and or race is an important societal issue that should be acknowledged. This is because, according to Astonish (2010), in order for people to feel that they belong, they should feel that they can be authentic, in that they can express their own identity and that they are valued and listened to. In this vein, although as acknowledged by Mosedale (2005) structural forces themselves do not lead to empowerment, however, they have the ability of creating an environment in which these women's agency is facilitated or restricted.

7.2.6. The importance of raising awareness of cultural sensitivity and acceptance

When I asked Mary if she thought it was the government's responsibility to ensure that migrants integrated in Norway with minimal conflict, she was quick to mention that the incidents of racial discrimination were largely due to the ignorance of some Norwegians as a result of lack of education or due to the perpetuation of stereotypes of Black people in media. This, she argued, was embedded in the Norwegian culture, and hence the Norwegian society, and it was therefore not the government itself that had the sole power to drive awareness and social change toward the acceptance of Black foreigners in Norway:

> *"Yes and no. Because the government can decide on many things, but at the end of the day it's the people you live with, work with, it's the culture, the people. That is how they are. Some can accept you for being Black, some need some time to think that this person is a Black person, not harmful. Some need education. It's also part of us, what they show on TV about Africa they show bad things. So, some think Black people are not good. So, they need some education so that we have beautiful places in Africa (...). In terms of migrants, in Norway I don't think the government is doing enough for migrants but at the same time I can't really press about job situations. We have heard worse situations where some Norwegians don't have jobs. But I would be very happy if the government makes provisions for us to get jobs, you are a foreigner you need to survive". –* ***Mary***

Martha had similar perceptions of the need of the Norwegian society to raise children who were accepting and educated about difference and equality:

> *"They should teach their children at home that not everyone they see with a different color or since that person is not our color that person is not a human being. That we make ourselves high and other cultures are Down. That's what I always tell the parents that at home teach your children that we are all human beings, we are all equal".* - ***Martha***

It was clear that the perceived racial discrimination (and other structural realities) experienced by these participants, as put by Antonsich (2010) served as a factor that illustrated the boundary practices separating "us" versus "them", which are the very essence of politics of belonging as inability to feel welcome by people who live in a certain place, inevitably spoils their sense of belonging. The participants' narrations symbolise the racial relations which magnified how they were foreign to Norway, creating feelings of a loss of a sense of belonging, revealing how membership (to a group) and ownership (of a place) are essential elements in any politics of belonging (Antonsich, 2010). The women's experiences bear witness to the disempowerment that emanates from a lack of place attachment that is compromised as a result of little to no political belonging. Voices of resistance are mostly absent, as their narrations are filled with avoidance, creating feelings of helplessness, frustration, despair and in some cases ambivalence. Potentially negating any positive interactions which encourage discussions and actions with the Norwegian community in order to encourage cultural sensitivity and acceptance with regard to ethnic minorities in Bergen.

Even though findings illustrate most Ghanaian mothers' inability to progress toward more egalitarian gender norms (mostly due to their cultural background and reinforcing traditions brought from Ghana) upon their settlement in Norway, posing a particular constraint on their sense of agency; their structural position in Norway (particularly race, language and cultural barriers) significantly undermine(s) their well-being and power within relationships. Parrado and Flippen's (2005) study on Mexican women revealed the causal connection between social structures (e.g. legal status and lack of social support) in the United States as an important constraint on their socio-economic advancement, rather than the less egalitarian gender relations after migration. Such a causation is also very evident for this particular sample as the findings suggest the prominence of social and political structures in Norway (rather than the inequitable household division of labour) in the Ghanaian women's major loss of a sense of belonging and consequently agency.

However, in spite of the structural factors in Bergen that compromise their politics of belonging, these women continuously find ways to exercise their agency by creating ways in which they can leverage some form of belonging, which will be explored in the next chapter. In this regard, Mosedale's (2005) comment best highlights the fluidity and complexity of power in that it is situational as people can be "relatively powerless in one situation and relatively powerful in another" (p. 251), highlighting particularly the centrality of *power within* and *power with* for these women's perceptions of their own empowerment. This is because as suggested by Phillips (1999) and Yu (2007), women's power, particularly in migration, can be enhanced even without the transformation of existing power structures as structural inequality is entrenched in the production regime of capitalism, and thus few would expect it to be eliminated. This sets the basis on which I continue to illustrate these women's empowerment, in the next sub theme and the subsequent chapter, where, as pointed out by Yu (2007, p. 17038), "both the time frame and space are largely determined by strong institutional forces".

7.3. The transformatory nature of migration

In spite of some level of disempowerment experienced through racial discrimination, inequitable household division of labour and lack of extended kin networks, among other factors within the Norwegian environment, findings also suggest the primacy of the gains obtained from migrating to Norway. These include an increased internal sense of power (*power within*) and economic independence for these women's own perceptions of empowerment; highlighting the empowerment disparity between their pre-migration and post-migration lives. This is because for all participants, migration resulted in upward mobility, enabling them to attain more ideal conditions in Norway in comparison to Ghana. Zentgraf's (2002) study on Salvadoran women who migrated to the United States revealed that immigrant women's experiences are best understood within a dual framework, as women's perceptions of life in countries of settlement are mediated by comparisons with their premigration circumstances, particularly their class backgrounds, which is particularly true for this study. All participants' assessments of their lives in Bergen indicated that they were mediated by comparison to their lives in Ghana, of which all of the 8 participants were from working-class or poor backgrounds. Participants acknowledged the transformatory nature of migration in providing better opportunities for themselves and their families. Despite marriage migration being the primary motivation for all of the women's

relocation to Norway, they all indicated that it was still an agentic decision, for example as remarked by Mary: *"It was a decision I had to make for myself, so I came"*. This is because despite the prevalence of some level of disempowerment, for all of the participants, being a female migrant became synonymous with being empowered. This was because migration facilitated leaving less ideal conditions in Ghana, crossing borders and getting formal employment/and or career advancement, and providing better lives for their children (and dependents back in Ghana) than they would have been able to do so had they remained in Ghana; and thus an advantage:

> "*The income we get here is more than the salary back at home, so if l were in Ghana now working doing the same job like here, I would not be able to sustain my family, only my nuclear family and not the extended family. But here I work, I can help my children and send some money back home to help those there. Something I would not be able to do if I were in Ghana. It is very important because I am the oldest of my siblings. My mother got sick when I was young, not all of my siblings were able to go to school, they dropped out. I was fortunate that I was the eldest and she was healthy, so I was able to go to school. I got that privilege as the eldest to finish school. Having the work to do I have to help them, those that were unfortunate. There are four of us in our family, the rest are in Ghana. Both parents passed away."* **- *Dorothy***

For Martha, the ability to pursue her passion, nursing, proved to be fulfilling, rewarding and self-actualizing as it also meant being able to support and provide for her children and siblings back in Ghana in ways she felt her deceased parents couldn't when she was younger:

> *"I wanted to be a nurse. That's a good experience, I went to school, I took the course. It's something that I wasn't even imagining the day would come. I could just see how blood flows in the veins, the heart, I experienced all of that in school (...) so going to the assistant nursing school. (...) I wanted to go to nursing School* (in Ghana) *but after finishing junior school I could see that my mother was struggling to pay the school fees so I did not want her to struggle like that so she was just using her mouth to bless me like that oh one day you'll be a nurse.. So I wished that when I have kids I put them first other than that I could be just a selfish mother also it is not just going to school, what l did not have I want them to have."* **- *Martha***

However, it was interesting to note that for Martha, she recognized that despite the empowering nature of being able to pursue one's passion, it was simultaneously frustrating. This was because she felt that mothering was an inherently a sacrificial role, and thus limiting her full potential (career wise) in some way, highlighting the contradictions that come with being a working mother despite the financial freedom. Her feelings also appear closely tied to the fact that she maintained traditional gender roles, which meant an increased burden on her as she maintained primary responsibility for home and her children. For Mary, the ability to pursue her passion of working with children, whilst simultaneously formally employed and attaining skill enhancement/development, proved to be very significant for her:

> *"I started certain things in Ghana like helping children, I was a seamstress by profession, working in the church helping children in Sunday schools all of that. I think that coming to Norway by God's grace l was able to move forward, working with kids. At the kindergarten it's not just working, I get to learn a lot of things, maybe in Ghana I wouldn't have a lot of knowledge I have now. For example, every year we go to certain courses, and they teach us a lot of things (...) but in Ghana it's not easy, here it's like they educate you on many things. I think I have come very far from what I started in Ghana in terms of working with kids."* ***- Mary***

When I asked Mary about her biggest achievement since settling in Norway, she explained in detail, jovial and beaming with pride about all of her accomplishments whilst on the job. She showed me various accolades and trophies she had been awarded from the two kindergartens that she had worked at in Bergen, at the same time reminiscing about how it had been very difficult for her to be initially employed, and how the recognition attained had resulted from her hard work and commitment:

> *"I am a hardworking girl. Whatever l set my heart on, l want to use my heart and strength to achieve it (...). I thank God and l love my job, working with kids, I think it's a blessing".*

For Rebecca, her biggest achievement was purchasing their house after 4 years in Norway, which she felt might have been impossible if both she and her husband were employed back in Ghana, due to the higher income (especially her husband's, who was currently pursuing a PHD) incurred from being in Norway. Sarah indicated that her primary motivation for coming to Norway was mostly financial in that she felt that for her, being employed in Norway meant earning a lot more

money in comparison to Ghana. It is clear that migrating to Norway therefore facilitated upward mobility for all participants, as they reported that the financial gain resulted in more independence and freedom, and thus they were more content, suggesting that class backgrounds and financial resources influence migrant's satisfaction in countries of settlement.

It was also evident that working in Norway gives the women more autonomy in managing their lives, in spite of their position as Black migrants, especially since all of them said that they feel that they are better off being in Norway than in Ghana. Seemingly, the ability to be gainfully employed enabled them to be respected by both their husbands and dependents as bread-winners in Ghana, as it challenged the gender order: as women's changing role in society as equal economic providers for the family is upheld, allowing them to challenge conservative gender norms of the sole/primary male breadwinner.

Sophia said "not really" when I asked her how her life had transformed in Norway, emphasizing instead that there was not much of a difference since she was already employed back in Ghana, the only difference was that her income was now much higher. For Sarah, although she felt that the Norwegian job market was very difficult for foreigners, emphasizing that for her, settling in Norway meant occupational downward mobility since both her husband and herself were not currently employed. She nonetheless spoke in depth about the immense benefits of healthcare in Norway, especially prenatal and postpartum care. She said that in Ghana checkups are very expensive, whilst in Norway such services are free for pregnant women. Mary talked more about the negative aspects of healthcare in Ghana, as it is often the case that mothers are uneducated about the necessary antenatal care needed, including vaccines; unlike in Norway were such information and services are more readily available, and thus "fantastic" as put by Rebecca:

> *"It's fantastic in Norway. Super Good. In terms of checkups. Like the antenatal, they check you up, they make sure you are in a good situation until your labour time. But in Ghana l used to take this. What do you call it?* (inaudible) *just to keep the child, but here there's nothing like that. They actually asked me which way l want to do my labour. They have a pool birth (...) So for healthcare I would actually say that here it's better than Ghana."* - ***Rebecca***

It was therefore a common sentiment across all participants that the ability to get access to more information and being able to utilize it and other resources within the Norwegian society,

enabled these women to perform their mothering responsibilities more effectively and confidently, in ways they couldn't have, had they remained in Ghana. Similarly other participants mentioned the merits of child benefits meant for their children, which they all felt led them to positively assess Norway as a good environment for mothers. They felt that it allowed them to do their mothering responsibilities in a better way than if they were in Ghana, where it was difficult, and sometimes frustrating going through pregnancy and raising children with little to no income and unfavorable healthcare conditions. For example, Dorothy had this to say about the benefits incurred navigating their parenting in Norway, in which social welfare services are available, unlike in Ghana:

> *" (..) Child benefits in Norway, you don't have anything like that in Ghana, and then here they go to school for free. They just started last year in Ghana for those going to secondary school, but the basic school they pay. Here they don't pay, you just pay the semester fee. So those are the benefits.* (..) *My husband took paternity leave for the youngest child. It helped because in Ghana it will be 6 weeks, but since here it was 1 year for me, I did not have to worry about going to work, I had to forget about work. So, it was very good, it was very beneficial to me. It would be very stressful if it was 6 weeks like in Ghana, being alone with my husband, then baby, housework and other things. Here it was 1 year leave and pay".* ***- Dorothy***

It was therefore clear that the Norwegian healthcare system and social welfare services are crucial elements in these women's relatively positive assessment of their mothering in Norway, as this facilitated their assessment of motherhood as an empowering resource in itself, especially within the Norwegian context, in spite of the various challenges they experience. The transformatory nature of migration, was therefore also closely tied to participants perceiving motherhood as an empowering resource in itself. This correlates with Morokvasic's (2014) argument that migrants tend to use the gender order as a tool for self-realization, autonomy, empowerment and upward mobility for themselves or for the benefit of the family, or as a resistance against denominations and power hierarchies (related to race, class or migrant status). This will be further discussed in the next chapter. It was amusing to note that in contrast with other participants, Martha's denouncement of gender equality, made her negatively assess the benefit of paternal leave, suggesting that women and not men were "naturally" equipped to

conduct emotional labour, indicating how a women's own gender ideals influence how they assess the merits of paternal leave in Norway:

> *"(...) as a mother I have the food of course, the father the care and giving. But as the mother you have everything. The child does not look anywhere. The baby of course they want to see papa and everything, but I have the milk, I have everything".* ***- Martha***

Furthermore, it is important to note that not all the Ghanaian mothers perceived the additional education and language qualifications they pursued in Norway as positives required to integrate better into Norwegian society, specifically professionally, which had however been regarded as a gain by some participants. When I asked Rebecca about what she was able to accomplish but might not have if she were in Ghana, she was quick to note that although she obtained a Bachelor's degree upon her settlement, she didn't see this as an accomplishment, but an inconvenient setback due to the language barriers. The language barriers meant that even with the required academic qualifications, you might not get the job you expected, or as she put it "*you have to take another degree or go below your standard*".

When l asked Rebecca if she felt that it was the Norwegian government's responsibility to ensure that migrants are able to integrate socially and professionally with less challenges, she compared marriage migration unfavorably with the situation of refugees. She argued that whilst asylum seekers and refugees might have similar problems with integration, the plight of those who come through marriage migration is a significant cause of concern as she perceives NAV (national office for social welfare) as not taking them as seriously. She felt that if help were to be given to refugees and asylum seekers it would be of great help if it were equally provided to all migrant groups as their needs were not any less significant. Rebecca's frustrations with the difficulty of attaining employment upon settlement (due to cultural and language barriers) were widely shared by all participants. This supports Antonsich's (2010) argument that formal employment is a contributor to an individual's sense of belonging, of which for these participants also enabled them to have some sense of agency. It is not surprising that all of the women perceived the ability to obtain jobs, financial stability, economic independence and the ability to send remittances to Ghana as measures (among others) of their success when I asked them what they felt were some of their biggest achievements since their settlement in Norway. As proposed by Osei-Tutu et al (2018) Ghanaians measure success through the achievement of such factors. It was clear that for these women, the ability to be "successful" in comparison to when they were in

Ghana, especially in a foreign country that was characterized by some challenges, a great measure of success as they felt that their agency had increased in comparison to when they were in Ghana. It was interesting to see that such measures of success still remain central to them, and guide their perceptions of empowerment, and in some way belonging. As suggested by Mosedale (2005), it is important for those that are empowered to claim it, as it is not something that can be bestowed. The ability to have more opportunities in Norway to pursue such measures of "success" was perceived as empowering as it also contributed to some sense of attachment as a result.

In response to open-ended questions about how their lives differed from when they were in Ghana, participants said that they felt more empowered in that they experienced greater sense of independence and autonomy, which they attributed to the resilience they built as a response to the challenges they experienced since their settlement in Norway. Being able to come out stronger and successful, whilst experiencing challenges in an unfamiliar society, was therefore regarded by all these Ghanaian mothers as a major boost to their self-esteem and confidence, which consequently included assisting their families adjust and adapt to two very different cultures, in the process. It is important to note that such a depiction of *power within* was closely tied to the notion of maturity, which according to them was an outcome of migration, in that they felt that they were able to adjust, become resilient and thus improve themselves and become independent; enhancing their self-confidence as a result. For example, Sophia, had this to say about how her self-confidence and self-esteem had increased considering the challenges she had experienced upon her settlement in Norway:

> *"I have grown up. I wasn't a matured woman, unlike the mature woman l am now. It has changed because in life every day when you wake up things are changing in your life. I wasn't the same woman l was when I came here. But now, I am now a woman. I have been through a lot of things, learning how to manage my life. So, for me it's a lot of changes in my life, l have kids ... a lot of changes. Before I was single, now l have a family".* ***- Sophia***

Sophia seemed to attach her maturity to the natural progression that is necessitated by different life stages. For her, the shift from being a single woman to getting married and becoming a mother, whilst navigating these identities as a migrant, resulted in an increase in personal growth and self-esteem. It is clear that migration provided a pathway for her to 'become' a woman,

which is not something new for some mothers to equate motherhood with womanhood. This is particularly true for her and other participants where traditionally in Africa, the essence of womanhood has been tied to mothering (Siegel, 1996). Therefore it can be implied that successfully assuming mothering responsibilities in a particularly challenging environment was widely considered as one of the major sources of self-confidence. Thus, similarly for Rebecca, her self-confidence was tied to adjusting to mothering responsibilities within the Norwegian context (which would have been different if she were in Ghana):

> *"... Yes, I have* (the extent to which she has overcome challenges as a migrant mother). *The thing is the more you practice, you become used to it. (...) Overcoming those challenges I would say it's more of practicing. The more you practice, the more I get used to it. I have been in this for so many years now. So, you have to accept that there is no one else to help. I am super, super confident now because now I know. The clothes for each weather. I know what to give my kids to school. I am on top of everything when it comes to childcare because I have the experience now and I am so comfortable with it. Though I may be lacking a few things that I may not know. I think I am okay. I am very okay now."* ***- Rebecca, Nurse***

For Dorothy, her ability to remain determined and persistent in order to thrive and provide a better life for herself and her children and siblings, gave her a boost of confidence she felt that she had not had in comparison to when she was in Ghana as well as surviving the early days of migration:

> *"As l said if l was in Ghana l wouldn't be able to help my siblings, but here I am able to take care of myself and send something to them. So, I have had some challenges, but I am generally happy about being here. I talked to a man from Liberia, and he said as soon as he set in a plane and flew out of the country, he knew he wasn't going to get those things he got at home, things will be different, so he set up his mind: were l am going all of this is my choice. So, I have to be able to go through everything. So that's what it is with me".*
>
> ***- Dorothy***

Such accounts illustrate the development of self-confidence and a stronger sense of self, suggesting how empowerment can't be merely reduced to the way the household division of labour is conducted. This is especially true within migration where it has the potential to offer transformatory opportunities; and therefore, the role of agency and the ability to exercise choice

are important in the full depiction process of empowerment. This is not *power over* but *power within* which according to Mosedale, (2005) all sense of power starts with the latter, as assets such as self-confidence and self-esteem are necessary before anything else can be achieved. It appears as the relative social isolation experienced by these women as a result of the lack of extended kin support along with the limited role of the state with child care, limited contact with Norwegians (due to language and cultural barriers), and the experience perceived racial discrimination, are significant factors that forced these women to resort to rigid gender norms as they felt that they experienced some level of disempowerment in Bergen. Resorting to rigid norms seems to have been a way of providing continuity to their own Ghanaian traditions and culture.

7.4. Concluding remarks

The varying levels of (dis)empowerment experienced by these women shows the complex nature of migration on women's empowerment. Therefore, as echoed by Yu (2007), it is important to not only understand, but accept women's own contradictory accounts of what migration means in their lives. As a result, correlating with Parrado and Flippen's (2005) study (2005), the association between migration, work and women's empowerment is not always direct and straightforward, as they face greater hardships in altering the sexual division of labour within the household, significantly lessening the potential gains in women's position that accrue from paid employment. Participants perceived belonging as an empowering resource, enabling them to have a sense of agency, whilst structural realities (e.g. language and cultural barriers) and the experience of racial discrimination constrained their sense of agency, and consequently empowerment. Not-belonging was therefore one of several manifestations of disempowerment, and vice versa. In this regard, in contrast with Mosedale's (2005) assertion that the analysis of women's empowerment as a group is to begin with the analysis of gender relations, and thus merely relegating disempowerment to solely being disadvantaged by the way power relations shape wellbeing, opportunities and choices - these findings also suggest the centrality of their ability to exercise social, economic and individual agency (in spite of structural factors) in their sense of feeling empowered.

Similarly, although migration is not inherently a tool for women's empowerment, past research has also shown that despite some subjugating elements within host countries, certain gains are still valid (Gilmartin & Migge, 2016; Pessar, 2005; Zentgraf, 2002). For these

participants such gains allowed them to not only experience some sense of belonging, but also feel empowered in that they felt more independent and reported a stronger sense of self whilst mothering and seeking a sense of belonging in a totally new cultural context. Apart from the gains necessitated through for example financial freedom and class upward mobility, clearing their pathways in allowing them to feel empowered; a discussion on how they exercise their agency through their Christian faith, utilizing motherhood as a source of empowerment and "home" as a physical space to transmit their values - among other factors - will be done in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8: FINDING HOME - AVENUES OF BELONGING AND AVENUES OF BEING

Even though the Ghanaian mothers' perceptions of belonging are primarily implicated by their self-identification as Ghanaian, the inequitable household division of labour and the experience of racial discrimination, among other factors within the Norwegian context; they were aware that they will not be returning to Ghana in the near future. Therefore, they had to come to terms with their reality by recreating "home" through daily "home-making" practices in Bergen. These practices include utilizing their homes as places for not only transmitting and practicing their own Ghanaian cultural values, but also as sites of political resistance; regular visits to Ghana with their children, Christianity and utilizing motherhood as a source of empowerment. As Antonsich (2010) argues, there are multiple forms of belonging, and these avenues of belonging illustrate such a plurality for the Ghanaian women. However, it is important to note that except for Mary, Sophia and Rebecca, who considered both Ghana and Norway as home, these home-making practices served as avenues for 'being' in Bergen, for the five other women. This is because for them such practices didn't necessarily generate a sense of place attachment, but these provided useful ways of 'being', or rather 'living in Bergen', making them feel like they have a stake in Bergen. This coincides with Antonsich's (2010) argument that belonging is also conceptualized as a journey, which seems evident in these women's lives.

Therefore, this chapter highlights what it means to be "at home" in Bergen for themselves, and thus what it means to be "living in Bergen" whilst trying to leverage some form

of belonging**.** The research question: ***"****In what ways do the Ghanaian mothers respond to the constraints or conflicts they experience?"* is therefore addressed in this section. I illustrate how the Ghanaian women exercise their agency through asserting their identity and simultaneously regaining some form of control with regard to experiencing some level of disempowerment as a result of personal and cultural challenges experienced in Bergen as migrants.

Past research has emphasized the important role of minority ethnic migrant mothers in the preservation of the culture of their mother/grandmother and homeland (Arthur, 2008) through cultural transmission and reproduction of traditions and practices in countries of settlement (Arthur, 2016; Goulahsen, 2017), suggesting the significant role of cultural continuity in migrant mothers' lives. All the Ghanaian mothers mentioned the significance of such continuity in their families and Ghanaian community. As argued by Bell (1999), belonging has a performative dimension, consisting of repetitive practices which are related to specific social and cultural spaces linking individual and collective behavior, which are important in the construction and reproduction of identity narratives as well as constructions of attachment. It was evident that the "home-making" practices were linked to habitual Ghanaian cultural beliefs, practices and traditions they pursue in Bergen as a way of renegotiating and leveraging some form of belonging, despite experiencing little to no place attachment and political belonging. Therefore, in their re-creation of "home" for themselves, they find solace and comfort in everyday practices with the main avenues of belonging (and being) including utilizing:

- "home" as a physical space for transmitting and practicing Ghanaian cultural values.
- "home" as a site for political resistance.
- regular visits to Ghana with their children.
- Christianity
- motherhood as a source of empowerment.

8.1. "Home" as a physical space for transmitting and practicing Ghanaian cultural values and language

Past research (e.g. Arthur, 2008, 2016) has highlighted the essential role of Ghanaian mother's in the preservation of Ghanaian cultural values in the diaspora, which includes practicing and embodying the traditions in all daily activities. Similarly, all women mentioned certain values that they believed were Norwegian, but were peculiar to them, and thus they did not want their

children to adopt. The home environment therefore became a place in which they "train" their children "Ghanaian" values that they deemed as most representative of their Ghanaian culture. When I asked the women how Ghanaian values differed from Norwegian values, all participants expressed that values such as respect and care for the elderly, empathy, openness and children's obedience as values they felt were not prevalent among Norwegians. As a result, they expressed how they did not want certain perceived unpleasant "Norwegian" values to be adopted by their children, as they felt these were "not Ghanaian", for example Martha had this to say:

> *"Like caring for example here. Like where I come from, I don't talk to my mum or elderly person anyhow whether you are a family member or not I cannot open my mouth and talk any how to anybody. And care, if like I am going out and I see anybody lying on the street. I will not just pass because I do not know the person or the person is Black or the person is White, no. I have to pay attention to the person, he is a human being, also I do not need to be a family with anybody before I love that person I do not need to. Respect and caring are inside the love (...) My kids, I do not want them to learn that. But you know they are at school they learnt different things but when they come home I am trying to let God help me to raise them in a way that not only mum and dad but anyone who needs help.. not just anybody else who will take your kindness for granted not that."* - ***Martha***

Ruth suggests the difference in the parent-child relationship between Norway and Ghana, particularly the diminished parental authority as well respect for the elderly (which was a common sentiment among the women):

> *"In Norway you do not have so much control over things that are going on with your kids ..as a child growing up* (in Ghana) *I saw that parents are responsible for their kids, but here in Norway it's not like that. I try to do this ... respecting elders no matter if it is your mum or dad... you just don't say that 'you are not my mummy', you can't talk to me like that like the kids here do".* - ***Ruth***

Perceived diminished parental (and elderly) authority, which is upheld in Ghanaian culture (Arthur, 2008), was regarded as a threat by all of the Ghanaian mothers. For example, whilst Ruth was seeing me on the way out, after her interview session, one of her daughters asked her to bring her a glass of water on her way back, to which Ruth exclaimed: *"Did you hear her, she just asked me to bring her some water from the kitchen. As I was telling you, I could never say*

that to my mother, could you!?" Other Ghanaian mothers mentioned how child discipline expectations and practices contrasted with those in Ghana, and some of them mentioned how the Barnevern should be inclusive of migrant cultures which have contrasting cultural values, and thus child discipline measures:

> *"At home (Ghana) you can beat your child. Even raising your voice too much here is the beginning of trouble with the barnevern. In Africa, you, the parents are in control, you teach the child. Although here you are the parents, the banervern decides a lot of things, but the thing is that they "poison" the child, not really poison but you get it (...) The child will say what they want. But it's both ways parents respecting their children and children respecting their parents. Most children who end with barnevern have problems. If parents are sick then it's okay, but if it's little they should try to fix it. You don't have a lot of authority. The school authority keeps influencing the children, yes they should know about violence and so on but I think they almost brainwash the children that you can misbehave and they won't punish you, that's bad cause some children can misuse that".* ***- Mary***

Most participants mentioned similar frustrations with the inability to discipline their children in ways that they deemed appropriate, particularly corporal punishment. Which is seemingly rooted in their Christian faith[2], and Ghanaian culture where parental authority is not questioned and "beating" children is viewed as a valid form of discipline (Arthur, 2016). This was a common sentiment among all the women. Ruth particularly mentioned a couple of incidents where her children had previously lied about being physically beaten by their father, which had led to retribution from the Barnevern and simultaneously frustrations with how to regain her parental authority that she felt had severely diminished as the result of the advancement of children's autonomy in Norway. The inability to practice forms of child discipline that they had inherited from their own parents and culture, made them resort to using religious ideology, particularly Christian teachings and going to weekly Sunday church services with their families. This served as a form of bringing some form of reference and stability to their own homes in the form of identification with religious values such as respect. The Ghanaian mothers' use of Christianity is discussed further in this chapter.

[2] Premised on the Bible verse: "He who spares his rod hates his son: but he who loves him disciplines him promptly". (Proverbs 13:24, New King James Version).

It is important to note that some Ghanaian mothers also mentioned that settling in Norway necessitated learning how to "discipline" their children in other non-physical ways, and thus had enhanced their parenting ability in some way. Rebecca brings to the forefront the difference in "openness" between Ghanaians (and Africans) and Norwegians, suggesting how Norwegians' reserved nature is remarkably different and thus difficult to navigate, particularly as a migrant:

> *"Our way of life, you see somebody like 'How are you?' You have a long chat! Here it's not like that. We are on the bus, we know each other, we met before, your flat mate sees you ... 'Hi?' But nothing. But now, maybe after the interview we are friends now. I will meet you in town. We can stand by the roadside and we will talk for 30 minutes before we leave".* **- *Rebecca***

The findings, particularly in regard to the upbringing of the children, illustrate that the women's physical homes serve as a source and means of reinforcing and sustaining their cultural and traditional beliefs that they regarded as significant to them. Cultural differences between Norway and Ghana act as a source of constant conflict, sometimes to a point where it raises the question whether one's children will be "Ghanaian enough" owing to the different cultural traditions, practices and values within the Norwegian environment that they inadvertently adopt during interactions within the school environment and the Norwegian society as a whole.

However, Mary emphasized that although there were some Norwegian values that she didn't identify with (for example children's autonomy), she maintained that there were various ways in which Norwegian values and Ghanaian values enhanced each other, and thus teaching her children values that she felt were important from both cultures was essential:

> *"Okay so I tell them this is Norway. We are from Ghana. We take the best from Ghana, and we take the best out from Norway, and then we put the two together. You don't take the bad things from Ghana or the bad things here. You would rather take the good things. The good knowledge, the good discipline. Then we take the good things we have in Norway."* **- *Mary***

I also asked the women about the additional practices and traditions they maintained to ensure that their children have a connection to their Ghanaian culture, which they had all expressed as important to them. All participants expressed that it was imperative for their children to

understand their home language. As a result, they all communicated with their children in *Twi*[3]. Although some participants acknowledged that their children were not very fluent in *Twi*, their ability to understand it was good enough although they could respond in Norwegian. However, for Rebecca, the inability of her children to be proficient in *Twi* served as a source of frustration. This is because the home language was tied to her identity as a Ghanaian, a medium which she hoped her children would also use to express their Ghanaian identity, as she does:

> *"Well for language if we were in Ghana for culture wise it would have been best. Though we try to speak our own languages at home, but they still reply in Norwegian, and it's very annoying for me sometimes because it seems like they do not even understand my own language which is a problem for me"* - ***Rebecca***

Other factors which illustrate the importance of their Ghanaian culture include their preparation of Ghanaian local food, which most participants expressed their children enjoyed, and for some their children preferred. For example, during my research interview with Elizabeth, she prepared a local Ghanaian dish *fufu.* She spoke highly of the dish, remarking how it was important that such food consumption habits were essential to feeling at home in Bergen, even though she had initially said that she had no place attachment to Bergen. It seems as if sharing *fufu* was a way of making me feel at home, in her place through sharing something that held such a sentimental value connecting her with her homeland, Ghana. Similarly, at the end of my interview session after discussing the availability of food products for the migrant community in Bergen, Sarah insisted that I take home some of her Ghanaian milk product that she routinely purchases at a local store in Bergen. She indicated that even though the store was very far away, she wasn't familiar with the Norwegian ones, even after more than a couple of years in Bergen. Remarking that in spite of the negative things she could not tolerate about Bergen, having such options of food products from Ghana, made staying in Bergen worthwhile. As argued by Mankekar (2005) and Petridou (2001), routine preparations and grocery shopping for food from migrants' "home" helps migrants feel at home in host countries, as food can be a bridge to a new home. With regard to this assertion, suggesting one of the differences between Norwegian culture and Ghanaian culture, Rebecca had this to say: *"We don't eat the same food, food is culture"*. For these Ghanaian mothers, such patterns of food consumption in Bergen provide continuity to their Ghanaian culture.

[3] One of the official languages of Ghana.

Additionally, most of the Ghanaian mothers' houses were decorated with artifacts from Ghana. Such domestic objects included Ghanaian crafts such as handmade indigenous carvings made of wood, paintings and contemporary art on their walls, depicting Ghanaian lifestyle. For example, Rebecca had handmade cushion covers depicting traditional musical instruments, as well as similar paintings on her walls. This illustrates how through such artifacts, their homes provide an avenue for providing the continuity of their Ghanaian culture, even in Bergen. Similarly, past research has shown how objects brought by migrants in new places of settlement can significantly transform 'spaces' such as houses, into 'places' of home, as these carry special meanings (Phillip & Ho, 2010; Salih, 2003). This is because as suggested by Antonsich (2010), the materiality of cultural practices and expressions such as food consumption or production and language can generate feelings of intimacy, contributing to an individual's sense of feeling at home.

8.2. "Home": as a site for political resistance

Closely tied to utilizing their physical homes as a source and means of reinforcing and sustaining their Ghanaian cultural and traditional beliefs, it was evident that their homes have also become sites of political resistance: a safe place in which they can find solace from racial discrimination (Hooks, 1990) and cultivate some sense of belonging, through actively engaging with their children and husbands about the realities of race relations in Norway. Most participants mentioned how they make sure to discuss with their children issues of perceived racial discrimination they would have experienced in Bergen, particularly at school, as a way of facilitating ways in which they can actively respond to such instances, which was refreshing and exciting:

> *"For them* (her children) *although their skin color is different, they think that they are like them. It's only recently that my boy started saying ... "Sean beat me, Sean beat me" (..). Bullying will be there* (laughter). *My girl complains that they don't even want to play with her. So, I will just tell her, my girl is a bit lighter because of her dad, and she even complains: "mummy why is that my skin is dark". I ask her "Look at me, am I not beautiful?", she responds: "You are beautiful". I say, "good". She tells me: "mommy, my hair is kinky and it's so beautiful". I tell her "When I do the braids for you, you look different that makes you unique". So, I love it. "You are beautiful." So, I mean, I try to*

> *put her where she is from. I try to place her. "You are Ghanaian. That's how you look. We are Ghanaian that's how we look." But they also feel like they are Norwegians whom they are also part of"- **Rebecca***

Martha had similar notions to share, regarding the importance of teaching her children to embrace their "Blackness", as a means of cultivating their own sense of self-worth in instances where their sense of belonging was affected due to racial differences / and or perceived racial discrimination:

> *"So, the kids also feel like what is going on, I was born here? But now they are kids, they think they are like them* (Norwegians), *actually they do not accept them. (...) Maybe some foreign kids are accepted like some Norwegians but no (...). They will never accept us. Never. Even them* (her children) *were born here but it's like hatred for our color. But I pray and then talk to them: "Do not listen to anything they tell you". It's very sad. (...) but God is helping us. I told them, "who you are is beautiful, you are nice, you don't need anybody to tell you that this is your color, that you are chocolate sometimes". They say you are a poop, they tell the kids. I told them that "you are your color, and you cannot change it." "You can go to the shop you can buy some soap cream you can bleach, but have you seen someone say I'm going to the shop to buy soap or cream to be Black it will not happen, so see how important your color is". That one I am not joking at all l tell them. - **Martha***

This reflects how for these Ghanaian mothers, despite the perceived racial discrimination they and their children experience, they actively find ways to respond to such matters, as a way of equipping their children with necessary tools for combatting negative effects of internalizing such experiences. Hooks (1990) illustrated how Black mothers have traditionally used their homes as sites of resistance against the experience of racial discrimination in the United States.

8.3. Regular visits to Ghana with their children

When I asked the participants why it was important to visit Ghana regularly with their children, Ruth and Rebecca best expressed the importance of the regular visits as facilitating not only their sense of belonging, but also their children's:

> *"I want them to know that they'll say 'I come from Ghana' which I want them to belong to. It is very important for me. For the past four years I have been taking them to Ghana. If you don't take them there, they will forget. That's why I try even when I don't have money, I try to borrow to take them there so that they know they have family there".* - ***Ruth***

Rebecca expresses similar sentiments:

> *"I take them to Ghana so that they know where they come from and if possible, to learn. We have been to Ghana 5 times. Every year we go, and sometimes when we spend more than one month they go to school. I just want them to have the feeling. I want them to see what Ghana is like".* - ***Rebecca***

It is clear that Ghana is regarded as a place that is not only central to the participants' sense of feeling at home, but it is extended to their children too. This is because of the presence of factors such as their extended family and the Ghanaian education system that they felt were crucial to their identity as Ghanaian. Other women discussed in depth the importance of their children's enrollment in a private school in Ghana when they stayed for longer periods since they felt that the education system was very different, in comparison to Norway. It served as a way of transmitting some Ghanaian values that they considered as significant for their children. It was evident that in a way, regular travels to Ghana also enabled their children to "see how Ghana is like", so that they could make sense of the Ghanaian cultural practices and traditions they practiced in Bergen, and establish the continuity of these cultural values upon their return. It is likely that Ruth's personal feelings and experiences of not-belonging in Bergen were projected onto her children, which explains the regular visits to Ghana that served as a "reminder" of where they belonged, unlike in Bergen, as she expressed. However, Ruth's personal feelings of her children not feeling at home in Bergen seem to be justified as some women made mention of the discrimination their children had encountered (discussed in-depth in the previous chapter). For instance, Martha described how the regular visits to Ghana necessitate a sense of place-belongingness in her child, a source of relief for Martha, considering the discrimination experienced by her daughter making it difficult for her to feel at home in Bergen:

> *The first time my eldest and l took a trip to Ghana she said she didn't want to live here, we have to go back to Ghana. She said I have been accepted more in Ghana than here because everybody is like me. No discrimination. You are a foreigner, you are, you are*

nobody...I was very sad… she was 8 years, experiencing that. Ok for parents ... they will also know you're not from here. But a child that is born here, also experiences even worse than you, so it is not easy - ***Martha***

8.4. Christianity as a tool for "transcendental" belonging, community and family cohesion

The central role of religion in the Ghanaian mothers' lives was highlighted through their narrations of their daily lives in Bergen. Out of the 8 Ghanaian mothers, only Mercy indicated that she wasn't religious, and thus she found solace in other alternative forms of coping with the challenges she experiences in Bergen. For the rest of the participants, belonging to a wider, global network, that transcends national identity proved to be comforting and affirming of their own "worthiness" or "humanity", especially in such a foreign land. This is because utilizing their Christian faith as a tool for "transcendental" belonging provides a spiritual understanding of human relationships as not only physically premeditated. This allows them to feel connected to a higher power, in this case, God. It seems as if "belonging to God" was therefore regarded as significant, minimizing feelings of the little to no place-belongingness in Bergen by most of the women.

Additionally, all Ghanaian mothers, except Mercy mentioned how their Christian Faith had increased, in that they felt that their personal relationships with God had strengthened since settling in Bergen, bringing to the forefront the capability of religion to facilitate another form of belonging for migrants, perhaps in a way it did not when they were still in Ghana. They all expressed how their identity as Christian took on a different meaning in Bergen. It became a refuge especially in instances where they felt overwhelmed with cultural conflicts and personal challenges, and even more identity crisis in Bergen. For example, when I asked Martha about other challenges she faced as a mother which made it difficult for Norway to feel like "home", besides for example, the issues of child discipline and respect that she had previously mentioned, Martha's insistence on her sense of "rootedness" in God facilitated through her Christian faith was clear. She explained how even though she didn't have a sense of place attachment to Bergen, as it was implicated by her lack of political belonging, true acceptance, or rather according to her, a more significant form of acceptance emanated from God. She captured the essence of the internal feeling of belonging that transcends territorialized notions of belonging (Antonsich, 2010) which emphasize nations of origin:

> *"Their culture does not accept foreigners. For example, like if you go to England, foreigners feel at home. You can be with them 100 years, they still want you to see that you are nothing. It is why I told you in the beginning that I don't need anybody to tell me: "oh you are this". I'm here and I am fearfully and wonderfully made by God and I told my kids the same thing! You do not need anybody to tell you that or "you are Black" or you are this no. So, something like that"* ***- Martha***

Similarly, when I asked Mary about how she navigates the challenges she experiences as a migrant, she explains how her Christian faith is central in her life, and thereby providing a source of security and comfort, even when going through challenges:

> *"I am a Christian. I believe that God is the one who has been helping us. It's not easy being in Norway, married, but God has been helping me. Whenever I am down, I just play some gospel music and then I feel better". -* ***Mary***

When I asked Sarah about the significance of her Christian faith in her life, she brings to the forefront how it gives her the ability to negotiate the various hardships she experiences in Bergen. By acknowledging the persistence of difficulty which seems to create a source of conflict as a Christian, but ultimately, refuge and thus central in her life:

> *"I know that God is a spirit and he lives in me (...) Why is it that we pray from Monday to Friday and the problems are still there? Sometimes I ask myself questions. After you live a righteous life you will leave a good life. (...) I know God is there, so he protects me". -* ***Sarah***

It is important to note that whilst Sophia mentioned the significance of Christianity in her and her family's lives, unlike other Ghanaian mothers, she emphasized that her children were learning about various religions at school and thus encouraged them to exercise their own choice with regard to what religion they believed in:

> *"If you believe in something and if you are a mother you want your kids to follow the same footsteps. If they also believe it then they also join you. Even at school they teach them Christianity, they learn about different types of religions (...) so it's their own choice." -* ***Sophia***

Throughout her interview Sarah repeatedly brought to the forefront the significance of her Christian faith in managing the challenges she experiences in Bergen, for example, with particularly childcare:

> *"In Africa you have other people to assist you* (support with childcare)*, here you won't get it, even if you get you have to pay another person to get that. Children and work, It's God that will give us strength. The school they go to, I have to take them and pick them up, in Africa children will go by bus, then return by it. Here it's very stressful. Thank God that he gives me strength. Europe is different from Africa".* ***- Sarah***

The Ghanaian mothers also actively took part in attending religious gatherings, at a place of worship. These consist of weekly Sunday services and mid-week bible studies, where they would meet up and encourage and lift up one another with bible readings. As I was able to participate in the weekly Sunday services from the onset of participant recruitment to the end of the research interviews, l was able to engage in this practice with some of the Ghanaian mothers. Among the 8 Ghanaian mothers, 3 of them were regular attendees of the local church, which comprised mostly Ghanaian migrants, and a few other African migrants. Seeing how church attendance was not only a family affair, but a communal affair as they took a significant amount of time to socialize before and after the services was interesting. Even though they came together to worship, they also cherished having other close, intimate and meaningful relationships with other Ghanaian migrants. This was very important to these women, as they mentioned the importance of the lifelong friendships that had come from their church.

Also, even though all of the women (and church members) were proficient in Norwegian, their service was in English and some songs were in *Twi*, which are both official languages in Ghana. Such a community of not only the same national identity but religious and cultural ideology created comfort and familiarity which is essential to their feelings of attachment to Bergen. It seems as if even if they felt the absence of their immediate family members who had stayed in Ghana, the Ghanaian church community provided the needed continuity of their Ghanaian lifestyle and practices, and close relationships critical to developing some form of belonging in Bergen, through integration, albeit limited but essential. Thus, participation and involvement (with their families) in ethno-religious communities, provides the reinforcement and interpretation of certain values and practices (Becher, 2008). Past research has also shown how for migrants, religion can enhance their lives in countries of settlement (Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003; Kogan, Fong & Reitz, 2019; Yuval-Davis, 2011).

8.5. Motherhood as a source empowerment: a divine appointment comprising a moral obligation of sustaining family cohesion

Apart from the Norwegian healthcare system and social welfare services contributing to the women's relatively positive assessment of their mothering in Norway, as this facilitated their assessment of motherhood as an empowering resource in itself particularly within the Norwegian context; their motherhood expanded notions of empowerment. Closely tied to utilizing their Christian faith in their daily lives in Bergen, all of the Ghanaian mothers' narratives highlighted the significant role of motherhood as having a dual role: that of constituting (i) a "divine appointment" and (ii) a moral obligation to sustain family cohesion, and thus serving as a source of empowerment enhancing their lives in Bergen. For Mary, she views motherhood as a blessing, which shows the role of her religious identity in this, and thus in spite of the challenges she experiences, she is quick to dismiss them as insignificant:

> "*It's not easy being a mother, but at the same time I say that it's a blessing to be a mother because it is not all women who get the chance to be mothers, if you listen to some women who are paying lots of money or putting a lot of effort to become pregnant, of course you face many challenges right from when you give birth. You wake up many times in the middle of the night (...) But those are some of the challenges, it's sacrificing a lot, but in the end, you sacrifice for a good cause."* - ***Mary***

Mary's sentiments also reveal her awareness of motherhood as inherently a sacrificial role, as she went on to highlight the importance of personal skills such as time management and planning of various activities in her daily routines. When I asked Rebecca, a mother of two children, about some of her accomplishments since she settled in Norway, she had this to say: *"Well it's the kids, I will say thank God, I have two accomplishments".* Her perception of motherhood as an accomplishment reveals the impact of her identity as both a Christian woman and a Ghanaian on her perception of mothering in Bergen. It is not only in the Bible, where traditionally women are expected to eventually leave their parents' homes, settle down and start a family and raise their children according to the teachings of the Bible. Additionally, her sentiments reveal the role and significance of motherhood in African cultures, where the essence of being a woman is tied to settling down and becoming a mother (Siegel, 1996). Sophia expressed similar sentiments as Mary's concerning the "divine nature" of motherhood which overshadow the challenges

experienced as a migrant mother, which were common among other participants, when I asked her about any challenges she had experienced as a mother in Bergen:

> *"It has been an excitement for me to have a child as a mother, there are a lot of people who cannot have children, so becoming a mother I am happy being blessed by God to give birth to the children. Being a mother, I am happy to be a mother. I love my kids, the way I raised them. The respect. People are not perfect, but I love my kids the way they are.* ***- Sophia***

Similarly, to Sophia's and Mary's sentiments which were common among all participants, Mahoney et al (2001, p. 148), also illustrates this role of motherhood as a "spiritual inheritance, as well as a moral obligation". This is because in the Home, children learn to seek their mother's guidance in the creation and development of their own relationship with God, as they are too young to fully grasp the complexities of their faith (Mahoney et al, 2001). For these Ghanaian women, motherhood as Christian women was not only perceived as a spiritual inheritance, but simultaneously a moral obligation of creating and sustaining family cohesion through enforcing and practicing Bible teachings. Sophia's acknowledgement of how she was proud of how she had raised her children, particularly how respectful they were, was an expression of being content with being able to fulfill such a divine appointment. Martha mentioned that one of her biggest worries of bringing up her children in Norway was that they could become homosexual and alcoholics, but however believed that the way she was bringing them up, with Christian values would be beneficial in providing an external source of moral guidance. Sarah had similar sentiments:

> "*So, we know that God is there, and he will teach our children so that they will too be alright. If you are a Christian, you have to teach your children what the Bible says so that when they grow up, they won't depart from it."* ***- Sarah***

It was clear that even though for these Ghanaian mothers Christianity provides a form of family cohesion (Mahoney et al, 2001), through the practice of similar values as a family, as prescribed by the Bible, their increased religiosity may also reveal their own anxieties and fears of their children adopting Norwegian values that are in conflict with their own Ghanaian and Christian values. Additionally, the Ghanaian mothers' "moral obligation" included transferring traditional gender ideologies (as opposed to the advancement of gender equality in Norway) to their children, which they believed their mothers had taught them, and thus were obligated culturally

and spiritually to train their children with such values. Such a justification of traditional gender roles was made evident through how most of them expressed that it was their role as not only a Ghanaian woman, but a Christian woman, to abide by what was expected of them by performing traditional gender roles, and training their children with the same values, allowing for the continuity of their Ghanaian and Christian values. This explains the prevalence and justification of their patriarchal nuclear families (Arthur, 2008; Siegel, 1996) among most of the Ghanaian mothers, which they feel they have the moral obligation to sustain, even in a different cultural context. For example, Martha had this to say, when l had asked her whether when she was still in Ghana, she had the same beliefs concerning the role of women and men in society, in comparison to now:

> *"Yes of course, what I learnt from my mum who was a single mother we lost my dad very early my mum was doing everything that is what I grew up to see. When I read my Bible it was not anywhere that Abraham and Sarah were doing this 50 /50, no if we want to have peace the Bible says that I do what I can if my husband helps me praise God. But then it's not like I can command him, yes of course maybe there was a time that I wanted to but it will just bring quarrels in the family many fights in a marriage so I do what I can do and when I can I finish the rest. So, I don't have that culture 50/50. Yes, if you help me praise God if he doesn't praise God! And also, what I have learnt by the grace of God it brings peace sometimes if he is a human being he will see 'oh she is doing dishes'. Of course, now he is better, before he was not doing that the children did all that. So, I think when you grow up in such a home you do not want to treat your kids otherwise. You want them to have the same values so it's very important".* ***- Martha***

Constructing motherhood as a divine appointment therefore allows the Ghanaian mothers to continuously find ways to adapt to Bergen and find different strategies to overcome various challenges they encounter. Through the use of Christianity they are able to attain some sense of security and knowledge needed to carry out their mothering responsibilities confidently, even in a challenging environment, as roles specified in the Bible provided the basis on which they carried out their roles as mothers. Due to the disruption of family lives as a result of migration, for these mothers Christianity seems to provide the needed stability and security, providing a resource with which they not only feel a sense of belonging, but can utilize to parent their

children, and negotiate traditional gender roles in a different cultural context (along with the disempowerment that accrues from the inequitable household division of household labour).

8.6. Concluding remarks

In light of the various challenges the Ghanaian mothers encounter during their day today lives in Bergen, it was a common sentiment that apart from trying to resolve issues by themselves as a result of having a smaller network of support, which comes with being a migrant, the importance and value of having their families, church (and Ghanaian) community and friends' support was paramount, to enhancing their daily experiences in Bergen. These findings revealed that for these Ghanaian mothers belonging is a journey, since although most of them had initially emphasized a lack of political belonging and place attachment to Bergen, primarily tied to their own self-identification as Ghanaian and the experience of racial discrimination, they were still determined to find ways to renegotiate and consolidate their Ghanaian identity and sense of belonging in Bergen through continued search for participation and inclusion in Norwegian society. Their own families and the Ghanaian community in Bergen are crucial in their daily constructions of home and belonging in Bergen. These avenues of belonging provide them with a sense of familiarity, comfort, intimacy and most importantly community, which is central to feeling like they have a stake in Bergen, as such transnational practices "help to ease their uprooting feelings, which in turn facilitate their integration" (Phillip & Cho, 2010 p.99). Apart from regular visits to Ghana, creating home-making practices that establish transnational belonging, even without travelling to Ghana is very significant for these Ghanaian mothers.

These avenues serve as a means of enabling the creation and reproduction of a shared culture and language, through a sense of community (Antonsich, 2010), which has been important to all the Ghanaian mother's subjective experiences of "home-making", and consequently, belonging (and being) in Bergen. Through exercising their agency, such avenues therefore serve as sources of *"power within"* and *"power with"* (Mosdale, 2010). Therefore, illustrating their ability to act on what they value and have a reason to value, set goals and act on them (Spreitzer, 1995). This was true both individually and with the support of other people (friends, nuclear families and the Ghanaian community in Bergen). In essence, these avenues of belonging and being illustrate how the Ghanaian mothers have developed empowering strategies,

revealing how even though they had initially expressed feelings of disempowerment (and not belonging) that come with being a migrant, this did not affect their ability to take action.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

9.1. Main findings and concluding remarks

This study has 3 main findings. The main finding of this study is that feeling empowered is central to the Ghanaian women's overall feelings of belonging in Bergen. This finding suggests that for these women, belonging and empwerment are not experienced in isolation (or absence) of each other, but the overall assessment of their lives in Bergen is implicated by the interactions between these two elements. Even though the Ghanaian women's accounts were quite diverse and complex, all mentioned that despite some sense of not-belonging and disempowerment that comes with being a migrant, exercising their "power within", through for example continuing to seek ways in which they can utilize Bergen as "home" for themselves, was central to their assessment of their lives in Bergen. "Home-making" practices among other factors provided a resource in which they could feel empowered, and consequently led to them feeling like they have a stake in Bergen, significantly lessening feelings of not-belonging in some way. The role of their internal sense of self or rather, "power within" which remains central in their overall perceptions of their daily lives in Bergen, was therefore illustrated.

The second main finding is the role of the wider social, political and cultural contexts on impacting on their agency. Thus, consequently implicating their feelings of belonging and empowerment, along with their intersections. Factors such as their self-identification as Ghanaian, the inequitable household division of labour and the perceived experience of racial discrimination threatened their sense of both place attachment and political belonging in Bergen due to differing cultural ideologies between Ghana and Norway. Most of the women reinforced traditional gender norms within their homes, influenced mostly by cultural and religious norms. This, however, disadvantages them as they are increasingly burdened by domestic work due to the lack of extended kin networks to help with childcare in Bergen, in comparison to Ghana were their mothers and extended families play an essential role in support with childcare. This also led to a sense of feeling disempowered as they were held "accountable" not only by their cultural

and religious ideology but by their husbands, who felt that they had the moral obligation of continuing, practicing and transmitting the same gender values to their children in Norway. The inability to engage in more gender equitable norms, in a cultural context that advances gender equality in comparison to their homeland Ghana, contributed to feelings of not belonging as they could not incorporate Norwegian behavior patterns and cultural values even though they were aware of its merit.

The Ghanaian women also felt subjugated not only as migrants but also based on their skin color. They indicated that in some way they had to find ways to gain "political belonging" from their Norwegian colleagues, which was particularly through colluding with racial discrimination. This was evident through avoidant attitudes such as "giving Norwegians time to adjust to their foreign-ness", "proving oneself" and "meeting them where they are". Hooks (1990, p. 155) conceptualization of the term *"stylish nihilism"* to conceptualize how Black people participate in their own subordination, through the social reproduction of racial inequality and stereotypes, as they have learnt to "see themselves through pervasive biases and stereotypes", blurring their own ability to notice instances of discrimination, proved significant in this study. Such attitudes reinforced their sense of powerlessness, as it internalized how they were "outsiders" and had to shrink themselves to "fit better" by not reinforcing stereotypes of Black people, in order to be granted political belonging, as they were deemed as not belonging. Not-belonging was therefore revealed as a source of disempowerment. This further revealed the question of who grants belonging and on what basis, and most importantly, it's impact on empowerment. This raises the question of whether such avoidant attitudes reflect the tolerance of racial discrimination, or are a reflection of the power of institutions and the wider societal contexts in determining the consequences for action and inaction for migrants, who just like these Ghanaian women, find solace in the transformatory nature of migration in offering better opportunities in comparison to their home countries.

The third main finding of this study is how for the Ghanaian women, the continuity of Ghanaian cultural and Christian practices provides a route to empowerment, and consequently a sense of belonging in helping their families adapt to the Norwegian environment. All of the women revealed that their internal sense of self, or rather, "power within" had increased in comparison to when they were in Ghana. Both due to the transformatory nature of migration in providing better opportunities (e.g. financial independence and job stability, and social welfare),

the ability to re-negotiate traditional gender roles (for 3 of the women) and the ability to find other ways of belonging in Bergen, by defining and utilizing ways to be "at home" in Bergen for themselves. Home-making practices such as utilizing their homes as both places to practice and transmit their Ghanaian cultural values and as a place for political resistance, regular visits to Ghana, Christianity and motherhood as a source of empowerment, provided a sense of comfort, familiarity and community. Giving them some sense of agency as a result. This study also showed that Christianity particularly provided a form of "transcendental" belonging for the Ghanaian women as "belonging to God" provided a form of comfort and true acceptance, minimizing feelings of not-belonging in Bergen. Therefore, going beyond territorialized notions of belonging (Antonsich, 2010). Revealing how feeling empowered has an ability to expand and redefine notions of belonging, even when place-belongingness and political belonging are threatened. Ghanaian women are therefore not merely subjugated by the various and intersecting social, cultural and political challenges experienced as African and Black migrants in Bergen, which implicates their sense of belonging and empowerment. They are empowered in that they have developed different coping strategies to deal with such challenges, and continue to thrive and define success as they continue to negotiate some sense of empowerment and belonging for themselves, in a new social and cultural context.

In conclusion, this study contributes to research on gender, identity, empowerment, racial discrimination, belonging as well as their intersections. This includes the Ghanaian culture and minority ethnic migrant women/mothers. Whilst highlighting their experiences of (not)belonging and dis(empowerment) it also examined particularly their agency, by illustrating the various strategies they use as a response to the experiences of not-belonging and disempowerment, through the use of "home-making" practices, among other factors. The study has revealed how their sense of Otherness (as migrants who are Black and African) disrupts notions of belonging and empowerment, and how the utilization of cultural continuity, and their internal sense of power (power within) is central to adapting in Bergen. The study therefore also demonstrates how the Ghanaian women's lives are structured by culture, foreign status and race. This brings Kyllingstad's (2017, p. 1) question to the forefront: "Does the relative absence of race and discussions on "race" mean that Norwegian academics, and the Norwegian public, are avoiding to talk about an important societal issue, namely that "race" actually matters, even in Norway?".

Lastly, the Ghanaian women are torn between upholding their own cultural values and utilizing them as a resource for empowerment and belonging, and modifying these in ways in which they can leverage positive outcomes from both of the dimensions and enhance their lives in Bergen. This study can contribute to discussions on what researchers think about not only female migration, but migrant motherhood, particularly among ethnic minorities. By bridging empowerment and belonging which have remained mostly separated in migration studies, this study therefore creates new visibilities by bringing forward the complex realities of migrant experience.

9.2. Limitations and opportunities for future research

Indeed, for migrant women to belong and feel empowered, they need to feel that they can be their "authentic" self (Antonsich, 2010) and have a sense of agency (Mosedale, 2005), and therefore thrive in countries of settlement. Despite the efforts towards the integration of migrants in Norway, policies in Norway would benefit from such a study that privileges the voices of Ghanaian migrants if their integration policies prioritized migrants' experiences in their formulation and evaluation. This is because as illustrated, even though the Ghanaian women's accounts are not entirely negative, they still struggle with institutionalized racism and other cultural and structural barriers within the Norwegian environment that affect their overall experiences of belonging and empowerment. As argued by Mosedale (2009) the presence of favorable structural realities (for example political and societal issues) do not contribute to empowerment, but they have the potential to create an environment within which women's agency is facilitated. Norwegian policies and structures can therefore benefit utilizing such findings if the marginalization of ethnic minorities is to be reduced or eradicated.

Despite the contribution of this research to studies on identity, gender, empowerment and belonging among women and ethnic migrants, the researcher is aware of its limitations. The use of such a sample restricted to the Norwegian context and a particular minority migrant and ethnic group and other socio-demographic factors, means that the findings cannot be simply generalized to all migrant women in Norway or in other countries, as personal and contextual factors influence migrant experiences of any phenomenon. However, the experiences and perspectives of the Ghanaian women are an important source of knowledge to both men and women (and migrants), regardless of ethnic social class, as they highlight lessons about survival,

resilience and adaptation. This is because they reveal how creativity and resourcefulness can be a powerful tool, along with engaging in ‘embodied’ forms of belonging such as Christianity. Implications for the study however include the need for a comprehensive theory that can be used to systematically examine the intersections between belonging and empowerment, and factors conditioning and/or isolating these outcomes, particularly within the context of migration and ethnic minorities. This would allow for a rich and more nuanced understanding on how resources for both belonging and empowerment can be enhanced and/or integrated for migrants, with minimum conflict from the wider societal, political and cultural contexts, as a way of enhancing their overall experiences in their countries of settlement.

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APPENDIX 1: Interview Topic Guide

Work / Family characteristics, motivations for migration, household management.

1. Can you please tell me a bit about your family? (age & number of dependent children, other dependents/caring responsibilities, partner's nationality). prompt - ln what ways is your family different from the family you grew up in?
2. Can you tell me about your job? *prompt:* What are your career aspirations?
3. What would you consider as your main motivations for coming to Norway? *prompt:* For how long have you been in Norway?
4. Did you experience any resistance / challenges (e.g. from your family / personal) when you were deciding to come to Norway? Why?
5. Can you tell me about what it was like when you first came to Norway AND what are some of the changes that have happened since you arrived?
6. Can you tell me a bit about what you do as a mother by describing your daily routines / typical day?

dis(empowerment)

7. What did you consider as the role of women at home and at work while you were in Ghana? How have your ideas about gender roles (i.e. women's and men's work) changed? *(**could be linked to 8.)*
8. In what ways do your own values differ from the values of Norwegians?
9. How have your responsibilities as a mother / **wife changed from when you were in Ghana to now? *(**if they were a mother before coming to Norway).*
10. What can you do now that you wanted to do but could not do in Ghana?
11. What can you say has been your biggest achievements* since you settled in Norway?
12. What resources did you use to achieve this, in terms of personal/ individual and external resources?
13. How have you worked with other women (Ghanaian / other migrants / Norwegians) to achieve this / other achievements?
14. What challenges have you experienced as a mother in Norway? To what extent have/ did you overcome challenges that you experienced?

15. How have your feelings changed? In terms of issues such as your self-confidence and self-worth / potential?

(not)Belonging

Place-belongingness

16. To what extent does Norway feel like 'home' for you?
17. What makes you feel at "home" here in Norway? *prompt*. What makes / made it difficult? For you to feel at home in Norway?
18. Has your understanding about "home" changed over the years since your arrival, if so in what ways?
19. Where would you like to be in the future? (Do you plan to stay here / move back / some other country?)
20. Where do (/did) you meet new friends?
21. To what extent is it important to have Norwegian friends / friends who have the same background as you?

Politics of belonging

22. Have you had any negative experiences living in Bergen? **detailed, specific.
23. What are Norwegians like? (and) In what ways are their values different from Ghanaians? *prompt:* How has this influenced your stay here?
24. In what ways do your own cultural values and Norwegian values enhance each other?
25. To what extent do you feel that you can express your own identity? *Prompt:* Are there any situations where you did not feel that you were valued / listened to?

Coping strategies / Support NB. These questions will be asked fittingly, simultaneously with the questions under the *belonging* and *empowerment* sections.

*ask for specific examples for illustration

27 . What helps (/helped) you manage the challenges you (or have) experience(d)? *detailed, specific.
28. In what ways do (/did) the people in your life support you?
29. What extent do you feel like you have (/had) to find solutions to your problems by yourself?

30. Do (/did) you help others who experience (d) similar problems? In what ways?

31. Do you feel that Norway has a responsibility toward providing an environment that enables the integration of migrants with minimal conflict or problems? *prompt:* What do you recommend?

***Closing** - challenges as a migrant mother and how you have managed those is terms of coping strategies.

APPENDIX 2: Informed Consent Form

Research Topic: *Belonging and empowerment: Narratives of Ghanaian women in Bergen, Norway*

Information and Purpose: My name is Chipiwa Maziva. I am a master's student doing research through the Department of Health Promotion and Development at the University of Bergen. My research is focused on Ghanaian women's experiences in Bergen. I am particularly interested in your personal experiences of belonging and empowerment, and the strategies you use to manage any challenges you may experience within the context of changing cultures.

Confidentiality: Everything you say will be treated with confidentiality. This means that even though the final report may contain information about your personal experiences, your identity will not be identified by readers. Your identity will be anonymized as I will use a pseudonym. Additionally, you can choose not to answer any questions about personal experiences that you are not willing to share. You can also choose to read the written version of what you have said and decide to withdraw your data at any time.

Benefits and Risks: Your participation will not expose you to any risks. It will help me and other researchers in the future understand Ghanaian women's social dilemmas as migrants in Bergen, including their strengths and achievements. The research has been approved by the ethics committee at the University and the Norwegian Centre of Research Data.

Your Participation: You will be one of the 8 women I will interview for this study. Your participation will consist of an interview lasting approximately 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours, at a time and place most suitable for you. Two separate, shorter interviews can be organized instead if you prefer. If you would like to see a copy of the interview questions, please let me know. The interview will be recorded, so that I can adequately obtain, analyze and document your experiences. All the records and interview notes will be stored securely and deleted after I have completed the research. You are free to decide not to take part in the research at any stage. You can take a break if you feel stressed or uncomfortable and don't feel like taking part for a while. You may commit to full participation unless unexpected circumstances happen, forcing you to withdraw from the research.

Researcher's Contact Information: If you have any additional questions about the research or if you would like to participate in this project, you may contact me on 41204378 and cmaziva@gmail.com. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr Siri Lange, on Siri.Lange@uib.no.

By your signature below, you agree to participate in this research, and understand what the research entails.

Participant: _____ Researcher: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 3: NSD Clearance

Siri Lange
Christiesgt. 13
5015 BERGEN

Vår dato: 06.07.2018 Vår ref: 61238 / 3 / OASR Deres dato: Deres ref:

Vurdering fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning § 31

Personvernombudet for forskning viser til meldeskjema mottatt 21.06.2018 for prosjektet:

61238	*Empowerment and Belonging: Narratives of Ghanaian women in Bergen, Norway.*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*Universitetet i Bergen, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Siri Lange*
Student	*Chipiwa Maziva*

Vurdering

Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon finner vi at prosjektet er meldepliktig og at personopplysningene som blir samlet inn i dette prosjektet er regulert av personopplysningsloven § 31. På den neste siden er vår vurdering av prosjektopplegget slik det er meldt til oss. Du kan nå gå i gang med å behandle personopplysninger.

Vilkår for vår anbefaling

Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med:
- opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon
- vår prosjektvurdering, se side 2
- eventuell korrespondanse med oss

Vi forutsetter at du ikke innhenter sensitive personopplysninger.

Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet

Dersom prosjektet endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å sende inn endringsmelding. På våre nettsider finner du svar på hvilke endringer du må melde, samt endringsskjema.

Opplysninger om prosjektet blir lagt ut på våre nettsider og i Meldingsarkivet

Vi har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet på nettsidene våre. Alle våre institusjoner har også tilgang til egne prosjekter i Meldingsarkivet.

Vi tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektslutt

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS Harald Hårfagres gate 29 Tel: +47-55 58 21 17 nsd@nsd.no Org.nr. 985 321 884
NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data NO-5007 Bergen, NORWAY Faks: +47-55 58 96 50 www.nsd.no

Ved prosjektslutt 30.06.2018 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av