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Topic: The invisible Ghanaian sex worker active in the Dutch sex industry
DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of all discussions and interviews. The work was done under the supervision of Dr. M. R. Doortmont, at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands.

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the involvement of Ghanaian sex workers in the Dutch sex industry taking into consideration all the social, political, economic as well as religious elements that set the storm for women's involvement in sex work. To achieve this, the concept of burger (migration status) and the theory of Self, Other and Other-self are used to provide a deeper analysis of sex workers of Ghanaian origin in The Netherlands. This study used qualitative methodology such as in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions to gather data from Ghanaian migrants, their families and returnees, as well as carrying out a review of extant literature on migration and sex work for additional insight on the lives of sex workers. This work highlights that despite Ghanaian migrant sex workers struggling daily to deal with the stigma attached to their work and their survival as well as that of their love ones, they manage to adopt strategies to deal with these constraints. It is evident from this study that, sex workers of Ghanaian descent mostly go into the industry for economic reasons and most take it up as a stop-gap measure. Juggling their social status as migrants (burgers) with sex work is really challenging. As burgers, they have to obtain enough money to maintain their ascribed elevated social status but need to make sure that relatives and friends do not know how this money is obtained. Consequently, there is a conscious effort to be secretive as many Ghanaians remain highly censorious about sex work. Furthermore, migrant sex workers have to deal with the stigma of their work for themselves and their families as they combine the socially acceptable role of taking good care of their families and morally condemned role of a sex worker.

Keywords: Migrants, sex work, Ghana, The Netherlands
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1.0. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“For men and women sex is a source of pleasure, expression of love, purpose of partnerships, path to procreation and the creator of kinship. But it is also for some individuals a means of survival and accumulation; to feeding their children, making money and amassing wealth…” (Oppong, Oppong and Odotei 2006, xi)

Ghanaians since time immemorial have often engaged in migration for the purposes of work, business and leisure. Migration involving “a complex web of border crossing” between countries is very common among many people. In spite of this, women migrants everywhere receive less academic attention than male migrants (Hune 1991). Lutz, Phoenix and Yuval-Davis (1995) and Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002) documented that there is an apparent inadequate research interest in migrant working women, particularly migrant female sex workers (Agustin 2003a; Agustin 2006).1 Perhaps, the dominance of males in the history of human migration (Sudarkasa 1977) has contributed to the focus on male migrants in scholarly research. Additionally, research on migrant sex workers in Europe (Willett 2007, Berman 2003, D. M. Hughes 2000, BBC, UN highlights human trafficking 2007) has often focused on nationals of countries such as Nigeria, Albania and some parts of Eastern Europe to name a few.

Current literature shows little evidence of Ghanaian women in sex work in The Netherlands, although the exploits of Ghanaian women as sex workers have been recorded in Nigeria (Brydon 1985) and Côte d'Ivoire (Anarfi 1998). In addition, apart from few anecdotal evidence and broad statistical presentation of migrants in Dutch sex industry (for which Ghanaian migrants have been mentioned briefly), very little systematic research has been done about Ghanaian sex workers for the past two decades in Europe and more specifically The Netherlands. My argument in this thesis is that social conditions may shape the practice of commercial sex work among Ghanaians in The Netherlands.

The idea of this research was informed by interviews I conducted in late 2013 as part of my internship at the African Studies Centre in Leiden, where I worked with a collaborative research group-“Roads to Prosperity”. These interviews were for an academic paper on Ghanaian

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1 This study will mainly focus on female sex workers. This does not aim to dispute the fact that there could be male and transgender sex workers. However, that is not the focus of this study. Hence, I have deliberately excluded male and transgender sex workers from this study. I therefore see it fit to mainly focus on female sex workers as they are the dominant group although it would be interesting to research on the sexual services offered by the largely ignored Ghanaian migrant LGBT community. My focus is on female sex workers because they constitute the dominant group in The Netherlands sex industry (TAMPEP 2009).
migrants in The Netherlands, their experiences and connections they maintain with their ‘home’ country. At that time, some interviewees suggested high expectations from a ‘Burger’, where remittances and investment in follow up migration is ‘demanded’.

These interviewees indicated how some Ghanaian female migrants go into sex work to meet demands in their home country as well as sustain themselves as migrants. Interestingly, the issue of sex work came up in many of my interviews with the Ghanaian migrants whilst discussing topics not directly related to sex work. Frequently, the interviewee would tell the story of another person- the sex worker. There were a lot of revelations about the Ghanaian sex worker that piqued my curiosity with regards to the involvement of Ghanaians in the Dutch sex industry.

There are several reasons why the study of Ghanaian migrant sex workers in The Netherlands is an interesting topic for research. There is a literature and evidence vacuum in this field that needs to be filled. It is very important to document the historical trend of Ghanaian migrants in the Dutch sex industry amidst the realities and myths that general studies on sex workers are unable to capture properly including the perceptions of migrants and non-migrants on Ghanaian sex workers. The few academic works that observe the involvement of Ghanaian sex workers in The Netherlands were conducted almost two decades ago.\(^2\) What has changed over the years? The time lapse clearly shows that there is a gap in the literature that needs to be filled. Thus, this study will look at the continuity and change in the involvement of Ghanaian migrants in the Dutch sex industry. My thesis, therefore, aims at adding to the existing body of knowledge on sex workers of Ghanaian origin in The Netherlands as many questions remain unanswered.

In addition, this study looks at the Ghanaian migrant sex worker in The Netherlands within a specific social context including cultural (that of Ghana and that of The Netherlands). Hence, this study of the Ghanaian migrant women in the Dutch sex industry is conducted by taking a closer look at the social and cultural particularities of Ghanaian migrants, and the Ghanaian society in general.

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The overall aim and objective of this study is to explore and document the historical involvement of Ghanaian migrant sex workers in the Dutch sex industry for a span of three decades (1980-2010). The year, 1980 is taken as the starting point because research shows that migration from Ghana to The Netherlands became more evident in the 1980s (Orozco and Mohogu 2007). Furthermore, Ghana experienced unprecedented migration of its citizens (especially females) in the 1980s to Europe.

This study on Ghanaian migrant sex workers in the Dutch sex industry takes into consideration the views of the “Other” as well as contextual dynamics (societal, political, cultural and religious). This study will embrace the realities, paradoxes and the intersections of various societal norms and cultural differences in addition to the human agency of these migrant women. Within this broad objective, there are also a number of specific objectives:

- To understand the main reasons why the Ghanaian female migrants in The Netherlands enter the sex industry
- To assess the practical issues of survival and success that migrant sex workers negotiate to keep up with their ‘burger’ status.
- To ascertain the perceptions of Ghanaians on sex workers.

The Netherlands is noted for its proverbial yet real red light districts and legalization of sex work. Rumours abound in Ghana and among Ghanaian migrants of the involvement of a number of Ghanaian women in the European sex industries in order to earn ‘quick’ money for their survival and to remit part of their earnings to their families back home. However, these continue to remain mere rumour and gossip. So far, several Ghanaians like to talk of the sex worker in terms of the ‘Other’; even in cases where an individual could be talking about herself (this is elaborated in the theoretical section).

Given the above background and study objectives, the research questions to be answered include: Why do Ghanaian women enter the Dutch sex industry? What are the perceptions of Ghanaian migrants and migrant families about these sex workers? How do people perceive and weigh the practical matters related to the survival and success of migrant women, which they negotiate to meet demands home? How do sex workers organise their life in The Netherlands?

The study of Ghanaian sex workers in The Netherlands using the Self, Other and Other-self theory as used by several scholars working on identity including Levinas (1989) and Sami (2011) is of special interest in this study. The theory of Self, Other and Other-self refers to how
individuals identify and present themselves to other people in relation to conceptions, expressions and influences from several factors. The theory of the Self, the Other and Other-self is used in this study to deal with delicate and sensitive issues that are denied any frank, open and free deliberation due to societal biases, attitudes and perceptions.

This thesis enabled the accumulation of information from several people who were either sex workers or are currently working as sex workers, those who have lived with sex workers and pastors who have worked with sex workers, migrants, parents of migrants and returnees. Involvement in sex work is often seen as temporal for Ghanaian migrants. However, understanding more about the motivations of migrant sex workers, and how they organise their life, whilst taking into consideration the social context, will contribute to a better understanding of the history of Ghanaians’ migration to The Netherlands.

The thesis is divided into eight chapters in two major levels. The first level – chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 - consists mainly of literature review and methodology. The second level – chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 - discusses the major findings of interviews conducted.

With the end of this first introductory chapter (1), the next chapter (2) looks into Ghanaian migration and migrant sex work. The second chapter points out that there is a long history of population mobility of Ghanaians. Migration plays an essential part in the livelihood and advancement strategies of many Ghanaians, during which some Ghanaians moved to The Netherlands in search of jobs, including within the sex industry.

Concepts such as burger, sex work and the theoretical framework of this study are explored in chapter 3. These concepts and theory help us to fully understand how cultural and social, religious and economic as well as personal factors shape the migration process of many Ghanaian migrants’ livelihood strategies and identity. The theory of the Self, Other and the Other-self has been used to understand that cultural, religious and social norms make the sex

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3 The use of this theory is an alternative ways to explore sensitive issues especially in recent times when most African countries have spoken against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT). Many Africans feel that LGBT rights are against their cultural and religious value systems and some African countries have drafted laws to increase sanctions against LGBT people. Most recently in Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni assented to the Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2014 on Feb. 24. It imposes life sentences on people found guilty of repeated gay sex, and jail terms for “aiding and abetting” or “promoting homosexuality.” Goodluck Jonathan, Nigeria's president, signed into law a similar act in January that introduced 14-year sentences for gay marriage and 10-year terms for gay people seen kissing in public, or anyone operating or visiting a gay club or society. Liberia in 2012 toughened penalties for same-sex conduct. Burundi criminalized it for both men and women in 2009. South Sudan ensured gay sex was outlawed from the outset, criminalizing it in its Constitution at independence in 2011. In Mauritania, the Islamic north of Nigeria and southern Somalia, a person can be sentenced to death for being gay. See (Constable 2014, week 2014, BBC, Amnesty International condemns 'homophobia' in Africa 2013)
worker –the Other. In conversations, she (the sex worker) may prefer to be the Other-self. The social status (burger) is conceptualised in this section, indicating the need to incorporate context into the discussion of migrant work and activities.

In chapter 4, the methodological choices that were made before and during data collection as well as the methodological limitations I encountered are described. The characteristics of interviewees are also outlined bringing out the diversity and similarities of my sample.

Chapter 5 discusses the various reasons why female Ghanaian migrants move to The Netherlands as well as the rationale behind their involvement in the sex industry. It is argued that economic reasons (the dominant reason) alone cannot fully explain the reasons for migrating as well as the reasons for engaging in sex work.

The myths, perceptions from “home” (family and friends) and the paradoxes in the life of the migrant sex worker are explored in chapter 6. I argue in this chapter that the expectations of migrants are very high whilst the perceptions of people in Ghana are that some female migrants engage in sex work but it would not be the case for their own family members, their friends or loved ones. The focus then shifts to how Ghanaians organise themselves in the Dutch sex industry. Many Ghanaian sex workers remain highly secretive in their involvement in sex work due to the attitude and reactions of Ghanaian non-sex workers and the effects it can have on loved ones.

Chapter 7 looks at sex work and temporality. Discussion is focused on how sex work is often seen as a stopgap for many migrant women. Several factors including interpersonal relationships, religious and social, legal residence statuses among others contribute to Ghanaian migrant women’s exit from the Dutch sex industry.

The final chapter (8) highlights the need to discuss migrant work taking into consideration context and here, I revisit the paradox in the title of this thesis.
2.0. CHAPTER 2: MIGRATION, BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Ghanaians have been migrating internationally, and the sex industry remains one option for work in the countries of destination. A review of the literature on Ghanaian migration shows the diversity, complexity and dynamic nature of migration experiences. This section of the thesis mainly focuses on migration and sex work in The Netherlands in attempt to better understand how Ghanaian migrants become involved in the Dutch sex industry. In this section, therefore, I give a broad but brief history of the state of migration from Ghana to The Netherlands and indicate how this offers an avenue for Ghanaian migrant women to enter the Dutch sex industry.

2.1. MIGRATION FROM GHANA

West African populations have experienced a phenomenal predisposition for mobility over a long period (Adepoju 2000; 2005, Arthur 1991, DFID 2004, de Haas 2007). This is notably true in the case of Ghana, where migration represents a long tradition. Ghana has historically experienced diverse migration flows within Ghana, within Africa and far afield to other continents such as Europe, Asia and America.

Historically and increasingly so today migration represents a major development opportunity for various migrants (World Commission 2004). For both men and women, migration sometimes functions almost like a ‘rite of passage’ to social recognition in their societies, which sometimes ‘pushes’ people into migration. For instance, in Ghana, migration is an achievement to one’s social status- “the burger status”. In this sense, it is the socioeconomic pressures that serve as motivation for Ghanaians to emigrate (UN 2004).

People have often moved willingly/ voluntarily or forced to migrate in search of often elusive and sometimes insecure as well as low paying jobs (Oppong 2006). During the peak of Ghana’s economic decline in 1980s amidst military revolts and takeovers, Bentsi-Enchill (1983) and Adomako (1991) documented that a number of Ghanaians migrated to other African countries, to Europe and America as refugees. During this period, there was socioeconomic
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decline, and women were the most affected in view of their low socioeconomic status compared to Ghanaian men (Anarfi and Awusabo-Asare 1997). Some of these women migrated to West African countries such as Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire (Amankwah 1984, J. K. Anarfi 1989, Brydon 1985, Anarfi et al. 2003).

A major complaint of Ghanaian immigrants to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is that conditions are not better than in Ghana; migrants want economic rewards rather than a cultural experience. This is probably one of the reasons why migration focus shifted from within the West African Region to other parts of the world such as The Netherlands.

2.2. GHANAIANS IN THE NETHERLANDS

The first remarkable wave of Ghanaian migration to The Netherlands took place during the 1980s (Orozco and Mohogu 2007), a period noted as the peak of unprecedented migration out of Ghana (Donkor 2005). This period was characterised by drought, famine, bush fires, political instability and the expulsion of Ghanaians from Nigeria. This pushed people out of Ghana and returnees from Nigeria were motivated to migrate and look for new destinations in Europe such as The Netherlands.

The Netherlands became very attractive to Ghanaian migrants due to its very strong policy emphasis on multiculturalism compared to other European countries (Schans et al. 2013, Koopmans et al. 2005). Ghanaians are considered to be one of the most significant African migrant groups in The Netherlands. However, in terms of the share of all migrants, the Ghanaian population represents in comparison a minority (Mazzucato 2008, CBS 2014).

The number of Ghanaians in The Netherlands remains uncertain despite official figures. It was estimated that over 3,000 Ghanaian migrants lived in The Netherlands unofficially in 1992 (Stadsdeel Zuidoost 1992). Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS) in 2013 reported that 5212

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5 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional group of fifteen countries, founded in 1975 with the mission to promote economic integration among its members.
6 Due to a plane crash in a suburb of Amsterdam when it was noted that many Ghanaians were either directly or indirectly victims of this disaster, the Ghanaian population in 1992 quickly became a “hot item” in media as well as for academic research. It was assumed Ghanaian migrants would be facing several challenges. (Knipscheer, et al. 2000).
are officially registered Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands, the majority 53 percent of whom are females (see table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-20</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>1077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-65</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>2163</td>
<td>4119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and older</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2467</td>
<td>2745</td>
<td>5212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Netherlands, Den Haag/Heerlen 7-2-2014

This CBS data does not however include the large number of undocumented Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands. The actual figure is likely much higher than suggested by official statistics.

Approximately 41 percent of Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands live in the urban centre of Amsterdam, especially in south-eastern part- Bijlmer (Orozco and Mohogu 2007, O&S 1995); followed by the city of The Hague (30 percent).

The Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands organise themselves in associations and on the basis of religion, ethnic and occasionally political lines. According to the Ghana Embassy in The Netherlands, these groups exceed seventy, with the majority based in Amsterdam and the remaining spread across The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht (Ghana Embassy sd). These Ghanaian associations have well developed structures that usually contain the form of networks that provide community living and other services connected to the everyday lives of these migrants in The Netherlands. Some of these migrants resort to sex work as a form of livelihood in The Netherlands.

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7 Examples of such groups include Sikaman Foundation, Ghana Students Association Enschede, Council of Ghanaian Chiefs in The Netherlands Foundation (CoGhaC Foundation).
2.3. GENDER AND GHANAIAN MIGRATION TO THE NETHERLANDS

Scholarly works available reveal that, migrants embark on their journey as a result of poverty, unemployment, political and economic instability in home country (Agustin 2006a, Akyeampong 2000, Amankwah 1984, Awumbila, et al. 2008, Mazzucato, Kabki and Smith 2006, Poeze 2010). Some of these people are also motivated to migrate in search of greener pastures (van Dijk 2003, Donkor 2005, Akyeampong 2000). Hence, earning a considerably higher income is an essential motivation for migration, as a little amount of foreign currency translates into higher values in Ghana Cedi. The objective of migrating is not only to earn more money for survival, but it is also broadly associated with the social construction of the ideal life (Olwig and Sørensen 2002; Gunvor 2008).

Migration and remittances are considered to be central to keeping the social position of a ‘Burger’. Migration especially to Europe places one on a certain accepted and fulfilled path in life (Vigh 2006). Gaining employment or finding something to do that earns the migrant some money to sustain people back home enhances the migrants’ ‘burger’ status in Ghana. Migrants return the gestures of tenderness to their family, especially in cases when the family invested in the travelling expenses of the migrant, defining the cycle of ‘generalised reciprocity’ (Sahlins 1972). Sahlins (1972) explained generalised reciprocity as the free award of gifts to people whom you once benefitted from.

Families who nurtured and invested in their young generation get the opportunity to be taken care of in later stages of their life or assisting families to cater for younger ones in order to reduce the burden of care. In such situations remitting becomes a strong moral imperative of the migrant. Before a migrant can remit, they need enough money for their subsistence first. Hence, they need to work to earn money. Peil (1995) notes that Ghanaian migrants are employed in many industrialised countries as taxi drivers, sportsmen, entertainers, restaurateurs, factory workers and professionals. Some Ghanaian migrants also engage in sex work, which is often seen as a job for females.

Ghanaian females in the current migration flow are often seen as dependent, but can sometimes display autonomy. They often make the decision to migrate despite having no family member in the destination area (Adepoju 2004, Anarfi, et al. 2006). The autonomous female migrant is often young, unattached and lacks basic skills (due to educational background) to
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compete for average and high paid jobs in host countries, which sometimes set the condition for such women to enter the sex industry. In the latter discussions, we will ascertain if this was the situation for the Ghanaian female migrants in The Netherlands or not.

Beside this, in order to understand gender and migration in the Ghanaian context, an understanding of the inheritance pattern is useful. There are two main inheritance patterns in Ghana. The matrilineal inheritance pattern operational in mostly the southern part/regions of Ghana has a bearing on migration. Most women in these matrilineal societies see it as their main duty to take control of the upkeep of their children. To achieve this goal, some women migrate to other countries to ‘struggle’ in order to earn a living to take care of their children’s education, feeding, etc. This probably explains the dominance of women from matrilineal Ghanaian societies in international migration. This assertion is supported by (Larson 1990:20):

Matrilineal kinship can be relevant because of the minimal importance those cultures impose on marriage; divorce is usually common and the woman retains her children and the guarantee of continued support from her family.

The matrilineal social structure provides economic autonomy for women from southern Ghana compared to other African women, but the system simultaneously leaves them to self-support; thereby facilitating independent migration and allowing them to glean the benefits of migration if they are successful. Brydon (1992) observed that women migrate internationally and internally in the southern part of Ghana where they operate the matrilineal inheritance pattern as frequently as men. In the north of Ghana, this influence is quite limited, because of the impact of the patrilineal inheritance pattern and the dominance of the Islamic religion.

Anarfi (1990) indicates in his research on migrant sex workers in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) that most (40 percent) of all the female respondents were from the Eastern Region of Ghana. He noted that Asante Region had the second highest number of sex workers, with a few people from the towns and villages bordering Côte d'Ivoire. The people from the Eastern and Asante region of Ghana follow the matrilineal system of inheritance. Later on in this thesis, we will find out the correlation of this information to the subject of this study.

Existing literature points to the fact that sex workers are often migrants or foreigners. Anarfi (1993) argues that the impersonality of prostitution makes it particularly suited to strangers or migrants. Pickering and Williams (1993) studying prostitutes in Gambia, noticed that about 86 percent of the prostitutes in Gambia are non-Gambians, thus, few women anywhere in the world
practice prostitution in their home area according to studies by Painter (1992) and Loum (2000). Research by Busia (1950) indicated that prostitutes in Africa were often outsiders with no kinship ties in the communities where they practiced their profession. Is this the reason for some migrant women to decide to work far from their home country, or is it out of circumstances beyond their control?

According to Helm (2004) the sex work profession in The Netherlands has always been populated by migrants. In 1999; International Foundation: European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers (hereinafter TAMPEP) noted that migrants constituted the majority of sex workers in Europe. The jobs available to non-European women are in the domestic, care giving and sex industries (Agustin 2003). A number of studies show that Ghanaians have been active participants of the Dutch sex industry in time past. About 40 per cent of Dutch sex workers are noted to be illegal immigrants from Eastern Europe, Sudan, Liberia, Ghana and Sierra Leone (Palmer 2001).

In 1985, Licia Brussa noted that in the 1980s presence of Ghanaian women in the Dutch sex industry became more conspicuous. She noted the presence of other African migrant sex workers, but the majority she claimed were Ghanaians. Brussa (1989) explains that most Ghanaian sex workers frequently work in clubs, bars, private houses, peep shows and a few worked at the windows in the red-light district. Brussa (1985) showed that they often lived in a close community with many as illegal migrants, estimating about 60 percent of the Ghanaian sex worker population were illegal residents in The Netherlands.

From 1985 to 1990, African migrants in the Dutch sex industry were dominated by Ghanaian women (TAMPEP 2007). In 1994, a study on 150 migrant sex workers by TAMPEP revealed that out of 50 African migrants involved, 30 claimed to be Ghanaians. The study also indicated that Ghanaian migrants were unwilling to actively pursue topics related to the sex industry or sex workers, despite the fact that many women from this population were sex workers. In the years 1997 and 1999, the dominance of Ghanaian women in the Dutch sex industry was again recorded by TAMPEP (1999). TAMPEP (2007) final report noted that women from Ghana constituted the majority of migrant sex workers from Africa in the Dutch sex industry.

Moreover, a blog on prostitutes pointed out that among the African prostitutes in The Netherlands, Ghanaians constituted almost half of the population (African prostitutes 2006). In a
study conducted on African prostitutes behind the windows in Groningen, 18 African prostitutes were interviewed out of which twelve were Ghanaians, five Nigerians and one a Sudanese (Venicz, Tánczos and GGD 1998). de Thouars and van Osch in 1995 secretly interviewed five (5) Ghanaian prostitutes among many other respondents in their research.

The ways of coming to The Netherlands and eventually entering the Dutch sex industry for many Ghanaian women are varied. In some instances, a Schengen visa is used which allow them to travel from one country to another within Europe (TAMPEP 1994, 2002, 2007). Some of these women are brought by members of their families in order to live with others who have already settled themselves in The Netherlands. In other cases, these women come through the assistance of ‘connection’ men with the aim of seeking economic resources (Donkor 2005). Most of these Ghanaian women do not explicitly aim at becoming sex workers- they would take any job that is available. But as many do not have the permission to stay, or a work permit, some of them are compelled to work in the Dutch sex industry, especially if they came to The Netherlands through the arrangement of a relative who already is in the industry (Adomako 1991).
3.0. CHAPTER 3: THEORY AND CONCEPTS

The theoretical framework of this thesis is founded on the concepts of the Self, the Other and the Other-self. The use of this theory is to provide an understanding of how migrant sex workers of Ghanaian origin identify themselves and assume the drawbacks of their work and its effect on the social image of themselves and their families. The theory of Self, Other and the Other-self is adopted due to the sensitive nature of sex work where expectedly, many respondents of this study are more likely to be uncomfortable talking about their ‘real’ self.

In addition, a discussion on the concepts of sex work and burger status is carefully refined and explained in this section. Given the centrality of these concepts in this thesis, it is important to understand what burger and sex work mean to different people and how they are understood; its evolution, meaning and operationalization. Sex work, a contested terminology, is used in the context of this study to reflect on how the various theoretical definitions enhances our understanding of what sex work means to Ghanaians.

The ensuing discussions demonstrate how burger, sex work and the Self, Other and the Other-self can enrich our understanding of sex workers of Ghanaian origin. These concepts and theory provide complex and comprehensive understandings of the Ghanaian society and its migrants: these concepts and theory will provide researchers different ―lenses‖ through which to look at Ghanaian migrants.

3.1. THE THEORY OF SELF/ OTHER/ OTHER-SELF

This study attempts to develop the idea of Self, Other and Other-self in a way that is useful for referencing not only migrant sex workers from Ghana but also other forms of identities. Identity in this context means a person's perception and expression of themselves and others' personality or group affiliations (self, national, cultural, group identity). However, the very existence of so many socially salient identities is truly a historical and even a contemporary problem. While some identity positions are marginalized, some are privileged. The Self is sometimes severed or multiplied. Many scholars have used this concept in different contexts to understand identity and social theory (Hegel 1977, Sami 2011, Calvin 1999, Butler 1993, Zuckermann 2006, Said 1978, Mamdani 2004). These influence how one sees him/herself when
relating to or talking about their experiences or the past. Depending on the context, some people see themselves at some point, as the Self, the Other or the Other-self.

The Self is described as the essential qualities that constitute a person's uniqueness. The “Other” (alterity) as a term, is the process of people becoming “Altern”, which connotes the essence of people being (mis) understood as different. This could be different from the dominant view or religious norm, social values or it may be due to race, class, gender, ethnicity, work and other defining traits. The “Other-self” comes about due to either personal, physical or non-physical interactions or a combination of all. So the social settings of the individual are the forces that triangulate into the Self, Other and Other-self. The “Other-self” could be defined as either another individual with whom the self identifies and connects with. The Other-self can also be the self-behaving as the other so as to fill or expand the void of identity between the Self and the Other.

In cases when one finds that he/she does not belong to the dominant view, he/she may try or pretend as the Other-self to bring the Self closer to the other across the spectrum of relatedness or to force the other further away. But in most cases, people want to be accepted in their society since the emotional effects of isolation are not easy to deal with. In that regard, the Self behaves as the Other-self to get closer to the dominant view. In this manifestation of the Other-self, the Self might assume, based on stereotypes or other socially received information that the Other will behave or think in certain situations, that they either may not like or will not be comfortable with. In response, the Self may in certain ways act as the Other-self in an attempt to communicate based on those views or ‘stereotypes’. It must however be noted that, alterity is not always about subjugation or stigmatization. On the other hand, the Self might believe that based on the Self’s social position, the Other has stereotypical expectations of the Self to behave or think in a certain way, and in response act as an Other-self in ways that either support or reject those stereotypes.

Sometimes, metaperception – a term derived from psychology – may be relevant for the understanding of the Other-self behaviour. Metaperception is what people believe that others think or perceive of them (Kenny and West 2008). In this situation, it could be argued that metaperception is the reason people behave in certain ways that could be known as the Other-self. Sami (2011) noted that metaperception can cause the Self to behave as the Other-self. This sometimes occurs mainly because there is a force or coercion identified as the difference
between the Self and the Other individual, especially in cases the other individuals are many in number or in cases when the others dominate (in views and have social, political or economic power). They have ‘power’ over the individual. This is what causes the Self to identify with particular person(s) as the Other-self or causes the Self to sense a void between the Self and Other, which the Self attempts to either bridge or make wider by behaving as the Other-self.

*Othering* is imperative to sex work in certain societies such as that of Ghana, where practices and the involvement in sex work are viewed as very negative and demeaning in nature. It is a taboo to be a sex worker in the Ghanaian society. *Othering* helps distinguish between the sex worker and non-sex worker, the burger and non-burger (even though an individual can assume a whole range of role depending on the socio-cultural context within which he/she is found). Yet, it often involves the stigmatisation and criticisms of groups, which further justifies attempts to find binaries of inclusion and exclusion of others, often the 'inferior' others.

The ‘Other’ could be ‘the looking glass’ of the Self; hence, the Other could also be relational or referential to the self. Levinas (1989) stresses the fact that using the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ contains an element of power, in that, the Self is often portrayed as or could be rich and powerful whiles the Other is viewed as poor and weak (Levinas 1989). Sometimes societies and groups exclude ‘Others’ (for example sex workers) and are often considered subordinate or ‘unfit’ into their society, therefore, taking away their voice or making them unable to express themselves freely.

Though this thesis most often uses Ghanaian migrant sex worker as an illustrative example, Self, Other and Other-self is applicable to multiple situations. Also, one may wonder if this essay argues that there is only one Self that does not change with time and space. This discussion does not suggest that there is one inherent self. What this discussion reveals is that in a particular situation and at whatever given moment, an individual receives a strong idea of who they are and can locate themselves in relation to others. Consequently, this discussion assumes that most people can sense when they are behaving in a ‘forced’ or unusual way, even if no one else notices it. The challenge here is for the researcher to find out whether the individual is talking about the Self, Other or the Other-self. This may take a long time but a careful observation as well as profile of respondents goes a long way to assist the researcher to understand the point of view of the respondents.
The discussion here does not place a boundary on the possibility of the Self capable of developing, modifying or even breaking down, but instead I argue that the individual knows him/herself at a given time and moment. In the case of a sex worker for instance, the individual knows or knew her involvement in sex work or her previous involvement in sex work. Hence, this individual relates, behaves or talks to the other based upon both the Self they know at that specific contextualized moment and the many Other-selves they find acceptable by others or the society at large.

3.2. THE BURGER

Once a Ghanaian boards a plane to travel beyond the borders of Ghana, he or she automatically acquires or assumes an identifiable and ‘enviable’ social status, known as a ‘Burger’ - a euphemism for a migrant. Nieswand (2012) explains that the term (burger) is in reference to the city name of Hamburg. In the 1980s, Hamburg was a major destination of Ghanaian labour migrants. These burgers often impressed people in Ghana with the money they earned in low paying jobs abroad. Similar terms exist in other countries, in Ivory Coast it is Bengiste (Newell 2005); in Senegal it is modou modou (Riccio 2001), and Tokunbo in Nigeria of the 1960s to the 1980s.

The burger status comes with it some sort of prestige and respect. A burger is one who has succeeded in the migration journey; a resourceful person who can support the family and reciprocally receives their respect. The ideal type of burger relies on differentials in wealth and the buying power of the migrant as compared to non-migrants. The burger status remains with the migrant forever, but to distinguish between the social statuses of different burgers, some phrases are often attached to the term burger ironically to reflect the loss in prestige and respect as indicated in the song, ‘Yeeya Aka Akwantuo Mu’ meaning ‘we are stranded abroad’ by the Lumba Brothers (Charles Kwadwo Fosu and Nana Acheampong) in the 1980s.

The two musicians were migrants - during the time of writing this song; they were based in Germany. Hence, the lyrics of this song were based on their observations and experience. The

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8 Succeeded in this sense means that the person is resourceful or has material wealth to support the family through remittances.
song in Twi language highlighted the life of the burger titled stranded abroad. This song explained how Ghanaian migrants, mostly left the country to seek better fortunes abroad with the aim of returning to Ghana, but due to financial, emotional, or other unforeseen hardships these host countries became permanent places of residence. The song also represents the deep frustrations that some Ghanaian migrants in Europe face (Ghana Web 2004).

Some of the terms used to differentiate these burgers include ‘burger aye mmere’ (burger is weak). This is in reference to monetary or financial weakness. Accordingly, the power of the burger is in relation to his purchasing power or income level. Burgers without adequate money become "weak" and forfeit the symbolic rewards of migration as well as lose the prestige attached to the burger status. Secondly, ‘Burger m’ahunu wo’ (Burger, I have seen you). This refers to a ‘burger’ who has arrived in Ghana but had not visited friends and families or even sent them gifts and is seen on the street. The expression, “Burger, I have seen you,” is a sarcastic reference to a burger who returns to Ghana and who, lacking the financial resources which makes him or her incapable of “dishing out” money and gift items, (an act which is seen by most Ghanaians as a typical trademark of burgers in general) hides from friends, loved ones and relatives. The burger resorts to this to as his or her best option to save ‘face’ from public ridicule of being a failure or poor. Thirdly, ‘burger me neema emmaaye,’ to wit, ‘burger my things or possessions have not yet arrived or are yet to arrive’. It entails that the migrant returned without gifts for family and friends, and maintains that his/her cargo is still in transit (by air or sea), have not arrived in Ghana, or still being held up at Customs clearance unit. A Burger who repeatedly says his/her possessions are on their way is put in the category of “Burger, my things have not arrived.” So the status burger have differentials such as “burger papapaa” - real burger and burger me neema emmaye’ ‘Burger ma hunu wo’ and burger aye mmere’

In addition, the song by the Lumba brothers powerfully illustrates how migrants find it difficult to ignore the expectations from ‘home’ as well as the shame and disgrace they face on their return home without the financial power or “muscle” often associated with burgers. Hence, some even decide not to return to their homes because of the associated embarrassment and humiliation. The shame of not meeting the expectations of their family and friends refers to the normative structure of the dominant discourse on migration that defines success as the normality

9 Song is available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCY4UW3dBrs. All translations of lyrics from Twi to English done by the researcher. The song was produced by Akosua Serwaa.
and a failure as a personal insufficiency (Nieswand 2012). So without succeeding, the migrant “loses face.”

The phenomenon of losing face, the difficulties of staying overseas and the fear of returning home with nothing also features on several tracks of Amakye Dede’s hit album ‘Iron Boy’ (Mega CD 004). The album, which came out in 1997, was recorded in Germany. Amakye Dede, a Ghanaian music artiste, who lived in Nigeria and Germany, waxed a song that also depicts the real life situations of burgers. However, he stressed that ‘koru dooso a, yenntena faako nngye animguase’, which literally translates as “the existence of many countries or nations or cities suggests that we do not stay in one while losing face.” The lyric suggests that it is better to be on the move to save one’s face as a migrant until one “makes it” finally. In addition, families in Ghana expect economic gains from the migrant, and frown on migrants that incur debts. A lot is expected of the burger in terms of financial aid to the family and to the society in the form of contributions in church (Nieswand 2012) and funerals (Mazzucato, Kabki and Smith, 2006).

Sarkodie10 (featuring J. Town) in his song ‘Borga’12 (another rendition of the term ‘burger’) sings “that “Borga- ena eyee den?-You’re burger, so what?” He continues with his fine lyrical exposition about the unbearable life of Ghanaian migrants. He asked that why should someone sell his personal possessions to finance migration in the midst of difficult situations, especially when life abroad is not rosy, referencing how Ghanaian migrants do odd and menial jobs abroad to make ends meet. Sarkodie states that the burgers do not tell the truth about their jobs to friends and relatives in Ghana and that some have a very precarious status. He notes: ‘Modwene se eda fom, gyae na nipa rebre, Obi te Canada, nea obedi koraa, osre... ’, – ‘you think it’s easy, people are suffering; someone lives in Canada but has to beg to eat.

The status paradoxes of migration are risky (Nieswand 2012). Migration is expected to raise one’s status, but it is not often the case. On one hand, the savings of the migrant are not enough to enact the status gained by travelling outside and maintaining it in Ghana after a permanent return or sometimes, during temporary visits. On the other hand, it is not feasible to cut connections with one’s family in Ghana in terms of achievement and recognition. Also, it will be very difficult for the migrant to deal with the emotional effects of such action, even

10 A Ghanaian hip hop and hip life artist.
though the geographical distance helps the migrant to manage the status by controlling information.

The geographical distance between the place of origin (or even where friends and relatives are based/located) involved matters in terms of information and stigma management. Akyeampong (2000) emphasizes the link between the distance in geography and the management of information when he notes that Ghanaians prefer to migrate to far away countries or destinations whereby their efforts and activities are not supervised or under strict scrutiny by kin.

Often, relatives of the migrants seem not to know what the burgers do abroad in terms of occupation or jobs (Nieswand, 2012). The paradox is that some families sometimes have an inkling of the low paying or socially demeaning jobs that their migrant relatives from Ghana are involved in, but they remain silent about it to save face. Generally, the migrant does not communicate the job status to the family and the family sees no need to ask. This silence signifies not absence of communication, but it is a form of communication in itself, a collaborative form of stigma management. This can even be seen on the obituaries of migrant family members when mentioning names of relatives (on radio) or written in the funeral program of the departed. Often, the name of the Burger is mentioned or written together with the country or city of residence (like Mr. George Biney, USA or Comfort Biney, Amsterdam) while those in Ghana are mentioned or written with their occupation following their name (like Comfort Biney, Teacher, Kumasi).

Is this as a result of the observable ignorance of relatives about the status of migrant activities in the receiving areas or it is just the principle of tact? Hence, some people are often left to speculate the work the migrants do. In the case of women, the speculations are that they are sex workers, though it is much more likely that they may not be involved in sex work.

Going abroad in Ghana has become entwined with the notion of going to 'hustle' or seek one's fortune. In the contemporary global context, on a macro level, the government of Ghana depends on Western financial institutions and donors for the running of the economy. It is these donor countries and agencies, who are mostly European countries and agencies who support the national budget. Hence, on a micro-level the economic survival and prosperity of some families are also dependent on having family members abroad. Menial jobs so much hated and rejected in Ghana, are eagerly embraced in Europe as valuable foreign currencies translate into higher
sources of income due to devaluing and the depreciation of the Ghana Cedi (the national currency). The empirical case study will investigate to what extent this understanding of burger is the same in the case of the interviewed persons.

3.3. SEX WORK

Imagine there is something about yourself that you cannot or you dare not talk about or share with another person due to fear of how they might behave or relate to you. It is not necessarily that you are embarrassed by it, but it is because of how you have to deal with others and societal stereotypes. The reality that is experienced from others can be sometimes positive, negative or twisted and this has created a difficult situation for most sex workers, those of Ghanaian origin being no exception. The Ghanaian society is heavily influenced by traditional culture and religion, and as such, sex work is regarded as a crime. Most often, it is the women involved who are seen as immoral, transgressors of the norms of femininity, guilty, and even perhaps, perceived as filthy and disease ridden (O'Neill 1997). Therefore, in order for the sex worker to avoid humiliation from others, she prefers to talk about her involvement in sex work as the other-self. Other burgers are ready to point quickly to migrant sex workers as the deviant and immoral other. But what is sex work?

Defining Sex work comes with it several limitations and controversies. Sex work covers a wide range of erotic economic activity, including erotic dance and stripping, phone sex, and pornography, as well as selling sexual services (NSWP 2008). Prostitution was simply defined by Akyeampong (1977) as the commodification of casual sex. Southall and Gutkind (1957) defined prostitution as an ad hoc commercial transaction between strangers, and love affairs, in which the parties do not establish a common ménage but simply visit one another.

Sex work is marked by the sale of sexual practices (intercourse, masturbation, sadism and masochism, perhaps merely a look at one’s breasts or naked body) for money. Sometimes sex work is determined by gifts. The exchange of gifts for sex includes a wide range of responsibilities that may not necessarily involve a negotiated or agreed payment or gift, but the people involved are motivated to benefit materially or financially from the sexual exchange (Hunter 2002). Participants in such relationships may not see themselves as sex workers/clients,
but Hoefinger (2010) notes that participants see themselves as girlfriends/boyfriends, or sugar babies/sugar daddies or ‘professional girlfriends/boyfriends’.

It has been argued that sex work portrays professionalism of the sex worker rather than the worth of a sex worker as seen and portrayed by much of society. The Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) and Jo Bindman (1997) documented that the term sex work was “coined by sex workers themselves to redefine commercial sex, not as the social or psychological characteristic of a class of women, but as an income-generating activity or form of employment for women and men…”

Difficulty exists in defining and distinguishing between sex work and prostitution because of the subtleties that come out as a result of legal, social, cultural, religious and ethnic influences. There is controversy around the terms sex work and prostitution. Agustin (2014) notes that some sex workers proudly call themselves prostitutes while others hate the term. Throughout this thesis, I attempt to use whatever term respondents use in the context of each discussion and argument. This is because whatever name or description given to sex work, there are social, political, cultural/ethnic, economic and health issues associated with it (Ansah 2006).

Later in this study, perceptions and definitions of sex work will be further explored based on the views of Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands. After which, a working definition of sex work will be used in the context of this research.

### 3.4. THE RESEARCH FOCUS AND CONCLUSION

The uses of the self or direct account given by sex workers themselves have often been used in research on migrant sex workers. Hardly has the concept of the Self, Other and Other-self been used in the literature on migrant sex workers. In the discussions above, it has been shown that social context in the discussion of sex work plays an important role as society’s perception and views of the burger influences the presentation of the burger in general and the sex worker in particular. The behaviour of the burger is embedded in the social expectations and social status attached to the concept.

Founded along the concept of burger as well as the varying definitions of sex work in general, I argue that the sex worker becomes ‘the Other’; or better still, she is more comfortable
presenting herself to the general public, her family back home, the Ghanaian community in The Netherlands using the Other-self. In contrast, burgers are proud to be known by that designation and so in many cases when burgers are talking or presenting themselves, the self is evident. Due to this important status of burger, migrants keep hiding a lot of information from others. Applying the Self, Other and the Other-self theory, I attempt to get a better understanding of Ghanaian migrant sex workers in The Netherlands. To achieve this goal, these concepts and theory guided the study design, questionnaires and acquisition of data from different sets of social relationships (Ghanaian associations, family, church, Neighbour, people in Ghana).
4.0. CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter gives detailed methodological considerations of this study. I start with the broad details, and then I continue with the profile of my interviewees.

The involvement of Ghanaians in the Dutch sex industry is characterized by secrecy and informality, and the available government data on sex workers are city based. For direct information, I contacted direct service providers and the GGD (public health organisations that carried out special services for sex workers). Each city in The Netherlands has these services and yet access to such data proved rather difficult, time-consuming and yielding little results as my contacts to some of these city GGD gave different directions.

The second option was to talk directly to the sex workers, which also proved very difficult because my informants were not willing to disclose former sex workers and current sex workers of Ghanaian origin to me. In a few cases, I was strictly warned not to reveal the name of the informant, as I did not want to put any of my informants in danger. It turned out that speaking to one who will accept that she is/was a sex worker seemed practically impossible. However, in talking to the people who had been mentioned as former sex workers, led to them also mentioning other people’s involvement and not themselves. This complicated the collection of quantitative information. The solution to this challenge was to interview or at least have a conversation with any individual who has been pointed out by others as a (former) sex worker.

Also, it was practically difficult to identify the nationalities of sex workers with my direct approach to them. On Saturday 14th of May, 2014, at around 1:00pm (Dutch local time), I strolled around the red light district of Groningen, with the intention of identifying and talking to a Ghanaian sex worker. I approached one black lady at the windows. She assumed I had come for lesbian sex intercourse. However, she gave monosyllabic answers ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to my questions when she understood I was on a research mission. She eventually admitted being of African origin but declined to specify the country of origin.

The third option, was contacting the organisations11 of sex workers, organisations working with sex workers and Ghanaian organisations in The Netherlands. The Ghanaian community in

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11 Some of the organisations I contacted include TAMPEP, FairWork Netherlands, Comensha.nl, The Red Thread (De Rode Draad), Sense Netherlands, STI Aids Netherlands, PIC Amsterdam, SHOP_info, The International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE), Bart de Graaff Foundation, GGD GHOR Nederland
The Netherlands is a close one and within this close-knit group, there is also a closed society of sex workers. An email I received from one of the organisations I contacted noted: “The Ghanaian community is a very closed one in The Netherlands. Our programme has never had direct contact with them.”12 Most of these organisations offered little help, as they had no direct contact with these sex workers. Those organisations that had ever had direct contacts with Ghanaian sex workers indicated that currently there were very few sex workers from Ghana and that they were of a very close community. As such, it is difficult for them to help me get in touch with even one.

Hence, ethnographic research methods inherent in anthropological fieldwork rooted in the establishment of rapport, trust and confidence were what I used to collect data from the field.

4.1. COLLECTION OF CORE DATA

The core data for this study was collected using in-depth interviews of migrants in The Netherlands (a total of 25 people) and 3 Ghanaian migrants formerly based in The Netherlands, but currently residing in the UK, 5 parents of Ghanaian migrants based in The Netherlands (parents in Ghana), 3 ‘returnees’ were also interviewed. Document reviews and focus group discussions (FGD) were also used. A focus group discussion with six (6) Ghanaian migrants formerly living in The Netherlands but currently living in the UK was held. As stated earlier, finding informants proved difficult due to the sensitive nature of the topic, thus this study is limited to the people who were willing to be interviewed. Apart from these formal interviews and focus group discussions, I have also had informal discussion and conversation with several Ghanaian migrants. I visited the homes and churches of most of these migrants and met some at functions (parties and weddings) organised by various Ghanaian groups. For almost all the migrants (The Netherlands and UK) I interviewed I had informal conversations with them before interviewing them formally. All interviewees were formally interviewed once.

Snowball sampling method with its numerous advantages13 was used to access interlocutors. Interviewed informants introduced me to other contacts (church member, friend, neighbour or

12 Sex work Programme, Soa Aids Nederland, Email conversation, 8th April, 2014.
13 See also Poeze 2010, 23, MacGaffey and Bazenguissa - Ganga 2000, 24.
family member) for subsequent interviews. While some interviewees were met through introductions, this research method also involved spontaneity and in some cases chance encounter. The majority of my informants belonged to the same church or Ghanaian hometown associations in locations such as The Hague and Amsterdam.

Real names of key informants and interlocutors are not disclosed in the analyses and discussions of interviews as most of them were not comfortable about revealing their identity. This is partly because of the sensitive nature of the topic, ‘sex work’, and residential status of respondents (some are ‘illegal’). In cases where I decide to use names I only use pseudonyms to make the analyses.

Respondents were interviewed in English and Twi (widely spoken Ghanaian vernacular); the selection of linguistic expression depended on either of these two languages that the respondents understood or were more comfortable with.¹⁴ Interviews of Ghana-based respondents were conducted by phone and Skype to save time and cost. All interviews were recorded.

4.2. DEALING WITH GHANAIAN MIGRANT SEX WORKERS

Clough (2002) observes that direct and first-person accounts provided by the actors themselves are often used in most-qualitative research works. However, this thesis focuses extensively on accounts given by the ‘Other’ or "the Other-self" that is the perception people have on the other (the migrant sex worker) not themselves. Direct use of the word ‘sex’ and parts of the body associated with sexual activity are taboo words in traditional Ghanaian Society. Allan and Burridge (2006) notes “many words and expressions are viewed as 'taboo', such as those used to describe sex, our bodies and their functions…” Hence, language is often classified under polite or impolite as well as politically correct or offensive depending on whether 'sweet-talking' (Euphemisms), 'straight-talking' (Orthophemisms) or being deliberately rude (dysphemisms). In some societies, including Ghana, there is an apparent taboo on sexual matters and parts of the body bothering on sex which often leads to shyness in discussion about sex or sexuality. This leads to indirect and long-winded discussion about sex, sex workers and sex organs (Agustin 2006).

¹⁴ Throughout my interviews (though with some few exceptions), most of the Ghanaians that spoke in Twi were more open and willing to discuss in-depth about issues.
In this context, Ghanaians in general and Ghanaian sex workers in particular find it difficult to talk freely about sex activities or sex work. Therefore, there is the tendency of interviewees to answer questions so as to be viewed as pious as well as upholding cultural beliefs and maintaining tradition by others. This can result in over-emphasising "acceptable behavior" or under-emphasising "unacceptable behavior". This has a tendency to affect collection of data. It poses challenges with conducting research on “sensitive” issues using interviews. People are always very discreet about such issues. In general, Ghanaians are much more comfortable talking about sex work in reference to someone else other than themselves (even if they are or were sex workers themselves). Likewise, some Ghanaians talk about sex in the form of gossip or as a means to express how different they are from a sex worker.

In addition, cultural and religious attitudes suppress any effort at any honest discussion of anything sexual or sex work related. Traditionally, a woman is expected to stick to only one partner at a time. As a result, the term 'prostitute' is used to refer to females who keep several partners. Similarly, the term 'adultery' has often been used in reference to a married woman who indulges in extramarital sex (Anarfi and Awusabo-Asare, 1993).15 There is secrecy surrounding extramarital, pre-marital sexual activity as well as the involvement of a woman in sex work as public opinion is too unforgiving and harsh on women involved in such activities. Several Ghanaian communities would ostracise or banish a woman caught in pre-marital sex of any kind (Sarpong 1977). Extramarital sex is also frowned upon, but it becomes worse off when the offender is a woman.

Taboos (strong prohibition of an action) in general and specifically taboo words play an important role in the discussion of sex work (ers). Sometimes, these taboos are upheld in the name of ‘protecting’ people from stigmatisation, but they act to maintain the difference of the ‘virtuous’ against the ‘bad’ or ‘fallen’. Negative terms commonly used in reference to a sex worker include ‘tuutuuni’ ‘Ashawo/ashewo’ (Ashawo/ashewo is a borrowed word from Nigeria, apparently introduced into Ghana by the Ghanaian returnees from Nigeria in the 1980s).

All three major religions in Ghana speak against the involvement in sex work. The last census conducted in Ghana in 2010 indicates that about 71.2 percent of Ghanaians are or claim to be Christians (GOG 2014). Women dominate the Christian population with 73.4 percent. Of

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15 Anarfi and Awusabo-Asare notes that mostly sexual networking of men is not often criticized compared to that of women.
the national population, 17.6 percent are or claims to be Moslems whiles 5.2 claims to be followers of the traditional religion (GOG 2014). Adherents of these religions are not supposed to participate in sex work. This contributes to the reason why Ghanaians prefer not to be visibly associated with sex work or sex workers.

Marchand, Reid, & Berents (1998) notes that literature often embraces the prostitutes as an integral part of village life, even though she is invariably represented as an outcast and tragic figure, taunted and despised by others (more especially women). All of these go to a long way to contribute to the reasons why many (former) sex workers are hesitant to speak about what they do because known sex workers are often ostracised within their local community. Ghanaians believe - and live - in the extended family, so everyone in a family has to be of good conduct in order to preserve the good name of his/her family (TAMPEP 2007). Families of migrants involved in sex work are easily stigmatized. Parents whose children are into sex work are labelled as failure in instilling moral values in their children and are ‘not religious’, and such parents see their wards as a great disappointment to the family name. In the larger context, involvement of a family member in sex work affects the entire family’s image.

Although some sex workers may like their work, some of them will not and do not speak ‘proudly’ or ‘freely’ about their profession because of how the Ghanaian society holds them and their work in contempt. Brydon (1985) indicates that most of the Ghanaian female migrants who returned from Nigeria found it very difficult to answer a simple question of what kind of work they did while in Nigeria. Brydon (1985) adds that it was their male counterparts who disclosed that the women were engaged in prostitution in hotels, beer bars and wayside uncompleted buildings. This clearly indicates how difficult it has always been for Ghanaian migrant sex workers to talk about their work. Mostly, the ‘Other’ or ‘the other self’ is much more comfortable talking about it than the self. In the backdrop of the difficulties in discussing sex work in Ghanaian society, this study focus on a group of people who will be asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes by describing the ‘Other’ as they would not readily talk about their involvement.
4.3. IN THE FIELD

As part of this research, I decided to find out the general perceptions of Ghanaians about sex work and the trend it took over the last 30 years. As indicated earlier, I had previously interviewed some Ghanaian migrants in 2013 as part of my internship. In view of that, I decided to use these already established contacts. So upon informing one of my former key informants about the theme of this research, this is what he said:

My daughter, why do you want to delve into an issue like that? It will be difficult to get your sample, you know our society and how everyone wants to be seen as pious, good. More so, the sex worker, whether you like it or not, is viewed as lacking in morals and therefore looked at with disdain and scorn. Seriously, it will be extremely difficult to get any Ghanaian sex worker to interview. Perhaps, you should go to Ghana and then find these teen prostitutes and give them some five Ghana Cedis as they may be more receptive to the idea of you interviewing them.

Despite my insistence that the research focus is on Ghanaian women in The Netherlands, my informant preferred to give a general overview. Upon my insistence, he cut in with the remark “but I cannot help you with any contacts before I get into trouble.” This initial conversation helped me to fine tune my approach so as to convince members of the Ghanaian community in The Netherlands to be willing to participate in this study. Some of them first wanted to read the abstract of my proposed study before agreeing to participate in the focus group discussion because they hoped the study would not “lead to any advocacy for the rights of prostitutes and eventually, the legalization of prostitution in Ghana.” This stance of theirs was due to the fact that “this (advocacy for the rights of sex workers) is closely related to LGBT\textsuperscript{16} and you know how people fight for them unnecessarily.” These initial reactions generated a serious rethink on my part as a researcher. Also, as a far-fetched solution to the difficulties I was going through, the idea of becoming one of them and have access to their views crept into my thinking, but soon disappeared.

Subsequently, I switched my interview approach from direct questioning about sex work to asking respondents about the socioeconomic life of Ghanaian migrants in general and cunningly introducing the kind of jobs engaged in by female Ghanaian workers. Not surprising,

\textsuperscript{16} Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
this indirect approach was very well received. Interestingly, when talking about the work of
migrant women, directly or indirectly, the issue of sex work often came up.

Due to the ethical issues and the limited access to primary data as noted above, I emailed
some organisations that work with sex workers in The Netherlands and some Ghanaian
organisations but only a few responded and in most cases they referred me to existing literature
or to other organisations. Some of them right away declined to be of any help. An email to one
organisation, for instance, received this response:

I am not aware of any organisation specifically working with Ghanaian sex workers. As far as I know there
are currently not that many Ghanaian migrants working in the Dutch sex industry. You might try Shop in
The Hague or PG292 in Amsterdam which are organisations providing services to sex workers. They might
have more information17.

Another email noted: “We cannot help you on info relate to sex workers from Ghana as we don’t carried (sic) out outreach program.”18

These initial discouraging remarks for my research confirm the observation noted by
Okojie (2003) and Miteva (2011) that, there is difficulty in getting sex workers to be
interviewed. At most times, sex workers are not forthcoming whiles in some situations they will
generally be hesitant to go beyond generalities.

The fact that the majority of Ghanaian sex workers remain in the shadow and do not
desire to be seen by fellow Ghanaians, makes it difficult to reach them. Whenever anyone was
recommended to me as being a sex worker in The Netherlands and I approached them, they
refused to talk to me as the ‘Self’ and were much eager to pinpoint others to me. No one was
free, bold or confident enough to talk about their experience or involvement. They all referred to
the self as dutiful and hardworking and having gone through very difficult situations without
engaging in sex work in order to survive or to meet expectations from home.

During a birthday party I attended in The Hague with over 20 Ghanaians in attendance, I
took the opportunity to ask about how Ghanaian women organised their lives on their arrival in
The Netherlands. Some of the women (most of who were between 37-53 years) noted that there
were several of the Ghanaian women who had to do low paying jobs such as cleaning, carrying
boxes, being nannies, restaurateurs and sex workers among others. Interestingly, some noted that
they had to go through hell in trying to seek asylum or legitimize their stay in The Netherlands.

17 ICRSEnetwork] For Netherlands members , Email conversation, 14th May 2014,
18 TAMPEP International Foundation, Email conversation, 20th March 2014.
Without residence permits or working permits, they could not further their education on their arrival, and neither could they learn Dutch which could have put them in a position to gain employment in better paying jobs. During a group discussion, they noted that it was very difficult when they first arrived in The Netherlands in relation to organising their lives, and meeting the goals and the agenda they set for themselves before setting foot in The Netherlands. This was because they were “Johnny just come”. Some males joined in, and funny enough one man remarked that some women were into prostitution and laughed it off, from the body language of some of the women, it seemed an uncomfortable truth, but they were not in the mood to talk about it. Though the party environment was not the right context for the discussion, it presented an opportunity to establish initial contacts as well as get general views on migrant works; especially when most of the migrants had been in The Netherlands for more than 15 years.

Throughout this study, the bias that I developed was to change my perspective on sex work. I avoid the discussion of moral issues and rather focus on the dynamics and complexities of sex work among migrant Ghanaians.

4.4. RELIABILITY OF DATA

One of the reliability questions stems from the selection of interlocutors. Since it was difficult identifying Ghanaians who had been involved in sex work, I used informants who have been living in The Netherlands for a long time. They included pastors with Ghanaian congregations, Ghanaians who have moved from The Netherlands to UK, and parents of Ghanaian migrants based in The Netherlands. I argue that even where a ‘self-confessed’ sex worker is obtained, she would have been more comfortable giving socially desirable answers. This could be compounded by my identity and background as a young Ghanaian lady. Even though we do not come from the same ethnic or locality in Ghana, they would not want to answer certain delicate and sensitive questions from me, all because I am a Ghanaian. The fact of being a Ghanaian still presupposes that there is no anonymity and as such they would not be ready to open up about the various research questions and as such, they would always limit themselves to generalities.
Validity and reliability were aimed for by triangulating research methods, including observation, individual interviews, church attendance and focus group discussion. The time I spent with some Ghanaian families in The Hague allowed them to disclose some known former sex workers. Hence, I discovered the people who knew more about Ghanaians in The Netherlands involved in sex work and Ghanaian migrant sex workers.

In summary, this study is based on semi-structured interviews (36 in-depth, many others less structured), participant observation in Ghanaian shops, Ghanaian functions, church activities, and socializing in The Netherlands and other parts of Europe, especially, the United Kingdom. I consider the period I spent visiting churches, attending Ghanaian functions, visiting migrant families as a potential methodological strength of my study. My view is based on the rich, vivid and detailed data that were generated and the extent of emerged themes that served to address my research questions. I posit that if my data collection stage had not brought out most of the nuances of Ghanaian migrant sex workers in The Netherlands, I would not have been able to properly uncover the in-depth and striking understanding of the perceptions and views of these migrants. I am with the view that, the skills I have acquired in interacting with different people facilitated how I approached my interviewees and my study.

The data collected from the field was interpreted with the aim of building my arguments through the Self/Other and the Other-self with awareness and attention to the available extant literature on migrant sex workers and particular attention on migrant sex workers from Ghana. The engagement with the existing literature before beginning my interviews was not merely to know the available data in the field, but more importantly, the existing literature guided my research design. This is because; it helped me to know the theories and methodologies that had been employed in similar studies. It also guided my choice and framing of research questions. Researchers have noted the importance of having knowledge of existing literature; it adds to making the research more scientific (Fox 2004).
4.5. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

This section provides a description of interviewees for this study. This information is useful for understanding the context of the views and status of these men and women interviewed for this research. The description is presented in terms of the following variables: age at the time of the interview, place of residence, educational background, ethnic background, employment status, language of preference and gender. An analysis of these variables provides the socioeconomic context within which perceptions, ideas and other issues are influenced.

Gender and age

According to demographic investigations, Ghanaians in The Netherlands are mostly single men and women coming from a city in Ghana and aged 25–40 years (Nimako 1993). The 25 migrants based in The Netherlands interviewed were between the ages of 28 and 59. These people came to The Netherlands between the ages of 17 to 35 years with the exception of one who came to The Netherlands at age 6. In summary, out the 36 people interviewed, 20 (56%) were females and 16 (44%) were males.19

Education

The average education of Ghanaians in Amsterdam is of secondary to higher level (Nimako 1993). In this study, 13 (52%) of the migrants based in The Netherlands interviewed followed Senior Secondary Course. One (4%) had completed Technical school. Six (24%) had Primary school education and Junior High School education. One had also completed training college in Ghana. In almost all cases, interviewees had completed their education in Ghana with the exception of three who were able to further their education in The Netherlands.

Place of Residence

As noted earlier, 25 out of the 36 of the respondents were based in The Netherlands with the majority (13) residing in The Hague. This was influenced by my earlier research work that was done in The Hague. Hence, previous contacts recommended other respondents. Six respondents resided in Amsterdam; 2 were located in Zoetermeer, 1 based in Groningen and 3 in Rotterdam. Among the 8 people (5 parents and 3 returnees) based in Ghana 3 were located in Greater Accra region (the capital of Ghana) and 5 in Kumasi, the Ashanti Regional capital. Other

19 See Appendix 1.
3 migrants who were also interviewed once lived in The Netherlands but moved to UK are based in London.

**Employment status**

Out of the 25 migrants who live in The Netherlands, almost all (except 3) had paid jobs.²⁰ One of the three unemployed is a student whilst the other two were on social welfare as a result of ill health and receive monthly stipend from the government of The Netherlands. Most of these migrants interviewed thought it would be easy to find a job and earn money (Tichelman 1996) and others knew that it would not be easy and yet were confident of making it once they got to The Netherlands.

**Ethnicity**

Lamensdorf Ofori-Atta and Linden (1995) described the Ghanaian population as very heterogeneous consisting of people of diverse ethnic backgrounds. These ethnic groups differ in language, rules of inheritance and religions. My sample population consisted of about 8 different ethnic groups, the largest being the Asante (11) from Asante Region of Ghana ²¹, the Kwahu/Akuapem (6) from the Eastern region of Ghana, Bono (5) from the Brong Ahafo region and Ewe (4) from the Volta Region. This sample size can be related in a simple way to that of Anarfi (1990) whose research in Côte d'Ivoire (as noted earlier- chapter 2) saw the dominance of respondents from Asante and Eastern region (with matrilineal inheritance pattern).

**Language**

As stated earlier, two languages were used- English and Twi (also known as Akan). Nineteen (53%) out of 36 of the respondents were more comfortable in speaking Akan (Given the fact that it was their primary language and easier to express themselves in), six (17%) respondents used English but intermittently spoke Akan language.²² In such cases, data was collected in one language (Akan) and the findings presented in another (English). A number of translation-related decisions had to be made but the researcher tried her best to maintain the original meaning of the narratives. It must be noted that this did not pose much of a problem to

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²⁰ See Appendix 1.
²² Generally, it was noticed that those who spoke in English were very formal with the discussions whilst most who spoke in Akan were less formal and open to discuss issues at length.
the researcher as Akan is her mother tongue. Eleven (30%) of the respondents spoke English throughout the data collection process.

**Summary of profile of respondents**

During the data collection period of this study- September 2013 to June 2014, the following types of respondents were encountered based on the sampling procedure earlier described. In-depth interviews of 36 respondents based in the cities of The Hague, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Groningen and Zoetermeer (The Netherlands), Accra and Kumasi (Ghana) and London, United Kingdom. Many of the migrants interviewed arrived in The Netherlands approximately 25 years ago with few exceptions (some have been in The Netherlands for up to 35 years and one arrived 3 years ago). Some of them are currently working as domestic workers, taxi drivers, sales personnel, others are engaged in professions such as teaching and clergy. Nearly all of them professed to be Christians, married with children, and maintain regular links with (extended) family back home in Ghana. As at the time of the interview, the majority of participants’ level of education was secondary and a few with primary level. More females participated in this research than males. Many came to The Netherlands directly from Ghana whereas others came to The Netherlands via Germany. A couple of the respondents interviewed in London (United Kingdom), had lived for many years (often between 5 and 12 years) in The Netherlands and decided to move to UK for different reasons. Outcomes of the interviews are discussed hereafter.
5.0. CHAPTER 5: MOTIVATION FOR MIGRATING AND WHY SEX WORK

In this chapter, the aim is to find out the various reasons given for the migrants interviewed to leave Ghana and why people decide to go into the Dutch sex industry. I first looked at what sex work is to Ghanaians and empirically redefined the theoretical meaning of sex work as explained earlier. Following that, I delved into selected transcribed interviews to discuss the reasons why some Ghanaians migrate and go into sex work.

5.1. WHO IS A SEX WORKER?

Sex work has different meaning to different people. Before proceeding with the discussion of what sex work is to my respondents and Ghanaian migrants in general. It is important to note that most of the Ghanaian migrants I came into contact with or I had the privilege of discussing migrant sex work with were not familiar with the term sex work (er). For some it was a term used to ‘paint what is black as white’, or ‘promotion from being a whore’. For instance one respondent remarked: ‘Ewuraa baasi bra, tutu, ashwao na wo apolishe no saa no, menfa edin foforo biaa ema no’ literally meaning ‘prostitute or whore nothing has changed, do not find a euphemism for it (sex work)’.

From the discussions I had with my respondents, the following four categories were believed to be sex workers:

1. A woman with multiple sex partners at a time.
2. A woman who takes money from the boyfriend(s) for sexual encounters or any woman who sees and demands money as payment for her sexual services. For this group of women, they aim to satisfy the men in their lives sexually mainly because they are highly motivated by the material gains and financial benefits they stand to gain from those men. In such a relationship, women are in a world where sex and money intermingle. These men can be ‘sugar daddies’. 23
3. Women living with one man with the intention of striking a lifelong marital union (serious boyfriend) while simultaneously entertaining another man for pecuniary

23 A slang term for a man who offers financial or material support to a woman (mostly younger than the man) for usually a sexual relationship.
interest. This kind of relationship is also called ‘understanding’. It often happens in situations where the men do not get sexual satisfaction from their wives. This group differs from the first and second groups. In the first group, the men are not aware of the involvement of a third party. In the second group, the lady is mostly into the relationship for money and there is no arrangement for the involvement of a third party.

4. The fourth and last group has to do with women who ‘sit behind the window’, stand on the streets, work in clubs, and massage parlours as ‘prostitutes’. For them, it is ‘Officially’ acknowledged that they are sex workers. They mostly have sexual relations with strangers for money.\(^\text{24}\)

In the context of this research, I will not focus on all the above classifications. For simplicity and to aid in my analysis, I focus on the fourth group. In contrast to existing literature as pointed out earlier (chapter 3), my interviews showed other categories of sex workers. I suggest the redefinition of the understanding of sex work in the context of research group understudy. Alternatively, researchers may need to explain to respondents the category they are interested in to avoid misunderstanding. This paper focuses specifically on women who exchange sex for money with a variety of (mainly unknown) men as their main source of livelihood or as a supplement to their main source of income.

5.2. MOTIVATION TO MIGRATE

Ghanaian migrant women of diverse ethnicity, age, class, education and occupation make several attempts to improve their lives through migration. The different profile of migrants I interviewed for this study attest to this (see Appendix 1). These migrants weigh available options, sometimes consult with friends and family (using available social networks), take advantage of opportunities offered, and continue to exercise judgment along the way. Travellers had to pay huge sums of money to middlemen often known as ‘connection men’ to ensure their

\(^{24}\) These categories of sex workers were debated over a long period of time in a focus discussion after these categories had often been emphasized by many respondents. In the focus group discussion, several categories emerged but there was an agreement among all 6 women based in the UK that sex work includes a range of people who may not accept to be sex workers. This discussion stimulated new ideas about my perspective on sex work.
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passage to The Netherlands, as well as to secure attractive jobs for them. From the interviews conducted, economic considerations dominated the reasons for migrating to The Netherlands. The reasons are often framed under political and socioeconomic factors with each influencing the other. Findings from a study by Anarfi and Fayorsey (1999) also noted that, economic reasons mainly underpinned the migration of some Ghanaians in Côte d'Ivoire.

The data from the interviews are supported by literature that shows that historically, Ghanaian migration to Europe often centred on the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany rather than The Netherlands. Most of these migrants in UK and Germany were to continue with their education whiles others were skilled workers (Buchan and Delanyo 2004, Awuah 2005). Interviewees noted that, most of the Ghanaians who came to The Netherlands unlike those drawn to UK or Germany, did so because of economic motivations. Interviewees indicated that some migrants aimed to make The Netherlands a temporal residence, but when unable to save enough money to go back to Ghana, The Netherlands became a permanent settlement. One female informant who has lived in The Netherlands for 35 years and abreast with migration of Ghanaians (as a result of being political activist and consultant) noted that there was a car business in Utrecht in the early 1980s, which drew Ghanaians in Europe to come to The Netherlands (Utrecht) to buy cars. These cars were either used in Europe or shipped to Ghana for their own use or to their kins whiles others traded in this car business to make money. So, it stands to reason that the car business attracted lots of Ghanaians to The Netherlands and in the process, some decided to settle in The Netherlands.

With time, these Ghanaians in Utrecht moved to bigger cities, especially in the capital city of The Netherlands, Amsterdam. This is because there is the perception that in big cities, migrants are more likely to get job opportunities and there is less likely to be discrimination. With time, the capital of southern Netherlands, The Hague became another attraction to Ghanaians and it is not surprising that the majority of Ghanaians based in The Netherlands are found in Amsterdam and The Hague (Orozco and Mohogu 2007, O&S 1995).

Some Ghanaians consider Europe to be a paradise where one can become rich quicker and easier. Many migrants therefore became disappointed when they realize that life is not so

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25 Interview transcripts, most interviewees attested to the fact that they came to The Netherlands to make money. Though there were other reasons, the underlining motivation was socio-economic.
26 see Lumba song and also Amakye Dede’s song Iron boy
27 Migrants, non-migrants and prospective migrants
easy in Europe and regret for leaving behind their (better) jobs (especially those who had formal jobs in Ghana like nurses, teachers, and police officers) or their businesses.\(^{28}\)

In spite of the money the connection men take, women are often vulnerable as they are faced with the grim reality of sex work on arrival. Males reported not to have been confronted with engaging in sex work. One 42-year-old female care-giver, who lived in The Netherlands before settling in London noted that:

> When I got to The Netherlands, my connection man told me that his job of getting me over to Europe was done and wished me well in my stay. He, however, directed me to seek asylum and that, it was my only means of survival. I met some Ghanaians through the contacts of my connection man. I was told that the way out was to sleep with men for money. And so, I struggled my way through…\(^{29}\)

Inferring from the above story, it is clear that on arrival in The Netherlands, the myth of Europe as a paradise disappears quickly upon the confrontation with reality. In situations when women pay a lot to connection men, the disillusion is high. So, in The Netherlands, some of these migrants realize that to eke out a living outside Ghana is not any easier than or as promising as they had previously thought (Surprising Europe 2011).\(^{30}\) Undoubtedly, a lot of desperation set in when the dreams of migrants turn into nightmares as they realize they need work permits in order to earn a living in Europe. When some migrants successfully acquire permits, they are mostly limited to odd jobs of a few hours per week. In such cases, some weigh available economic opportunities as against high expectations from Ghana (family and friends) and their subsistence, and then may go into the obvious alternative, sex work, seen as a highly lucrative industry.\(^{31}\)

A 47-year-old interviewee who was formally working with a construction firm based in The Netherlands but now has established his own construction firm noted his frustration at the effects economic crisis had on his life:

> Sometimes what to even eat becomes a problem. Because of the economic crisis, some of us were sacked from our work. You have to beg for money before you can even eat. But you have to keep lying to people

\(^{28}\) Focus group discussion transcript, London, 20th April 2014. However, none of my interviewees indicated that they left behind their better jobs. The contradiction is that they often compared situations in Ghana and recommend that if someone has a good job in Ghana there is no need to travel to Europe.

\(^{29}\) My own translation from Twi to English, Interview transcript, 42 years, Female, 16\(^{th}\) April, 2014.

\(^{30}\) Interview transcripts 2013, 2014

\(^{31}\) Migrants interviewed noted that sex work was formerly lucrative in terms of money, however to most; the same cannot be said today due to taxes.
home. Go and stand by someone’s car or you go and stand by someone’s house and take a photo. You send the photo home and you say see my car, see my house. It’s a shame.32

It can be inferred from the narratives above that, some migrants regret coming to Europe but cannot go back because they either have debts to settle or have sold all their properties to enable them get visas and tickets to make the journey abroad. Debts were incurred as a result of loans some contracted to acquire a visa, buy tickets or pay ‘connection men’ or middle men. They cannot return with bare hands because to do so would be returning to face the shame and the name-calling (as noted in the song of the Lumba brother’s ‘yeeye aka akwantuom’). So they fall back on any work at all including sex work.33 Also, from the profile of my respondents, it was clear that, due to the educational background of many of my respondents, when they even decide to go to Ghana, there will be a challenge of finding a well-paying job to maintain their social status as returned migrants - burgers.

There is no direct answer to the question whether choices made by migrants are influenced by personal characteristics (gender, ethnic background, age, education etc), and attention should concentrate rather on the question: under what conditions migrants are able to adapt very well in the destination or host country to attain their dream jobs and to avoid being stranded, ending up in occupations they feel shy to talk about, such as sex work.

Women sex workers of diverse nationalities are in major cities throughout the world and it has been so historically from Nigerian women in Italy and Chinese women in Paris, Italian women in Doha to South African women in Dubai (Chin 2013). The experience of Ghanaian women in The Netherlands is also an empirical reality.

32 Interview transcript, male, 47 years old, 6th March, 2014

33 Adomako (1991) noted that the Ghanaian women in The Netherlands travel on tourist visas or with false documents provided by kin or procurers. She indicated that some Ghanaian women living in The Netherlands are living in virtual slavery having been tricked by the offer of travel, jobs and or nice clothes. Some of these women sign bondage to cover their expenses (visa acquisition, plane tickets, or even temporary marriage (contract marriage) to obtain paper and spend years working to pay off such debts. Those who escape the above two categories, find a pimp who will be able to provide them with a greater security. Those who gain their independence may lack the appropriate papers to stay in The Netherlands thus making them vulnerable.
5.3. WHY SEX WORK?


For many of the people I interviewed, they framed the motivation to enter sex work as socioeconomic. The major reason to migrate and enter the sex industry for many Ghanaian women often overlap- to make money.

Many Ghanaian women saw in migration an opportunity to make money. Sometimes ignorant of the work to do when they get to The Netherlands. One female interviewee noted: “I knew people who had gone abroad and changed the lives of their families. I also wanted to go outside to struggle to support my family.” Although often discussed in vague terms in my conversation with Ghanaian migrants, going abroad in spite of limited educational background of women clearly implied going to ‘struggle’. The idea of struggling denotes doing any available ‘hard’ job that will enhance ones financial status. Migrants therefore struggle or hustle to be able to transform the lives of their family, for which sex work is one main avenue. ‘Returnees’ were often not candid about the kinds of job they do/did abroad. Most of them do not even talk about the jobs they do. Burgers have an obligation to maintain their social statuses. Migrants thereby presented themselves to people in Ghana in enviable ways, painting the image of being happy, prosperous and wealthy depicting that they are successful. This seems to be a duty of every migrant to the people who remain back “home”. Burgers often visit ‘home’ with some presents and exude an air of success and fulfilment even in cases when the reality is very far from that

34 That is, the ability to choose when and where to work and who they work with. Still others see the sex industry as an opportunity to explore their sexuality, to validate their desirability, and to be a part of something that defies social-sexual norms and values.
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(Skrobanek, Boonpakdee and Jantateero 1997). A 38-year-old male respondent declared that in his 10 years of living in The Netherlands he has observed that:

Some people visit home once in a year, others every two years or even several years. They save all they have earned and go and show off in Ghana. They have to live restricted lives here (The Netherlands) to show off at home that they are burgers. Sometimes it takes them years of planning and these women go in a group just to let people know that some burgers have landed. They create unnecessary attraction that they don’t even deserve.35

So there seems to be a calculated effort by some migrants to maintain their social status. Using Goffman’s stage metaphor (1990), migrants present themselves to people in Ghana based on expectations and social norms. These performances can be challenging for the migrant. This is because migrants have to be able to manage information as well as send money to families back home, presenting themselves as fulfilled and successful for admiration. This also goes a long way to influence others to believe that by going abroad they are on their way to socioeconomic prosperity. Migrants often succeed in such presentation and performances because they are ‘envied’ and admired by people back home. The Netherlands becomes the backstage where some migrants accumulate money to perform and maintain their social status in Ghana.

Remittances from these migrants (most interviewees noted, were relatively small but) played a significant role in the lives of their families in Ghana through investment in consumer goods, land and housing. This is relevant in the Ghanaian culture as portrayed in a famous Ghanaian adage: “If your parents nurture you to develop your teeth, you also have the responsibility to cater for them in their old age as they lose their teeth.” Thus, out of duty and filial piety, many young people migrate in search of employment to take care of parents and other family members (Ypeij 2005, Ypeij and Steenbeek 2001). When occupational options becomes restricted and are relatively not financially rewarding, sex work often becomes the immediate solution or rescue.

Below are three transcribed interviews of selected respondents who have lived in The Netherlands for more than 25 years:

35 Interview transcripts, Male, 38 years, 5th May, 2014,
You know most of us in The Netherlands are here mainly to make money, nothing else. As you can see, most of us did not come to The Netherlands to school and with our academic qualifications; you don’t expect us to be doing office jobs, do you? So, most of our sisters are here to make money. It was really difficult to get jobs, not even in cleaning. They just decide to sell their bodies when they get frustrated with the economic pressures. I thank God I never got myself involved in sex work like them. I remained steadfast and believed in God. They could make lots of money from prostitution. Some did not even have to rent apartments as they kept moving from window to the client’s residence or hotel. One could be very lucky to escort a client to a place for weeks or even months. The client will pay for the accommodation, the food you will eat and also pay for your service. It was much easier to make quick money.³⁶

Apart from money, what else will make one go into sex work? Nothing else but money underscores people’s involvement in prostitution.³⁷

Almost all the Ghanaian women who went into sex work did so because of financial difficulty. It is never easy to live in a foreign country without any relatives to turn to in times of hardships and especially when you have kids left behind in Ghana. You need to eat, pay your bills, pay your kids’ fees, pay or remit the one taking care of them too. Lots of pressure from home. There is no help from anywhere else but at the very end of your own hand. The only people you can fall on have only one solution: prostitution is your sure bet.³⁸

The narratives also confirmed the literature that asserts that, most Ghanaians enter into sex work due to difficult (financial) situations. These three narratives are representative of the views shared by many of my respondents. The first narrator was suggested by a lot of the Ghanaian migrants in The Hague as a former sex worker. However, for obvious reasons, she never admitted it during the interview. This notwithstanding, my conversation with her revealed that she knew several other sex workers and was abreast with how sex workers organise their sex life in The Netherlands. I had no doubts whatsoever that she was basically recounting her story but with thoughtful circumspection and secrecy. Hence, she decided to talk as the Other-self.

The male interviewee was generally very critical of sex work. Generally sex work is believed to be practised by female migrants and therefore the males interviewed often saw it as the work done by the Other (the female). The third narrative above was one that felt pity for the sex worker. She noted that it was due to situations and conditions that were not favourable in The Netherlands for the Ghanaian migrant woman. In many ways this 55-year-old woman indirectly

³⁶My own translation from Twi to English, Interview transcript, female, 50 years, Zoetermeer, 3rd November, 2013.
³⁷Interview transcript, Male, 59 years, 3rd April, 2013.
³⁸My own translation from Twi to English interview transcript, female, 55 years, May 10th, 2014.
admitted being a sex worker as she gave life history of a sex worker that was very similar to her story. She noted that:

    There is this woman who needed money to take care of her two kids and eventually bring them over to The Netherlands; she did the work for her kids and family. Today she lives happily with her husband and kids. She has also successfully brought her big brother here.

    I am convinced that this woman was telling her story because I knew her family quite well and at church (when I visited where she fellowships) she had once introduced me to her two children and her big brother now residing at The Hague. Sex work can be a means to earn money to meet set goals as highlighted above.

    These sex workers do something that is perceived bad in the Ghanaian society to have a good place in the same society. So they are not only recognized as burgers, but also despised sex workers at the same time, a very interesting and complex social dimension.

    Sex workers are now classified as self-employed businesswomen in The Netherlands (Holligan 2011). Speaking to one sex worker in Groningen city in northern Netherlands, she noted that the only reason she is at the window at the Groningen red light district is to make money and go back home.\textsuperscript{39} She was not willing to go beyond general descriptions of the motives of engaging in sex work, but she believed that almost all women in sex work are in it to make money. “Why do people work? Just to make money. If not, we will just be idling around and having fun”. She added that it does not mean that there is no fun in the work but for her the money is very important.

    My interviewees in The Netherlands noted that though sex work helped some women to be able to accumulate considerable assets within a short time, other women earned ‘nothing’ out of being sex workers. This is not because they did not earn substantial amounts of money, but because such sex workers lived extravagant lifestyles. Women who earned money from sex work, but were not able to save enough to build a house in Ghana or get the Dutch ‘papers’ or even bring other family members abroad were branded as being ‘kohwini’ – useless or wasteful.

    However, it could be that not all Ghanaian migrants have the aim of financially supporting their family members (though that is the dominant view and the expectation). Some women may

\textsuperscript{39} Interview transcript. Female, 14\textsuperscript{th} May, 2014.
have migrated or entered the Dutch sex industry because they wanted to be independent from family control and enjoy their lives with limited or no restriction. Even though during my interviews, none of my respondents excluded family from the motivation to migrate, at this point, metaperception could be the reason. In that, the interviewees may think about what others may think of them. In addition, the dominant view among many Ghanaians is to have a communal spirit and act in ways that support family and community. This goes a long way to influence what people feel comfortable talking about as the self. Interestingly, being a sex worker is demeaning, but nothing appears more demeaning and socially degrading than failing to make use of what is gained from this “very demeaning” enterprise. Interviewees often juxtaposed a sense of embarrassment and shame in discussions about the involvement of Ghanaians in sex work with an appreciation of the uses of the money people earned doing sex work, including supporting family and investments in follow up migration.

Generally, it is demanded of burgers or migrants to acquire landed property in Ghana. By working in the sex industry, many migrants are expected to be able to maintain dignified living standards in The Netherlands while dramatically improving the living conditions of their families in Ghana. Building a house in Ghana (in one’s village or a large city or town) showcases both the migrants’ attachment to home and their success abroad. All things being equal, migrants are more likely to afford the cost of building materials (albeit sometimes inflated for the burger) better than locals plying their living back home in Ghana owing to the differences in the exchange rates of the currencies at home and abroad. These houses are often inhabited by their families and/or rented out for a return on investment until the burger returns home to use them, either permanently or temporary.

Despite gender stereotypes and strict moral and social codes surrounding sex work, some Ghanaian migrant sex workers are resourceful as they use sex as a tool to improve their lives and that of their families. Most interviewees noted how The Netherlands can be a tough place to be without ‘papers’ and employment. Although the options for supporting migrants are very restricted, some migrants chose what seemed best for them at a particular moment in time by entering the Dutch sex industry. Being a sex worker is noted as a way for migrants to avoid the unrewarding conditions in the low skilled and low paid jobs available to them, such as: working in restaurants and bars, private homes and cleaning. However, the reality is far more complicated. As will be noted later, it is
more about limited options (legal status) to get such low skilled and low paying jobs. The contradiction here for many Ghanaian migrants is that many people who were even deemed as former sex workers are currently employed in such low-paying jobs. However, working in the sex industry for migrants can also be a way to minimise the risk of being subject to deportation, when one does not have her ‘papers’. This is because it is possible to go underground in the sex industry as there are invisible forms (in hotels, discotheques, and clubs and private apartments). Alternatively, mobility could also minimise chances of deportation.

Several of my interviewees believed that, women become wealthy through sex work. I discovered that for most women who decide to enter into the sex trade, the rate of pay hourly, daily or weekly is higher than any other work their level of education could have qualified them to do.\footnote{In a study of sex workers in Australia, reasons such as supporting families/dependents, pursue higher education, pay off debts and buy cars, houses and/or other expensive items. International evidence shows that the money earned doing sex work was a compelling incentive for women to remain in the sex industry. Obviously, sex work is well paid: a study of 216 sex workers in Queensland in 2003 claimed that an average weekly income of a sex worker was A$1,500 weekly meanwhile the average weekly earnings in Queensland was approximately A$900 (Ministry of Justice sd).} A female respondent of 44 years who has resided in The Netherlands for 22 years noted: “I heard that around 1997, sex workers were receiving about 30 to 35 guilders for a service, they were getting a lot of money.” Many respondents talked about how sex worker earned quick money. In Ghana, money is power and enhances one’s burger status. However, how can sex workers hold on to any sense of power and a high social status in a world in which they are despised, stigmatized, as well as denied any voice and criticised because they have sex for money? In a conversation with one male respondent based in Amsterdam noted, “God gave us free bodies, why do you sell it? So, the sex workers should be treated badly because they are selling what should otherwise be free. Survival, an important reason in our lives is the greatest factor for most Ghanaian migrants to sell sex for money. However, some interviewees have been very sympathetic to migrant women as they endure all the emotional shame and pain to adequately support themselves (and family).

Some people interviewed also believed that it was the breakdown of traditional values that made it possible for people to go into sex work. Most respondents held the view that someone who upholds tradition will never ‘sell her body for any material gains,’ even in dire circumstances. They had a similar view with some Ghanaian scholars who documented that sex work was as a result of the collapse of the traditional and cultural morals (Busia 1950, Acquah 40).
1972). Contrary to this point of view, Dinan (1983) and Caldwell, Caldwell and Quiggin (1989) discussed sex work as one rooted in traditional Ghanaian society. Their argument was that prostitutes existed as a means to satisfy unmarried men. However, these scholars noted that, sex work was not socially accepted in Ghanaian society and still continues to be socially unacceptable in Ghana. These are the reasons why the Self, Other and Other-self was applicable in the presentation of the views of my interviewees.

Some interviewees noted that most Ghanaians who were in the Dutch sex industry in the 1980s and 1990s entered willingly into the industry due to eventual financial benefits and legal residence issues. Interviewees noted that prior to late 1990, sex workers did not need legal documents to work, so irrespective of an individual’s legal residence and work status she could enter into the Dutch sex industry. However, with time situations changed and requirements to enter the Dutch sex industry or even remain in the industry became restricted:

So around 2001 or is it 2002, it was required that one has to have papers to be a prostitute. This was very difficult for most Ghanaians. The strategy was to link up with other sex workers who had papers to sometimes link you up to some of the clients or arrange for you to meet some clients at a certain place. Another option was to keep contacts with some of your old clients. Fortunately, at this time mobile phones were becoming common. So people could be called by clients and friends.

TAMPEP (2002) noted that in April 2001, the Dutch implemented a law which restricted the involvement of people without legal documents into the Dutch sex industry. Despite this restriction, the perception of generating income made some Ghanaian women to engage in sex work despite their legal status. Hardly did any of my ‘respondents’ mention trafficking as a way for known Ghanaian women entering the Dutch sex industry. This is not to dispute the fact that some Ghanaians entered the industry through trafficking. Adomako (1991) mentions trafficking as one major way Ghanaian sex workers entered the Dutch sex industry.

Routes into sex work are varied and diverse. It could be by chance, choice or coercion. Some women voluntarily choose this lifestyle as a result of economic burdens. Some women are lured into it through association with friends already working in the sex industry as an option either premeditated upon or not presents itself. A decision to enter into the sex industry is

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41 Akyeampong makes a similar assertion, but limits it to Southwest Akan (Akyeampong, Sexuality and Prostitution among the Akan of the Gold Coast c. 1650-1950 1997)
explored. Akosua Adomako, a Ghanaian researcher, in 1991, identified three means or ways by which Ghanaian women enter into the sex work in The Netherlands:

1. Trafficking
2. Furthering of sex work by (professional) sex workers from Ghana.
3. Women who due to their illegal residence status in The Netherlands, financial need and the lack of alternative economic opportunities turn to sex work.

Those who enter into the Dutch sex industry through trafficking are often deceived or lured by the traffickers into The Netherlands under the pretext of getting them gainful employment on their arrival. A 57-year-old Pastor based in Amsterdam who works with trafficked African women (an NGO in Amsterdam) and also African based congregation remarked about how for several years he hardly came into contact with trafficked Ghanaian women. One 41-year-old female who has been in The Netherlands for 35 years stated:

 Trafficking is quite a recent phenomenon and you must note that Ghanaian involvement in sex work dates back to the early 1980s. I believe that during those periods, pimps and madams had not yet seen the gap in the migration process and how gullible some Ghanaian women can be when it comes to travelling to Europe. People are now exploiting this alternative.

In a nut shell, most interviewees believed that trafficking was not a major route into the Dutch sex industry for many Ghanaian migrant women.

Apart from trafficking, another major route into The Netherlands sex trade for is financial hardship. Interviewees mostly mentioned this route as the main means Ghanaian sex workers entered the Dutch sex industry. Most of these women have financial obligation back home, coupled with their own precarious situation in The Netherlands. This therefore becomes an easy way into the Dutch sex business. Their situation becomes very precarious as there is fewer or no alternatives left. It is clear that their illegal residence status becomes a major contributing factor: it weakens their position and therefore, limits their freedom of choice and possibilities in job search and survival strategies. Sex work becomes the best alternative to survive in The Netherlands for many of them.

Professional Ghanaian sex workers in Ghana or elsewhere have also been reported to have travelled to The Netherlands to practise their trade. These women come to The Netherlands believing that the Dutch sex industry would be more financially rewarding and lucrative than in
Ghana. Interviewees noted that Ghanaian women previously prostituting in Ghana, Nigeria or Côte d'Ivoire were likely to come to The Netherlands. But, as secretive as many Ghanaian sex workers are, it is highly difficult for people to know whether some of these ladies were former sex workers elsewhere. What remain are only rumours and stories told by other migrants but never the sex worker herself.

It is safe to conclude that there are three kinds of Ghanaian migrants in the Dutch sex industry: the first is those who were already sex workers before migrating, others with a blurry idea of the kind of work they would be involved in and coerced into it, whiles others decided to go into the Dutch sex industry due to financial pressure and see sex work as temporary measure as they strive to find a meaningful job or an alternative economic means with the passage of time.

Entering into the sex industry in order to make money to support one’s needs or that of the family or dependents is not uncommon. However, there is prejudice against economic motives of doing things. Agustin (2006) asserts that we live in a world where individuals are not only expected to make money, but where success in life is judged on how much money one makes. This seems to be the case for many Ghanaian migrants, as they have to send remittances home as well as maintain their needs in their country of residence.

5.4. CONCLUSION

This section has outlined the various definitions of sex workers identified by many Ghanaian migrants. Reasons for migrating to The Netherlands and engaging in sex work were noted as purely socioeconomic. Even though, women’s migration for sex work cannot be reduced solely to economic survival imperatives (Lim 1998, Doezema 2000). It is often the major reason (interviewees 2013; 2014, backed by literature).

Some women involved in sex work as the job of last resort, often to provide for personal and family needs. It is quite clear from the above discussion that, Ghanaian migrant women who need to maintain their burger status enter into sex work for the money. The phenomenon of Ghanaian migrants engaging in sex work can be explained in terms of the socioeconomic developments regarding the position of women in Ghana (especially in the 1980s) and by the obvious opportunities for making ‘quick’ money in The Netherlands. The earnings of these sex
workers, with the exception of few are often invested in Ghana or in subsequent migration of family members.

Most times, Ghanaian migrant women knowingly engage in sex work even though they may not always be able to fully anticipate working conditions before migrating or before going into sex work. Some Ghanaian migrant women did not migrate to The Netherlands for sex work. It was only later that the advantages and opportunities the sex industry offers in a very short time lured them into it.
6.0. CHAPTER 6: FROM GHANA TO THE NETHERLANDS

This chapter of the thesis looks at the perceptions from people in Ghana (migrant families and returnees) on migrants in general and more specifically female Ghanaian migrant sex workers. These perceptions and views are therefore contrasted with those of Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands. The striking differences produce some kind of paradoxes in how migrant sex workers organise their lives in different locations (in Ghana and in The Netherlands).

6.1. PERCEPTIONS FROM HOME

In Ghana, people believe that some burgers engage in sex work, and there are anecdotes about the involvement of Ghanaian women in sex work abroad. There is a joke that went viral on social media about a Ghanaian lady who travelled abroad and went back to Ghana. Upon arrival at her Father’s house, she met the father who asked her what work she did abroad. When she said she was a prostitute, her father cursed and disowned her, telling her never to return to his house again. Before the lady left, she told the father she had a fat brown envelope for the whole family and thereupon, the father quickly cut in as he asked again: ‘what did you say you were doing abroad again’? She replied that she was a prostitute, to which the father said: ‘come here my daughter and hug me, I have missed you, I did not hear you well earlier. I thought you said you were a persecutor’. This joke acknowledges the volte face of acceptance. In the first instance, families disapprove of prostitution but on the other hand, the money generated from prostitution is unquestioned and blindly received and accepted.

It must, however, be noted that sometimes, the average Ghanaian does not know the differences between the European countries and lump all together as abroad - ‘aburokyire’. Others do mix up the countries and cannot distinguish one European country from the other. My experiences attest to this fact. Before I set off to The Netherlands for my studies in the summer of 2012, a family member noted how I could stay with my aunt who lives in London. During the fieldwork for this study, some of the interviewees in Ghana sometimes lumped up the stories they hear from different parts of Europe, as if it happened in one location. I tried to avoid the lumping up by reiterating that my focus is on Ghanaians in The Netherlands. This was the main
reason I interviewed migrant families in Ghana, who had their children based in The Netherlands and returnees from The Netherlands for this section of the thesis.

6.1.1. HOME AND MIGRANTS WORK

{Migration} usually entails personal sacrifices, such as family separation, yet is generally undertaken for the sake of the family. Thus, ambition and commitment figure prominently among the motives for migration. (Gravil 1985, 523).

For many Ghanaians in The Netherlands, their migration is a response to an initiative and enterprise. Migration usually comes along with personal sacrifices: physical separation from ‘society’, family, friends and loved ones. Families have had several opportunities to express their fears for the future when their children are embarking on migration. This is often because migrants are away from family control. Below are some perceptions of interviewed parents about their migrant children:

My daughter was brought up in a Godly manner. She will never get herself into prostitution. She cherishes and loves the Lord and her dignity.  

My children are responsible adults. They always discuss issues with me and the family before going ahead with whatever they want to do. I don’t think any of them will ever think of going into sex work they cannot and will not go into sex work… one is a nurse, a teacher, and the other owns a shop. My children are very hard working and making the whole family proud. As for the migrants who go into sex work, they are just bad nuts spoiling the (names of the) good ones. They just want to tarnish the image of most migrants. They are very lazy. They want the easy way out, but there is no easy way out in life. We are all witnesses to how many of those t sex workers who returned from Ivory Coast died of AIDS.

I have heard several stories of migrant sex workers in Europe, especially in Italy, Netherlands and Germany. How can a woman be selling her body for money? It’s serious and disturbing indeed. In all these, I can confidently say that my daughter will not get herself into prostitution, drugs or anything immoral. She knows her background, where she is from, a royal at that and would not sacrifice her dignity on the altar of silver and gold. Not at all. She will sweat to gain what is due her.

42 Male 67 years, Ghana, Skype interview, April 15th 2014  
43 Female, Ghana, mother with 3 migrant children, 60 years, phone interview transcript, April 18th 2014. My translation from Twi to English  
44 My Translation from Twi to English, Male. Ghana, 64 years, phone interview transcript, 22nd April, 2014.
In some cases, migrants exhibited remarkable treachery and cunning as they went about misinformating and deceiving relatives and loved ones they suspected of resisting their plans to enter into the sex industry (Busza 2004). To a certain extent, migrants’ decisions are based on the constraints, opportunities and objectives of people around them and, in particular, by the needs and resources of their families (Stark 1984, Lucas and Stark 1985, Lauby and Stark 1988). While some migrants do sex work as a survival strategy, other migrants enter into it because of their families’ back ‘home’. They want to be able to remit and meet the demands and pressures from home. In the same way, they may have to shield their work from these loved ones, for whom they cater.

The needs of relatives have led to a situation where family exert pressure on their relatives to go abroad even when such relatives have reached their adult years. In some cultures, the family can be thought of as an economic unit as well as a social grouping that transcends well-defined ‘labour markets and geographical loci’ (Lauby and Stark 1988). It is often believed that the family contribute to the decision of their wards to embark on a trip to Europe or a destination outside their own country. Some interviewees (2013, 2014) noted how families invested in their journey by selling off family property. However, there were some who said they independently embarked on and self-sponsored the journey. In the latter case, they may sometimes inform or discuss with the immediate family before embarking on their journey.

Some families will decide to support a member who wants to become a burger if they sense that there is a need for additional income or if financial benefits of the place of destination of the migrant is reasonably high, and the opportunity cost associated with migration is considerably low. Sending or encouraging a relative abroad often depended on the gender of the migrant. The indication to send a particular individual using the criterion of gender is highly influenced by the individual attributes, but also about familial objectives and job opportunities in the host country. As indicated earlier migrant women dominate some jobs.45

Notably, migrants need to maintain a strong degree of social allegiance to their families and societies in Ghana. The connectedness of migrants helps to maintain their social status because the prestige of the burger depends so much on the power exercised by the family of the

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45 Including domestic service and sales jobs. Some employers often prefer to hire women because they are considered to be more docile and compliant. There are wage differentials between men and women, where women are believed to be paid less.
migrant at home which is in turn determined by how well the migrant is able to provide for their needs and turn their fortunes around financially and economically. Therefore, parents always try to protect the image of their migrant children and that of their families. For instance, one interviewee noted that one of her children was a nurse, but the daughter was a ‘carer or care giver’\textsuperscript{46}. Another child, who she said was a teacher, was actually into domestic work\textsuperscript{47} whiles the one she said owns the shop works with a factory. I would not want to believe that the woman I interviewed was misleading me. What is being played out here is that sometimes migrants are not able to explain their occupation very well to their parents and people back home. This is because some of these works are non-existent in most parts of Ghana. Other migrants also feel that it is not important to give the details of their jobs. However, the reality is that most people have no clue as to what occupations their children are into abroad.

Also, some families mention jobs that will very well enhance their children’s social status. What parents say about their migrant children and the material things people see around the migrant family are all contributions to the social image and the burger status of migrant children. Apart from altruistic motives and filial piety to families in Ghana, some migrants also compensate the family for helping them maintain their social status through remittances. Hence, there is a set of reasons why migrants may in principle be willing to commit themselves to the transfer of remittances and also maintain good social ties with family.

Many women, who remit, are with the aim of building social networks to enhance their social status and maintain ties to home. However, when people find out about the work of the migrant (sex worker) with and/or the remittances, some relations are or could be

1. Affirmed and reinforced,
2. Strained and broken, and
3. Initiated and cultivated

To avoid relationships that may be strained and broken due to migrant women’s involvement in sex work they decide to be less candid with the jobs they do.

After understanding how migrant parents perceive their children, I now move on to the general perceptions of people in Ghana on Ghanaian migrant women.

A 73-year-old returnee who previously resided in The Netherlands stated that:

\textsuperscript{46} Takes care of aged and elderly in their homes.
\textsuperscript{47} Cleaning private’s homes and sometimes babysitting
When these women migrate, they often return weak and unhealthy. Do you know that these migrant women introduced AIDS into Ghana? These people brought AIDS and also most came home empty-handed. Without these migrations, Ghana will be free from some strange diseases like HIV/AIDS.48

A negative health aspect of migration to some people seems to be the spread of HIV/AIDS which is often attributed wrongly or otherwise to women migrants. Even though the history of HIV/AIDS in Ghana is not well documented, for most people, HIV/AIDS came to Ghana because of international migration of women. Konotey-Ahulu (1989) asserts that most AIDS cases in Ghana were associated with people who had lived outside Ghana. He adds that almost all of the females who had HIV/AIDS were said to be in prostitution in another country. Anarfi (1993) noted that in 1986, 89 per cent of people with a history of living outside the country were among the recorded AIDS cases in Ghana. These also stressed the fact that migrant sex workers are socially viewed as misfits and capable of spreading deadly and strange diseases.49

Another returnee (based in Accra) that I interviewed noted that sometimes migrants return with bad habits, like alcohol and drug abuse, develop a tendency to be adulterous and with a certain penchant for indecent dressing. These are arguably the various negative perceptions about burgers; some Ghanaians believe that migration has had a negative impact on traditional Ghanaian values and morals.

It must however be noted that the perceptions are not always negative. There are also positive perceptions of women’s migration. A 32-year-old male interviewee said that if there were jobs, people will not migrate:

Migration will force the government to create an enabling economic environment for all… the aspirations of poor Ghanaian women and the severely limited possibilities for legal migration to the West are the problem we have in Ghana. Migration will therefore force government to create jobs to avoid brain drain.50

48 Male 73 years old, interview transcript, May, 10th 2014.
49 Therefore, it comes with little surprise that some Ghanaians believe that migrant sex work is the result of the spread of HIV/AIDS and other strange diseases. Some studies on Ghanaian female migrants have established a strong connection between Ghanaian sex workers in Côte d'Ivoire and the presence of HIV/AIDS in the Eastern Region of Ghana.
50 Male, 32 years, 5th June, 2014, interview transcript.
Remittances are generally associated with poverty reduction strategies because unemployed persons belonging to migrant households enjoy the economic support of migrants and some unemployed relations of migrants are supported to start businesses (Kugler 2006). Remittances to Ghana are generally used on consumer goods such as food and clothes, education, funerals (Sam, Boateng and Boakye 2013) as well as housing. Migration quite feasibly, can lead to the creation of jobs through remittances and not through the creation of jobs by the government as such, even though this cannot be ruled out entirely. This is as a result of the money sent to family members to start their own small scale businesses (TAMPEP 2007) and also the construction of houses by the migrants which serve to create jobs for artisans like mason, carpenters, plumbers and many more. One parent interviewed revealed how the son in the Netherlands has started a business in Ghana and continually visits Ghana to see how the business is going on. Migrants in the Netherlands often have small scale businesses like supermarkets, restaurants and bars in Ghana, for which they employ mostly relatives.

A 66-year-old man with three kids abroad, one in The Netherlands, another in Germany and one other in the UK, noted that migration of women is more useful than that of men. He believed that women support their families better than men. He noted how children were the ‘insurance’ for parents during old age. He added that his daughter who was ‘well brought up’ thinks so much about people home and even sends money to the family more often than the male children. ‘Well’ brought up in this context meant that a daughter who for the wealth in the world will not go into sex work because the father believed he trained her very well to respect moral values. Parents generally agreed that they have taught their children to make informed personal choices.

One interviewee I must say was the most neutral of all the people I interviewed. A 55-year-old male returnee noted that:

Migrant ladies sell their bodies for money… Their chance of coming home rich enough to buy their family cars, apartments and businesses are shattered when they get to the West. To make their parents and loved ones proud of them, they are often left with few choices, why they do it (sex work). It is often not for long, just to cushion them to meet their dreams. I am not justifying their work but I must say that life out there isn’t easy at all. People even do worse things for money. I know lots of people in the industry. I have also

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51 Interview transcripts, 2013
heard lots of stories. Throughout my 23 years of living in The Netherlands, I have seen people struggle to survive. No one engages in prostitution for fun.52

To examine migration for sex work as a key strategy adopted by some Ghanaian women is not to celebrate sex work as an inherently liberating form of work. Neither does it entail denying the vast structural changes that push and pull some women into the sex industry nor does it imply that sex workers are overly responsible for situations beyond their control (Agustin 2006). The stories told are not always about criticizing the women. Probably some people feel pity for the situation of some migrants, but how many people in/from Ghana share similar views? No matter the reasons given for one’s involvement in sex work, the attitude of many people is very critical, fault-finding and judgmental. Sex work has been seen as a stigmatizing label for women and their families.

It must be understood that every time the terms ‘tuutuuni’ or ‘ashawo’ is used, the stigma is renewed, and the lives of the many Ghanaian migrant women involved made more difficult. Substituting ‘sex worker’ as a more appealing term may appease some migrant sex workers, however it is not a solution to the problem faced by people who enter into the sex industry as a survival strategy and feel no sense of identity connected with it (Agustin 2005).

An interviewee noted that we should not justify that people go into sex work because of pressures from home or as a result of financial hardships. She added that everyone has financial challenges and face pressures. In her view, it is just the bad ones in society who become sex workers. In addition, she noted that these are lazy women not willing to develop personal skills (language and education) and want the easiest way out of difficult situations. However, sex work is not always an easy way out as such. Personal skills are needed in sex work. Sex workers need to develop skills such as sexual and communication skills to help them in their work.
6.2 IN THE INDUSTRY

At this point, one may be wondering which group of Ghanaian migrants often goes into the Dutch sex industry, men or women, single women or married?

In my interviews key factors such as: socioeconomic background; educational aspirations and achievements, professional and language skills, gender and sexuality, family history of these Ghanaian migrant sex workers were explored through other migrants in order to appreciate the ‘kind’ of Ghanaian women in or entered the Dutch sex industry. Let me hasten to add that Appendix 1- profile of respondents is not and cannot be directly linked to the profile of Ghanaian sex workers in the Netherlands. This is basically because there are no easy correlations none of my respondents as stated earlier spoke as a (former) sex worker but appendix 1, is profile about the self. Secondly, even if one spoke as the other-self, these are recent profiles and not that of the period when such women were in sex work. Interestingly enough, most of the people interviewed unanimously said that all kinds of women are into the sex industry for the money, married or single women, divorced or separated women. It stands to reason that the Ghanaians who entered the Dutch sex industry are very diverse and trying to group them in a particular category seems impossible. However, most of my interviewees mentioned that the dominant group of women seem to be the Asantes. This was also something addressed by the research of TAMPEP (1994). TAMPEP (1994) noted that the dominant Ghanaian group in the Dutch sex industry were from the Ashanti region of Ghana and next to them were those from Greater Accra.

Why the dominance of Asantes? Why other ethnic groups were less visible in the industry too is something worth knowing. In Côte d'Ivoire, Anarfi (1989) noted the dominance of women from Eastern region of Ghana. This clearly shows that depending on the area of study, there seem to be a network of people who belong to a particular ethnic group. Could this be influenced by the social network of the migrants or the number of migrants in a particular place? Asantes are from southern Ghana and the inheritance pattern is matrilineal. Matrilineal societies have a higher tendency to migrate internationally due to the autonomy these women have in decision making. Also, wealth accumulation is very important for these women because of the inheritance pattern. There is a high probability that the majority of the female Ghanaian

53 Going beyond the borders of Ghana, in The Netherlands, the Nigerian group that dominates is said to be the Edo people. While in Ghana the Nigerian group said to be dominating the sex industry are people from Calabar.
54 To better understand this phenomenon more research needs to be done.
population in The Netherlands are from the Ashanti region of Ghana. The migrants’ ethnic affiliation in The Netherlands is likely not to correspond to the ethnic distribution in Ghana. Migration to foreign countries as mentioned earlier in chapter 2 primarily takes place from the southern part of Ghana especially for females. The southern part of Ghana is more populous and economically stronger compared to the northern regions. As a result, very few Ghanaian women from the north of Ghana may migrate to Europe or The Netherlands. A large number of Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands seem to belong to the Asante ethnic group. This perhaps could be the reason for the dominance of Asantes.

Adomako (1991) in her research on Ghanaian sex workers in The Netherlands, provided case studies of the movement of “unattached” women. Few of these women had formal education but most of them were unable to speak Dutch, but often speak a little bit of English or Pidgin English. Even though my respondents all claim not to be (former) sex workers, out of the people I interviewed, only 2 of the women had tertiary education, 8 had completed secondary school and 6 had completed primary and Junior high school. Two of the women based in The Netherlands migrated whiles married, the rest migrated when not married. Eleven of the female respondents were much comfortable speaking in Twi, while 4 spoke in English and 1 spoke in English and intermittently spoke Twi. The research of TAMPEP (1994) also added that most of the Ghanaian women could not speak good English but understood it. Their study focused on women behind the windows in cities of Alkmaar, Arnhem and Nijmegen in The Netherlands. My interviewees unanimously agreed that most of the Ghanaian migrants in the 1980s and 1990s had primary and secondary school education.

With regards to the language, it is easier to assume that it takes time to learn a foreign language, the reason why most interviewees could not speak Dutch. One 52-year-old female interviewee in The Hague said: “… is very dull, she has been in The Netherlands for almost 20 years, her Dutch is very poor and her English is neither good.” Perhaps because English is the official language in Ghana, most migrants are expected to speak and understand the language, but considering the educational level of some of these ladies, arguably, speaking English will not be easy.
The invisible Ghanaian sex worker active in the Dutch sex industry
Amisah Bakuri- ReMa Thesis

The sex industry in The Netherlands ‘is an open one’. The sex worker population in The Netherlands is very diverse, including women, men, and transgender workers, Dutch nationals and migrants from many different countries (TAMPEP 1999). However, from the interviews conducted majority of my informants noted that they have never seen a male Ghanaian sex worker. They were amused when I asked if Ghanaian men had entered the Dutch sex industry. One interviewee noted that:

You are really funny! How could you ask such a question? Ghanaian men could be in the Dutch sex industry, but probably not as sex workers, but pimps or managers of the sex workers. You will hardly hear of Ghanaian men in the Dutch sex industry. Not in the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and not now. [57]

I purposely decided not to include the study of Ghanaian male sex workers in my study. This was to avoid the complexity of this issue as well as the cultural difficulty of adding this discussion to an already complex discussion of female Ghanaian sex workers. Almost all interviewees denied the existence of male Ghanaian migrant sex workers in the Dutch sex industry. Organisations that replied to my email inquiries noted that they had not yet had contacts with Ghanaian male sex workers. This does not mean or suggest that this group is nonexistent. It is very likely that there were some male Ghanaian sex workers working as pimps, pornographic film actors, telephone sex operators or cybersex operators among others. However, there is no available information on these. Additional research will undoubtedly provide better and deeper insights.

From the discussions and interviews (2013, 2014) it has been noted that anyone can go into the Dutch sex industry, but for Ghanaians, it was possible to see “married women, young

[55 Interview transcript, 20th May, 2014, Female, 41 years.
[56 This includes all non-cisgender gender identities, including transgender, transsexual, transvestite, genderqueer, gender fluid, non-binary, genderfuck, genderless, agender, non-gendered, third gender, two-spirit, bigender, and trans man and trans woman (Fausto-Sterling 2000, Serano 2007, Griggs 2014)
[57 Interview transcript, Male, 52 years, Amsterdam, 12th March, 2014
[58 Male sex workers are not the focus of this study but it came up briefly in my discussion with some Ghanaians and it is worth knowing the complications of such discussions. As some of the interviewees see the female sex work as a “social and cultural problem” that of the male sex worker was seen as a more serious and worse “social and cultural problem”
[59 It is important, before proceeding with the analysis and discussions, to understand just how broad the term ‘sex worker’ is to cover all people who work in any industry related to sex. This includes prostitutes, escorts, call girls, professional dominatrix, porn performers, burlesque performers, phone sex operators, cybersex operators, pornographic film actors, pornographic models, strippers, erotic dancers, bikini baristas and strip tease dancers. Indeed sex work is often used as a catchall term for the people who work in a sex industry (Reida 2014).
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ladies, middle aged, single, divorced, women with kids. “60 One 41-year-old female migrant based in Amsterdam in an interview added that it greatly depends on the person’s values and background. She stated that “anyone with low moral values and without a proper upbringing with little financial support may go into it”. 61 This comment reiterates how the sex worker is viewed in the Ghanaian society -immoral.

The Ghanaian sex workers in The Netherlands have different social backgrounds, reflecting a wide and complex group of women (TAMPEP 1994, 2009). In spite of the complexity, most interviewees gave almost the same story about sex workers in The Netherlands as shown in the narrative below.

Question: Were there Ghanaian sex workers in the 1980s?

Nana 62: Several Ghanaian migrants went into the sex industry because of the money. They wanted the money and it was very difficult to get jobs, especially when one cannot speak Dutch and when the education level of most of us was low. Asylum seeking was the main option for many of us, but imagine being given 20 Euros per week to survive on. Not enough for your own needs, let alone to send some home to your family. Some women, therefore, entered into prostitution to make some more money.

Question: So, were they not forced by a third party to go into it?

Nana: Oh no! No one forced them. They went into prostitution because it was very lucrative. Ok, it could be that some were forced, but none I’m aware of.

Question: How did they organise the sex work?

Nana: It is very difficult to tell how exactly they organised their lives. Our society definitely frowns on sex work so most of these people did their work very far from where they lived. For instance, a sex worker in The Hague could go to Eindhoven to practice it so that neighbours and Ghanaian non-sex workers do not find out. Some even went very far to other countries following their customers. This is done in secrecy so I don’t know how exactly they managed it.

Question: If it was done in secrecy, how come you know some of the sex workers and even how they organised their lives?

60 Own translation from Twi to English, Interview transcript, female, phone interview, 29th March, 2014.
61 Interview transcript, female, 50 years, Den Haag, 20th March, 2014
62 Pseudonyms are used throughout the text to protect the identity of the interviewees and to maintain confidentiality.
Nana: It is very easy to know them. They are always unable to tell where they work but often go to work. There is also always an aura of suspicion around their lives. However, when discovered by other Ghanaians, it became the talk of town and a subject matter for gossip. Other sex workers when discovered would also name others as a way of levelling the playing field and not feeling embarrassed alone.

Question: Is it not possible that, when you have an issue with someone, s/he could easily mention your name as a sex worker?

Nana: I doubt, but it was easy for the story to be believed if only most Ghanaians suspected the individual as a sex worker. You have to know that, the sex workers knew each other because some were introduced into it by others. They maintained a strong and closely-knit community to assist each other.

Question: Does that mean they had an association of Ghanaian migrant sex workers?

Nana: (laughing it off), not at all. None, I ever heard of. They just knew each other and tried to be helping each other. May be a kind of something informal. They sometimes needed each other for help, and guidance in times of trouble.

Question: Trouble?

Nana: Yes trouble, they could be in all kinds of trouble with clients, family, sickness etc.

Question: Oh okay, so are these sex workers still in the business?

Nana: Not now, to the best of my knowledge, most of these women have stopped doing sex work. Some have moved to Ghana, whereas others who are still in The Netherlands but doing something else.

Question: So what are they now doing?

Nana: Lots of things, very different. Some of those who moved to Ghana are doing quite well with the money they earned. I can mention of … she has really done well for herself and family and now owes a popular restaurant, do you know of… whilst those still in The Netherlands, I know, have either been able to secure a job in cleaning homes or working in shops.\(^{63}\) Some are happily married and their husbands have joined them over time.

Question: Do you have any idea why they stopped being sex workers?

\(^{63}\) I decided to exclude the name of the former sex worker as well as her restaurant. I got into contact with this woman through one of my informants through the phone. However, she denied ever being in the Dutch sex industry and noted how her hard work has been misconstrued as being involved in sex work; interestingly she also mentioned names of other women.
Nana: I think most of these people were in for the money and it was not something people wanted to do for the rest of their lives. So when one felt her financial situation was not that bad anymore, they moved on to something else. Others feared of being known and called names. There are several reasons why people leave the job. Some of the ladies also got their papers so it was easier to get jobs in other areas.

Question: So are there still some Ghanaian sex workers in the Dutch industry?

Nana: We no more hear such stories so I can’t tell. But previously it was the stories that made us curious, we gossiped about them...

The above narrative only represents the single trending story. The view of this particular interviewee does not differ from many other respondents. A 59-year-old male respondent based in The Hague gave these responses to my questions. He has been in The Netherlands for the past 26 years. As stated earlier male respondents always spoke from the perspective of the Other as they believed sex work is gender based- females. One theme in the narratives given by interviewees indicated the mobility of the Ghanaian sex worker.

Studies indicate that sex workers are increasingly mobile (Skrobanek, Boonpakdi and Chutima, The Traffic in Women: Human Realities of the International Sex Trade 1997, Watenabe 1998, L. Brussa 1988, Brockett 1994). This was the viewpoint of most of the people I interacted with. Some said that mobility helped the Ghanaian sex worker to easily hide her identity from family and friends. Mobility also provided a safer distance away from their neighbourhoods as a way of managing information about the type of trade they are into. The EU has made it possible for many sex workers to be mobile not only within cities in The Netherlands but also to other European countries. Some sex workers as noted by the interviews go to other European cities to do their work.

From the interviews, it became clear that mobility had a changing trend with time. In the 1980s and 1990s mobility was mostly between cities within The Netherlands and different working environments. In the 2000s, however, for many migrants it was easier to move to other countries to do sex work. Two major reasons could be used to explain this phenomenon. First, most of the interviewees noted that in the 1980s, most Ghanaian migrants did not have the right “papers” to work and hence, they had to work in the ‘shadow’ and limit their movements to avoid being arrested and deported to Ghana, a finding supported by TAMPEP (1994;2002). Some of these “undocumented” migrants were believed to belong to the family of women who
reside or were working legally as sex workers in the Netherlands for a considerable period of time. One interviewee noted how adoption was used as a way to get people to migrate to The Netherlands and consequently into the Dutch sex industry.

Secondly, during the 1980s and early 1990s the numbers of Ghanaians in The Netherlands were considerably low and so was the number of Ghanaian migrant association, making it easy to hide and manage information as a sex worker by working in another city. In the late 1990s to 2000s, some Ghanaian associations had emerged and making it easy to be identified by fellow Ghanaians if one belonged to any of the organisations. Some migrants had worked on getting the right papers (it must be noted here that, there are still some undocumented Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands) to be able to freely and confidently move to other European countries. Mobility in one way was used to avoid deportation by illegal migrants and again, mobility was used as a way for legal migrants to freely move between towns and cities.

Migrants trading in sex tend to be constantly on the move, from city to city and country to country (Agustin 2010). Spanger (2002) interviewed a Ghanaian sex worker-Sarah- who threw more light on how mobile sex workers operate. Her submissions are similar to what most of my respondents in The Netherlands, indicated in 2014. Sarah lived in Amsterdam, but worked in Copenhagen. Some Ghanaian sex workers migrate for short periods between a city in The Netherlands, where their families and friends live to other cities in The Netherlands or another city within Europe to ply their trade. Life in the resident city is ‘normal,’ that is, taking care of household, attending church and participating in the activities of Ghanaian associations. In contrast to the working city, they either work in a strip bar, brothel or club or private homes of clients as sex workers. When in Ghana, they are successful burgers, dutiful and God fearing daughters.

Ghanaian migrant sex workers engage in mobility for a number of reasons, although these reasons are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Migrant sex workers could be influenced to move between bars/streets/ red-light area/ houses if they felt they were being badly treated by the owners of rented apartments or clients. They could also move in search of the better client base. In particular, fights and issues with other sex workers could also be a reason for such mobility.

The development (or avoidance) of new personal relationships is another reason why some sex workers will change the area or city in which they work. The stigma associated with sex work means that these women try to separate their work from their private lives. Mobility could
also be a way to directly avoid having regular clients who may try to establish relationships with these workers. Furthermore, another reason for this mobility pattern is to travel to different places at times where the business would be particularly lucrative or because they are looking for new adventures. They may want to try their luck elsewhere.

This research reveals that the concept of mobility is important in the lives of Ghanaian migrant sex workers in The Netherlands. Interviewees identified that sex workers engaged in complex processes of mobility, moving between work locations both within and between cities and countries. Additionally, some interviewees highlighted that in some instances sex work restricted the mobility of sex workers, tying them to a particular location as they might have to establish good relationships over time with some clients and some other sex workers (Berk 2007).  

There is also a pattern of working in a different country other than where husband and the members of family and friends live. Interviewees in The Netherlands (2014) also indicated how being very mobile enabled Ghanaian sex workers to conceal enough information from friends and relatives. For instance Spanger (2002) noted that, her interviewee (Sarah) hardly tells clients where she lives, especially those from Amsterdam due to the fear that they could be colleagues of her husband and might tell her husband what she does. Her husband knows that she works short time in Copenhagen as a hostess, but not as a sex worker.

This shows how some Ghanaian sex workers in the Dutch sex industry have been able to hide their work from many people, including their husbands and children whom they live with. Some of these sex workers take advantage of their transnational life, using it as a disguise. Most of them, more especially those who have legal residence and employment permits can hide their work because their permits are valid throughout the EU. So a sex worker can be a housewife in The Netherlands, a dutiful daughter in Ghana and a hostess with extra income from sex work in another country (Spanger 2002). Therefore, mobility was one major way sex workers used to maintain their image as “good” women carrying the perception that no one knows about their involvement in sex work.

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64 See Blerk (2007), using Ethiopian ladies as his case study
6.2.1. PARADOXES IN THE LIFE OF GHANAIAN MIGRANTSEX WORKERS

De Thouars and van Osch (1995) noted that prostitution is a taboo in Ghana but some Ghanaian migrants are involved in this occupation and hence, do not like to accept it publicly as their work. As a result, they often hide their identity and fail to talk about the kind of occupation they are engaged in. Ghanaian women who engage in sex work via transnational migration often bear the wrath of their families, friends and societies as being morally indignant should they be found out.

A sex worker aptly noted in an interview with TAMPEP (1994, 58) that “Over here I’m a whore; over there I’m a lady”. Many Ghanaian women in the sex industry find themselves in similar situations. It therefore makes migrant sex workers lead double lives to get over the problems associated with the ‘whore stigma’. Even when one no longer works in the sex industry, it carries a stigma that can impact on her new life psychologically and her family.

Some empirical research has already revealed that, from migrant women’s perspectives, participation in sex work does not define their enduring self: how they see themselves as women and as human beings in general (Agustin 2007; Andrijasevic 2010). For them, sex work is work. More significantly, some of these women consider sex work as any other form of labour that they are paid for. But for the average Ghanaian, sex work is more of one’s enduring self and that leaving the trade does not go to exonerate the sex worker from the stigma previously attached to her. This explains why it was really difficult to get former sex workers to talk as self, but rather as the “other-self”, so as to avoid their description and involvement in sex work as their enduring self. This has affected the way people present themselves to others - society, friends and relatives.

Several studies (Adomako 1991, Venicz 1998, Brussa 1989, TAMPEP 1994; 1999; 2002, 2007, de Thouars and van Osch 1995 and Kempadoo 2001) point to the fact that Ghanaian sex workers in The Netherlands were very visible and active in the 1980s, 1990s and even early 2000. Interestingly, the reaction of abhorrence was shown by most of the Ghanaians when they learn of the research into migrant sex workers; as if in their consciousness, it never existed. However, one becomes surprised by the details and the adequate information individuals have
about Ghanaian sex workers and how they organised themselves as well as the people who used to be in the industry.

The interviews revealed that Ghanaian sex workers were not those who sit behind the windows in the red light districts. Even in cases where they did, it has been just a handful who practised far away from the community they lived in. Many Ghanaian sex workers were believed to be escorts; whiles some interviewees noted that some Ghanaian migrant sex workers worked in clubs and private houses. It is easier to deduce from the interviews that in the 1980s and the 1990s most Ghanaians were illegal residents in The Netherlands (stories were shared by some interviewees of their legal status and how it negatively affected their lives). They had overstayed their visa durations and purposely decided not to travel back to Ghana till they were relatively, economically independent and self-sufficient to return home.

In my data collection, much reference has always been made to the former sex worker, which is suggestive of the fact that the number is decreasing or the current sex workers are more secretive than the previous ones. It could also be that migrant Ghanaian sex workers have gone into more “hidden and unseen” forms of sex work in the Dutch sex industry. Several organisations that provide social welfare services to sex workers testify that Ghanaian sex workers are decreasing in number.

6.3. CONCLUSION

The discussions above portray a conscious effort to distance self and kin from sex work that attracts social shame, blame, and contempt. In all the discussions, parents stated the non-involvement of children in sex work. Indeed, every discussion about all cases of sex work involving migrant Ghanaian women revolves around the deviant Other. As in the case of the parents interviewed, they believed that the involvement of migrant sex workers from Ghana in The Netherlands is rather associated with children of Other people, lazy women, deviant or immoral ladies. Significantly, other jobs such as working in factories, teaching or being a nurse appear to be acceptable decoys or camouflage for many of the jobs migrant Ghanaians do in The Netherlands.

The common denominator is that relatives help migrant members in the management of information through avoidance and circumvention because of the fear or embarrassment attached to being a sex worker. I hasten to add that, one important way of handling the employment of
migrants by all parties involved is avoidance or silence – ‘conspiracy of silence about the jobs Ghanaian migrants do abroad’. In many instances, when people talk about sex work, the emphasis is on the ‘promiscuous’, ‘lazy’, ‘unreligious’ and the Other, the well brought up, dutiful and religious Self. Most often than not, the one telling the story, for the sake of self-preservation or preserving the image of the family or the protection of important social relations disclaims the involvement of family and loved ones in sex work.65

The paradox is that there are sex workers of Ghanaian descent in The Netherlands, who work actively and consciously for money, and yet, unknown to their relations, and loved ones. This goes a long way to set the pace for sex work to only be a temporal job for many Ghanaian women.

65 See also Yankah (2004) focusing on Narratives given by some Ghanaians on migrants with AIDs, some were into sex work.
7.0. CHAPTER 7: SEX WORK AND TEMPORALITY

Sex work is often seen as a springboard to a much better life for most Ghanaian women (interview transcripts 2014). Researchers who have focused on why women exit the sex industry have concluded that, it is either an appealing economic option or a rational decision that makes it very difficult for sex workers to exit the sex industry (Brock 1998, Jeffrey and MacDonald 2006, Rosen and Venkatesh 2008). Following this argument, if the socioeconomic status of a sex worker does not see any positive transformation, then they may be inclined to continue.

Scholars such as Sanders (2007) have noted that women may exit the sex industry due to personal motivations. Oselin (2010) also notes how sex work could be seen as a role that is attached to certain status and behavioural patterns. So, sex work in this sense, could be referred to as “role exiting;” the shedding of one role to adopt another (Ebaugh 1988). Research often states that it is very difficult to exit the roles that are labelled as socially unacceptable or “deviant”.

During my interviews (2014), I asked several reasons why many women decided to quit sex work. While there are many reasons why some migrant Ghanaians enter into the Dutch sex industry, the over-arching theme seems to be financial need as evidenced by interviews (2013, 2014). For Ghanaian migrant sex workers, the economic motive is strong; money allows immediate gratification, which other types of work may not immediately provide. Nevertheless, most interviewees framed why women quit the sex industry in terms of personal motivations, spirituality and restrictive factors (age, legal status, shame).

Interviewees (2014) in The Netherlands who stated religious factors as the main reason women left the sex industry noted that they “were saved by grace” and needed to make things right with God. An interviewee highlighted:

Sometimes some people just look back on their lives and see how far the Lord has brought them. God brought them from Ghana to Netherlands and He has seen them through very difficult moments. They have no choice than to live a good life.66

66 Interview transcript, Male, 52 years, Amsterdam, 12th March, 2014.
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The important role God had played throughout the lives of these women was noted as a motivation to exit the sex industry. The above interviewee noted that many people in Ghana would have wished to be abroad and they do not get the luck to travel outside Ghana. Meanwhile, these sex workers end up not being grateful to God by engaging in sex work.

Other interviewees (2014) in The Netherlands noted that religion played a big part in most of these sex workers childhood and their faith eventually became a primary motivation to leave the Dutch sex industry. Among my respondents, of whom three pastors noted the important role that the church played in helping women to exit the Dutch sex industry. However, during one of the church services I attended, a pastor noted the contradiction in the behaviour of some Men of God (pastors) who were only interested in money and did little to help some women to turn new lives. He stated that “some pastors were aware of what some women were doing but because of the money these women earned from prostitution, the pastors refused to help these women convert but only encouraged them to pay tithes…”

The element of religion is also demonstrated by the interviews with parents of migrants (2014), who also noted how their children fear the Lord and cannot afford to be engaged in “bad and immoral behaviour”. The emergence of several Ghanaian churches in the 1990s (van Dijk 2002) was also an important way to keep reminding the women that they are children of God and have to make things right with their Father in heaven.

The amount of negative experiences and the fear of being seen as a sex worker by other migrants was another major factor for these women to leave the Dutch sex industry. In these situations, interviewees (2014) often discussed that the burden of the stigma label on many migrant sex workers left them feeling scared to be caught. In their calculations, it is better to quit and be free; free from hiding from friends and loved ones.

Rosen and Venkatesh (2008) claim that sex work affords parents’ flexibility, time, and money to care for their children. In contrast, very few Ghanaian migrant women enjoyed this privilege. Interpersonal relationships with family members, partners, close friends and/or church members likewise became a reason to get out of sex work. Sometimes these interpersonal relationships as noted earlier, indirectly were reasons why people entered the Dutch sex industry. There were two main ways that these relationships motivated women to leave the industry.

67 Interview transcripts 2014
68 Church session, Amsterdam, 16th March, 2014.
First, women considered their relationships too important to lose; therefore sustaining the relationship was a prominent reason for leaving the sex industry. Relatives will naturally have problems with a relative who is a sex worker because of the bad image it comes with. Sometimes, sex workers often do not spend much time with their families. The need for more time with their children and husbands eventually pushes some of them to call it a day to sex trade.

Other women left their families in Ghana to come and ‘hustle’ in order to take care of them; therefore, they left the industry to go back to Ghana to raise their children and to fulfil their motherly duties. This was also a means to protect loved ones from negative publicity and stigmatization because of their involvement in sex work. Another common reason was that of pregnancy; when women left the industry to give birth and resolved not to go back into the Dutch sex industry.

The second way interpersonal relationships become a motivation to leave the Dutch sex industry is individuals who served as role models to these sex workers. As they strive to emulate the exemplary lifestyles of their role models who themselves might have been former sex workers or not. In some cases, women had connections to other former sex workers who had successfully left the Dutch sex industry and are successfully doing something different. And so, the impact of the stories of these former sex workers could actually motivate and inspire others to also quit.

Old age and “marital” age was also another important reason why some Ghanaian women abandon the Dutch sex industry. At a certain age, some women feel it is time for them to marry and hence, they quit the industry to settle permanently as married women or wives. For some women, growing old and its subsequent inability to attract clients was catching up on them.

Some interviewees mentioned how the acquisition of “papers” to legally reside and work in The Netherlands was crucial for many of the Ghanaian women to exit the Dutch sex industry. When people have their legal documents, it is much easier to go in search of jobs and are more likely to gain employment; though in low paid ones.

Another frequently cited reason given by my respondents (2014) was travel. Travelling back to Ghana or traveling to seek greener pasture in another European city could lead to the end of their involvement in the sex industry.
Many interviewees based in The Netherlands perceived that it was not very easy for some sex workers to exit the sex industry; because they perhaps could not overcome the barriers to exiting the Dutch sex industry on their own. Therefore, they were heavily assisted by families, loved ones, pastors, church members and “anti-prostitution organisations”\textsuperscript{69} to help make their transition possible, through provision of skills to ultimately improve their chances of success in other jobs. Nevertheless, this group are relatively very small. As indicated earlier, most sex workers preferred to keep their work secret and hidden from friends, church members and loved ones.

There is no prominent reason that made many Ghanaian sex workers quit the Dutch sex industry with time; it is a combination of several factors. This is not to suggest that all Ghanaian women formerly in the Dutch sex industry have exited but from the interviews conducted in 2014 in The Netherlands, it seems that most Ghanaian women have made sex work temporal and the discussion above is only limited to the women who made sex work temporal and exited with time.

\textsuperscript{69}I use this as an overarching term, labelling all organisations that provide services for women in prostitution borrowed from Oselin (2010).
8.0. CHAPTER 8: GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis examined many ideas of migration from Ghana to The Netherlands. The focus has specifically been on migration and sex work for Ghanaian migrant women. Overlapping topics discussed in much of this study included resourcefulness and livelihood strategies, kinship and social ties, mobilities and immobilities as well as issues of identity (the burger, the Self, Other and Other-self), and the contestation of binaries such as good/bad, inclusion/exclusion, respectable/immoral, migrant/non-migrant, religious/non-religious.

Some of the major elements contributing to reasons to migrate included poverty, political tension and the pressure from seeing other people who upon leaving the shores of Ghana for Europe, grow rich and as well as the instigations of some burgers who, knowingly or not, make life outside Ghana appear so easy and tantalizing to naive young women who fall easy prey to their deception. This finding supports much of the research done on why Ghanaians migrate as socioeconomic (Adepoju 1994, Anarfi 1989, Brydon 1992).

In The Netherlands, some Ghanaian women adopt the get-money-quick strategy: they go for any available job to make money fast, for which sex work is not an exception, and with the aim of returning to Ghana wealthy. However, as shown in some burger songs such as that of Lumba brothers and Amakye Dede (chapter 3), migrants who feel unfulfilled are unable to go back to Ghana due to shame and embarrassment, therefore, they make The Netherlands a permanent stay. Being a burger (migrant) is equated to being on a highway to material success. Migration is therefore a means for the improvement of the migrant’s social status. It is also an assurance that a safety net has been cast for the future of the migrant and the family. Indeed, the hope of the average Ghanaian is to travel outside Ghana so as to make strong, steady and ‘fast’ progress in life.

And yet, we need to remind ourselves that the trigger could be traced back to serious economic challenges in Ghana. In the case of the migrants interviewed for this study, the economic hardships and political instability in the 1980s were the main push factors to travel to Europe. Comparatively today, Ghana seems to be experiencing economic challenges of similar proportions if not bigger in scale than what pertained in the 1980s. The national economy seems to be in crisis, with the local currency; the Ghana Cedi in continuous free-fall against major global currencies. All these, coupled with ‘erratic power supply’ are mitigating against the
growth and development of small and medium scale industries. There is a tendency that disillusioned women and men may redouble their efforts to seek greener pastures abroad. The question seems to be: will this be the ‘perfect storm’ that will produce another batch of mass exodus of Ghanaians to seek elusive greener pastures which ultimately, will push many into the sex industry?\

In The Netherlands, it is not easy to survive due to precarious situation often caused by the migrant’s legal status in addition to their low academic background as a result migrants decide to do sex work. This study showed that, due to issues with ‘legal papers’ and social pressure from Ghana, engaging in sex work seems to be the only viable option for many of these women. Many Ghanaian women who came to The Netherlands in the 1980s and 1990s had a difficulty with getting permits to legally work hence, limiting their options for jobs. It was much flexible to work in the sex industry without the proper legal documents (papers). However, only a few Ghanaian migrant women were able to combine sex work with other economic ventures (regarded as mostly not financially rewarding and used as camouflage).

Findings from this study support the view point of some researchers (Bakweswgha 1982, Finnegan 1979, Corbin 1990, Walkowitz 1980, Bullough and Bullough 1987, TAMPEP 1994, Day 1990, O’Neill 1997, Bujra 1975, Little 1974 and Gulcur and Ilkkaracan 2002), that the main reasons for engaging in sex work are socioeconomic. Most Ghanaian migrant women initially were driven by the socioeconomic imperative of assisting family members and their subsistence to enter the Dutch sex industry. Resultantly, migration for sex work offers women alternative pathway for better livelihood and self-enhancement, including to have the latest clothing, to purchase land, houses, cars and other properties to adequately take care of families and to set up businesses.

Many Ghanaian women are astutely aware that migration for sex work has and will continue to elicit the hypocrisy of families, friends and societies that vilify them, hence, migrant sex workers are forced to navigate between who they think they are, and all that is ascribed to and expected of them from different people- loved ones, neighbours and society. To the migrants interviewed for this study, migrant sex workers consciously made efforts to keep everything

70 For details of the economic difficulties Ghana is facing in recent times as a result of erratic power supply and depreciation of the Ghana Cedis, increase in electricity and water bills, increasing fuel prices see Quartey 2013, Myjoyonline 2014, Ghana begs EU to help solve economic crisis 2014).
about their sex work very private. One major way they do this is by being very mobile. The reason for their mobility is to protect their anonymity towards their own loved ones and other associations of which they are members. Therefore, developing a pattern of working in a different country or city, the one where the husband or the members of the community live. This confirms studies that emphasise the mobility of sex workers (Painter 1992, Anarfi 1993, Pickering and Williams 1993, Loum 2000, Spanger 2002, TAMPEP 2007: 2009).

Issues concerning sex are always controversial and delicate, encompassing two topics that are rarely discussed openly—sex and money. People get sentimental and pass judgement about what is right or wrong, good or bad. Sex work is an income generating activity and emphasis on morality neglects the financial motivations of people who sell sex for the money. Much emphasis on the monetary aspect also includes a wide range of individuals who do not self-identify as sex workers/clients, which compounds the difficulty in conducting research. A point worth noting is that, the available theoretical definitions of sex work are not really helpful when conducting research among certain group of people. There is the need for researchers to develop their own categories and emphasise it during data collection period. Alternatively, from the study sample, researchers can develop working definition of sex work. It is therefore useful to define sex work on the basis of empirical studies.

This study showed that, it is hard for people to think about sex workers as anything other than ‘broken or immoral women’. According to the Ghanaian society, sex workers are morally deviant and therefore often placed on the lowest strata of society and called demeaning names such as ‘ashawo’ and ‘tutu’. Historically, sex workers have always been portrayed as social misfits with attitudes and behaviours described as inimical to the Ghanaian society. Sex work in general is a complicated issue with no easy answers. It can be seen that the theory of the Self, the Other and Other-self is greatly useful and tactful in dealing with other delicate and sensitive issues that are denied any frank, open and free deliberation due to societal biases, attitudes and perceptions.

Usually the subject of Ghanaian migrant women trading in sex work is only gossiped and rumoured around. It is always a person pointing hands at the other or telling stories about other people. This is basically because of social norms, cultural values and religious influences leading

to stigmatization and social shame, and therefore, resulting in secret lifestyles on the part of these sex workers. Hence, migrant women are often less truthful about the actual situation and experiences they are going through in The Netherlands. People do not tell about the jobs they do and loved ones hardly ask. This culture of silence could be as a result of positive interest in group solidarity or by such negative impulses as social “ostracism”. Only a handful of people are bold enough to ask about the kind of jobs migrants do in The Netherlands. The responses given by migrants, whether in sex work or any other job, are those that one should be proud of, that is, socially desired answers.

Migrants therefore tell socially accepted, mainstream or apparently an “official” story- a one trending story. The story that featured in most of the interviews are ‘too naturalistic’ or too obvious and do not necessarily fit the entire story. In other cases, the stories people say indirectly seem to be their own stories rephrased to reflect the stories of ‘others’ to avoid shame and negative social judgement as well as stigma.

The concept of burger has been seen as very useful in understanding Ghanaian migrants. The status attached with being a migrant in Ghanaian society seems higher in spite of the difficulties some migrants face in Europe. The concept of burger enhances our understanding of the social and economic motivation and context of migration (Nieswand 2012). The use of the concept can be an empirically grounded effort to conceptualise migration, social status, and integration as well as labour issues of Ghanaian migrants.

Based on my findings, the income earned from sex work was not merely used to enhance the sex worker’s personal wellbeing but also to support her family- an act of “self-sacrifice” for her family. This seems to suggest that Ghanaian migrant sex workers continuous participation in this trade has less to do with the mere adventure with sex itself or the breakdown or lack of morals on the part of the sex worker. When sex workers give reasons such as saving themselves and families from starvation and humiliation, is this not a moral reason? If this is described as deeply moral, then the expectation from family is support, but this is hardly the case as families are shy and uncomfortable about it. It is one thing to engage in sex work for the sake and benefit of loved ones and another thing resolving the moral dilemmas thereof individually.

The everyday life of a Ghanaian sex worker has to do with dealing with a constant balancing of two different kinds of ethical dilemmas: meeting the material needs of relatives and those of the sex worker as against the morality of the commercialisation of sex. The friction between
morality and reality of meeting practical needs of families and self produces hidden identities. Ghanaian sex workers in The Netherlands are uncomfortable about being known or discovered by other Ghanaians, church members and loved ones; because of the shame and the public humiliation that comes with it. The contradiction between the real position and status of the Ghanaian migrant sex worker in The Netherlands as well as the impression and the perception they must give as a woman within their own society\textsuperscript{72} - not least taking into account the religious, cultural and social elements - leads to psychological and emotional downturns.

In summary, Ghanaian migrant sex workers in The Netherlands are largely informed by rational economic decisions. The obscurity or invisibility of the Ghanaian sex worker in The Netherlands is as a result of the cultural and social constraints in the Ghanaian society that abhors such a practice. Findings of this study shows that being a good woman and a fulfilled burger was not something determined by the individual. Instead, it was evidently determined by the social perceptions and the need to impress others and these in turn were guided by broader societal expectations. Thus a migrant’s view of her success seems to be shaped by the interactions as well as the perceptions of others.

At this point, there are some principal agreements on which there is almost complete unanimity among Ghanaian migrants today:

1. Engaging in sex work is as a result of compelling economic reasons.
2. Sex work is shameful, degrading, demeaning, and dirty to the sex worker as well as to her relatives and close associates.
3. Sex work is not a profession of a lifetime; it is a stop-gap. A sex worker has to get out of it as quickly as possible.

Based on these agreements and arguments, sex workers of Ghanaian origin prefer to disguise themselves in forms such as the use of different job titles and engaging in different patterns of mobility.

8.1. ONE TRENDING STORY?

The story shared by interviewees - one trending story - the questions to ask are: is it “official” version or the happenings during the time? And what are the implications of this story to second-generation migrants, new migrants and the researcher?

**For second generation migrants and new migrants**

The preservation and dissemination of knowledge with time may depend on new migrants and second generation migrants, but if these stories are “official” and mainstream ones, then not much will change regarding what new migrants and second generation migrants will tell. Such a story relies more than on a mere collection of facts. Inter-generational dissemination and preservation of information about sex work experiences of first generation Ghanaian migrants can be subjective appraisal of the facts. While personal accounts of experiences, processes and relationships stretch and change with the passage of time, and are indeed important; second generation migrants and new arrivals are in a new migration dispensation where advanced technologies and newer laws that permit sex work, as well as the commodification of sex in the new age media may gradually erode the feeling of stigmatisation and increase engagement in sex work. Therefore, the perception that Ghanaian migrants will quit sex work may be temporal, illusory, and elusive.

**For the researcher**

A major challenge of this one trending story is how reliable any memory really is as most interviewees acknowledged that these were happenings in the 1980s and 1990s. How can the researchers be sure that the stories shared are accurate and honest? The key point is to be aware of the potential traces of bias, and the means for countering them. The researcher must consider whether bias is part of the lesson to be learned from the story shared. When the informant's memory seems vague or unreliable, the interviewer should keep in mind that all the ‘real facts’ cannot be known even under the best of circumstances. Even in situations when the informant is talking about the Other - often as immoral - the story often seems twisted to glorify the Self. The researcher needs to consciously fish for truths of understanding over time, taking into proper
account, the religious and socio-cultural values and norms that tell the real story or even shape the story.

8.2. FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has revealed the perceptions of Ghanaian migrants and non-migrants about migration and sex work. I found that certain themes emerged in my study that I had not anticipated and which I did not explore as they went beyond the scope of the research. Hence, I pose few questions that could lead to future studies in the field of labour migration of Ghanaians in the Netherlands.

1. What is the relationship between migration and well-being for Ghanaians? How different is migration for gender in terms of family support? What is the historical pattern of labour migration from Ghana to The Netherlands?

2. What new insights will a comparative case study to explore similarities and differences in migrant sex workers of Ghanaian descent and those of Nigerian descent bring to light?

Exploring these questions can provide better insights on Ghanaian labour migration to The Netherlands.

8.3. FINAL REMARK

To conclude this thesis, I am reminded to revisit the paradox in my title- the invisible Ghanaian sex worker active in the Dutch sex industry. I used this paradox to illustrate how rumours abound about the involvement as well as the activeness of Ghanaian sex workers in The Netherlands; this is also supported by research (Adomako 1991, Venicz 1998, Brussa 1998, TAMPEP 1994; 2002; 2007). In spite of these stories and studies, it is very difficult to find any Ghanaian migrant who will say that she was or is a sex worker. Hence, the active Ghanaian sex worker in the Dutch sex industry could neither be seen nor heard by the “Self”. Nevertheless, the stories of the Ghanaian migrant sex worker are always heard through the visible Other and the Other-self.
The invisible Ghanaian sex worker active in the Dutch sex industry
Amisah Bakuri- ReMa Thesis

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Amisah Bakuri- ReMa Thesis


## APPENDIX 1 - RESPONDENTS PROFILE

### Migrants in the Netherlands

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APPENDIX 2- INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

This appendix is the first questionnaire used to collect data for my research work for my internship in Leiden. Some extracts of these interviews were used for the current study.73

INTRODUCTION
This questionnaire is designed for the purpose of collection of data for a study on **Roads to prosperity: The Missing Link between Ghana and The Netherlands (Case study of the Ghanaian community in The Hague)**. Although useful recommendations may result from the analysis of the information you will provide, this exercise is first and foremost for academic purposes.

Thank you.

Name of Interviewer:

Date and Time of Interview:

1. Kindly tell me about yourself, who is ….? Age, Marital status, Educational background,
2. Date and place of birth
3. Family size- number of siblings, rank, Polygamous/ monogamous
4. Schooling Background
5. Work Experience in Ghana
6. Lived alone/ or with a group in Ghana?
7. Satisfaction of life in Ghana
8. Motivation to travel abroad
9. Why Germany?
10. What City?
11. What type of job did you do first? Was it difficult getting a job?
12. What motivated your continuation to Holland?
13. Arrival in Holland?
14. Comparing Germany and Holland, which do you prefer and why?

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73 This was an unstructured interview; several other possible questions came up as respondents gave answers to previous questions asked.
APPENDIX 3- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR KEY INFORMANTS

First of all, everything you tell me is kept confidential. Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I value greatly your expert opinion on migrants in The Netherlands particularly that of Ghanaians, I am specifically interested in Ghanaian migrant women in The Netherlands and more specifically that of Ghanaian sex workers because of the many rumoured stories we hear back in Ghana and among some Ghanaian migrant groups here in The Netherlands. The topic of my thesis is “Ghanaians in the Dutch sex industry; the myths, the realities” for now it is a working title; it could change after I have gathered all the necessary data.

Ghanaian migrants

- Which people migrate often from Ghana to The Netherlands- Gender, Age, Marital status, education, family background, country side/ urban?
- How was and how is life organized in the communities in The Netherlands? Has there been a change or not? In terms of associations and social networks?
- What are some of the main reasons for Ghanaians to migrate to The Netherlands-economic, Education, family reunion, vacation?

Ghanaian Sex workers in The Netherlands

- I did a little survey and Ghanaians seem to generally think that migrants and the burgers especially the women always do menial jobs for which many even go into ‘prostitution’. Is this really the case or is just perceptions?
- Were there some Ghanaians in the sex industry in the 1980s/1990s in The Netherlands? Often which “kind’ of people go into the industry? Single, married, divorced, widows legal/illegal?
- Do they go into it willingly or are trafficked?
- Is it mainly economic reasons that pushed people into the sex industry? What other factors could have made people to go into the sex industry?
- Was there Ghanaian sex workers association you might have possibly heard of?
- Is sex work temporal or permanent for these Ghanaian women?
- If it is temporal, what are the likely jobs people often do after it?
- What are the reasons that make it less lucrative with time?
• *Do these people often remain in Netherlands afterwards or go back to Ghana or to other countries?*

• Was sex work for people who belonged to none of the Hometown associations or Ghanaian/ migrant churches?

• What is the trend of sex work for Ghanaian migrants since 1980 to 2010?

• Is it true that the female Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands are grouped into 3, those who have retired from sex work, those still in the sex industry and those who never went into the industry?

Thank you very much for your time.

Name of Interviewer:

Date and Time of Interview:
APPENDIX 4 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MIGRANTS BASED IN NETHERLANDS

First of all, everything you tell me is kept confidential. Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I value greatly your time and sharing your experience and that of other migrants with me, I am specifically interested in Ghanaian migrant women in The Netherlands and more specifically the work they do in The Netherlands.

- Could you kindly tell me more about yourself? Occupation, age …
- How long have you been in The Netherlands? Any interesting remark on your coming to The Netherlands?
- Are there many Ghanaian women in The Netherlands?
- What are some of the jobs these women do?
  - Were there Ghanaian sex workers in the 1980s?
  - What about the 1990s?
  - What are the main routes into the sex industry for Ghanaian women?
  - How do/ did they organise sex work?
  - Do you know about some sex workers of Ghanaian descent?
  - Were there association of Ghanaian migrants workers?
  - Are these sex workers still in business?
  - So what are they doing now?
  - Do you have any idea why they stopped being sex workers?
  - So are there still some Ghanaian sex workers in the Dutch industry?
  - Any concluding remarks?
    Thank you very much for your time.

Name of Interviewer:
Date and Time of Interview:
APPENDIX 5- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS OF MIGRANTS

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I value greatly your time and this discussion. I am working on my thesis on migrants in The Netherlands. Everything you tell me is kept confidential.

Name of Interviewer:

Date and Time of Interview:

- Can you kindly tell me about yourself?
- How many children do you have?
- How many are abroad?
- How many of your children are in The Netherlands?
- What jobs do they do?
- Are there any fears or anxiety because they live abroad?
- They are several perceptions about burgers out there, have you heard any and what are they?
- Do you think your child (ren) could be involved in any of these stories we hear, for instance sex work?
- What of children of others?
- How often do you hear from your children? How? Do they remit you and how often?

Thank you very much for your time and this discussion.
APPENDIX 6- FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Thank you very much for agreeing to have this discussion with me. This conversation is about your time in the Netherlands and the observations as well as interactions you had with other Ghanaians. This is confidential and I will record our discussions to enable me make reference for my research when necessary, please do you agree?

a. Why do Ghanaians migrate?
b. How was and how is life organized in the communities in The Netherlands?
c. What are some of the main reasons for Ghanaians to migrate to The Netherlands—economic, Education, family reunion, vacation?
d. What are the jobs Ghanaian usually do in the Netherlands?
e. Is it true some engage in sex work? Were they many?
f. How do they become sex workers?
g. Is it mainly economic reasons that pushed people into the sex industry? What other factors could have made people to go into the sex industry?
h. How did they organise sex work?

Thank you