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# Reflections of Home 'Here' and 'There': Ghanaian-Canadians' Return Visits to the Homeland through Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) Tourism

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**Abstract**

Over the years, Ghanaian immigrants in Canada regard their ancestral homeland as their true and ideal home. Kinship relations, fond memories, and nostalgia have been part of their identity and imagination in their host country Canada. Their ultimate longing to visit their homeland for vacation, visit friends and relatives, and reconnect with their roots persists throughout their stay in Canada. What is home? What does home mean to you? Where do you perceive and consider your home? How deeply do you identify yourself with your homeland?  Do you have a special affinity and attachment to your homeland? These are some of the questions explored in this paper. Adopting a cultural geographic perspective, this paper explores the social and cultural processes associated with Ghanaian immigrants' return visits to their homeland from a gendered, generational and spatiotemporal perspective. Drawing on ongoing research which uses qualitative semi-structured interviews on first-generation Ghanaian immigrants living in Canada, and second-generation adult children, this paper discusses the meanings these immigrants attach to home, how they describe, construct, negotiate, and reconceptualize the notion of home as they engage in return visits to the homeland. The differences and similarities in how these two sets of generational cohorts perceive their sense of home are also teased out. This study enriches our understanding of Ghanaian immigrants' return visits to their homeland as an important transnational mobility phenomenon within the fields of migration, transnationalism and tourism. Also, to the extent that limited research has been done on African immigrants in this area, this study fills an important gap in the extant literature.

**Keywords:** home; return visits; Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) tourism; Ghanaian immigrants; Canada.

**Author Note**

This paper is part of a larger project towards my PhD dissertation.

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**Introduction**

Migration and tourism are closely related social phenomena in the geographies of mobility. The rapid growth in technology and transportation has provided migrants and their descendants with the ability to travel to their countries of origin to visit their kith and kin and to engage in other transnational activities. Travelling to the homeland to visit friends and family has promoted the niche of tourism popularly known as 'Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) tourism' (hereafter referred to as VFR) in the emerging tourism literature. There has been an increasing interest in the aspect of return visits by immigrants or diasporic communities to their homelands which is studied under different names such as "diaspora tourism," "roots tourism," "homeland tourism," "heritage tourism," "ancestral tourism," "pilgrimage tourism," "home visits," and "visiting friends and relatives tourism." (Backer, 2007; Baldassar, 2001; Basu, 2004; Coles & Timothy, 2004; Schramm, 2004; Uriely, 2010).

Besides return migration, some studies have shown that migrants visit their homeland for many reasons such as holidays, business, VFR, identity construction, seeking heritage, and language learning (Basu, 2004; Graf, 2017). Increasingly, Ghanaian immigrants in the Global North have been returning to Ghana for holidays, visiting their friends and relatives, participating in important social and cultural events like funerals, festivals, weddings, old school reunions, and thereby reconnecting with kith and kin and establishing ties with childhood friends and schoolmates–this form of tourism (VFR) is growing significantly (Asiedu, 2008). Many first-generation Ghanaian immigrants in the diaspora have also invested in second homes in Ghana, which serve as their family vacation home when on holidays. The second-generation children often visit their parents' country of origin for a short time, to spend holidays with family, learn about their heritage and cultural background, and seek leisure and pleasure in Ghana's ample tourist facilities. Such return visits for the first-generation immigrant amount to a return to a previous home and reconnecting with the past. For the second (and subsequent) generations, regardless of whether they consider their parents' country as homeland, the visit is to a new destination and not necessarily coming home (Huang et al., 2016). However, some second-generation children may feel attached to their parents' homeland even before a first visit because of stories they have heard, their cultural and ethnic identity, and their sense of belonging to the homeland. Attachment to the homeland is seen as an important component in the migration-tourism nexus and has been studied under different terms including "home ties," "sense of home," "home identity," and "belonging" (Li & McKercher, 2016).

A pertinent question here is: why do migrants continue to travel to their homeland when there are now technological advancements and opportunities for practicing transnationalism over the internet maintaining relationships with family and friends over social media and other online platforms? Arguably, nothing can substitute for the presence of a loved one physically close to kith and kin. For example, the special kind of emotional comfort and attachment an individual receives, a sense of loyalty, a sense of belonging, issues of cultural and ethnic identity, and place attachment relations are some factors that influence immigrants to return to the homeland. In the case of Ghanaian immigrants in Canada, there is a dearth of literature on VFR tourism, although anecdotal evidence shows that many of these migrants have embarked on homeland return visits for decades. My study seeks to fill this gap and, by doing so, will focus on the notion of home, issues of sense of belonging, and attachment of the Ghanaian Canadian.

This study unpacks the social and cultural processes—such as the meanings of home, place attachment, the affirmation of migrant identity and sense of belonging, leisure, and tourism —associated with the migrant's homeland return visits. The main objective is to investigate the meaning of 'home' to Ghanaian immigrants in Canada and to examine how their conceptions and perceptions of home foster or otherwise undermine their homeland visits.

The previous impression that migrants do not go back to their country of origin but settle permanently in their host country and sever ties with their homeland is no longer valid (Basch et

al., 1994). Many first-generation Ghanaian-Canadians and their second-generation children undertake frequent, regular, or occasional visits to their homeland, and these return visits form an important part of their identity, family relations, and transnational connections. Literature on intergenerational migrants and their touristic return visits to their parental homeland are not as common with Africans as it is with other migrant groups like the Irish, Mexicans, Chinese, Albanians, etc. In fact, this literature is virtually non-existent in the Ghanaian context.

With this as an introduction, the next section reviews the literature on the migration-tourism nexus, VFR tourism, return visits and the concept of home, following which I present the methodology used to procure the field data. The next major section presents the findings from the data analysis before I bring the discussion to a close with a brief conclusion.

## Literature Review

The links between migration and tourism are becoming more intricate, as new trends in tourism and migration make it difficult to determine where the "home" is, what our true identity is, and why we stay at 'home' or go 'away' at any particular time (Williams & Hall, 2002). The mutually reinforcing relationship between migration and tourism has been noted and extensively verified in the literature on tourism (Aslan, 2018; Coles & Timothy, 2004). A special edition of *Tourism Geographies* in the year 2000 explored the convergence of tourism and migration (Capistrano, 2013). On the one hand, tourism facilitates migrations (Feng & Page, 2000) while on the other hand, migrants are essentially tourists, particularly those who travel primarily for VFR purposes (Gheasi et al., 2011; Williams & Hall, 2002).

Globalization and its attendant innovations in air travel and telecommunication technologies have given migrants the opportunities to travel more frequently between two or more countries (Hung et al., 2013). Tourism is now a transnational activity through which overseas communities get involved in the affairs of their homelands (Coles & Timothy, 2004). Migrants remain connected to their ancestral roots by way of short visits and tourism. There are many reasons why migrants travel back to their homelands. For instance, transnational entrepreneurs conduct businesses across home and host societies, some migrants visit their homeland to retain family and friendship ties, and those with longer migration histories visit their homelands in search of their family roots and ancestry. For diasporic communities such as the African diaspora in the United States and Canada, their main reason for visiting is often spiritual or emotional, and their "homecoming" is considered as a form of pilgrimage (Schramm, 2004). There are differences for multi-generational immigrants concerning their return visits to their homeland. In a study of the Irish diaspora in the United Kingdom, Hughes and Allen (2010) found that first-generation Irish attached higher priority to their VFR travels than their second-generation counterparts. Another study by Nguyen and King (2004) found that first-generation Vietnamese immigrants in Australia visit Vietnam more frequently to fulfil family obligations than their second- and subsequent-generation counterparts.

Arguably, Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) tourism[1] has been considered the largest and oldest segment of tourism in the world (Backer & Morrison, 2017). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (2017) reported that nearly 30% of all international travellers see VFR as their main purpose of visit. This goes without saying that connecting with friends and family is an important aspect for many people, and especially for migrants. VFR tourism emerged in the mid-1990s mostly in Australia, the United States, and Europe, yet thirty years on, we find tourism scholars still describing the phenomenon as underestimated, undervalued, and comparatively under-researched (Munoz et al., 2017, p. 477). Further, Palovic et al. (2014) describe the VFR

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[1] The VFR phenomenon as an activity is often interchanged with tourism, travel, or mobility in most tourism literature: as such, one can use the terms VFR tourism, VFR travel, VFR trip, or VFR mobility.

phenomenon in tourism as "unstructured and chaotic" (p. 266). Perhaps scholars overlooked VFR because it was perceived as making little contribution to the commercial tourism and hospitality industry (Backer et al., 2017), and that it had limited relevant data (Asiedu, 2008; Backer, 2007). Backer (2008) argues that the scope of VFR was not well-known because many tourists did not undertake official surveys for inclusion in tourism statistics in that category. Again, the multifaceted nature of VFR made it hard to integrate findings (Moscardo et al., 2000). As a segment of tourism, it has been difficult to get enough information about VFR because of the technicalities of defining a VFR trip based on motivation or purpose of travel, activity, marketing, type of accommodation used, and focus of visit (Backer, 2008; Griffin, 2014). A more inclusive definition has been suggested by Backer (2007) to wit "VFR is a form of travel involving a visit whereby either (or both) the purpose of the trip or the type of accommodation involves visiting friends and/or relatives" (p. 369). VFR's economic impact seems rather smaller since tourism businesses such as hotels and tourist attractions do not benefit from VFR travellers and therefore the effects of the expenditures of this category of travellers are often ignored (Aslan, 2018). On the contrary, in his study on migrants' return visits to Ghana, Asiedu (2005) found a substantial trickle-down effect of VFR travellers' expenditures into the local economy which is beneficial to the development process of the country. Other studies demonstrate that expatriates from Sri Lanka, China, and Mexico returning to their respective countries for holidays contribute significantly to developmental projects. In addition, they give money and gifts to family members and spend within the local economy (Scheyvens, 2007). Aside from the economic contributions of VFR tourists, the social significance of their visits and linkages between social connections and economic development have been acknowledged (Scheyvens, 2007). VFR is seen as a means of strengthening and maintaining social networks in this era when friends and relatives are being dispersed all around the globe (Larsen et al., 2007). VFR has also been conceptualized as "enmeshed in the web of relationships around diasporas, transnationalism, inter-generational transitions, and the reaffirmation and recreation of (hybrid) identities" (Janta et al., 2015, p. 585).

A return visit to one's homeland represents one of the major facets of the migration-tourism nexus. Migrant return trips home is classified as a sub-type of VFR tourism in official statistics and some scholarly literature, but researchers including Duval (2003) consider this label inadequate. Duval's (2003) research on some Eastern Caribbean migrants residing in Toronto distinguishes the return visits of migrant families to their homeland from ordinary VFR tourism based on the cultural differences between the home and host society. Duval's working definition of return visits is "the periodic, but temporary sojourns made by members of migrant communities to their external homeland or another location where strong social ties have been forged" (2002, p. 260). The return visit to the homeland is seen both as a transnational practice and as a way of fulfilling the functions of a family visit, cultural transmission, and tourism (Duval, 2003).

Duval (2003) argues that the return visit should be conceptually separated from tourism, especially VFR tourism, which he finds to be more closely associated with the motivation to visit families and relatives in the country of origin. He argues against the use of the general term VFR on the grounds that it is inadequate in describing the situation of diasporic communities visiting their homeland. Duval prefers the use of the alternative term 'return visit,' which he thinks acknowledges, for instance, the fact that the returning visitor has past non-touristic experience at the destination. As Duval (2003) puts it, "the return visit can ultimately be positioned as the vehicle through which transnational identity structures between diasporic communities and homelands are maintained" (p. 274–275).

The return visit has become an important part of the migration experience (Baldassar, 1997), but it is distinct from return migration. The concept of return has been theorized primarily as return migration, that is, the permanent resettlement of migrants back in their homelands (Gmelch, 1980). The term 'return visit' is borrowed from Baldassar's (1997, 2001) original usage from her research on Italians living in Australia and their temporary visits to their original homeland in Italy. Describing return visits as trips undertaken by migrants as a moral obligation between the

diasporas and their homeland, Baldassar (1997, 2001) notes that return visits for second-generation youth bring identity transformation, help them acquire some cultural knowledge and establish ties and obligations to their kin. The migrant's return visits are usually characterized by memories, identity, and nostalgia for the homeland (Marschall, 2015). The experience of a return visit is often perceived as personal enrichment and provides visitors a sense of being "at home" (Stephenson, 2004, p. 62). Again, return visits evoke emotions and a strong sense of belonging to the homeland and transform the social construction of gender and social class in transnational contexts (Thai, 2011).

Looking at the issue of return in relation to the second-generation, Barber (2017) concludes that most of the second-generation may never have been to their ancestral home and travelling there may be the first time they are visiting. With such a group, it is after the first visit that it becomes a return visit for them. Return visits allow immigrants the ability to negotiate and construct flexible transnational identities (Carling & Erdal, 2014; Chang et al., 2015). For Carling et al. (2015), the return visit plays a crucial role in migration trajectories as they influence migrants' decision to return permanently in the future. Even though there is no standard definition of return visit (Oeppen, 2013), it is operationally used here to connote a temporary visit undertaken by migrants and/or their descendants who visit the homeland because of economic, social, cultural, familial, or political motivations and engage in touristic and/or transnational activities for less than a year before heading back to the current place of residence.

## The Concept of Home

The concept of home has been understood in many ways: it can be conceived as a mental construct as well as a state of mind, aside from the most popular representation of it being a physical structure on land that provides habitation. From the perspective of the traditional migration model, the term 'home' refers to the migrants' country of origin or homeland. The meanings and lived experiences of home are diverse. Usually when one thinks of home it brings memories and past experiences. Home also raises questions on identity and sense of belonging. At a conceptual level, literature on 'home' from the disciplines of geography, philosophy, sociology, and anthropology show that it must be understood as abstract, fluid, and complex (Erdal, 2014; Etemaddar et al., 2016; Oeppen, 2013). Home, 'feeling at home,' and the meanings associated with home have become important themes in public and societal discourse (Blunt & Varley, 2004). From a geographical standpoint, home invokes a sense of place as suggested by Relph (1976) and Tuan (1977), as cited in Easthope (2004). Basically, home is used to refer to a physical dwelling place, but it has connotations of family ties and social bonding. For some people, home is a feeling, and for others, it is an analytical construct. It can also mean a personalized place or a symbol of self-identity. For Blunt and Dowling (2022), home is a complex and multilayered geographical concept.

In different contexts of studies, home is described as "multidimensional in nature or related to house, family, a haven, self, gender and journeying" (Mallett, 2004, p. 65). Furthermore, Mallett (2004) argues that home may be perceived as "a place, space, feeling, practice, and/or an active state of being in the world" (p. 62). In addition, Blunt & Varley (2004) see home "as a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear, the home is invested with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life" (p. 3). The concept of home has been linked to personal, social and cultural identities. Home is "where we could be ourselves freely and fully, whether we have actually been there or not. … is a reflection of our subjectivity in the world… an emotional environment, a culture, a geographical location, a political system, a historical time and place, a house, etc., or a combination of all of the above" (Tucker, 1994, p. 184). Home entails emotional attachment and feelings that can be embodied in, yet definitely go beyond, spatial attributes of dwelling (Zhang & Su, 2020, p. 112). Home can be

conceived as a site of comfort and security. A home is created through social and emotional relationships (Blunt & Dowling, 2006) and can be continuously produced and reproduced by people and communities in different times, forms, and locations (Nowicka, 2007; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011).

From a tourism perspective, "home can arguably be understood to be located primarily in relationships between self and others, rather than being a geographic site" (White & White, 2007, p. 91). For a migrant, the obvious meaning of home is the country of origin or homeland, which remains "a powerful unifying symbol for diasporic people" (Maruyama et al., 2010, p. 23). Analyzing the meaning of 'being at home' or 'away from home' appears to be highly relevant to the VFR sub-segment of migrants on a visit to their homeland (Mueller, 2015). The meanings of home can be reconstructed and recreated by migrants through their comings and goings. In his study of return visits of Caribbean migrants, Duval (2004) suggests that an analysis of the return visit requires an understanding of the ways that migrants position themselves within the context of two locations: the country of origin (homeland) and the country of migration (present home). Tabor (1998) argues that a house identified with the self is called a 'home' and a country identified with the self is called a 'homeland.'

The place that is considered home for the first- or second-generation immigrants will depend on several factors including their ethno-cultural backgrounds, transnational ties, their levels of activity involvement at the place, their past and present experiences and memories, and actual visits to the place. For a migrant on a return visit, how would they feel about defining 'home' or 'away from home'? Will it be the same for the first-generation immigrant, will it be different for the second-generationer who is visiting their parents' country of origin for the first time or even on a repeat visit? Do migrants who left their home country and now reside in a new society call the new place home? Is this a forever home or do they intend to return to their original home in the future? The chapter addresses such questions in the context of Ghanaian immigrants who now live in Canada but engage in return visits to their original homeland.

**Study Context**

Return visits to Ghana from the international diaspora have been an increasing trend in recent years. With a population of approximately 31 million (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021), Ghana has been cited as one of the leading markets for VFR tourism in Africa because of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and out-migrations during the post-independence era (Asiedu, 2008). By the 1990s, Ghanaians were known as part of the main group of "new African diaspora" (Afrifah & Mensah, 2023; Koser, 2003). There are large concentrations of people of Ghanaian ancestry in Europe and North America (Asiedu, 2008). In recent years, many in the Ghanaian diaspora have visited their homeland for holidays, participated in social and cultural events and renewed affiliations with friends and family (Asiedu, 2005). This may be attributable to the promulgation of the Dual Citizenship Act in 2002 by the Ghana government. Those with dual citizenship status do not require a visa to travel to the motherland. Even though systematic data are not collected by the Ghana government, the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs (UNDESA) has estimated that there are close to 1 million Ghanaian migrants living overseas (International Organization for Migration, 2020). Still, as Mensah et al. (2018) observe, "the size of the Ghanaian emigrant population in leading European and North American countries remains a mystery, just as the number of Ghanaians in major African destinations continues to be enigmatic" (p. 2).

The Ghanaian diaspora demonstrates a strong transnational engagement through regular visits and calls. Many Ghanaians are active in hometown associations (HTAs) which often mobilize financial resources from their members or other philanthropic bodies to carry out developmental activities in their home areas (Asiedu, 2005). Many first-generation Ghanaian immigrants find it important to visit their homeland with their second-generation children to

maintain links with their culture and extended relatives. It is not surprising that the children also have a strong desire to reconnect to their homeland (Nketiah, 2020). The government of Ghana declared the year 2019 as the "Year of Return" to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first enslaved Africans arriving on American soil, ushering in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Many Ghanaians in the diaspora including African Americans visited Ghana for this homecoming event (Visit Ghana, 2019). A new tourism development product dubbed "December in Ghana" was launched by the Ghana Tourism Authority in 2020, which showcases a package of cultural events and entertaining programs specifically structured to attract second-generation children in the diaspora to visit the homeland. These events have been tailored to make Ghana the preferred tourism destination for Christmas and New Year celebrations, especially for those in the diaspora. As such, for the past three years Ghana is increasingly becoming a holiday destination.

Ghanaians living in Canada—many of whom have become Canadian citizens of Canada—refer to themselves as Ghanaian-Canadians. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are over 60,000 Ghanaians residing in Canada, but the 2016 Canadian census estimates this total to be almost 40,000 (Mensah et al., 2018). Ghanaian immigration to Canada started in the late 1960s when students came for continued education, but specifically in noticeable numbers in the 1980s (Mensah et al., 2018). Changes to Canadian immigration policy in 1962 made it possible for Ghanaians to emigrate to Canada, many of them coming in as scholarship students to further their education in the mid-1970s. This is said to be the first wave of Ghanaian immigration into Canada. The economic hardship and political upheavals in the late 1970s to early 1980s prompted Ghanaian nationals to emigrate to many developed nations in the West, including Canada. By the 1990s, the second wave of Ghanaian immigration was in place; Ghanaian arrivals had peaked, and the emergence of hometown associations, ethnic shops, and immigrant churches had sprung up in Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa (Mensah & Owusu Ansah, 2021). By the turn of the 21st century, more Ghanaians were arriving, particularly through the family reunification system of sponsoring family members, especially wives and children (Mensah et al., 2018). The Ghanaian diaspora in Canada is intergenerational, consisting of first, second, and third generations. The Ghanaian population in Canada is overwhelmingly urban, mostly living in the cities of Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Montreal, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, and Winnipeg (Mensah et al., 2018).

The experiences of Ghanaian immigrants in Canada cannot be overemphasized. They have experienced discrimination and social exclusion in the housing, education, and labour markets as they strive to settle and integrate within Canadian society. Other challenges include the lack of recognition of foreign credentials and work experience, cultural clash, the difficult process of adaptation and adjustment, and downward social mobility (Mensah & Owusu Ansah, 2022; Otoo, 2018; Zaami, 2015).

## Methodology

Primary data for this paper was collected between August 2022 and May 2023 in Ghana and Canada. A qualitative research approach was chosen to help ascertain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the research participants (Cresswell, 2009). According to Cresswell (2009), the focus of qualitative research is based on deriving meaning that participants attach to a problem or issue, rather than what researchers contribute themselves or what authors have penned in available literature.

A mixture of purposive and snowball sampling techniques was employed in selecting the participants for the research study. The primary means of data collection were face-to-face semi-structured interviews and a few interviews via phone. Interviews conducted in Canada were primarily online via Zoom, with a few taking place in the homes and offices of the participants. The interviews were conducted primarily in English with just a few conducted in Twi, a local

Ghanaian dialect. A series of open-ended questions that addressed themes on home, sense of belonging, place attachment, touristic activities, and other transnational practices were asked. The eligibility criterion was that all the participants were aged 18 and above and had engaged in return visits to the homeland at least twice. Again, they must have lived in Canada for at least five years.

All ethical procedures were followed through York University's Ethics Committee. Brear (2018) acknowledges that using pseudonyms is the accepted and expected ethical practice for maintaining participants' privacy in qualitative research. Participants were asked to choose their own pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity and data confidentiality. Interviews lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. With participants' approval, each interview was audio recorded to make sure that the participants' responses were not misrepresented. I transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim and coded and analyzed them using NVivo qualitative software. After a lengthy period of time spent on transcriptions, I used NVivo software for the coding process. Coding helps to define what is presenting itself in the data collected. Using thematic analysis, I drew out themes from the coding process. Coding allowed for the grouping of categories, and the identification of key themes were established. I restrict this paper to solely the theme of home. It focuses mainly on participants' responses to questions I asked about home and its meaning to them.

Social scientists need to disclose how their positions and experiences may affect their interpretation of participants' lived experiences (Scharp & Thomas, 2019). My positionality as a cultural insider interviewing participants from the same cultural background allowed the participants to express themselves freely (Watkins & Gnoth, 2011). Being ethnically Ghanaian, I felt a special connection to some of the first-generation interviewees who reminded me of myself when I first migrated to Canada and some challenges I had faced during that time. I was able to build trust with my participants as I considered myself as one of them.

The socio-demographic profile of participants is as follows. The sample consisted of 45 participants, with a gender composition of 25 females and 20 males, and an age cohort ranging from 27 to 77 years. Of the 45 participants, thirty are first-generation, ten are second-generation, and five are one-and-a-half (1.5) generation.

## Findings

Even though data were collected on the three main themes of home, belonging, and place attachment, I focus solely on the theme of home in what follows.

### *The Meaning and Significance of Home*

Home is interpreted differently by many in various ways. Discussing the relevance and meaning of home to the Ghanaian immigrant can be complex. Home for many of my research participants was found to connote social relationships, a sense of place—the lived experience of a locality emotions, and even one's state of mind—how one makes of it.

#### *As the Birthplace Connection*

Many of my study participants viewed home from the perspective of being the place they were born. Manuel, who was in Ghana for holidays at the time of the interview, had this to say about his conception of home:

Home is where you were born, and family is all around. I feel more grounded here in Ghana. There is a sense of relief, and it is a good feeling for me. I also have the sense of responsibility to contribute to the well-being of my larger family… as a man, this is always on my mind. (Manuel,1st gen., M, 38, Gh.) [2]

In fact, Manuel's narrative corroborates Ralph's (2009) observation of home being a place of ontological security connected to one's roots and associated with kin and community networks. Home is their birthplace as shown by the words of some of the interviewees. Also, many of the participants identified home as the place where they grew up, while others identified home as a place where they felt grounded. This is how two interviewees conceived home:

Home is where I was born, where I have grown to only know as my home. Home is where my parents, siblings and other relatives are. (Jaye, 2nd gen., F, 34, Cd.)

Home is where I was born, and that's where I grew up and my upbringing, whatever I know most of it has come from Ghana. (Nana J., 1st gen., M, 36, Cd.)

Even though Nana J. and Jaye are first-generation and second-generation, respectively, they both have the idea of home as being their birthplace. For Manuel, it is a feeling. These buttress Ralph & Staeheli's (2011) assertion of home being experienced both as a location and as a set of relationships that shape their identities and feelings of belonging.

The emotional importance of home is analyzed here. Narratives from many of the participants underscore home as a feeling of familiarity and a sense of security. Feeling comfortable and feeling loved, Adansi puts it this way:

Home is where my heart is. It is comfortability for me - where I feel comfortable, loved and cared for. Home is where true friends really are, and I have these friends in Ghana that's why Ghana has a pull on me. In Ghana, I have strong connections with my schoolmates, and we've built lifelong friendships—I go way back with my friends. (Adansi, 1st gen., F, 62, Gh.)

Fide, another first-generation participant, shared the following:

Hmm, this question I think it's going to invoke a lot of emotion. It does invoke a lot of emotion. Because when we talk about home, home is where the heart is. Given that I have lived in Canada for over now getting to 15 years, lived in the US for over 5 years, meaning I've lived in North America for over 20 years, and I'm 44. So, I lived in Ghana for 24 years. Right. So home is not necessarily where you've lived the longest. To me, home is where you feel welcomed, home is where you feel that sense of connection. That is what home is about. (Fide, 1st gen., F, 44, Gh.)

Adansi and Fide have contextualized home as an emotional concept. As the literature shows, some people identify home as a place where they feel grounded and secure (Ralph, 2009). Others associate it with relationality, that is the kind of relationships they derive from their connections with friends and family. As some participants observed:

Home means love, comfort, a sense of security, spending quality time with family. (Nana, 1st gen., M, 74, Cd.)

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[2] All quotes can be identified by participant's pseudonym, generation cohort, gender, age, and place of interview.

> Home is always supposed to be the place where you feel most of yourself. (AT, 2nd gen., F, 37, Gh.)

Akwaa, a second-generation woman who, at the time of interview, was on vacation in Ghana, seems emotionally and physically connected to the homeland. I could see much excitement in her during the interview, and she told me that she had the intention of settling in Ghana permanently if she found a good-paying job. This is how Akwaa framed her thoughts:

> I think home is just where you feel most comfortable, where you feel accepted. Yeah, it's a feeling. Where you feel accepted, where you may be free. I want to say as a second generation, when people ask me, where am I from? The first place I always say is Ghana. Even though this is not where I was born, it's a place that I enjoy more than being in Canada. I consider this to be my home more than Canada. It's almost like familiar. Everybody is friendly, everybody is welcoming. (Akwaa, 2nd gen., F, 27, Gh.)

### *Age, Gender, and the Conception of Home*

There are ways in which gender and generational relationships influence the idea of home for many immigrants, an example being the social and cultural experiences associated with home in different geographical jurisdictions. First-generation immigrants who knew of the cultural significance of patriarchy in Ghana before migrating were vocal about the question of their age and gender shaping the conceptions of home. Below are some of the participants' comments.

> In Ghana, I realize that stigma is attached to older, single women and I do not like it. How women are treated by men is not the best. This can't happen here in Canada. (Wussii, 1st gen., F, 41, Cd.)

> Since I migrated to Canada, I have clearer perspectives of things going on in Ghana. The attitude of the people are not changing. The men are still dominating women. Women are not given that opportunity. [I] thought they have been given some but not given much attention in the society like positions, salary wise, home. It's like women are still relegated to the home. They don't get the opportunity. They feel like women belong to the home; they do all the stuff. Men don't really help like that. They still don't. So, we are still following strict gender marks. Do you understand? (Gapa, 1st gen., M, 36, Gh.)

> The Ghanaian society is very male-dominated, and so growing up, there were perceptions about a girl doesn't do this…, this is for boys, etc. When I went to Canada, I realized that even though there are still some gaps in male-female type things, it's better there whereby both genders are recognized, at least by law, as equal. I don't feel that it's the same here in Ghana even now, especially in the northern part of the country, where some people think that possessing a particular genitalia makes you superior to another person. I find that in Canada and this may be very narrow - because it's based on my personal experiences - the men are more helpful than men in Ghana. Things that men never did in Ghana, in Canada, they do them. They get up and they bathe the children, they will help in cooking, those kinds of things they don't do for them. A lot of men here [Ghana] don't do them but over there [Canada] they will. So why are they doing them there but cannot do them here? ... I tell those who have boys that they have a very big role to play in bringing up the next generation of men because some of them allow their boys to sit down and do nothing whilst their girls are suffering with all their household chores and yet they expect

their girls to perform as well as their boys in school. So, I always say that women today, in most parts of the world, even in Canada, women play a very significant role in the upbringing of children. So, we have a big role to play in ensuring that the men of tomorrow, who are the boys of today, have been brought up in a way that will make both genders see themselves as co-equals, co-helpers in everything. It will make the world a better place for all of us. (Queen, 1st gen., F, 41, Gh.)

Queen was very passionate when speaking on gender roles and how patriarchy in the African societal context has allowed gender inequities to define male-female roles and relationships. Such expressions by the participants bring out the power dynamics in gender and class relations across space, thereby showcasing the gendered dimension.

### *Ambivalence in Meaning of Home*

Some participants viewed home in an ambivalent manner. Gyakyewa's attention seemed to be divided between Canada and Ghana in considering her idea of home. She balances and negotiates both locations as her home depending on the meanings she ascribes to the term. For Gyakyewa, home is anchored between her nuclear family and her extended family. This is how she phrases her thoughts on this tension:

> So, if you look at the definition of home, home is a place where you reside with a family. So, if you look at that definition, then Canada is my home. But if you look at the broader aspect of home, home is where your soul is, home is where your roots are, home is where your culture, ethnicity and extended family are. That for me is Ghana. I've always felt Ghana is my home. (Gyakyewa, 1st gen., F, 77, Cd.)

### *Living Between Two Homes and Two Cultures*

Many of the first-generation participants regarded themselves as living in both Canada and Ghana as they see both as their homes. These participants attach strong cultural connections to the homeland. The dimensions of the sociocultural aspects of home are shaped by people's cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Adansi, like Gyakyewa, embraces both locations as her home. Adansi exhibits strong transnational ties to both places, here and there. She wilfully indicates her desire of where she wants her remains to be interred following her demise. The following is how she puts it:

> Personally, I'm straddling two homes and because of that I have told my children that wherever I die that is where I should be buried. When I die in Ghana I should be buried in Ghana at Gethsemane cemetery, and when I die in Canada, I should be buried in Canada at Meadowvale cemetery. That shows the extent of my commitment to the two countries. There's a space for me in either place. That shows my involvement in both places. (Adansi, 1st gen., F, 62, Gh.),

Wussii is also a first-generation who immigrated to Canada at the young age of 19 years for education and has since made Canada her residence. Even though she has lived in Canada most of her adult life, she still sees Ghana as her home because of the familial ties. The idea of Canada being her home continues to shift from time to time, depending on the context. According to Wussii:

> Home is where my family extended family is … I mean my parents, siblings, cousins and aunties, uncles … I'm here with my only child who was raised by my parents back in Ghana, so I often visit with her to go see her grandparents. I miss the food there and anytime I'm home I get spoilt with authentic homemade food by my mother. Canada is also home because I have lived here since I was 19 years and I have learned a lot. It is home for the moment, but I would want to retire to Ghana. (Wussii, 1st gen., F, 41, Cd.)

Second-generation adults, like Zia, may have a cultural connection to Ghana through Ghanaian cultural attributes such as ethnic foods and music. For Zia, Canada is her home by birth and by upbringing:

> Canada just by virtue of the amount of time I've lived here. My entire life has literally been developed here. My sense of home in Ghana is literally just a cultural connection. And I love the food and the music, but because I haven't lived there, I don't have any real grounding in terms of, I guess, determining Ghana as my home in any real way. (Zia, 2nd gen., F, 30, Cd.)

Osei, who is a second-generation child of immigrant parents, is of another opinion. He observes home from a hybrid approach. Canada is his home by birth, and Ghana is his home by cultural heritage. Regardless of the fact that he was born Canadian, he is culturally connected to Ghana. His desire to stay connected with his roots make it possible for him to easily belong to his parental homeland. According to Osei:

> I am loyal in a sense, and I think I'm pragmatic in the sense that I'm born here. So, for me to be technical about it, of course this will be my home because I'm born here. But my love and desire for heritage, culture and the people of Ghana will also make me say that Ghana is also my home. I think it's also massaged through because of my experiences in my home, Canada, that helps to push me towards seeking something that I'm going to feel more belonged. So that is, I think, a factor that's going to make me say Ghana is also my home. (Osei, 2nd gen., M, 48, Cd.)

### The Shifting Nature of Home

For some migrants, the idea of home may change over time and across space. Home, whenever or wherever located, is subject to the immigrant's lived and situated experiences. In this regard, a first-generation woman shares the following interesting story:

> The day I made up my mind that Canada is home was when I arrived in Toronto from Ghana on one of my trips and at Pearson the official smiled at me and said welcome home. Wow, I was shocked! I visit Ghana often and no one at the airport has welcomed me home even when I show my Ghana passport. By the way, I have both Canada and Ghana passports. What those people [Ghanaians] do best is extorting money from you because you are arriving from abroad. This Canadian immigration official made me feel good, accepted and confident. Canadians know how to treat their citizens. Tell me, why shouldn't I say Canada is my home? (Adjoa, 1st gen., F, 57, Cd.)

### Ghana as a Tourist Destination or as a Home

In the African or Ghanaian context, tourism is usually viewed as an activity for the rich and privileged. Hardly do you see domestic Ghanaians undertaking domestic tourism just for the fact

that they do not have the disposable income to engage in tourism which, in their view, is very expensive. Tourism industry players and actors see Ghanaians in the diaspora as prospective tourists just like foreign tourists who can spend good money in the industry. Meanwhile, these immigrants see themselves as just regular migrants coming 'home' to visit family and friends. Their visits are not motivated by tourism but by other factors which I have mentioned earlier. Participating in tourism and its ancillary activities is just a by-product for some migrants. In sum, many Ghanaian immigrants will not label themselves as tourists, but rather as immigrants visiting their home country.

The number of visits to the homeland may influence a migrant's feelings for 'home'. As a second-generation migrant, Jaye says her parental homeland is home for her but not a tourist destination. Jaye has visited Ghana about ten times since she was 23 years old and says:

> Ghana is not a tourist destination for me anymore. Before it was but now, no, because I've been there so often, I take it like my home. So, if I'm going on a vacation to a tourism country, it would have to be like going to a totally different country. Like, let's say you're going to Greece or Spain or Mexico, that would be vacation for me. (Jaye, 2nd gen., F, 34, Cd.)

Nana, a first-generation immigrant was of the view that he visits Ghana as his home country and not as a tourist destination. According to Nana:

> We are not tourists. We are from there [Ghana]. That is our home. I see myself as a tourist when I visit say Mexico because there, I see that there are nicer beaches and hotels and other places for relaxation during vacation. (Nana, 1st gen., M,74, Cd.)

Pookie does not see Ghana as a tourist destination, but he has visited some tourist areas by courtesy of his friends. This is how Pookie describes the situation:

> When I am in Ghana it is my friends who I want to catch up with, who take me on trips to tourist sites just to have me entertained. The last time I was there my old schoolmate took me to the Sandbox resort somewhere in the central region and we had a great time there. I have promised myself to try and go to these places on my next visit. (Pookie, 1.5 gen., M, 43, Cd.)


**Discussion and Conclusion**

'Home' is a complex concept with diverse meanings and interpretations as addressed by Blunt and Dowling (2022). It is obvious that an immigrant experiences home in multi-dimensional ways. The ambivalent nature of home produces two homes for the first-generation Ghanaian immigrant. Most of these people have their feet in both the home and host countries. Even though the immigrant is connected to both their home country and host country, 'home' is predominantly their country of origin or birthplace. In this paper, I have examined the meanings of home by Ghanaian-Canadians who engage in return visits to the homeland, and how their perceptions of home influence said return visits.

Some differences were seen between first-generation immigrants and second-generation stock. The first-generation base their experiences, feelings, kin and community networks, and memories of their birthplace, Ghana, which is home for them. However, because of roots and ancestry, the second-generation sees Ghana as their parental homeland and Canada as their birthplace and home. It was observed that visiting Ghana was not motivated by tourism but by other transnational practices and factors such as extended family and kinship relations, investing

in business and building projects, leisure and relaxation, attending social and cultural events such as weddings, festivals, reunions, and funerals, but not necessarily visiting touristic sites and facilities.

The findings of the study so far contribute to the existing literature on African migrant visits and VFR tourism to the homeland. The Ghana government has a Diaspora Engagement Policy as well as a National Tourism Policy, and I think, by synergizing these two policies, they could contribute to the maintenance of a conducive environment for overall national development through Ghanaian immigrants' transnational engagements in the homeland not excluding tourism development and promotion. One main tenet of the Diaspora Engagement Policy is to foster deeper connection and collaboration between Ghana and its global diaspora through tourism and cultural heritage. With this policy and more, Ghanaian immigrants living abroad, their foreign-born children, and subsequent generations would feel the need to reconnect with their roots by regularly visiting the homeland.

It is suggested that future studies examine how subsequent generations like the third-generation cohort will conceptualize home and their transnational touristic visits to the homeland.

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