

What is the Impact of Transnational Migration on Families Left Behind? An Examination of the Experiences of Mothers and Children in a Town in Ghana

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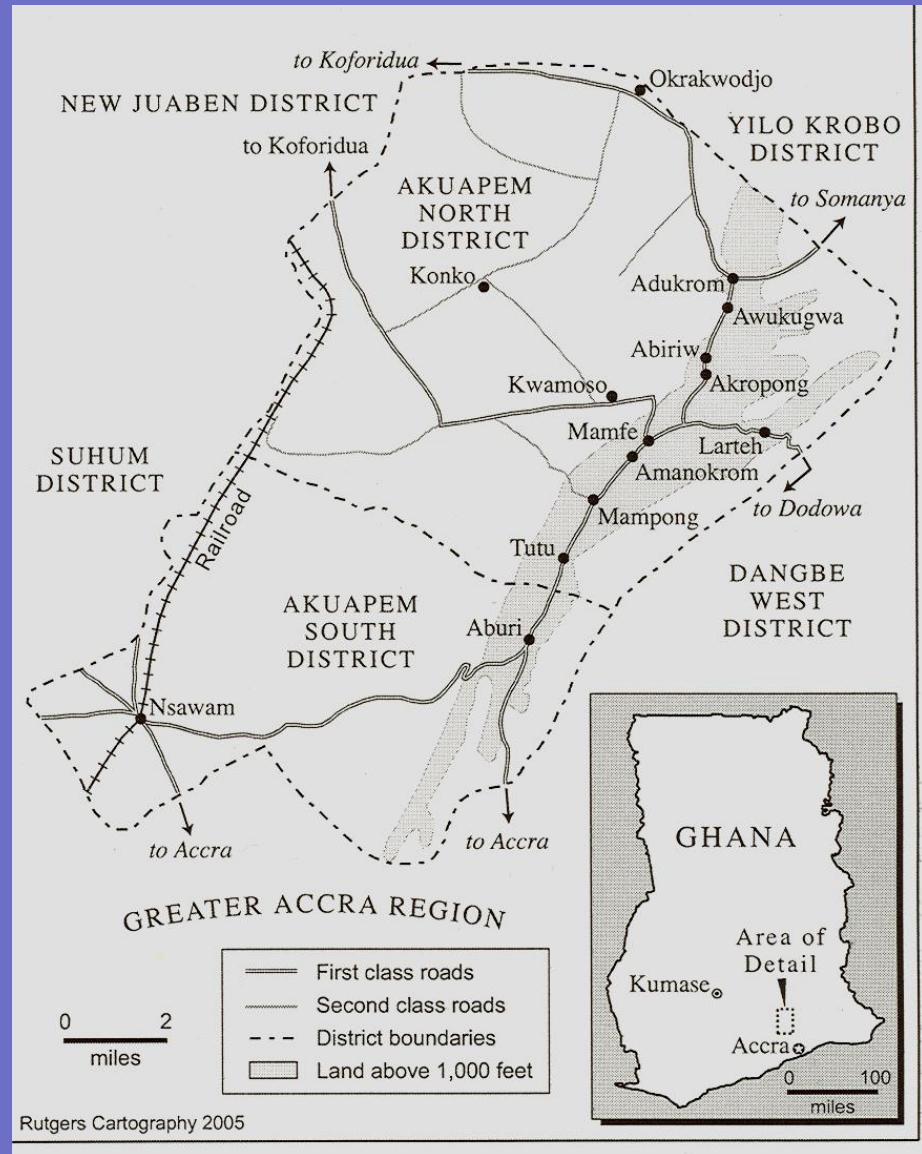
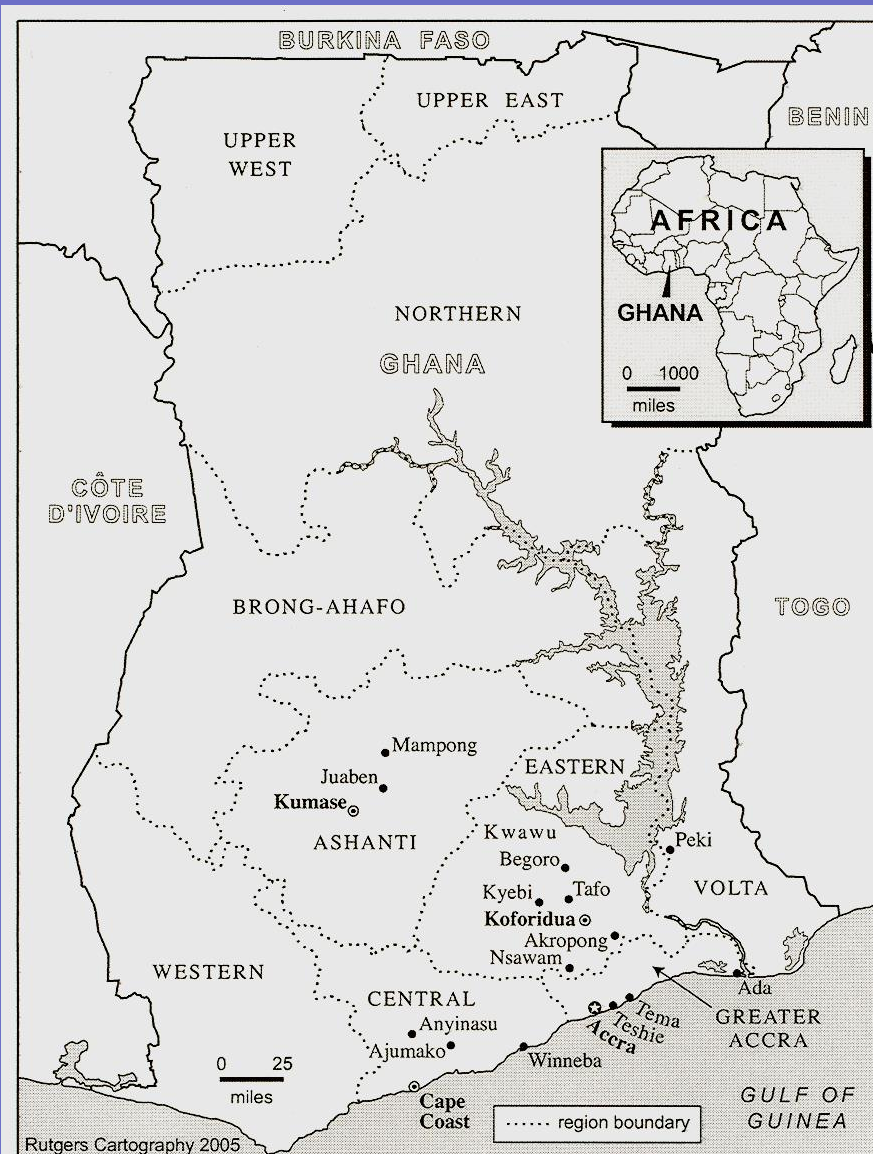
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Split Households and Scattered Families

- The newness of this phenomenon?
- Traditions of child fosterage
- Fragility of marriage
- What are the family situations of those who do not migrate internationally?



Akropong, Akuapem, Ghana





Akropong Street

Methods

- Visited 220 houses in a town of approximately 1712 houses
- Resulted in interviews with 93 caregivers and 80 children (aged 8-22)
- Focus group discussions with 45 of the same children
- Follow-up with parents of those children living in the US



Children's Abandonment

In contrast to previous research conducted in elite secondary schools and private schools in Kumasi and Akropong, I found many more children abandoned by migrant parents

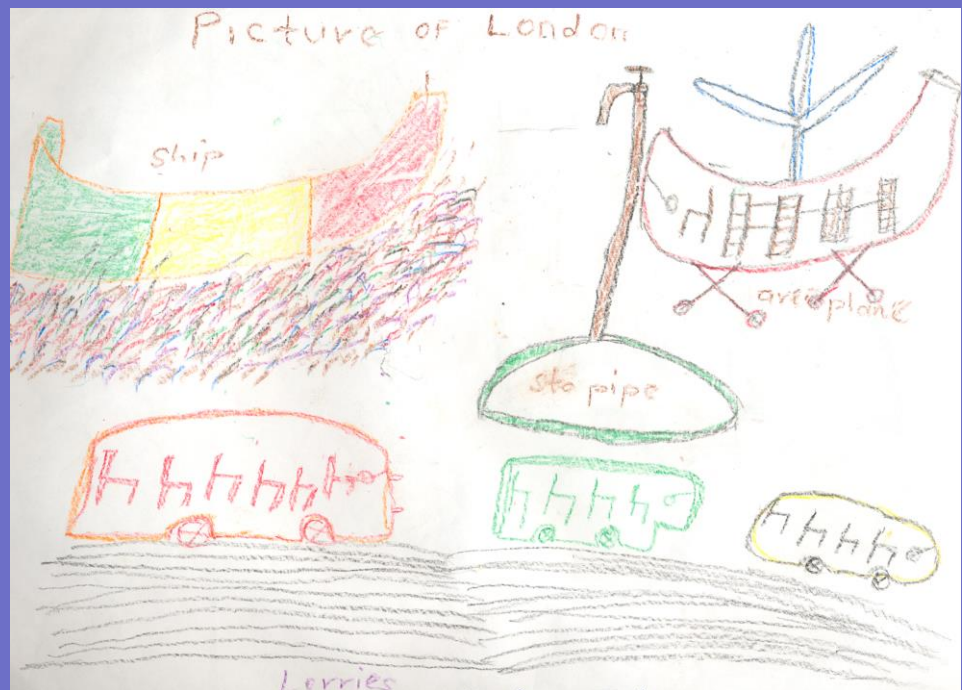


Subgroup of 17 Mothers

- 8 had a husband or ex-partner abroad
- 7 had a husband or ex-partner living separately in Ghana
- 2 in a mixed category: some experience with both kinds of husbands
- Age range of the women: 24-56 years

Some Definitions

- “Marriage” used loosely to encompass informal or temporary relationships, rather than a legal definition
- Transnational migration included migration anywhere outside Ghana, including Togo, South Africa, and Nigeria, not just to the UK or US, the most prestigious destinations.



Support of Children by Father

- Greater differences between children abandoned and supported by fathers than differences between those who have a father abroad and those with a father in Ghana
- Schooling disrupted
- Child can live with other relatives or as househelp



Why do Fathers Not Support their Children?



- Lack of income
- Souring of relationship with mother
- Death of mother

But

there are differences between
those with fathers abroad and
those with fathers in Ghana

- Fathers abroad more insulated from the demands of mothers to support the children
- Fathers can begin to support children as they grow
- Migration can lead to abandonment

Children with supportive fathers abroad

- Seemed more likely to attend private school
- Sense of emotional connection and longing to join parent abroad
- Happy about the material support



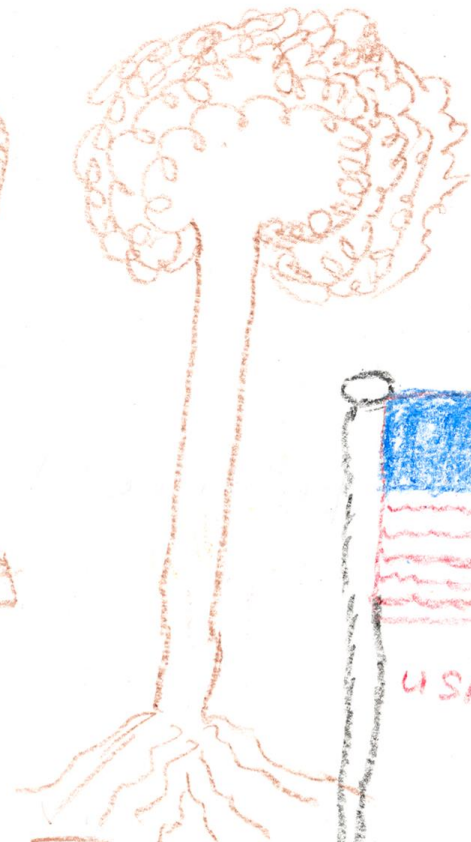
Picture of USA



house



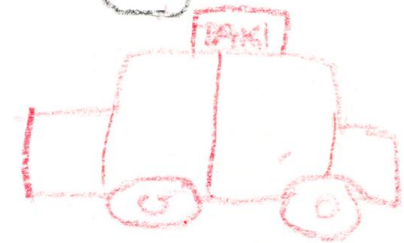
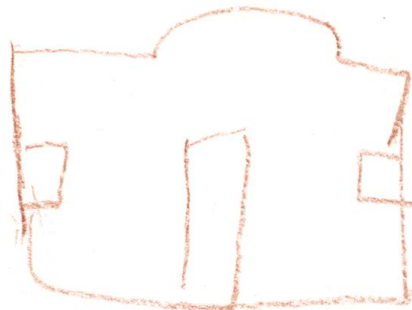
Toy



Tree



USA Flag



car

Some Conclusions

We are operating with continua, not binaries:

- Households are not split or unitary, but experience different degrees of separation and unity at different points in time
- Migration to Europe and America operates on a continuum with internal migration and migration with the sub-region or continent, despite differences in legal restrictions