



LUNDS UNIVERSITET

Migrating Mothers'

Experiences of Motherhood and Mothering in an ever-globalizing world.

Linnéa Ljung

Department of Gender Studies

Bachelor Thesis: GNVK02, 15 Credits

Supervisor: Sara Goodman

Spring Term 2018

Abstract

Female migrants comprise half of the worlds migrating people today. Modern ideals of mothering and motherhood entail mothers staying at home to care for their children, mother's having to migrate away from their families contradicts current (modern) values.

This thesis aims at investigating how mothers experience migration, and how their ethnicity, class and location affect their migrational experience. It also looks at how ideals of mothering and motherhood are shaped and how they are reflected in migrant mothers' lives.

This study is based on a qualitative ethnographic interview method. Through the recollections and experiences of five transnational mothers (who either are or who have been living away from their children) I have established common themes. The themes are also established by the use of intersectionality as the overarching theoretical framework. The themes regard ethnicity, push and pull factors behind the mother's migration, and socio-economic opportunities.

There is also focus on the migrant mother's experiences of domestic and motherwork, both professionally and in their personal lives.

The results of the thesis show how ambivalent and contradictory mothers' experiences of migration can be. I argue that the modern ideals of mothering need to be rebranded to ease the societal stigma regarding transnational mothering; this seems necessary because the gap between the Global North and South is growing larger and because of this migration flows are not likely to decrease.

Keywords: *migration, transnational motherhood, motherwork, mothering, migrant mother's intersectionality*

Thank You!!!

I want to thank all the mothers who shared their time and experiences with me. Obviously, this thesis would not be possible without you...

I also want to thank my supervisor, Sara Goodman who has been so kind and positive whilst guiding my throughout this process.

And finally, to those people who are always there for me: ma, pa, and PD.

Table of Contents

1 INTRODUCTION	5
1.2 NORMS AND IDEALS	6
2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH	7
2.1 INTERNAL MIGRATION AS A WAY OF CHANGING “TRADITIONAL” GENDER ROLES	7
2.2 GLOBAL CARE CRISIS	7
2.3 MOTHERWORK	8
2.4 TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION	10
2.5 GENDER AND TRANSNATIONAL MOTHERING	10
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	13
3.1 INTERSECTIONALITY	13
3.2 IDEALS OF MOTHERHOOD AND MOTHERING	14
4. METHOD, MATERIAL AND ETHICS	16
4.1 TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS	17
4.2 THE MOTHERS	18
4.3 LIMITATIONS	19
4.4 MY POSITION	20
4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	20
5. ANALYSIS	21
5.1 INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS	21
5.2 MOTHERING AND MOTHERHOOD	23
5.3 REASONS BEHIND MIGRATION	27
5.4 ETHNICITY	30
5.5 LEGAL STATUS	34
5.6 DOMESTIC WORK	35
6 CONCLUDING REMARKS	38
WORKS CITED	40

1 Introduction

Today there are 258 million people living in another country than the one they were born in (UN DESA 2017), that is an increase of almost 50 percent since the year 2000. New methods of transportation, rising inequalities, and conflict, are all factors that drive people to migrate and seek better opportunities. Migration studies have focused on various fields regarding reasons for migration, the effects of remittances, but also the repercussions of migrating.

Women comprise about half of the worlds migrating population (UN DESA 2017) and female migration differs from male migration in both reasons behind migrating and the aftermath. Female migrants are occasionally mothers looking to create better opportunities and possibilities for their children, thus becoming transnational mothers. Women having to leave their children at home while they migrate in pursuit of labor is because of various things; having to enter the host country irregularly, lacking the economic and social capital to bring them, or believing that the children will fare better whilst at home.

Paradoxically mothers pursuing labor abroad for the purpose of creating better economic conditions for their children, or *transnational mothering* as I will be referring to this phenomenon, is not normatively perceived as “good mothering”. The traditional view of “good mothering” is a woman who is always available - both physically and emotionally to her children (Moorehouse & Cunningham, 2012:494). Fathers, on the other hand have not been routinely expected to stay at home with the children, thus making migration and the traditional role of mothering a salience to only women. Transnational mothers are put in the position of having to reconstruct their mothering practices; finding new ways of caring than the ones normally valued.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

Women have in many cultures been revered as the primary caretaker within families. More women are choosing or having to migrate, which also means more women are becoming transnational mothers. I'm intrigued by how this shapes identity, how this is viewed in social spheres, and how transnational mothering is performed.

Increasing global polarization and transnational female networks have caused more women to migrate (Hochschild, 2004:20). Despite some contesting this migration is inescapably a gendered

experience (Millman, 2013:72). All migration experiences are affected by the circumstances of departure and the social and economic capital one has. My aim in this thesis is to highlight the ambivalent and contradictory experiences mothers can have while migrating.

During the process of finding previously conducted research it has become apparent to me how large a field migration studies are. Globalization is felt everywhere, and everyone knows someone who has migrated at some point in their life.

This is an ethnographic study that aims to see how mothers who have migrated experience motherhood and mothering, did the migration process change how they mother and finally what role does their social and economic position play in the felt experience of their migration?

I also hope to shed light on what impact migration can have on families as well as how migration can transgress gender norms. Therefore, my research questions are as follows:

- How is migration experienced by mothers?
- How has migration impacted these women's role/identities as mothers?
- How does class, ethnicity and gender impact a mother's migration?

1.2 Norms and Ideals

Norm, coming from the word normal encompasses both the most frequently occurring as well as the most desirable thus norms are both the average and the ideal (Ambjörnsson, 2003:21)¹.

Ambjörnsson argues that because of this, norms are both descriptive and regulating, norms than representing prevailing power structures.

Cohering to a norm can have advantages in both daily life but also in terms of political- and power structures. Likewise, norms create disadvantages and opportunities to discriminate or exploit persons not cohering to the prevailing norms (Nationella Sekretariatet för Genusforskning).

¹ Fanny Ambjörnsson uses the Swedish word *normal* in her description, however she cites George Canguilhem who uses the English word norm

2 Previous Research

There are vast amounts of ethnographic studies done on the effects of transnational mothering on families, especially the migrant mothers and children. Much of the research I have read has been focused on the global care chain. I have been greatly helped by Diana Mulinari's (1995) perspectives on motherwork.

2.1 Internal Migration as a way of Changing "Traditional" Gender roles

Tanzina Choudhury's (2013) study on internal migration in Bangladesh depicts how women negotiate with the patriarchy when entering into the male dominated work sector of construction. Choudhury's study takes place in Bangladesh where the prevailing norm is that women do not work at all. Choudhury's study shows how migration can be an emancipatory practice away from traditional gender norms. Admittedly paid labor grants women greater mobility and economic freedom, however as Choudhury points out entering the paid labor force also places them at larger risk to other forms of exploitation.

2. 2 Global Care Crisis

In Lise Isaksen, Uma Devi and Arlie Hochschild's article Global Care Crisis, Mother and Child's-eye view they state that an increasing number of women are "choosing" to migrate, especially from the Third World. This due to several reasons among them collapsing economies, political unrest, and the economic gap between how life is lived in the Global South and North (Isaksen, Devi, Hochschild, 2008:61). Women are more and more fitting into the "male model of migration" which means that they're migrating for work alone. Since in most cultures women are still most often revered as a family's primary caregiver it is interesting to look at the family life of a migrant woman. Although fathers should also be viewed as emotional caregivers this simply is not the case and women are more likely to feel guilty or sad about their long absences away from their children (Isaksen, Devi, Hochschild,2008:62). This article looks at Kerala which has had an increased migration due to the imbalance in a good school system but a poor economy where few jobs are available. This subject is sensitive, and it demands a great trust between the researcher and the interviewee (Isaksen, Devi, Hochschild,2008:63). They also mean that since the migrant woman wants and needs her working life to work out to support her family; the economic incentive is very high thus making the woman reluctant to jeopardize her situation.

There is a divided feeling among many transnational mothers as they feel proud of their overseas job but also feel bad or guilty about leaving their children at home. Many mothers are also reluctant to talk about their situation as the social stigma surrounding leaving one's child is strong. The fear of being called a “bad mother” is real and there is shame associated with this since mothering is in many cultures a woman’s most important task.

2.3 Motherwork

Diana Mulinari (1995: 174) argues that in accordance to modern and enlightenment discourse the separation of culture and nature has created the perception that motherhood is natural. The term motherwork was created in an attempt to transcend this dichotomy between culture and nature. Due to the biologization of women’s bodies their experiences of childbirth, pregnancy and everything connected to that has been seen as natural. Motherhood being seen as a natural/biological fate has reduced women’s labor to passive and trivial. Motherwork deconstructs the biological essentialist stance at the same time as not overlooking the reproductive labor that mothers carry out (Sager, 2014:74). Shadow work and reproductive work can also be terms used for women’s unrecognized labor. Conspicuously Moorehouse and Cunningham observe that many of the Zimbabwean migrant mothers they interview forfeit their “shadow work” at home only to continue doing it in someone else's home (Moorehouse and Cunningham, 2012:501).

With the use of the term motherwork it can be established that the practice of mothering needn’t be specifically fixed to biological mothers, to women, or to parents. Mothering as a practice can be performed by a number of different actors.

Diana Mulinari (1995:177) argues along with Sara Ruddick (1989) that women engaging in maternal practice, or motherwork are engaged in a discipline. They argue that the demands placed on anyone engaging in motherwork foster feelings and thoughts of “...preservative love, nurturance and growth of children.”. They mean that because children crave or rather demand safety these feelings are expected to come when engaging in motherwork.

Furthermore, Mulinari’s own informants in Nicaragua don’t distinguish between their motherhood and workinghood. Workinghood was included within their mothering because to them providing for their children was central to their mothering practice. Mulinari argues that for

the Managuan women providing for their children was included within their identity as mothers (Mulinari, 1995:178-179).

Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild (2004:3) note that much attention is paid to women's labor migration as it is often care work female migrants engage in. The dependency or the relationship between the Global North and South mirrors the relationship between the sexes; the north being the old fashioned male unable to nurture, cook or clean for himself. The Global South representing the wife whose job is to take care of the domestic sphere, placing everyone else's needs above her own (Ehrenreich, Hochschild, 2004:11-12).

The feminists above argue that mothering and motherhood do not come *naturally* to women so why look at women's experience of mothering and migration specifically? The fact of the matter is that mothering, and motherhood are still a heavily gendered practice associated with women, family care and in the domestic sphere is still labor that more women than men carry out. Maja Sager (2014:74) points out that women (and children) are often seen as more or extra worth protecting under asylum and migration laws. Paradoxically this "special" status also fails to note women's and mother's experiences of war, violence, lack of rights and access to work. Furthermore, women's reasons for and experiences of migration is often composed of intersecting forms of oppression that can produce and give a more complex understanding of the hegemonic structures in the world today.

Nira Yuval-Davis (1997:5) maintains one of the central reasons to women's oppression is due to their location not being in the same social sphere as men's. However, as Yuval-Davis confesses there are many inconsistencies and confusions when trying to determine the private/public spheres and therefore argues that there should be three social spheres: the state, and the sphere of family (1997:81). Using these three spheres it is evident that in post-colonial "modern" states there has arisen issues. With colonialism leaving a legacy of westernized forms of politics and government, traditional ways of ruling (where family and relational ties are the center organization) women are caught in between the spheres and left with little or no formal citizenship (1997:81).

2.4 Transnational Migration

Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1993:5) realized that along with new technological advancements within communication and transportation the existing research categories of “immigrants” and “remaining behind” were insufficient in understanding how migrants experience their home and host societies. The former categories failed to see the complex social and political experiences a migrant could experience; despite scholars seeing these experiences as fragmented across nation-state borders, it seemed to be one.

Transnationalism was coined as a way of understanding this circular, or rather interconnected social experience. What characterizes transnational migrants is their agglomeration of involvement, often simultaneously in both their host and home country.

“We define “transnationalism” as the processes by which immigrant’s forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.” (Basch, Schiller, Blanc, 1993:7)

Steve Striffler (2007) looks at the case of Mexican poultry workers in the United States. The influx of Mexican poultry workers in the American Midwest is not as Striffler argues a coincidence, the workers are part of a transnational circuit. Migrants inspiring and facilitating friends and family to migrate has increased, a contributing factor to this is in large the advancement of communication technology (Striffler, 2007:675).

2.5 Gender and Transnational Mothering

Just like many research fields, migration research largely ignored the role gender played until the 1980’s. The rise of interest and more women participating in the global migration processes has changed this and more studies are focused on female migration. Bermudez (2016:29) highlights that much of the existing research about female migration has been focused on whether the migration is an emancipatory practice or whether it leads to more vulnerability and oppression for women. Due to findings being contradictory transnational migration research commenced on a more intersectional approach as to what identity factors influence a person's migration experience.

It is more common for women and mothers to migrate internationally and uptake paid labor today (Madziva, Zontini, 2012:430). Due to the transnational circuit as mentioned previously as well as other factors migrant mothers are often seeking employment within the domestic sphere and retain jobs that include taking care of other people's children. Caring for other people's children while not being physically there for your own children directly contradicts the modern ideals and morals of motherhood (Smart, 1996).

Cultural context does however matter as seen in Elisabetta Zontini's (2004) study situated in the Philippines. There are more than 10 million Filipino migrants working and living in 160 countries (Maruja, Migration Policy, 2017). There, the country's economy is completely dependent on remittances thus the state encourages emigration. Women's labor migration is valued and encouraged resulting in women sometimes being away for decades in the search for work. According to Zontini mothers and wives will not be ostracized or criticized for migrating over prolonged periods of time. Rhacel Salazar Parrenas argues that public perception of transnational families in the Philippines is hostile because gender norms are violated. Parrenas claims that gender ideology is not in line with the economic reality in the Philippines (Parrenas, 2004:39). Numerous traditional gender norms are violated; women as the primary breadwinners, nurturing fathers (or fathers "acting" like mothers), divorce, and mothers leaving their children. Despite the public fearing the emotional deterioration of the younger generation left without mothers, the return of migrant mothers is not necessarily a realistic or desirable solution: "Rather, it implicitly accepts gender inequities in the family, even as it ignores the economic pressures generated by globalization" (Parrenas, 2004:52).

It is worth noting that the most extensive documentation about transnational mothering is from the Filipino context and this in large thanks to Salazar Parrenas research (Lutz, 2011:113). Helma Lutz (2011:117) argues that transnational families are social units and have to navigate and define themselves within several relationships and places. Lutz also highlights that it is not only the family members who migrate who construct transnational relationships but also those "left behind".

The globalization of “motherwork” and the importation of care from the Global South poses challenges regarding gender equality. Furthermore, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of a Child (1959) states: “... a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will...” and as Arlie Hochschild (2004:15) says so eloquently “these words stand now as a fairy tale ideal, the promise of a shield between children and the costs of globalization.”

3. Theoretical Framework

For my theoretical framework I will use intersectionality as an overarching theory. As the majority of the interview participants are from an African context I find that Post-colonialism is also relevant, thus I will be analyzing with a feminist post-colonial perspective in mind. I intend to demonstrate (with my theories) that there is not one “authentic” female experience, but that experiences are impacted by one’s location and history (Mulinari, Sandell, 1999:289). Ideals of mothering and motherhood will also be used as a way of understanding how societal norms and ideas about motherhood and mothering have come to be.

3.1 Intersectionality

I aim to have an intersectional approach to the analysis in my thesis when looking at the reasons why women migrate. Poverty, economy, location, and opportunities all affect why women migrate and how the migration is experienced.

Although the term intersectionality surfaced later, Black feminists and scholars had already commenced working on the framework. Initially Black (and other) feminists deconstructed the categories “black” and “women” in an attempt to analyze how different social divisions such as gender, class, and race interplay and create power structures and oppression (Yuval-Davis, 2006:193). It was initially presented as “triple oppression”, that, for example black women suffer discriminations or disadvantages; because they are black, women, and working class (Yuval-Davis, 2006:195).

Intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in the late 1980’s and aims at understanding and analyzing how different identity categories and power structures interplay (Crenshaw, 1991:1244). In *Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color* (1991) Crenshaw argues that the layers of oppression toward marginalized women such as women of color, are too many to be simply addressed or analyzed from one angle. She argues that the intersections of race and gender are critical to understanding the “structural and representational aspects of violence against women” (Crenshaw, 1991:1244).

In *Gender & Nation* Nira Yuval-Davis (1997:7) rejects the notion of the patriarchy being an autonomous social system. She argues that “gender, ethnicity and class have different ontological bases and separate discourses, are intermeshed in each other and articulated by each other in concrete social relations”. Yuval-Davis asserts that it is imperative to view oppressions, not as isolated but rather seen as parallel to one another.

In her dissertation *Motherwork and the Politics in Revolutionary Nicaragua* (1995) Diana Mulinari refers to Angela Davis (1981) who argued that the practice of mothering was limited to white middle/upper class women thus leaving Black women excluded from discourses revolving ideological femininity and motherhood. This also connected to working class mothers who must leave their children in the care of others while they go to work (Mulinari, 1995:171).

Crenshaw uses the example of immigrant marriages in the United States prior to the 1991 domestic violence amending the marriage fraud rules. For an immigrant to obtain resident status through marriage, the immigrant must be “properly” married for the duration of two years. This put immigrant women facing domestic violence/abuse in a precarious situation of having to choose between deportation or abuse (Crenshaw, 1991:1247).

Four out of the five interview participants live and are from an African context thus I find it important to incorporate a postcolonial approach within the intersectional approach. I have used Mohanty’s *Feminism Without Borders* (2007) as grounds for this.

3.2 Ideals of Motherhood and Mothering

In this thesis I aim at having a critical stance toward the naturalization of motherhood to women’s sexuality and while using the term motherhood I imply being a mother. Motherhood is a legal institution recognized in most societies, mothering on the other hand can either be connected to motherhood or completely separate. Mothering is the act of nurturing (a child). Mothering does however beset different activities in different contexts, and I don’t aim at explaining or placing value in these tasks. I have decided to encompass Elizabeth Bortolaia Silva’s (1996) stance on motherhood and mothering; that being that both are institutions *portrayed* as natural to women. Despite haven been given the identification of women being the “essence” of motherhood Bortolaia Silva (1996:33) states this has not lead to any advantages in

the social spheres. Bortolaia Silva (1996:33) acknowledges that mothering is a convoluted issue but asks that instead of it being a psychological or essential attribute of women, it be put into relational context.

What it means to be a mother and what motherhood entails is variable to historical and cultural context (Moore,1996: 58). Carol Smart (1996) argues that motherhood is not natural, but rather an institution that is the outcome of (hetero) sexual activity. Michael Warner (1991) states that modern societies are centered around the necessity for an economy based on reproductive growth². Motherhood being restricted to solely the female gender equates motherhood and womanhood to the same thing; motherhood being a natural state and desire for women. Moore further explains that a common misconception is that motherhood and mothering are universally the same. Moore argues that motherhood and mothering differ depending on social, cultural, and economic contexts (Moore, 1996:58). Diana Mulinari (1995:173) says that the attempt to universalize the white middle class woman's experience of mothering has provoked many, especially Black feminists who assert that women of color experiences of motherhood have been made invisible. The idea of the middle-class mother's experience being the norm comes from the assumption of the male being the primary breadwinner, however women in most "Third world" countries don't live according to this social arrangement.

Smart (1996:46) argues that feminists in 20th century Britain are in large part of the establishment of the hegemonic version of ideal motherhood we have today. Establishing motherhood as an institution equal to fatherhood was essential to create equal rights for mothers, however this struggle pushed ideals of mothers as being essential to the domestic sphere, as well as carrying knowledge essential to the wellbeing of their children (Smart, 1996:45).

The idea that motherhood is natural for women stems from heterosexual intercourse being seen as the natural form of sex. Heterosexual sex is seen as natural because of its biological outcome of offspring (thus determining what was natural first is conundrum...) (Epstein,1994:189).

Mulinari (1995:173) states that feminist research has shown that the institution of motherhood is linked to ideologies of the nuclear family as well as "the politics of compulsory heterosexuality".

² Michael Warner (1991:7) further elaborates on heterosexism and how the current sexual order seen in the world today first transformed sexuality in Europe and has spread through colonialism and globalization to the entire world.

Since the ideals of motherhood and mothering became seen as “natural” or instincts of some sort, mothers not conforming to these are characterized as “bad” mothers.

Moorehouse and Cunningham (2012:497) also highlight that when a mother is “successful” this is the ultimate receipt of her worth and ability as a woman. According to Smart, the evolvement of a more centralized state, good motherhood and mothering ideals became fixed policies; these policies dictating the goodness of a mother with both legal and discursive mechanisms in society (Smart, 1996:44-46).

4. Method, Material and Ethics

The aim is to understand the experiences of migrant mothers and my belief is that conducting a feminist ethnography is best suited for this intent. I also think that understanding their point of view on what is expected of them as mothers is essential to this thesis and to the broader research field as these voices are not the ones most often heard.

I intend to use narrative research analysis. Amia Lieblich’s (1998) book has been useful thus far in the process as I have used it to create my interview guide, and the material being analyzed are personal life stories. As Lieblich points out, narratives give insight into people’s identities (Lieblich, 1998:7), and this is central to my theme of looking at how the identity of motherhood is re-created when not physically being in the same place as one’s child. In addition to this Lieblich points out that people generate their identity and narratives from common culture available to them. Since I am conducting interviews with women who come from different ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and classes it is highly relevant to consider this. Bryman points out that narrative analysis purposes to find and make sense of life events and the connections between these different events (Bryman, 2012:584). Narrative analysis adopts a holistic-content perspective to find significant themes in the interviews. These themes are found by looking for words, feelings or experiences that are often repeated or emphasized by the interview participants (Lieblich, 1998:63).

I have been inspired by Sara Ahlstedt's (2012) dissertation about queer migrant couples where she uses a phenomenological approach. All knowledge comes from consciousness (Gallagher, 2012:8) (or the way we experience things) and that is why a phenomenological approach is interesting when conducting ethnographic research; through what lens does someone look at the world?

4.1 Telephone Interviews

My interview participants are geographically dispersed and the best way with my limited time was to conduct interviews by phone. I have conducted the majority of my interviews by phone. Bryman explains that conducting interviews by phone has the beneficial potential of the interviewee's not seeing or knowing the characteristics of the interviewers, thus a phone interview may prevent participants responses being affected by characteristics of the interviewer (Bryman, 2012:214).

Bryman states that telephone interviews have been less effective when discussing sensitive issues, they're also limited in the area of observation. These are the two downsides I have experienced when conducting my interviews. On the matter regarding the sensitive nature of my questions I have been prepared. To avoid no answer at all I created a few hypothetical examples of situations and ask if they've experienced similar things and if they could elaborate on those. Thus far I have only had to use these examples in one interview as in all of the other interviews the participants have been open despite the sensitive nature of the questions.

It does feel like a bereavement that I missed out on the observational side of the interviews. Not being able to see how the interview participants respond emotionally to the questions is woe (Bryman, 2012:215). On the other hand, like mentioned previously, I think that for many of the interview participants it has felt quite easing not having me in front of them pressuring them to answer the questions.

I have conducted a total of five semi-structured interviews for this thesis, four of them by telephone and one face to face. Although I would have enjoyed delving deeper and getting more experiences recorded I felt that five interviews was an appropriate size for my analysis.

According to Bryman (2012:425) sample sizes in qualitative research should be large enough to

achieve a comprehensive data analysis however they should be small enough to achieve a deep case-oriented analysis.

4.2 The Mothers

I carried out a total of five interviews which were varied between 30 minutes and one hour. Although I was hoping to have more focus on migration, almost all women had migrated in the past and now lived with their children. Furthermore, some of the women I interviewed did not perceive their time away from their children as an act of “migration” therefore I found it imperative to shift my focus. The themes I was hoping to explore the deepest were those of migration and longing. However, I have restructured my thesis to revolve more around the experience of being a mother. Through this I have tried to understand how these women “feel” about motherhood and their perception on what it is like being a mother, furthermore I wanted to establish how mothers who have migrated understand what makes a “good” mother. Just like Moorehouse and Cunningham (2012) discover through their extensive interviews with migrant mothers from Zimbabwe, all my interview participants emphasize the importance and love of their motherhood role and view this as the pillar of their identity. It has become apparent to me that these women’s role as a mother surpassed any other experience ever had, and that the well-being of their children remained the focal point before, during and after the migration.

The decision to restrict myself to the category of women who are mothers is for several reasons. Firstly, traditionally speaking women have largely been the primary caretakers and bearers of children. Lena Gunnarsson (2011:34) states that “Gender is not a global monolith but must be studied theorized in all its local variations”. All women are different, and all women experience life differently depending on their social, economic, and cultural location. As Yuval-Davis says, without differentiation there is no possibility of resistance or struggle (Yuval-Davis, 2006:203). Further, I agree with Mulinari and Sandell (1999:288) when they argue that although women’s experiences have always been theorized they have been silenced, misrepresented, and misinterpreted. Conducting feminist reflexive ethnographic work is a way to counter this. I believe that a migrant woman’s experiences of migration are different from those of men.

4.3 Limitations

Bryman (2012) asserts that qualitative research is often criticized for being too subjective. In qualitative research the researcher is often the main “instrument” of data collection and this poses an issue seeing as the researcher is than the one with the power of determining what data is relevant and which is not, thus making the product of research heavily influenced by the researcher’s predisposition (Bryman, 2012:405).

Another limitation when conducting ethnographic work is the fact that participants in observations or interviews are likely to be affected by the characteristics of the researcher (characteristics such as age, ethnicity, gender etc.). Bryman argues that because of this factor it is nearly impossible to replicate the findings of qualitative findings (Bryman, 2012:405).

Since most of my interviews have been conducted via phone with participants family members present on their side of the line, confidentiality has to some extent been breached there. It is hard to say how this might also have affected the answers the participants gave.

Some of the interview participants live in small spaces and having a private space to talk is not available. Furthermore, this circumstance also sheds light on the interview participants life and as in the case of Mandy and Liz, being a mother doesn’t come with breaks (even for a phone call).

My personal relationship with Mandy has most likely impacted our interview. I avoided asking her questions regarding her experiences of domestic work and her former and current employers as this could have implications for her. It is problematic to ask about Mandy’s experiences as a domestic worker when she has been employed by my parents; I am sure that there are things that she might have said to someone else but not to me.

I have battled with how I present myself before, during and after my interviews. The questions I am asking are highly personal and as the thesis looks at societal norms regarding motherhood I have placed a lot of emphasis on me not doing these interviews to judge or make statements regarding whether the interview participants are “good” mothers or not.

Finally, the interview conducted with Trinity was in Swedish thus I have translated her words into English.

4.4 My Position

It is important for me to share my own location in regard to this research. My interest in migration comes from my own background of moving between several different countries during my childhood. It is important to state that I don't have children myself, and I have never had economic, social, or political factors forcing me to move.

My race, class, and nationality have all impacted my life and previous migration process'. But rather than list my location(s) I have used Sara Ahlstedt's dissertation (2016) as a guide for conducting self-reflexive research. She stresses the importance of problematizing and making oneself visible (Ahlstedt, 2016:124). I have aspired to make it clear how I understand the material as well as how I might have influenced it.

Myself not having a child has felt like a barrier at times during this thesis; especially in regard to my interview participants. Many of the feelings described to me were feelings I myself could not relate to exactly, and this made me feel separated from the interview participants.

All the women I interviewed seemed happy to share their experiences with me and I have learned so much from them.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

I have followed Vetenskapsrådet's (VR 2017) guidelines for conducting research. All the interview participants in this study have been given the opportunity to choose their own pseudonym. For further confidentiality I will not be revealing their places of work. I have chosen to reveal their country of residence/origin as my belief is that they will not be able to be identified through this information.

To further assure confidentiality I have changed some details about the mothers and their children's ages. Before the interviews I briefed the interview participants on their rights of confidentiality and participation. I also informed them that if they wished to terminate the interview they could do so at any time.

Because of my relationship with Mandy her identity will obviously be revealed. I am confident that I explained what this would mean to her and she has stated that she is fine with that.

5. Analysis

Through the interviews with the five mothers I have come up with the following themes using narrative analysis. I have decided to use intersectionality as a broad theme to look at how the mothers experienced their migrations. What seems to be a determining factor for how their migrations are experienced is class, but ethnicity and legal status also need to be considered. I want to highlight that during most of the interviews sexuality was not discussed. It can be said that sexuality is still a sensitive subject in the African context.

Intersectionality is a complex theory but so is life and I hope that giving an intersectional perspective on the mother's experiences will depict how privilege and power affect how our lives look.

5.1 Interview participants

Trinity is 42 years old, lives in Sweden with her two children who are 10 and 12 years old as well as with her husband. Trinity and her family fled from Latin America in the 1970's and came to Sweden as political refugees.

She works with development and humanitarian aid for a large organization. She initiated her global career in El Salvador where she lived for two years. She later moved to Sweden where both her children were born.

As she was not completely happy with her professional duties at her current workplace she was persuaded to take a position in Afghanistan, a post considered too dangerous for employees to bring families. At the time Trinity's children were young and although she felt that the job was perfect for her she was not completely sure if this was the right thing to do. Trinity's husband was supportive in her taking the job in Afghanistan and so was her family, so she decided to take the opportunity to work abroad once again.

Trinity, unlike the other interview participants has social and economic capital thus had the capacity to make her migration without too much pain rather she explains that her migration was winsome.

Beatrice is a 43-year-old domestic worker who is from Uganda but is currently living in Nairobi working for a European family. She has three children who are now adults. She had her first child when she was young and was forced to move to western Kenya for employment. After her time in Kenya Beatrice returned to Uganda where she and her family moved to a large city.

Beatrice has been able to afford sending her three children to boarding school. Working as a “live in maid” has eased the financial burden as she has lived rent free for almost her entire career. She also mentions that she has been lucky to have been employed by “white people” for so many years as she states that foreigners pay generous salaries. The interview with Beatrice is also largely focused on the culture in East Africa of sending one’s children to boarding school, the way Beatrice has.

Although Beatrice wishes she was closer to her children she is happy in Nairobi. She explains that she has been lucky to have been employed by this European family who have decided to live in East Africa permanently. Through her years working for them they have established a close relationship and Beatrice feels that the two (now adult) children are almost like her own. Beatrice’s situation, as she puts it, is very different today than during her childhood and early twenties.

Mandy is 40 years old and comes from South Africa. She works as a domestic worker and has four children. Mandy and I know each other very well as she worked as a domestic worker and nanny in my family for seven years.

When her first child was born she had to seek employment to support her family. The employment she found was far away from home and she was unable to bring her newborn son to work thus Mandy’s grandmother took care of her son during the three years she was employed with this family.

Mandy has had children in two “batches”. Her two oldest children are 22 and 15, while her two youngest are 7 and 2.

Mandy's husband is their community's pastor and the two of them have large social respect. Mandy is however the main breadwinner in the family, something that is uncommon in South African families.

Anna, 36 is from Malawi and works as a domestic worker and nanny in South Africa. When her husband died Anna had to look for work. Previously Anna had worked at home taking care of the children and household so the migration to South Africa was a shock to both her and her family. Anna's children are 16, 8, 6 and 4. Anna's oldest daughter is the one fulfilling the domestic and caretaking duties of the younger children. She has been working in South Africa for two years now and has visited her children four times during this period. Anna admits she finds her work lonely but that she at the same time feels proud and good about the work she does. She credits her years as a mother and home-carer for her diligence as a domestic worker.

Olayeni, 32 is from a city in western Kenya but lives in Nairobi and works as a math and chemistry tutor. She has a son who is 6 years old who up to the age of 3 lived with Olayeni's mother in western Kenya. Olayeni fell pregnant when she was still at university and her mother did not want anyone to know that Olayeni had had a child out of wedlock, the mother therefore decided to raise Olayeni's son as her own. This situation was very hard on Olayeni who wanted to take care of her son herself. Only when Olayeni's mother died did she get custody over her son again and now they both live in Nairobi.

5.2 Mothering and Motherhood

During all the interviews motherhood and what it means to be a mother was a theme. Just like Moorehouse and Cunningham (2012:494) discover, I found that the complexities of motherhood are unraveled when discussing what it means to be a mother with mothers who have at some point had to leave their children. The interview participants had mothered their children from afar for several reasons ranging from economic restrictions to the danger of location the mother was in.

Important to note is that motherhood as an institution has both been created and redefined numerous times throughout the past century (Smart:1996). Moore (1996) points out that

mothering and motherhood vary within contexts. Smart, Moore and Bortolaia Silva all argue that the modern-day ideology of a good mother was created during the industrialization and Moore continues by stating that the social construction of mothering is clear in colonial contexts as well (this as part of a larger attempt at social reconstruction lineal to western notions of how a society should be) (Moore, 1996:58). Furthermore, anthropologists have asserted that the Westernized family ideal is a socially constructed unit (Smart, 1996:38).

Anna spends her free time talking to her children via WhatsApp. This enables her to be involved in her children's daily lives although she is not present physically. Helma Lutz (2011:124) says that developing strategies of communication like talking through WhatsApp or on the phone is common in most studies about transnational mothering.

Anna's migration experience is highly influenced by the guilt she was feeling for leaving her children without a parental figure and her daughter having to assume so many responsibilities.

“who is there to take care of them when they are sad? The boys they have my daughter, but she has no one. I don't know if she has time for school work. I talk to her by WhatsApp everyday but still there it is not the same... I try to encourage her to do good in school but sometimes she is writing why did you leave me with all these children? Why can't I do what my friends do? - She doesn't write like this, but I can see this is what she says sometimes...”

Anna also says that although she much rather be with her children, and although she knows they much rather have her near they have a much better communication now than what they had previously;

“sometimes I worry they maybe think I am more like their friend...haha... eh.... But at least I know what is happening.”

Along the lines of this Salazar Parrenas further states that all transnational families adapt differently but the children of transnational migrants “who feel that their mothers strive to nurture them as well as be good providers are more accepting.” (Salazar Parrenas, 2004:50).

Although Anna's children are not lacking in emotional nurture or guidance it is evident that both Anna and her children are making enormous emotional sacrifices during this time. Anna's oldest

daughter has had to become like a mother to her younger siblings, while Anna herself misses out on her children growing up. Anna feels that she has a close relationship, especially with her daughter even though she is so far away. She does worry that her relationship has changed from being a mother, who as she states has the role of discipling and nurturing her children into one that more resembles a very close friendship. I can imagine that to Anna it feels strange discipling her children over the phone. I also think that she feels that the best way for her “to nurture” her children is to be there for them emotionally.

Trinity explains that motherhood is something special:

“I am the mom, almighty in some way... not almighty but personally I think that the mother and child have a special... relationship... or bond in some way. Almost telepathic in some way.”

Although Trinity highlights that her being a mother is the most important role, she explains the societal pressures she felt, especially when her children were young:

“I read in a magazine one time, and God I thought this is just how I feel! It described motherhood as being “mald igenom en köttkvarn” (minced through a (meat)mincer). And I just thought YES, oh yes! And it’s not good to say that, to admit that it’s tough and that you don’t want to... but when I went to Afghanistan it was like I found myself again! I was free!”

Trinity felt that she was finally free to “be herself” again or rather, not having to be that suburban mother that she had become. Trinity, at several time says things that she says that a mother is not allowed to say aloud, but she is convinced everyone feels them. But just as Smart (1996) points out, the maternal feelings or instincts that are supposed to come once the child is born have not always been felt. In fact, Smart claims that the conception of these maternal feelings did not appear up until the twentieth century.

It is interesting that Trinity believes that her mixed feelings toward motherhood are not socially accepted.

Mandy describes her community and how hard it would have been for her if she did not have children:

“Oh, my life would have been difficult especially in our... if you are... for black people it’s difficult. Because when you get married, if you don’t have a baby haha it won’t be good. They call you a bad

woman, for women it is so painful to hear this. I have friends... it is so difficult for them. They are always hoping, going to different men, they are with lots of men but still no children.”

Children are seen as a natural outcome of heterosexual sex, but as Smart (1996:39) points out the result in children is just one link in a chain that is ordained from a construction of social behaviors. Sexual activity does not naturally lead to the conception of a child. Mandy’s friends who have not been able to conceive children are faced with social stigma and seemingly taking to “extreme” methods. Mandy is Christian and condemns extramarital relations but seems to understand these women’s desperation for a child. Mandy says that although people will say that a mother who migrates without her children is “a bad mother” she says that she herself understands because she has had to do it herself

“They will think you are a bad mother, a bad bad mother if you leave your children with someone else. But I know because sometimes you have no choice”.

Trinity was surprised that some of her co-workers reacted negatively to her taking the job in Afghanistan

“here at my organization there were many people who raised their eyebrows and was like oh a mother leaving her young children to go to Afghanistan! And I didn’t think I would get those reactions from them... I knew I would get reactions, but I didn’t think they would come from here”.

Despite this, when Trinity returned she had a few female co-workers who approached her to say that they were inspired by her migration and felt that if she could do it then they could do it as well.

Tanzina Choudhury (2017:303) says that one of the most favorable factors when migrating is having relatives or acquaintances who are already established in the new setting.

Trinity having had a positive experience of her time working in Afghanistan probably inspired other women in her workplace to do the same. Motherhood being part of Trinity’s identity also seems to have played a role in what reactions she felt she was given. Had Trinity been a single woman without children she might have received more positive reactions than what she did (because she did not conform to the ideals of mothering).

5.3 Reasons Behind Migration

All the mothers had different reasons for migrating and this is important to understanding their locations and opportunities in society.

For Trinity taking this job in Afghanistan was a sort of escape from what she felt was expected of her as a mother and wife. She expresses that she carries the heavier burden of taking care of the family. After her time in Afghanistan Trinity and her husband separated, and much of this she explains was because she felt their relationship was not as equal as she wanted it to be. Trinity and her husband are now back together again, and this time Trinity says that she has accepted how things are. Trinity sees herself as a feminist and reflects over a time where she was her own living nightmare:

“I was in a situation that I think all mothers have experienced... I was seven months pregnant with my daughter and I had this big belly sticking out and I was holding my 16-month baby and standing by the stove stirring and waiting for my husband to come home... I was so shocked, the tears just streamed down my face like this..., What happened?! I could’ve as well been living in the stone age!”

So, for Trinity going to Afghanistan was a chance for her to “take” her life back as well as gaining work experience that today works in her favor. Tanzina Choudhury (2013:891) claims that migrating for work can increase women’s self-esteem and prove valuable for their agency, as in the case of Trinity.

This story is vastly different than those of the other mothers, looking at Trinity’s feeling of empowerment in comparison to the other mother’s feelings of guilt, helplessness and worry it is evident how much one’s class and location matter when migrating. Trinity might have migrated for financial reasons, though she is not the primary breadwinner in her family as she has a husband who works as well. Trinity’s reason for migrating was for her own personal career aspirations.

Trinity also hopes that her migration will serve as an example to her children that they can do whatever they want in life, that nothing is too hard.

“I don’t know what a good mother is... I try to show the children that everything is possible if you want it to be, there is hard work behind everything, you don’t get anything for free. I don’t put any like

limitations... eh I mean if they want to be astronauts than do it! You have to be good at math, physics, chemistry and you'll have to study 24/7 but you can become one."

Beatrice's mother-in-law was the driving force behind her migration to Kenya. The "deal" was that she would take care of Beatrice's baby while Beatrice worked as a domestic worker in Kenya to make money and send back home.

"I fell pregnant and this was bad because we were not married eesh.... Linnea this was so bad! I was thinking ok, I can give this child away, but then I changed my mind. My husband, the father of my child he had to tell his parents because we were young, no money, this was bad time political in Uganda and all the time I was worried but yes, his parents were so cross.... but agreed they would take care of the baby but they also got me a job through a cousin in western Kenya as a domestic worker. So... when I have my son I had to give him away to them... aaah I was crying I was crying and the mother she was telling me to go so I did."

Beatrice experienced that she had no choice but to do what her mother-in-law told her do. The social stigma of having her baby despite not being married was something that she could deal with, however her lack of financial means forced her to migrate. Beatrice has no formal education thus she was limited in what work she could engage in. Crenshaw (1991:1245) stresses that class is something that strongly affects women of colors experiences and that is clearly seen in Beatrice's case.

Beatrice has sent her children to boarding school for most of their lives. This is because she wanted them to excel academically and she was aware that she herself could not help them with their school work:

"I am happy with my life and I am proud of my children, but I don't want the same life for them as for me. In Uganda the only option was sending them away you know the public schools are so bad and when they live there they have teachers who can help them with homework, I can't do that."

Beatrice also explains that since she was the breadwinner of the family she had to prioritize work. She says that it was good to send her children to boarding school because then they wouldn't get involved with "bad stuff", by this she means they wouldn't get involved with the wrong people.

I think that for Beatrice, sending her children to boarding school was a little bit like employing someone to care for her children, the way she cared for other people's children. Beatrice didn't have time to make sure her kids weren't getting involved with the wrong crowd of people. Because Beatrice was always working (so her children could go to school) she felt she wouldn't have the time (and certain knowledge) to guide them. It seems unfair and it is paradoxical that Beatrice was hired to take care of children whose parents didn't have time to take care of them, so she could take care of her children while this also meant not having physical time to be with them herself.

Due to her husband's death Anna was forced to seek employment to support her family. The family's financial situation was dire and made her migration process hasty. Important to note in Anna's case is that Malawi is one of the world's least developed nations (CIA World Factbook 2018). Before her migration Anna took care of the household and farmed while her husband engaged in paid labor; this was necessary, so the children can get school uniforms, so they can go to school. She resides in South Africa without the necessary documents granting her legal residency.

"I would you know, I would never want to be here but now I am here, so they can eat and go to school. When they go to school they can be smart people... and then they will also have a better life."

Diana Mulinari's (1995:178) interviews with women in the Managuan neighborhood in Nicaragua shows that mothers don't separate workinghood and motherhood. I think this is shown in Anna's case as well since she practices mothering by providing for her children. Anna migrated to South Africa, so her children can have better opportunities than she does. The class perspective here is so interesting because Anna hopes that because of her migration her children will be able to lead better lives (with more economic and social freedoms) than she has.

Admittedly, it is also important to discuss the issues of location and what welfare systems are in place in context of Anna's migration. It is safe to say that had the children been able to attend school without cost Anna probably would not have migrated.

Anna also describes how shocked she was the first time she came into her employer's home and expressed that she had never been in such a nice house: "Haha first time I came I was "aaaaahh wow I have never seen a home like this!"..."

During our interview I wish I had asked Anna what it is like working in a home more lavish than one you had ever seen before. Since I didn't I can only assume it must be an extremely peculiar feeling.

Intersectionality as a theory is based on the fact that black women experience multiple layers of oppression. Single motherhood is still a social stigma in most areas of the world and it is a fate working-class women and women of color are more likely to be "affected" by. In Olayeni's and Beatrice's cases, they are influenced by the fact that they had children without being married, essentially this being the catalyst behind their initial migrations. Being a black, unmarried and young mother all influence how they are treated by society. I therefore argue that single/young motherhood is another dimension of their identity that causes oppression.

5.4 Ethnicity

Ethnicity is important in many aspects of the mothers' experiences and for several reasons.

Like Olayeni mentions above, "Everyone needs to go to Nairobi. Especially for me you know there are foreigners here who will pay for their children to be good in school..."

Olayeni asserts that "foreigners" or white people are the ones willing and able to pay for her services as a tutor. Nairobi being a hub of NGO's and United Nations employees is a good place for a tutor to make money in her experience.

In Kenya tribal affiliations are important. This dates back a long time but since Kenya's independence in 1963 ethnic tensions have risen as a result of political rivalries (the 2007 election violence is a result of these ethnic tensions). Olayeni is a Luo which is the second largest ethnic group. She is passionate about Kenyan politics and when she first arrived in Nairobi she says that living in a neighborhood with people from her own tribe was important for her to feel safe and accepted:

“In Nairobi I knew it was important... but yes I also wanted to live in a place where no kikuyu lived. I would not feel safe if I was around them also I knew I would not feel that welcomed by them.”

Olayeni strongly identifies both politically and culturally with her ethnic group. Her moving from western Kenya where her ethnic group was in majority was scary for her.

Beatrice expresses that the best employers are foreigners, she feels lucky to be employed by them. Later I will discuss domestic work more, but Beatrice feels that her employers aren't in need of her services as much now that the children have moved out. Beatrice thinks that although the family can manage without her they feel loyalty to her, she doesn't feel bad because she knows that they can afford her services. Beatrice thinks foreign people give more generous salaries and better benefits. For example, her current employers pay for a plane ticket home once a year and they also helped Beatrice with all the necessary documents for her to reside in Kenya with them.

We talked about how it was when Beatrice' husband had died, at the time she was also employed by a foreign family: “Yes, but we are strong and thank God I had a good job for a foreign family and they helped me financially... lent me money and I managed.”

Historically whiteness has been associated with and used as a privilege and a power. Mohanty (2003:191). argues that we are all burdened or privileged by our histories and locations. She further argues that while we don't embody our categories (i.e. gender, race, sexuality) they are fundamentally interwoven into our lives. So, although Beatrice does not embody her blackness or womaness the history of colonialism, racism, sexism, class and status is involved in her relation to white people. Although I do not wish to claim that Beatrice' positive experiences of white employers as not true, I want to highlight that there could be historical power structures involved in the creation of Beatrice' feelings.

Although the majority of the mothers I interviewed are in an African context where they are not per say the “minority” the effects of colonialism in Africa are still evident in these cases. The fact that so many women turn to domestic work can be seen as a result of the colonizers employing black women to work in their homes. I am in no way trying to say that the post-colonial effects make it impossible for women in Africa to find economic and social freedom

however being both women and black enables oppression from both men and the colonial aftermath.

Who took care of the children?

All of the mothers share the experience of leaving their children in the care of others. It however, varies how confident they felt about the arrangements. Anna, for example is not happy with how her children are “cared” for but does not have the means to do much about it. When Anna migrated to South Africa her four children were left under the “supervision” of her brother and his family. However, it was evident that Anna’s oldest daughter is the one in charge of the household while Anna is in South Africa working:

“My brother had a family to take care of already and I think it wasn’t so good for him. He didn’t have time even though he tried to help. My daughter was the one doing all my old duties in the home.”

Anna had no choice but to leave her daughter in charge of her younger siblings. Madziva and Zontini (2012:440) describe how crucial the migrant mother’s context and circumstances upon departure are in their ability to plan their migration. Anna never having migrated before, in pressure to provide for her children was forced to migrate in a hurry without the stable/good alternative care opportunities. I find that this example also shows how multilayered and dire Anna’s situation was. She did not only have to migrate to support her family but her network back in Malawi seemed limited. Anna’s only living relative was her brother, literally the only one she could ask for support.

Olayeni’s mother cared for her son while she was in Nairobi,

“I was not happy about not being with my son. I wanted to have the child, but my mother didn’t want everyone to know I had a child when I was not married. I had a good childhood, so I know he was well treated there. But it hurt so much when I came home, and I was introduced as a sister to him. I didn’t want to take my mother to court but I also knew that even though I sent money every month my son would have a better life with me, because I am his mother. It sounds so bad and... I really did love my mother, but I felt relieved when she died because now finally my son can live with me...”

At first Olayeni felt conflicted about not being able to care for her son. Initially she felt shame, both for herself and her family however this feeling changed and when she realized that she would be able to care for and support her son herself she started resenting her mother.

Looking at who is/was taking care of the children during the mothers' migration is important because it gives insight as to what social and economic means the mothers had.

Anna had no choice but to leave her children with her brother, who obviously did not have the psychological or physical capacity to care for more children than his own.

Beatrice left her child with her mother-in-law because that was the only person she had. Olayeni left her son with her mother because well, that was what she thought was the right thing to do. Mandy left her son with her grandmother because that was the person who had time to take care of him.

All the mothers, except Trinity, are the primary breadwinners in their families. This is so vital to mention because it depicts what options the different mothers had in the quest for income. The four mothers who are the primary or only breadwinners in their families did not necessarily "choose" to migrate but were forced to by their circumstances. While Trinity wanted to go and work in Afghanistan none of the other mothers wanted to work away from their children. They left because they simply felt they had no choice if their children were to have better opportunities in life than they did.

As Mandy explains to me, a mother is very lucky if she gets a six-month maternity leave in South Africa. Most employers give their workers three months and the father ten days. I ask her how women manage this situation and she says:

"It is difficult. But what can you do? Because you must go back and look after... if you don't go back you'll lose your job. Where can you get another job? It will be more difficult if you lose your job."

It seems evident that when there is lack of financial resources in a family, that needs to be prioritized as seen in the cases above. There is a clear pattern in the cases that are in the African context here: employer's employ mothers to clean and look after their children, mothers have to leave their children at home while they work, they also pay their family members who look after

the children... This situation also depicts how different the Global South as a society looks as opposed to the Global North where there are societal networks to ensure children and parents can be together initially, then kindergarten's that facilitate entrance back into the workforce.

5.5 Legal Status

For two of the interview participants, Anna and Beatrice their irregular³ status in their host countries is a source of uncertainty.

Beatrice says:

“There were many people from Uganda there, but I was only going to work then going home, nothing more. I didn't have any friends. I sometimes visited a person my mother in law knew, but I had no friends. At least now here in Nairobi I have many friends, I have a church, I go do things with other domestic workers. But then, I had no one. I just worked and slept.... I was also a bit scared because I was not having all the right papers because I would go by the border and say I was visiting an aunt. Now I am here with papers and everything, but my employers arranged this and also, they buy me a plane ticket once a year so then I really need the right documents you know. Kenya close to Uganda and if something went wrong my mother-in-law just said get a boda boda⁴ and in Uganda they can't do anything. I even used to think I would steal a boat and go to Uganda when I was tired of all these Kenyans... haha but you know me I can't swim so thank God I didn't do this.”

Anna says: “I didn't even think about if I was going here without papers. I don't really think about it now, a lot of people in Lilongwe just go to S.A. Sometimes maybe I think about it because imagine something gets stolen from me then where will I go? Eeesh I don't know if... if something happens then I must just go home I think... I am not happy with people who aren't from my country...because I can never know if maybe they don't like me and will go to the policeman or something.”

Beatrice's and Anna's reflections about their situations while living abroad shows a number of things. Firstly, it shows how important the transnational circuit is. Although Beatrice was very young at the time of her first migration she managed to get a job outside of Uganda with help of her mother-in-law's contacts. While living in Western Kenya the only person Beatrice would spend (limited) social time with was a friend of her mother-in-law's.

³ Koser (2007:17) defines the term irregular migrant as a person who enters a country with false or no documents.

⁴ Motorbike taxi

Sharam Khosravi (2010:69) describes how the lived reality of an irregular migrant is always uncertain and overshadowed by a fear of deportation. Due to the denaturalization⁵ of migrants the public and media in host countries seldom view crimes against irregular migrants as heinous and legal action is rarely taken against the perpetrators. What Anna describes about the fear of both the South African public and the authorities Khosravi call's being a "homo sacer" which comes from roman meaning of a person who has been stripped of their membership and rights in society.

Telling in both Anna and Beatrice's stories is how their irregular statuses aren't what woes them the most. Beatrice was preoccupied with missing her child and daydreaming about escaping across Lake Victoria by boat to get back to her son.

Looking at these two cases from an intersectional viewpoint is very descriptive because not only are Anna and Beatrice marginalized women by class and ethnicity, but as an irregular female migrant a woman is more at risk of being exploited by her employer's other people as well as facing larger risk of violence or sexual abuse. They are not only marginalized by their gender and socioeconomic background but also by their "otherness", they are invisible in the law.

5.6 Domestic Work

Three of the mothers I interviewed were domestic workers themes of how the work was experienced was discussed. Anna, although feeling lonely at times during her nine-hour work days takes pride in doing a good job.

"I feel I am really helping these people and... this makes me feel good about myself. Even the children, they did not like me at first... haha but now the other day the boy came and said good morning in my language!"

It is important to feel valued as a worker and obviously this is how Anna feels. Making money can also promote feelings of pride and empowerment however it is evident that Anna would

⁵ The nation-state system has equated citizenship to being a human being. Denaturalization happens when a person loses citizenship, as in the instance of an irregular migration. Denaturalization means "becoming unnatural. (Khosravi, 2010:122)

never choose to be there by complete free-will. So although she “chose” to migrate, it was not actually a choice for her.

Anna takes care of two children alongside her domestic duties and this is a bittersweet feeling for her: “...the children make my day good, they feel sometimes as my own children. The youngest one... I have been here since he was born, and I am with him more than his mother...some days when I feel I really want to go home I can get cross with these children and think if I didn’t work here I would be at home.”

Arlie Hochschild (2004:21) points out that many families in richer countries hire nannies to take care of their children while at work. She further states that some nannies, in the seclusion of the domestic sphere where they work cope with the situation by lavishing the children they care for with love, love that they are unable to give to their own children (2004:22). In Anna’s case the child care duties she has are what she appreciates most about her work, however the children also remind her that she is not with her own children. Anna’s situation seems to be the lived reality for many transnational mothers and domestic workers. Anna’s life is not full of love, she has no friends in South Africa and the only social contact she has is with children thus they receive all the physical love she would have otherwise given her children.

Beatrice shares Anna’s experience, she too thought having her employer’s children in the house made her work less lonely:

“now... haha oh you know they are so big now... haha there is not much to do here anymore. They can manage without me even but they...I think... they support me, and I don’t want to find another job...they know that too.”

Beatrice has a lot more time now that the children of the household have moved out. Although she does admit that the workload is better she is under the impression that her employers don’t *need* her services anymore. When I asked her how she felt about that she said she didn’t mind, she had assumed new responsibilities in the household such as shopping now, she also added that she knew her employers could afford having her. Also “when the children come home to visit, they are happy to see me... of course I am not their mom haha, but I have been there for many years.”

Ultimately there seems to be a loyalty going both ways, and Beatrice does feel that she is important to the children, she herself does not say she is “part of the family”. I wonder though,

will there not always be an imbalance between and employer and employee? Even in cases where both are dependent on each other, the employer will always have a power over their employee.

Looking at my own experiences I can say that Mandy feels like my family, this due to the fact that she was part of my everyday life for so many years.⁶

Both the employer and employee need to deal with issues that arise when one person is in the private sphere of another. The employer needs to trust their employee; that they feel their home (that contains both exposing personal information as well as valuable items) is respected and secure with the employee. Lutz (2011:71) uses to Mary Douglas famous work *Purity and Danger* (1966) to understand how domestic employees cope with working within intimate spaces (such as bathrooms and bedrooms) as well as objects (such as underwear or sanitary items).

Douglas argues that depending on cultural context there are different concepts of cleanliness and that this influences the way society is structured. Overcoming reservations about handling other people's most intimate things (especially your employers intimate things) can be difficult, like Beatrice recalls:

“When I first arrived... well I had been cleaning at home all my life but in my own house... and it was only women. Haha can you imagine how I felt touching this man’s shorts(underwear)?! The first weeks, every time I saw him I could not look at him without thinking about... egh his big shorts!”

Beatrice who had never lived with a man before was embarrassed by handling her employer’s underwear at the beginning of her career. She further says: “...I was wondering just why like why did she (wife/employer) at least not do these things herself? Haha... anyway now everything is fine.”

Interestingly Beatrice wondered how the *wife* could feel comfortable with another woman washing her husband’s underwear. After a few weeks Beatrice got used to her work and has now been handling means underwear for years without issues.

⁶ Since Mandy was a live in domestic worker I grew up alongside her oldest son and I could not imagine my life or who I would be today without him or her. Every year my family and I go to South Africa and spend our holiday with Mandy and her family.

6 Concluding Remarks

While I commenced this thesis with the hypothesis that mothers would feel empowered by the economic freedoms a migration can give I find now that this is not the case. Rather the experiences of the five mothers interviewed for this thesis seem to be ridden with ambivalence and contradictory emotions.

Being a mother is a large part, the biggest part of all of these women's identity. But when looking at Anna's case for example, it is hard to keep being a "mother" as part of one's identity when you are not around your children. The ideals of mothering exclude mothers who do not or cannot conform to these "standards". The mothers I interviewed all conducted their migration because of and for their children. Most of the mothers migrated with the well-being of their children and families intended. The mothers were forced to "mother" in a different way the way society asks as well as withstand the grief of not being with their children. Essentially all the mothers managed to migrate and still be mothers, all with different tactics.

Imperialism in its original form entailed wealthier nations, often from the North's pillage of physical resources from the South. I agree with Arlie Hochschild (2004:26) when she argues that love is a resource extracted from poorer countries by richer nations, broadly she argues that this modern-day imperialism lets migrant mothers and their children pay the price. Unlike the classic imperialism which entailed (often brutal) force, women migrate because of the economic pressures. The rising economic gap between the Global North and South is a strong coercion and can leave women with no other choice.

Arguably the modern ideals of motherhood and mothering need to be rebranded as the ever-globalizing world will only entail more women from the Global South migrating to find work opportunities. Changing the ideals of motherhood and mothering will be difficult because the prevailing discourses surrounding migration say that it's a "personal choice". Out of the five mothers I have interviewed four of them did not feel it was a "choice" they made. Location, class, ethnicity and gender all played a part in what "options" the mothers had and evidently also impact how they could plan and execute their migration.

I believe that the prevailing discourses and ideals regarding mothering and motherhood, that a “good” mother is constantly close both physically and emotionally need to be changed, and that the question should not have to be “should I “mother” or migrate?”. I really wish to highlight the importance of rebranding what a “good” mother is because for so many families, children and mothers the ideals of mothering and motherhood is not coherent with their reality. Providing economic and emotional support are also part of mothering and while it is easy for mothers in the Global South to pinpoint the importance of physical proximity to their children their socioeconomic situation does not reflect that of the rest of the world.

Other intellectuals’ research on the subject of transnational mothering as well as my own interviews highlight the need for more as well as better labor and social protection laws. Female migrants are more engaged in the private sphere and often employed irregularly which puts them at higher risk of being exploited. I would be interested in researching more about what policies, laws, and regulations can be put into place and effectively protect migrant mothers, so they have more opportunities to go back and see their children.

What is evident in the cases of the mother’s I have interviewed is that the multiple layers of oppression women and mothers face are many. In many of the interviews I could not help but express how unfair it all seemed, but none of the mothers saw it the same way I did. For Beatrice for example, this was just how it was, and she is happy with how it has all worked out. I do think that hearing stories from other women who have migrated is so important for many women, partly as inspiration but also a means of protection. In a sense, whether a migration is performed as means of making money or not migration is a trade, one country gains a person who has valuable contributions to make, and the other country loses that person, whether it be a mother, father, teacher or domestic worker, everyone has something to contribute.

Works Cited

Ahlstedt, Sara 2016, *The Feeling Of Migration: Narratives Of Queer Intimacies And Partner Migration*, n.p.: Linköping: Linköping University, Department of Social and Welfare Studies, 2016.

Ambjörnsson, Fanny 2004, *I En Klass För Sig: Genus, Klass Och Sexualitet Bland Gymnasietjejer*, n.p.: Stockholm: Ordfront, 2004 (Finland).

Basch, Linda, Schiller, Nina, & Szanton Blanc, Cristina 1994, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, And Deterritorialized Nation-States*, n.p.: Basel: Gordon and Breach, cop. 1994.

Bermudez, Anastasia 2016, *International Migration, Transnational Politics and Conflict. [Elektronisk Resurs]: The Gendered Experiences Of Colombian Migrants In Europe*, n.p.: London: Palgrave Macmillan
UK: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Bryman, Alan 2014, *Social Research Methods*, n.p.: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Butler, Judith, & Almqvist, Suzanne 2007, *Genustrubbel: Feminism Och Identitetens Subversion*, n.p.: Göteborg: Daidalos, 2007 (Uddevalla: Mediaprint).

Cia.gov. (2018). *The World Factbook — Central Intelligence Agency*. [online] Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mi.html> [Accessed 16 May 2018].

Choudhury, Tanzina 2017, 'Women and migration: transition, agency and labour', *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in The Social Sciences*, 8, 3, pp. 299-322.

Choudhury, Tanzina 2013, 'Experiences of women as workers: a study of construction workers in Bangladesh', *Construction Management & Economics*, 31, 8, pp. 883-898.

Crenshaw, Kimberle a 1991, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review*, 6, p. 1241, JSTOR Journals.

Ehrenreich, Barbara, & Hochschild, Arlie 2004, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, And Sex Workers In The New Economy*, n.p.: New York: Metropolitan Books, London: Granta books, 2004.

Epstein, Steven a 1994, 'A Queer Encounter: Sociology and the Study of Sexuality', *Sociological Theory*, 2, p. 188, JSTOR Journals.

Gallagher, Shuan 2012, *Phenomenology*, n.p.: Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Gunnarsson, Lena. 'A defence of the category "women"' 2011, *Feminist Theory*, 1, p. 23, SwePub.

Hochschild, Arlie. (2004). Love and Gold. In: B. Ehrenreich, ed., *Global Woman Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. New York: Metropolitan Books, pp.15-31.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. (2004). Blowups and Other Unhappy Endings. In: B. Ehrenreich and A. Hochschild, ed., *Global Woman Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. New York: Metropolitan Books, pp.55-70.

Isaksen, Lise, Devi, Uma, & Hochschild, Arlie 2008, 'GLOBAL CARE CRISIS: Mother and child's-eye view', *Sociologia, Problemas E Práticas*, 56, pp. 61-83.

Khosravi, Sharam 2011, *'Illegal' Traveller : An Auto-Ethnography Of Borders*, n.p.: Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Koser, Khaled 2007, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction*, n.p.: Oxford: Oxford university, 2007.

Lieblich, Amia, Tuval-Mashiach, R, & Zilber, T 1998, *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, And Interpretation*, n.p.: Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, cop. 1998.

Lutz, Helma 2011, *The New Maids: Transnational Women And The Care Economy*, n.p.: London: Zed, 2011.

Madziva, Roda, & Zontini, Elisabetta n.d., 'Transnational mothering and forced migration: Understanding the experiences of Zimbabwean mothers in the UK', *European Journal of Womens Studies*, 19, 4, pp. 428-443, Social Sciences Citation Index.

Maruja, A M.B. "The Philippines: Beyond Labor Migration, Toward Development and (Possibly) Return." Migrationpolicy.org, 30 Nov. 2017, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/philippines-beyond-labor-migration-toward-development-and-possibly-return.

Millman, Henrietta L. 2013, 'Mothering from Afar: Conceptualizing Transnational Motherhood', *Totem: The University Of Western Ontario Anthropology Journal*, 21, 1, pp. 72-82.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2003. *Feminism without borders : decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. n.p.: Durham : Duke Univ. Press, 2003, 2003.

Moorhouse, Lesley, & Cunningham, Peter 2012, "'We are Purified by Fire': The Complexification of Motherhood in the Context of Migration", *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 33, 5, p. 493-508, Scopus®

Mulinari, Diana 1995, *Motherwork And Politics In Revolutionary Nicaragua: "Huellas De Dolor Y Esperanza"*, n.p.: Lund : Bokbox, 1995 ; (Ystad : Hansson & Kotte).

Mulinari, Diana, Sandell, Kerstin, Sager, Maja, & Rätzel, Nora 2014, *Kritiska Gemenskaper: Att Skriva Feministisk Och Postkolonial Vetenskap : En Vänbok Till Diana Mulinari*, n.p.: Lund : Genusvetenskapliga institutionen, Lunds universitet, 2014 (Lund : Media-Tryck).

“Norm/Normkritik.” *Swedish Metoo Movement Greatest Impact Amongst the Nordic Countries / Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research*, Nationella Sekretariatet För Genusforskning, www.genus.se/ord/normnormkritik/.

Sager, Maja. 2014. Motherwork i papperslöshet: Om nation, familj och ”kvinnovänlighet”. In: K. Sandell, M. Sager and N. Rätzel, ed., *Kritiska Gemenskaper: Att Skriva Feministisk Och Postkolonial Vetenskap : En Vänbok Till Diana Mulinari*. Lund: Lund Media Tryck, pp.71-83.

Salazar Parrenas, Rhacel. 2017, 'Love's Labor's Cost: The family life of migrant domestic workers', 3, p. 16, Project MUSE.

Salazar Parrenas, Rhacel. (2004). The Care Crisis in the Philippines: Children and Transnational Families in the New Global Economy. In: B. Ehrenreich and A. Hochschild, ed., *Global Woman Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. New York: Metropolitan Books, pp.39-54.

Sandell, Kerstin & Mulinari, Diana 1999 'Exploring the notion of experience in feminist thought' *Acta Sociologica* 42, p. x-297

Silva, Elizabeth Bortolaia 1996, *Good Enough Mothering? Feminist Perspectives On Lone Motherhood*, n.p.: London : Routledge, 1996.

Striffler, Steve 2007, 'Neither Here nor There: Mexican Immigrant Workers and the Search for Home', *American Ethnologist*, 4, p. 674, JSTOR Journals.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). International Migration Report 2017: Highlights(ST/ESA/SER.A/404).

Warner, Michael a 1991, 'Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet', *Social Text*, 29, p. 3, JSTOR Journals.

Yuval-Davis, Nira 1997, *Gender & Nation*, n.p.: London: Sage, 1997.

Interview Guide

- How is migration experienced by mothers?
- How has migration impacted their role as mothers?
- Interested in mother's experiences of migration and how societal norms and ideals of mothering are perceived by you...

Pseudonym!

General

Name, age , occupation, education (Tell me about yourself etc. etc.)

Why have you moved? What was the reason for moving?

(... if appropriate/worth it, ask more about experiences at work)-first time job? -first time in that line of work?-enjoyable work?

What has been good about your move?

What has been difficult?

Motherhood- migration

Have you experienced any practical challenges because of the move?

How long have you lived away from your children?

Who has taken care of the children while you've been gone?

How do/did you keep in touch with your children and how often?

What is positive about you working away from your family?

How do your children feel about the arrangement?

How did your community respond to your decision to move?

Were you given support? (if so from who?)

Do you think your experiences would have been different if you were a man? Would you say there is a norm for how a (mother) (father) should be? Is it easier to migrate as a man do you think?

Do you feel that your experience as a mother changed because of your migration?

How has your relationship with your children been impacted by your move?

Do you feel that the outcome of your migration corresponded to the hopes and expectations you had about moving?

Is there anything more you would like to say?