

Birth Tourism to the United States of America and its Perceived Implications for Ghana

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Abstract

The global appeal to give birth to US-born citizens by foreign parents is increasingly highlighted by a growing body of scholarship on its implications for US society. Based on mixed methods research conducted in three Ghanaian cities – Accra, Cape Coast, and Kumasi - this paper examines the awareness of birth tourism to the United States of America and its perceived implications for Ghana. Thus, 260 residents who are yet to give birth in the United States were surveyed, and 15 interviews with the parents of 25 US-born citizens were conducted. Mabogunje's (1970) migration system theory served as an interpretive guide in the analysis. The paper argues that the travel to have a US-born citizen is an open secret; positive feedback from co-nationals pushes some pregnant Ghanaian women to give birth in the US. The city residents also agree that the travel to have US-born citizens will act as a precursor to migration from Ghana to the United States of America, with the most significant implication being brain drain. The paper recommends that origin countries should create an enabling environment that dissuades potential birth tourists from using US-born citizenship as a conduit to secure their long-term economic futures.

Keywords: birth tourism; implications; information sources; migration; US-born citizens

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Introduction

Mobility rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have influenced most human decisions, including where to give birth to their offspring (Bianchi & Stephenson, 2013). This study considers the growing transnational family arrangement where foreign pregnant women travel to the United States of America (the 'United States' or the 'US') to enable their offspring become US citizens (Kang, 2018). This legal travel to have a US-born citizen, known as birth tourism, is consistent with the country's *jus soli* (right of soil) principle, which is unrestrictedly offered to children born to illegal and temporary immigrants (Feere, 2010; Arthur, 2018). This excludes children born to diplomats.

Birth tourism to the United States is not a new travel trend (Heaton & Dean, 2016). Kang (2018) observed that since the 1980s, some Taiwanese women have travelled to the United States to give birth, with South California being the most popular destination. To date, little attention has been paid to how birth tourists are informed about the opportunity to have US-born citizens, as well as the implications of such travels on their home countries. Because these social phenomena are inextricably linked and symbiotically related, tourism may act as a precursor to migration (Williams & Hall, 2000; United Nations World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO], 2009). Similarly, because contemporary migration frequently begins with tourism, study, or temporary work abroad, the relationship between mobility and migration has been regarded as particularly important (Mau, 2010; Koslowski, 2011). Thus, the UNWTO (2009) refers to this type of tourism as 'Tourism-led Migration' (TLM). Yet, the literature on the symbiotic relationship between migration and tourism has developed entirely in isolation.

The ramifications for the United States as a destination for birth tourism are well documented in the literature (Feere, 2010; Stock, 2012; Grant, 2015; Arthur, 2018). However, there has been little discussion on how the possibility to have US-born citizens is shared, as well as the implications of birth tourists' travels to the US on their home countries. The study, therefore, seeks to answer the

following questions: (1) how many Ghanaian urban dwellers are aware of the phenomenon of Ghanaian pregnant women travelling legally to the US to have US-born citizens? (2) how are these women informed about the opportunity to have US-born citizens and (3) what are the implications for Ghana as its citizens travel to give birth to US-born citizens? By studying the viewpoints of Ghana's urban populace, this paper adds to the modest number of studies on information sources on birth tourism to the United States and the perceived implications of having US-born citizens for Ghana. These perspectives were elicited from Ghanaian parents of US-born citizens and urban residents who had yet to give birth in the US.

The global appeal of having US-born citizens

Birth tourism to the United States is becoming increasingly popular in many parts of the world (Kang, 2018). The majority of birth tourists that visit the United States are from Latin America, Eastern Asia, and Europe, with a few from sub-Saharan Africa (Tetteh, 2010; Guerrero, 2013; Grant, 2015; Altan-Olcay & Balta, 2016; Heaton & Dean, 2016; Nori, 2016). Some Ghanaian and Nigerian mothers have been identified in the literature as participants of this travel trend. Some scholarly works suggest that families from Central and South America account for a sizable proportion of birth tourists with US-born children. Other authors report that childbirth in the United States is common among wealthy families in Mexico and Asian countries such as India and South Korea (Stock, 2012; Altan-Olcay & Balta, 2016). Guerrero (2013) further suggests that these mothers-to-be are the richest and make up the largest groups of birth tourists that visit the United States. Similarly, some birth tourists come from Pacific Rim nations such as Taiwan and China (Grant, 2015; Ji & Bates, 2017; Kang, 2018). The ethnic Chinese are widely acknowledged as the most active participants in birth tourism to the United States (Grant, 2015). It is well noted that such travels have become prevalent trends in Eastern Asian countries as well as among families from Eastern Europe and Turkey. Undoubtedly, the global

status associated with US citizenship is a pull factor (Grant, 2015; Altay-Olcay & Balta, 2016; Nori, 2016).

Notwithstanding its global appeal, Feere (2015) notes that the majority of birth tourists' travels are undertaken in secrecy. Consequently, estimating the actual number of birth tourists who visit the United States and breaking their nationalities is challenging. The difficulty in determining the overall number stems from a lack of transparency in the purpose of the visit provided on the visa applications filed by these mothers-to-be (Tetteh, 2010; Grant, 2015). Reasoner (2011) indicates that there is no system in place in the United States to track infants born to those admitted as non-immigrant parents. Some of the reasons stated include travelling for pleasure, family visits, and studies at US universities (Tetteh, 2010; Gonzalez, 2011; Lollman, 2015). Tetteh (2010) adds that it was even absurd to expect Ghanaian birth tourists to explain why they were visiting the United States rather than going on vacation.

Pearl (2011) posits that statistics on international visitors and anecdotal evidence show that tens of thousands of foreign women with tourist or business visas give birth in the United States each year. Reasoner (2011) reported that almost 200,000 children are born each year to short-term visitors to the United States. According to the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) in the United States, 40,000 of the 300,000 children born to foreign residents in the United States each year are born to birth tourists who are lawfully in the country (Grant, 2015). Furthermore, Altan-Olcay and Balta (2016) estimate that 600 Turkish women travelled to the United States in 2011 to give birth during the third trimester of their pregnancy. From 4,200 in 2008 to over 10,000 in 2012, the number of Chinese women travelling to the United States to give birth has more than doubled (Heaton & Dean, 2016). Though the statistics above do not agree with the overall number of birth tourists who visit the United States each year, they do confirm that a significant number of foreign pregnant women from other parts of the world have their babies in the country each year. However, Wang (2017) is of the view that the total number of birth tourists visiting the United States may be less than the country's immigrant

population. Equally, US citizens born to birth tourists account for less than one per cent of the country's four million yearly births (Stock, 2012; Camarota, 2015; Goldstein, 2019).

Birth tourism to the United States has, admittedly, become a mostly unregulated but thriving "industry" that spans the globe (Pearl, 2011; Heaton & Dean, 2016; Ji & Bates, 2017; Goldstein, 2019). Thus, it has become profitable for certain travel agencies to provide packages to foreign parents who desire to have US-born citizens. Ji and Bates (2017) claim that there are numerous birth tourism agencies in China. A report by Feere (2015), for instance, indicated that there are at least 500 firms in China that provide birth tourism services. A typical birth tourism package includes a US visa, a return ticket, a three-month hotel stay, and obstetric care (Nori, 2016; Ji & Bates, 2017). Furthermore, this mode of travel is known by a plethora of jargon that relates to its many facets. It is frequently seen as a type of medical tourism and is also known as 'baby tourism,' 'maternity tourism,' and 'maternity migrations' since the women receive maternity care and give birth (Connell, 2013; Guerrero, 2013; Grant, 2015; Wang, 2017; Kang, 2018). 'Citizenship tourism' is another term for birth tourism as a result of women acquiring *jus soli* citizenship for their unborn babies (Wang, 2017). Birth tourism to the United States is evidence of a contemporary trend in international mobility in which more women are increasingly travelling alone, leaving their spouses or family members behind (Adepoju, 2010; Karagöz et al., 2020; Ngwira et al., 2020).

Implications of birth tourism for the United States

The popularity of the United States as a birth tourism destination has led to a considerable body of literature and media reports, the majority of which focus on the ramifications for US society. The majority of the consequences reported are unfavourable, however, there are some positive benefits as well. The most often discussed consequence is an increase in family reunification, which is a component of international migration (Kerwin & Warren, 2019a; Sironi et al., 2019). Some anti-

immigrant politicians, immigration reform advocates, and researchers refer to it as ‘chain migration’ (Feere, 2010). However, this term is considered nativist and derogatory by some. Family reunification is ‘the right of non-nationals to enter into and resides in a country where their family members reside lawfully or of which they have the nationality to preserve the family unit’ (Sironi et al., 2019: 72). Birth tourists and members of their families can gain US citizenship through their US-born children. That is, the birth of a US citizen to foreign parents guarantees the child a US passport and the right to initiate or support their family's immigration to the US (Feere, 2010). Birth tourism thus, serves as a forerunner of future immigration to the country. However, Nori (2016) and Stock (2012) claim that because these women are rich, well-educated, and live luxurious lifestyles in their home countries, they are unlikely to seek sponsorship or overstay their visas. Even if they wish their US-born citizens to sponsor them for permanent residency in the US, these parents and immediate relations must wait until they reach the legal age of 21 years. (Stock, 2012; Kerwin & Warren, 2019b). Hence, the sponsorship procedure is lengthy and fraught with difficulties in obtaining visas for relatives, such as the high cost of application and attorney's fees (Nori, 2016; Kerwin & Warren, 2019b).

Another perceived negative consequence is the expenditures borne by US taxpayers as a result of birth tourists (Schuck, 1998; Nori, 2016). According to the CIS, the cost to US taxpayers for births of immigrants (regular and irregular) in 2014 was around \$5.3 billion, with \$2.35 billion spent on more than 273,000 babies born to irregular immigrants (Arthur, 2018). In addition, Grant (2015) asserts that US-born children who have tax-paying parents have to compete for the same public resources as other US-born children whose foreign parents have not paid any taxes in the United States. Moreover, having US citizenship permits the children to return to the US from their parents’ home countries as high school or university students, giving them access to cheaper or better education and other healthcare facilities accessible to US residents. For this reason, anti-immigrant politicians, immigration reform advocates, and some scholars in the United States have become frustrated with how these birth tourists are using deceptive reasons to apply for visas and gain entry to have US-born

citizens (Feere, 2010; Pearl, 2011; Reasoner, 2011; Grant, 2015). Grant (2015) on the other hand, articulated that the return of these US-born citizens to the United States from their parents' home countries for education should not be viewed as problematic since they may become essential to the country's development if they decide to stay after their studies.

On the contrary, other politicians, legal scholars, and immigration experts recognise the merits of the United States as a birth tourism destination. Stock (2009, 2012) asserted that US citizens born to birth tourists have contributed to the country in the same ways that other US citizens have: by joining the military, opening successful businesses, serving in high political office, and as diplomats. Stock (2012) believes their contribution is one of the factors that led to the country attaining superpower status since they had become economic and social assets. The United States has expanded its tax net to include citizens who live and work overseas (Stock, 2012). Picchi (2015) stated that the United States is the only country in the world with a strict law that requires its citizens to pay taxes regardless of where they live. Therefore, all US citizens who work and reside overseas must file and report their global income, and this is a requirement in every American state (Stock, 2012). As such, US-born citizens who choose to return to their parents' country of origin continue to contribute to the US economy. Some scholars have also suggested that US *jus soli* citizenship rather reduces irregular migration in the first generation due to the possibility to provide a legal path to citizenship for other family members (Feere, 2010; Stock, 2012; Wang, 2017). Arthur (2018), therefore, summarised that US citizenship provides the most significant economic opportunities, guarantees the fullest protection of the laws and the security afforded to military personnel worldwide, and, most importantly, provides the opportunity to participate in one of the world's oldest existing democracies. He thinks that *jus soli* citizenship has benefited all aspects of US society.

The majority of the research on the implications of birth tourism for the United States is one-sided, with an emphasis on the negative consequences for the country. Terri Givens (2011) highlighted a widely held belief among supporters of the abolition of US *jus soli* citizenship. She believes that a

child born in the United States to a foreign pregnant woman will be entitled to all of the rights and privileges reserved entirely for US citizens, even if the child has not spent much time in the country since birth. Other benefits include full protection under the US Constitution, possession of one of the world's most powerful passports (i.e., a US passport), eligibility for federal education scholarships, and assured access to the country's job market (Arthur, 2018; Berghuis, 2020). However, few studies have examined the impact of birth tourism beyond the United States, whether positive or negative, on the birth tourists' home countries. Grant (2015) exceptionally, addressed the impact of US-born individuals with Taiwanese parents on Taiwan's national insurance plan. That is, a growing number of Taiwanese Americans living in the United States are returning to Taiwan to take advantage of the country's low medical insurance and costs. Local taxpayers are angry because they may reinstate their domestic medical coverage in Taiwan for a little charge. Consequently, Taiwanese legislators responded by establishing a higher premium reinstatement charge (Grant, 2015).

Theoretical considerations: Migration system theory

Mabogunje's (1970) migration system theory, which focused on rural-urban migration within the African continent, informs the study. But this study extends the theory to birth tourism, just as other scholars did in the 1990s in their analyses of international migration (de Haas, 2007; Bakewell, 2014). Tourism is a multidisciplinary subject that has been examined from various disciplines' perspectives rather than a universally agreed tourism perspective (Page & Connell, 2006). Thus, employing a migration system theory as the theoretical framework for the study is not unusual, particularly when investigating the information sources on birth tourism to the United States and its implications for Ghana. Besides, birth tourism aids in family reunification. The migration system is defined as a set of places linked by flows and counter-flows of people, products, services, and information that tend to stimulate further interchange, including migration between the places. It is assumed that migration modifies the social, cultural, economic, and institutional environments in both the origin and

destination areas. That is, the entire developmental space in which migratory processes take place (de Haas, 2007). Hence, the theory is concerned not just with why individuals move, but recognising the interdependence between the sending and receiving areas with all of the implications and ramifications of the migration process (Mabogunje, 1970; de Haas, 2007).

There are at least three advantages of the migration system theory (de Haas, 2007; Bakewell, 2014). First, it recognises the crucial role of feedback from previous migrations in changing subsequent patterns of travel from origin to destination (Bakewell, 2014). Information on the migrants' reception and processing at the destination is communicated back to the origin via the system framework's feedback mechanisms (de Haas, 2007). Mabogunje (1970) explained that the transmission of migrants' reception at the destination might have one of two effects. That is, positive feedback can encourage further migration, but negative feedback can discourage more migration by urging a return to the origin. Appropriately, this study determined that it was critical to explore how certain Ghanaian parents were familiar with the possibility of having US-born citizens, as well as if feedback from parents of US-born citizens stimulates this type of mobility from Ghana to the US. The theory draws attention to the origin and destination locations for the second strength. Many studies on the determinants and impact of migration tend to focus on migrants and migration which is a weakness (de Haas, 2007). Bakewell (2014) postulated that such focus skews research towards the causes and implications of migration only in destination areas. Of course, when only those who migrate are researched, a scientific bias is introduced. Birth tourism discourses in the United States suffered from the same bias, with an emphasis on motivations and the ramifications for the US society. Consequently, the purpose of this article is to investigate the implications of birth tourism to the United States for Ghana as a sending nation.

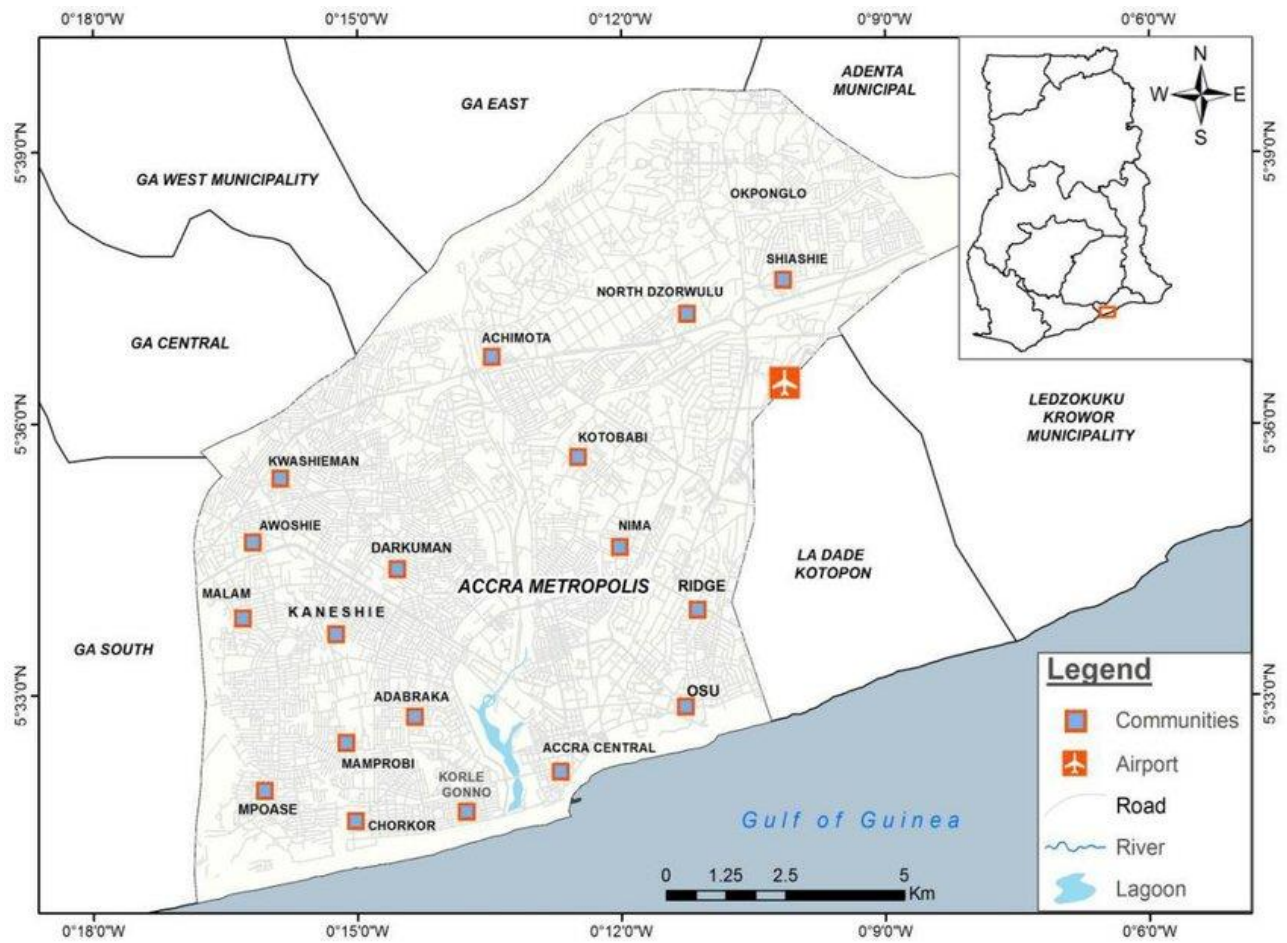
The third strength is the focus on the control subsystems and adjustment mechanisms that are crucial to the migrant's transformation process. A control sub-system, according to Mabogunje (1970: 5), is "one which oversees the operation of the general system and determines when and how to increase or

decrease the amount of flow in the system.” The family, the migrant's community, and the host destination are some of his examples of control subsystems. To him, the decision to migrate initiates a sequence of changes that will be reflected in the existing social, economic, and other interactions on both the sending and receiving ends. Yet, the theory's primary flaw is that migrants are regarded as homogeneous actors whose aggregate activity results in change but not in their agency (Bakewell, 2014). Bakewell added that migrants create uncertainty in the system. Otherwise, the findings demonstrate that a study on the information sources and consequences of birth tourism to the United States for Ghana may employ both a mixed method research design and migration systems theory as the theoretical approach.

Methodological considerations

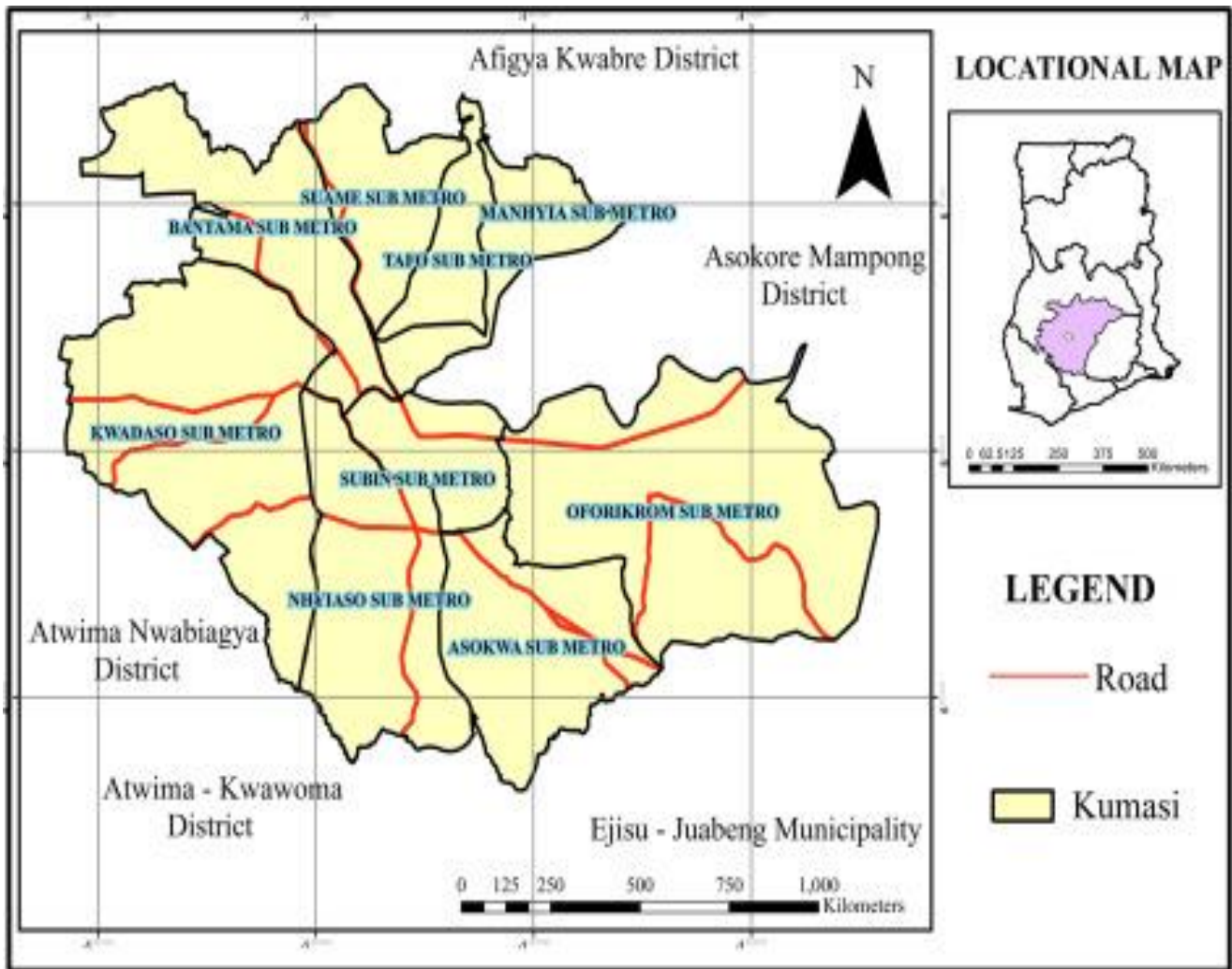
The study used a concurrent triangulation design from May 2017 to March 2018 (Creswell, 2009, 2012). Taking the study's objective into account, this design was the most appropriate. Both quantitative and qualitative sample sizes were determined using probability and non-probability sampling procedures, as well as inclusion criteria. To select three study areas and calculate the sample size for the quantitative research, a multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. For the first stage, Greater Accra, Ashanti, and Central regions were chosen based on their persistent status as the most urbanised region since Ghana's independence (GSS, 2013: 53). Each chosen region was then stratified into administrative districts based on the Ghana 2010 census frame. For the next stage, one district was purposefully chosen from each selected region based on having the highest proportion of their population being urban according to the 2010 census (GSS, 2012). Thus, the metropolitan regions of Accra, Kumasi, and Cape Coast were chosen for research. Figures 1-3 below depicts the maps of the three metropolitan areas.

Figure 1: Map of the Accra Metropolitan Area and its neighbouring districts



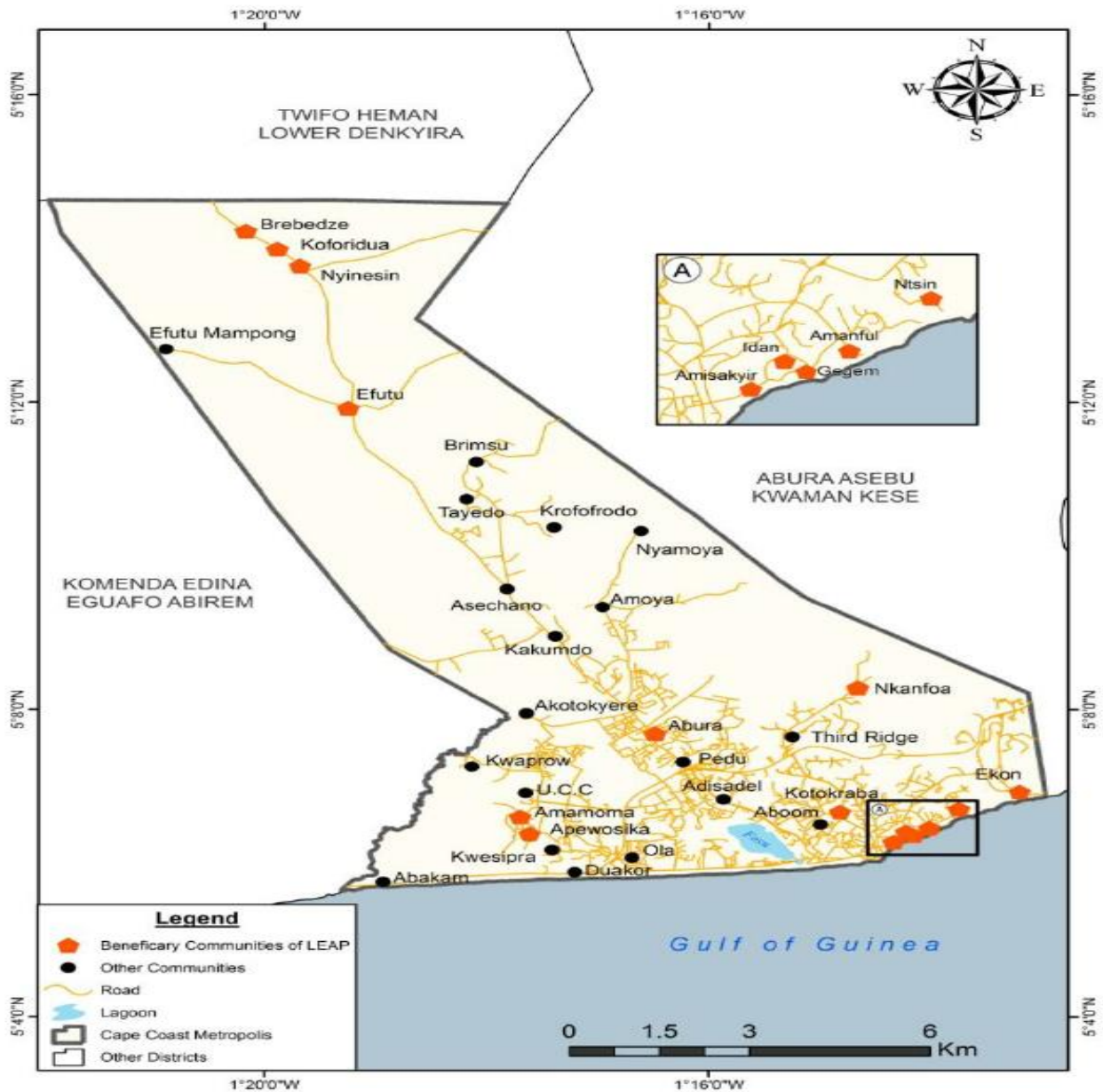
Source: Fagariba & Song (2017)

Figure 2: Map of the Kumasi Metropolitan Area and its neighbouring districts



Source: Amponsah et al. (2016)

Figure 3: Map of the Cape Coast Metropolitan Area and its neighbouring districts



Source: Department of Geography and Regional Planning, UCC (2012)

A total sample size of 400 was chosen using Yamane's (1967) sample size calculation technique, based on the total urban population of the selected study areas who were 11 years or older and literate in both English and Ghanaian languages, as indicated in the 2010 census report (GSS, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d). There were 1,526,433 people in all. The calculation considers a 95% confidence level and a precision level of 0.05. After the determination of the sample size of 400, each study area's share of

the total sample size was calculated using the selected regions' proportion to size to their rate of urbanisationⁱ. The choice to use the selected region's rate of urbanisation was made to guarantee that the composition of the sample from the chosen study areas matches the composition of the selected region's urban population (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). The inclusion criteria were then used to identify urban dwellers for quantitative research. An urban dweller should have the following key variables: reside in any of the study areas, be at least 18 years old, literate in both English and Ghanaian languages, and have not given birth in the United States. The response rate was 65 per cent at the end of the quantitative research.

A combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques was adopted for the qualitative research. These techniques were employed to contact either one or both parents of a chosen sample of 20 Ghanaian families with US-born citizens resident in the study areas. So, each parent or both parents sampled from the same family was regarded as representing one family. Snowball sampling was instrumental because a) where parents decide to give birth to their children is a private matter and b) Ghanaian birth tourists with US-born citizens are a 'hard-to-research' population. For this reason, the qualitative research enlisted the assistance of multiple gatekeepers to locate them (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Creswell, 2012). The enlistment of multiple gatekeepers helped to address the selection and gatekeeper biases associated with using the snowball sampling technique (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Semi-structured in-depth interviews, with the guidance of a guide, were conducted with 15 parents from 13 families in a face-to-face manner and the English language. The Ghanaian context was investigated from the perspective of the urban population for two reasons. First, middle-class Ghanaian women from urban areas who have financial means travel to have US-born citizens (Tetteh, 2010). Ghanaians were classified as middle-class based on the 2005 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), which ranged from \$2 to \$20 per capita per day (Sarpong & Jha, 2013; UN-Habitat, 2014; Lentz, 2016). Second, it has been found that the majority of international migrants from Ghana come from the urban areas of Greater Accra and Ashanti regions (GSS, 2014a). Their primary destinations

are Europe and the Americas. Thus, the term ‘urban dwellers’ in this study refers to Ghanaians from the urban middle class.

Data analysis procedures

The quantitative data obtained was manually coded and categorised into meaningful themes. The coded data were then entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20 and Stata version 14.1, where they were summarised and further explained using a combination of univariate and bivariate analyses. The univariate analysis described the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Socio-demographic characteristics were key independent variables in this study and were presented in frequency tables and charts. Cross-tabulations were then used in the bivariate analysis to depict the relationship between these independent factors and dependent variables such as awareness of Ghanaian pregnant women's engagement in birth tourism to the United States. Meanwhile, the qualitative data from the interviews were recorded, organised, and transcribed verbatim in preparation for coding and analysis. Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis technique was used to construct themes manually from the transcripts. Some verbatim quotes from the transcribed interviews provided the ‘spice’ for this paper's discussion of the findings (Blumberg et al., 2011). Besides, the inclusion of quotations from different participants shows the transparency and trustworthiness of the results and interpretation provided (Tong et al., 2007).

Ethical considerations

The ethical issues were addressed by ensuring that the questionnaire and interview guide used to collect data were accurate. The interviewees’ anonymity and confidentiality were also guaranteed. To safeguard the anonymity of their responses and to avoid linking them to the urban dwellers, each

retrieved questionnaire was assigned an identification number known only to the researchers (Saunders et al., 2012). Interviewees were informed verbally that their responses would be audiotaped and used for academic purposes. Satisfied with the requisite assurances of anonymity and confidentiality, they were given the consent form to sign. All of the parents' names were substituted with pseudonyms.

Findings

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents of the survey

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the urban residents who completed and returned the questionnaires by study area, sex, age, marital status, and type of employment. The majority (44.2%) of participants were from the Accra Metropolis, more than half (51.5%) were females, and slightly more than seven out of every ten were between the ages of 20 and 34. In terms of marital status, almost two-thirds (63.5%) of respondents had never married, while 36.5 per cent had been married. Respondents in the ever-married category are currently married (33.1%), informal or consensual union (1.5%), widowed (0.8%), separated (0.7%), and divorced (0.4%). Moreover, the majority of respondents were employed, with nearly 7 in 10 (68.8%) in salaried or wage employment (see Table 1). The majority of individuals employed on a salary or wage were professionals in administration, banking, health, university, and public service. However, less than a quarter of the respondents (23.5%) were tertiary students in most of the universities and nurse training institutions located in the study areas. The overwhelming majority of respondents (91.1%) had tertiary or higher education, with the majority reporting that they have a first degree. This corresponds to their urban middle class status.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Number	Per cent
Study area		
Accra	115	44.2
Cape Coast	55	21.2
Kumasi	90	34.6
Sex		
Female	134	51.5
Male	126	48.5
Age (years)		
<20	22	8.5
20-34	188	72.3
35-49	44	16.9
50+	6	2.3
Marital status		
Never married	165	63.5
Ever married	95	36.5
Type of employment		
Salary/wage employee	179	68.8
Self-employed	14	5.4
Student	61	23.5
Other	6	2.3
Total	260	100.0

Source: Field data, 2018

The 15 parents who participated in the in-depth interviews were 12 mothers and three fathers. The ages of the parents ranged from the mid-30s to the late 60s, with an average age of 43 years. Only two of the mothers were not married at the time of the interviews; one was divorced but married when she had a US-born citizen, and the other had never married. Their marital status is consistent with statistics indicating that the majority of Ghanaians that have actual demand for international tourism are married (Cooper et al., 2008; GSS, 2015). There were eight married ladies among the married parents, two married couples, and one husband. All of the parents had received tertiary higher education, with a diploma as the minimum qualification and a doctorate as the highest; five doctorate degrees, one doctoral student, five master's degrees, three bachelor's degrees, and a diploma. Their diverse occupations demonstrated their educational status though two mothers were unemployed at

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the time of the interviews. Their professions include two bankers, a horticulturist, four lecturers, three marketers, a nurse, two civil servants, and a primary school teacher. One mother was a lawyer in addition to being a public servant. The parents together have 25 US-born citizens, including twins. Nevertheless, six of them have 11 other children born in Ghana and one in the United Kingdom. These US citizens were born in 13 different US states – most of them were in the northeast of the country, including Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. The sexes of US-born citizens are 13 males and 12 females. Their ages ranged from below a year to 32 years as of the time of the interview. Thus, each family involved had at least one US-born citizen, with a maximum of three.

This study reveals that the urban dwellers sampled have diverse socio-demographic characteristics but share a few similarities. Most of them were females, of youthful age, well-educated, and economically active professionals. Nevertheless, there was a noticeable disparity in the marital status where most of the survey participants were not married compared to the interviewees. The parents had a total of 37 children in three different countries with most of them being US-born citizens, males, and under the age of 18 years.

The popularity of birth tourism to the United States among Ghanaian urban dwellers

The study investigated Ghanaian urban dwellers' awareness of the birth tourism phenomenon to ascertain its popularity among them. Table 2 reveals that the majority of urban dwellers (82.5%) who had not had US-born citizens were aware that some Ghanaian pregnant women travel to the US to give birth. This study also discovered that most of them are females (56.6%), between the ages of 20 and 34 (72.2%), have never married (61.6%), and have higher education (89.4%). Another finding in Table 2 discloses that more than half (55.6%) of urban dwellers personally knew a Ghanaian woman who is the mother of a US-born citizen.

Table 2: Awareness of the birth tourism phenomenon and knowledge of Ghanaian women having US-born citizens

Variable	Number		Per cent		
Awareness					
Yes	198		82.5		
No	42		17.5		
Total	240		100.0		
Knowledge of US-born citizen					
				Total	
				N	%
Awareness of Ghanaian women's participation in birth tourism to the United States	Yes	%	No	%	
	110	55.6	88	44	198 100.0
	5	11.9	37	88.1	42 100.0
Total	115	47.9	125	52.1	240 100.0

Source: Field data, 2018

Table 3 reveals that around 40 per cent of these urban dwellers identified a female friend whom they knew as a mother to a US-born citizen. Equally, 4 per cent of urban dwellers knew more than one Ghanaian woman who has a US-born citizen.

Table 3: Ghanaian birth tourist to the United States personally known to the urban dwellers

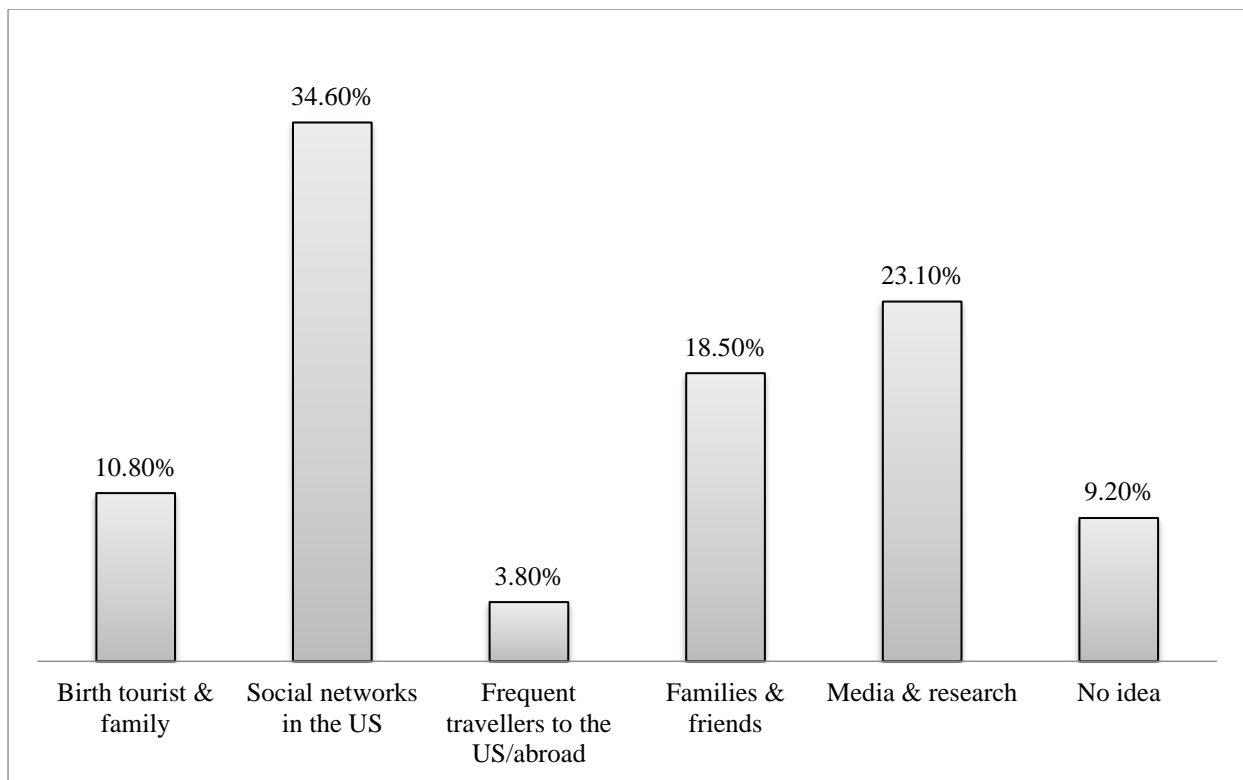
Variable	Number	Per cent
Ghanaian birth tourist to the United States		
Sister	7	6.1
Female friend	46	40
A female member of the extended family	21	18.3
Female acquaintance	36	31.3
More than one Ghanaian birth tourist	5	4.3
Total	115	100.0

Source: Field data, 2018

Sources of information on birth tourism to the United States

It was somewhat surprising that almost 56 per cent of survey participants directly knew a Ghanaian birth tourist who has a US-born citizen despite the clandestine nature of this travel trend. Subsequently, the study went on to find out from participants how these Ghanaian women became acquainted with the possibility of having US-born citizens. Most of the participants revealed that Ghanaian birth tourists got stimulated through primary and secondary sources, confirming what Beerli and Martìn (2004) postulated about the composition of travel information.

Figure 4: Sources of information about birth tourism to the United States



Source: Field data, 2018

Figure 4 demonstrates that 49.2 per cent of expecting mothers learned about the possibility through other birth tourists with first-hand experience (see Zain et al., 2017: 26). Therefore, the main primary sources cited were a birth tourist and any member of her family (10.8%), social networks in the United States (34.6%), and frequent travellers to the United States or abroad (3.8%). Social networks refer

to the family and friends of birth tourists who live in the United States (see Sundari, 2005: 2298; de Haas, 2007: 31). In addition, 18.5 per cent said they were informed by their families and friends. However, respondents did not specify whether their families and friends live in Ghana, the United States, or another country. There were several instances in the parents' narratives that revealed the persuasion from their social networks in the United States and other mothers' experiences with intrapartum care to have US-born citizens. Anna confirmed this as follows:

My brother and his family live there [United States] and they told me about all the benefits, of good health care. So, I decided I will love to go there to have my kids. At first, I wasn't so sure whether I will go or not. But it was later that I did some investigation to confirm what my brother said, the health care and everything. I asked other people who have had their children there and they said hmm the service is good, so it is better I go there (Anna, 41, Cape Coast).

Thus, for some parents, such as Anna, the stimuli that led them to choose the United States as the birthplace for their children included personal experiences from other parents of US-born citizens and their social networks in the country (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004).

Media and research were mentioned as secondary sources (23.1%). The participants identified electronic media, the internet, mainstream media, and printed materials as sources of information on the possibility of having US-born citizens. Anna's quote above also reveals that she did some research to get more information after learning about the opportunity of having a US-born citizen. This finding substantially supports the works of earlier researchers on tourist information sources and travel technologies. Koslowski (2011), for instance, argued that the internet has expedited international information exchanges. Furthermore, Goldstein (2019) stated that electronic media has drawn attention to the ease of obtaining US citizenship for an offspring and the disparity in living standards between the US society and the rest of the world. Besides, the country's prominence as a birth tourism destination has been related to late twentieth-century technological developments (Goldstein, 2019). 9.2 per cent of respondents had no clue how these mothers were informed.

Perceived implications for Ghana of having US-born citizens

The varied responses solicited from survey participants and parents affirmed that certain Ghanaian pregnant women engaging in birth tourism to the United States had both positive and negative implications for Ghana. The study observed that their responses ignited a debate regarding whether there are a lot of Ghanaian parents who have given birth to US-born citizens to assess the consequences for the country. The quotes below from a father and mother of US-born citizens from two separate families aptly describe this debate.

Until I returned to Ghana, I did not know that many people were giving birth in the United States. So, I later had a conversation with someone in the United States and said: “you know what; we have a lot of Americans in Ghana” (Thelma, 40, Cape Coast).

It is only a small fraction [of Ghanaians] because it is very expensive. A round-trip ticket is about \$2,500. How long do they go and stay? Do you have an idea how long? Like 180 days or six months? (Kingsley, 67, Accra).

The majority of responses were categorised into three main themes: economic, political, and socio-cultural (see Table 4), which emphasise the benefits and costs of having US-born citizens, as well as international migration for Ghana (Manuh et al., 2010). Yet, more than 8 out of 10 participants (85.9%) disclosed that Ghanaian parents having US-born citizens have much more negative implications for the country than positive ones. Only 5.3 per cent did not envision any impacts.

Table 4: Implications of having US-born citizens for Ghana

Variable	Number	Per cent
Perceived implications		
Brain drain	74	28.5
Other negative economic	60	23.1
Negative socio-cultural	66	25.4
Insecurity & negative political	23	8.9
Positive economic	19	7.3
Positive socio-cultural	4	1.5
No impacts	14	5.3
Total	260	100.0

Source: Field data, 2018

The single most cited negative implication by participants and interviewees was brain drain, which was mentioned by more than a quarter (28.5%) of the participants and the majority of the parents. Both indicated that Ghana may lose the majority of its prospective skilled human resources as most US-born citizens may choose to stay in their birth country as adults to access their entitled benefits and initiate the emigration of their family members to the United States (Adepoju, 2010; Manuh et al., 2010). The narrative below depicts the concern of a mother of three US-born citizens over Ghana's impending brain drain:

Massive brain drain! ... very soon if we decide that everyone should go home [the United States], it is going to be serious. We are sending the future leaders that we need to develop the country out to the United States and many of them, they would not come back. Just a few would come back, you know. That is why initially I said we are trying to bring up our children as Ghanaians; giving them a sense of home so that if they go, they would still feel the attachment. Some of them might come back and relocate here [Ghana] (Thelma, 40, Cape Coast).

Another mother stated that, while most parents desire the best education for their children, they are concerned about their children's return to Ghana once they have completed their education. To her, the uncertainty surrounding their return is important since Ghana might face a human resource shortage in the future.

We kept saying we are giving our children the best education and yet we were not sure if they would come back and use it to serve our country. That I see as a problem even a human resource gap because the best brains would go out and what happens to our country? (Comfort, 52, Accra)

Some parents, such as Thelma, said that encouraging their US-born children to have place-belongingness to Ghana may be a way to prevent future brain drain (Antonsich, 2010). Antonsich (2010) described place-belongingness as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place. To the contrary, Anna was unsympathetic about Ghana experiencing a brain drain since, in her opinion, the political class has failed to develop the country, such as by providing better health care to citizens.

Less than a quarter (23.1%) of respondents rather reported the consequences of brain drain such as decreased productivity and economic instability. To them, Ghana will remain underdeveloped because it will lack sufficient resources (i.e. financial and human).

The prospect of receiving remittances from US-born citizens who decide to stay behind after their education was enumerated as the main positive economic benefit by just 7.3 per cent of respondents. A few of the parents agreed with their views. They alluded to monetary and social remittances (Oucho, 2010). Both categories of urban dwellers mentioned the advantages of remittances. The monetary flows would provide additional income to the families of US-born citizens in Ghana, while their children, as adults, would provide social remittances to help with Ghana's development. The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe (2006) explains social remittances as 'ideas, practices, mindsets, world views, values and attitudes, norms of behaviour, and social capital (i.e., knowledge, experience, and expertise) that diasporas mediate and, either consciously or unconsciously, transfer from the destination to the home countries' (as cited in Oucho, 2010).

Furthermore, 25.4 per cent of respondents believe that Ghanaians participating in birth tourism to the United States will have a detrimental socio-cultural influence on the country. The perception is that US citizens with Ghanaian parentages will intentionally or unconsciously lose their social and cultural

ties to Ghana to be accepted as one of ‘us’ when they return to the United States (Yuval, 2006, 2009; Antonsich, 2010). Only 1.5 per cent believe that having US-born citizens would bring diversity to Ghanaian citizenry. Other consequences enumerated were insecurity and political impact, which accounted for 8.9 per cent of survey responses. For insecurity, they were of the view that certain US-born citizens may engage in social vices while in the United States and then bring such undesirable behaviour back to Ghana. More significantly, participants feel that due to a large number of US-born citizens, the country will become a target for terrorist attacks. Another political implication alluded to is the fear that US-born citizens may obtain dual citizenship to enjoy the same political rights as other Ghanaians but will not be obliged to demonstrate patriotism to Ghana.

Discussion

The phenomenon of birth tourism to the United States is complex and multifaceted. So, this article considered this type of mobility as a system with discrete components that interact, and these interactions have consequences for the system as a whole (Mabogunje, 1970). The paper established, using migratory system theory as an interpretive guide, that a comprehensive overview of the extant literature on the pull factors that motivate birth tourists to have US-born citizens and the implications of their travels for US society is numerous (Feere, 2010; Stock, 2012; Arthur, 2018). Allotey and Kandilige (2021) also investigated the Ghanaian urban population’s attitudes towards this travel trend. Within this systems framework, these attitudes may be considered as control subsystems and adjustment mechanisms. They discovered a nuanced continuum of attitudes among Ghanaian urban dwellers, ranging from positive to neutral or indifferent to opposition to having US-born citizens. This research, on the other hand, examines other aspects of birth tourism to the United States, such as its popularity, the information sources that promote this type of travel, and its implications for Ghana as a sending nation if birth tourism to the United States is considered a system.

This high proportion of awareness recorded among urban dwellers who are yet to have US-born citizens has established that the participation of some Ghanaian women in birth tourism to the United States is an open secret, even though those involved in this type of movement do so covertly and regard it as a private matter (Feere, 2015). Furthermore, information concerning birth tourism to the United States is acquired from both primary and secondary sources in the Ghanaian setting. The finding on primary sources is consistent with Sundari's (2005) observation that migrants in a host country with long-established relationships and information are abreast of potential opportunities and obstacles. The primary sources included in this study are considered organic sources of information. Family and friends provide information based on their expertise and experience in response to a request or an offer (Beerli & Martìn, 2004). Organic sources are frequently referred to as word of mouth (Zain et al., 2017). Beerli and Martìn (2004) averred that word of mouth is the most credible and genuine communication channel. As a consequence, these sources influenced some urban dwellers to have the intention to have US-born citizens (Ajzen, 2011). For example, positive feedback from social networks in the United States, Ghanaian birth tourists, and their families to other urban dwellers encouraged other Ghanaian spousal dyads with motility to travel to the United States to give birth. Moreover, the findings on information sources validate other studies concerning feedback from an earlier movement altering subsequent movement patterns (Bakewell, 2014). Secondary sources are equally important in the decision-making process when it comes to the formation of images about destinations (Beerli & Martìn, 2004).

Moreover, making such a correlation between US-born citizens and a potential decrease in productivity and economic instability in Ghana is debatable. But Ghana cannot gloss over such a possible impact because the country lacks data on the number of Ghanaian families with US-born citizens. Another significant fact is that there is no limit to the number of family members a US-born citizen can sponsor for permanent residency in the United States to get US citizenship (Kerwin & Warren, 2019b). Therefore, opponents of family reunification have described it as endless. According

to Gimpel and Edwards (1999), the most relatives sponsored by a petitioner on record was 83 (as cited in Edwards, 2006). However, Kerwin and Warren (2019b) noted that, in addition to the difficulties in obtaining visas, almost 3.7 million intended applicants were stuck in family-based visa backlogs as of November 1, 2018. The immediate negative economic consequence that neither the participants nor the parents mentioned were the leaking of hard-earned currency from Ghana to the United States. That is Ghanaian parents, convert a considerable amount of Ghana cedis to dollars to fund their travel and have US-born citizens, as well as their children's selective migration to the US, to access their entitled benefits as citizens. These monies may have been invested in any economic activity in Ghana to generate revenue for both their families and the country. However, the preferred outcome for Ghana is to benefit from both monetary and social remittances sent into the nation by US-born citizens as adults. This view that US citizens born to Ghanaian parents will intentionally or unconsciously lose their social and cultural ties to Ghana does overlook the possibility of having dual or multiple loyalties and ties to different geographical locations in a transnational world.

Conclusion

This study sought to contribute to the body of knowledge on birth tourism to the United States by investigating its popularity, information sources, and perceived implications for birth tourists' home countries from the Ghanaian perspective, which has been neglected. The paper has shown that almost 83 per cent of urban dwellers polled were aware that some Ghanaian mothers have US-born citizens, and almost 56 per cent knew the mothers as female friends. Hence, the journey to have a US-born citizen is an open secret, even though such travel is deemed in literature to be done clandestinely and as a private affair. Positive feedback from primary sources of information, on the other hand, tends to inspire other spouse dyads to have the intention of having US-born citizens as well. Furthermore, this travel trend has been found to have the propensity to act as a precursor to emigration from Ghana to

the United States. The paper concludes that the emigration of US-born citizens and their families to the United States has economic, political, and socio-cultural consequences for Ghana. The first implication for the country is brain drain and its associated impacts. There is a high probability that Ghana will lose its youthful human resources to the United States due to US-born citizens' selective migration to their birth country as adults to access better education opportunities and to utilise their right to sponsor their families' emigration to the country. Thus, the study has demonstrated that birth tourism to the United States is a 'system;' that is, there is interdependence and ramifications of this form of mobility at both the sending and receiving ends.

These findings have some implications. First, the urban dwellers' high awareness of Ghanaian women's engagement in birth tourism to the United States may be used to predict their intentions to have US-born citizens. Second, the risk of brain drain in Ghana would be detrimental to the country's commitment to the African Union's Agenda 2063. The 'Africa we want' agenda outlines the vision for a renewed transformation of the continent, with one of the aims being harnessing the continent's youthful and economically active population for sustainable development (African Union, 2020). Finally, this paper posits that birth tourism to the United States, like migration, should not be criminalised since people have the freedom to choose where they have their children.

Nonetheless, origin nations must make greater efforts to provide an enabling environment that promotes human flourishing, well-being, and equal opportunities for all, as well as instils a sense of patriotism and self-worth in aspiring migrants. Accordingly, this environment might dissuade potential birth tourists from feeling compelled to embark on the travel to have US-born citizens aimed at securing their children's long-term economic futures. Another recommended policy intervention is for the Government of Ghana to fast-tracking the country's developmental agenda. One way to advance this development process is for the government to encourage industrialisation such as what the one district one factory programme aims to achieve to provide employment opportunities. These opportunities will provide urban dwellers with an avenue to have an income to further their objective

to secure better life opportunities as well as act as an incentive for the US-born citizens to return to Ghana after their selective migration to the US. But the call for industrialisation should not be done at the expense of environmental sustainability, distributive justice and human freedom.

The main limitation of the study was gaining access to parents with US-born children resident in the Kumasi Metropolis. Social networks were contacted to assist in enlisting birth tourists or any member of their families, but were unsuccessful. A possible area for further research is to investigate how these US-born citizens with Ghanaian parentage use their right to sponsor members of both immediate and extended families for permanent residence towards attaining US citizenship.

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¹ Below is the formula the study came up with to calculate each of the study area's proportion of the total sample size of 400:

$$sn = \frac{R}{\Sigma 3Rs} \times n$$

Where sn is the sample size for the study area, R is the rate of urbanisation for the administrative region, n is the total sample size for the study and $\Sigma 3Rs$ is the sum of all the three administrative regions' rate of urbanisation.

Statistically, using Accra Metropolis as an example:

$$sn = \frac{90.5}{(90.5 + 60.6 + 47.1)} \times 400$$

$$sn = \frac{90.5}{198.2} \times 400$$

$$sn = 0.4566 \times 400$$

$$sn \cong 183$$

Hence, the sample size for Accra Metropolis was 183 while Cape Coast Metropolis was 95 and Kumasi Metropolis was 122.