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Becoming a Migrant Mother: An Intersectional Approach to the Narratives of Cape Verdean Women in Portugal

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Abstract: Becoming a mother in the context of migration configures itself as a dynamic process of identity constitution that raises questions about citizenship, belonging, and migration policies. Furthermore, it is a process that involves a new set of maternal positions and practices that are composed through possibly conflicting cultural values. Based on the occurrence of unplanned pregnancies, this study sought to analyze the dimensions crossed by this event through an intersectional perspective of the narratives of Cape Verdean immigrant women who had children in Portugal, focusing on gender, migration, race/ethnicity. In-depth interviews were conducted with nine women, born in Cape Verde and residing in Greater Lisbon, through the Biographic-Narrative Interpretative Method (BNIM), which enabled an approach to the different dimensions that intersect in life stories of becoming an immigrant mother. Thematic analysis was chosen as an analytical tool, and the framework provided by intersectionality allows us to see the multiple identities that shape the processes of becoming a migrant mother. The results brought to light themes and issues that overlap and make motherhood more complex in the context of migration, highlighting and reinforcing the conditions of inequality.

Keywords: migration; becoming a mother; narratives; intersectionality; BNIM

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1. Introduction

Becoming a mother is a process that involves identity transitions that produce meanings in a particular social, cultural, and relational context (Hollway 2010). Research in this field points, in addition to other factors, to the particularities of maternal practices in another culture, to the importance of local and transnational support networks, and to the reconfiguration of the migratory path after the birth of a child (Constable 2014; Ramos 2012; Ryan 2007; Urwin et al. 2013).

Taking as a starting point the occurrence of unplanned pregnancies, this study aimed to explore the dimensions of life that are crossed by this event and the arrangements that are configured from unplanned motherhood in the context of migration, through an intersectional approach to the narratives of Cape Verdean mothers in Portugal, with a focus on gender, migration and race/ethnicity. Cape Verdeans are the largest African population in Portugal, being a community that has a strong connection with the country and configuring itself as a very significant migratory flow at a cultural level (Batalha and Carling 2008).

We present below a brief literature review (Section 2), addressing the concept of intersectionality, the themes of female migration and motherhood in a migratory context, and the characterization of Cape Verdean migration in Portugal. Afterward, the qualitative methodology used for data collection and analysis is presented (Section 3), as well as a characterization of the interviewed participants for the study. In the results section (Section 4), five themes addressed in the narratives about becoming a migrant mother are described in their nuances, in the different experiences, and in the different impacts of each aspect in the lives of women. Finally, the conclusion of the study and some notes regarding its limitations and implications (Section 5).

2. Literature Review

The interest in the theme of female migration is directly related to the development in the field of Women's Studies: in the 1990s, North American researchers, inspired by black feminists who denounced the power relations between women themselves, began to question the dominant feminist epistemologies. This approach became known as the race–class–gender debate, and its spread can be explained as a reaction to the fact that migrant women and women belonging to ethnic minorities were not considered a central issue, neither in migration studies nor in the studies on women. An important insight of this debate is the understanding that gender relations are always mediated by other socially constructed categories, just as studies on 'race', 'ethnicity', 'class' or 'nationality' cannot ignore their gender dimensions: this approach has received attention and has been developed on under the term 'intersectionality' (Lutz 2016). According to Crenshaw (1989), taking black women as a starting point makes more evident how dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as a disadvantage that occurs along a single categorical axis. The idea of intersectionality makes it possible to reflect on situations in which various axis of differentiation are involved so as to identify what is made invisible when these categories are analyzed separately (Crenshaw 1989).

The intersectional approach in migration studies has given rise to new areas of research and has made evident the importance of intra-group differences (Bastia 2014). Based on several of these studies, Anthias (2012) draws attention to the importance of the role played by gender in the reproduction of national and ethnic boundaries, enabling a better understanding of the position of migrants.

On the other hand, motherhood studies, which for a long time reinforced stereotyped and idealized notions of motherhood (almost always represented by white middle-class families and heterosexual couples), has in recent decades begun to emphasize the central role played by social, cultural, and economic contexts and to pay attention to the different categories in which women are inserted, become mothers and exercise maternal practices (Arendell 2000). Whether the focus is on the identities and meanings attributed to motherhood, on the new relationships established there, on maternal experiences and activities, or on the structural contexts in which women become mothers: class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, origin, and Immigration experience should be at the forefront (Arendell 2000). Since the 1980s, Collins (2016) emphasized that racial domination and economic exploitation have always deeply marked the context of motherhood for all women, but investigations often minimize the importance of these structures. The intersection between ethnicity, social class, and gender places immigrant women in a complex web of discrimination, which acts on the different spheres of their lives (Albuquerque 2005).

Studies in maternal migration address different phenomena and point to female and family trajectories, generally focusing on either transnational motherhood as a consequence of a global care chain or in the context of family migration, and less attention is paid to the experiences of co-resident migrant mothers (Gilmartin and Migge 2016). The dimensions that are the object of research, especially in sociology, anthropology, medicine, and psychology, include the health of the migrant mother and baby (Bollini et al. 2009; Dias and Rocha 2009; Khanlou et al. 2017; Kingston et al. 2011; Machado et al. 2006; Nielsson et al. 2019; Phillimore 2016), motherhood practices in another culture (Chao 2000; Buki et al. 2003; Barona-Vilar et al. 2013; Erel et al. 2018; Moscardino et al. 2011; Ramos 2012; Urwin et al. 2013; Rivera and Lavan 2012; Vesely 2013) support networks (Brandão and Craveirinha 2011; Ryan 2007), transactional practices (Åkesson et al. 2012; Carpenedo and Nardi 2017; Madianou 2012; Mazzucato and Schans 2011), the reconfiguration of the migratory path after becoming a mother (Berrocal 2020; Constable 2014), and the change in identity (Aroian 2001; Challinor 2010; Hollway 2010), for example. With regard to pregnancy, studies often focus on the increased risk of the migrant population regarding the care of pregnancy and the health of the baby and relate the ethnicity and origin of women to higher rates of unplanned pregnancies (Hernandez et al. 2020).

Regarding studies on women who became mothers in other cultures, Constable (2014), for example, differing from most of the research dedicated to transnational motherhood in this context, focused her research on Filipino female workers who became mothers in Hong Kong. The author shows how the country's policies and practices shape the life choices of these women and points to the problems they face daily in legal matters of documentation, exploitation at work, and discrimination, for example, which are amplified with the birth of their babies. According to the author, we can think of these births as mediators of structural problems, migration policies, and social meanings, and raise questions about citizenship, belonging, and the symbolic meanings of mobility. In this sense, Erel et al. (2018), in the UK context, state that immigrant mothers from ethnic minorities are often considered marginal in theoretical and political debates about citizenship and are often seen as an obstacle to the integration of their children.

As this study intends to be a contribution to research on motherhood in a migratory context based on the analysis of the narratives of Cape Verdean women, we will present a brief characterization of this population. Cape Verdeans are a population that has migrated to Portugal for many decades and are a community that has a strong connection with the country (Machado 2009). For many years this was the largest immigrant population in Portugal until 2007 when Brazil became the largest immigrant population. However, Cape Verdeans continue to be the largest African population (Machado 2009). Currently, according to the Immigration, Borders and Asylum Report (SEF 2019), the Cape Verdeans represent 6.3% of the resident foreign population, with 37,436 people. However, authors point out that it is difficult to determine the size of this community and that the flow of immigrants may be underestimated due to factors such as a large part of the migration from Cape Verde that occurred during the colonial period (which lasted until 1975), many Cape Verdeans became nationalized over the years, in addition to the presence of many inactive immigrants (students and retired people) and generations of descendants from all previous groups, which number in the tens of thousands (Góis 2006; Machado 2009).

Cape Verde is an archipelago consisting of ten islands in the central region of the Atlantic Ocean, about 355 miles off the coast of West Africa and with approximately half a million inhabitants. The country has a long and multifaceted history of migration, and currently, the diaspora possibly outnumbers the islanders' residents (Åkesson et al. 2012). The uninhabited islands were occupied by the Portuguese in the second half of the 15th century, in the context of the black slave trade from Africa to the Americas and Europe. Thus, its process of social formation was, in short, the result of the meeting of Portuguese and Africans, which gave rise to a creole and heterogeneous society (Lobo 2016). The causes of a significant number of people who emigrated from Cape Verde are related to the impossibility of guaranteeing self-sufficiency for the entire population, both due to natural conditions (drought, lack of fertile soil) and to how the economy was structured by the colonial administration: few investments, incipient industrial development, fragile social assistance, education and health structures (Carita and Rosendo 1993).

The Lisbon Metropolitan Area—the capital of Portugal, which maintains the vast majority of Cape Verdean immigrants—is also configured for the Cape Verdean community as a link between the various communities in the European Union (Góis 2006). This can be considered prototype immigration: it was the first migrant population that partially settled permanently in the country, it is the first to unfold in three generations, which has also given rise to a new phenomenon of elderly immigrants, who in addition to being a pioneer in cultural assimilation, through naturalizations, socialization of the youngest, mixed marriages, and others (Machado 2009).

Some women migrate from Cape Verde intending to acquire academic capital, coming to Portugal to continue their studies—a possibility that is facilitated by cooperation relating to the field of education and training between Cape Verde and Portugal. It is important to emphasize that the working conditions of most of these women and the associated precariousness are directly influenced by the discrimination they suffer since the stereotype created about the African woman can determine the professional activities they perform:

even though they look for other spaces of social life in equal circumstances, they continue to be confronted with barriers that limit their opportunities (Dias and Rocha 2009; Neves et al. 2016). Accordingly, immigrant women from Portuguese-speaking African Countries (PALOP) in Portugal still work mostly as employees and tend to perform low-skilled occupations (Dias and Rocha 2009).

3. Materials and Methods

Qualitative methodology was chosen, as it allows access to the experiences and life paths in detail, configuring itself as the most appropriate method for exploratory research (Braun and Clarke 2019) and given its importance for research with an intersectional approach. In the context of qualitative research, interpretive narrative interviews allow for the exploration of social phenomena and spheres of life that have been little studied and are configured as an open method centered on the interviewee, which can bring opportunities for research with the migrant population (Rosenthal 2018). Thus, the data collection procedure chosen was the BNIM—Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method, as it is a method that enables the construction of holistic and intersectional knowledge of the interviewee, from individual issues but also cultural and historical contexts where their life fits (Wengraf and Chamberlayne 2006), and it is specifically recognized in some studies for facilitating the voice of marginalized minority groups (Peta et al. 2019). From a single initial question, the person interviewed tells their life story, selecting the events they want to tell and in the order they choose. At the end of the narrative, the interviewer suggests to the respondent to develop specific aspects of the stories told, producing detailed narratives about specific moments, always respecting the structure of the initial narrative, as well as the very words used by the interviewees.

The sample of participants was selected considering its heterogeneity, from the standpoint of the key variables for the study, such as age, reasons that led women to migrate, the age at which they moved to Portugal, and the number of children. The author conducted interviews with nine Cape Verdean women, aged between 19 and 34 years, residing in the Greater Lisbon area, except one interviewee who previously lived in Lisbon but recently emigrated to another country. Regarding migration processes, one participant migrated from Cape Verde to Portugal accompanied by her mother at the age of 3, and all the others were young adults with autonomous projects. Two participants migrated to Portugal initially to undergo medical treatment, three went soon after finishing high school and enrolled in a university, and four migrated seeking better job opportunities living conditions than they had in Cape Verde. Seven of the nine women interviewed became mothers in Portugal, and two had already had children in Cape Verde. As for education and professional activity, three women interviewed studied up to middle school and worked as a maid, counter worker, and hospital cleaner. Four interviewees studied up to the 12th grade, working as a maid, operational assistant, in laundry, and as a barmaid in a chain of restaurants. One completed a professional course—she was a store manager but is currently a maid and lives in Luxembourg—and one finished her degree, currently working as a hospital cleaner.

Participants were selected within the scope of the FEMINA project—Fertility, Migration, and Acculturation: Intersectional Approach to Sexual and Reproductive Health Experiences and Expectations in Cape Verdean and Portuguese Families (Alarcão et al. 2019). During the first half of 2020, a telephone survey was carried out to analyze the sexual and reproductive health of Portuguese and Cape Verdean women and men residing in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon, randomly selected from the list of users of the health centers. Among the 151 Cape Verdean women interviewed, 94 were mothers, 55% of them said that at the time of their last pregnancy "had nothing planned", "had it planned for later" or "never questioned themselves".

The result of the quantitative component of the project is not the object of this study but was used for the selection of participants. In-depth qualitative interviews performed for the present study were conducted with nine participants who had not planned their

pregnancies and who, at the end of the questionnaire survey, agreed to be contacted again for another interview.

The nine interviews carried out are part of a set of thirty-four biographical interviews that were carried out within the scope of the FEMINA project in its qualitative stage, but which were not used for this study and therefore are not the subject of this article. Given the depth of the narratives of life stories and the complexity of the analyses, the interviews presented here were sufficient to respond to the objectives of this project, so there was no need to resort to other interviews. The interviews were carried out between February and May 2021, using video calling systems due to the pandemic situation at the time. All data collected were anonymized, and pseudonyms were chosen by the participants themselves at the end of the interview. They were recorded, transcribed *verbatim* and *integral*, and anonymized. After each interview, a field diary was written, which together with the transcripts of the interviews constituted the material for analysis.

Thematic analysis was chosen as a tool for the analysis of the narratives. This method allows us to identify, analyze and report themes or patterns to facilitate the organization and a detailed description of the dataset and the interpretation of various aspects of the research topics, providing a thorough understanding of explicit and implicit meanings in the narratives (Braun and Clarke 2006). In addition, two interpretations workshops were coordinated based on the presentation of a case. They are part of a dynamic analysis proposed by the BNIM method, which involves the entire research team in a joint reflection on the data (for further information on how BNIM workshops operate, see Wengraf (2001)).

To explore how becoming a mother in an unplanned way can reorganize the experiences of immigrant women (in this case, Cape Verdean women living in Portugal), this study sought to explore, through an intersectional approach, the dimensions of life involved in this event. Five central themes in her experiences will be presented below (Table 1), which were experienced in different ways. Then, the life story of one of the interviewees will be presented in more detail, as it is a case that reveals clearly how the intersection of these different themes in the life of a migrant woman can reconfigure her path from the moment she becomes a mother.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of participants.

Pseudonym	Age	Migration to Portugal	Birth of Children	Level of Education	Occupation
Janice	34	2011	2010 (Cabo Verde), 2016, 2019 (Portugal)	9º grade	Unemployed
Francisca	34	2005	2008, 2020 (Portugal)	12º grade	Operational Assistant
Ermelinda	34	2007	2014, 2017 (Portugal)	12º grade	Laundry maid
Dulce	33	2007	2015, 2018 (Portugal)	12º grade	Cafeteria Worker
Maria	32	2005	2007 (Portugal)	Post-secondary/Professional course	Hospital Cleaning
Carla	31	2014	1997, 1999 (Cabo Verde), 2020 (Portugal	11º grade	Housekeeper
Janine	28	2011	2014 (Portugal)	Post-secondary/Professional course	Housekeeper
Guerreira	23	2015	2017 (Portugal)	12º grade (incomplete university)	Housekeeper
Lunna	19	2001	2020 (Portugal)	11º grade	Cafeteria Worker and hospital cleaning staff

4. Results and Discussion

For an immigrant woman who made the arrival of a child possible in the months following the pregnancy, it is necessary to plan the operation in various spheres of life. In the analysis of the results, five central themes were identified concerning becoming a mother in Portugal—taking into account that the themes are intrinsically related to each

other. Some can be considered more facilitators and others more constraining for the process of becoming an immigrant mother.

4.1. Social Relations Network: The Importance of the Cape Verdean Diaspora

The women interviewed for this study migrated from Cape Verde to Portugal alone, as young adults with autonomous projects, except Lunna, who came as a child. Although their migratory projects and the reasons for leaving Cape Verde were different—continue to study, take care of health or seek better living conditions—there is a common feature: all of them had Cape Verdean family and/or friends living in Portugal (specifically in the Greater Lisbon area) who gave them some kind of support. Living with the Cape Verdean community also had its relevance in their relationships: seven of the nine women had their children with Cape Verdean men they met in Portugal, and the other two with African immigrants of other nationalities.

> I didn't have any difficulties, right. I arrived here and I already had people I knew. [. . .] It wasn't very difficult to adapt. And then at, at school, there were many Cape Verdeans, so we were always there, surrounded by Cape Verdeans, so it was practically living in Cape Verde within Portugal (Guerreira, 23 years old).

For some participants, family members who already resided in Portugal were of great importance upon their arrival: five of them stayed in the home of these family members until they managed to settle down and rent a house or room, and three turned to the family after the birth of their babies, as they were unable to reconcile studies with child care and working to support themselves. Having Cape Verdean family in Lisbon, especially mothers, sisters, and mothers-in-law, was essential for most of the interviewees as a support network in return to work/studies, and also at the time of discovery of pregnancy, in the sense that knowing that they would have some support made them live a less "worrying" pregnancy.

According to what is mentioned in several research articles, kinship-based networks constitute strong links between Cape Verde and the diaspora—most Cape Verdeans have family members living outside Cape Verde—and they end up being a fundamental element in migration projects, taking into account several aspects, which include the risks and costs of emigration (Machado 1997). Cape Verdeans have immigrated to Portugal for many decades, being a community that has a strong connection with the country and configuring itself as a very significant migratory flow at a cultural level (Batalha and Carling 2008), as we can see through migration stories which are presented here.

The presence of the Cape Verdean community was fundamental in Janine's story, for example. She went to Portugal at the age of 18 to continue her studies and got pregnant while still at school. The moment was one of surprise and apprehension, but her partner's family (also an cape verdean immigrant) in Lisbon gave them the necessary support so that they could complete their studies and enter the labor market.

> I cried a lot when I found out I was pregnant (. . .). That's when I moved in with my husband, who we are now together. We went to stay together and I told my relatives and then my mother-in-law said no, that I would not leave school just because I am pregnant, that I would go to school and when the baby was born she would help me with the child. And that's how I managed to finish the course (Janine, 28 years old).

4.2. Experiences in Social Institutions and Use of Services: Perceived Differences between Portugal and Cape Verde

- Day-care and School

Although the presence of family members from Cape Verde living in Lisbon offered some support, few women were able to count on them to help care for their children when they returned to work after maternity leave (in Portugal, maternity leave paid at 100% has a period of four months). As Francisca pointed out, immigrants, in general, are not retired or do not have the possibility of not working. On the contrary, they often work even harder

because they have family members in Cape Verde who rely on their financial help. The lack of a support network after birth was mentioned as one of the biggest complications of motherhood in the context of migration.

> It's complicated because in my case, I'm from Cape Verde, and in my country, people are more willing to help with the child, you go to a neighbour (. . .) they can hold the child, and stay for a few hours, or pass by the day there, the parents are at home to help take care of the child, while everyone works here, it's complicated if you don't have some (. . .) already at retirement age, it's complicated (Francisca).

Day-care is a necessary resource for most immigrant mothers, but finding places is not simple, and they often end up resorting to nannies.

> It was painful leaving him with someone I didn't know. Even more with the fame that the nannies have, that they don't take care of them well (Janine, 28 years old).

Several authors, such as Kitzinger (2012), point to the importance of social support in motherhood processes and claim that pregnancy and the postpartum period are possibly the periods when women most mobilize their resources, especially family resources. The women interviewed spoke several times about the differences perceived in this regard, since in Cape Verde, the care of babies and children is much more shared by the family and the community. None of the women interviewed mentioned difficulties and anguish in the postpartum period, as they already had the experience of caring for and observing the care of babies throughout their lives. The big question that seems to arise is how to reconcile motherhood with studies and work without a support network.

Emphasis was given to the support of friends in some narratives. Other researchers have already noted the importance of the local support networks that migrant mothers establish (Ryan 2007) and also the fact that in Portugal, they resort to formal networks much more than they would in Africa (Brandão and Craveirinha 2011).

- Health System

If, on the one hand, the need to resort to nannies and day-care centers complicates motherhood in the Portuguese context, on the other hand, monitoring in health services and the support of social security appear as facilitators. All narratives affirm the quality of the Portuguese health system, compared to Cape Verde, and the trust they have in health professionals. Although this trust was not mentioned as a determinant for the decision to continue with the pregnancy, its relevance in the experience of pregnancy and in the processes of becoming a mother in Portugal can still be considered.

> Here it is very different from Africa, where there is no control like here in health. I have family members who lived here, worked, some are retired (. . .) they insisted on having a document of Portuguese nationality in case they ever needed to come here for some medical appointments, they prefer to come here, opt for the system here rather than the one in Cape Verde. It is much better. (Maria, 34 years old).

> Most of the women interviewed seem to feel grateful for the health care they can get in Portugal, even though several reports about childbirth recall bad experiences. "It wasn't a very good moment, because before having the baby, a lot of things happened to me, right. But when he was born I could forget about the rest", remember Ermelinda. Guerreira remembers that her birth experience was so painful and with medical maltreatment that after the birth of her son, she was determined never to go through that again.

- Immigration and Border Service

The issue of residence permit was a theme addressed in several narratives, as it is of central importance for almost all the interviewed, and it directly affects their life choices, especially after pregnancy. None of the women interviewed came to Portugal already

with a work contract and visa with permission to work—some came to study, others came looking for opportunities (with a tourist visa), two came for medical treatment and ended up staying, and one of them came as a child, so documentation in adult life was no longer an issue. Thus, for several of them, the pregnancy added to the lack of support brought the need to start working formally, and the issue of documentation was a major barrier, which made several of these women remain in precarious jobs for years and face added difficulties after the birth of their babies. In some cases, the situation of illegality meant that they had to accept precarious jobs, and the length of the processes ended up prolonging these situations, as reported by Guerreira:

> To renew the document I had to be studying. But I, I'm not studying. I sent one, an email to SEF, explaining the situation (. . .). They said that I have to do a new process, which is to renew the document as . . . as a worker. So I had to do this . . . It's been over a year since I've done this. I'm waiting for them to call me . . . (Guerreira, 2 years old).

In addition, after birth, the women had questions regarding the documentation of their babies and sometimes did not feel well-informed about how to proceed in the bureaucracy of the country, which they referred to as a major "complicator" in the lives of immigrant mothers.

> I started working, taking out the (. . .) documents, it was not easy for me, it took me 5 years to get it (. . .). I worked as a live-in domestic worker, which was to sleep. It's the worst thing there can be. But it had to be because I was going to have a paper that would help me to have a document, so I chose to go (Carla, 32 years old).

Impasses regarding the nationality of babies born in Portugal appeared in some narratives: registration of the newborn child was destabilizing for some women, who were faced with issues and with feelings of belonging from the moment their children were born. The fact that they did not have the right to Portuguese nationality at birth—as the babies nationality depends on the nationality of their parents—and at the same time did not automatically have Cape Verdean nationality was a surprise that disoriented them at that time and also brought a feeling of injustice.

> The issue of documentation also, with my first child I had difficulty because I had not yet acquired a residence permit, however, it was very complicated because he was neither Cape Verdean nor Portuguese. I had to go ask for his nationality, from Cape Verde, knowing that he was born here and not, (. . .) he didn't know Cape Verde and it was very complicated [. . .] I felt it was a bit unfair because in the end he was born in a country (. . .), it's like a person being born and not having a nationality . . . I ended up feeling that it was a bit unfair (Francisca, 34 years old).

There are structural issues in societies that are amplified with the birth of babies born to immigrants, as pointed out by Constable (2014): these births expose problems of migratory policies and social meanings and raise many questions about citizenship and belonging. Based on the analysis of empirical and theoretical studies on motherhood in the context of migration, Gedalof (2009), in this sense, finds that migrant women, when they become mothers, engage in dynamic work that is much more complex than the ideas posed by migration theories that presuppose two relatively stable places That is, thinking about migration experiences from the birth of a body challenges these oppositions, if we take into account the work that is performed in the reproductive sphere, which, according to the author, refers both to the "embodied" work of motherhood, but also the work of reproducing cultures and structures of belonging, building and rebuilding new identities.

4.3. Men's Place

- Father Absence

Male figures appear very little in the narratives. Through the reports about the discovery of the pregnancy, the decision to continue, and the experience of this period, it seems clear that these were moments in which the father figure did not have a central place. Except for Carla and Janine, who referred to their partners as people who are present in their daily lives and the care of their children, the others insterviewees Ermelinda, Maria, Francisca, Dulce, and Janice did not mention the father of their children, or when they did, they did not linger on talking about the context of the relationship or their roles as parents, and in Guerreira and Lunna's interviews they became an important topic, but in the sense of their indignation at their absences and with the absence of their own parents.

> At that moment she is fine, but I just think sometimes, when she starts to grow up and wants to know about her father. Because I don't have my father, either, and I saw my classmates saying: oh, my father gave it to me. And I was going to say what? No, I don't have it because my father didn't give it to me. If I have it, it's because my mother gave it to me, and that's it. Ah, my father is picking me up from school . . . It's just that my father wouldn't pick me up from school either, and my mother couldn't either (. . .) because she worked for two [. . .] And then the teacher said: look, your mother didn't come, I'll call her, blah blah blah. This is a normal thing, but for a child, it is not. Hear this: oh man, your mother didn't come. Oh, your mother never comes to meetings. Well, my mother can't because my mother is working for two (Lunna, 19 years old).

Some studies dedicated to analyzing family relationships and parenting in Cape Verde point to a recurrent fragility and inconstancy in marital relationships and find that families within the country are historically founded on inequality (racial and gender) and mobility due to continuous migratory flows (Feo Rodrigues 2005). Martins and Fortes (2011), in an ethnographic study with families in the city of Mindelo, Cape Verde, reported that women tend to respond to the social expectations that fall on them in the sense of being the family's caregivers in a context that deprives the father of responsibility. In this way, family security and cohesion (both from an economic and emotional point of view) is guaranteed by the mother and other women, with the support of local and transnational networks. If in Cape Verde, paternal absence ends up being compensated by shared care between women in the family and the community, in Portugal, these networks are much more fragile—for the reason that everyone is working—or nonexistent, which significantly limits the possibilities of migrant mothers, many of them not having any type of support from informal networks.

- Machismo

Linked to the theme of paternal absence is the presence of machismo in relationships. Lunna, for example, remembers her relationship with her daughter's father as a "toxic" relationship in which she was not even aware of the psychological violence she suffered, and she characterizes this partner's position and also the paternal absence as a characteristic position of the Cape Verdean men. Carla suffered for a few years with the father of her first children, in Cape Verde, who would not let her work and had violent attitudes, and that was something that affected her emotionally and reverberated throughout her life—even though she has been divorced, fear seems to remain present in her relationships. However, it was mainly Guerreira who named the issue when talking about the father of her child:

> Cape Verdean men inherited a machismo that I don't even know from where [. . .]. I will speak for, for the father of my son. Because . . . I don't know if he still lives in the seventies, I don't know (. . .) Me, I'm at home, I have to do everything (. . .). I used to see my grandmother cooking, taking it to my grandfather (. . .), but now every woman studies, every woman does what she wants, she has the profession she wants (Guerreira).

4.4. Experiences of Racial Discrimination

Categories such as race, gender, and social class do not simply describe groups. They have meanings of historical and ongoing relationships of political, material, and social inequality and stigma in the field of psychology, criticizes the systematic underrepresentation of certain groups that makes some categories—and here we can think specifically about motherhood—to be represented by only one group, in general, middle-class and white women. The author points to the importance of always thinking about the role of inequality since associations of multiple categories place individuals and groups in asymmetrical relationships among themselves, affecting their perceptions and experiences.

Experiences of racism, in addition to the absence of the father and the episodes of violence that women experience throughout their lives, constitute how they seek to carry out their motherhood, as mentioned by Lunna:

> We are black, right, we are African, and we are in a country that . . . This country is not our best friend, especially Cape Verde [. . .]. Because here in Portugal they are very racist . . . We black people are the foundation of this country. Because no one works more in cleaning than us (. . .), most of the jobs like cleaning or the heavy work, civil construction, the black people are there, they are the vast majority [. . .]. And they want us to go to our land (. . .). They think they are superior, they are indirectly racist and they don't realize it. Because they use jokes a lot, and I always say: if there isn't a friendship between me and the person, there isn't enough trust to have that kind of joke. They use this characteristic that we have a lot, black skin, to affirm several things (Lunna)

Lunna also spoke about recurrent episodes of psychological (with her ex-partner) and physical (within family members) violence in her life. Nowadays, she strives to give her daughter the confidence to be a brave child and to know how to fight for what she wants, since she—who migrated as a small child and therefore also grew up as a black child in Portugal—regrets having grown up insecure and shy, unable to respond to the violence and offenses that were directed at her.

> I don't want a daughter like I was, who was a closed child, I don't want [. . .] . . . it's good to show her that she can be free, have to (. . .), make her own decisions.

Lunna differs from the other interviewees for one reason: she was the only one who migrated to Portugal as a small child for medical treatment, so she has no memories of Cape Verde. However, she was the interviewee who spoke the most about her country of origin, with pride, and also about the experiences of racism she suffered throughout her life. She said that when she became a mother, she felt strong and confident and made many decisions, starting with the separation from her partner, how to position herself, and she became more assertive.

> I was very shy before (becoming a mother) . . . Now, you throw one stone at me, I throw two at you. As my mother says: now I'm Cape Verdean [laughs]. And now I'm much more open, I'm much more me (Lunna).

Her assertion as a black Cape Verdean woman, after entering adulthood and having became a mother, is in line with research on young children of African immigrants who grew up in Portugal, in the sense that having an African origin can impact different aspects of young people's lives in Portuguese society and generate identity strategies for ethnicization (Machado and Matias 2006). We perceive in Lunna's speech the central role of awareness of her social place and her race (her origin) in her motherhood, often referring to the big change she felt in herself after becoming a mother when she started having to be always positive and have the confidence to pass it on to her daughter and, above all so that she can grow up knowing her origins and knowing how to stand up for her rights.

4.5. Domestic Care and Domestic Work

One theme that was highlighted in the narratives due to its importance in these life stories, although not directly related to motherhood, is housework and working in the cleaning sector. At least seven of the nine interviewees reported currently working or having already worked in the domestic work and care sectors. The work of live-in domestic worker and care worker—in the house of elderly people, during the day and night—was reported by Carla, Janice, and Ermelinda, as the only possible job they could acquire when they arrived in Portugal and as the only possibility to regularize their legal status in the country. The other interviewees work as maids (informally) or as employees in cleaning companies. The recurrence of this type of work among immigrant African women in Portugal is in line with what is found in several studies (Constable 2014; Kilkey et al. 2010; Lutz 2016), which characterize the most striking migratory pattern in recent decades as that of young women from poorer countries in the so-called global south who work as caregivers, cleaning workers, nurses and sex workers in richer countries.

It is mainly in Janice's narrative that domestic work occupies a central place: it was the first job she had, and that gave her the possibility to continue living in Portugal after the end of her medical treatment and to become legalized after a few years. She worked as an in-house maid in an elderly woman's house for six years, 24 h a day, with Sunday morning off only. She cleaned, cooked, helped the lady in all her activities. Janice established a very close relationship with her boss, as she says, "we were almost family". Upon discovering her pregnancy, her first major concern was how she would break the news to her employer, fearing that she would be upset and disappointed, and she was afraid of losing her job. Lutz (2016), in a research on female migration and domestic work, argues that this type of work differs from other labor markets in several aspects, including the fact that it is constituted as a space for the female gender, by the intimate nature of the social sphere where work is performed and by a highly emotional relationship between employer and employee that is characterized by mutual dependence. Janice seems to be grateful to this lady for the possibility of work she has given her, as she believes that in Portugal, she has a better quality of life than she would have in Cape Verde and so will be able to provide her children with things she could not have in her childhood, as the youngest child of a large family with limited financial resources. Migrants seek better opportunities for social inclusion concerning the possibilities they found in their country of origin, in the sense of upward social mobility (Albuquerque 2005). Studies show that most of the time, the children of immigrants time rise socially, compared to their parents' social status (Papademetriou et al. 2009), which meets the desire expressed by Janice—and by several other interviewees—of being able to provide their children with better living conditions than they would have in Cape Verde. Machado et al. (2005), in a study on Cape Verdeans in Portugal, pointed to the fact that this community, despite having general stability in their professional situation, end up persisting in a certain precariousness of work even after long periods of residence.

Janice remembers that she was very relieved by her employer's reaction when she told her the news of the pregnancy. She was happy and told Janice that if it was a girl, the baby should be called Inês. Janice did so. At the end of the interview, when I suggested that she choose a pseudonym, she did not hesitate and chose the name she would have liked to give her daughter, saying that she did not because she thought that, at that moment, she should satisfy her employer's wishes. How her social, legal, and economic condition builds her motherhood from the beginning seems evident.

4.6. The Impact of Becoming a Mother on the Experiences of Migrant Women: Contributions from Intersectionality

The analysis of the narratives that make up this study highlights the complexity and the different layers that constitute the experience of becoming a mother as a migrant. One of the important insights of intersectionality theory is to de-essentialize identity constructs that homogenize social categories, such as "the woman" or "the migrant". From the reported life stories, we realize that even though the women interviewed are black Cape

Verdean immigrants who had children in Portugal, the intersection of different spheres of their lives and their positionalities make up different arrangements. For example, for some women, such as Janice and Ermelinda (who migrated in search of better opportunities of life), the birth of babies made it possible for them to have better working conditions (given the impossibility of continuing to work as live-in domestic and care workers with their babies) and to build a stable home with their partners. For others—such as Guerreira and Maria (who migrated to continue their studies, being the first of their families to enter higher education), it meant the need to abandon their studies to enter the informal domestic labor market. Maria, for example, even moved from town to another part of the country in order to be able to start working as a cleaner, as there she had family members who could help with the care of the baby. Janine, who had the support of her partner's family, managed to reconcile her studies with motherhood.

The legal situation in the country was a common issue in all narratives. In the story of Lunna, this was not an issue experienced by her as a mother, but by her mother when they migrated to Portugal when she had to submit to situations of family violence and precarious work because she was unable to rent a house without legal documents, for example. In the case of Maria and Guerreira, having to interrupt study after the birth of their babies placed them in an irregular situation. Janice, Carla, and Ermelinda were already in an irregular situation before becoming pregnant, which was a cause for concern.

In other words, becoming a migrant mother has different meanings and is related to multiple factors, and this study pointed to some of them. By using intersectionality theory, it was evident that gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status play a central role. Male figures are hardly present in the narratives, and paternal absence determines the path of these women, who are almost solely responsible for their children, both in financial support and in care. Migrant status and race determine different spheres of the lives of the stories presented and point to motherhood with several complex factors that are hardly present in the lives of Portuguese mothers, limiting their possibilities. Accordingly, while much of the literature and public health policies draw attention to the disadvantages of unplanned pregnancies, intersectionality theory offers a framework that considers the diversity of experiences. Although the decision to proceed with the pregnancy is not the focus of this study, the fact that the participants classified their pregnancies as unplanned is related to several aspects, especially the social, legal, and economic conditions in which they found themselves, which could be considered unfavorable for becoming a mother.

4.7. Report of a Case: A Guerreira

Guerreira's case is an example of how the intersection of different axes of inequality shapes her motherhood and migration experience. Guerreira is a young Cape Verdean woman who went to Portugal at the age of 18, intending to obtain a university degree. She was accompanied by her mother, who soon began working as a live-in domestic worker and thus established residence in Lisbon to support the daughter's studies. In the school context, she met the father of her son, also Cape Verdean, becoming pregnant a few months later in 2016. During the six months of maternity leave, Guerreira said that despite being a very lonely period, she did not feel any difficulties, as she already had experience in taking care of children and watching her grandmother with the babies of the family in Cape Verde and therefore she already had "the instinct of motherhood", as she referred. When she returned to school, it was not simple to reconcile studies with caring for the baby, as she could not count on her mother's support, since she slept at work, nor with her partner, who lived with the aunt, worked and studied and did not want to commit to taking care of her son.

Guerreira says that even though it was a very exhausting period, she was determined and did not give up. However, the logistics of leaving the baby with the nanny and going to school did not allow her to arrive on time for classes, which added to the limited time she had to study and the classes and tests she missed by having to take care of her sick child and was left with many classes behind schedule. As he was not doing well at school

and, at the same time, was not able to offer her son the time and things she would like, she decided two years later to end her university enrollment and start working. However, she could not get a job with student residence documents. Since then, she has been contacting the Immigration and Borders Services to regularize her legal status, and at the time of the interview, she had been waiting for over a year for an appointment. In this situation, her social condition, migrant status, and the absence of her partner as a father made her the only possibility the informal work as a domestic servant.

Guerreira's life trajectory is a portrait of many other life trajectories that are similar to her own. It is a path of migration, with plans for mobility and social ascension, but which, as a result of an unplanned pregnancy, ends up progressing to a situation of precarious employment and uncertainty. It is true that early and unplanned entry into the maternity ward plays an essential role in this journey and that it may have introduced a series of difficulties in making it compatible with educational projects. However, we must consider that in its trajectory, there are difficulties beyond this one and that they reinforce its impact. The scarce support networks in the host society, the difficulties in regularizing the work situation, and the father's absence are some examples of elements that push her to the precarious situation in which she finds herself at present.

5. Conclusions

In this study, we highlight five main themes highlighted in the narratives of Cape Verdean women who became migrant mothers in Portugal—social network, use of services, the men´s place, experiences of racism and discrimination, and work in the domestic and care sector—which intersect and configure different arrangements in the lives of these women. The presence of the Cape Verdean community in Portugal facilitates the migration process, whether in the reception upon arrival in the country or as a support network after the birth of the babies. The health services are a positive point that facilitated the decision to proceed with the pregnancy, while nurseries and day-care, although they are a necessary resource due to the lack of support from the community, are difficult to access. The experiences of racism and discrimination mark many life stories and directly interfere in the way women exercise their motherhood. In addition to the legal situation, the slowness and complexity of immigration services and the naturalization of paternal absence make motherhood more complex in the migratory context, substantially limiting the possibilities of action for women, who often need to submit to precarious work to achieve a guarantee of their livelihood with their children.

It is important to emphasize that despite pregnancy being something that was not in their plans, all the women spoke of the strength and confidence that their children brought to their lives. As pointed out by Collins (2016), racial domination and economic exploitation deeply mark the context of motherhood, and the subjective experiences of black women are directly linked to the sociocultural concern of ethnic minority communities. Motherhood can be configured, therefore, as a power to confront divergent power systems and as a collective commitment to maintaining family life in the face of forces that undermine its integrity. Thus, the source of their struggles, more than motherhood, are divergent power systems such as racism, poverty, and sexism (Donath 2017).

The narratives analyzed in this study show the complexity of factors involved in the lives of migrant mothers that end up amplifying the inequalities from the birth of their children, which highlights the need to think and study motherhood in a situated way, taking into account that there are social groups that are systematically under-represented in the research. Using the insights of intersectionality theory does not necessarily require the adoption of a new set of methods, but rather requires a reconceptualization of the meanings and consequences of social categories: directing the focus of academic research to groups that experience disadvantages is more than just caring about inclusion and equity; it is about repairing the mistakes engendered by their invisibility. The framework provided by intersectionality allows us to see the multiple identities that shape the processes of becoming a Cape Verdean migrant mother in Portugal. Finally, we emphasize the relevance of the

BNIM method in the construction of the narratives that were produced and the relevance of biographical interviews for intersectional analysis, as it values the self-determination of the people interviewed and provides narratives that allow us to understand the complexity of the intersection of multiple dimensions—which include gender relations, social, cultural, legal and economic relations—that make up the lives of migrant women.

Limitations and implications: The pandemic situation did not allow us to carry out the interviews in person, which brought some challenges that may have somewhat limited the interviews, such as the lack of an informal initial moment and the restriction of communication, including the failures in the connection and the unfamiliarity of some participants with video calling systems.

As this was an exploratory study that had not pre-defined concepts and themes to be worked on in the interviews, some issues that were addressed in relation to unplanned motherhood in a migratory context, presented in the analysis of the results, were mentioned only by a few participants, and it could not be analyzed in more different experiences. However, as a qualitative study that does not intend to create generalizations and that used an intensive approach, both in data collection or analysis, it allowed a very in-depth look at the nine life stories. The narratives brought up themes and issues that could be deepened in future studies and that provide clues for professionals who work directly with migrant mothers and their children.

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