Mothering Across Borders: A Phenomenological Exploration into the Work-Family Balance Experiences of Jamaican Transnational Mothers in the United States

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MOTHERING ACROSS BORDERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION INTO THE WORK-FAMILY BALANCE EXPERIENCES OF JAMAICAN TRANSNATIONAL MOTHERS IN THE UNITED STATES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Agricultural and Extension Education and Evaluation

by

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B.A., Louisiana Tech University, 2010
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This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Isabella, Daniel, Lillian, Gabriel and Joel Udoko, who have been my main source of inspiration and strength.

To my husband, Isaac, my backbone, my right arm, and the one who forever holds my heart.

And finally, to my mom, who has paved the way for me and taught me everything about what it means to be a woman.
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ABSTRACT

The U.S. is home to one of the largest Jamaican populations residing outside of Jamaica and comprises over 50% of the U.S.-Caribbean workforce. Despite this, the experiences of Jamaican mothers who balance domestic work and families abroad—a phenomenon known as transnational motherhood—is often overlooked in research on work-family balance. Currently, a need exists to further explore work-family balance (WFB) as the lack of it has been associated with negative organizational outcomes. The purpose of this dissertation is to understand the WFB experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers and to explore the role of institutional/national policies and culture on WFB experiences. The overarching research question that guided the inquiry is: What are the experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers who balance their work in the US and their children abroad? The secondary question is how do institutional/national policies and culture affect the WFB experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers?

This study used a phenomenological approach to collect and analyze the data. The sample consisted of nine participants and data were derived from in-depth interviews. The overall essence of the Jamaican transnational mother’s lived experience is that they found meaning in their experiences through the constant negotiation of various internal psychological forces and external institutional forces with hopes of satisfying the needs of their children while satisfying cross-domain demands. This was revealed through four major themes: (a) human capital; (b) degree of dispersion; (c) location; and (d) length of separation. This study used Cho and Allen (2018) framework and an interpretive approach to help interpret their experiences.

The study’s findings provided insights on the demands, resources, and challenges that Jamaican transnational mothers face when navigating their work and family domain. Issues of
power, privilege and discrimination were salient, and mothers WFB experiences were negatively impacted by institutional forces such as US immigration policies, gendered ideologies, and cultural expectations. The findings have implications for future policy, practice, and theory. Recommendations are offered to organizations, practitioners, and policymakers to help support transnational mothers in their pursuit of WFB, while also helping to alleviate some of the challenges they may encounter.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, there has been a 50% increase of migrants within the last 20 years, and this trend is expected to continue (OECD, 2018), with the United States (U.S.) having one of the largest groups of immigrants in the world (U.S. Census, 2017). Among employed immigrants in the US, almost 47% stated that they had a child under 18 years of age (NSCW, unpublished data, 2002), suggesting that a substantial number of immigrant employees have to balance work and family responsibilities. Workplaces have become increasingly more reliant on an ethnically diverse immigrant worker population; however, to date, much of the research conducted on work-family relations has focused on dominant groups such as White, middle-class women with limited data on ethnic minority groups, and has neglected diverse types of family structures such as immigrant families whose children reside across international borders (Cousineau & Domar, 2007; Kamenou, 2008). As a result, there was a need to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of immigrant mothers who balance their work and families across borders.

Immigrant mothers who care for their children who live across international borders are participating in a phenomenon known as transnational motherhood (Hondagneu-Sotelo et al., 1997).

Not only is the U.S. one of the largest migrant-receiving countries, it is also home to one of the largest Jamaican populations outside of Jamaica, which makes up over half of the U.S. Caribbean workforce (U.S. Census, 2010). Considering their large presence in the U.S. workforce, their experiences are worth exploring. Additionally, Jamaica is currently facing a high percentage of absentee mothers from their households that is linked to migration (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2018). This maternal absence has led to a variety of negative social and economic outcomes for the country. Therefore, analyzing the experiences of Jamaican immigrant
mothers is timely and relevant, especially since most of these mothers emigrate for economic reasons. Further, Jamaican mothers, based on their socialization and culture, may face significant challenges attaining WFB. Upon immigration, they become both the caregiver and main breadwinner of the family (Chamberlain, 1997), and they may be encumbered by cultural expectations and norms surrounding the ideals of motherhood. Managing the demands of mothering across international borders while navigating national and institutional restrictions and negotiating cultural ideologies makes work outcomes, such as WFB critical to consider.

Immigration places a significant amount of psychological stress on Jamaicans who immigrate without their families, and it is even more significant when children are involved (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2015). Psychological stress originates for Jamaican mothers emerges from a range of sources such as (a) experiences with racism and discrimination, poverty, acculturation, and immigrant status (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2015), all of which negatively impacts immigrants, and in turn may foreground key organizational, cultural, and societal problems. Further, when immigrants, especially mothers, are faced with managing the demands from their families who are still residing in their home country, they face a significant challenge which are often overlooked or misrepresented. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Jamaican mothers who balance work in the US and children who live in Jamaica.

**Background of the Problem**

The U.S. has the largest immigrant population living in a space that is not their country of origin—with over 19% of the total 244 million international migrants worldwide (The United Nations Department of Economics & Social Affairs, 2019). Further, the U.S. Census (2010) reported there are over 43 million immigrants within the country’s borders. Since 2010, however, this number has increased by 8.8 million and immigrants now account for 14% of the U.S.
Further, the immigrant population has expanded eighteen times larger over the last 150 years, which is significant when considering that the U.S. born population grew only thirteen times larger over that same period (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2018).

As a result, the changes to immigrant populations are so far reaching that it is difficult to represent. Nevertheless, the issue of immigration is increasingly viewed as a high-priority policy issue by many governments, politicians, and the broader public throughout the world. Particularly in the U.S., it has been at the forefront of political debate over the last few decades and has become a flashpoint of heated debates on the national stage (Wong, 2017).

Many scholars agree that one of the main reasons that the US has seen an increase in migration, stems from globalization and technological advancements as well as the increased ease of international travel (Haagsman, 2015). Migration refers to “the movement of people across countries and is a broad term that encompasses emigration (i.e., people leaving a country) and immigration, i.e., people moving to a country” (Cho & Allen, 2018, p. 78). It is driven by factors such as a country’s political climate or the pursuit of better economic and educational opportunities) and can have many forms such as short-term visits or long-term stays, and with or without accompanying family members (Cohen et al., 2011).

When studying migration, the transnational migrant experiences are rarely considered (Castañeda, 2014). Migration studies usually look at the experiences of immigrants in the context of their host country or the sending countries without taking into context the cross-border experiences that occur in both the sending and receiving countries. According to Parreñas (2001, p. 363), transnational migrants “are a subset of immigrants who retain significant ties to their country of origin while they are settling into the host country.” He suggests that in addition to globalization, other factors such as the rise of the information society, modern technology, and
capitalist production contribute to a rise in these types of migrants (Dreby, 2007; Schmalzbauer, 2004).

Researchers have only recently begun to examine transnational migrant experiences through a process known as transnationalism. Bash et al. (1994) were among the first to theorize transnationalism and defined it as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (p. 6). Interest in the transnational phenomenon became highlighted as scholars began to observe that most immigrants have to leave loved ones in their home countries and that despite the distance separation, most of them continue to fulfil their familial obligations across borders. Migrants continue to provide financially, stayed loyal and loving, and continued to see themselves as a part of the same household despite the geographical separation (Castañeda & Buck, 2014).

Transnational households have family arrangements that can take a multitude of forms such as immigrant mothers, immigrant fathers, the children and families left behind, and children immigrants (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002). In these types of family arrangements, members usually share plans, aspirations, and economic resources and act as virtual households since they are split into different domiciles in different countries (Castaneda & Buck, 2014). Transnational families have diverse forms and is sometimes referred to in the literature as parachute kids (where minor children emigrate alone for better educational opportunities), and astronaut/goose families (where one parent emigrates with their children for better educational opportunities, leaving the other parent behind) (Tsong & Liu, 2009). When mothers leave their children behind, it is referred to as transnational motherhood — a phenomenon that describes how mothers recreate their identities away from their families (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avialo, 1997). This study will focus on Jamaican mothers who emigrate, leaving their children in Jamaica.
According to Pribilsky (2004), gender may be seen as organizing concept in the transnational immigrant perspective. Pribilsky (2004) argued that migration serves to reorient, and question generally assumed gendered roles and ideologies as people work to fit their daily routines into the new rules and priorities of maintaining a transnational life. Further, Pribilsky (2004) suggests, that transnational men and women go through two related processes during the construction of their transnational identities. The first is the altering (or accommodating) of ‘traditional’ roles and the second is the *degendering* male and female task. The former implying that new gender identities are constructed by accommodating new roles in the new country, and the latter related to removing the assignation of specific tasks as masculine or feminine. Thus, despite the fact that mothers’ responsibilities are traditionally constructed around caregiving and fathers’ responsibilities around economic provisions (Dreby, 2010; Parrenas 2001, 2005), new identities are formed upon immigration.

In transnational parenting both fathers’ and mothers’ parenting activities tend to be similar, but they encounter different experiences in the host country and even in regard to their children left behind (Dreby, 2006). For example, Parreñas, in one study completed on transnational parents found that “both parents sent gifts and money and maintained communication, but mothers were expected to also continue providing emotional care to their children” (Parreñas, 2001, p. 378). Thus, even when mothers live thousands of miles apart from their children, they were still constricted by care-giving expectations and obligations. Indeed, Parreñas (2008) in another qualitative study of Filipino transnational parents noted that, transnational fathers made far fewer adjustments to suit the needs of their children than Filipino mothers in similar situations. Further, while examining their experiences of *fathering at a*
distance, Parreñas (2008, p. 1059) found that “fathers tended to perform a ‘heightened version of conventional fathering,’ conforming to norms of breadwinning and male authoritarianism,” while mothers on the other hand, engaged in intensive mothering from afar in reaction to the greater expectations placed on them. The study also illustrated that mothers generally followed “normative gender roles regarding motherhood through sending money and gifts, and regularly telephoning their children.” Taken together, these added responsibilities and expectation places transnational mothers at risk for emotional and psychological stress.

When transnational parents immigrate, they not only deal with their own cultural ideologies, but additionally, they have to deal with the U.S. cultural expectations of the ideal worker. Typically, the ideal worker works long hours, is dedicated to their jobs, is willing to place their personal lives on hold in order to please their employer, and has few (if any) interruptions from their home, especially from children and childrearing (Acker, 1990; Crittenden, 2001). As stated earlier, mothers, traditionally, are expected to spend most of their time and emotional energy caring for children, even at the expense of their professional career (Hays, 1996). For the ideal workers, fathers’ cultural expectations are such that they are expected to be in work roles and are expected and rewarded for working and over-investing their time and energy at work and for disinvesting their time in the family. As such, society’s—and employers’—different views regarding parental roles and parenthood and job compatibility for women and men are certain to have implications for employment outcomes, such as WFB. Gender role ideologies sacralize mothers but sustain fathers’ roles as breadwinners and financial providers (Dreby, 2006) and puts mothers more at risk for encountering significant difficulties maintaining their transnational lives.
In general, mothering is seen as a practice that involves preserving, nurturing and training children for adult life, and there are many variations, which cuts across race, class, and culture (Ruddick, 1989). There are many types of mothering arrangements — single mothers, employed mothers, stay-at-home mothers, lesbian mothers, surrogate mothers, to name a few — all of which reside with their own children. However, the transnational mothering situation disrupts the notion that children will live with their parents as separation from children may last for months, and in many cases, years. Transnational motherhood is one variation that describes the process of how mothers create meanings, arrangements, and priorities to accommodate the spatial and temporal separations from their families (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avilia, 1997).

The identity of motherhood involves multiple layers of meanings, encompassing physical, emotional, social, and care activities that are often times socially and culturally mediated (Maher, 2010). Further, transnational motherhood operated within the boundaries and hierarchies of nationality, race, class, ethnicity, and gender, each operating differently depending on their location. Consequently, navigating through borders to manage their family and work life is both a political and economic process, which implicates transnational mothers’ nationality, and ethnicity.

With the geographic separation of the transnational mother, the physical care of children is often left to aunts, or other relatives and friends. The transnational mother must then wrestle with the notion that they, the biological mothers should be there physically with their children instead of the caregivers (Illanes, 2010). Although the transnational mothers continue to perform their motherhood role from a distance, sending money and gifts to meet their children’s needs and to express their love (Horton, 2009).
Of the 43 million immigrants in the U.S., over half come from Latin America and the Caribbean. Of the English-speaking Caribbean immigrant population, Jamaican immigrants account for more than half (61%) (U.S. Census, 2017). Jamaica is the third largest country in the Caribbean, and the most populous English-speaking country in the Caribbean. With a population of 2.9 million people, the country predominantly comprises of Black (92%) with a small percentage of mixed or unidentified race (8%) (United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs, 2019).

In a study done by the International Caribbean Regional Development Center (2010), it was found that approximately three-fourths of Jamaican households had at least one parent living abroad. The study surveyed over 1200 migrant households sampled from three major communities in Jamaica and found that more than half relied on care from their older siblings (56%), and the remainder, received care from relatives and friend, suggesting the high incidence of transnational household. Furthermore, the study found that most households in the study relied on remittances sent from parents abroad. Indeed, Golash-Boza (2014) suggested that Jamaica is a prime site for the study of transnationalism. Clearly, the issue of transnational family research is relevant and timely.

There are numerous factors that are responsible for the establishment of a migration tradition in Jamaica and the country’s high propensity for migration. Factors such as the country’s colonial history, economic instability, and persistent social problems such as the high crime and poverty rates (Thomas-Hope, 2006) contribute to this ever-increasing trend. Jamaican women are more likely to migrate than their male counterparts and are more likely than fathers to engage in transnational parenting due to gendered social norms and cultural expectations.
surrounding parenting (Douglas-Harrison, 2014). Despite this trend, however, little is known about their work-related outcomes. Thus, more research is needed to shed light on the experiences of transnational mothers, especially Jamaican mothers who, as a group, have been largely overlooked, especially in regard to their WFB.

**WFB of Transnational Mothers**

According to Clark (2000), WFB is defined as the “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum role conflict” (p. 751). It is also described as a “global assessment that work and family resources are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that participation is effective in both domains” (Voydanoff, 2005, p. 825) or the “accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains” (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007, p. 458). Transnational mothers, and transnational parents in general, as a group, have been overlooked in the conversation on WFB. WFB research has predominantly been focused on traditional family structures, but to date, there is little research done on families that are arranged transnationally (Haagsman, 2015).

The narrow focus on the traditional family of WFB research has excluded the experiences of diverse family structures and has led some scholars such as Glick (2010), Agars, and French (2016), to call for more research on the work-family interface among nontraditional family. This study is important as it intends to fill this gap in knowledge and to address some of the challenges this group faces. WFB research has shown that employees who believe they do not have WFB can lead to negative outcomes because they might quit, be regularly absent and have low work-performance. Further, negative experiences at work can spill over into employee’s
personal life and can lead to job burnout and exhaustion, marital and family issues, and overall life dissatisfaction.

The issue of WFB is prevalent as according to Lowe (2005), one in four employees experience issues with WFB. Currently, there are no known studies that examine WFB in Jamaican transnational mothers. Labor market outcomes are especially important for transnational mothers because economic benefits of their employment are an important reason mothers migrate leaving their families behind. For example, several studies have shown the importance of remittances—the main outcome of their employment—for maintaining family relations (Dreby, 2006; Dreby & Adkins, 2010; Zenigraf & Chinchilla, 2012). Equally important, is the impact of remittances on the immigrants’ home country’s economy, such as Jamaica, where remittances accounts for about 16% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Bank, 2018). Thus, additional investigation into their WFB experiences among this group was warranted.

**Statement of the Problem**

WFB is central to issues of Human Resource Development (HRD) (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Various studies have examined issues of WFB and have demonstrated the financial ramifications for organizations. Some consequences of employees’ work-family imbalance or low WFB are depression, decreased work productivity, and higher work-absenteeism (Layous, et al., 2011; Seligman, 2011), employees’ low morale (Brought et al., 2005), higher staff turnover, and poorer work quality (Seligman, 2011).

The WFB experiences of transnational parents are often overlooked, leaving this group out of the Work-Family policy debate. The experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers are especially important in understanding the phenomenon of work-family balance, as the literature
suggests that this group has unique experiences than that of dominant groups, upon which most WFB policies are predicated. For example, one study found that there is often a high demand for extended leave from members of transnational families but despite these requests, there are hardly any provisions made in work balance policies and initiatives made to accommodate families in this type of arrangements who may need extended leave time (Bradley et al., Mukherjee, & Nupur, 2005). The lack of accommodation for transnational families, especially parents, may have a negative impact for individuals as well as the organization because these employees may find it too difficult attain WFB.

Further, as stated earlier, Jamaican immigrant women has the largest share of English Speaking-Caribbean group in the workforce and have one of the highest rates of immigration in the Caribbean. Most of the existing literature on WFB focuses on White individuals from North America and European countries. Grzywacz and Marks (2000) suggested that many work-family studies limit their samples to individuals who are married or who have children living in a single household and argue that “such a limitation reflects too narrow a conceptualization of family” (p. 114), and emphasized that other family structures should be included in work-family studies.

Given the ever-increasing size and diversity of transnational employees, more research on this population is required. Moreover, it is important to incorporate a diversity of family structures in research as these groups are no longer the minority in the workforce and their omission from work-life studies can lead to skewed and unrealistic snapshots of social reality.

Immigrants are more likely to have health and psychological problems due to employment challenges, disrupted marital relationships, fragmented social network, and physical hardships (Jolivet et al., 2012). Mazzucato (2014) suggests that stress faced by transnational parents can prevent them from doing their job well. Stress faced by transnational parents may
lead to lack of concentration at work, sleepless nights, anxiety and worry at home, all impacting their experiences balancing their professional and family lives. Furthermore, increases in technology and communication, and globalization trends have allowed spatial, temporal, and mental borders that have traditionally separated the work and family domains to be increasingly blurred (Halpern, 2005; Lyness & Judeisch, 2008, McMillan et. al., 2011), suggesting that problems of WFB may be even more salient in this group.

When mothers immigrate, they have to adapt to their new roles and redefine what it means to be a mother. Transnational mothers create new definitions of what it means to fulfill their role through the process of transnational motherhood. These transnational mothers often times abandon or redefine dominant cultural and gender ideologies, which may also affect their experiences with WFB.

Currently there is scant research that examines WFB of transnational mothers, and no known evidence on WFB of Jamaican transnational mothers. WFB is important to this group as, considering their persistence in the workforce, lack of imbalance may lead to adverse consequences for the organization such as high turnover rate, high employee absenteeism and low production rate.

Given that transnational mothers face unique challenges that may impact their work and family life and the lack of research focus on this group, this study sought to understand the experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers who balance their work in the US, and their children’s life in Jamaica. The study aims to advance the work-family literature by being the first to study the experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers as they balance their work and family lives. This research will significantly expand the work-family literature because the transnational family is an unconventional form of family that faces unique challenges as they manage their
work and family life due to the additional barrier of geographic separation across international borders.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and understand the lived experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers who balance their work in the U.S. with their families in Jamaica.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical perspective guiding this qualitative study comes from Cho and Allen’s (2018) conceptual framework and propositions of WFB and Interpretivism (Crotty, 1998). These perspectives will be used as a guide to understand the varying factors that inform the WFB experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers as well as to interpret the cultural ideologies and discursive practices that are embedded in their experiences. Details of the conceptual framework is presented in Chapter 2, literature review.

**Research Questions**

The overarching question that guided this study was: *What are the experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers who balance their work in the US and their children abroad?*

The secondary question was: *How do institutional/national policies and culture affect the WLB experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers?*

**Significance of Study**

This study is significant in various ways. The following section presents ways in which this research might have implications for research, human resource development (HRD) practice, as well as organizational and national policies.

*Significance to Research*
This research is significant, as it will help address the gap in the WFB knowledge on diverse forms of family arrangements by looking at a specific type of employee, the transnational mother, bringing this understudied population to the forefront of the work-family literature. As stated earlier, the majority of work-family studies have been conducted within the dominant group (White middle-class employees), and WFB policies formulated based on this group, without much discussion about whether the experiences of these groups differ from other group, such as the transnational immigrant parent (Casper & Swanberg, 2011).

Additionally, it will improve our understanding on the experiences of an ethnic group, Jamaican Immigrants, as there is little organizational research on this immigrant population (Ferguson et al., 2012) and in general, they are an understudied group (Hall, 2010). More studies are needed to understand their experiences working in the U.S. workforce as this group takes up a significant portion of the US workforce.

This dissertation also aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on WFB issues for an ethnic minority group in the U.S. Although it focuses on Jamaicans, the findings of this study could be of interest to other immigrant groups experiencing transnational parenting. Understanding how transnational mothers manage their transnational family and work may help inform practitioners on the challenges that these individuals face so that they may begin to explore how to better assist them. Organizations will be better prepared to build and retain their diverse workforce by finding ways to support these employees through social support, design more effective organizational work life policies and adapt better HRD strategies such as creating a more supportive work culture for transnational employees.

*Significance to Practice*
This study can inform organizational leaders and practitioners on the unique family situations prevalent in today's global workforce and uncover challenges faced by these groups of employees in relation to their WFB. It has long been recognized that organizations play a critical role to the extent that employees experience WFB (Allen, 2012). It is important to uncover the challenges that transnational parents encounter in balancing work and family.

Understanding the impact of these changes on organizations is important, especially regarding attitudes toward immigrants and other ethnic minorities. Attitudes toward these often-disadvantaged groups are likely to be more positive when there is an increased organizational understanding of the immigrant experiences (Nesdale et al., 2005). When organizations and their members understand the experience of immigrants and other ethnic minorities, there is an increased likelihood of positive intergroup relations, and they would be more willing to accept a diverse workforce. The benefit of having a diverse workforce gives an organization access to resources and a competitive edge.

*Significance to Policy*

The knowledge on the experience of transnational mothers and the unique needs and challenges they have, could inform changes in organizational policies. Knowledge garnered from this study could empower organizations to provide more tailored support for transnational employees through revised policies pertaining to transnational mothers. Providing support for transnational employees may aid in the retention of professionals in high-demand jobs (e.g., information technology) and increase transnationals’ loyalty to their company. Bringing the transnational employee to the forefront of the WFB literature, allows organizations to develop ways to help ease some of the difficulties transnational employees experience in managing their families.
Finally, this study aims to improve understanding of the issues immigrants face in relation to WFB. By doing so, it can contribute to the public awareness and inform national policies to support transnational families. Considering the immigrant demographic trends, the impact of immigration on individuals, families, organizations, and the economy, the negative attitudes towards immigrants, the study hopes to bring to action a revision of current policies to support these types of families by bringing to light the challenges of Jamaican transnational mothers, a subset of this group. A revision of the immigration policies that keep families apart is necessary and more support to organizations who employ immigrants in order are necessary to reduce discrimination and negative attitude towards immigrants and to promote their success.

**Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

This study represents a focal point of interest in the large phenomenon of transnational motherhood and does not intend to be exhaustive or all encompassing. The participants involved in this study do not account for every single experience in the Jamaican context, and as such, they can only speak about their subjective experiences. Thus, the results of the study are limited to data gathered from the Jamaican transnational mothers interviewed in this study and not the entire population.

The main limitation of the study is the translating of the local language — *patois* — as well as certain elements of the Jamaican culture. Translation of the language and cultural elements are essential, as it is my goal to represent the participants stories in the most accurate way based on their individual context so that I can provide a true picture to readers who are unfamiliar with the Jamaican language and culture. Interviews were primarily conducted in English, but questions were recorded in Jamaican patois. The limitation stems from the complication of translation from patois to Standard English, which sometimes may obscure
meaning when the semantic equivalence is used, and the true sentiment embodied in the local vernacular may get in the translation.

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 introduces the research topic by discussing the problem and its significance. It also presents the definitions of terms, introduces the theoretical framework, overarching research question and the structure of the dissertation is outlined. Chapter 2 presents the literature review. The review of literature first examines migration in the US in terms of definitions and provides a brief history of emigratory trends. Next, it directs its focus to immigration in the context of Jamaica. In order to understand the WFB experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers, a brief history of Jamaica’s slavery past, socialization, and culture is presented, followed by the emigratory history, trends, and outcomes. Finally, the literature review presents the current state of the body of knowledge of WFB in relation to immigrants. In Chapter 3 a discussion of the research methodology is provided. It first justifies the method and procedures employed, including a discussion of how data were analyzed, and the final part provides a consideration of the ethical issues related to the methodology. In Chapters 4 and 5, findings from the research conducted are analyzed and discussed. The final chapter concludes the dissertation. It provides a summary of the key findings, a discussion of the implication of the findings, followed by suggestions for future research.

**Definitions of Terms**

The following terms are defined for purposes of this study:

- Epoché: This is when the researcher set aside his/her views of the phenomenon and focus on those views reported by the participants (Moustakas, 1994);
- Migration: “The movement of people across countries and is a broad term that
encompasses emigration (i.e., people leaving a country) and immigration (i.e., people moving to a country)” (Cho & Allen, 2018);

- Phenomenology: Phenomenology is described as the study of lived experiences in which the researcher explores and articulates deep and hidden meanings of the experiences of the participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2003);

- Phenomenological Reduction: This is when the researcher describes “in textural language,” what he or she sees (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90);

- Textural and Structural Description: “This is the process of synthesizing the meanings and the essences of the lived experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 91);

- Transnationalism: “The process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Glick Schiller, & Szanton-Blanc, 1994, p. 6);

- Transnational Mothers: “Immigrant women who work and reside in the United States while their children remain in their countries” (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997);

- Work Family Balance: “Satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum role conflict” (Clarke, 2000, p. 751).
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines migration in the U.S. and provides a brief history then directs its focus to immigration in the context of Jamaica. The brief history of Jamaica includes its slavery past and socialization of Jamaicans. Next, it presents the emigratory history, trends, and outcomes followed by an examination the various ways WFB is conceptualized. Thereafter, it outlines the current state of the body of knowledge of WFB concerning immigrants. Finally, the theoretical lens used for this study is presented. Namely, Interpretivism and Cho and Allen (2018) perspectives on WFB.

**Jamaican Emigration**

Emigration from Jamaica predominantly began after the abolition of apprenticeship in the early 1840s. It began with individuals going to the Caribbean and the coast of Central America and after a decade, the emigration rate had risen significantly (Thomas-Hope, 1977). Emigration patterns from that period to the early 20th were mostly made to Panama and Costa Rica, as people sought work in the construction of the trans-Isthmian railway on the Panama Canal, and to provide agricultural service to the United Fruit Company; as well as labor for the sugar industry in Cuba (Bauer & Thompson, 2004). By the mid-20th Century, emigration continued to increase as people traveled in pursuit of labor to new destinations – predominantly the U.S. and Great Britain.

After World War II, the labor requirement for the U.S. and Britain changed, leading to the recruitment of labor from Jamaica and the extended Caribbean. In addition, workers were also recruited for the Post-Second World War reconstruction in Western Europe, and a significant number of skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers, were recruited to serve in hospital services, industry and transport (Bauer & Thompson, 2004). Meanwhile, in the U.S., the
amendment of the Nationality Act of 1965, and in Canada, changes to legislation, led to the demand for skilled labor, as these countries started to require that migration be based on skills and education, as opposed to nationality and race (Bauer & Thompson, 2004). These changes to immigration legislation in the U.K., U.S., and Canada greatly impacted Jamaican emigration. By the 1960’s the U.S. became the chief destination for skilled migration and this trend continued during successive decades (Thomas-Hope, 2002).

Jamaican migration to the U.S. began as predominantly male (Brown, 2006), as men filled occupations in agriculture and construction. However, it changed to predominantly female as accessibility of international travel improved, and thereby an increased demand for female labor emerged in the service industry that was rapidly expanding in the U.S. (Bonett, 1990; Brettell & Simon, 1986; Foner, 1999; George, 2005; Kasinitz, 1992). As such, women began to immigrate to fill roles as domestic helpers, caregivers, nurses and nursing aides, and hotel housekeepers (Harrison, 2014).

The historical migratory trends continue throughout today, but Jamaica’s, modern migration is predominantly driven by two main structural events described as push and pull factors. The former represents forces such as economic hardship (poverty and unemployment) that stimulated migrants to seek a better opportunities and way of life. Meanwhile, pull represents the promise of a better life abroad (Thomas-Hope, 1992). Diaz-Briquets (1985) provided a more detailed list:

- high population and labor force growth;
- insufficient employment opportunities;
- expectations and aspirations influenced by the more developed countries;
- social and political strife;
• advances in transportation and communication that have reduced the economic and psychological costs of emigration;

• the establishment of “ethnic colonies” in the U.S. that eases the assimilation of newly arrived immigrants;

• vast differences in wage levels and standards of living between the U.S. and Caribbean countries;

• the need for cheap, abundant, unskilled labor in the U.S. agriculture, industry and services; and

• U.S. immigration policy that encourages family reunification. (pp. 42-43)

In the U.S., over one quarter (26%) of the Jamaican population were under the age of 18, and over half (55%) were of working ages between 18–44 years (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2010). Jamaican Immigrants and Caribbean immigrants in general have lower levels of educational attainment compared to the overall foreign- and native-born populations. Surprisingly, Jamaican immigrants participate in the U.S. labor force at a similar rate as the overall immigrant population and a higher rate than the native-born. In fact, in 2014, over 66% of Jamaican immigrants and immigrants overall (ages 16 and over) were employed in the civilian labor force, compared to 62% of the native-born (Migration Policy, 2020). Although Caribbean immigrants, in general, are more likely to be employed in the service industry, Jamaicans, usually enter careers in management, business, science, and arts occupations (The migration Institute of Jamaica, 2014).

Consequences of Emigration for Jamaica

The impact of Jamaican emigration is far reaching – from the individual level to the national level, affecting the country’s socio-economic and financial conditions. Remittances sent
from the U.S. have supported many households, and has been of major value to the country, because it exceeds all other sources of foreign exchange inputs (The Migration Institute of Jamaica, 2014). Further, these remittances received in Jamaica have made its way to become a permanent part of the country’s budgets (Chamberlain, 1997; Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Olwig, 2007). These remittances also serve to “increase . . . [immigrants’] status ‘back home’ and to blunt the sharpness of life in the U.S.” (Le Espiritu, 2003, p. 213). Thus, remittances are used as a tangible compensation for the immigrant, and as a reward symbolizing their success.

Another positive consequence of migration on Jamaica is that the unemployment and under-employment rate for the country has been reduced because of the increased number of persons obtaining short-term employment through programs such as the Foreign Workers Programs – a program has been used to help increase low-skilled worker access to temporary work in the U.S. where they would receive higher wages than what they would have been paid in Jamaica (PIOJ, 2018).

The consequence for migration has also negatively impacted the Jamaican labor force participation. In particular, the receipt of remittances has led some households to be less likely to seek employment. This has potential adverse impact for the economy as the country seeks to generate sustainable sources of national income, and find ways to promote domestic talents through employment in domestic businesses and creative enterprises (PIOJ, 2018). Likewise, the high emigration of highly educated, skilled migrants and students has negatively affected Jamaica’s human resource capacity for development, i.e., a brain drain has occurred (PIOJ, 2018).

Another consequence of migration for the Jamaican economy, and the society at large, is that while the voluntary return of working age nationals is at a decline, the large number of
enforced returns (deportations) of Jamaican nationals has increased, which has placed additional demands on resources of different kinds for reintegration, further burdening an already weak economy (PIOJ, 2018). This is especially true within the last few years where Jamaica has seen its highest rate of deportation (Golash-Boza, 2013). The factors surrounding deportation have also had a negative impact on Jamaica’s profile abroad.

**Jamaica’s History: Slavery & Socialization**

An understanding of socialization norms may better help in explaining why parents sometimes migrate without their children. This study is framed in the context of Jamaica. Before one can understand the experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers, it is important to understand the historical and cultural factors that shape these processes. In the following section, I present a brief history of slavery in Jamaica, and its norms surrounding family, which is essential to understanding the country’s emigration history and factors that influence the immigrant mother’s experiences.

**Jamaica’s Slave History**

The majority of Jamaicans descended from enslaved Africans. One of the major impacts that slavery had on the Jamaican was that it helped form their beliefs and customs about what it means to be a man or woman in Jamaica today. From the 16th to 19th Century African men and women were forcibly brought to the Caribbean to work as slaves in response to the development of the sugar plantation in the region (Rogozinski, 1992). On the farms, certain tasks were assigned by age and sex (Mintz, 1985). As young as age four, children began collecting vines on plantations, and by the age of eight, they were hoeing and weeding fields.

Despite the nature of the jobs, some work responsibilities were given to either sex, while some were gender specific. As children got older, tasks were also distributed. Adults of both
sexes labored in the field or in the master’s house as domestic slaves, and as petty traders.

Further, “male slaves were the only one who could have an elite or skilled position as field commanders or artisans, while women slaves mainly worked as domestics, hucksters, and unskilled laborers” (Mintz, 1985, p. 69). The traditional assignment of gender roles impacted the roles of women, and this pattern is still salient in the culture today, however, western influence has caused the roles of Jamaican women to evolve.

Slavery has also shaped the family formations in Jamaica, mainly through the procreation practices and child ownership traditions practiced at this moment in time. For instance, during slavery according to Gmelch,

White men in the Caribbean frequently used female slaves as their sexual concubines. They married White women but often had affairs with mixed race or Black women. If a slave became pregnant by her master, he would often free his mixed-race child and the other children were considered to be the property of their mother’s owner. Slaves did not often have exclusive sexual relations with one person, but instead had children by different partners (Gmelch & Gmelch, 2012, p. 34).

These practices created the complex family structures in Jamaica today, as well as the racial disparities that persist.

During slavery,

If a slave woman gave birth, she might have an older female slave look after her baby while she worked in the fields or work with her infant tied to her back. This pattern has continued today through a process known as child shifting in which childcare responsibilities would be passed to other family members (Chamberlain, 2002).

Indeed, coming from slavery days, women used the village to help raise their child. These practices were necessary, as mothers depended on the support from others to maintain their work.
Gender Roles After Emancipation from Slavery

According to Momsen (1993, p. 43),

Gender roles after the abolition of slavery in the 19th Century, Jamaica, and the Caribbean became very stratified and sexual inequality increased. Many male laborers migrated from British West Indian colonies either permanently or in search of seasonal work, leaving women to run homes and support their families.

At the same time, women were excluded from elite political or economic roles; and as an alternative, they worked as maids, higglers, dressmakers, and in the fields as plantation laborers.

The Afro-Caribbean family in general, and especially Jamaica, “is characterized by low rates of legal marriage, high rates of illegitimate children, and the centrality of the mother-child bond rather than the husband-wife bond” (Blank, 2013, p. 2). Women often raise children that are not their biological offspring to help other families cope with challenging economic circumstances, i.e., child shifting. This occurs:

So that children may enjoy better living conditions than they would in their birth home. If a mother cannot support some or all of her children, she may send them to a female relative or even to well-off strangers to be raised (Blank, 2013, p. 2).

The child shifting is seen as an arrangement in which disadvantaged children are fed, schooled, and clothed by their new caregivers. Sometimes, the children are also forced to take on a servant role in their new family such as doing errands or housework and once grown, are obligated to support those who have raised them (Safa, 1995; Senior, 1991; Sobo, 1993).

The childbearing practices gave rise to the matrifocal family. The term originally:

Described the domestic organization of Guyanese coastal villages in the early 1950s where the mother is the center of the domestic sphere and men tend to be marginalized. Mothers and their children form the basis of the family unit and women are the main economic providers and decision-makers regarding the emotional and subsistence needs of household members (Blank, 2013, p. 12).

In matrifocal households, economic circumstances differ such that some women may have complete control over their income and spending money, and in other households they are the
primary breadwinner but not the only earner. These systems are not matriarchal as men are still seen as having ultimate authority (Smith, 1996). If a man is present in the home, women often defer to his authority. It is argued that of the prevalence of matrifocal households in the modern Caribbean could be a result of the cultural traits retained from Africa or the main reason could be attributed to high rates of male migration and male unemployment or underemployment in the region (Chamberlain, 2002).

**Household Heads**

Men are generally considered to be the head of the household in Jamaica, and women are only viewed as the head if there are no males present in the home. According to Chevannes, (1992), “often, if an adult male lives in the house, such as a woman’s brother, father, or cousin, he is considered the household head.” Often times these households constitute of children by different fathers who do not provide adequate financial support for their children. Women in the families find various ways to support their family such as taking odd jobs, depending on friends and neighbors for material goods, and carefully allocating their resources. This practice dates back from the slavery period, where these women were used to economically contribute to their households, until now where male unemployment is persistent. These practices and trends have influenced the decision for some mothers to consider better economic opportunities such as emigration (Chevannes, 1992).

**Jamaicans’ Socialization and Views of Motherhood**

Sociologists and anthropologists have argued that in Jamaica, the role of a mother is more valued than the wife role (Barrow, 1996; Rubenstein, 1987; Senior, 1991). More than three-fourths of Jamaican women have children and, in many cases, having children is necessary to be considered a woman (Mohammed & Perkins, 1999). They view children as adding value to their
lives, often providing comfort and company, and childbearing often attracts companionship, femininity, and receiving emotional support (Barrow, 1996).

The construction of the female identity in Jamaica is viewed from the way that girls are socialized from a young age. Throughout the Caribbean, young girls are treated more strictly than are boys to prepare them to take charge of a household. Studies show that before children reach five years old, they would play together, but once they get to that age, gender task differentiation takes place. At this age, girls start performing domestic tasks and household chores under their mother’s guidance, while boys continue to play, and help with certain outdoor tasks such as fetching water and firewood or caring for animals (Birth, 1993; Brown & Chevannes, 1998; Senior, 1991). Also, girls are generally kept closer to home, while boys visit and move more freely in public (Brown & Chevannes, 1998; Fog Olwig, 1993; Rubenstein, 1987). Thus, from early, girls are expected to manage the home.

In Jamaica, the emotional support of the family is mainly carried out by mothers. The social science literature suggests that “in many households, fathers are absent, and children are strictly raised, and mothers act as both satisfiers and deprivers of children’s needs” (Senior, 1991, p. 78). Mothers are left to carry out most childrearing responsibilities and are both the main sources of emotional support as well as punishment and behavior correction for their children. Further, along with being the caregiver of the family, they also serve as the financial provider of the family. The cultural norms and expectations, their gender ideologies and socialization of Jamaican mothers all contribute to Jamaican mother’s views of motherhood. Ultimately, the economic necessity of the family leads mothers to migrate as a way to satisfy her role as a provider for her family. Jamaica’s migratory culture, history and current trends helps
provide the context for the study, as well as provides an understanding as to the various factors
that helps to shape the WFB experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers.

**Work-Family Balance, Gender, & Transnational Motherhood**

Considering that one of the main impetuses for transnational parents has historically been
economic necessity it is vital to investigate how they achieve WFB. The following section
presents a brief summary of the literature as it relates to WFB, gender and transnational
motherhood. To begin, the term work-life balance is most commonly used; however, the concept
may also be referred to as work-family conflict, family-life balance, work-life systems, work-life
integration, work/non-work balance (De Klerk & Mostert, 2010; Munn, 2013; Greenhaus &
Beutell, 1985). Additionally, the term WFB and WLB are used interchangeably by scholars, as it
is a more encompassing term that looks at balance across multiple areas of life (Grzywacz &
Carlson, 2007). In this investigation, WFB is used to narrow its focus on the experience of
balancing two major areas: work and family. Scholars generally agree that work-life balance is
important for an individual’s psychological well-being, and that some indicators of a successful
WLB is experiencing high self-esteem and an overall sense of harmony in life (Clark, 2000;
Clarke et al., 2004; Marks and MacDermid, 1996).

Other constructs have also recently emerged also relating to WFB. These include work-
family enrichment, which is defined by Greenhaus and Powell (2006, p. 78) as “the extent to
which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role.” The term *work-life
culture* has also recently emerged as an area of critical interest and is defined by Thompson et al.
(1999, p. 394) as “the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an
organization supports and values the integration of employees’ work and family lives.”
Most of the studies on WFB participants were greatly impacted by gendered norms and expectations (Bacik & Drew, 2006; Backett, 1982; Bryson et al., 2007; Charles & Harris, 2007; Connell, 2005; Emslie & Hunt, 2009). A study of U.K. home-based teleworkers (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001) found that, although the majority of participants reported that working from home led to a blurring of the boundaries between work and home, there were differences in how men and women experienced WLB. Working from home allowed women to perform multiple roles, which helped them to fulfill their domestic responsibilities and in accomplishing their financial and personal needs, but this led to the reinforced gendered expectations of work and family.

On the other hand, men enjoyed the flexibility gained from working from home, because it allowed them to work long hours, further reinforcing gendered norms around work. According to Sullivan and Lewis (2001, p. 140) the men in the study reported “higher levels of interference between work and home than the reverse, reinforcing the normalized legitimacy of work interfering with family for men, and family interfering with work for women.” This reinforcement of gendered norms was also supported by another study of fathers in the U.K. who worked from home several days a week for an insurance firm (Halford, 2006). Because participants reported some changes to their fathering patterns and involvement, this was viewed as “unearned and unexpected, a perk that they would regret losing, but did not expect to keep” (p. 399), with the fathers’ roles being inextricably entwined with that of provider.

Loscocco (1997) found similarly gendered experiences in her study of self-employed people in the U.S. According to this study “women and men were found to fulfill gender norms in different ways, with women accommodating work to fit with family life, whereas men prioritized their business.” In another study of fathers working across a range of organizations in the U.K. (Hatten, Vinter, & Williams, 2002) found that work-place culture played an important
role in participants’ experiences. Many employers expected that men make work the primary focus of their lives and thereby leaving little space for family commitments. This idea was reinforced because men in the study assumed that flexibility to accommodate caring for their family was only acceptable for mothers and not them as fathers. These assumptions were also perpetuated at the organizational-level and the study found differences within as well as between women and men.

There are handful of studies that have looked at the impact of class on the experiences of work-life balance. One example is a comparative analysis of working mothers in low income, service sector jobs, and assistant professors in the U.S. (Weigt & Solomon, 2008, p. 641). The study found “interesting intersectionalities between class and gender.” As an illustration, the assistant professors were “more able to manage work and family demands due to greater access to resources,” whereas the low-income women’s “experiences of work-family management were inextricably tied to making ends meet” (Weigt & Solomon, 2008, p. 641). However, class had an additional impact on gender for the two groups, as it was discovered that “it muted the gendered experiences for the assistant professors, while intensifying them for the low-income, service sector group.” For example, the low-income workers reported “gendered interpersonal work of managing supervisors’ or employers’ impressions and emotions and to obtain flexibility, however, the assistant professors were found to have better access to institutional policies and as a result avoided this interpersonal work” (p. 642). Further, the earning power of the professors determined if they were able to pay for childcare.

To further compound the WFB challenge, immigrants faced peculiar challenges affecting their ability to balance their work and family life. A study done by Wilding & Baldasaar (2009) found that time and money were key resources that influenced a family’s capacity to engage in
transnational caregiving, and that gender also influenced their patterns of use. The study also found that both women and men negotiated work and family patterns in order to maximize their resources available to use to care for their transnational family. It also reported that mothers were likely to reduce work so that they would have more time to engage in transnational caregiving, while men tend to prioritize work as a way of supporting and facilitating the costs of transnational care. Further, they found that decisions and resources surrounding childcare were further influenced by cultural notions of obligation and gendered expectations from family members where there was continuous negotiation of commitments. The findings from the study corresponded with gendered expectations of the breadwinner family model, in which “women are expected to provide care, and men are expected to provide economic support addressing the problems of contemporary families, thereby reproducing gendered norms surrounding parenting” (Wilding & Baldassar, 2014, p. 182).

Ali, et al. (2017) in their review of literature on WFB, argued that immigrants’ experiences in the workplace may be different from that of their U.S. counterparts because of intersectionality of ethnicity, migrant status, and religion. They argue that factors organized as micro, meso, and macro, each of which keeps immigrants from accessing WFB. Micro factors may be immigrants’ skill levels, competency and qualifications, meso factors includes their knowledge of the work domain and human agency, and macro includes their intersectionalities and interweaving affecting aspects of gender, culture, ethnicity, and norms. According to the authors macro societal and sociocultural factors for example, informs the embedded nature of institutional and cultural pressures that immigrant women would have to balance in a Western context.
Poster and Prasad (2005) presented a transnational analysis of work-family relations by comparing three high-tech firms in India and the U.S. The study found that employees in each country had different work-family boundaries such that the U.S. tended to prefer an integration of work and family life through permeable boundaries whereas, employees in India more often had a separation between work and family spheres through clear boundaries. Their study demonstrated how organizations in the U.S. promoted a culture of overwork (where employees work long hours), as well as bringing work home. They argued that the findings showed how cultural values are structurally embedded in organizational systems of bureaucratic control.

Casper & colleagues (2007, p. 34) reviewed a range of socio-demographic characteristics of samples, including “sex, marital status, child characteristics, race, hours worked, education and occupation,” and reported that “much relevant information regarding samples is omitted from descriptions of work-family research.” This pattern of results emphasizes the difficulty of evaluating whether existing research on WFB is likely to generalize to employees who are diverse in terms of family structure or industry (Casper et al., 2007). And, in the instance that the sample characteristics were reported, they were homogenous, and it excluded several important groups including diverse racial and ethnic groups, distinct cultures and non-traditional family structures (Casper et al., 2007).

A review of literature by Chang et al. (2010) supported previous scholarly evidence that the majority of work-life balance research has been conducted in Anglo-Saxon countries that are comparable in nature such as the U.S. and Canada, and with most samples being confined to a one country. The concentration of research conducted on people from these countries is problematic because findings cannot necessarily be extended to other context or populations of
interest, especially those which are culturally diverse, or with different family structures (Poelmans et al., 2003; Poster & Prasad, 2005), such as transnational mothers from Jamaica.

As stated earlier, there is scant research that examines WFB in the context of transnational parents. Although not the focus of this study, findings on work-family conflict (WFC) (a construct related to WFB), of transnational parents in general may provide insights on the experiences of WFB of transnational mothers. One such study is a quantitative study that examined the transnational parents experience with of work-family conflict (WFC) (Haagsman, 2015). This study was the first known study to examine WFC in the context of the transnational parents. This was a quantitative comparative study of Angolans and Nigerian parents in The Netherlands, the former with their children living in another country and the latter with their children living with them. Using data collected from 132 transnational Nigerian, 139 transnational Angolan, and 165 and 167 non-transnational parents respectively, the study examined the relationship between transnational parenting and certain job outcomes and hypothesized that Nigerians who had their children living with them would face more WFC than Angolans who had their children living abroad. The study found, however, that Angolan transnational parents experienced more, not less WFC than Nigerians, despite not providing direct care, and that their caregiving responsibilities affected their work. As such, the findings from this study provided implications for further research that examines the transnational parents’ experiences.

The presentation of the studies done on WFB revealed a gap and need for this research. The lack of attention paid to the WFB experiences of parents, especially mothers, managing children across borders is therefore one of the main impetus driving this study. Evidently, the findings from this study should have implications that are far reaching.
Theoretical Lens: Interpretivism & Cho and Allen’s Work Family Balance

The overarching theoretical lens used for this study is interpretivism. Along with this lens, I will use certain key concepts and propositions from Cho and Allen’s (2018) framework on WFB to analyze and interpret my findings.

Interpretivism

Interpretivism argues that humans construct knowledge while they are interpreting their experiences (Crotty, 1998). It looks for “culturally, derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998. p. 67). According to Pascale (2011) interpretivist believe that, “In order to understand a situation … researchers must understand the meanings the situation holds for the participants, not just their behaviors” (p. 23). Thus, one of the aims of interpretivism is for the researcher and participants to account and ascribe their own meanings to their social world. These meaningful interpretations are seen as constructions.

According to Greene (2010),

Interpretivist knowledge comprises the reconstruction of inter–subjective meanings, the interpretive understanding of the meanings humans construct in a given context and how these meanings interrelate to form a whole. Any given interpretive reconstruction is idiographic, time– and place–bound; multiple reconstructions are pluralistic, divergent, even conflictual. (p. 68).

Interpretivism as a theoretical lens allows me to gain access into the participants experiences by examining the meanings formed in their minds, examining how they see the world and how their beliefs and practices are formed.

Cho and Allen (2018) WFB

Cho and Allen (2018) proposed a unique way to view WFB of transnationals. The authors describe WFB in the context of transnational employees as “a global intrapersonal assessment of the extent that an exchange of resources is mutually beneficial and satisfactory to the focal employee and to his/her role/related partners and that the traded resources satisfy cross-
domain demands” (Cho & Allen 2018, p. 8). Demands refer to “structural or psychological claims associated with role requirements, expectations, and norms to which individuals must respond or adapt by exerting physical, or mental effort” and resources are “structural or psychological assets that may be used to facilitate performance, reduce demands, or generate additional resources” (Voydanoff, 2005, p. 823). I used this definition of WFB to frame my study because previous conceptualizations of WFB do not highlight the unique context of transnational families such as the cross-domain demands across international border and the resource exchanges such as remittances.

Transnational families face unique challenges to maintain their family because of their physical separation across international borders. Some of the challenges include logistic, financial and legal issues (e.g., costs and advanced planning for international travel, legal permits to enter and exit countries, cost of communication, sending money and goods) (Baldassar, 2007; Wilding & Baldassar, 2009). They typical interact through the exchange of various resources (Carrasco, 2010; Maimbo & Ratha, 2005; Wilding, 2006), and Cho and Allen’s (2018) conceptualization and frameworks, nicely captures these dynamics, as they recognize the importance of these elements as being the most influential piece of transnational’s WFB.

To satisfy cross-domain demands, resource exchange is essential in maintaining familial ties of transnational mothers. Resources such as financial remittances (Maimbo & Ratha, 2005; Massey & Emilio, 1994), social remittance (i.e., ideas and practices that are transferred by transnationals that influence the transnational family’s social relations and identities; Carrasco, 2010; Levitt, 2001), and emotional support through various forms of communication such as letters, telephone, email, and video call (Wilding, 2006). Thus, examining transnational mothers
exchange of these demands will help us better understand their WFB experiences and capture how they are able to challenges associated with such.

This study will use Cho and Allen’s definition of WFB to assess Jamaican transnational mothers in the study WFB. Additionally, it will use some of the dimensions and prepositions that were used in the framework to organize and interpret the findings of this study. Considering the qualitative nature of this study, the model will loosely guide this research, and will only serve as a support to the emergent findings. There is no known study that has attempted to use this model.

The propositions are listed below followed by his representation of the model in Figure 2.1 (Cho & Allen, 2018):

Proposition 1. The human capital of the transnational employee positively relates to WFB;

Proposition 2. The location of the transnational employee influences WFB such that the cultural distance of the transnational employee’s location negatively relates to WFB

Proposition 3. Degree of spatial and temporal dispersion negatively relates to WFB.

Proposition 4. Length of separation negatively relates to WFB

Proposition 5. The human capital of the transnational employee interacts with length of separation in predicting WFB such that the impact of length of separation is weaker among employees with higher human capital than employees with lower human capital.

Proposition 6. The location of the transnational employee interacts with length of separation in predicting WFB such that the impact of location is weaker among employees who have been separated from family members for a longer time than employees who are separated for a shorter time.

Proposition 7. Length of separation interacts with degree of dispersion in predicting WFB.
such that the impact of length of separation is stronger among employees whose family members are more temporally dispersed than employees whose family members are less temporally dispersed.

Figure 2.1. Cho & Allen (2018) conceptual model of work-family balance among transnational families.

**Summary**

This chapter introduced the historical and sociological context that will be used to frame the experiences of Jamaican Transnational Mothers. Additionally, it presented an overview on literature relating to WFB, gender, and transnational motherhood. Finally, it presented the theoretical lens that was used to view the study.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The review of literature indicated that understanding the WFB experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers was critical. Further, the literature also illuminated the historical and sociological factors that shape Jamaican transnational mothers’ experiences. This chapter’s aim is to provide a detailed description of the methodology used in this investigation. To begin, I detail my role in this study including how my ontological and epistemological position shaped the study’s guiding research question, methodology, and methods to sample participants, manage the data, and guide my ethical decision-making.

Researcher’s Positionality

As a Jamaican woman who immigrated alone more than 16 years ago, I came to know the experience of leaving culture, family, and friends only to develop an unrelenting longing for something familial. Becoming a mother while working and developing as a young professional gave my life more meaning, but it also presented many challenges. For example, as an immigrant parent, I raised my family in a different culture, not having the social or kinship network in which to rely on for help with childrearing. Further, I also did not have adequate access to resources to meet the needs of my growing family. Despite these obstacles, I was eventually able to come into my own and step into this new dimension of my identity successfully. However, unlike many other Jamaican immigrants, I was afforded the opportunity to raise my children in the U.S. As a result, I am a transnational parent. Although I was raised as a transnational child, navigating motherhood in a foreign country and maintaining relations with family members across international borders created numerous challenges. Recognizing that my personal immigration experience is different from the experience of other immigrant mothers, I sought to explore a deeper understanding and meaning behind the experiences of participants in this study.
The Jamaican immigrant population is of personal interest to me as I have seen and experienced first-hand, the consequences of the emigration of Jamaican mothers. I know many Jamaican children and parents who have struggled and many who continue to struggle with maintaining their transnational families. Even for me, it almost became my reality when I was a child. I remember while growing up that my mother would tell my sisters and me, “you know how many times mi coulda gone a farrin, but mi never wah leave unno” [Translated, “You know how many times I could have gone to [a] foreign [country], but I never wanted to leave you all.”] Despite having a tough life in Jamaica, my mother stayed with us and she declined many opportunities she had to emigrate, as she would have been unable to bring us all with her. Even though my mother did not emigrate, I am endlessly humbled by the demonstrated strength and courage of mothers who choose to leave their children behind, and in turn having to deal with a life of despair and uncertainty.

My experiences as a Jamaican immigrant in the U.S. give me insight that influenced my subjectivity. My personal knowledge and experience on managing work and family can also bias my understanding of the phenomenon being studied. I am aware of the effect that my preconceptions and assumptions might have on the research process and used bracketing – suspending my beliefs, attitude, and opinions – to mitigate its consequences on my analysis of data. My hope as a social science researcher is to lead and inspire change for these families who immigrate, and to recognize and celebrating these transnational mothers who have endured a rough path. For me, this study marks the beginning of a personal journey that focuses on ameliorating gaps in WFB research, practices, and policies that seldom incorporate the needs of the immigrant population.
Epistemology

According to Crotty (2003, p. 10), ontology is “the study of being” and gives answers to the question of “what kind of world we are investigating, what is the nature of existence, what is the structure of reality.” The epistemological position used for this paper is constructionism. Constructionism argues that an objective world does not exist and that no one can really know truth and knowledge. We cannot really measure and observe it (Pring, 2004). The realm of reality exists even without us being aware of it, and that it is within ourselves, within our consciousness that we create meaning. According to Crotty (1998), we create reality by observing, measuring, and applying meaning. Within this reality, knowledge is viewed as grounded in an individual’s perspective. Thus, social phenomena and its meaning is never truly complete and meaning are constructed and influenced by our own background, history, and socio-cultural contexts. This research study is aligned with the constructionism approach as it assumes that Jamaican transnational mothers co-constructed the meaning of their experiences with work-life balance instead of discovering them. The researcher is aware that factors such as their preconceptions, cultural background, personal experience with the topic affected the data gathering, analysis and interpretation of the data, and approached all data sources (such as transcripts and documents) objectively and without prior meaning attached.

Crotty (2003, p. 3) described epistemology as “a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know.” Further, “it provides the psychological basis which determines the definition, nature of knowledge, and what would count as legitimate knowledge,” and “It reflects assumptions about the researcher’s knowledge of reality and the possibilities of this knowledge” (Crotty 2003, p. 8). This research assumed that meaning is co-constructed through
the interaction between the researcher, its subjects, and the data, collected and interpreted within the context of this study.

**Methodology**

A qualitative design was chosen for this study because I sought to make meaning of the individuals’ lived experience with transnational motherhood. Qualitative research is often used when there is a need to “understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (Merriam, 1998, p. 5). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) defined this approach as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world [that] involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world” (p. 3). Thus, this study employed a qualitative methodology.

Creswell (2002) suggested three considerations for determining an approach to a research study:

(a) Fitting the approach to the audience;

(b) Relating the researcher’s experiences to an approach;

(c) Matching the approach to the research problem.

To this end, I determined that a qualitative approach was the most appropriate. Specifically, a phenomenological approach is the best way to gain a greater understanding of the Jamaican transnational mothers experience with transnational motherhood (Moustakas, 1994).

**Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is described as the study of lived experiences in which the researcher explores and articulates deep and hidden meanings of the experiences of the participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). My role as a Researcher was to closely assess how participants understood a specific phenomenon while it was occurring in their world. Specifically, I aimed to examine how participants described their WFB experience as well as their experience with the
immigration policies in the U.S., and aimed to determine what they all had in common by reducing “individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). The essence of the phenomenon was revealed through a “systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10). In this study, I was able to examine the lived experiences of transnational mothers as a way to better understand the essence of their shared experiences. While using phenomenology, I also used an interpretive theoretical perspective to frame their experiences, which included aspects of Cho’s and Allen’s (2018) framework of WFB of transnational employees.

Moustakas (1994) argued that “a phenomenological approach seeks to better understand experiences, meanings, perceptions”, and “not explanations or analyses” (p. 58) and “it does not seek to predict or determine causal relationships” (p. 105). He (1994) further argued that the “phenomenological approach seeks to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon from participants who share a common experience,” such as transnational motherhood. The word phenomenon originated from the Greek word *phaenesthai*, which means “to flare up, to show itself, to appear” and “any phenomenon represents a suitable starting point for an investigation” (Moustakas, p. 26). The phenomenological approach involves four major processes. Namely, *epoché*, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. Below summarizes the major process.

**Epoché**

Epoché is the German term for bracketing, and these two words are used interchangeably in the research literature. When using bracketing, the researcher sets “aside his or her presuppositions, biases, prejudgments, and knowledge about the phenomenon to be free to
explore the lived experience with open and fresh eyes” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Further, the approach allows the researcher to:

See the phenomenon that is being investigated through a fresh and naïve lens so that the researcher’s biases that have been gained from what he or she has learned to know as fact is cleared away or tabled to make room for obtaining new knowledge. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85).

Epoché is how we “invalidate, inhibit, and disqualify all commitments with reference to previous knowledge and experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). This technique is also “a way of creating an atmosphere and rapport for conducting the interviews” and begins before the initial review of the literature (Moustakas, 1994, p. 181). Epoché, is the first major process undertaken in the phenomenological study.

*Phenomenological Reduction*

Phenomenological reduction necessitates that the researcher describes “in textural language,” what they observe (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90) and the process “is not only a way of seeing but a way of listening with a conscious and deliberate intention of opening ourselves to phenomena as phenomena, in their own right, with their own textures and meanings” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 92). Phenomenological reduction focuses on the quality of the experiences, and its “goal is to discover the nature and the meaning of the experience,” and it “involves a pre-reflective description of things just as they appear and a reduction to what is horizontal and thematic” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 91).

*Imaginative Variation*

After phenomenological reduction, the next stage is imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). The main purpose of imaginative variation is to come to a “structural differentiation among the infinite multiplicities of actual and possible cognitions, that relate to the object in question and thus can somehow go together to make up the unity of an identifying synthesis”
Moustakas argued that the main purpose of imaginative variation “is to grasp the structural essences of experience” (p. 35). “The process of imaginative variation results in a description that portrays the conditions and context of the experience, or stated more succinctly “a structural description of the essences of the experience is derived” (Moustakas, p. 35).

Textural and Structural Descriptions

The final process, after imaginative variation, is the finding of the essence. This is done through the synthesizing of the meanings and the essences of the lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). Arriving at this ‘knowledge of essence’ is an arrival that is “never totally exhausted” (Moustakas, p. 100) for “the fundamental textural-structural synthesis represents the essences at a particular time and place from the vantage point of an individual researcher following an exhaustive imaginative and reflective study of the phenomenon” (p. 100).

Participant Selection

The sampling strategy used in this study was, a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling techniques (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposeful sampling techniques are used when the researcher aims to select a group or individuals who are knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest. Snowball sampling techniques are used “when the researcher approaches members of a specific population who are accessible and then asks them to suggest other individuals whom they know of in that population to approach for an interview” (Rubin & Babbie, 2010, p. 45). I began participant selection by sending a text message to known Jamaican immigrants and asked them if they knew anyone who might fit all the following criteria:

(1) Legally immigrated to the U.S. from Jamaica;
(2) Have or had a dependent under the age of 18 residing in Jamaica while living and working in the U.S.;

(3) Currently employed in the U.S. workforce fulltime (at least 30 hours per week), or was previously employed in the US workforce fulltime (at least 30 hours per week) according to the Affordable Health Care Act’s (2009) definition of fulltime employment;

(4) Working or worked for at least 6 months in the U.S., and finally;

(5) Identify as a mother.

These criteria were purposeful and allowed the participants to adequately reflect on their experiences both as a Jamaican transnational mother and as an employee.

The text message outlined the six criteria required to be a participant. Along with the text message, a letter was attached that introduced myself, stated the purpose of the study, described the research and clarified the criteria, procedures, confidentiality, and risks and benefits of participants in the study. In an attempt to get more participants, I asked my Jamaican contacts to share this letter with possible participants and requested their permission to share their contact information. After this text message was sent, the contacts that knew individuals that fit the criteria, after seeking permission to share contact information, sent me the telephone number of participants who were interested in participating. After the participant information was received, I contacted each participant via telephone. During the initial telephone call, I reviewed the purpose of the study, answered their questions, asked for their participation, and if they were willing to participate, scheduled an interview date and time. A follow-up message was texted to everyone who verbally agreed to participate in the study. The message thanked them for their willingness to participate, stated the interview date and time, and provided a link to view the informed consent form, and electronic signature form (See APPENDIX A).
I recommended completing an informed consent form immediately after establishing the research procedures, but before data collection began (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). The elements of the informed consent form were as follows: who was conducting the study, why the participants were selected, the study’s purpose, time commitment, benefits to be expected, potential risks and how they were managed, rights, confidentiality, personal contacts and questions. A copy of the informed consent form was provided to the participants for their records. All participants electronically signed the consent form prior the scheduled phone interview. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the participants’ characteristics.

Table 3.1. Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Years in the U.S.</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>State of Residence</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanisha</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3 &amp; Pregnant</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Head Chef</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alesia</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2 &amp; Pregnant</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Emergency Room Nurse</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Divorced; currently engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Labor &amp; Delivery Nurse</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Home Health Aide</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2 (1 deceased)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Single; Never Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roneish</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Server</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>Single; Never Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassandra</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Facilities Support Staff</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Divorced; Re-Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fast Food Restaurant Manager</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Divorced; Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzie</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Store Manager</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

On the day of the interview, participants who agreed to the study were sent a reminder one hour before their scheduled interview. At the scheduled time, participants were telephoned for the initial in-depth, 45-60 minutes semi-structured interview. During this time, the purpose of the study, procedures, risks and benefits, confidentiality, and audio recording consent, were reviewed. The informed consent was discussed to ensure that participant understood that participants understood what they were agreeing to do. Following this discussion, each participant was asked to consent to the audio recording acknowledging that they fully understood the study.

After consent was given, demographic questions were asked, and rapport was established. After the collection and discussion of participant demographic information, the researcher then used nondirective, grand-tour questions and floating prompts (See Appendix B) to guide questioning. According to Bhattacharya (2017), grand tour questions are designed to offer details about everyday experiences in a particular setting. Questions were scripted but allowed for the flexibility to adapt the questions to further probe into each participants’ unique experiences. It was important to use such questions to probe key aspects regarding the phenomenon. The questions were phrased in such a way to illicit participants deep reflection about their experience, and the true essence of the phenomenon came from the experiences that was described during the flow of our conversation. Bhattacharya (2017, p. 130) suggested that “grand-tour questions should be phrased in a general and nondirective manner allowing respondents to share their own unique experiences in a way to own terms.” As such, the grand-tour questions focused on the following topics: (a) experience living away from children, (b) challenges and supports, and (c) views of motherhood.
At the start of each interview, I took some time to engage the participants in a conversation so that they would feel relaxed and to build a sense of trust. I began the interview by first asking the participants to describe their experience living away from their children. After their response, I asked follow-up questions and when the discussion would pause, I offered some probing questions and prompts to encourage expand on their experiences.

While the participants were telling their stories, I took notes about concepts they shared that I perceived warranted follow-up or expansion. I also asked additional questions to get more details about their experiences. I continued this process until data saturation occurred. At the end of each interview, I took time to record my thoughts about the process and reflected on follow-up questions or areas that I could have probed deeper. I reflected on things such as the interviewees’ background and whether they seemed at ease and thoughts on whether the participants experienced any part of the interview process as particularly positive or supportive. I also revisited the interview guide to ensure that all questions were answered. After each interview, I became more comfortable in the way I engaged my participants, and this helped with subsequent interviews. It was important that I was comfortable because this made the participants more engaging and open.

All interviews were digitally recorded to capture verbatim language and voice inflections. The transcripts were hand transcribed from digital recordings and sent to participants, along with its analysis, to ensure accuracy. I made a follow-up telephone call to the participants so that they could state any concerns or make any adjustments or to ask any questions. In addition, the researcher read through the transcripts for understanding. Finally, I sent a thank-you note to all participants. Data collected was stored and managed in a locked filing cabinet and saved audio recordings and their transcripts were saved on a secured password protected computer and
backed up on a secure external hard drive. Data were only made accessible to the dissertation supervisor and the researcher.

Transcription process

Each interview was transcribed verbatim from audio recordings as soon after the interviews as possible. Doing my own transcription offered many advantages, such as being able to recall pieces of the interview beyond the words such as non-verbal language such as sighs. I was able to capture the true feelings of the participants as I paid attention to sighs and pauses after a question or an emotional comment that they made. Further, I sought for explanation about what this meant when I heard these during the interview, and note them, and it helped to enhance my understanding of the complexity of the complexities the participants shared. After transcribing the document, I read it through and made sure to correct any misspellings or formatting mistakes. When this was completed, I went through and highlighted any mistakes or inconsistencies and wrote notes about any questions that I had about accuracy of transcription. After this, I listened to the audio once more, so that I could clear up any mistakes.

Ethical Considerations

This study might have posed a risk for the participants as mothers were asked to share their personal account of living away from their children. Mothers often became emotional and uncomfortable but to ensure that I closely followed the guidelines provided by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Louisiana State University to reduce the risk. I ensured that I explained in great detail, the purpose of the research, its potential impact and provided them contact information of the research team and the IRB to address any of their questions or concerns. Further, I provided each participant with an informed consent form outlining all potential risks and benefits prior to interview. I described to them how information collected in the interviews
would be used, and stored, and assured them that they can withdraw themselves from the study if they changed their minds.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers utilize various strategies to make their studies credible and rigorous (Creswell, 2007). Lincoln and Guba propose four criteria to evaluate qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Each criteria advanced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was used in this study to elucidate the methods and findings of this study, and each criteria is presented below and summarized in Table 3.2 presented after.

Table 3.2. Evaluative Criteria used in this study based on Lincoln and Guba (1985)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluative Criteria</th>
<th>Methods Employed in this Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Triangulation &amp; Member Checks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>Rich Thick Descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Audit Trail; Peer Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>Audit Trail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Credibility

Credibility is “the qualitative researcher’s equivalent of internal validity,” a representation of the “truth value” in the interpretation and representation of the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp. 296). Lincoln and Guba present five major techniques for showing credibility:

1. activities that enhance the likelihood that credible findings and interpretations will be produced (prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation);

2. an activity that provides an external check on the inquiry process (peer debriefing);

3. an activity aimed at refining working hypotheses as more information becomes available (negative case analysis);

4. an activity that makes possible checking preliminary findings and interpretations
against archived “raw data” (referential adequacy):

(5) an activity for providing for the direct test of findings and interpretations with the human sources from which they have come – the constructors of the multiple realities being studied (member checking) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301).

This study used two of those criteria: triangulation, and member checking to establish credibility, along with researcher reflexivity. The data was triangulated with the various forms of data that were collected in this study. Triangulation was achieved through the use of multiple sources of data and peer review (Merriam, 2009). Multiple data sources came from the in-depth interviews and with member checking. I conducted follow-up member checks with most of the participants via telephone. I reviewed the participant profiles and the overall findings of the study to ensure that I properly captured their thoughts and feelings, and the meanings associated with them, as expressed during their interviews. All of the participants that I spoke with confirmed the accuracy of the data collected.

Peer review was done by a skilled qualitative researcher as myself who reviewed the interview transcripts, data analysis process, and overall findings and corroborated the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. The other researcher possesses a doctoral degree, has participated in at least one other qualitative research project and is familiar with the coding process. This offers two key advantages. First, multiple investigators enhance the creative potential of the study. Second, the convergence of observations from multiple investigators enhances confidence in the findings (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Researcher reflexivity pertains to the analytic attention given to the researcher's role in qualitative research. Reflexivity is:

A process of introspection on the role of subjectivity in the research process and it is a continuous process of reflection by researchers on their values and of recognizing, examining,
and understanding how their social background, location and assumptions affect their research practice” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 17).

Throughout the research, I engaged in the active reflection and documenting of my values and preconceptions and how they affect my approach, understanding and interpretation of the research. I acknowledged the importance of being self-aware of my role in the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data, and in the pre-conceived assumptions, that I bring to the research. Reflexive notes were made and kept throughout the data collection process. The reflexive notes included notes made during the interview itself and while transcribing the audio tape and analyzing the transcript.

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the findings of qualitative research can be used or applied to other contexts or settings with other respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through “rich, thick” description. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985):

The qualitative researcher must provide enough detail about a context to (1) impart a vicarious experience of it, and (2) facilitate judgments about the extent to which working hypotheses from that context might be transferable to a second similar context.

In this study, there is a rich account of descriptive data, which includes the context in which the research was carried out, its setting, sample, sample size, sample strategy, demographic, inclusion and exclusion criteria, interview procedure and excerpts from the interview guide. This provides a basis that can help reader to assess whether findings are transferrable to a particular setting. The “rich, thick” description of the nine participants’ responses that consented to be interviewed for this research study will be presented verbatim in Chapter 4.
Dependability

Guba (1981) argued that there is no credibility without dependability and suggests that establishing credibility is sufficient in establishing the dependability. Dependability is synonymous to reliability, and in quantitative research it is achieved when a study can be replicated or repeated under the same circumstances in another location and at another time. Any deviations that are found between the replicated study is usually attributed to unreliability, or error (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, however, research designs are emergent, and changes are made consciously. In addition, emergent designs do not allow an exact duplication of a study, especially since a second inquirer may have a different interpretation and analysis of the same data. Thus, the qualitative researcher defines “dependability” to mean “stability” in research design (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also suggest that one way to further establish dependability is by having an audit trail which transparently describe the steps that the researcher took from the beginning of the research project to the development and reporting of the findings. The records used in this research were also kept throughout the course of the study. Further, these processes and documents were also shared with an independent person who is not a part of the research team to examine the data analysis and interpretation process employed in the study. This process was carried out by a member outside of the research team and further contributed to the dependability of the findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability establishing and showing that data and its interpretations are not simply figments of the researcher’s imagination, but that it was clearly derived from the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) In other words, the interpretation should not be based on the researchers own particular preferences and viewpoints but should be grounded in the data. The process of
interpretation should be embedded in the process of analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the way to accomplish this is also through an audit trail, which was employed and kept throughout this study.

Data Organization and Analysis

Clark Moustakas (1994) offered two methods as guides for analyzing data in phenomenological research, namely, the Modification of the Van Kaam Method and The Modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method. This study used the Modification of the Van Kaam Method. It involves seven steps of phenomenological analysis to come up with a composite meaning and essence of the group’s experience as a whole. I explain these steps in detail, followed by a visual representation of the phenomenological method and analysis.

Step 1: Listing and Preliminary Grouping

The first step was to read the individual participant’s transcript verbatim and reflect on each statement – one word, one phrase, and one line at a time. During this process, the statement’s relevance to the research question was considered: “What are the experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers who balance their work in the US and their children abroad?” The secondary question is, “How do institutional/national policies and culture affect the WLB experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers?” If a statement was important, it was noted and used. This process is referred to as horizontalization.

Horizontalization helps to understanding the nature and meaning of the phenomenon in question (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas’ (1994) emphasized “that although we may come to a stopping point in horizontalizing, horizons are unlimited and it is a never-ending process…” (p. 95). In this investigation, 297 significant statements emerged from my analysis. While listening to the relevant statements, labels or “codes” were constructed and assigned using an open coding
process. This allowed the descriptions of each participant to reveal its own meaning and guide the organization of the data. After this was done, the statements were then organized into two preliminary groups: 1) the experience of WFB of Jamaican Transnational Mothers; and 2) the description of the organization.

Step 2: Phenomenological Reduction and Elimination

Next, the list of horizons was reduced “by eliminating those relevant statements that did not meet certain criteria” as suggested by Moustakas’ (1994, p. 121) modification of the Van Kaam Method. The criteria used were: “(1) does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and a sufficient constituent for understanding it? (2) Is it possible to abstract and label it? If so, it is a horizon of the experience” (Moustakas 1994, p.121). If an expression did not meet these requirements, then they were eliminated. Expressions that were overlapping, repetitive, or vague were also removed or presented in more exact descriptive terms. After this was completed, 79 delimited horizons remained. The horizons that remained represented the invariant constituents of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). After re-analyzing the participant’s relevant statements using the stated criteria, the result was a reduced listing of the relevant statements – “a listing that consisted of relevant statements that were non-repetitive and that significantly and uniquely brought meaning to the participant’s experience.” This allowed for the remaining statements, or otherwise the significant statements, to be “linked thematically...” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96). These significant statements are called “invariant constituents” (Moustakas, p. 96).

Step 3: Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents

In the third stage of analysis, the invariant constituents were clustered and assigned thematic labels to represent the core themes of the participants’ experience in regard to the
research question of this study. Next, I grouped the invariant constituents into themes, by carefully examining each significant statement so that the meaning of the textural qualities that parallel with the participant’s experience could be understood. This led to the development of the core themes of each participant’s experience as guided by imaginative variation. According to Moustakas (1994) “through imaginative variation the researcher understands that there is not a single inroad to truth, but that the countless possibilities emerge that are intimately connected with the essences and meanings of an experience” (p. 99). Further, imaginative variation “enables the researcher to derive structural themes from the textural descriptions that have been obtained through Phenomenological Reduction” (Moustakas, p. 99).

Step 4: Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes

Conducting the final identification of the invariant constituents and themes involved interpreting it against the complete record of each participant. As such, I double-checked to see if the invariant constituents were explicitly expressed in the participant’s transcript. If they were not explicitly expressed, then I checked to see if they were compatible. If they were neither explicitly expressed nor compatible, then the statements/expressions were eliminated. The end product was a final list of core themes constructed from each participant’s transcript. These core themes and the associated invariant constituents gave meaning to each participant’s experience of WFB of Jamaican transnational mothers.

Step 5: Individual Textural Description of Experience

Using the participant’s invariant constituents and their associated themes, a textural description of the participant’s experience was constructed. This meant that a description of what the participant experienced as it related to the phenomenon was constructed. The individual textural descriptions helped answer the research questions: “What are the experiences
of Jamaican transnational mothers who balance their work in the US and their children abroad?” As well as “how does the institutional/national policies and culture affect the WLB experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers?” With this understanding, insights were gained into how the study contributed to the knowledge base.

**Step 6: Individual Structure of Experience**

Using imaginative variation and the participant’s textural description, an individual structural description was created from each participant’s response to provide a “frame of reference” for their experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Essentially, I constructed a description of *how* the participant experienced the phenomenon. The structural description represents an “understanding of the underlying structures” that account for their experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 137) regarding the context, situations, or conditions (Creswell, 2007). A structural description is “the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced”; and “by speaking to the conditions that were present during the experience, the structural description illuminates the ‘what’ of [the] experience” (Moustakas, p. 98).

This step showed how participants described their lived experiences of balancing work and family abroad. When the data was presented in this form, it brought forth interesting advancements in layering participants’ meaning. By mobilizing the composite textural descriptions, we were able to observe several interesting connections with the data and the study’s literature, which was an indication that I was approaching meaningful coherence. Deeper analysis of data was needed so at this stage Moustakas’ (1994) imaginative variation technique was employed. I pursued meaning by using “imagination, varying frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from diverse perspectives” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). By asking questions of the data, I negotiated through a number of
conceptual and theoretical possibilities through which this study could be positioned. However, as noted earlier, certain concepts from Cho and Allen’s (2018) WFB conceptual framework and an interpretive lens would be used to anchor this study. These lenses helped me to reconcile the messiness of Moustakas’ (1994) imaginative variation technique. What emerged from this process was a composite structural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994),

*Step 7: Individual Textural-Structural Description of Experience*

After constructing the textural description, i.e., the what, and the structural description, i.e., the how, of the participant’s experience, a textural-structural description of the participant’s experience with the phenomenon was constructed. The textural-structural description summarized what the participant experienced as well as how the participant experienced the phenomenon. The textural-structural description also combined the invariant constituents from the participant’s transcript along with the associated themes. Using the lens mentioned above to drive the analysis, I returned to the delimited horizon, and was able to reduce the 97 delimited horizons to four themes and six subthemes, suggesting that data supported the framework.

*The Final Product: The Essence of the Experience*

Finally, there was a synthesis of “all of the individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122). Constructing a composite textural-structural description is the final step in the process of phenomenological reduction and “represents the essences at a particular time and place from the vantage point of an individual researcher following an exhaustive imaginative and reflective study of the phenomenon,” regarding the phenomenon itself (Moustakas, p. 100). As Husserl opined (as cited in Moustakas, 1994), this final step is “the establishment of a knowledge of essences” (p. 100). This final step represents the findings of this study as it relates to what it is
like to balance work and family abroad, the experience of transnational motherhood WFB, and is presented in Chapter 4: Findings. (See Figure 3.1)

Figure 3.1. The phenomenological process adapted from Moustakas (1994)

**Summary**

This chapter began with an overview of the research questions, the epistemological position of the study and its methodology. I align with the constructionism epistemology and used the phenomenological method to carry out the study. I further provided great detail of the data collection procedures, the sample selection and the procedures that were used to record the data. I explained the purposeful and snowball method of selecting participants, how the interview was carried out, and steps taken to ensure trustworthiness and rigor of research. Using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) evaluative criteria for qualitative research, I described how the study met the criteria for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I used triangulation and member checking, rich thick descriptions, audit trails, and peer review as a way to establish these
criteria. Finally, the procedures used to analyze the data were presented which was done according to Van-Kaam seven-step phenomenological analysis. In the next chapter an in-depth look into the lives and experiences (as they report them) of the transnational mothers will be used to frame the discussion of the data in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

This section is divided into three main sections with each section culminating with a summary. First, the chapter presents a profile of the participants who were interviewed. Second, the major themes identified are highlighted.

Findings from participants interviews are organized under four emergent categories from Cho and Allen (2018) framework: human capital, degree of dispersion, location, and length of separation. In the human capital dimension, two sub-themes are discussed: Low wages, job security, and limited access to financial resources, and skin color, language, accent, and stereotypes. Regarding location, two themes were discussed: gender and cultural barriers as well as negotiating roles and norms. One subtheme was discussed under the degree of dispersion dimension; namely, significant emotional difficulties being separated across transnational space and time. Finally, I discussed one subtheme under the length of separation dimension; immigration policy as barriers. The third and final section presents a summary of the study’s overall findings as they relate to the study’s major research questions.

Participant Profiles

This section presents an overall descriptive and demographic profile of the participants that includes information of their transnational motherhood status. This information is important as it helps the reader to get to know and understand the background of each of the participants. Nine Jamaican transnational mothers participated in this study. Each selected the pseudonym (for anonymity) that are used in the profile. They are: Tanisha, Alesia, Evelyn, Martha, Joy, Roneish, Cassandra, Mary, and Suzie. Table 4.1 summarizes participants’ personal characteristics regarding their transnational life.
Table 4.1. Participant’s Demographic Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Mother’s Age at the time of Immigration</th>
<th>Reason for Immigration</th>
<th>Type of Immigration</th>
<th>Transn. children gender</th>
<th>Children’s age at the time of immigration</th>
<th>Number of Years Separated from Child(ren)</th>
<th>Childcare arrangement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanisha</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Family Sponsorship</td>
<td>3 boys</td>
<td>5yrs; 2 yrs; 3 months</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Children’s Father &amp; Aunt (Maternal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alesia</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Family Sponsorship</td>
<td>1 boy &amp; Pregnant</td>
<td>3yrs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Child’s Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Family Sponsorship</td>
<td>1 boy</td>
<td>7yrs</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Child’s Grand-parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Family Sponsorship</td>
<td>2 boys 4 girls</td>
<td>Boys-25yrs; 13yrs. Girls- 22yrs; 13yrs; 11yrs; 6yrs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Children’s older siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Family Sponsorship</td>
<td>1 boy; 1 girl</td>
<td>22yrs; 14yrs (died two years ago)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Child’s Aunt &amp; Older sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roneish</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Family Sponsorship</td>
<td>1 girl</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Child’s Grand-aunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassandra</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Family Sponsorship</td>
<td>2 boys</td>
<td>13yrs; 9yrs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Children’s Grand-parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table cont’d.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Mother’s Age at the time of Immigration</th>
<th>Reason for Immigration</th>
<th>Type of Immigration</th>
<th>Transn. children gender</th>
<th>Children’s age at the time of immigration</th>
<th>Number of Years Separated from Child(ren)</th>
<th>Childcare arrangement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Family Sponsorship (Spouse)</td>
<td>2 girls 1boy</td>
<td>Girls- 14yrs, 7yrs Boy- 12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Boarding School &amp; Children’s Father Dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzie</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Personal Change</td>
<td>Family Sponsorship (Spouse)</td>
<td>2 boys</td>
<td>10 and 11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Cousin &amp; Dad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tanisha**

I recruited Tanisha as someone who was within my social network. I know members of her extended family and she was nominated by one of them. At first, she agreed to do the interview, and on the day of her scheduled interview she cancelled. I offered her the option of rescheduling, but she declined. I asked her to reach out to me if she changed her mind, which she did one week later. At this time, she consented to participate in the study.

Tanisha is a 32-year-old woman. She immigrated to the U.S. from Jamaica over eight years ago, leaving her three sons who at the time, were five years, two years, and three months old. Her children all had different fathers, two of whom were absent from their lives. She came to the U.S through family-based sponsorship by way of her mother. She currently works as a head chef at a prominent seafood restaurant in New York. She was unemployed before she immigrated and has worked several jobs in the restaurant and clothing industry over the last eight years. She does not have a GED or high school diploma.

While residing in Jamaica, her household consisted of her two younger sons, her boyfriend, who is also the father of her youngest son (3 months old at that time), his child and his mother. Tanisha’s oldest son was living with her maternal aunt, in another city in Jamaica. At the time of her emigration, this household arrangement remained the same. She currently lives with her fiancé of two years; his three children and she was pregnant with her fourth child during data collection. For the first six years of her immigration, she lived with her mother, and sometimes moved back and forth between her cousin’s and her mothers’ houses. She has lived away from her sons for over eight years and has not seen them.

**Alesia**

Alesia was personally recruited as she was someone that I knew who met the study’s criteria. She volunteered to be interviewed when she learned about my study. Alesia was a 33-
year-old woman. She immigrated to the U.S. from Jamaica over 10 years ago, leaving one child who was three years old at the time of her immigration. She came to the U.S through sponsorship by way of her spouse who is a U.S. citizen. However, her and her ex-husband divorced within three years of marriage. She currently works as a nurse at a hospital in Florida. Before immigration, she worked in a supermarket and had a high school diploma. In the first year of immigration, she was unemployed but worked as a receptionist in a property management company after one year.

Alesia graduated nursing school two years ago and currently lives with her fiancé of four years. She has a son (age nine) with her ex-husband, who was born in the U.S. She shares joint custody with her ex-husband, so he only lives with her on the weekend. Alesia is currently three months pregnant. Her other son, who she had before immigrating, currently lives in Jamaica but was present during my follow up interview. During the first interview, she revealed “his papers came through,” meaning that his immigration filing paperwork would soon be approved for him to legally immigrate to the U.S. Although she was residing in Jamaica, she lived with her son and his father. Her son was left with him after she immigrated. She has been living apart from her son for over ten years, but he visits her on average once per year, and at times, for a period of up to two months.

**Evelyn**

Evelyn was 55 years old. She left her son to come to the U.S. and he was seven years old at the time of her immigration. She has been living in the U.S. for over 22 years. She immigrated for educational opportunities as a student. She felt that she did not have enough educational and work opportunities while living in Jamaica, leading her to studying in the U.S. Her parents encouraged her to seek out this option, as she felt that she would be better off utilizing opportunities that the U.S. offered. As a student in U.S., she struggled with depression and...
dropped out after the first year, then she got married to a U.S. citizen, which eventually granted her path to permanent residence.

Evelyn’s son has been reunited with her after 22 years of separation. He now lives with her and is in his first year at a University nearby. She currently lives in Florida where she works as a labor and delivery nurse in a hospital. While living in Jamaica, she also worked as a nurse and lived with her father, stepmother, and her son. Evelyn lived in the Cayman Islands for a few years prior coming to the U.S. and left her son in the care of her parents. Her son’s father is not present in their life.

**Martha**

Martha is a 51-year-old woman who has six children. She first immigrated to the Cayman Islands where she worked for two years while her children resided in Jamaica. She then moved from the Cayman Islands to the U.S. She worked as a home health aide in Jamaica and Cayman Island prior coming to the U.S., then after immigrating to the U.S. she continued to work as a home health aide at a nursing home. She immigrated based on family sponsorship from her mother and the main reason for immigrating was to gain access to better economic opportunities. She currently lives in Connecticut with her child’s father but stated that she is single and is only trying to “help him out” by giving him a place to stay. She immigrated to the U.S. ten years ago.

At the time of Marthas’s immigration, she left her six children in Jamaica; four under the age of 18. She has two boys 25 and 13 years at the time of immigration), and four girls, aged 22, 13, 11, and six at the time of her immigration to the U.S. One of her daughters, (one of the twins, who is now 23) was living with her and attends the university nearby. Another one of her children, is currently living in the Cayman Island where they were born. She stated that her oldest son (25 years old) was a police officer at the time of immigration and her second child (23 years old) was attending a University in Jamaica at that time she left. While in Jamaica, she lived
with all her children. Her children have four different fathers. When Cassandra left, her children cared for each other, without any other adult help.

Joy

Joy was a 52-year-old mother. She has a son and a daughter who is now deceased. At the time of her immigration to the U.S. they were 22 and 14 years old respectively. She currently lives in New York and has been living in the U.S. for 11 years but travelled extensively from Jamaica six years prior to that time, staying six months in U.S. out of each year. After she immigrated, she would visit Jamaica at least once per year to see her children. She finds it difficult to tell her story as it is “filled with so many challenges and disappointments.” Disappointments mainly from the recent passing of her daughter, and her ongoing court battle for guardianship for her granddaughter.

Before permanently immigrating, Joy lived in an extended family arrangement consisting of her sister, her nieces and nephews and her two children. When she immigrated, her son, who was 22 at the time, became the head of household, and he along with her sister (their Aunt) took care of his sister and other children in the household. Both of her children had different fathers, who were not a part of their lives. Joy lives alone but is currently seeking guardianship for her granddaughter, who is the child of her deceased daughter. She stated that her granddaughter is like a daughter to her, as her mother (the child’s mother) died when she was as the tender age of one year old and knows no other mother. Even though Joy acknowledged that this study was about her experiences of motherhood of her own children, she offered to share information on her granddaughter, which helped to give a full picture of her story.

Her granddaughter was born in the U.S., but she currently lives in Jamaica with her son and daughter-in-law until all her (granddaughter’s) legal documents are sorted out. Joy shared that her daughter passed two years ago at the age of 23 from cancer, and she is still grieving so
she finds her experience difficult to share. She lamented how difficult it has been because she
died within six months of her cancer diagnosis. She shared how her granddaughter is God’s gift
to her as it gave her the opportunity “to do it right this time” and sees her as a second chance at
“mothering.”

**Roneish**

Roneish was a 23-year-old mother who immigrated from Jamaica three years ago. When
she immigrated, she was pregnant and gave birth to her daughter in the U.S. but sent her to
Jamaica about one year after her birth. Roneish’s daughter is currently living with her Aunt in
Jamaica and she working to reunite with her daughter.

Roneish sent her daughter to Jamaica a few months after she was born, due to financial
hardship that she faced, especially with childcare. Roneish felt that it was difficult to manage her
child as she did not have anyone to help her with childcare. She also said that the cost of daycare
was more than she could afford. Roneish has been separated from her daughter for about two
years. She is not in contact with her daughters’ father as he does not wish to be a part of her
daughter’s life. Roneish immigrated through family-based sponsorship from her Mother. Roneish
was living by herself at the time of data collection. While living in Jamaica she lived with both
of her aunts and did not have any formal employment. In Jamaica, she worked as a Beautician.
Currently she works as a server at a prominent restaurant in New Jersey. The main purpose of
her immigration was for better financial opportunities.

**Cassandra**

Cassandra was a 57-year-old mother who first came to the U.S. at the age of 37. For a
short period prior to her immigration, she lived and worked in Tortola. She had two boys, who
were 13 and nine at the time of her immigration. When she immigrated, she left her sons with her
parents, her stepmother, her father and her other siblings. The boys have different fathers, both of
whom are inactive in their lives. Prior to her immigration she also lived with her parents and other sibling. She stated that the main reason for her immigration was because of financial reasons. She has lived apart from her children and has not seen them in over 15 years.

Cassandra first came to the U.S. as a visitor, but shortly met her spouse, a U.S. citizen shortly thereafter. She is currently divorced, Cassandra stated that her first years after immigration were difficult as her husband was incarcerated shortly after they were married, and she struggled to make ends meet without him. She stated that she is single. She currently works as a facility support staff. While living in Jamaica she worked as a secretary at a Governmental organization.

Mary

Mary was a 55-year-old mother, who left Jamaica at the age of 45. She has three children, two daughters aged 14 and seven, and a son aged 12 at the time of her immigration. When she immigrated, her two oldest children, the girl (14 years old) and boy, were in boarding school, and the youngest (seven year-old girl) lived with her husband. All her children share the same father. While residing in Jamaica, she lived with her children and her husband and worked at a food factory. The main reason for her immigration was for economic purposes.

Mary’s immigration was through family sponsorship via her spouse. She immigrated first as a part of a work program but did not return to Jamaica after she stopped working. Subsequently, she temporarily lost legal status. Then, she got married a couple years after to a U.S. citizen, and dissolved her marriage to her first husband in Jamaica. She immigrated with the intention of bringing her children shortly after, but her hopes of reunification has not been accomplished yet. She has seen her children three times within the last 10 years of her separation. She currently works in Florida at a fast-food restaurant as a manager.
Suzie

Suzie was recruited from within my personal network from a close friend. She was very cooperative in the interview but offered few details about her story. She felt like her experience has been challenging but she was successfully managing her life and believes there is no point to focus on the negative experiences but on the positive. Suzie was a 36-year-old mother with two boys who were 10 and 11 years old at the time of her immigration. She has been separated from her children for seven years. Her children have different fathers, one of whom is an absentee father, who does help with his parenting responsibilities.

Suzie’s oldest child was left in the care of his father and the other, with her cousin. While residing in Jamaica, she lived with her cousin and worked in wholesale. She grew up with her cousin and her Mother immigrated to England when she was a teenager. Her main reason for immigration was for personal reasons. She said she did not have financial issues in Jamaica but needed a change in environment. She currently lives in Florida where she works as a store manager at Payless.

Presentation of Findings

This section presents the findings that emerged from the study. The findings emerged by conflating the textural-structural descriptions and using Cho and Allen’s (2018) framework, as an anchor to ground the study’s findings and a lens. Four major themes were identified:

(a) human capital;
(b) degree of dispersion;
(c) location;
(d) length of separation.

Each major theme contains sub-themes that are interpreted as elements of meaning of the major themes. Table 4.2 summarizes the themes. An integration of the four themes forms the
phenomenon’s essence, i.e., Jamaican Transnational Mothers who balanced work and family across borders found meaning in their experiences through the constant negotiation of various internal psychological forces and external institutional forces as they exchanged resources with hopes of satisfying the cross-domain demands of their children.

Table 4.2. Emerging Themes and Descriptive Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Summary of Participant’s Responses (Descriptive Statements)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Capital</td>
<td>Low wages, job security, and limited access to financial resources negatively impacted transnational mothers WFB. Additionally, skin color, language, accent, and stereotypes affected their WFB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Living in a foreign country, transnational mothers experienced gender and cultural barriers that negatively impacted their WFB experiences in the U.S. However, they found ways to negotiate their motherhood roles and norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Dispersion</td>
<td>Transnational mothers experienced significant emotional difficulties being separated across transnational space and time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Separation</td>
<td>Transnational mothers experienced significant barriers affecting their WFB, because of restrictive immigration policies in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 1: Human Capital**

Human capital is the group of personal characteristics such as skills, knowledge, abilities, experience, and education that helps a transnational employee to produce economic value (Cho & Allen, 2018). The theme human capital emerged from the findings and had two major sub-themes. Namely: (1) low wages and job security, and limited access to financial resources, and (2) skin color, language, accent, and stereotypes. As such, the theme also reflected the personal characteristics of transnational mothers that served as barriers affecting the resource exchanges between work and family. Therefore, the mothers perceived they had limited personal characteristics that impacted their employment. These in turn affected their financial contribution to their family and made it very difficult for them to attain WFB.

An overwhelming majority of mothers spoke about their current financial situation that directly impacted their experience mothering from a distance and attaining work-family balance. Most mothers in the study had low education level and were from a low socio-economic background. Conversely, some participants had significant work skills and experience, but these did not improve their employment outcomes. Two of the mothers, Evelyn and Cassandra, had post-secondary education and two, Evelyn and Alesia, attained their bachelor’s degree after migration. The other mothers only had a high school diploma or less.

One mother, Cassandra, shared that she received a post-secondary diploma in Jamaica, but the qualifications were overlooked in the U.S., while searching for employment. While searching for jobs in the U.S., she felt like her applications were overlooked whenever they saw that she studied in Jamaica. Joy said that she applied for many jobs but was only hired at a basic level of employment even after she demonstrated competence. She explained,

I remember when a position was open in my company, I asked my supervisor if I should apply, since I meet the job requirements. She told me yes, but at the end of the day I wasn’t even invited to an interview, instead they hired someone from outside. I felt bad because I knew that this was a position that I was well suited for, but evidently they did not see that.

Joy felt as if she was overlooked because of her immigrant identity, and to her, that meant she was “not good enough.”

Other mothers shared similar experiences in which their work experience from Jamaica did not help them to find a job, as most employers were looking for a professional background from the U.S. For example, Joy shared:

After six months of job hunting, I had to eventually pick up a position at a restaurant as a hostess. I thought that since It would have been easy to find a job in the area I was already working in Jamaica, but that was not the case. It’s like they don’t even look at the work experience you have before you come here. No regards. Maybe they look down on
it because your experience was from a third world country. That is not fair, because that is the whole point of coming here and leaving your family, to get better financially.

Mothers lose out on prior human capital as their work experience and sometimes educational qualifications are overlooked. They feel disadvantaged starting from behind. Losing out on prior human capital contributes to their low wages and job security. Mothers shared how they worked multiple jobs and long hours just to make enough money to be able to send remittances. Most mothers shared that they were making close to minimum wage and sent more than three-quarter of their earnings back home in the form of remittances and purchasing goods to send to family. This negatively impacted their WFB. Additionally, they also become aware of the privileges of being “from here” and felt disadvantaged as they were “not from here.” They could see the system of oppression that kept them from getting access to more human capital.

In addition to low wages, mothers overwhelmingly reported that they were from poor backgrounds and did not have access to money outside of their income, except from “help here and there from a friend” (Suzie). When mothers encounter financial difficulties, they do not have access to loans, because they do not have established credit, collateral for a loan, or enough money to repay them back. One mother, Roneish, believed that there are systemic barriers that only work in favor of Americans born in the U.S. In her words “It’s the system, they don’t really want to cater to people like we, you know, they don’t want us come here to depend on their system. They don’t want us to benefit.” Roneish refered to “they,” being the institutions that represents the U.S. Roneish, like Joy, was also aware of how the system oppressed them and kept them from moving forward.

Coming to the U.S. as immigrant mothers felt disadvantaged by the fact they do not have established credit score to engage in financial profitability. Tanisha, for example, shared how it took her many years before she could build enough credit to rent an apartment or afford to
purchase a reliable transportation. “Many times, I wanted to move out of my mother’s house but I couldn’t afford it.” She went on further to express “not even a car I could buy. I went to the dealership but when they ran my credit, they denied me the car.” Alesia also expressed the financial demands placed on her, and the frustration she felt not being able to keep up with the demands because of limited human capital:

Sometimes things come up from back home and the children need extra money and I have to run about trying to find it. Everybody thinks that because you are in foreign, you have to come up with money quick. Because in their minds money grows on trees. And nobody feels sorry for you because you they think America is a bed of roses. But it is not, because people have to work as hell so that they can send the money that they need. They don’t know that you have to live with people to be able to split the bills, and have to live in bad condition, do without, just to get ahead.

Dealing with the lack of human capital made it very difficult, especially because participants felt as if their family members living back home did not understand that this posed direct financial challenges for the mothers. They were limited in their access to typical resources that were not accessible because of their limited human capital thereby causing WFB challenges.

The majority of the participants also spoke about the financial hardship that came about in their lives. Financial hardship resulted from their inability to meet the needs of their family. For example, Martha, after being asked about challenges she faced, frustratingly responded:

They (children and caregivers) call and complain about certain things that you are not sending, and about money. And when they ask for things and you don’t end up buying it because it's expensive and stuff like that, it becomes a problem. And then they call complaining, and you can’t even do nothing about it because you still have to send the money. If you don’t send the money, then they will not be happy.

Martha’s account suggested that if she does not fulfill the monetary demands and expectations of her children and their caregivers, then they would complain and be unhappy. This is frustrating to her, as she feels like she cannot do anything about the situation that arose due to her absence. Tanisha also shared how she experienced financial hardship resulting from her low wages. With a sense of disappointment in her voice she expressed:
It's three kids and the little job that I was working, you know. Even though I was not paying any rent, I had to buy food and stuff like that, and you know traveling back and forth to work. So, the small money that I had working to send for the three of them to help with their lunch money and stuff was not enough. It was hard. Sometimes they want to ask for something extra. Like sometimes they want KFC or pizza, you know. And I can’t afford to buy it for them. So sometimes I avoid talking to them because I do not want them to ask me for money, because I know I do not have it to give to them. I don’t work much and it's hard to find.

Not only that it was difficult to maintain herself financially, but she also struggled to do so for her children. Tanisha felt embarrassed by that such that she would avoid speaking to her children. These feelings of disappointment made it difficult for her to attain WFB.

Suzie also experienced difficulties that affected her ability to meet the financial demands of her children, but added that when sending money, an adequate amount does not get to them. With frustration and disappointment in her voice she expressed:

You know in Jamaica when you send money, whoever is taking care of them has to take half of it for themselves or ¾, and then they spend the quarter or half on the kids. The kids are not getting what they supposed to. And when you pack stuff and send it, then you know, they share it and give away the stuff. So, the kids still have a problem. So, you know that bring up angry feelings and stuff because there's not much you can do. And when you call them, you know you can’t say anything because they’re just going to take it out on the kids.

She is already limited in her financial resources and felt as if the money sent was not used appropriately, and her children would think that she did not send money for them. Having conflicts with the children’s caregiver gives an added layer of stress, affecting mothers WFB.

Evelyn, expressed the that she felt like her parents (the caregiver for her son) and her son, did not understand the financial hardships that she endured while living in the US. In her own words:

Sometimes they may need money for a school trip, and I tried to explain to him that I do not have any more money because I just sent my last. And sometimes they would even get upset with me and make it look as if I do not want to take care of them. And even my son would get mad at me if I don’t send something he asks. He would get upset and do not answer his phone. Sometimes I just get to the point where I say it's better that I just go back home to Jamaica because I do not see how this make sense.
Not being able to send money as often as often and as much as was demanded often led to family conflicts and further guilt and regrets. These financial difficulties made her feel like she was unable to manage work and her family, and that she should giving up and returning back home.

Cassandra’s also described her financial difficulties that kept her from sending money to her children, and also shared how this affected her:

I had to send money and sometimes the work was not flowing for me to send money. Because I have to pay school fees for them, and I was a single mom. I did not have any father that stand up with me. Taking care of my two kids on my own, and all I had was to work hard here and send the money. And sometimes there was no jobs. Sometimes I don’t have any job, or I was not put on schedule to work. So sometimes there were no money. And I didn't save any money back home for them to take care of themselves, so I had to send whatever I work. I have to keep on sending because if they don't have any money I would worry. Sometimes I cry because of all that.

Cassandra’s heartfelt story is similar to that of other mothers. For instance, the participants shared how they do not have as much economic capital to support two households, themselves, or their children. They also struggled with employment, despite having legal status, because of the money they are earning. Most mothers even questioned if they had made the right decision to immigrate to work, since to them, sometimes it seemed as if they were not really better off. These experiences compounded mothers’ ability to satisfy their partners and cross-domain demands, suggesting difficulty in achieving WFB.

In addition to low wages, mothers shared how they often worried about the security of their jobs. They shared how that they would work hard for their employees in hopes that they would not face discrimination since they are immigrants. Additionally, four mothers stated how they made sure that they followed the rules at work closely, because “eyes are always watching”
them, even more than other employees. Joy shared how she often felt singled out at work or attacked:

I am the first one everybody looks at when something happen, they make it seem like they are more competent than me. Always ready to blame or waiting for me to mess up, and whenever I do good things, it’s not like I would get a pat on the back. Instead, they are always ready to tear me down. They do not do that to the Americans. It’s like to them, you don’t really belong, and you constantly have to prove yourself.

The participants also reported that they were singled out because they were immigrants. This made them feel discriminated against. The mothers expressed that other employees looked down on them since they were not born in the U.S. The experiences described above negatively affected the transnational mothers’ WFB as they are often fearful that if they did not act a certain way then they might lose their jobs or be viewed negatively, which would in turn jeopardized their ability to financially support their family. Thus, they felt like they had to endure these negative experiences in order to keep their jobs. Not having adequate human capital further contributed to the mothers continuing to work despite the dealing with the negative attitudes towards them at work. Mothers continuing to work in such environment contributed to the challenges they faced attaining WFB.

Skin Color, Language, Accent, and Stereotypes

Many participants in this study also suggested that factors such as skin color, language, and accent negatively impacted their work family balance experience. In particular, these factors appeared to influence how employees relate to them and some mothers believed it affected other factors at work such as promotion and employment. These factors appeared to be associated with their immigrant identities, however, they were also viewed as barriers in their WFB experience. For example, Evelyn reported she was passed up for a professional development opportunity at her job because of her skin color. She shared:
The entire department was invited to a nursing conference in Mayamar, Florida, but the last minute they had a budget cut, and I was one of three staff that was removed from the list. My supervisor’s excuse was that it was because I was a junior staff. She said that the others senior and had more rights than me. But this was not the case. I felt like they had their cliques, and I was not a part of them. Therefore, exclusion from opportunities appeared to negatively affect the mother’s WFB,
as they perceived that because of their immigrant identity they did not receive the same privileges at work. Cassandra further noted,

You can’t sit at table, or engage in a social interaction at work without your accent coming up. Whether someone laughing and joking about how cute, or cool I talk, or someone asking 1 million time to repeat yourself as if you’re not speaking English.

Joy also shared a similar sentiment “Even in staff meeting, it’s like they don’t take me serious whenever I give my opinion or concerns.” The mothers also shared how they would refrain from interacting in social situations because they did not want to be singled out because of accent. In addition, the participants were often perceived to be uneducated because of their language, in this case local dialect-patoise- and as a result they often refrained from entering professional spaces, out of fear of being judged.

Further, mothers argued that they are often stereotyped at work, which made them uncomfortable. “People hold the view that a lot of us married for papers, so already, people think that you are looking to go around the system. People therefore see us as being dishonest or opportunistic.” This view shared by Mary highlighted how being a Jamaican immigrant automatically led some individuals to a dissenting view about her character. There were other stereotypes that mothers experienced. According to Mary, “people have it to say that Jamaicans don’t worry or care about anything. This make it seems like we are lackadaisical and unserious. They don’t take us seriously when they should.” As a result, the participants felt like they were made aware of their immigrant identities through their accent, language, skin color, and
stereotypes, which they felt, caused people to treat them differently. At work, they were the subject of laughter, scrutiny, and were continuously singled out, based on these factors.

Participants were made aware of how these dynamics affected their human capital at work in the sense that they were placed in marginal positions. Being a Jamaican immigrant, they were led to believe that they are not as competent as other employees, not serious, were different, thereby negatively affecting their WFB. These practices in the workplace made participants unhappy, and uneasy at work, and coworkers discriminatory attitudes made participants often worry about their job security and work environment, further making it difficult to attain WFB.

**Theme 2: Location**

In the second theme, location, the work experiences of the Jamaican transnational mothers will be presented. Supporting evidence for this theme was organized using the following sub-themes:

1. gender and cultural barriers;
2. negotiating motherhood roles and norms.

*Gender and Cultural barriers*

The mothers shared how the U.S. culture affected their WFB experiences. For example, participants described their gendered experience in parenting such that they perceived to be a good mother they had to assume multiple roles, despite the emotional burden associated with the responsibilities. Additionally, they felt pressured to live up to their, U.S., gendered expectations and ideologies of mothers being the primary care giver. The Jamaican mothers also appeared to be socialized to believe that they should fulfill the caregiving role, or they could be subjected to external criticism. Further, the participants reported feelings of guilt when they did not live up to such expectations. For example, Tanisha expressed that the perceptions and attitudes towards her as a transnational mother made her feel like she is not a “good mother.” She expanded:
People talk and say, how do I do it? how do I leave my three kids and so… but you know I do not let that get to my head, you know? I'll make them talk anything they want to talk, because I know my situation. You understand me? Sometimes they even want to mess with my head to make me feel like I am not a good mother. And sometimes I feel guilty, but you know, even though I know that I cannot give them all that I want to give them from here, at least I know I'm giving them something to set them straight in life, do you understand?

Tanisha also harbored guilt because she was mothering from afar, because of others’ attitudes and perceptions of her. As an illustration, she received negative comments that made her feel as though she was not “a good mother.” Despite those feelings, she was confident that her children would have a better life as a result of her decision. The importance the participants placed on being “a good mother” was also articulated by Suzie. When reflecting on motherhood, Suzie shared that felt guilty about leaving her children and also faced judgment by her friends and family. She explained:

So you know some people talk some of the times. Like when you go around your family, you know sometimes people will talk. Your friends will talk and things. They would say, I should not do this and do that. I should not leave. And I always feel bad.

On this point, Suzie further articulated:

People always say, when a father can do it, a mother don't normally leave their kids. But it actually happened to me. My mother left me. I am just trying to do what is best for my children. Does that make me a bad mother? At the end of the day, I am trying to do what is best for them.

Suzie was aware of the expectations placed on her as a mother but understands that she has to do what she feels is best for her children. Suzie’s story is similar to that of other mothers. In fact, all participants in this study shared that they were trying to do what was best for their children. Nevertheless, they were still plagued with feelings of guilt. This guilt often endured for years and even decades later. Alesia expressed:

Even though I know I made the right decision or tell myself yes, I want the income to provide for him [my son], but at the same time, I still feel guilty. I feel bad about it. I really miss him and he's growing up and when I get six weeks out of the year for him to spend time with me in the US it's nothing compared to having him here full-time you
know, sitting with him, staying with him doing things with him so I pretty much miss out on him growing up... Now he is a teenager... when I visit it’s like we are learning about each other because I missed so much, I really do not get to see much of who he is, and he does not get to know much of who I am.

The mothers also reported that they sensed they were missing out on both the small and big details in their children’s lives. They shared how they used to have a close relationship with their children, but being away from them, they could no longer maintain that closeness. Further, they expressed how they missed out on the developmental milestones in their children’s life. Therefore, the participants’ emotions were often paradoxical because they wanted to be in two places simultaneously. The mothers also shared that they had a strong desire to show their children how much they loved and cared for them across borders. This was very difficult for since they were limited in their capacity and were “not there to feel the closeness and strong bond for their children.” Cassandra, shares how she believes that she is unable to show love and care from a distance effectively:

How can you be miles away with water between you and your children and you show them the same love? You know the love is really not the same because no matter how much kisses I blow over the phone to them it’s not the same as when I can put my lips on their cheeks or give them a hug, you understand? But if I was there with them, I could sit down and teach them the little things like how to wash dishes, and even though they are boys, I think that they must know how to take care of their home [...] I can’t do the little things like making sure they brush their teeth when they wake up, and you know, make sure they brush their teeth before they go to bed and those things. [Sigh.] You know, make sure you say good morning. Those things change because of the distance between us. It hurt to know that I am not there doing all of this.

The participants also explained that their children felt as though their mothers’ absence reduced their love for them. Evelyn, for example shared in a loud and trembling voice,

One time my youngest said to me, Mommy it’s not the amount of money you send or the number of things you send, it’s the amount of love. And that just ripped out my heart. Oh my God. That’s not something anyone want to hear!
These expressive words and intense emotions were similar across many of the mothers’ stories. However, despite the participants’ many attempts to express their love to their children, often times the message would get lost, because of the huge space that separates them. As a result, many of the mothers would worry about their ability to fulfill their parental roles. Tanisha, in a sad tone of voice, expressed:

I think a mother supposed to be, you know present, and in the child's life to teach them little things in life, teach them how, […] to groom themselves. You know, teach them their ABCs, and teach them how to count, and you know, those little things. A mother supposed to teach their children how to bathe themselves […], when they're sick, you hug them. It's like you are their first doctor. You medicate them and stuff like that. And when them sick you comfort them. You understand me? You supposed to help provide for them even when they said that fathers are to provide, but I think a mother is supposed to help provide for their children too. So, I just think the mother is to guide their children in the right way. And I feel bad that I am not able to do that from here.

The distance from their children also required the mothers assume multiple other roles. For instance, the participants overwhelmingly concurred that they have to be the main the breadwinner of the family, while providing the emotional support as well. For many mothers in the study, these are the expectations that they believe have to be fulfilled, since they have to send money back home, inquire on children’s daily lives, discipline and make decisions for the family. Alesia shared:

My baby father is not a professional, he has basic income, and this was not enough, so I have to make sure that I send the money. I am the main breadwinner, so I have to do what I have to do to make ends meet. For example, one years ago before I started working as nurse, I used to live in a roach-infested apartment because that was what I could afford. I am used to living in a better place but I was strapped for cash and I had to cut back so I could send him money every week time. Those are some of the sacrifices that I have to make.

Alesia had to make personal sacrifices in order for her to fulfil her breadwinning role, sacrificing her comfort in order to have enough money to send to Jamaica. Six of the nine participants also reported similar obligations. They believed that they were taking on both the
mothers’ and fathers’ and they did not receive the support of their partners or their children’s father. Another example is Mary, who shared:

> It’s like you have a husband, or a partner at home. But the main person is the mother. It’s like you are single. The kids always come to you. They not going to their father. It’s like everything is mommy. I am the one who is always there. I make sure that they go to school. Make sure that they have money. I was always there. I help them with homework, make sure they have their books. My husband didn’t show much interest.

Cassandra and other participants also shared how their roles extended beyond caregiving and breadwinning. Case in point, she reported that she had to financially care for their relatives and other extended members of her family. Cassandra added:

> Everybody expects that you have to send them money and help out. It’s a lot. Whenever you come here You have to be working, working, working. And I don’t really have money like that. And when you call home everybody wants this, and they want that… I also have a sister that I take care of. She is mentally ill, and I have to pay for her treatment and her medication. It’s just so much.

Taking on these multiple roles, can be overwhelming. As Cassandra pointed out, not only carrying out multiple roles to raise children, but also sending money to other friends and family members and trying to keep up with various relationships can cause added strain for these Jamaican transnational mothers. In addition to the gendered expectations placed on the mothers, the U.S. workplace culture negatively impacts mothers WFB experiences. Alesia and Evelyn described the workplace as a transnational mother as working all the time. Alesia, who voiced her perceptions very passionately during the interview, explained:

> Because you know that the reason you came here is to work, you feel guilty if you don’t. You don’t even want to take any time off, much less to do anything else like go on a vacation or relax.

Evelyn went on further to explain, “even the working mothers here, they expect that they shouldn’t let their family life affect their ability to work, and vice-versa, they shouldn’t let their
work affect their family life.” Judgement comes from both sides. It almost impossible to fulfill both expectations.

One mother, Joy, shared how work culture in the U.S. was different from Jamaica. Back home we don’t have all these things to worry about. The boss knows that when you have children, you have responsibilities. For the mothers, at least. We have to go to parent teacher meetings, we have to take our children to see the doctor when they are sick. We have to do it everything. But the difference with here and there is that we are not expected to work such long hours and shifts. Here, work never ends.

Cassandra also shared that how she worked multiple work shifts, which affected her ability help with her children’s care from a distance. She reflected:

Back in Jamaica we do not have many duties and restrictions. But you know over here we have the shifts, and you're working late at night till next morning. And I find that working like that makes me too tired to call home. Because I come in late, or I work overnight. And I am just so tired. And when I’m on the job sometimes they will call. Like to to help them with their homework or so, but I can’t because I’m at work.

**Negotiating Motherhood Roles and Norms**

The mothers in this study also described how they navigated the norms of transnational motherhood. To begin, it is important to understand that more are expected and almost required to maintain their transnational families while working. In this study, the participants reported they tried to manage their work and family life across borders, because each responsibility is very important to them. All nine mothers shared how they performed rituals that allowed them to be able to work and maintain their relationships with their children. One of the ways that mothers accomplished this was through use of technology such as their cell phones that allowed them to call, text, sending photos, and video-chat. They also used social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp to connect and document their lives. For example, Roneisha, explained that she attempts to contact her daughter daily,

I speak with her (daughter) over the phone every day. I video calls and send pictures most times. I am not really worried because she is in good hands, but I really miss her and really have to see her. The thought of not seeing her. Touching her. You know those things.
Like Roneish, Martha echoed similar calling rituals, but for her it was not easy to call, because at the time of her immigration, there was limited access to international calling. She expressed,

First time I had to use calling cards. You know the international calling cards that you buy at the store. I had to be calling all the time, it was a strain at first until we got service to call internationally in Jamaica, where I would put minutes on their phone so they would call.

Many mothers also used video-calling on WhatsApp, and Skype to communicate with their children. Even though all the mothers in the study described that they had used video-calling as a way to communicate with their children, three stated that they were not fond of doing so, because it made it was very painful and difficult to see their children and not being able to touch them. For example, Tanisha dismally stated, “I did not really like the video talk because I get too emotional about it. Like, I get so sad.” Two other mothers also expressed similar sentiments that they did not like video-chatting because they did not want to deal with the painful emotions seeing their children and not being physically present with them.

Although all mothers stated that they called their children regularly. Three mothers shared how they struggled to call their children regularly, because they worked during the times that their children were available. Their work hours coincided with times their children were in school, and while mothers were at home, children were in school. Alesia frustratingly reflected,

Sometimes I go into the bathroom stall so I can make a phone call to them, but you know I do not feel like that's a sufficient time for me to talk to them or spend time with them, but I just have to do what I have to do.

Not being able to call their children at a time when they are available, compounds mothers’ burden because mothers they feel obligated to spend as much time as possible with their children.
Cassandra telephoned her children regularly, and like other mothers, intensity varied. She shared how during the early periods after her immigration, she would try to call her son consistently but after a few months, “calls have now become less frequent and more random.” In her own words she continued to share,

I would call every other day in the first months when I just came, then after about a year, I would just call, you know, randomly. like every week. You know, just to speak to them. And now that they are older, we talk sometimes weekly or every other week.

Alesia also shared that she also calls her son regularly, to not just see how he is doing, but even to discipline him. She reflected:

Sometimes I have to call and discipline him over the phone you know. His dad would call and say, oh he's not doing this, he is not doing that, or he is trying to have his own way, so I would call him and tell him, listen you need to listen to your dad! You know, it's not easy. It's not easy disciplining a child over the phone but you know I have to. Sometimes we do the video call because seeing him face-to-face it helps to make me feel like I'm there. So, when it comes on to discipline, I would do a video call like FaceTime or WhatsApp so he could see the expression on my face that I'm serious and he knows that if he does not do what I ask him to do I will not buy things that he wants or likes.

Mothers commented on how they negotiated their motherhood roles through communication but were sometimes restricted at work.

Three mothers shared that their work phone policies and their limited access to personal leave posed a challenge. Further, the mothers stated that in most cases they were restricted from using their phone at work and that they had little time off to visit their children. They also stated that even with the little time they had, they could not financially afford to pay for their children to visit and spend time with them, or for their trip to visit their children. Joy for example, gave her account,

Some of the challenges were getting the time to talk to them, I couldn’t use my phone at work, so I have to wait until I am off. By that time, I still could not talk to him because he would be sleeping by then. That was really challenging.

Not being able to use phones at work also presented challenges to many other mothers.
Evelyn reflected:

I wish this country could learn to accommodate mothers who have to leave their kids behind to come and seek a better life. They should see if they can understand and make things more accommodating, you know like with my job. I remember one time it was my son's birthday and I wanted to talk to him before he went to school. But I was working in the morning and I was trying to ask my boss if I could get some time to make a call and whatever. And you know he just pushed it off. He pushed me away! He does not understand that I did not wake up with my child to say happy birthday! It is a phone call I have to make. So, I felt so bad about it and it was in the night before I got to tell him happy birthday. And I felt so bad about it and he was upset.

One mother, Alesia, shared how she circumvented the no-telephone use policies at work. She stated:

Every workplace in the last 5 years that I worked always have this stupid cell phone policy that you cannot use cell phone at work. There are many times I would simply let my supervisors know that my son is in Jamaica and if anything goes wrong, I would like to know. So, I keep my phone on me and sometimes that will cause a problem with my boss. So, when I see a phone call coming in from Jamaica, I would excuse myself and go to the restroom and take that phone call because I'm not there to assist in any other way. So, to make me feel comfortable in my mind that he is doing okay that is what I have to do.

Alesia communicated to her supervisor the needs to have her phone with her, and despite her supervisor’s resistance, it did not stop her from using her phone as it was very important to that she communicated with her children. Tanisha expressed how she also felt stressed at work and this would even affect her ability to work and call her children.

I think the stress from everything gets to my head. Sometimes I can’t even get along with employees or I would be thinking about my life, so I just have to smoke a blunt (marijuana). [I] Just have to leave work and hold a med[i]tation, sleep it off until morning. When I get like that I don’t even want to go to work or even call my children.

Tanisha felt stressed at work whenever she thought about her life. The stress became so overbearing that she chose to use marijuana as a way to escape.

Another way mothers negotiated their roles was that they seemed to financially over compensate for their physical absence. Most of them shared that they sent money consistently
but felt the need to send more, or extra, to make their children happy, or to please the children’s caregiver. For example, Mary shared:

I try and make sure I send money for them and ask them what they need. I know they always see things and want it, so I make sure I send extra, so they can have extra to spend. I don’t want them to have any need for anything, and it makes them happy.

In addition to using financial rewards to satisfy their role-related partners, many mothers shared how negotiated their motherhood roles through prayers and seeking encouragement from their family and friends. For example, Mary shared:

I used to wonder if I am doing the right thing. If I choose the best life to provide for him. If I should still try with the little money that I was getting at the time. Sometimes I used to think it would be better for me to go back and then other times I really wouldn’t. But when I start feeling like that, I just encourage myself and remind myself that it that it is for the best. I would just pray about it and hope that it is for the best.

Mary also shared how her mother was the main source of encouragement for her, in times when she struggled with mothering from a distance,

Sometimes I would call my mom who would encourage me and remind me that it is going to be okay. And sometime my friends here or other friends and family back home would call so we could call and talk about things.

Relying on encouragement from supportive relationships was important as mothers often faced many challenges and difficult emotions as a transnational mother working and balancing their children’s lives across international borders.

Interestingly, the mothers displayed resistance as a way of negotiating their motherhood. For example, Joy expressed how she refused to allow dominant cultural ideologies to negatively affect her. She argued:

I am not the type of person who I let someone else define who I should be. I don't worry about what culture says. I do not feel pressure to do something or be somebody, so I just do what I feel is best for me.
Suzie also concurred: “It does not matter the negativity or the bad things that people say, it does not do anything to me.” Another mother, Mary, also said,

You learned from an early age that you cannot please everyone. You do something some people going to like and others not going to, So I don’t make people's opinion bother me. I just stay focused on what I can do.

Martha also shared an example of her own resistance:

I did what I had to do, it was challenging, but I just did what I had to do. Sometimes you don't worry about stuff like that. You don't worry about what you have to eat, so you just do what you have to do to take care of yourself. I just focus on what I have, because at least I am here, and I can make it.

Another interesting finding was that some mothers hid the fact that they had children in Jamaica, especially at work. They shared that they rarely shared that they had children out of fear of being judged by their colleagues. For example, Suzie “did not want anyone to think that she abandoned her children,” and Mary “did not want anyone to think that it was selfish for her to leave without them.” Not letting their work colleagues know about their family kept judgment away, but presented another challenge as these mothers then became the subject of discussion about their decision “to not have any children” or increased the demands from their employees on them to be available for work at all-times since they are not made aware that they have children. Cassandra explained: “because I don’t have no children to go home to, they expect that I have to overwork myself and not complain because, in their mind, I am single without a dependent.” Tanisha, echoed that she had a high sense of anxiety in coming into a new “culture,” and shared her concerns about “being a workaholic in the U.S.” and criticized how organizations punished employees for not working long hours and rewarded those who did. Although she was critical of these practices, she also had to accept them, commenting, “I think I just have to work and play by rules so that I can be able to earn money to take care of myself and my family.” She said she felt she “had to conform to the system.”
Theme 3: Degree of Dispersion

The theme degree of dispersion represented how they mothers experienced significant emotional difficulties being separated across transnational space and time. Therefore, the mothers explained how living apart from their children was a difficult emotional journey, causing them a lot of grief, sadness, and pain. Further, the mothers spoke about how their work and conflict of time posed an added challenge because it affected their ability to trade resources to satisfy cross-domain demands. On this point, most participants described experiencing intense sadness living apart from their children to the extent that it even caused psychological stress and depression. They regretted not being present to assume a caregiving role such as nurturing and grooming their children, and their inability to do so contributed to their feelings of sadness. Mary reflected:

Sometimes I would cry when I know they are sick, and I have to find out what the doctor says, and I am not there to take care of them for myself. And I am not there to say baby it’s going to be okay. You know the children want me to hold them, but you know I cannot do that from here you know, so it makes me cry sometimes.

Mary’s also described how she cried because she was unable to do certain parental duties such as comfort or care for her children. The intensity of the mothers’ sadness was often difficult to articulate, and many mothers expressed grief that could be heard from long pauses and sighs, to actual crying. Alesia described her immense grief after four years of being away from her children. She articulated:

Initially, I thought it was an opportunity to work outside of Jamaica and make the extra income, and not long after that (about 2 months after that), I started to get really depressed, getting home sick, and I started missing my son, When I was at home, my son was there with me and then when I came here I didn’t have him around so I became really, really sad about that. I was sad for about 4 years.

The mothers described feelings of sadness that are usually coupled with feelings of depression. Their feelings of sadness were compelling for most, and despite the fact that most
seven) mothers immigrated for financial opportunities for their family, some found the pain of their absence consuming. In tears, long sighs, and pauses, Roneish, expressed her sadness,

I would cry myself to sleep for weeks (long pause). I remember not sleeping good for a few weeks. Even though I knew that she was in good hands. [Sigh] I still feel sad about it and I am still working on bringing her here.

Mary continued to share how the stress from being away from her children affected her psychologically, to the point that she suffered stress-induced memory loss. She continued to share her story:

I remember one time going to work, going to my job, I could not find my way. I was lost. I was going to that place every day. Like I could close my eyes and drive to that place, and I was lost, I was lost! All of a sudden, I didn’t know where I was. I drove around confused for hours, and then when I got to work, it was time for me to leave... I got so depressed. I mean [sigh] I was so depressed [sigh].

When broaching this topic, Martha blurted out, “Just ask me, I know you are thinking it. You want to know how I neglected my kids?” Martha felt like she neglected her children, leaving them behind to pursue work. She painfully recounted her experience. “Sometimes they say I neglect them. I often feel like a bad mother, like I have neglected them when I came here (to the US). You know how sad I feel, knowing that I neglect my children.” Martha expressed that she feels sad because she thinks that she neglected her children. She experienced sadness having to cope with being away from her children because of her choice to immigrate for work. Martha repeatedly stated that she was not sure when she would feel better. In fact, she stated that she doesn’t think that she can get over the sadness and pain that came about from her leaving her children behind.

Cassandra expressed that her experience was hard partly because she was often reminded of the difficult life that she had back in Jamaica. She was often discouraged because she saw her
children facing similar challenges such as poverty, insufficient food, sickness, lack of healthcare, and not having access to adequate resource and housing infrastructure. Cassandra explained:

I just remember how tight it is when I call, they have no money, or food. It reminds me of the rough times I had when I was there. When we didn’t have the money or anything. That's why I had to leave… Sometimes I am reminded of the conditions that I left them in… Seeing them when they are sick, for example, I would look at them and think, I can't even touch or help them to make them feel better. And sometimes I don’t even have the money to send to help with the doctor bills. So those are the times that makes it so hard to see them and talk to them. it’s very hard. So frustrating…

Of all the mothers interviewed, all nine shared that they were saddened and felt guilty from the experience of leaving their children and being a mother across borders. Seven mothers explained how difficult it was to deal with the separation from their children. Participants also overwhelmingly shared how living away from their children impacted their daily lives. In particular, they reported guilt, questioning their decisions, and sadness.

**Theme 4: Length of Separation**

This theme details the challenges faced by the Jamaican transnational mothers as they balanced their work and children in Jamaica. It also speaks about the main factor that participants expressed that was responsible for their transnational experience that influenced their increased family demands because of the length of their separation. Thus, making it more difficult for transnational employees to satisfy their children’s needs.

Participants shared that the U.S. immigration policy made it difficult to attain WFB such that it restricted their ability to visit their children, legally bring them to live with them, and affected their ability to gain meaningful employment. Additionally, it also made it difficult for them to maintain relations with their children’s’ fathers, some of whom were their spouses. All the mothers in the study did not plan on living apart from their children for an extended period of
time. They believed that once they arrive and found a job, they would be able to bring their
children. One mother, Tanisha, for example shares her experience,

When mi leave, mi did plan seh mi did a guh bring them come here. Mi tell mi baby fada
seh mi ago send fi dem. Mi never expect seh it never did a go work out… It’s not like
one, two, three. You need a whole heap of things to put in the paperwork… and mi cya
afford lawyer fi even help me.

Translated:

When I left (Jamaica), I planned that I was going to take them (children) here (the U.S.). I
told my child’s father that I would send for them. I never expected that it would not work
out…It’s not like one, two, three. You need a whole lot of things to put in the
paperwork… and I cannot afford a lawyer to even help me.

Here Tanisha was aware of the institutional barriers that kept her from uniting with her
son. She was aware that it is a very complex process in which she could not navigate. Tanisha,
and the other mothers hoped to begin filing for their children, but that hope did not come to
fruition for most of the participants. For example, Tanisha stated that filing for her children
required her to meet many criteria, which she has not met. Evelyn recounted a similar experience
but added that she was unable to secure meaningful employment to support the filing process to
legally obtain citizenship for her children. As a student at the time, she was not able to find work
easily. She stated that her immigration status did not allow her to work while attending school,
and that despite being legal, she was not able to work “a decent job,” thus could not afford to file
for her children. Another mother, Alesia, added that she experienced unexpected immigration
problems:

Three years after I got married, I divorced. Even though he (husband) filed for my green
card, we divorced before I could file for my son. We were having a lot, a whole lot, of
marital problems, and I had to get out of it. He made it very difficult for me. He made
immigration (department) write me that they were revoking my green card. I had to get a
lawyer to fight the case. Eventually, everything worked out for me, but I was still unable
to file for him at the time, because it was me alone. And things did get rough.
Alesia’s account demonstrated that there are many uncertainties and unexpected challenges that mothers face despite having a legal immigration status. For her, her legal status was jeopardized after she divorced, which lead her to seek the help of an immigration attorney. Joy, recounted a similar experience, sharing how it took a while for her papers to “come through” to begin filing for her son, and stated how even when she was successful with the immigration filling, she could not afford to bring her children. Many other mothers also lamented that they did not have the money or their ability to file for their children, which stressed them about their decision to immigrate leaving their children behind.

The mothers also stated how they their intimate partners were impacted while attempting to balance their work and family life. For example, three of the nine participants shared that leaving their family behind has negatively impacted their relationship with their intimate partners who they also left behind. Mary, who was married prior immigration, had to divorce her husband after a few years of her immigration because of the strain on their relationship. She admitted, “You know while coming here, it was a lot for the family back home, you know my marriage there in Jamaica went down the drain, because everything was neglected, and he moved on.” Mary felt like their marriage was neglected, and therefore ended. Tanisha also shared similar sentiment that her relationship with her baby’s father was no longer; “To tell you the truth my relationship with my baby's father is not good anymore because he expects so much from me.” Alesia’s account was also similar. She reflected:

Me not being there during the relationship, you know the long-distance relationship, it was not working for him. I love him but we could not have a good relationship apart, so we had a good relationship as co-parents, so we just continue on that path. And as far as our relationship go, as far as intimacy, that is no longer the case.

Tanisha and Alesia could no longer maintain relationships with their intimate partner because of the distance. Alesia, despite still having love for her partner, chose to break up their
union and co-parent, as this was more feasible across borders. Not being able to maintain their family cohesion and facing uncertainties about their futures made it very difficult for mothers to attain WFB. Immigrating, while it aimed to solve the financial challenges that mothers faced because of increased opportunities to work, the added strain that it placed on these families make WFB certainly critical.

**Essence of the Phenomenon**

The phenomenon’s essence emerged from a synthesis of the four essential themes: Jamaican Transnational Mothers who balance work and family across borders found meaning in their experiences through the negotiation of various internal psychological forces and external institutional forces as they exchanged resources in hopes of satisfying the cross-domain needs of their children.
CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I will begin by presenting a brief overview of the study, then describe its purpose, methodology and research questions. Next, I offer a summary of the findings and a discussion regarding the phenomenon. Finally, I conclude with implications for the investigation.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers who attempt to balance work and family across international borders. A qualitative design was used to understand the collective experience of Jamaican transnational mothers in their own words. Specifically, a phenomenological approach was used to provide a rich, nuanced view of the phenomenon while offering an interpretation of the emergent themes in the data, while gaining a better understanding into how the participants experienced the phenomenon.

Multiple in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine Jamaican transnational mothers. An analysis of the data revealed the following four themes:

(1) human capital;

(2) location;

(3) degree of dispersion;

(4) length of separation.

As such, the phenomenon’s essence was best described as Jamaican transnational mothers balancing work and family across borders found meaning in their experiences through the constant negotiation of various internal psychological forces and external institutional forces as they exchanged resources in hopes of satisfying the cross-domain demands of their children. The overarching question that guided this study was: What are the experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers who balance their work in the US and their children abroad? The
secondary question was: How do institutional/national policies and culture affect the WFB experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers?

**Research Question One**

*What are the experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers who balance their work in the US and their children abroad?*

According to Cho and Allen (2018) propositions, the extent in which a transnational individual experiences work-family may be dependent on certain characteristics because of the varying levels of demands and resources, as well as the extent in which they experience difficulty in exchanging resources. According to their conceptual framework, resources that are exchanged between the transnationals and their family members are more likely to be viewed as satisfactory to both parties and enough to meet cross-domain demands when transnationals have more human capital than when they had little.

Mothers in the study, noted that they had little human capital (e.g., wages, educational qualification, and skills). The majority of mothers were employed in low wage occupations and more than three-quarters of them had a high school diploma or less. Not having a high human capital contributed to their negative experiences balancing work and family. Some of the study participants expressed that they struggled to send remittances and could not afford to pay for visits to see their children, which further increased the stress on mothers and their ability to maintain WFB. Additionally, even though mothers were sending remittances, some were dissatisfied with how it was being used, while others expressed that caregivers and children demanded more money and gifts than what mothers had to send. In regard to mothers’ work, because of the nature of their jobs, mothers were unable to get adequate time to meet the emotional demands of their family, a tradeoff as they were busy at working to earn their remittances.
Cho and Allen (2018) propose that factors existing together such as the length of time away from children, and the time difference impacts, may affect transnational individuals’ WFB. Additionally, they argue that prolonged separation might have a stronger negative impact for a transnational individual who experiences more barriers to synchronous communication than for one who experiences fewer barriers. The mothers in the study spoke about the lack of time impacting their experience balancing work and family. The lack of time limited their communication with their family and the emotional exchanges that they have with their children.

Even though mothers did not speak about the physical time difference existing between countries significantly affecting their experience, they often spoke about being unable to engage in synchronous communication because they were working while their children were at school, and when their children were available, mothers were at work. This suggests that mothers’ work times were in conflict with their family time, and thus prevented them from adequately engaging in communication with their children.

Some mothers expressed that they often engaged in both the financial and emotional care for their children. Issues with lack of time posed an added challenge for the transnational mothers to perform the emotional care role for their children. Some mothers expressed that they still had to “run the household,” doing things such as homework, checking on child’s health, discipline, and dating in addition to being the main breadwinner. The time conflict limited their ability to effectively do so.

The length of time spent away from children, negatively impacted the participants’ WFB experiences. The lack of emotional presence and direct interaction among family members, resulting from geographic separation, has profound negative consequences (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). All the mothers lived apart from their children for at least 2 years and up to 22
years. They all expressed how challenging it has been dealing with the negative emotions associated with not being physically present with their children. Some described intense feelings of sadness, depression, and guilt, and many spoke about how they tried to send remittances and gifts in an attempt to make up for their absence. Cho and Allen (2018) contend that the length of separation likely affects WFB such that the longer the separation the more difficult it becomes to balance. This finding supports the Cho and Allen’s propositions on WFB which states that transnational individuals’ difficulty and inability to have sufficient communication might hinder timely exchange of emotional support, and thus, negatively impacts WFB.

This study of transnational Jamaican mothers’ experiences showed the reflections of these mother’s dual lives—the I am here but I am there, (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997), while uncovering ways that they navigate social, cultural, economic, and political boundaries while living and working in the US while balancing their children’s lives across borders (mothers struggled with the cultural ideologies and expectations that they strove to adhere to). Mothers experienced increased emotional demands, which came from the expectations from their children, families, and their own self-perceptions of the motherhood. Participants expressed how they adopt multiple roles and are sometimes reminded of their absence. Mothers’ inability to meet these expectations caused stress and feelings of guilt that they have neglected or abandoned their children. According to Senior (1991), Jamaican mothers are usually expected to carry out the emotional support of the family, childrearing responsibilities and behavior corrections. Mothers in the study, in addition to these expectations, are also expected to act as the main breadwinner. Mothers struggled to maintain these roles, and had to adapt or redefine their way of life.
Managing work and family then becomes a challenge as they try their best to keep their jobs in order to send remittances, while struggling to maintain family relations across borders. Mothers often question their decision to immigrate, but would often find a way to go on, thus redefining their motherhood role. The cultural norms and expectations, their gender ideologies and socialization of Jamaican mothers all contribute to Jamaican mothers’ views of motherhood. Furthermore, the economic necessity of the family leads a mother to migrate as a means to satisfy her role as a provider for her family.

**Research Question Two**

*How does institutional/national policies and culture affect the WFB experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers?*

This study revealed that Jamaican transnational mothers’ WFB experience as they navigated issues at the cultural, political, and socioeconomic levels which all impacted their sense of identity and their response to WFB challenges. Participants felt that their experiences were affected by the immigrant policies especially, which in the first place, created their transnational experience. Complicated immigration policies that surround the length of time for reunification, made it very difficult for mothers to attain WFB. Further, complicated immigration filing paperwork and lack of expertise on the process kept them from navigating the immigration process for their families. Participants also could barely afford to pay for the process, especially, the upfront cost that was needed to support the family immigrant filing. Also, the documents and stable income that are needed to reunite with their families were often out of reach for these mothers.

Some scholars argue that the stringent migration policies in the US and their restricted mobility be threatening to family life and detrimentally impacting family relations (Bernhard et al., 2009; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Cohen, 2000; Kraler et al., 2011; Strik, De Hart, & Nissen,
Nevertheless, while they were restricted by stringent immigrant policies, mothers continued to execute their motherhood role despite the legal-judicial barriers they encountered. Landolt and Da (2005) argue that migrant families have to constantly negotiate the spatial challenges they face, and this distance makes families vulnerable. The stories I discussed here drives the point home that with the movement across borders, the institution holds great power, as it delimits and constrains.

As seen in this study, job insecurity as an institutional force, can strain family ties because the mothers’ inability to send remittances and can damage relationships between them and the child’s caregiver, who expects economic returns (Carling et al., 2012; Dreby, 2006; Pribilsky, 2004). For example, Mary, who often felt as if she was unable to keep up with the financial demands from her children. Further, according to Dua (1999), U.S. immigration policies also deter people of color from living in their traditional family structures because they make it difficult to file for spouses. An examination of the experiences of transnational mothers in the study reveal that they have been denied the right to live in a family context, or the right to have the family form of their choice. Thus, the family structure that these mothers had did not conform with the idealized family structure in the white settler society such as the U.S. which made these mothers subjected to further WFB challenges and their experiences often overlooked.

In addition to the immigration policies affecting their WFB experiences, the stories of the nine Jamaican Transnational mothers mentioned above revealed that they had unsettled feelings resulting from the role of culture. Culture is intertwined with the social and historical forces that exist in the transnational context and is grounded in the peoples’ interaction with external forces at the state and community level as well as at the institutional level (Lowe, 1996; Ong, 1999). According to Lisa Lowe (1996),
Culture is the medium of the present – the imagined equivalences and identifications through which the individual invents lived relationship with the national collective – but it is simultaneously the site that mediates the past, through which history is grasped as difference, as fragments, shocks, and flashes of disjunction (p. 2-3).

Participants often spoke about how culture affected them, in that it made them subjected to certain restrictions and stigmatizations based on the dominant cultural practices.

Findings revealed that Jamaican transnational mothers in the study grappled with the U.S. culture of “intensive mothering” stemming from dominant gender ideologies that views women as being the care giver in their families. “Intensive mothering” according to Hays (1998), is an ideology that asserts that the mother is primarily responsible for child rearing and she invest extensive unending hours of emotional and physical labor, and considerable financial resources, in offer to meet imposed, unrealistic and unremunerated obligations from the culture.

Mothers who grappled with these feelings, often struggle to maintain adequate WFB. Henderson, Harmon, and Newman (2016) indicate, “families exist in two spheres, both public and private . . . which means that mothers’ experiences cannot be analyzed without taking prevailing gender ideologies into account” (p. 512). Participants described their gendered experience in parenting by speaking about the pressures they felt to satisfy the emotional needs of their children and felt guilt whenever they do not live up to the cultural ideals. As such, when mothers did not subscribe to “intensive mothering,” they were subject to the scrutiny and pressure of the culture at large to perform “intensive mothering.” Henderson et. al. (2016) further states, “the omnipresent state of these maternal expectations across populations such that even if a group questions a particular aspect of the ideology, the hegemony of these maternal standards continue to affect how women parent” (p. 512). These mothers are constantly negotiating the needs of work and family, while wrestling to manage the emotional tug of each.

The findings also revealed that mothers felt pressured by the U.S. culture of overwork. The U.S. culture of overwork is often seen as a factor that exacerbates work demand (Cha, 2013;
Padavic & Ely, 2013; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013) and thereby affect the individuals’ ability to attain WFB. Smeeding (2005) argues that the U.S. “employ more people who work longer hours than their counterparts” (p. 976), and that their ideas of organization’s success is intrinsically linked to the culture of overwork. As Gill (2014) contends, people seem to automatically know that they should be available at all times to work.

There is a prevailing discourse about migrating without children, that says that it’s a “personal choice”, and immigrants are often judged by these discourses. Out of the nine transnational mothers I have interviewed only one felt like they had a choice. Instead, factors such as their economic class and gender, informed their decisions surrounding their immigration. The prevailing discourses and ideals regarding mothering, that in order to be a “good” mother you should constantly be physically and emotionally close to your children should be changed. Mothers should not have to ask themselves the question “should I ‘mother’ or migrate?” This study shows that this discourse is unhealthy, as mothers and their children constantly negotiate WFB across international borders, and while their experiences are far from ideal, they should be able to feel a sense of pride in their execution of their way of motherhood.

**Conclusions**

The focus of this study was to explore the WFB experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers, and to find out the role of institutions and national policies in influencing such. I conclude that this study revealed some of the issues that transnational mothers faced while they aimed to balance their lives across borders. Table 5.1 outlines the findings that emerged from this research and how it aligns with literature presented in this study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Findings</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low wages, low job security, and limited access to financial resources</td>
<td>• Immigrants from developing countries tend to take up low-wage service labor that is needed in industrialized countries, while leaving non-productive family members, such as children, behind (Hondagneu-Sotelo &amp; Avila, 1997; Parreñas, 2001; Schmalzbauer, 2004).&lt;br&gt;• Work opportunities are seldomly available to immigrants and most are available in certain low-paid sectors. Qualifications not being recognized, not having a work permit and racial discrimination are compounding factors (Spitzer et al., 2003; Wright, 2011).&lt;br&gt;• Socio-contextual circumstances, such as declining employment options, high unemployment rates and undocumented status, can affect the extent and the way individuals experience work-family conflict (Grzywacz et al., 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin color, languages, accent and stereotypes as barriers</td>
<td>• Immigrants are discriminated against because of their combined skin color, accents, and geographic locations. It is important to situate and contextualize indigenous people along the racial hierarchy (Brown, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transnational Gender &amp; Cultural Barriers</td>
<td>• Norms of ‘good mothering’ are held by immigrant mothers and the society and culture see women as primary caregivers (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parreñas, 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation of Norms</td>
<td>• Gendered norms were important in framing transnational’s experiences (Dreby, 2006; Parreñas, 2005; Pribilsky, 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Difficulties across transnational Space and Time</td>
<td>• Mothers feel guilty, ashamed and embarrassed about ‘abandoning’ their children (Banfi &amp; Boccagni, 2011; Bernhard et. al., 2009; Boccagni, 2012; Carling, Menjívar, &amp; Schmalzbauer, 2012; Parreñas, 2005; Zentgraf &amp; Chinchilla, 2012).&lt;br&gt;• Geographic distance restricts mothers from fulfilling their roles and as causes mothers to feel guilty, ashamed, and stigmatized (Parreñas 2001; Aranda 2003; Bernhard, Landolt, and Goldring 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Separation</td>
<td>• Length of separation is an important factor that affects the transnational families (Mazzucato, 2013).</td>
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Current Findings | Literature Review
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Immigration Policy Barriers | • Immigration policies of a receiving country have direct impacts on family life and can strongly influence transnational family dynamics ((Falicov, 2007; Fresnoza-Flot, 2009; Menjívar, 2012; Trask, 2010; Zontini, 2010).
• Stringent migration policies in place threatens immigrant family life and family relations (Bernhard et al., 2009; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Cohen, 2000; Kraler et al., 2011; Strik, De Hart, & Nissen, 2013).

As indicated in Table 5.1, this study consisted of seven major findings as is aligned with previous research. As such, I conclude that the findings largely support existing literature in regard to transnational mothers continuing to mother across international borders as well as sending remittances and gifts to express love for their children (Horton 2009). It also supports the Hondagneu-Sotelo’s & Avilia’s (1997) findings on transnational mothering, which showed that mother’s experiences are complicated by cultural (and cross-cultural) constructions of what the role of motherhood entails, and by the mother’s own perceptions about their decision to leave and take care of their children rather than physically being with them. Thus, the transnational mothers often contend with ideas of what it means to be a good mother while negotiating the concept of care.

I also conclude that the mothers in this study navigated complex cultural ideologies and negative stereotypes in balancing work and life (Richardson & Roberts, 2020; Roberts & Edwards, 2017; Roberts & Ramsey, 2016; Traini et al., 2020). As an illustration, mothers reported they experienced guilt, pain, and sadness, arising from the separation from their children. According to Millman (2013), transnational mothers have to contend with ideological representations of what it means to be a good mother. This representation often juxtaposes the tradition where mothers offer both physical and emotional nurturing domestically with the
realities of nurturing from across international borders. These representations and conceptions are still important to the transnational mothers even after she has left her country of origin, coupled with the new sociocultural and national context in which she finds herself, which for the mothers in this study was compounded by their beliefs of motherhood and what it meant to mother from a distance.

It is also concluded that the mothers expressed negative emotional struggles such as guilt and depression over the separation from their children, but despite this, they continued to negotiate the challenges with great resilience and strength. Similarly, Hondagneu-Sotelo’s & Avilia’s (1997) described how mothers, amidst the negative emotions they faced, and physical separation, were able to continue to provide for their children while becoming more empowered.

Finally, I conclude that the mothers performed multiple roles to meet the work and family’s demands. Illanes (2010) explained, “Motherhood is a complex image composed of several dimensions and charged with different meanings at regional and national levels” (p. 207). Participants used several strategies that helped them to navigate through these multiple roles. For example, they regularly sent remittance and maintained consistent communication with their children and families via telephone and Internet. This concept supports Yeoh’s and Huang’s (2010) findings that transnational mothers provide physical support through remittances and emotional support through technological mediums like internet or over the phone. Mothers in the study overwhelmingly reported that they were the main breadwinner and also took on the primary emotional burden of the family.

In addition to the findings that aligned with the literature on transnational motherhood, this study also sheds light on the experiences that these mothers face in the context of their work and balancing it with their family. There is scant research that looks at their experiences in this
context. Mothers spoke about their work either supported or made it difficult for them to have WLB. These findings elucidate the challenges they face managing both domains. Employers and organizations are now able to see how they contribute to the WFB challenges that immigrants face. Unlike their American counterparts, these immigrants face an added layer of difficulty balancing. This is important to fill the gap in research on marginalized group as they are intersectionalities of factors such as language, color, and culture in their experiences. In assessing the findings of the study, a new conceptual framework was developed as represented in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. Udoko-Roberts Model of Jamaican Transnational mothers’ WFB.
Implications and Recommendations

This study revealed the lived experienced of Jamaican transnational mothers who balance work and family. Based on the findings, the implications and recommendations will now be discussed. The study’s major findings have implications for the field of social science, particularly as it relates to policy, practice, and theory.

Recommendations

The study revealed that national and institutional policies impacted their WFB experiences, in that it made it difficult for the mothers to attain balance. Thus, it is important for governments and non-profit organizations to better facilitate the reunification of the transnational family. Further, they should focus on reducing family conflicts and the strengthening of family bonds. This may be accomplished in the following ways. On the national level, immigration policies, particularly in the U.S. and current institutional practices should focus on eliminating barriers to mother-child reunification and reducing the processing delays associated with immigrant filing petition and paperwork as this prolong family separation. As seen in this study, this was one of the main factors that kept mothers separated from their children, with separation lasting for up to 22 years.

Governmental agencies and non-governmental groups should also coordinate their efforts so that they can establish working relationships among all the different institutions and groups who work with immigrant families. Particular efforts should be made to provide funding and services for transnational mothers, as well as child-care and after-school program subsidies that are accessible to newly arrived immigrant children regardless of their immigrant status. This is important, as transnational mothers often do not have the social or family network or economic
capital to assume the cost associated with childcare, or the proper documents to access school resources.

Another recommendation is that institutions, such as churches and other faith-based organizations who usually serve a large number of immigrants, should be included in the discussion of immigrant family issues, and they should assist in the provision and design of immigrant services. In addition, social service providers should receive education on how to assist immigrant families. Perhaps, this begins with better understanding of immigrant histories and cultures to have a deeper insight into how it affects their present circumstances. Further, organizations who prove services to immigrant families, when assisting immigrants, should focus on the needs of the transnational family after reunification, in addition to pre-unification, and they should also provide resources such as childcare support, and parental education that addresses particular issues affecting transnational families. Further, they can create networking opportunities for these transnationals, where they can have information and resource sharing, and opportunities for social capital building.

*Implications for Practice*

The findings of this study have provided some valuable insight regarding transnational mothers WFB. This research informs the social science field and organizational leadership on the unique family situations prevalent in today's global workforce. The knowledge relating to the experiences of transnational parents’ experiences of WFB, could embolden organizations to provide tailored support for transnational employees. One way organizations may do so is that they could consider providing resources to the transnational employee children who are living abroad. For example, they may provide educational support or scholarship to the children. This would help in the retention of workforce talents and diversity.
Organizational practitioners could also pay close attention to transnational employees who are likely to encounter more challenges to achieve WFB and implement various initiatives to support them. For example, they may provide support programs and allow more flexibility at work to ease the difficulty the transnational employee’s may face in virtually communicating with their children especially if have been living apart for a long time. Organizations may also provide opportunities for transnational employees to visit their families across borders. Case in point, employers may allow transnational employees the opportunity to work longer hours or have a longer workweek, with the tradeoff of having longer vacation time, as opposed to the standard two-week yearly vacation that is provided by most organizations.

Also, the role of new communication and information technologies is important to help facilitate international connections and exchanges and with its expansion, transnationals are better able to engage in resource exchange. There should be a continuing priority in expanding communication opportunities to facilitate WFB. Ensuring wider access to communication technologies might help families maintain relationships across borders.

Finally, leaders and practitioners are expected to be committed to being multiculturally competent. Given the centrality of family to work-life policies, organizations must be equipped to facilitate the needs of this group and practitioners should possess a general working knowledge of the cultural attitudes, beliefs, and challenges that affect this immigrant group. This study would facilitate this knowledge, equipping them with information on the diverse needs of different groups and aiding them in dealing with issues that employees outside the mainstream white group may encounter (Kamenou, 2008).

Implications for Policy

Certainly, migration is a reality that is here to stay and is likely to become more prevalent considering the demographic changes and other societal trends, especially institutions of higher
education (Alston et al., 2019, 2020). Therefore, it is imperative that policymakers make migration work through better migration management, while keeping in mind the migrant families and experiences when designing policies. As an illustration, policies should have a transnational outlook and should specifically address the linkages between countries arising from transnational activities and practices by migrants. This study presents pertinent information that may help in the development of these policies.

Implications for Theory

This investigation also broadens the discussion and provides an opportunity for more minority scholarship. The findings of the study also contributed to an understanding of the WFB experience of transnational mothers, a group that has been neglected in the literature on the work and family interface, providing the field with a more inclusive approach. The study indicated that the WFB experience of transnational individuals are dependent on certain factors such as their individual resource exchanges and cross domain demands. This lends support to the propositions of Cho’s and Allen’s (2018) conceptual framework of work-family balance of transnational employees.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several research areas that are in need of further exploration. First, the participants’ stories should inform the field of human resource education regarding the challenges that transnational employees face in organizations, and particularly the issues they face regarding work-family balance. Although the study is set in the Jamaican context, the findings could be transferred to other transnational mothers who face these challenges of balancing their work and family life. Thus, more work should be done on other immigrant populations to expand applicability and have a global reach. Second, Jamaicans have been understudied and underrepresented in empirical literature, thus more studies should be done on
this group so that their experiences can be understood, especially in organizational studies.

Additionally, in this study, mothers played multiple roles including the breadwinning role and caregiving roles. Jamaican transnational fathers’ experiences should be examined to see how they differ from Jamaican transnational mothers.

Finally, in this study, Jamaican transnational mothers found it overwhelming when dealing with the various demands from the family and lack of emotional support from work. Considering that Jamaican women are more likely to immigrate than Jamaican men, and Jamaican mothers are more likely to engage in transnational parenting than fathers, it would be appropriate to discover what measures are in place to support this group. Additional research in this area might provide a unique contribution to existing knowledge. Additional research in the area of WFB of transnational Jamaican mothers could also increase the cultural competence of social scientists who may interact with transnational mothers in the future.
APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR JAMAICAN TRANSNATIONAL MOTHERS WFB

**Purpose:** To explore the experiences of Jamaican Transnational Mothers who balance their work in the United States and their families abroad.

Demographics
1. Age
2. Occupation
3. Family Structure
4. Purpose of immigration
5. Length of Separation

**Interview Outline**

1. **How do you describe your experience (s) living away from your children/family:**
   (a) How do you describe the feelings that you have?
   (b) How do you describe the challenges that you face? (Prompts: emotional/psychological, financial or legal etc.)
   (c) How do you describe the support that you have?

2. **How does/has your experience of living away from your family affect(ed) your work?**

3. **How does/has your work impact(ed) your experience of living away from your children/family?** (Give examples)

4. **How do you juggle your work and family abroad?**
(a) How has that impacted your overall experience as an immigrant?

(b) How has your experiences with the immigration policies affected your ability to juggle?

5. How do you describe your role as a mother?

(a) How do you feel about your role?

(b) How has your role, attitude and expectations changed?
APPENDIX B. JAMAICAN TRANSNATIONAL MOTHERS WFB: INTERVIEW SURVEY

Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Phelecia Udoko: LSU School of Leadership and Human Resource Development (318) 278-0431

Co-Principal Investigators: Dr. Petra Robinson: LSU School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development (225) 578-5753

INTRODUCTION
The purpose of this interview is to explore the experiences of Jamaican transnational mothers who balance their domestic work in the United States with their families still residing in Jamaica. The findings from this study will be used in a dissertation.

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?
You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a Jamaican immigrant mother who is employed in the US and have or had children living in Jamaica while you lived in the United States.

RESPONSIBILITIES/EXPECTATIONS
You will be asked to describe your experiences while you juggle work in the United States and your family abroad. The interview process should take approximately an hour.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND POSSIBLE BENEFITS
There are no known risks associated with this study. All information provided will be confidentially managed and accessible to the project manager for research purposes only. No individually-identifying data will be collected, but general themes that emerge across all survey responses may be included in publish literature. Participants’ identities will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Participants may benefit from this research by contributing to the knowledge on Immigrants in the United States and help in finding ways to better support immigrant employee.

CONFIDENTIALITY
During the interview, you will be asked to provide a pseudonym to ensure that your identity. The audio-recording will be assigned the pseudonym that you pick during the interview. The demographic sheet will not identify you. The demographic sheet will only have the pseudonym that you picked during the interview. All documents you provide will be kept along with the demographic sheets. Audio tapes will only be used to transcribe interview. Once the interview is transcribed, the audio tapes and interview transcripts will be kept for 5 years in a locked cabinet at the university in the office of the secondary investigator and the primary and secondary investigator will only have access to them. You will not be asked to write your name on the anonymous demographic sheet. Once all demographic sheets are entered in a database, they will be destroyed. The information obtained during this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings, but the data will be prepared as aggregated data.
VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Ph. D., Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. By providing your signature below, you are consenting to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this document for your records.

“The study has been described to me above, and I have been informed about avenues for obtaining a copy of these terms and additional information regarding this study.”
I agree to participate

__________________________________________________________________________________________
Signature Date

I hereby give consent to audio record my interview. ______________

________________________
Initials Date

Principal Investigator

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APPENDIX C. LSU INSTITUTIONAL BOARD APPROVAL

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

TO: Phelecia Udoko  
Leadership & Human Resource Development

FROM: Dennis Landin  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: December 10, 2018

RE: IRB# E11405


Review Date: 12/10/2018

Approved X Disapproved

Approval Date: 12/10/2018 Approval Expiration Date: 12/9/2021

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2a

Signed Consent Waived?: No

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (If applicable):

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING – Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
8. SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.

* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in the office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irb
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Dua, E. (1999). Beyond diversity: Exploring the ways in which the discourse of race has shaped the institution of the nuclear family. In E. Dua & A. Robertson (Eds.), Scratching the surface: Canadian anti-racist feminist thought (pp. 237-259). Women's Press.


VITA

Phelecia Udoko was born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica. Before attending Louisiana State University, she attended Louisiana Tech University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology in 2010 and a Master of Arts in Industrial Organizational Psychology in 2013. While at Louisiana Tech University, Phelecia was the recipient of a Track and field scholarship from 2005-2010, and she competed in amateur athletics at the local, district, regional, national, and international level. She has received several awards both athletic and academic, including All-American Honors and national and international recognition. Also at Louisiana Tech University, in 2013, she was placed on the University Dean’s List, in recognition for attaining a GPA of 3.8 and above.

At Louisiana State University, Phelecia served as a Graduate Assistant in the Department of Leadership and Human Resources Development, teaching courses such as Leadership, Needs Assessment, and Learning. She currently works for her own private consultancy firm where she offers services in Organizational Development, Evaluation, and Professional Development. Additionally, she is a Performance Catalyst for a non-profit organization in Baton Rouge, where she is responsible for improving and tracking organizational effectiveness, implementing systems and processes, and grant and stakeholder reporting. Her research has predominantly focused on Work-life issues, Immigrants, and counter-productive work-behaviors. Upon completion of her doctoral degree, she plans to continue her work as a consultant and teach in a Higher Education Institution.