Social Class, Education, and Motherhood in a Globalized Context: Identity Construction for

Student Transnational Mothers

By

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ABSTRACT

The research question guiding this project is: *What are the differences and similarities between the motherhood identities of student transnational mothers and domestic worker transnational mothers?* While previous literature has focused on domestic worker transnational mothers' experiences, I investigated how motherhood identities vary according to class and educational background. I conducted ten semi-structured interviews with student transnational mothers and compared their discourses to those of domestic worker transnational mothers explored in previous literature. I found that while transnational mothers employed as domestic workers center their motherhood identities on economic and emotional family necessities, student transnational mothers focus theirs on self-development, professional growth, and being good role models. These findings suggest that transnational mothers shape their identities according to the available resources. I conclude that although transnational mothers seem to have a common set of experiences and motherhood identities, these differ according to their social characteristics such as socioeconomic status and education.

Key Words: Transnational, Motherhood, Students, Class, Education, Globalization

Social Class, Education, and Motherhood in a Globalized Context: Identity Construction

for Student Transnational Mothers

In this project, I explore the diversity of transnational motherhood identities. Transnational mothers typically migrate from Southern nations to Northern ones due to unequal, globalized political contexts. While most transnational mothers migrate for labor opportunities offered in Northern nations in order to help bring financial stability to their families in their home countries (Sternberg 20011; Dreby 2010; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Silvey 2006; Lan 2006; Salazar Parreñas 2003; Salazar-Parreñas 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; 1994), they also migrate for other reasons, including education.

Research on transnational motherhood has focused primarily on women employed as domestic workers (Sternberg 2011; Coe 2011; Dreby 2010; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Silvey 2006; Pessar 2005; Salazar Parreñas 2001; and Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). According to the United States Department of Homeland Security, 0.8% of all legal immigrants admitted in the U. S. were students in the year 2010. Forty seven percent of them were female and 60% of those women were between the ages of 20 to 29 (United States, Department of Homeland Security, 2010). To gain an understanding of how class and education shape the constructions of transnational motherhood identity, I interviewed transnational mothers who were university students in the United States seeking graduate degrees. Then, I compared interview responses to previous literature focusing on transnational mothers employed as domestic workers.

The research question driving this project is: *What are the differences and similarities between the motherhood identities of student transnational mothers and domestic worker transnational mothers?* Though the literature makes no distinction within transnational

motherhood identity and experiences, in this research I argue that motherhood experiences and identities differ according to socioeconomic statuses and educational backgrounds. By motherhood identity, I mean how transnational mothers view and perceive themselves by either fulfilling or not fulfilling their own conceptions of motherhood. After interviewing ten college-educated transnational mothers from seven countries, I found that, although they have many of the same fears and anxieties of less educated mothers, their perceptions of motherhood differ in that student-transnational mothers' motherhood identity centers on individual growth while domestic worker mothers' focus on family growth and needs. In examining the impact of social class and educational background on motherhood identity, my findings will supplement the literature on transnational motherhood and transnational families.

In exploring transnational motherhood identity construction, first I review literature focusing on Western and non-Western perspectives of motherhood as well as the factors that lead mothers to migrate. After giving a summary of transnational families, I detail previous research on domestic worker transnational motherhood. Second, I explain the process of conducting interviews and formatting this project. Third, I show how transnational motherhood identity varies according to social class and education by comparing the interviews conducted for this project to literature of domestic worker transnational mothers. I reflect the discourses present in student transnational mothers' motherhood identity constructions. The findings focus on four main themes: (1) definition of a good mother, (2) perceptions of mothering from a distance, (3) class differences in childcare, as well as (4) emotional pain. I conclude that student and domestic worker transnational mothers' identity constructions differ due to their access to opportunities and life chances. Finally, I describe the limitations for this study and give recommendations to make student transnational mothers' goals of professional growth easier to reach.

MOTHERS ACROSS TIME AND SPACE

Western Motherhood

Motherhood has been explored by opposing perspectives. One is the essentialist perspective, where women are born to fulfill motherhood roles and mothering duties due to their genetic nature (Kawash 2011; Glenn 1996). The second, social constructionist perspective, centers motherhood as a learned role and not nature-bound (Kawash 2011; Arendell 2000; Smart 1996; Glenn 1994).

> As Third World women, women of color, lesbians, and working-class women began to challenge dominant European and American conceptions of womanhood, and to insist that differences among women were as important as commonalities, they have brought alternative constructions of mothering into the spotlight. The existence of such historical and social variation confirms that mothering, like other relationships and institutions, is socially constructed, not biologically inscribed (Glenn 1994).

The social constructionist perspective will guide the understanding of transnational motherhood identity throughout this project.

In the U. S., dominant motherhood discourses of the "good mother" center on the experiences of white, heterosexual, middle class women where traditional values such as nurturance, care, and complete time and attention is devoted to their children (Smart 1996; Glenn 1994). This ideal places women's needs second to their children's and family's necessities (Glenn 1994). To be a "good mother" in the U. S., women should not place their personal growth before family matters. Yet, this "good mother" ideal is not always the same as mothers' own identities and what motherhood entails (Moore 1996; Silva 1996; Collins 1994).

Western feminism has focused on the binaries of women's experiences in society such as, the public vs. private, the haves vs. the have-nots, and the powerful vs. the powerless (Collins 1994; Glenn 1994; Ruddick 1980). These binaries are not applicable to all women. As Collins (1994) explains, women of color and their families have to experience racial and socio-cultural

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concerns that are linked to all areas of life, and cannot be separated into oppositions. For many women of color and women in lower socioeconomic statuses, the public and the private spheres have always been intertwined, mothering does not only take place in one sphere or the other (Collins 1994; Glenn 1994).

Glenn (1994:3) explains that gender and motherhood are not the same, but they are "closely intertwined." Motherhood can be used as a method for women to fulfill their femininity and many gender roles are based on motherhood or mothering, for example, the nurturing and caring woman (Arendell 2000). In many situations mothers are not able to fulfill either motherhood or gender roles reinforced by the dominant society.

In the U. S., motherhood and mothering roles are shaped according to women's social characteristics such as race, class, marital status, sexual orientation, and religion (Kawash 2011; Arendell 2000; Collins 1994; Glenn 1994). The expectations of motherhood have been affected by the political, economic, and historical contexts of women (Kawash 2011; Hill 2005; Arendell 2000; Collins 1994; Glenn 1994). It is not possible to express motherhood as a single definition that would fit all mothers.

Black feminists such as Hill (2006; 2005), Shaw (2006), and Collins (1994) emphasize the effects of colonialism, slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and modern segregation on family identities and roles. Black women's experiences as mothers and their conceptions of motherhood are very different from white women's experiences of motherhood and mothering. Collins (1994) argues that, Black women explain motherhood and mothering work as a way of teaching their children how to survive in a racist context. In her research of cross generation motherhood of African Americans, Ferrell Fouquier (2011) notes that motherhood for many Black women

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serves as a form of empowerment. For these researchers, the mainstream ideology of the "good mother" does not fit into the actual experiences and identities of Black women.

The dominant view of the "good mother" focuses on the heterosexual, stay-at-home, and caring mother (Kawash 2011; Braun, Vincent and Ball 2008). Mothers who are poor, lesbians, and/or mothers of color are depicted as irresponsible and incompetent (Arendell 2000). As Hill (2005) argues, the depiction of the "welfare queen", or "baby-making machine" is inconsistent with mothers' actual experiences and perceptions of themselves. Mothers' identities differ from society's perceptions and expectations. Kaplan (1992) found in her case study of twelve mothers that mothers identify themselves as "good mothers" even if their experiences do not interlock with the mainstream ideology of what a "good mother" should be.

Research reports that women's motherhood identities often are challenged by women's various roles like employment (Braun 2008; Johnston and Swanson 2006). As Johnston and Swanson (2006) note, "both employed and stay at home moms construct their mothering identities in a range that constrains their other choices" (pp. 517). For example, Blair-Loy (2003) found that high-status women who are employed and attempt to perform both motherhood and employee responsibilities feel guilt for not fulfilling either role according to dominant expectations. Bair-Loy's (2003) findings suggest the impact of the dominant "good mother" discourse where mothers must place professional growth second to their families' everyday needs.

Social characteristics as well as historical, political, and economic contexts intersect with the perceptions of motherhood and the construction of motherhood identities. The flexibility and variety of definitions and ideals of motherhood throughout time and space demonstrate how motherhood identities are socially constructed as explained earlier by Glenn (1994). Women's

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other roles also affect their definitions of motherhood. Such social constructs of motherhood have similarities and contrasts with non-Western motherhood perspectives and ideals.

Non-Western Motherhood

Motherhood perceptions vary cross-culturally and according to historical time. For example, historically in Confucian societies women's roles centered on the domestic sphere where their main obligations were childbearing, childcare, and home-care (Sun 2007:37). These ideals continue to affect the way Asian mothers construct their motherhood identities. Ngai, Chan, and Holroyd (2011) conducted a psycho-education program for first-time mothers in Hong Cong, China and found that descriptions of competent mothers focused on self-sacrifice, time, and attention committed to their children, successful breastfeeding, and properly socializing the child (Ngai et al. 2011: 1485).

Orthodox Russian mothers also had traditional perceptions of motherhood, which connect with physical presence. Isupova (2002: 63) explains that in Orthodox Russia, mothers had traditional responsibilities of childcare and self-sacrifice for their children and husbands. According to Isupova (2002), during the Soviet times motherhood entailed self-sacrifice not only for their children, but also for their country.

Childcare responsibilities do not always rely on mothers. After interviewing mothers who work outside the home in professional settings in Sri Lanka, Kodagoda, and Duncan (2010: 597) found that mothers rely on their own mothers or mothers-in-law for childcare. Some South African children have nannies or female kin responsible for childcare while their mothers work outside the home (Moorhouse and Cunningham 2012; Walker 1995).

Kulakac, Buldukoglu, Yilmaz, and Alkan (2006) explored the differences and similarities of motherhood constructions for ten Turkish midwives and ten Turkish school teachers. They

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found that, similar to employed Western mothers' experiences, mothers who worked outside the home felt guilt (Kulakac et al. 2006: 844). Kulakac et al. (2006: 845) also found that among the mothers who were teachers, becoming good role models was part of their ideals of being "good mothers".

Western and non-Western societies have specific orientations on the construction of motherhood. Differences in motherhood discourses suggest the effect of social expectations and needs which affect the constructions of motherhood roles and identities. The spread of globalization and modernization has challenged traditional motherhood ideals. Mothers across the world have had to reconstruct their roles according to resources available to them. In some cases the lack of resources in non-Western nations force women to migrate in search of better opportunities.

Why do Mothers Migrate?

The recent increase of female migration to Western nations is due to different reasons including consequences of national and international policy changes such as those implemented by the International Monetary Fund and (IMF) the World Bank. Throughout the last few decades, Southern nations around the world find themselves in a position where they must borrow capital from private organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank in order to participate in the world economy. These organizations lend capital in exchange for direct modifications in state policies (Roces 2010a; Johnson Osirim, Bose and Kim 2009; Acosta-Belén, 2009; Isbister 2006; Sparr 1994). The IMF and World Bank impose Structural Adjustment Plans (SAPS) (Sparr 1994). These plans cut subsidies on the public sector, devalue the currency, raise or remove ceilings on interest rates, and abolish price controls (Friedman 2010; Isbister 2006; Sparr 1994). When public funding is cut, access to job opportunities as well

as higher education becomes limited. These changes create poverty and increase labor demands for women in Western nations, which in turn push women to travel abroad in search for better life chances (Pearce et al. 2011; Pessar 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994).

Geopolitical and economic factors contribute to migration (Pearce, Clifford, and Tandom 2011; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Gutierrez and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008; Pessar 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). For example, the Bracero program in the 1940's attracted Mexican immigrant men through incentives to work in the agricultural sector (Dreby 2010; Gutierrez and Hondagneu-Sotelo). In contrast, today we see an increased demand for women laborers in the domestic and care sectors of Western countries (Widding, Sambsivan, Devi, and Hochschild 2008; Gutierrez and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008; Salazar Parreñas 2003). Southern nations also play an active role by encouraging women to migrate to richer nations to gain capital through women's remittances (Gutierrez and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008).

Nation-states influence who enters and leaves a country and affect women's construction of motherhood identities. Ho (2008) explains that there is a gendered relationship between nation-states and their citizens. Women who migrate are more likely to feel stress to retain their femininity through cultural values set by the nation-state (Ho 2008). This in turn causes conflict with their roles and identities as mothers.

Mothers who migrate do so with the intention of returning to their native countries after a few years. Scholars (Dreby 2010; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Pessar 2005) suggest that reunification becomes more difficult as women's expectations for betterment of themselves and their families grow. Pessar (2005:6) explains in a report for the United Nations expert group meeting of international migration and development in Latin America and the Caribbean, that in recent years the illusion of women going back and forward from their native countries to the U. S. is "too

risky and less frequent," especially for undocumented mothers. Migration for women also affects their gender role expectations and perceptions of motherhood, as well as those of their family members.

Previous scholars have mostly focused on the feminization of migration due to labor demands. A different reason for migration has largely been ignored: education. It is possible that some mothers migrate to Western countries in hopes to fulfill a higher education. SAPS directly change the funding of public sectors within various nations. Therefore, in many cases educational programs such as masters or doctoral degrees are unavailable. When they are available, the education sector is often in bad shape and of low quality (Pessar 2005). Education, and educational attainment have a significant effect on the experiences of transnational mothers and their constructions on motherhood identity.

Transnational Families and Motherhood

Transnational families are defined as families that maintain links across national boundaries, cultural divides, and cross-spatial distances (Goulbourne, Reynolds, Solomons, and Zontini 2010). Migration greatly affects the structure, relationship, and interactions of families through geographical divisions among family members. A recent trend is the increasingly higher numbers of female than male migrants (U. S. Department of Homeland Security 2010; 2004). Scholars have found that migrant parents leave their children with the hope of increasing their children's life chances and opportunities (Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012; Crawford 2011; Dreby 2010; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Women's migration has a large effect on their families since they are traditionally viewed as the main caregivers and nurturers of their children (Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012; Dreby 2010; Salazar Parreñas 2003; Salazar-Parreñas 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994).

Transnational families and mothers face conflict between their cultural values, economic needs, and new values acquired in their host countries (Bohr and Whitfield 2011). The effects of distance between married couples as well as migrants' marital statuses before and after migration are significant to gender role expectations of families (Dreby 2010: Coe 2011; Mahler 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994).

Scholars (Widding et al. 2008; Silvey 2006; Salazar Parreñas 2001) have mostly focused on women who migrate for labor demands as domestic workers. As Peterson and Sisson Runyan (2010:206) explain, there are a number of transnational agencies and networks that facilitate the flow of women into Western countries for work as domestic workers. Transnational domestic work is not only gendered, but is also racialized, and therefore, undervalued and underpaid. The experiences of migrant mothers who work as domestic laborers are especially complex, as they become the main caregivers of their employer's children (Peterson and Sisson Runyan 2010: 207; Dreby 2010; Lan 2006; Pessar 2005).

Domestic worker transnational mothers

Domestic worker transnational mothers face struggles when they separate from their children. Dreby (2010) and Salazar Parreñas (2001) have looked at the emotional costs of transnational motherhood from the perspectives of domestic and care workers. Dreby (2010) explored the lives of Mexican immigrants of low socioeconomic statuses by interviewing men, women, and children who are members of transnational families. She found that children of transnational fathers and mothers judge their parents according to traditional gender role expectations even if they have similar parenting practices (Dreby 2010). Mothers are expected to be physically present due to their gender role expectations of care, nurturance, and devotion to children, while fathers are expected to be the breadwinners and maintain their status outside the

home (Dreby 2010). Salazar Parreñas (2001) looked at the lives of Filipina domestic workers who moved to the U. S. and Italy. She combined micro and macro levels of analysis to explore Filipina domestic workers' experiences of being away from their families, and the racism they encountered in their new communities. She explains that transnational families base their ideals of motherhood in traditional roles of care and nurturance. Filipina transnational mothers construct motherhood by adding the breadwinning role and sending remittances (Salazar Parreñas 2001). Both Dreby (2010) and Salazar Parreñas (2001) demonstrate how motherhood ideals for domestic worker transnational mothers continue to reflect traditional motherhood roles of care giving, nurturance, and full attention to their children.

Dewi (2011), explored the ideal of "good mothering" for Indonesian transnational mothers who migrate for domestic work. Dewi's (2011) findings indicate that "good mothering" is divided into two types, old style and new style. Her results indicate that old style good mothering focuses on care giving, nurturance, and emotional work. The second centers on women's "independence, individuality and creating a stimulating environment for children" (Dewi 2011:211). These findings are related to women's participation in the workforce, and lack of time and financial surplus to be a stay at home mom.

Lan (2006) inspected the lives of migrant domestic workers from the Philippines and Indonesia living in Taiwan. She sheds light to the intersectionality of globalization, race, and gender on migrant domestic workers' experiences. Among her findings, Lan (2006) explains that social networks become important for migrant women. Networks of other migrant women give domestic workers an outlet from their over-worked and underpaid lives as well as a community they can trust. Lan (2006) also explains that it is harder for migrant domestic workers to visit their families because they cannot take days off work, and the trips become too expensive.

Transnational mothers as well as non-mothers in Lan's (2006) work communicated with their families through cell phones and email. Technology made it easier for migrant women to maintain communication with their families. For transnational mothers this is significant since it is through cell phones and email that they maintain contact with their children's everyday lives.

Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001; 1994) explored how the meaning of motherhood changes and is revaluated for domestic worker, transnational, Mexican, mothers once they leave their children behind. She explains that the ideal of being a stay-at-home-mom has never been realistic for many women. In their native country, Mexican women have always worked outside the home. However, while in Mexico, they had the possibility of incorporating their children in their work. When migrant women move to the U. S. and leave their children in their home country, this is no longer possible (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994:320). These women redefine the role of motherhood while fulfilling the same emotional tasks that their traditional views require. Women expand and add to motherhood ideas of breadwinning and emphasize the distinction of physical absence from emotional absence (Dewi 2011; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994:326). Emotional connection is the most emphasized theme in domestic worker transnational motherhood literature (Dreby 2010; Salazar Parreñas 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Emotional attachment is maintained through the transfer of material remittances and information while the mothers are away (Boccagni 2012; Bohr and Whitfield 2011; Lan 2006).

Recently, scholars that have explored transnational mothers in and outside of the U. S. have focused on women employed as domestic workers (Sternberg 20011; Dreby 2010; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Silvey 2006; Salazar Parreñas 2003; Salazar-Parreñas 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Although many women participate in this labor sector, there are other occupations that transnational mothers hold, which may have an effect on their beliefs on motherhood

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identity. For example, Bohr and Whitfield (2011:170) interviewed middle-class Chinese-Canadian immigrant mothers who sent their children back to China. They found that Chinese transnational mothers felt conflicting interests between their economic needs and their cultural values.

This brings into question how gender roles of migrant mothers affect their motherhood expectations and identities, and if these can be fulfilled by mothers who are not living in the same country as their children. Although previous scholars have found traditional gender role expectations in the motherhood identities of transnational mothers, a large implication is that these studies have focused on women working in the domestic sphere. It is likely that women with different occupations, socioeconomic statuses, and educational levels have other perceptions of motherhood.

Through this project, I contribute to the literature by telling stories of transnational mothers from diverse backgrounds, social statuses, and educational levels. Transnational studies often victimize women and their experiences (Mohanty 1991). Transnational mothering is not in isolation, but rather based in a historical, political, and economic context, which affects mothers' ideals and perceptions of mothering (Dewi 2011:209). Transnational mothers vary according to country of origin, social class, race, ethnicity, education, cultural background, and many other social characteristics. I argue that motherhood identity is constructed according to the availability of resources that migrant women have as well as their cultural backgrounds and political contexts. While many of these social locators have been examined, there is limited research on how social class influences transnational motherhood discourses. To address this gap in the literature, I interviewed transnational mothers who are graduate students in the United States.

As explained by previous authors described in the above sections, transnational

motherhood is not a new phenomenon. Rather, for student transnational mothers, the experience of being away from their children for the purpose of education differs from that of mothers leaving their children for labor demands. Using a social constructionist approach, I explore how student transnational mothers view and perceive their motherhood identities. Social constructionists believe that identities are socially created according to one's social, cultural, historical, and political contexts (Glenn 1994). Mothers who were interviewed socially defined their motherhood identities by deciding and justifying when is good timing to leave their children, and through their conceptualization of being good role models as key to being "good mothers." The construction of motherhood identity for student transnational mothers interviewed also centers on self-development and professional growth.

This project will help gain a better understanding of transnational families, their relationships, and individual roles by exploring mothers' experiences and ideals of motherhood. This project compares student transnational mothers' motherhood identity constructs to those of domestic worker transnational mothers' studied by previous scholars. This will help us gain a better understanding of transnational relations within larger social institutions, including gender, class, and education, which have an effect on transnational families and their identities.

METHODS

The goal of this project was to understand the ways in which student transnational mothers construct their motherhood identities while being away from their children. The research question that guided this project is: *What are the differences and similarities between the motherhood identities of student transnational mothers and domestic worker transnational mothers?* I conducted ten semi-structured interviews with student transnational mothers and compare them to literature on domestic worker transnational mothers. I chose to conduct

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interviews because they are the best method to understand individuals' meaning making and the social construction of their identities (Warren and Karner 2010; Denzin and Lincoln 2008).

Criteria for participation for this study include being an immigrant mother living in the United States and having children under 18 years of age living in their original country during the time of the interview, or women that have undergone the same circumstance in the past, but no longer than 6 years ago. All participants migrated for the purpose of gaining a graduate degree. This study differs from previous research on transnational motherhood in that the sample population for this project migrated for the purpose of education not labor.

The method of selecting participation for this project was through snowball sampling[1]. I established rapport with interviewees via email, after sending mass-emails through two list-serves of women's academic national organizations and after contacting student university organizations in the Midwest area. As Mann and Stewart (2003) discuss, I was careful when building rapport through Internet sources such as email, since words can be understood differently when read.

Table 1. Data Collection Information	
Dates	November 2011 to August 2012
Location	University in the Midwest area and via Skype
Number of Interviews	10
Interviews Length	60 to 90 minutes

The interviews for this project were conducted from November 2011 until September 2012. The interviewing process took a year to complete due to the difficulty in finding the target population of student transnational mothers. Half of the participants were interviewed at a

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[1] There are both advantages and disadvantages to snowballing. Snowballing is a good way to find participants when the criteria for participation are too specific, or the sample is simply not physically easy to locate, which was the case for this project. On the negative side, snowballing can turn the sample into an interlock of common relationships (Warren and Karner 2010: 145).

university campus in the Midwest, while the other half were conducted through Skype. The use of Skype helped enrich the number of participants and gain participants from various countries.

The interviews lasted between sixty and ninety minutes. All the interviews were audio-recorded and immediately after transcribed. The interview transcripts were available for the participants upon request to clarify shared information. I gave pseudonyms to all participants in order to maintain their confidentiality.

To analyze the ways in which student transnational mothers construct their motherhood identities, I focused the interviews on four main categories of analysis or themes: (1) Definitions of being a good mother, (2) perceptions of transnational motherhood, (3) childrearing practices, and (4) emotional pain[2].

First, I focused on the participants' definitions of being a good mother. Interview questions on this section focused on their family and cultural values, their perceptions of motherhood in their families and cultures, their main responsibilities in their families before they migrated, and their relationships with their mothers while growing up. Women interviewed also discussed their ideas of motherhood at a personal level in comparison to their cultural views.

Second, I centered on the participants' perceptions of transnational motherhood. Participants were able to detail changes in their relationships with their children, why they felt they had changed, and their perspectives of motherhood while being in a different country than their children. This section also focused on student transnational mothers' roles from afar, as well as their bargaining of roles once abroad.

Third, I looked at the participants' childrearing practices. Here the intention was to learn about the participants' roles in their immediate families as well as their share of responsibilities.

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[2] For a detailed interview guide, please see Appendix II.

Questions in this section focused on the ways in which participants bonded with their children, communication with their children, and their responsibilities surrounding childcare arrangements before and after migration.

Fourth, participants explained the draining emotional pain they felt while being away from their children. The purpose of this section was to gain a detailed understanding of the participants' feelings and perceptions of their experiences as transnational mothers. In this section the interview questions centered on the participants' thoughts and feelings on living in a different country than their children.

Table 2. Demographic Information of Participants

Name	Country of Origin	Marital Status	Occupation	Program of Study
Kissa	Uganda	Cohabited	Journalist	MA
Niu	China	Married	University Teacher	Visiting Scholar
Luz[3]	Colombia	Single	University Teacher	MA
Mariya	Russia	Divorced	University Teacher	PhD
Mierem	Kyrgyzstan	Married	University Teacher	Visiting Scholar
Ayana	Kyrgyzstan	Married	University Teacher	Visiting Scholar
Jina	Tanzania	Widowed	Research Manager	PhD
Dalia	Tanzania	Married	Sociologist	PhD
Hae	South Korea	Married	University Teacher's Assistant	PhD
Min	South Korea	Divorced	Stay-at-home-mom	MA

During the interviews I also collected demographic information from the participants including, country of origin, marital status, occupation before migration, program of study, and age. Table 2 gives a short description of the demographic information of the women who participated in this project[4]. The ten women interviewed were from, China, Uganda, Russia, Tanzania, Kyrgyzstan, Colombia, and South Korea. All of the women interviewed had visas to

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[3] Luz's interview and transcription of the interview were conducted in Spanish. Her quotes were translated to English by the primary investigator.

[4] For more detailed information regarding the participants please see Table 3 under Appendix I.

study in the U. S.[5]. I selected participants from different continents in order to gain a cross-cultural understanding of transnational motherhood identity.

All the women interviewed left their children in their native countries in order to pursue a graduate degree in the U. S. Most of the interviewees attended universities in the Midwest and others in the East coast. Nine of ten of the participants were employed before migration. Educational levels and occupations can be used as a reflection of the women's social class statuses. Five of the women interviewed were married, one cohabited, one was single, one widowed, and two were divorced. Nine out of ten of the women interviewed moved to the U. S. alone. During the interviews, women shared their cultural views as well as personal experiences regarding mothering from a distance, which shaped their motherhood identities.

HEARING THEIR STORIES

Interviews suggested that various social institutions including, social class, education, gender, culture, and globalization affect the construction and meanings of motherhood for student transnational mothers. The motherhood discourse of student transnational mothers reflected the bargaining of gender roles and gender expectations within an unequal globalized context. I found that the women I interviewed reshaped non-traditional and traditional gender ideals in order to fulfill their motherhood identities. Their discourses simultaneously referenced social class privilege and global inequality. Their stories demonstrated the differences and similarities of transnational motherhood identities within migrant women's experiences. In comparing my interviews with previous studies of domestic worker transnational mothers it was

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[5] Domestic workers' legal statuses varied depending on country of origin and country of labor. For example in Lan's (2006) work, some of the women had work visas which determined the length of stay and the freedoms they could take from their contracts. In Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) and Dreby's (2010) research, most of the women did not have legal documentation therefore reunification with their families was complicated as they were not able to travel freely back and forward.

found that, less-educated domestic worker transnational mothers are more traditional and have a family-focused ideology, while student transnational mothers who are more educated are less traditional and embrace a more individualistic ideology. These two perspectives affected the way in which transnational mothers shape their motherhood identities and experience transnational motherhood.

In this section, I compare motherhood identity construction of student and domestic worker transnational mothers. I explore the definition of the "good mother" ideal for both groups of transnational mothers. I show the similarities and differences regarding the perceptions of transnational motherhood between student and domestic worker transnational mothers. Then, I focus on the different attitudes towards childcare according to social class expectations. I describe the emotional pain felt by transnational mothers when leaving their children behind. Overall these four major themes demonstrate the different ways in which transnational mothers shape their motherhood identities.

Defining a "Good Mother"

Student and domestic worker transnational mothers' definitions of what it entails to be a "good mother" brought two main distinctions to the fore. (1) Student transnational mothers replaced traditional motherhood ideals with individualistic values of professional growth and good role modeling. To become a good role model also entailed giving children access to opportunities through the mothers' educational attainments and socioeconomic backgrounds. (2) Domestic worker transnational mothers focused their mother ideals on more traditional beliefs of self-sacrifice in the name of the family and children.

Similarities in defining a "good mother"

When women interviewed were asked to explain what it means to be a "good mother," most women emphasized traditional gender roles for mothering similar to those explained in Western motherhood literature, as well as non-traditional roles of breadwinning and independence described by domestic worker transnational mothers (Arendell 2012; Kawash 2011; Smart 1996; Glenn 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994).

Jina is originally from Tanzania. She is married and has a six-year-old son. She moved to the U. S. to pursue a doctoral degree. Before she moved to study abroad, she was the research manager for a nonprofit organization and her husband worked as a journalist. During the interview, she described that in order to be a good mother, it is important to "ensure the child gets all of the emotional, psychological, physical support, and economical support." Jina's description reflects roles of nurturance and care giving, which are traditionally viewed as responsibilities of mothers in both Western and Non-Western cultures (Ngai et al. 2011; Sun 2007; Smart 1996; Glenn 1994; Ruddick 1980). Domestic workers' motherhood ideals also focused on traditional views of motherhood (Dewi 2011; Salazar Parreñas 2001).

Jina's description also reflected the breadwinning role, by her wanting to provide economical support, which has been viewed as part of transnational motherhood roles by previous scholars (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). This was contradictory since student transnational mothers cannot fulfill physical caring or nurturing roles while being away nor breadwinning roles, because they are students and no longer in the labor market.

Women interviewed felt it was necessary to justify why they chose to leave their children. For example, Min, the mother of a six year old from South Korea moved to the U. S. to pursue a MA in communication. She explained,

He [son] is just six years old, and he cannot … I mean I want to say; for his age it's impossible that he can do everything well. For example, he needs help when he is doing homework, he needs help when he goes to private academy, he needs help to go to kindergarten, he needs help when he is taking showers, everything he needs some care. I'll be very busy if I just started studying, so maybe if I wait for two years, he will be eight years old, maybe he will be okay without my help.

Min's experience represented the friction between student transnational mothers' ideals of being a "good mother" and the reality of not being able to be physically present with their children. Choosing the correct time to leave their children shows student transnational mothers' attempts to fulfill traditional "good mother" ideals. Women who had children five years or older explained that if their children were younger, they would not have left them, due to their physical needs. Yet, Hae, the mother of a 3-month-old baby girl who is studying for a PhD in social work explained why she would not have taken the opportunity to study abroad if her daughter was older.

Well I'm not sure if my children are two or three years, if I couldn't bring her with me, then I could give this chance up… And because I think two, three, four year old are very critical time for baby. So if my baby were at that age, I would pursue a motherhood with physical contact.

Student mothers believed they left their children at a time when the children would not need their physical presence as much as during other developmental periods. Choosing the correct time to leave their children is challenging for all transnational mothers, students as well as non-students, and brings conflict to migrant parents' emotional well being (Carlin et al. 2012). There were also differences on the definitions of the "good mother" ideal for student and non-student transnational mothers.

Differences in defining a "good mother"

In interviews, student transnational mothers revealed that it was particularly important to be good role models in order to fulfill "good mother" ideals. The role model ideal was not

present in previous domestic worker transnational motherhood studies (Sternberg 20011; Dreby 2010; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Silvey 2006; Salazar Parreñas 2003; Salazar Parreñas 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994), but such role was present in high-status mothers' motherhood identity in non-Western motherhood literature (Kulakac et al. 2006). By focusing on becoming good role models, student transnational mothers' professional development and individualized goals became part of their motherhood identity constructs.

While domestic workers viewed their decision to move abroad as a necessity to help their families rise economically (Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012; Crawford 2011; Dreby 2010; Silvey 2006; Lan 2006; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994), student mothers viewed it as a necessity for self-growth and professional development. Lan (2006) had similar findings for single women who migrated as domestic workers, these domestic workers experienced migration as a form of gaining status and adventure. This is significant, since motherhood literature (Ngai et al. 2011; Silvey 2006; Isupova 2002; Smart 1996) points to self-sacrifice as part of motherhood identity, which was not reflected by student mothers interviewed.

Mariya is the mother of a five-year-old girl from Russia. She moved to the U. S. to pursue a PhD in sociology while her daughter lived with her mother in Russia. When she was asked to define the main role of a mother, she explained the following,

> The main role of the mother is just to love a child unconditionally, to give all support, but I don't think that you have to be physically present with your child all the time until she or he is like 21 years old. I think that in primary years your physical presence, your... connection is very important, it's crucial. But as a child grows, I think that your own example of who you are as a person is the most important thing.

As Mariya explained, the "good role model" becomes a new role and responsibility in transnational motherhood for student mothers. This gave student mothers the chance to center on their professional development rather than their families' economic needs. Student

transnational mothers had the opportunity to study abroad and not worry about their family's financial situation. Only one of ten women mentioned financial worries during the interviews. Education also provided women a roadmap for self-development and gave them access to grow as professionals. The focus on "good role models" reflected socioeconomic differences between student and domestic worker transnational mothers. Domestic workers did not have such focus, rather they centered on the remittances sent home and the emotional connection with their children as the main themes to be "good mothers" (Dewi 2011; Dreby 2010; Salazar Parreñas 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; 2001).

All student mothers explained intensively that they have tried to do the best they can, but they need to have their own personal lives, besides focusing on their families and children. Min from South Korea explained, "I cannot devote all of my time and effort to him. Because I have my life, but even though… I hope he understands I love him very much and tried to do my best." Luz has a six-year-old daughter living with her parents in Colombia. She had similar thoughts regarding being a good mother when she explained the following,

> I think that, I don't know if it is only for me, but if you are satisfied with what you have done professionally, with what you have reached in your personal life, something that is yours. Because it is not of your children, or your husband, it is yours.

As both Min's and Luz's quotes demonstrate, student transnational mothers interviewed for this project emphasized the importance of independence and growth as part of their motherhood identities. For women in this research, motherhood was part of who they are, but not what they are. Balance was a key aspect of student transnational mothers' perceptions of being "good mothers." Various women mentioned the importance of maintaining balance between work and family in order to fulfill motherhood ideals. They also emphasized that this balance is almost impossible to obtain. As Blair-Loy (2003) explains, this is similar to the

experiences of many high-status working mothers in the U. S.

Dalia, from Tanzania, is a student transnational mother who moved to the U. S. to pursue a PhD. When asked why she moved abroad she explained, "I just wanted to be in school and feel like a student. I think I just didn't want to be at home, you know with everyone else. I just wanted to feel like I'm a student." The changing of roles between mother, student, and worker made it hard for some women to focus solely on one or the other. After women migrated, it became easier to focus on one of the roles. For women interviewed in this project, that is the student role.

While in their original countries, women had to take responsibilities of the home, their jobs, and children. Mierem worked as a university teacher in Kyrgyzstan and is the mother of a two-year-old girl and a six-year-old boy. Her children stayed with her husband and mother-in-law while she studied abroad. Mierem's description gives an example of student transnational mothers' family roles in their country of origin.

> So early in the morning I take my son to the school, and my daughter to kindergarten and then go to work, and then just run off to the classes, and then take son from school home. Then in the evening we sometimes, together with my son, or just by myself, and then go to kindergarten, and take daughter back… and … like everything like a squirrel. You… Like I was doing everything, like running everywhere, I had to cook, I had to clean the house, and at the same time prepare for my classes.

With so many chores and duties to perform, it is not surprising that many women felt relieved away from their everyday responsibilities. Later in the interview, Mierem explained she felt less stress once in the U. S., "You have less things to do like with household and everything… I was feeling more relaxed."

The task of raising a child takes time and work, especially when the child is a newborn or infant. After being asked how she felt from separating from her 3-month-old baby, Hae, explained,

Well… actually… because she is a baby still in terms of physical convenience, I'm more comfortable with that! [Laughs] It is sad, but true! When I was with my daughter I had to get up at least three times during the night to feed her, yeah… she was so newborn baby, but I don't have to do that now. And actually I have more free time, compared to that.

Like Hae, many women interviewed felt relieved from their "motherly" everyday responsibilities. This does not mean that student transnational mothers did not worry about their children; on the contrary, they communicated with and worried constantly about their children. Definitions of "good mother" were divided between collectivistic, family-centered idealization and individualistic, self-development orientations.

Perceptions of Transnational Motherhood

In recounting the stories of student transnational mothers, we can disentangle how perceptions of transnational motherhood are shaped by women's financial and educational backgrounds. Student transnational mothers had conflicting ideas regarding their new motherhood identities. On the one hand, they believed they could not fulfill their roles from afar. On the other hand, they expressed that they could continue to influence their children while abroad. While domestic workers linked their motherhood ideals to their families' economic necessities, student mothers had a space and time to focus on themselves and their professional careers. Student mothers' constructs of motherhood ideals legitimized their actions and molded their identities. They focused on self-growth and "good role model" notions to influence their children from afar.

Similarities in perceptions of transnational motherhood

Participants had contradicting responses towards motherhood and mothering from a distance. When we discussed what it is to be a good mother, as examined in the previous section, most women emphasized that they did not have to be physically present with their

children to be good mothers. However, when asked if they believed that they could still fulfill their motherhood roles from a distance, women interviewed explained that these could not be fulfilled from abroad. For instance, Kissa is the mother of a six-year-old girl who lives in Uganda with her husband and a nanny. Kissa moved to the U. S. to pursue a MA degree. She explained the following,

> Not really [because] mothering a child requires physical bonding, physical bonding. But if you are far away it becomes very difficult for physical bonding. And there are times when a child is sick and a child requires the attention of a mother so you can't have that because you are far away.

The association of mothering with traditional roles of nurturance and physical care became dominant in Kissa's illustration. This was similar to most participants' descriptions of being a mother from a distance.

Although student transnational mothers interviewed believed they could not fulfill motherhood roles from a distance, all mothers interviewed expressed they could continue to influence their children even if they were not physically present. Influence was reflected through the "good role model" ideals expressed by student transnational mothers and through the constant communication with their children and their children's main caregivers. Such communication practices were similar to findings of domestic worker transnational mothers beliefs on influencing their children (Carlin et al. 2012; Lan 2006). Geographical distance became a factor for transnational mothers' identity construction.

Differences in perceptions of transnational motherhood

Domestic worker mothers explained that they could continue to fulfill motherhood roles from a distance (Crawford 2011) while student mothers interviewed felt this was not possible. I found two main reasons for these differences. One, the emphasis on emotional connection by domestic workers with their children, which they believed was maintained even during

separation through constant communication (Dreby 2010). Student mothers did not stress as much emotional connection with their children as domestic workers. Second, domestic worker mothers continued their breadwinning roles, unlike student mothers. Student transnational mothers could not fulfill physically caring, nurturing roles, or breadwinner roles, since they were students and no longer workers.

Some women interviewed planned to study in the U. S. since the beginning of their undergraduate studies. Obtaining an education in the U. S., especially a graduate degree involved gaining a higher status upon return to their original countries. Hae, the mother of a 3 month-old from Korea explained, "I mean even before [the] masters degree, I planned this study abroad… at least three or four years ago, and before meeting him [husband]. So it was my plan, and I didn't want to change that." As Dreby (2010) explained, domestic workers also planed and calculated their travels carefully. Student mothers planed their travels for individual and personal reasons, where domestic workers did so for family focused motives (Bohr and Whitfield 2011). Student transnational mothers experienced their travel abroad as routes of accomplishment, professional development, and self-growth, which were motivated by their careers. Domestic workers also viewed working abroad as part of their success, they also experience self-growth and self-development, yet their focus centered on their families' ability to gain financial stability (Bohr and Whitfield 2011; Lan 2006).

Perceptions of mothering from a distance also differed for student and domestic workers due to remittances and financial necessities. For domestic workers, remittances and material gifts sent home were a large measure of realizing their motherhood ideals (Boccagni 2012; Crawford 2011; Salazar Parreñas 2001). Remittances were described as a form of maintaining an emotional connection and being part of their children's lives for domestic workers (Boccagni 2012).

Student mothers interviewed only sent gifts for their children's special occasions such as birthdays and holidays. This difference in part was due to the notion of reunification.

Overall, student mothers were assured reunification with their families upon completion of their degrees. For domestic workers, it was harder to attain reunification due to financial need, employment restrictions, work permits/documentation, and controls (Lan 2006; Pessar 2005).

Perceptions of motherhood from a distance were contradicting at times, yet class and education made a difference on the women's experiences and expectations. The similarities and differences of transnational mothers' childrearing arrangements were also accompanied by women's social backgrounds.

Class and Childrearing Practices among Transnational Mothers

Classed differences were noticeable in transnational mothers' perceptions of nannies and maids. Although childcare was handed over to other women, their expectations of those women differed according to transnational mothers' socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Higher educated student mothers demanded a specific type of education for their children from their nannies, and were frustrated when this was not provided. Domestic worker mothers did not stress such issue since they themselves were in some cases the main caregivers of children in their host countries, thus focused on the emotional care given to their children.

Similarities in class and childrearing practices among transnational mothers

The closest female relatives and husbands of the women who were interviewed were designated as the main caregivers of their children. Participants' mothers, mother-in-laws, sisters, nieces, nannies, or maids helped participants' husbands with childcare. Women who were not married or cohabiting [single, divorced, or widowed] relied on their mothers and

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nannies to take care of their children[6]. Niu, the mother of a six-year-old from China described the caregiver role as follows, "Mother-in-law can help take care of children so she can release our burden. My mom also helps, but she is not so healthy so I wouldn't trouble her, but she would like to."

Female-centered childcare practices were also depicted in motherhood literature of domestic workers and some non-Western countries (Carlin et all 2012; Moorhouse and Cuningham 2012; Lanka et al. 2010; Peterson and Sisson Runyan 2010: 207; Dreby 2010; Lan 2006; Pessar 2005). Kissa's description was a good example of married student mothers' childcare arrangements, "She lives with her dad… Right now she is staying with a maid. Her dad goes to work in the morning, drops her off at one and then comes late at night like 9 p.m. or 10 p.m. So she stays with the maid most the time." As Hochschild (2001) explains, when women migrate a global care-chain begins, where women care for other women's children. For domestic workers this entailed migrant women caring for Western children, and their own children being cared by other women (Hochschild 2001). Student mothers were not responsible of care for children in the U. S., but they needed someone to provide childcare while they were gone.

The experience of living away from their children was not new for all women, two of the women interviewed studied abroad before and this was the second time they were separated from their families due to educational attainment. Other women lived in separate households than their children due to labor demands, and some traveled constantly leaving little time to be physically present with their children. For example, Luz, from Colombia did not live with her

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[6] Women provided childcare for nine of the ten women interviewed. Only one husband had full responsibility and no outside help with care for his fifteen-year-old daughter. The daughter was in charge of household chores, which were her mother's responsibilities before she left to study abroad. The husband was responsible of supervising and helping his daughter when needed.

daughter the year before she moved to the U. S. because she needed help with childcare in order to maintain her job. Her daughter stayed with her parents an hour away while she worked and lived in the city.

> That last year I did not live with my daughter because my family moved to Barranquilla, a city that is an hour from Cartagena… I could not renounce [my job], and I was in the process of the scholarship [to study abroad]. So resigning entailed a lot of change. I traveled all the weekends to see her and called her everyday.

Luz's quote and student mothers' experiences of not living in the same household with their children support Hondagneu-Sotelo's (1994) argument of women's presence in the public sphere. Hondagneu-Sotelo explains that most women who migrate have always worked outside the home; therefore the gender role of breadwinner is not something new for migrant women. Student mothers left for the purpose of education, but the dynamic of someone else taking care of their children did not differ greatly from their everyday lives. In these instances, women relied on female members of their family or female nannies for childcare. When they lived in their original countries, in some instances, domestic workers could incorporate their children in their job (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; 1994), and student transnational mothers were able to visit their children on a regular basis. The main difference is that while abroad transnational mothers could not visit or see their children as often as they did when they lived in the same country.

A persistent flow of communication with main caregivers and the children was part of both domestic worker (Dreby 2010; Lan 2006) and student transnational mothers' motherhood discourses. Communication means varied according to women's availability of resources. Eight of ten women interviewed communicated with their children on a regular basis via Skype or another form of computer or cell-phone video-chat. The other two used the telephone. Women interviewed talked with their children a minimum of three times a week, and a maximum of everyday. Domestic workers did not always have the opportunity to talk to their children as

frequently due to employer restrictions, but they also used technology to help with communication, especially cell-phones and email (Lan 2006).

Student mothers discussed the children's school, activities, and friendships when they talked to their children. Mothers interviewed also expressed that frequently, their children did not want to see or talk to them via the Internet. Niu stated, "Till now I chat with my husband everyday, but my son would not like to face me." This was similar to domestic workers' experiences. Dreby (2010) found that in many cases children did not want to talk to their mothers because they felt abandoned, or angry.

Differences in class and childrearing practices among transnational mothers

Both domestic worker and student transnational mothers had to rely on their children's main caregivers for transfer of accurate information (Dewi 2011; Dreby 2010; Lan 2006). Most women interviewed were constantly worried that the main caregivers were telling them what they wanted to hear, and not the truth about their children. Student mothers interviewed emphasized their involvement with their children's schools while being in different countries. Dalia, whose daughter stayed at a boarding school while she completed her doctorate degree along with her husband in the U. S. explained the importance of staying in contact with her daughter's school.

> So when she is at school you have to call like teachers all the time asking, 'how is she doing? Is she behaving well? You know everything doing good, has she changed?' You know all those kind of things. And sometimes teachers don't tell you necessarily the truth. They just want to tell you, aw, she is fine, everything is good.

Student transnational mothers worried that they would not be able to obtain accurate information regarding their children from their main caregivers. Student mothers' involvement in their children's education and communication in part was due to their educational level and class background. Literature on domestic worker mothers shows that domestic workers focused

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their attention on communicating with main caregivers, but not necessarily with the children's schoolteachers (Carlin et al. 2012). Student mothers also had the privilege and opportunity to give their children private schools and private lessons. This is a significant marker of class. Although private schooling is common for some in Southern nations, and sometimes less expensive than in Western nations, private schools as well as extracurricular activities are a signal of class and status. Student mothers were able to offer their children these opportunities due to their own schooling and educational backgrounds.

Another difference in childcare practices was student mothers' apprehension with maids and nannies. Women interviewed who had help from nannies had contrasting attitudes towards them. Jina, from Tanzania explained,

> The only influence he [son] got was from the nanny. And sometimes I would call and maybe the nanny would not be home, and he would just be playing with his stuff in the house… At some point I was so, so, desperate and distressed because I felt he was not getting the attention he would be required.

Jina's son first stayed with her husband and a nanny, where the nanny was the main caregiver. As the interview progressed, Jina explained that her husband was not used to taking care of her child and the nanny was not giving him the attention necessary, therefore they decided to send her son to live with her mother. Kissa, from Uganda had a similar experience. She described her childcare arrangements as following,

> …She stay[s] with the maid most [of] the time and… uh… you know how nuns [nannies], you know how nuns behave. They have all types of nasty behavior, so she is copying what her nun is doing. You get it? Nobody is there to tell her 'hey, don't do this; this is bad.' And then it will be a big challenge for me to undo this, to undo whatever she learned from the maid, whatever she copied from the maid.

In these two examples, women expressed concerns with the children not getting enough attention, but also the "correct type" of attention. Interestingly, they did not pressure their husbands to pay more attention to the children instead of the nannies. This can be explained as

a gendered and classed worry. Women's main worry was the type of attention children were getting and what they were learning from their female caregivers. Student mothers wanted their children to gain the correct cultural capital, which their nannies could not teach due to their social class. In contrast, domestic worker mothers did not express this concern; rather focused on the emotional care their children received from their caregivers (Dreby 2010; Lan 2006; Salazar Parreñas 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994).

Although there were strong differences on student and domestic worker transnational mothers' childcare practices, one key aspect remained the same. That is, both groups worried and felt guilt constantly after leaving their children.

Emotional Pain from a Distance

The emotional pain and drain felt from being away from their children broke class boundaries among transnational mothers. All women interviewed expressed fear that their children would feel abandoned and neglected. This was similar for both student and domestic worker mothers (Dreby 2010; Lan 2006; Salazar Parreñas 2001). Luz repeated this fear throughout her interview, "The responsibility to demonstrate her affection, to make them [children] feel like they are not abandoned, because normally the child is always going to think that." Luz explained that she felt she had to work even harder than when she was at home on making sure her daughter understood she loved her so she would not feel abandoned. Both student and non-student transnational mothers faced the fear of their children feeling abandoned because they were not physically present. After talking to her daughter via Skype, Kissa had an experience that demonstrates Luz's and other transnational mothers' fear. She explained,

> I'm supposed to Skype with her [daughter] for three hours. But these days every time we Skype the first question [is,] "Mommy when are you coming back? Mommy why did you leave me here? You abandoned me you don't want me; you left me under daddy's care. I will find another mom."

Kissa was very hurt to hear that her child was suffering because she was abroad. Although student mothers interviewed demonstrated a strong front and willingness to be independent, a feeling of guilt followed them constantly. This reflects the consequences faced by many women around the world when they attempt to break traditional molds and traditional ideals of motherhood.

Guilt was another factor that affected the ways in which transnational mothers constructed their motherhood identities. Dalia's description depicted the participants' experiences of guilt when she stated,

> It is horrible. I'm telling you, it is just horrible. Some days you just cry the whole day. You feel guilty, like... that is I think the hardest, you feel guilty all the time. You feel like your kids are sacrificing so much for you. You… sometimes you feel like you're kind of not a good mom.

All women interviewed explained that being a mother automatically comes with feelings of guilt. Student transnational mothers described that as mothers the "perfect" ideal could never be reached. This was similar to Bohr and Whitfield's (2011) findings centered on Chinese middle-class transnational mothers in Canada who mostly described uncertainty to their new roles as transnational mothers. The ambivalence of roles for transnational mothers affected their feelings of guilt (Bohr and Whitfield 2011).

Guilt was also reflected as student transnational mothers who were interviewed expressed their lack of options. Student transnational mothers explained that their decision to study abroad was, in their perspective, their only option to gain professional growth. This is interesting since student transnational mothers had more options than domestic worker transnational mothers due to their economic stability.

Before Kissa moved to study abroad for her MA, she worked as a journalist and as a

teacher at a private university. Her husband worked as an engineer in the public sector. During the interview she described the emotional drain she felt from living away from her daughter and that she felt a lack of choice. She explained, "I miss her. I miss my daughter. And every time she tells me mommy when are you coming back, I feel, project [pain] because it is beyond my control." Kissa is financially stable, but the lack of choices she described in part came from the slight academic options she had in Uganda to develop her career.

Northern nations are known for their prestigious universities, in comparison to graduate programs offered in Southern countries. Southern nations have less quality programs due to current neoliberal policies such as Structural Adjustment Programs that defund education (Pessar 2005). Student transnational mothers expressed that they had limited options available to further their studies in their native countries. Transnational mothers employed as domestic workers explained their lack of options in terms of work opportunities and financial necessity (Boccagni 2012; Bohr and Whitfield 2011; Lan 2006). Yet, both groups felt guilt as a result of their sparse opportunities.

The following description by Mariya best depicts student transnational mothers' experiences of their will for independence and their connection to feelings of guilt due to traditional motherhood views as well as societal norms and expectations;

> The motherhood is always in a way connected with sense of guilt. In the way that you [are] always not sure, you [are] always hesitating, whether you do things right, whether you guide your child enough, you are always pushing yourself like 'am I a good mother?'

Student transnational mothers who were interviewed expressed feelings of guilt and sadness connected to motherhood. Yet, these same women conveyed their willingness and need for independence as part of their constructions of motherhood identity. As Collins (1994) and Glenn (1994) explain, it is not always possible to fulfill dominant motherhood roles, yet women

continue to be judged and judge themselves according to those roles. Guilt is then reproduced as a side effect of mothering.

As Ruddick (1980) explains, maternal thinking is something that accompanies women constantly due to their gender expectations. Traditional motherhood ideals follow women into physical spaces and cultural binaries. Social institutions including, globalization, gender expectations, social class, and educational background shape transnational mothers' discourses of motherhood and identity constructions. Student transnational mothers managed these, sometimes-conflicting institutions, by renegotiating their roles as mothers and reshaping their motherhood identities.

CONCLUSION

The findings in this study placed student transnational mothers' experiences in a larger global, unequal context. Student transnational mothers juggled social class, gender expectations, educational background, and globalization to construct their motherhood identities. First, the findings reflected friction between non-traditional gender ideals centering on individualized fulfillments and traditional gender ideals focusing on familial needs. Second, the discourses simultaneously presumed social class privilege and global inequality. Finally, student transnational mothers' stories demonstrated the differences and similarities of transnational motherhood identity construction.

The women interviewed for this study deconstructed traditional motherhood views and shaped them according to their environment. As Glenn (1994) and Collins (1994) have explained, dominant motherhood expectations are not realistic to all mothers' identities. Traditional roles continue to affect how women view themselves as mothers, how they are judged as mothers, and how they justify their actions.

Personal growth and professional development were crucial for student transnational mothers' discourses of motherhood. On the contrary, domestic worker transnational mothers' identities centered on their families' economic needs and children's emotional wellbeing (Dreby 2010; Salazar Parreñas 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Professional growth enabled student mothers the opportunity to focus their motherhood constructions on being good role models. The "good role model" ideal was key to define student transnational mothers' motherhood identities. This role legitimized their departures and independence from their families. Which in turn reflected a motherhood identity that was not self-sacrificing, but rather individualistic in the sense that women focused on themselves instead of their families and children's needs

Class and education were significant factors in constructing student transnational mothers' motherhood identities. Student transnational mothers' experiences were affected both positively and negatively by their privileged class position in comparison to domestic worker transnational mothers. While student transnational mothers had a significant amount of options due to their class privilege, from their perception, their choices were limited, if not to say invisible. Women interviewed viewed studying abroad as a necessary means to obtain their desired self-development as professionals. Women interviewed traveled from Southern to Northern nations, this may be a reflection of the lack of quality educational opportunities in the South due to global inequality and neoliberal policies (Pessar 2005). In their home countries, student mothers had limited access to develop their careers, while domestic worker mothers had limited access to financial stability (Dreby 2010; Salazar Parreñas 2001; Lan 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Economic stability gave student mothers the option to focus on their personal and professional growth as opposed to their families' economic needs.

There were various similarities found between student and domestic worker mothers.

Their strongest similarities laid on the need of childcare and emotional pain expressed. Childcare continues to be female-centered throughout various countries around the world (Blair-Loy 2003; DeVault 1991; Hochschild 1989). Female-centered care takes away responsibility from fathers and reduces the possibility of a relationship with their children. The emotional pain, guilt, and worry expressed by women displayed their traditional perceptions of motherhood that could not be fulfilled from a distance.

Women's perceptions of themselves as mothers were affected by larger structures of power dynamics, which are globalized (Mohanty 196; Basu 1995). Transnational mothers' access to opportunities were restricted by global inequality (Dreby 2010; Salazar Parreñas 2001). Yet, their feelings of guilt break barriers of social class as well as global inequality. Motherhood identities of student transnational mothers reflected the bargaining of gender roles and gender expectations within an unequal globalized context.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One limitation in this project is the small number of participants. Nevertheless, due to the difficulty in finding participants, the depth of the interviews conducted demonstrates a small piece of the larger picture. Another limitation is that I did not have the opportunity to interview the women's families including children, partners, and caregivers. Gaining their perspectives would broaden our understanding of student mothers' experiences.

In order to help student transnational mothers diminish their emotional pain and anguish, it is important to give student transnational mothers access to support systems of other women who are going through the same experience. University student organizations or national list-serves aimed specifically at this population (student transnational mothers) would give women a space where they can share their feelings and gain motivation and support. Half of the women

that I interviewed studied at the same university, but only two knew each other. The other five women were at different universities located on the East coast, and only one knew of another woman in a similar situation. Such peer groups would benefit women in fulfilling their graduate studies abroad while having children in their home countries.

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APPENDIX I

Table 3. Detailed Demographic Information of Participants							
Name	*Country of Origin*	*Age*	*Marital Status*	*Occupation*	*Number of Children*	*Length of Stay when Interviewed*	*Program of Study*
Kissa	Uganda	29	Cohabit	Journalist	1	4 months	MA
Niu	China	35	Married	University Teacher	1	2 months	Visiting Scholar
Luz	Colombia	28	Single	University Teacher	1	7 months	MA
Mariya	Russia	27	Divorced	University Teacher	1	8 months	PhD
Mierem	Kyrgyzstan	33	Married	University Teacher	2	3 months	Visiting Scholar
Ayana	Kyrgyzstan	39	Married	University Teacher	2	4.5 months	Visiting Scholar
Jina	Tanzania	44	Widow	Research Manager	1	2 years	PhD
Dalia	Tanzania	33	Married	Sociologist	2	4 years	PhD
Hae	South Korea	26	Married	University Teaching Assistant	1	1 month	PhD
Min	South Korea	33	Divorced	Stay-at-home-mom	1	1 year	MA

Interview Guide

What is your marital status?

How old are you?

Where are you from?

How long have you been in the U. S.?

Do you work outside the home?

Can you tell me a little about what your life was like before you moved to the United States? Did you work outside the home? What were your main responsibilities in the family/house? Can you describe your relationship with your husband/partner?

What was it like when you were growing up? Can you describe your family when you were younger? Did you live with your mother?

Can you describe your relationship with your mother when you were growing up? How is it now?

Why did you move to the U. S. ? Did you move alone or with someone?

What did your family think/say when you moved?

When you were in (country), how did you think your life was going to change if you moved? How has your life changed since you moved to this country?

Can you tell me about your children? How many do you have? How old are they? How many live with you? How many do not live with you? Who do they live with?

How would you describe your relationship with your children before you moved to the U. S.?

How often do you see your children? How often do you talk to them?

What is the most difficult part about being away from your children?

Do you plan on moving back with your children? Are you planning on staying?

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a mother living away from your children?

What do you consider your family values to be? Are they the same as your values? Have your values changed since you moved?

What do you think is the role of a mother? What are the responsibilities of a mother? How do you think that this is decided?

What do you think about the roles of mothers when they cannot live with their children? What are their roles?

How do you think women gain an identity? Can you describe what is the role of a woman? How do you think this is decided? Do you see differences in women in the U. S. and women in (country)? Do you think you have changed as a woman since you moved here?