

Fulfilling Dreams Through Education: An Immigrant Mother's Sociocultural Narrative

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Abstract

There are bodies of literature that exist on motherhood; however, the focus of these studies is on mothering in a European context. This sociocultural study focuses on my lived experiences as a mother navigating through Jamaica's hegemonic educational structures, and managing the challenges faced by my son. Additionally, it recounts the disorienting dilemmas I experienced with my child falling seriously ill at 11 months old, and critical incidents relating to him not being able to fulfill his educational potential in Jamaica. I have looked at my experiences through Mezirow's (1992) transformative learning theory to connect them to my journey "fulfilling dreams through education" – as an immigrant mother all in an effort to ensure a better future for my son. Also, Tripp's (1993) critical incident theory and turning point theory is used to narrate stories of my experiences with Jamaica's K-12 educational system, which provides little or no support for students outside the 'edges,' or those who do not fall within the normative standard. Further, in this study, I have incorporated a storytelling approach, a method used in narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), by telling my life stories in order to relate my experiences with the Jamaican education system to make meaningful connections. Telling these stories will facilitate a sense of awareness and help me to understand several engagements with the cultural system of education in Jamaica (Fresco, 2008). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) use the word *narrative* to mean "both the *phenomenon* (people lead storied lives and tell stories of these lives) and the *method* (researchers describe these lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience)" (p. 2). I have undertaken to do this by writing about my life experiences from recollection, and it is envisioned that the stories contained herein will serve as a source of inspiration and strength to those who read it.

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Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
Personal Justification	1
Background of My Journey into Motherhood.....	4
Social and Cultural Context for This Narrative.....	5
Purpose of the Study	6
Significance of the Study	7
Research Focus	7
Limitations of the Study.....	8
Delimitations of the Study	8
Theoretical Framework.....	8
Chapter Summary	13
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	14
Motherhood	14
Education.....	23
Immigration.....	37
Chapter Summary	40
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	42
Narratives Explained.....	42
Data Collection and Analysis.....	44
Data Reliability and Validity.....	46
Sample and Population	47
Ethical Assurance	47
Dissemination of the Study	47
Chapter Summary	48
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	49
Stories	50
Summative Analysis	73
Chapter Summary	74
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	76
Motherhood	76
Education	79
Immigration	80
Conclusion	81
References.....	82

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In this study, I will be incorporating a *storytelling approach*, a method employed in narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), by using stories from my life in order to create profundity to my acquired knowledge, and to assist me in explaining my lived experiences as a mother navigating through Jamaica's education system. Clarity of purpose and self-knowledge can be achieved by storytelling, which strengthens one's ability to understand various social encounters (Fresco, 2008). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) use the word *narrative* to mean "both the *phenomenon* (people lead storied lives and tell stories of these lives) and the *method* (researchers describe these lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience)" (p. 2).

Personal Justification

Justification for undertaking this narrative stem from my most important identity: being a mother. Employing this narrative approach is reflective of a growing trend in research with regard to the concept of identity, as it lends itself to the process of individual storytelling (McAdams, 2008). Narrative has an important approach to delivery: for inquirers to tell their story and make meaning of their complex experiences in an autobiographical, sociocultural format (Clark & Rossiter, 2008). I am writing about my journey into motherhood because it was, and has continued to be, a most challenging role from 1999 onwards after I became pregnant with my son. Homans (1982) describes the process of pregnancy and childbearing as a rite of passage: women are separated from the rest of society during delivery, and after, are reintegrated with the new status of 'mother.' This reintegration could be problematic: changes in social relationships are dramatic, and they occur when mothers are most vulnerable, following the physiological trauma of

delivery and the exhaustion brought about by catering to the demands of the new infant.

My son was born in March 2000, and from that time, I have experienced many incidents that threatened to derail my efforts of raising a productive, independent adult, especially since my son had experienced a major illness. He battled and miraculously recovered from contracting the encephalitis viral infection, which affects the brain, and afterwards, had difficulty performing at the standard required for success in Jamaica's education system. With these existing challenges and the ongoing recovery from his illness, it has been difficult for me to see him struggle with education – especially when it was my own success in Jamaica's standardized testing education system that has bestowed upon me the liberation that I now enjoy in fulfilling my own dreams.

Through my educational pursuits, I have engaged heavily with Mary Wollstonecraft's contribution to education in her writing of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in the 1700s, and now I realize the reason for the shift in the social identity of women based upon her advocacy. Murphy (2006) informs us that, "Wollstonecraft argued for women's liberation, starting with education, leading to full participation in the middle-class cultural revolution, resulting in social usefulness and legal and civil equality" (p. 190). The relevance of Wollstonecraft's advocacy to my role as a mother is in relation to my realization that women can seek fulfillment through education to benefit their children and families both financially and emotionally, all in their effort to grow and nurture productive human beings.

This autobiographical narrative is an important story to tell in my effort to not only fulfill my own educational dreams, but to grow and nurture my son into a productive human being. To that end, I had to leave Jamaica for Canada to pursue this educational

opportunity. However, although I know deep down the merits of my decision, I am also confronted with adjustment issues as an adult learner and an immigrant, which is compounded by my physical absence from my son. To compensate for my absence, I use technologies such as Skype, WhatsApp video calling, and Facebook video messenger to communicate with my son, but I only achieve temporary relief to the discomfort I have experienced from not being able to feel and touch him. I am experiencing some of the challenges associated with being a *transnational mother*. O'Reilly (2014) explains that *transnational mothering* is a practice among migrant women whose children remain in their country of origin. Leaving my son in Jamaica added difficulties to my own adjustment being an adult student and immigrant, in that I have experienced intercultural incompetency. I am acutely aware that the challenges I had with intercultural incompetency stem from my inability to completely focus on my new environment, as I miss my son who, depends on me to help him through his daily activities, especially his educational tasks. This is further compounded by the fact that he is a teenage boy who is experiencing both physical growth as well as emotional and educational development issues.

Therefore, this narrative is an important piece of writing for me to make better sense of my journey and experiences in achieving my goal of creating a better future for my son. This is important for my readers to not just hear of my own personal experience, but to also hear of the experiences of at least two other Jamaican mothers. How do I deal with this emotional conflict associated with the necessity to fulfill my immigrant dream through education, amidst the reality of the necessity to raise and nurture a productive adult? How are other immigrant mothers coping with this emotional conflict amidst the same realities? This is what I intend to narrate and uncover in the undertaking and storying of my

experiences and that of two other Jamaican mothers.

Background of My Journey into Motherhood

My first encounter with the responsibility of mothering was as the older sister of my two siblings. However, as emotionally charged and highly responsible those early activities were, they did not provide me with adequate preparation for my own role as mother. My own responsibility as a mother began on March 28, 2000, when I gave birth to my son. Since then, I silently vowed the protection of my child and declared that nothing unfortunate would happen to him on my watch. This transformative experience of motherhood made it difficult to place my needs above his. I saw the experience of motherhood as a gift, and instinctively knew that my child should always feel that he was that to me – and, to the world. I would appreciate the miracle that he was to me by never acting in ways that may be deemed as untoward or detrimental to his well-being or survival.

Having my own child led me to realize that nothing compared to the real, awesome responsibility and complex nature of motherhood, which oftentimes meant ensuring that the needs of my child were met while ignoring my own. It was an immediate realization that this responsibility did not allow room for missteps – although it did not come with a ‘how-to’ manual. Lewis (1997) affirm the preceding, that the process I experienced and the emotions I felt are what I have come to realize as the, “mother’s love which is eternal not only because it outlived the mother herself as it was preserved in her children’s memories” (p. 58). Regulating this love was impossible, as instinctively being a mother, I felt every pain and struggle of my child. If he felt hurt, it was a corresponding effect that I, too, would also feel hurt, and his healing would become my only focus.

Social and Cultural Contexts for This Narrative

To suitably situate this narrative, I will examine my own social and cultural context. Undertaking a narrative in a sociocultural context allows for the inquirer/researcher to present a, “real picture of reality, as it exists in time and space” (Neisser, 1976, p. 2). Accordingly, the social and cultural context of this story is grounded in the reality of being an educational administrator for two decades in Jamaica, where I have seen the triumphs and pitfalls that the system affords to the Jamaican populous. I personally triumphed within the Jamaican education system in that, although I did not come from a middle-class family, nor did I live in affluence, I was successful at passing the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) at 11 years of age. I am the child of a teenaged mother, and lived in a single-parent household in the inner city of Kington. Education has been my vehicle for success, as I was able to navigate through Jamaica’s education system without additional support and passed the standardized assessments that led me to attend one of the most prestigious high schools in Jamaica.

However, later, I personally experienced the pitfall of that same education system when my son, who had learning difficulties, was not adequately supported to achieve educational success. It was these two contrasting experiences that have opened my understanding of what it feels like to both triumph and fail miserably in Jamaica’s educational system. I have become critical of the system that I once lauded as one of the best in the world – because the high achievers, like myself, that have been sifted out have been able to perform incredibly well on the international scene – but I now realize that those who do not perform well – the low achievers, are left with a dim outlook for the future.

The irony of my story is that the same system that assigned this dimmed outlook for my son is the same system that provided his mother – me – with the capabilities to overcome it. Therefore, I came to Canada in September 2017 to pursue a Master of Education degree in the hope that the Canadian educational environment will resound as a better space for him to flourish educationally. However, I have experienced challenges dealing with intercultural competency, and had to engage with Deardorff's (2004) process model of intercultural competence and Hammer's (2012) adaptation of Bennett's (1993) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS), which is used to create the intercultural development continuum (IDC), to understand the theories behind my transitioning experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to reflect on my journey as an immigrant mother using education as a pathway to fulfill my dreams and to raise my son into a productive adult, despite the challenges he faces with Jamaica's educational system. More specifically, the study will seek to:

- i) narrate the disorienting dilemmas and critical incidents experienced as a mother of a child with learning difficulties due to an illness, which led to the necessity to migrate to Canada;
- ii) narrate the role that education played as a challenge and an opportunity for transformation; and
- iii) explore the lived experiences of two other Jamaican mothers in relation to their disorienting dilemmas and the critical incidents that influenced their decision to migrate to Canada.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for mothers who have experienced critical incidents that have made it more challenging to raise productive and independent adult children within a Caribbean context. Also, this study is significant for mothers, regardless of culture, to gain information on how to overcome the challenges of having a child or children struggling to fulfill their educational dreams in one system of education. Finally, this sociocultural narrative study is significant in the field of educational scholarship, as the body of literature on Caribbean motherhood exploring mothering journeys in any dimension is sparse.

Research Focus

The central focus of this sociocultural narrative is to tell the stories about my journey to fulfill dreams through education as an immigrant mother by examining disorienting dilemmas and critical incidents, in addition to a turning point that occurred which made me, as a Jamaican mother, uproot my life to ensure that I am successful in my efforts to raise my son to become a productive adult by migrating to Canada.

More specifically, this study explores the following six specific questions:

- i) What is the history of Caribbean motherhood in the Jamaican context?
- ii) Who were the early advocates for women's liberation and transformation through education?
- iii) What are the challenges of mothering differently abled or intellectually challenged children?
- iv) What are the challenges within the Jamaican educational system for children outside of 'the edges?'

v) What are the challenges associated with adult education as an international student?

vi) What are the experiences of two other Jamaican immigrant mothers in their journey of uprooting their life to ensure that their children are able to achieve their educational potential in Canada's education system?

Limitations of the Study

The following three limitations were experienced in carrying out this narrative inquiry: i) limited literature existing on the subject area of Caribbean/Jamaican motherhood; ii) time constraints on the part of the researcher to fully examine the issues; and iii) a limited number of participants in the study.

Delimitations of the Study

The study was limited to my own reflections as I experienced motherhood, education, and immigration. Additionally, the perspective of only two other Jamaican mothers was included. The general opinions of motherhood, education, and immigration were not considered in this study. It should also be noted that the researcher did not conduct surveys or interviews during this inquiry.

Theoretical Framework

This study is influenced by many theories such as mothering theories, Mezirow's (1992) transformative learning theory (TLT), Tripp's (1993) critical incident analysis (CIA), Freire's (2000) critical pedagogy (CP), and turning point theory (TPT). In the following section, I will briefly explain how each has influenced my topic, thoughts, and ideas for this study. These theories will help portray my thoughts and opinions, while clarifying my experiences in relation to being a mother, an educator and student, and

immigrant in this narrative.

Mothering Theory

The theory of mothering in its natural form has been examined by many feminists. However, I will look at mothering based on the ideas espoused by two educational theorists to incorporate my position as a mother living in the 21st century. Homan (1982) describes the process of pregnancy and childbearing as a rite of passage for women. Although this process may be seen as a rite of passage, society's norms have dictated to women over many decades how they were to fulfill their role as mothers. Murphy (2006) informs us that in 650 to 570 BC, Sappho's ideology for women was that they were to become educated to be cultured wives and mothers for domestication. Her school trained women to be attractive for their husbands and she used music, poetry, and dance to educate them – but they were not themselves permitted to have a career of any sort outside of the home. While Sappho believed in education for boys and girls, her concept of education for both sexes was different: women's role was not to be one of independence, although she is credited for being an independent thinker herself. Instead, her philosophy was that a woman's place was to remain in the home and be a 'good wife' that catered to the needs of her husband, and a mother who catered to the need of her children.

It was these ideologies that Mary Wollstonecraft stanchly debunked in the arguments in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Here, she argued against Sappho's idea that a woman's place was in the home, and that she should be at the disposal of her husband and children. Murphy (2006) notes that Wollstonecraft envisioned a greater role for women as not only as wives and mothers, but as equal contributors to society as men. It is because of the advocacy of Wollstonecraft that mothers, including me, are now

able to pursue careers and fulfill dreams through education in the 21st century.

Transformative Learning Theory

For this sociocultural narrative, I rely on Mezirow's (1992) phases of transformative learning framework to explain the lived experiences that have fueled my aspirations to fulfill both my own dreams and the dreams of my son through education as an immigrant mother. Mezirow's (1992) transformative learning theory (TLT) stems from humanistic theory, which views people as being responsible for their lives and actions, and having the freedom and will to change their attitudes and behaviour and, by extension, their circumstances in life. Mezirow's (1992) theory is also based on constructivist assumptions, the belief that learning is acquired through human interactions and experiences (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). While I did not engage with all of Mezirow's (1992) phases, I have listed all ten phases for edification and reflective purposes:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| i) Disorienting dilemma | vi) Building confidence in new ways |
| ii) Self-examination | vii) Planning a course of action |
| iii) Sense of alienation | viii) Knowledge to implement plans |
| iv) Relating discontent to others | ix) Experimenting with new roles |
| v) Exploring options of new behaviour | x) Reintegration |

Integral elements to the transformative learning process include taking the perspectives of others and yourself, and performing critical appraisals of the assumptions underlying your roles and their associated priorities and beliefs – and, in turn, deciding whether to act on those priorities and beliefs. This theory focuses on individual transformation, and I have used it to illustrate the circumstances that led to the action taken by me, as the author/researcher, to migrate to another country with the hope of fulfilling a

dream for me and my son through education.

Critical Incident Analysis

Critical incident analysis (CIA) is a pedagogical theory developed by Tripp (1993), whose analytical approaches allow reflection on teaching situations so that teachers can develop their professional judgments and practices (Muhammed, 2016). It is important to note that CIA is not exclusive to any one discipline or sector of life, despite its development for the teaching profession. Daily, CIA is being used by ordinary people going about their activities. Items of news can evoke CIA of all sorts, depending on the story being reported and its relevance to the life experience of an individual. Caribbean mothers, for instance, undergo CIA when they are faced with the dilemma of creating a better life for their children, and oftentimes, many see migration as a possible avenue for achieving a better future. In illustrating Tripp's (1993) formulation of CIA, Muhammed (2016) developed personal theory analysis (PTA), "an articulated set of beliefs that informs our professional judgement" (Tripp 1993, p. 51). It is, "an evolution of dilemma identification because the reason one particular action is chosen over another enables identification of intrinsic values that underlie one's professional judgment" (Ahluwalia, 2009, p. 5).

Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy

Freire's (2000) *critical pedagogy* (CP) informs us that, that there is a distortion of being more fully human, sooner or later being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so. In order for the struggle to have meaning the oppressed must not in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it) in turn become oppressors of the oppressor. (p. 44)

Freire (2000) further clarifies the preceding statement by asserting that the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed is to liberate themselves; as oppressed individuals or peoples who fight for their humanity, they will be attempting the restoration of true generosity. It should be noted that in this struggle for liberation, there is a fear of freedom which affects the oppressed; this fear may lead them to either desire the role of oppressor or bind them to the role of oppressed.

There is a connection between the decisions that Caribbean people make to migrate with Freire's (2000) CP, as many see migration as a means to overcome the lingering colonial oppression associated with being people of African descent. Enslavement has left many Caribbean nationals impoverished, and our only elevation out of low socioeconomic conditions is to go to another country where the prospects of meeting the 'bread and butter needs' are better. Among the many routes available to Caribbean and other nationals is through education, to obtain a student visa to study in whichever foreign country they desire to migrate to, as their critical consciousness informs them that, based upon their personal circumstances, a better life awaits them in another country. Freire (2000) asserts the importance of developing this *critical consciousness*, which is an awareness of hegemonic dominance and questioning – one that I had personally developed over the years as an educational administrator.

Turning Point Theory

A *turning point* is a frequently used term when life changes are experienced. Based on the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, a *turning point* is defined to be “the point at which a very significant change occurs: a decisive moment, alteration or deflection in a long-term pathway or trajectory that was initiated at an earlier point in time”

(n.d., p. 16) – distinguishing it from a temporary change or a mere fluctuation in behaviours. Turning points redirect trajectories and are not simply temporary detours from life's pathways. As discussed in turning point theory (TPT), they often involve particular events, experiences, or awarenesses that result in changes in the direction of a pattern or trajectory over the long-term (Teruya & Hser, 2010).

Chapter Summary

This sociocultural study details the life of the author/researcher and her encounters with education in Jamaica, looking primarily at her personal experience and the challenges her son encountered when navigating its standardized testing educational environment. I have chosen to do this narrative for reflection and have grounded my account in educational theories. I have included the stories of two Jamaican mothers to enrich this discourse that I hope will serve as inspiration to other mothers who are on the path of overcoming any oppressive situation, whether education-related or otherwise. This study is arranged in chapters which include this introduction, followed by a review of the literature, methodology, and findings, ending with discussions and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter represents a review of the body of literature relating to themes that emerged from my lived experiences through a sociocultural lens. Therefore, I have included information in the literature that is congruent with the emerging themes in this study: motherhood, education, and immigration. The antecedents linked to each theme and the theoretical framework identified were used to organize the flow of the information presented in this chapter.

Motherhood

Under this first theme, a sociocultural perspective of motherhood is explored to identify the unique context in which this role is performed in the island of Jamaica. Traditions and beliefs about the role of mother are explained based upon the antecedents linked to the way this role is performed, juxtaposed against the experience of two Jamaica mothers and the cultural practices of motherhood in the United States of America. The importance and challenges associated with the role are identified, highlighting both the privilege to be a mother while simultaneously exploring early advocates that paved the way and have afforded women the privilege to also have a career.

History and Traditions of Caribbean Mothering

Motherhood in the Caribbean is a concept passed down through deeply rooted traditions during enslavement. Shaw (1997) reminds us that, “mothering under slavery was truly contested terrain” (p. 297). The “contested terrain” Shaw refers to is told in the stories of motherhood in the Caribbean and forms a part of the traditions handed down through generations. Every type of mothering behavior in the Caribbean has historical antecedents linked to the period of enslavement, with a mixture of African and European traditions

intertwined (Shaw, 1997). Sprague (1992) demonstrates the uniqueness of Caribbean mothering in the recount of her trip to Jamaica. She illustrates that the conversations she had with her Jamaican friend, Maureen, a PhD candidate, revealed a great level of cultural shock regarding the value of motherhood in the Caribbean. Sprague (1992) describes that she had left her home country of the United States of America (USA) to escape what she perceived as the 'blah' of housework; she did not like, "mopping up floors and sponging someone else's grit from the bathroom bowls and saw them as nothing more than a necessary chore" (p. 1). Oddly, her talks with her friend Maureen began by them conversing about the women's liberation movement in America, which somehow digressed and touched on the cultural values placed on the home and family in the Caribbean. Maureen was astonished that mothers in America, at least from Sprague's perspective, did not value highly homemaking as part of motherhood.

In the conversations Maureen had with Sprague, she shared stories about Jamaican women being extraordinary and proud of their expressions of womanhood in the form of home care, mothering, and wifely duties. Sprague (1992) recounts how Maureen told her that, "by tradition, Jamaican girls are brought up with the expectation that they will become women with no limitations and that taking care of family and home is introduced at an early age" (p. 2). Although there were these expectations of girls, Maureen was assertive in pointing out that the Caribbean culture in no way practiced distinctive gender roles. O'Reilly (2014) reinforces this practice, as she highlights that women have historically played an important role in the Caribbean economy. Further, O'Reilly explains that, "Caribbean women are the backbone of the family and often combine dual roles of primary parent and income earner" (2014, p. 171). This is corroborated in Maureen's illustration

that,

homemaking was only one of several areas she was encouraged to develop as a child. Academic achievements and other accomplishments were equally extolled. She did not have a sense of limit placed on the things she could do or become. (Sprague, 1992, p. 2)

As previously mentioned, the roots of mothering in the Caribbean can be found in the legacy of enslavement, and that Caribbean women, by tradition, play an important role in the economy of their family. Shaw (1997) illuminates the point that enslaved women did not always depend on slaveholders to provide the means of sustaining their children's lives; while they acted within the various restrictions of their owners' mandates, some women made legendary efforts to preserve the lives of their children, to nurture them, and to encourage their development. Their efforts to take care of their children was described as, "determined effort" or, "mother's love" (Shaw, 1997, p. 2). Enslaved women regularly demonstrated their ability to provide a higher standard of life for their children than their owners were willing to provide.

Unfortunately, enslavement had as part of its dreadful legacy a link to separation. However, separation did not necessarily mean that many mothers did not attempt to do what they could for their children during these periods of separation. Shaw (1997) tells a story of Rose, whose family name is unknown, regarding how she was separated from her mother, but was still owned by the same white family that owned her mother. On the occasions when her mother knew of the white family's visits to where Rose was located, she would send money and fruits for her. Here, there is a connection with the account of Rose's mother with present-day Caribbean mothers migrating and sending back barrels

with things for their children – thereby not allowing their circumstances to rob them of the opportunity to give care to and nurture their children. Today, connection to this activity is seen in the efforts of Caribbean mothers to continue the tradition of sending home ‘stuff’ to their children to ensure their wellbeing. The historical difficulties faced by Caribbean mothers in separation and financial hardships can be seen through mothering during enslavement and today, an experience summarized in this line of Langston Hughes’ poem *The Negro Mother*: “Sometimes the valley was filled with tears, but I kept trudging on through the lonely years” (Hughes, 1921, p. 3).

In the 21st century, mothers being away in pursuit of their goals may pale in comparison to the atrocities that women in the Caribbean experienced during the enslavement period. Again, the words of Langston Hughes ring through to illustrate the antecedents of hardships experienced by Caribbean mothers: “remember my years heavy with sorrow” (Hughes, 1921, p. 3). At that time, women and their children were torn apart when they were sold to different plantations. However, in later years, Caribbean women voluntarily chose to leave their families in pursuit of economic and social gains. In that regard, the body of modern literature suggests that the selfless and doting mother of yesteryear has like the 18-hour bra fallen out of fashion, suggesting that more women will find themselves having to leave their families in pursuit of self-development to improve their lives. There is, thus, a call for a new style of mothering which advocates balance and admonishes guilt. The following excerpt from O’Reilly (2014) explains this shift well, citing new literature advocating for the changed approach:

Bria Simpson, for example, asserts in *The Balanced Mom: Raising Your Kids Without Losing Yourself* (2006): “We need to continue, rather than deny, the

development of ourselves to be fulfilled.” ... Likewise, Amy Tiemann, in her recent book *Mojo Mom: Nurturing Your Self While Raising a Family* (2006), claims that “all women need to continue to grow as individuals, not just as moms” (xvi). ... In *How to Avoid the Mommy Trap: A Roadmap for Sharing Parenting and Making It Work*, Julie Shields argues that “the best alternative to parenting by mother is parenting by father.” She goes on to explain that “Since fathers can parent, too, we should not start from the assumptions that mothers, and mothers alone, must choose whether to work, cut back, or hire a replacement caregiver.” (p. 1-2)

In that regard, consideration to migrate may mean negotiating with fathers to takeover caregiving activities for children to make it possible to fulfil the dream that, “God put like steel in their souls” (Hughes, 1921, p. 1).

An important cultural interjection is to note that childbearing in Jamaica is perceived as a confirmation of femininity and proof of good health, and childless women are stigmatized as *mules* which, in the Jamaican context, are women who are unable to bear offspring. Motherhood, both within or outside of marriage, is viewed positively as being natural and right, and while childbearing does not actually elevate the social status of a woman in the Jamaican society, it reinforces her worth as a normal, healthy female (Brody, 1981). However, it cannot be an overall assumption that childbearing in Jamaica has consistently positive implications for individual women. It is not unusual, for instance, for very young girls to invariably react to their first pregnancies with dismay, and for the arrival of fifth, sixth, or subsequent children to women in stable, but poor, unions to be more burdensome than welcomed. It is apparent, then, that generalized accounts of a Jamaican

culture that approve of childbearing can mask the problems faced by individual women when confronted with the reality of having to feed a child on an unsecure income, or after dealing with disorienting dilemmas and critical incidents associated with raising a well-nurtured, independent adult. In the absence of a developed welfare system, Jamaican women have to depend on their own income, educational capabilities, or support from their male partners to take care of their children (Brody, 1981).

Early Advocates for Women’s Liberation and Transformation Through Education

At this juncture, it is important to recognize the advocates that have allowed women the very rights which can now be taken for granted by women in the 21st century. Murphy (2006) notes that the aim of education for Athenian women, for instance, was more at the level of training, enabling them to master domestic tasks, rather than at an intellectual level. Sappho operated a school in ancient Greece focused primarily on preparing young girls for marriage and with key domesticated skills to take care of a family. This school trained young women according to the customs of the time: they studied poetry, music, chorus dancing, and singing under Sappho’s guidance and one day, they would, “go away again” (Murphy, 2006, p. 18) and return to their homes to marry and have children as cultured women. Ironically, whilst Sappho’s aim of education was to prepare women for marriage and motherhood, she lived a life of liberation, similar to that which women of the 21st century enjoy.

Mary Wollstonecraft’s work emerged in the 1700s, staunchly rejecting the concept that education for women should solely be on the basis that they were to become wives and mothers. Wollstonecraft advocated for women’s education to be on the same level as men by emphasizing the moral identity of men and women, as they each had an immortal soul

(Murphy, 2006). Virtues were not sex-specific: for instance, Wollstonecraft expressed the viewpoint that women could not be moral without independence, autonomy, and an escape from male dominance.

Wollstonecraft's idea of education for women was different from Sappho's in that it espoused the idea that women could and should have a career, while also being 'good' wives and mothers – whilst Sappho's philosophy was rooted in women becoming wives and mothers for domestication. It is from the views expressed by Wollstonecraft in *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* that women today enjoy independence. This independence affords women the opportunity to financially provide for their families and oftentimes, they are the ones who go in search of better or greener pastures for their families. This new privilege has led to the realization of the need to examine feminist motherhood, which I will delve into in the next section of this review of the body of literature. Wollstonecraft is seen as one of the earliest pioneers of feminism, espousing the views that women can enjoy having children and successful careers.

Feminist Mothering

Feminist mothering bears characteristic resemblance to the views advocated by Mary Wollstonecraft, referring to any practice of mothering that seeks to challenge and change various aspects of patriarchal motherhood that cause mothering to be limiting or oppressive to women (O'Reilly, 2014). In her book *Feminist Mothers*, Wollstonecraft asks the question: What is a feminist mother? It seems impossible to conclude by explaining what a feminist mother is or to answer the underlying question. However, her study of feminist mothers reveals some particular factors, one being that feminism emphasizes that women are strong, and that women have rights. Thus, feminist mothers have been able to

develop critical orientations towards societal structures and cultures and have debunked stereotypical expectations and myths of motherhood. Mothers do that in the context of exploring how the personal is political, and with the support of the networks of women which place them beyond, “collective isolation” (O’Reilly, 2014, p.188). It is this critical orientation towards societal structures that has made the discussion around the challenges educating differently abled or intellectually challenged children necessary.

Challenges Mothering Differently Abled or Intellectually Challenged Children

O’Reilly (2014) conveys that the term, “*learning disability* has replaced *mental retardation* and refers to both intellectual and social disabilities” (p. 642). The concept of a *learning disability* is used to describe a wide range of disabilities from severe and profound to mild functioning. Therefore, a child with a high IQ can still be ‘learning disabled’ in the context of, for example, social skills and communication (O’Reilly, 2014). These challenges are identified as children progress in school, and their inability to learn at the pace of children in their age group becomes increasingly defined in terms of their association with established academic performance goals (Valle, 2009).

Children who are ‘learning disabled’ may not be born with any disability (either physical or mental), and their mother’s pregnancy may have been full-term with little to no complications. More often than not, minor complications during birth do not manifest into any form of concern, and deliveries are usually normal. Even if illnesses occurred for these children during infancy, after the recovery, there may not be any visible signs of challenges or difficulties for the child. However, challenges may first present themselves in educational contexts. It is noted that mothers with children whose disabilities emerge feel as if they have lost a perfect child based upon the evaluation of medical or educational

practitioners (Valle, 2009). The mother of a child diagnosed by either medical or educational practitioners becomes the mother of a child with a disability and, metaphorically, becomes stripped of the credentials of being a ‘perfect’ mother (Valle, 2009). To overcome this societal label, these mothers feel compelled to add long-range, strategic planning to their maternal duties in hopes of giving their children a competitive edge in the race for success (Valle, 2018). This is done as part of a contingency, as Chase and Rogers (2001) reaffirm that mothers are held responsible for everything that happens to their children; however, the support they need may not be available to them.

In pursuit of an education, a child who is deemed intellectually challenged elevates the pressures of mothering when their academic performance is evaluated in relation to established academic norms. If women already feel pressured and consumed by maternal expectations, imagine how a mother feels in relation to the discourse that defines their children and academic success (Valle, 2018). It stands to reason that the relentless focus upon what is ‘normal’ within schools may contribute to the maternal anxiety already induced by such a culture. In the Jamaican context, a report in the *Jamaica Observer* (2018) highlights that only in July of 2018 did one of the oldest high schools in Jamaica, Jamaica College, accept a wheelchair-bound 11-year-old for the very first time. Jamaica College is a traditional high school that boast of graduates that have gone on to become Prime Ministers and elder Statesmen (Cummings, 2018). The announcement was greeted with a public outcry of shame, and became an item of news. This was a physical and visible disability that many institutions do not cater for – readers can, then, only image the hardships and stigmas faced by children with disabilities that are not visible, such as intellectual challenges or learning difficulties.

Valle (2018) has been able to give a provocative description of what mothers in these circumstances face with their children: “these are treacherous waters indeed for mothers of children with these disabilities to navigate” (p. 9). Another consideration in the Jamaican context is the announcement recently made by the Minister of Education, Senator Ruel Reid, that a Special Education policy was ready for submission to Cabinet. For mothers in Jamaica with children with disabilities, these are indeed, a “treacherous waters” as Valle (2018) describes, as little or no support is available for these students. The preceding literature forms the basis for more fulsome look at the educational challenges in the Jamaican context.

Education

Jamaica’s education system has been structured to include standardized testing dated as far back as 1957, when the government introduced the Common Entrance Examination (CEE). Children who were able to pass the CEE – an examination established on a meritocratic system – would receive scholarships from the government to attend high school. Prior to 1957, access to high school education was only available to the fee-paying children of well-to-do Jamaicans. Therefore, in order to increase access, the Government of Jamaica introduced the CEE to enable Jamaican children to attend high school based on merit – an administrative decision made due to budgetary constraint. Over the years, other standardized examinations were introduced; the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) replaced the CEE and currently, the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) has replaced the GSAT. In this section, a closer examination of the effect of these standardized tests is provided based upon information gleaned from the bodies of literature, learning theories, and sociocultural

commentary on the current state of Jamaica's education system. Additionally, challenges associated with the pursuit of education as an international adult student are explored.

Jamaica's Education System

To explore the educational challenges, present in Jamaica, an examination of the curricula has to be undertaken. Jamaica's Ministry of Education, Youth & Information website lays out the curricula for K-12 education, outlining the different assessments which are used as diagnostics tool in the government's formal education system. A digression may be required here, to highlight Jamaica's Vision 2030 statement:

...our country will develop an education and training system that produces well rounded and qualified individuals who are able to function as creative and productive individuals in all spheres of our society and be competitive in a global context. We will build on the foundation of education transformation processes which are progressing towards improvement of the education system at all levels. (Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan, 2010, p. 1)

Furthermore, the Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan (2010) highlights that,

Jamaicans have a vision; a vision where Jamaica is more competitive in the global marketplace; where the many inherent strengths of Jamaica are better leveraged for economic gain and where children grow up in a society which places significant value on education and human capital. (Vision 2030 National Development Plan 2010 p. 12)

When the above vision is juxtaposed with a statement made by the Minister of Education, Youth & Information, Senator Ruel Reid, regarding creating an equal and

inclusive educational system, an obvious disparity emerges, however. In June of 2018, the Jamaica Information Service (JIS) reported on the Minister speaking where he, “asked the system to pull back a little and strengthen the foundation” (p. 1). The Minister further stated that, “it doesn’t make sense we spend money at the top end without fixing the root. What we want is equity in readiness and preparation for the education system” (p. 1). In sum, then, “the overarching framework is that the youth in Jamaica no longer should detach themselves from education, training and certification because our aspiration is that by the time our youth in Jamaica reaches age 18, they must have acquired training and certification equivalent to at least an Occupational Associate Degree” (p. 1). Essentially, the statement by the Minister was an indication that congruency did not exist between the ideals espoused in Vision 2030 and the educational policy framework being pursued by the government. Therefore, Jamaica’s educational officials needed to restructure the educational offering by using greater financial resources at the early childhood stages where the possibility exists to have greater impact for early interventions for children with challenges.

Let me highlight the curricular structure of the Jamaican education system based upon the assessment tools that lead to detachment, not only for those outside of ‘the edges’ – meaning those who do not ‘fit’ within the borders of standard, normative schooling – but also those who are average children with financial challenges. The Jamaican K-12 educational system begins at age three at the Kindergarten level. Table 1 below illustrates the different types of assessments conducted up to age 12.

Age	Assessment	Comments
3 to 6	Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP)	Testing for readiness for Grade 1 and as a diagnostic tool to identify areas of learning weakness
7 to 8	Grade Three Diagnostic Test (GTDT)	Testing for readiness for Grade 3 and as a diagnostic learning tool to identify areas of learning weakness
9 to 10	Grade Four Literacy and Numeracy Test (GFLNT)	Testing for readiness for the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) and as a diagnostic learning tool to identify areas of weakness
10 to 12	Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT)	Testing used to place children in high schools

Table 1

Types of Primary Level Assessments in Jamaica

There are numerous issues with this stratification of testing, as the scores are not a true indication of the capabilities of the children in these formative years. Ford and Helms (2012) stated that, “tragically, concerns about unfairness have not altered the use, misuse, and abuse of test for (mis)judging the abilities, capabilities, and potential of African Americans; consequently, their life options continue to be unjustifiably narrowed and compromised” (p. 188).

Applying the preceding statement to the Jamaican context, it could be deduced that the GSAT examination is also a means of unjustifiably narrowing and compromising the future of many of Jamaica’s children. Further, it is a major cause for concern as the Government of Jamaica does not adequately fund the cost of education, and the remedial programs required to assist these students outside ‘the edges’ to overcome their identified areas of weakness after doing the GTDT and the GFLNT is not in place. Additionally, the GSAT examination is given to students on a one-time basis; therefore, failure to be placed at the institution of their choice – usually, schools offering the highest quality education – means that students and their parents find themselves in a quandary to find institutions to assist their children outside of the Government of Jamaica’s system. Many of the options available are not attractive; the ones that are attractive come at a cost that is out of the reach for many Jamaican parents. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Information informs us that on average, 30,000 students take the GSAT on an annual basis, and for the institutions that are reputable – frequently chosen by students because of the quality of education the institution offers – there are approximately 11,000 spaces available. Therefore, it is estimated that 19,000 students are placed in underperforming schools, which continues the cycle that perpetuates and highlights the weaknesses that these students have.

In an article entitled, “Underfunding Means Poor Education” in the *Jamaica Gleaner*, Espeut (2017) highlights, “that there are wide disparities in quality between Jamaican high schools” (p. 1). After their children take the GSAT, parents are grief-stricken and experience Mezirow’s (1992) disorienting dilemma if their child failed to get one of the coveted spaces in the traditional institutions that offer high-quality education.

In recognition of the challenges faced with the system, the Government of Jamaica announced that the 2017/18 academic year would be the final year to administer the GSAT. There is now a new form of assessment called the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) which will be used with its first cohort during the 2018/19 academic year for high school placements. This system will use the work done by students for the last three years at the primary level (Grades 4, 5 and 6) to decide which high school they will be placed in based on their profile. It is as if the Jamaican officials are finally conscious of Freire’s (2000) statement that, “liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one” (p. 49). The system of education with GSAT served as a means of oppression for the children; a process of liberation must begin for those who did not receive a space in the traditional high schools that offer quality education. Finally, however, the Jamaican government has now recognized their poor educational policy decisions and are making some efforts to enact changes.

In Jamaica, the focus thus far has been to concentrate on the effects of standardized testing on children within the ‘average’ range. With the aforementioned issues identified, standardized testing can be problematic for the average child; however, consider a child who is outside of ‘the edges’ – one who is differently abled, intellectually challenged, or has learning difficulties.

Only recently in 2016 did the Government of Jamaica develop a document called

Providing Alternative Pathways to Secondary Education to support these students (Ministry of Education, Youth & Information, 2016). The alternative pathways are based upon the constructivist approach. Merriam and Bierema (2014) define *constructivism*, “as less a single theory of learning than a collection of perspectives all of which share the common assumption that learning is how people make sense of their experience – learning is the construction of meaning from experience” (p. 36). Minister of Education, Senator Ruel Reid, also notes that the constructivist approach is learner-centered rather than school-base or teacher-centered, which was the previous focus of Jamaica’s education system. Additionally, in the back-to-school conference for schools in Regions 1, 2, and 6 in June 2018, Reid disclosed that a Special Needs Education Policy was ready for submission to the Jamaican cabinet. This was encouraging and welcoming news for those who were both in the system and were about to enter the educational system; however, the disclosure was disappointing for those students and parents who did not benefit from having support for their children’s intellectual challenges.

More support for children outside ‘the edges’ of the Jamaican education system would also come in the form of provisions for financial and technical support for a new program at the School for Therapy Education and Parenting (STEP Centre), which was aimed at targeting students at the early childhood level who have physical disabilities and are also visually impaired. Considering the definition of *standardized testing* – “a test that asks all takers to respond to the same questions (or to questions drawn from a common source), requires that the questions be administered using a common procedure and scores all responses using the same process, often using automation” (Wallace, 2003, p. 5) – deductions can be made that a one-size-fits-all approach to education cannot have children

with different capabilities reap the same great rewards as ‘normal’ children. Again, sentiments made by Ford and Helms (2012) – which reported that, “tragically, concerns about unfairness have not altered the use, misuse, and abuse of test for (mis)judging the abilities, capabilities, and potential of African Americans; consequently, their life options continue to be unjustifiably narrowed and compromised” (1999, p. 188) – apply not just in the American context, but in the Jamaican context, as well. Many affected by the system may feel that it is tragic that it was not until recently that the Government of Jamaica has taken action regarding the public outcry urging for the removal of the GSAT – especially since this assessment is seen by many as a tool to unjustifiably narrow and compromise the life options of many of Jamaica’s children.

Reasons for the Government of Jamaica’s poor track record in education. Why is the Government of Jamaica’s track record in education so poor? I will rely on the views expressed by a social commentator, Espeut (2017), who offers three reasons accounting for the disparities between high-quality school and low-quality schools in Jamaica. These reasons give an indication of the systemic issues within Jamaica’s education system which affects children who are performing outside of the normative standards are summarized below.

School boards. Firstly, the church and trust schools send the names of their board members to the Ministry of Education, and they usually possess the highest quality of qualifications. The persons placed on public school boards, however, usually are of lower level skills and are based upon political affiliation. In this regard, the appointment of unqualified individuals on government run school boards lead to ineffective practices that are detrimental to the quality of education delivered at public schools.

Religious motivations. Second, the teaching and administrative staff of church and trust schools are often highly dedicated and motivated church members or past students: often clergymen, deaconesses, or vowed nuns. Church schools are usually guided by philosophies of education that strive for academic excellence with high moral values. Public schools, however, are often not guided by a strong philosophy of education, and it is not unknown for politics to creep into the process of selecting academic and administrative staff.

Financial resources. Third, church and trust schools spend more money per student in the delivery of their curriculum. To put it plainly, you get what you pay for. The actual cost for providing quality education to each child in Jamaica is exorbitant. Espeut (2017) reports that - the University of the West Indies economist Dr. Peter-John Gordon calculated the cost to be about \$65,000J per child (or, about \$505USD) per year. However, the Government of Jamaica's subvention per child is just \$19,000J per child (or, about \$150USD), which is only 29% of the cost of providing quality education to one child. Church or trust schools with better teachers and better school management are better able to meet the shortfall of \$46,000J per student (or, about \$355USD) per year by having school barbeques, fetes, and funds from well-to-do alumni – which, in turn, helps them to deliver strong academic results and keep their institutional rankings high.

Not to mention, these schools' strong value-based programs result in better disciplined and well-rounded students. Here, I believe Minister Reid's statement regarding how a constructivist approach to teaching would yield greater student success is true based on the information that exists in the literature. Therefore, I will look at the different learning approaches for student success from the bodies of literature in the following section of this

review.

Student-Centered Teaching and Learning Approaches for Student Success

Teaching theories evolve, and practices change regularly. However, since the formalization of education in Jamaica, the teacher-centered approach has been practiced in classrooms across the country. Freire (2000) describes this as the *banking method* of education, as the teacher is the repository of all knowledge, and students are merely empty vessels waiting to be filled. Teaching practices in support of the memorization required by standardized tests have remained the approach for educating Jamaica's children – even today. Post-independence Jamaica has only recently adopted the constructivist approach or the student-centered approach to learning based upon Minister Ruel Reid's announcement in June 2018.

Therefore, as part of the discourse, an examination of different educational theories from the bodies of literature is relevant. The first examination will be of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), which asserts that students can complete a certain level of work individually, but they are able to accomplish a higher level of understanding when provided with assistance – known within the theory as *scaffolding*. This potential area of learning is referred to the ZPD (Seng, 1997). Another educational theory relevant to this discussion is Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains. Mayer (2002) discusses the revised model of Bloom's taxonomy, which starts at the student being able to remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create based upon increased complexity – in that sequential order. The difference between the first presentation and the revised approach introduced by Bloom is that evaluation was removed from the top of the pyramid to the penultimate level of the pyramid. Learners' ability to create was seen as the final step of

the complexity of learning in the revised version.

An additional applicable theory is Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences (MI), which Holding (2009) describes as revealing that each person holds a different level of each range of intelligence and utilizes these levels of intelligences to perform tasks and develop preferences. The intelligences identified are linguistic, kinaesthetic, logical mathematical, visual-spatial, naturalistic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Similarly, Piaget's (1936) constructivist theory emphasizes placing students at the centre of the learning environment and asserts that teachers should serve as facilitators and co-learners in learning contexts. This theory also supports learning through inquiry, authentic experiences, and a learning experience fostering teamwork and collaboration. Finally, Dewing's (2010) active learning theory (ALT) draws upon the principles of multiple intelligences, critical reflection, dialogue with others, intentional action, and skilled facilitation to promote learning.

To enable student success, other teaching and inductive (student-centered) teaching and learning approaches learning include:

- *Problem-based learning* (PBL), which allows students to determine the degree of knowledge and understanding they must develop to solve the problem (Hmelo-Silver, 2004);
- *Project-based learning*, which is similar to problem-based learning, but the distinction lies in the requirement to produce something (Bell, 2010);
- *Inquiry-based learning* (IBL), which allows students to complete open-ended investigations through engaging in evidence-based reasoning and creative

problem solving (Ontario Capacity Building Series, 2013);

- *Discovery-based learning* (DBL), which allows students to find a solution to challenges presented with little or no direction, placing great emphasis on students constructing their own knowledge (Rahman, 2017); and
- *Case-based learning* (CBL), which requires students to explore personal preconceptions and accommodate case realities as they engage in case-based learning practices (Lyons & Bandura, 2018).

The foregoing theories highlight the need to move from relying on the teacher-centered approach to learning or, as Freire (2000) categorizes it, the banking model of education, especially for the success of students who present with different learning abilities. The teacher plays a crucial role in moving students' ideas forward; however, student-centered approaches consider different elements including learning styles, integrated curriculum, classroom environment, assessment, and learning skills and work habits. Therefore, a blended approach which includes teacher-centred *and* student-centered approaches may be the best plan of action for schools to yield the best results and to foster greater student success.

Challenges Associated with My Adult Education Experience in Canada

Merriam and Bierema (2014) inform us that, “education has become a commodity of the marketplace, intricately, related to the market economy in a globalized world is the knowledge economy” (p. 3). Developed countries like Canada, which are experiencing skilled or knowledge-based worker shortages, are using education as a means for their population to remain competitive in the knowledge economy that has emerged. For adult

learners with high levels of education, they may choose to pounce upon the opportunity after undergoing a personal theory analysis (PTA) (Tripp, 1993) regarding the benefits of education to both themselves and their family. If the benefits outweigh the challenges, then the decision is usually to take up the opportunity to become adult students.

Several issues arise in the pursuit of education as an adult learner, however. These include, as Fairchild (2003) asserts, issues in relation to the multiple roles that adult students juggle. Bearing the preceding in mind, it is also difficult juggling this role in another country. One of the struggles that an immigrant adult student may experience is that of intercultural incompetence. Academically, students may manage to be resilient and complete assignments regardless of the pressures to meet deadlines; however, they may feel socially awkward. To handle the awkward personal exchanges or experiences as an adult student, the bodies of literature on intercultural competence may be researched as a means to cope or in the quest to find answers. Through reflection, adult international students may come to the realization that they need to participate in intercultural activities organized by the educational institution. Fairchild (2003) asserts that adult students juggle multiple roles, and that statement was true for me as an adult international student. Therefore, the task of ensuring the completion of academic work superseded the need to partake in any of the cultural activities that were not directly beneficial to my academic success.

Two intercultural models serve as modes through which to cope and handle the transition into another culture. Deardorff's (2004) process model of intercultural competence (PMIC) and Hammer's (2012) adaptation of Bennett's (1993) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS), which resulted in the creation of the intercultural

development continuum (IDC). Jackson (2015) notes that through a study of these models, personal discoveries can be made:

As more diversity on campus does not necessarily lead to meaningful intercultural interactions (Glass, Buss, & Braskamp, 2013; Redden, 2013), research-based intervention is recommended to actively encourage domestic and international students to push past stereotypes and cultivate meaningful intercultural relationships. (p. 92)

It is important to illustrate intercultural competence as part of the experience as an international adult student as many adult students decide to remain in the foreign country they studied in after the completion of their studies. In 2018, the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) revealed that 51% of international students intend to remain in Canada after the completion of their programs. More significantly, there was a 119% increase in the international student population in Canada between 2010 and 2017. Canada may be seen as an attractive option for residency based on the geopolitical issues in places like America, which has enacted legislation to limit the acceptance of international students from certain parts of the world. The revenue stream from international students in Canada is 8 billion USD annually from their expenditures, including tuition and living expenses, including 81,000 jobs which have generated over 445 million USD in government revenue in 2010. Therefore, building intercultural competence is of significant economic value to the foreign country to maintain the continued desire of international students to remain in their country. Additionally, rich intercultural opportunities are necessary for university graduates to succeed in a global environment (Deardorff, 2004). Lastly, having intercultural competence is important for

the individual students on a personal level, as dealing with separation from family – even though by choice – helps with feelings of loneliness, emotional stressors, and the anxiety associated with transitioning to another country as an adult international student.

Immigration

People from the Caribbean have a long history of migration from the period of their enslavement. The enslavement period represents a period of forced migration, however, and that history has led to voluntary migration in subsequent years in an effort to improve the prospects for current and future generations. Therefore, an examination of migration based upon different waves was undertaken in this section of the study in an effort to have a richer perspective on the meaning of migration to this particular group of people – especially regarding those people of the Caribbean island of Jamaica.

History of Caribbean Migration

Louise Bennett Coverley's (2016) poem *Colonization in Reverse* depicts the innate desire of Jamaicans to immigrate to Britain. Using Jamaican parlance, Bennett Coverley (2016) reflected on the history of colonization by Great Britain of the island of Jamaica. The original flow of migrants was from England to Jamaica, and now, the reverse is in effect. *Colonization in Reverse* (2016) is Bennett Coverley's ode – a piece of Jamaican folklore about Jamaicans leaving for Britain in boatloads to rebuild the motherland after World War II. This period was also called the Wind Rush, named after the ship on which many Caribbean nationals journeyed as colonists of Britain upon the invitation of the government, as they required affordable labour in their rebuilding efforts (BBC report). There have been recent reports in the news media of the plight of these immigrants from Jamaica and the West Indies being threatened with deportation because many were unable

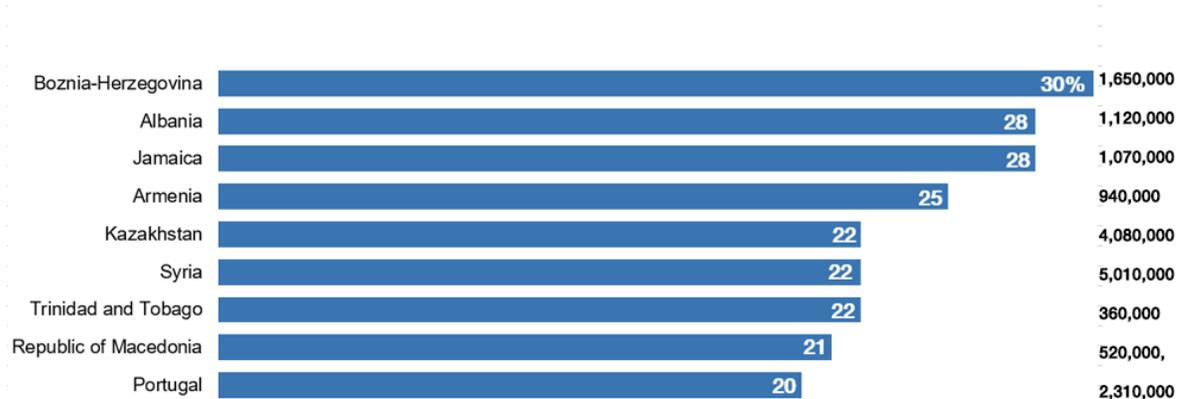
to show documentation of how they got to Britain, despite the fact that it was on Britain's invitation that they migrated. The reports are that Britain's invitation came with the promise of citizenship in return for their contribution in the rebuilding efforts.

Prior to the 'Wind Rush Generation,' Jamaicans and other Caribbean nationals went to provide affordable labour to build the Panama Canal. Jamaicans also migrated to places like Canada, which also formed part of the British Commonwealth. They provided seasonal agricultural labour, domestic, and babysitting services to Canada. In subsequent years, they have formed part of the pool that provides Canada, England, and the United States with highly skilled labour to fill their labor gap, or, for Canada in particular, labour to alleviate the shortage due to its aging population.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) (2015) highlights a study conducted by the Pew Research Center using data from the United Nations, which lists the number of countries with a fifth or more of their population living abroad. Jamaica was ranked third on the list of nine countries, with an estimated total of 1,070,000 people living outside of their country of birth. This is further elaborated in Figure 1 below, adapted from the World Economic Forum below.

People living outside their country of birth

Based on Pew Research Center analysis of 2015 United Nations data (% and number)



Source: Pew Research Center

Figure 1. People living outside their country of birth (adapted from the World Economic Forum website).

The reason for migration for many Jamaicans is based on their effort to create better socioeconomic opportunities for future generations, and to lessen the effects of the global economic downturn. Employment opportunities are scarce in Jamaica due to limited resources and very few viable productive sectors that offer employment to low-skilled individuals. This is confirmed based upon the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) 2012 report, which provides a comprehensive migration profile for Jamaica (Livermore, 2012). Based upon the IOM report, during the 1970s to 1990s, the number of Jamaicans moving to the United States accounted for 80.33% of all Jamaicans living abroad. Comparatively, during the corresponding period, migration to Canada accounted for 16.9% and 2.71% to the United Kingdom. It is important to note that, the United States has always been seen as the land of opportunity. A place where low-skilled individuals could migrate and improve their socioeconomic status based upon the United States geographical location to the Caribbean.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, a review of the body of literature was undertaken through a sociocultural lens under the emerging themes of mothering, education, and immigration. Concerning motherhood, the unique cultural performance of the role was discussed against the background that the women of Jamaica have historically been encouraged to pursue careers outside of the home. Motherhood has changed in the 21st century, however, and women are now able to play a dual role based upon the advocacy of educational philosophers like Mary Wollstonecraft, as women are now playing a more dominant role in ensuring the wellbeing of their families.

Regarding education, the challenges in Jamaica's education system are systemic

due to poor government financing and the reliance on standardized testing. Jamaica is not near to completing their Vision 2030 aspirations; however, in spite of the challenges highlighted and my experience with the education system as a parent, there are encouraging signs. The removal of the GSAT is to be celebrated, for instance, and introducing new pathways to secondary education provides hope that the Government of Jamaica is serious about developing an education and training system that produces well-rounded and qualified individuals who are able to function as creative and productive citizens. Hope is also being fueled by the creation of the special education policy aimed at supporting children with learning difficulties. As Freire's (2000) statement highlights, "liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one" (p. 49) – but nevertheless, the process has begun.

This chapter ended with a review of the history and purpose of migration for the people of Jamaica. The most interesting realization was found in the data from the International Organization of Migration (IOM), which ranked Jamaica third in the world based on having at least one-fifth, or more, of the country's population living abroad.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology with which the study was conducted is elaborated upon. This study is a sociocultural narrative rooted in education which contains the stories of a Jamaican mother's educational journey – my own – as an immigrant. To reaffirm sociocultural norms of the emerging themes, this study also includes the stories of two other Jamaican mothers' personal experiences with education and immigration. The method used in the conduct of this study follows the principles of research: the treatment of the data and stories, dissemination of the results, and the ethical issues have each been illustrated.

Narratives Explained

This study takes on the form of a narrative, looking at critical incidents and transformative learning experiences which influenced my decision to migrate to Canada. A *narrative* is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience through, “collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 20). Therefore, I have written about stories and different events during my experiences as a mother who is a Jamaican immigrant in Canada. I have written stories reflecting upon the time of my son's birth, which are focused on a disorienting dilemma and critical incidents – and my feelings about those events. A *narrative in temporality*, “refers to events under study in transition” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 479). Giving attention temporally directs inquirers to the past, present, and future of the people, places, things, and content being studied.

This narrative is also autobiographical in that it displays multiple layers of consciousness. An *autobiographical narrative inquiry* is a special form of narrative inquiry

and is closely linked to auto-ethnography. Understanding ‘life as narrative’ led Bruner (2004) to posit that, “the stories we tell about our lives are our autobiographies” (p. 691). Nevertheless, narrative inquirers understand that telling stories is not an unbridled process; how people tell their stories is shaped by cultural conventions and language usage and reflects the stories of possible lives that are apart of one’s culture (Bruner, 2004).

Context of Narratives

The narrative style of writing is very useful in telling stories. However, the popularity of writing narratives should not overshadow the need to study people’s behaviour in context, as it is an important consideration for cultural deductions. In that regard, as Tuval-Mashiach (2014) notes,

Taking context into account is justified by narrative assumption that individuals cannot construct their identities in a void; rather, they do so by using the social and cultural scripts and norms available to them as a repertoire from which they chose. (p. 126)

Consequently, “one’s identity is never an expression of a unique or ‘private’ identity” (Zilber, Tuval-Mashiach, & Lieblich, 2008, p. 126). Therefore, this narrative is sociocultural in context, looking at the cultural norms related to motherhood, education, and migration for people in Jamaica and, by extension, the Caribbean region. The cultural practices in relation to all three themes of this study are contextualized within the experiences of the researcher and two other Jamaican mothers.

Data Collection and Analysis

To ascertain the views of two other Jamaican mothers, I have used conversations with them to better understand the cultural perspective of Jamaican mothers and the critical

incidents or the phase(s) of transformational learning they experienced that made them decide to migrate to Canada. The conversations took place in the month of July of 2018, and the responses gleaned were summarized to see the emerging themes about mothering as a Jamaican. Mother One was the first person available to have the conversation on Sunday, July 8, 2018 in the late afternoon, while Mother Two was available on Sunday, July 22, 2018 in the afternoon. Data was also gathered from books and journal articles on motherhood, education, and immigration and my own personal recollection of events.

Initial Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data collected from the scholarly journals and books on motherhood, education, and immigration, conversations with the participants, and my own experience as a mother from my personal recollection, both summative and formative evaluation was utilized. The former gives an appreciation for motherhood in general, while the latter serves the purpose of discussing the findings which, in the end, will serve as a guide for Jamaican mothers to cope with the transformative learning and critical incidents that are unique to their journey in raising productive and independent adult children whilst in pursuit of their personal educational or immigrant goals. As the researcher, I have organized relevant ideas from the documents by similar events, and have attempted to look at the emerging ideas that makes it more bearable for mothers' transformations and, conversely, their ability to raise productive adult children. The discussions were framed under the three thematic headings outlined below by looking at the challenges associated with all three elements on my journey to Canada that involve both myself and my son.

Motherhood. This theme represents an examination of the Jamaican cultural context surrounding motherhood, including early advocates for women to become liberated

through education. It explores how motherhood has evolved over the years, and the challenges mothers experience raising differently abled or intellectually challenged children.

Education. This second theme is a recount of the events that were either transformative or critical incidents in raising children in Jamaica's education system. It asks about the educational challenges experienced based upon Jamaica's standardized testing structured education system, and queries the challenges experienced by the participants in pursuing education in Canada as international adult students.

Immigration. Lastly, this theme presents an historical look at the different waves of migration from the Caribbean. It explores the reasons for migration, profiles trends in Jamaica's migratory patterns, and asks how the need to raise productive adults supports the participants' decisions to migrate.

Participant Data Analysis

In analyzing the responses from the conversations, the study adopted the framework developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which involves *data reduction* and *conclusion drawing* verification.

Data reduction. At this first stage, the information was reduced or reconfigured to ensure the manageability of the issues being addressed. Therefore, the transcripts produced from conversations were reviewed in order to distill the information provided by the two respondents. This process involved creating the three themes of motherhood, education, and immigration. I then employed a specific analytical strategy known as *constant comparative analysis* to transform the information into a new, coherent depiction of the study; in utilizing this strategy, I took information from the conversations one theme or

sub-theme at a time, and linked it to the theoretical framework used in this study. This allowed for the conceptualization of the possible relations between similarities or differences from the mothers' conversations, and how and why they relate to theory.

Conclusion drawing. In the final stage of the analysis, I considered the meaning of the analyzed information and assessed the events that were disorienting dilemmas and/or critical incidents from both the conversations and my researcher's reflection journal. This validity was achieved as the findings were personal and credible; thus, no one could contest the lived experiences of the mothers.

Data Reliability and Validity

Yin (1998) states that the criterion for *reliability* is met by establishing protocols that would allow someone else to follow the researcher's procedures. The basic protocol for this study included: i) recollection of events; ii) conversations with participants; and iii) documentary evidence based upon themes and events.

Yin (1998) asserts that the task in meeting the criterion of *validity* does not lie in finding a design or setting to define my experience or point of view, but rather, lies in the strengths of the themes and theories contained in my findings. The findings from the conversations and my recollection of events may be validated externally, as there are records at hospitals, schools, and other medical institutions that prove that these events occurred. Also, the information from the conversations with the two Jamaican mothers are similar to the experiences of other Jamaican mothers.

Sample and Population

Available or convenience sampling was used to ascertain the views of two other Jamaican mothers; this is, "the process of selecting the respondents that are available to the

researcher” (Northey, Tepperman, & Albanese, 2005, p. 71). The sample of this study consists of the author/researcher and two other Jamaican mothers, representing the larger population of Jamaican, or other Caribbean, mothers who have immigrated to pursue education in an aim to support their children.

Ethical Assurance

The privacy of the participants in the research was important to the researcher; therefore, the findings of the conversations do not include identifying names and information. The Jamaican mothers will be called pseudonyms of Mother One and Mother Two to protect their information and identity. All information provided was considered confidential, and data was secured electronically, requiring a password only known by the researcher for access.

Dissemination of the Study

The information gleaned in this study will be shared at the Caribbean Women’s Conference in June 2019, and efforts are being made to submit to scholarly journals for publication. An abstract will also be submitted to the Women’s Bureau in the United States of America for consideration as part of their presentations at their Annual Conference in June 2019, in addition to any future conferences and publications.

Chapter Summary

The objective for conducting this narrative was to record past events based on my experience as a Jamaican mother in relation to critical incidents and the phases of Mezirow’s (1992) transformative learning. Also, I have included conversations with two other Jamaican mothers to uncover the experiences that led to their decision to migrate to Canada. This study was positioned in narrative form to be able to tell the stories from my

life in a theoretical format. The importance of writing this narrative is of significance, as there are many studies on the topic of motherhood, but only within a European context. Consequently, the methodology that is used is applicable as it allows for the telling of stories in a sociocultural and academic format.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented based on the researcher's own story and the conversations that occurred with two other Jamaican mothers. This chapter begins with the recollection of the story of the researcher's life, as positioned within the theoretical framework of the study. Thereafter, the stories gleaned from Mother One and Mother Two are subsequently positioned in the theoretical framework of this study, as well. As previously mentioned, the identified theoretical framework used in this study includes i) mothering theory, based on Sappho's and Wollstonecraft's philosophy; ii) disorienting dilemmas from Mezirow's (1992) transformative learning theory (TLT); iii) Tripp's (1993) critical incident theory (CIT); iv) Freire's (2000) critical pedagogy (CP); and v) turning point theory (TPT).

Access to these two Jamaican mothers was easy and convenient, as they provided their telephone numbers to me due to our previously established social and interpersonal relationships. The conversations were hosted under very relaxed and friendly conditions on two Sunday afternoons, after we had completed our traditional routine of preparing Sunday dinner. The conversations were facilitated in an attempt to have Mother One and Mother Two's respond to the guiding questions of this study:

- i) What is the history of Caribbean motherhood in the Jamaican context?
- ii) Who were the early advocates for women's liberation and transformation through education?
- iii) What are the challenges of mothering differently abled or intellectually challenged children?
- iv) What are the challenges within the Jamaican educational system for children

outside of ‘the edges?’

v) What are the challenges associated with adult education as an international student?

vi) What are the experiences of two other Jamaican immigrant mothers in their journey of uprooting their life to ensure that their children are able to achieve their educational potential in Canada’s education system?

Information specific to my story and that of the two immigrant mothers are recounted below in the sections Denese’s Story, Mother One’s Story, and Mother Two’s Story. The chapter ends with a summative analysis and a high-level summary of the findings.

Stories

Let me reinforce that the stories recounted below are narrated because it is an important approach of delivery for inquirers to tell their story and make meaning of their complex experiences in an autobiographical sociocultural format (Clark & Rossiter, 2008). Therefore, to suitably situate this narrative, the stories contained in this study are recollected through a social and cultural context, and are grounded in theory. As previously stated, undertaking a narrative in a sociocultural context allows for the inquirer/researcher to present a, “real picture of reality, as it exists in time and space” (Neisser, 1976, p. 2). The forthcoming stories are the, “real picture of reality, as they exist in time and space” for the researcher, Mother One, and Mother Two.

Denese’s Story

I will first begin with my own narrative as a Jamaican immigrant mother pursuing higher education in Canada, with the ultimate aim of fostering positive outcomes for my

child.

Mezirow's disorienting dilemma. Part of my decision to migrate to Canada stemmed from a heartbreaking incident which occurred when my son was only 11 months old. He fell gravely ill, and was diagnosed with the encephalitis virus that almost took his life. To date, it has been the most frightening experience for me as a mother. It was also difficult to come to the realization that any recovery would mean an uphill battle to ensure that he was able to function as 'normally' as possible based upon societal dictates. I was experiencing, as Mezirow (1992) imparts, a disorienting dilemma. I could not believe that this was really happening, that my son had been afflicted so dreadfully. Dreadfully, because all the prognoses had indicated that recovery could mean that he would not be unable to walk, talk, or even take care of himself and that, as his mother, I was not to expect any 'normal' functioning of my son as a 'complete' human being. It was difficult news to accept and, put in Jamaican parlance, a "tough pill to swallow." What happened? Where did I go wrong as his mother and primary caregiver? What could I have done differently? More so, how could I make things better for him during his illness and for his future?

Thereafter, I experienced Mezirow's (1992) self-examination phase with not only feelings of guilt and shame, but with feelings of incompetence as I internalized what had happened as my being incapable to protect my child – who had been born healthy. The doctors and nurses at the University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI) gave him to me with a clean bill of health, and all that was required was for me to take good care of him. In my mind, all he needed was a mother who would be able to protect him from the dangers that he would encounter in this world, and I felt I did not live up to that expectation as he did not make it to his first birthday without any medical issues.

That year, I would be back and forth at the Bustamante Hospital for Children for more than two weeks, of which 11 days were spent in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) as my son required a ventilator to breathe. At that time, I did not realize how fortunate we were to be able to get him on the only working ventilator at the hospital. It was not until later years when one of our Jamaican Reggae Superstar Shaggy started to do a biannual concert – *Shaggy and Friends* – to raise much needed funds to purchase ventilators for the Bustamante Hospital for Children that we realized our good fortune. Another part of my good fortune, in this dreadful experience, was the support I received from my mother. She stayed at the hospital overnight, bathing my son and providing care for him while I went to work. Consequently, my mother and I have developed an unbreakable bond from the experience. In retrospect, those two things made me aware that even in my most dreadful experience as a mother, I was still fortunate that my son was able to use the machine for the length of time he required it, and to have his grandmother's care. Internally, I felt as if I did not deserve to have him, and that I failed miserably at being his mother. Amidst that feeling, I knew that in some way, as Pickhardt (2000) asserts, as his mother, I would have to use my influence because of my love for him to ensure that he developed strong self-esteem, regardless of what challenges he might encounter.

My son had a miraculous recovery from his illness and has been able to accomplish more than the initial prognoses projected. He can walk, talk, and function on his own as a 'complete' human being and, as his mother, I have worked assiduously to build in him a strong self-esteem. I recall thanking the doctors for their treatment and care in his recovery, and the response given by the Chief Pediatric Neurologist assigned to his case was a gracious rejection of any praise for his recovery, as he believed that it was divine

intervention.

Notwithstanding, my son has had challenges associated with the illness he experienced as it relates to education. Unfortunately, Jamaica does not have an education system that caters to children that are outside of ‘the edges’ – children who do not function within the ‘average’ range based upon the established educational structures. Even children who identify within the average range fail to keep up with the rigours of standardized testing that is structured within Jamaica’s education system from as early as age 6. Thus, many of Jamaica’s children require additional tutoring and private lessons to successfully pass the different standardized tests within the K-12 system, and some suffer burn out before even completing high school as a result.

As an educational administrator by profession, I knew too well the pitfalls of those who were not able to pass these standardized tests. I was one of the fortunate ones who was successful at handling the rigours of Jamaica’s standardized testing system without additional support. Therefore, I expected that as a mother, I would be able to nurture my child and successfully guide him through Jamaica’s education system – just as I had done for myself. This passage would be tough for an average child, but now, I was confronted with having to do the same for him after recovery from a brain infection that made him miss some of his developmental milestones.

Being an educational administrator for several years, I have seen first-hand the pitfalls of not making it through the Jamaican educational system. Consequently, I had to seriously evaluate my educational expectations for my son. I knew that he would not be at the level of children of his age group, but that was not my expectation. I wanted him to at least be able to do the basic things such as reading, writing, calculation, and problem-

solving. In that regard, I searched for schools that had these programs, even though they cost a small fortune. However, nothing was more important than to give my son the best that I could afford as his mother. Although much of my financial resources went into providing him with the best educational opportunities I could afford, it became abundantly clear to me that he required far more than what the Jamaican educational system could offer when he was not allowed to sit the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT).

Being unqualified to sit the GSAT would mean paying for him to attend a private high school – and so, that I did. Regardless, my son required educational support that was very expensive and, at times, more than I could afford. That would not deter my resilience in ensuring that his future was full of possibilities and of great hope. I had to find an avenue to help him succeed through education and as his mother, I am grateful for the fact that he can read and write and complete forms on his own in spite of his challenges in meeting the academic rigours of Jamaica's educational system. Conclusively, then, I would describe my son's inability to sit for the GSAT examination as a critical incident that made me think of alternative routes for his successful future.

Tripp's critical incident analysis. My son not being allowed to sit the GSAT examination led me to undergo my own critical incident analysis (CIA) and personal theory analysis (PTA). At that time, I contemplated migrating to a country that may have the support and resources that would help him succeed in his educational pursuits. However, I knew too well the stories of other families that chose the path of migration, especially when the mother who is the one to leave the home. Amidst the stories of success are others that have made many Caribbean women refuse the opportunity to migrate.

I recall the story of Lee Boyd Malvo, the convicted DC Sniper from Jamaica., for

instance. CNN reported that his mother migrated, and left her son with his father in Jamaica, with the hope of securing a better future for him (Meserve, 2009). During that time, he and his father's relationship became strained. Therefore, his mother took him from Jamaica, and had John Allen Muhammed act as his mentor. He later entered the United States of America and remained in the care and mentorship of John Allen Muhammed. When the authorities in the United States of America were finally able to apprehend him and John Allen Muhammed, Lee Boyd Malvo's legal defense was that John Allen Muhammed had brain-washed him into committing multiple murders in Washington, D.C.. John Allen Muhammed had this influence on him because he was the only person who Lee Boyd Malvo believed showed him love and spent quality time with him.

This sent shock waves across the Caribbean, and the story served as a deterrent or as a cautionary 'red flag' for mothers desirous of migrating. It was a vivid reminder of the many social ills that families and children fall victim to when parents – especially mothers – leave their children for the proverbial 'greener pastures.' From these homes emerged children who would openly tell teachers that they did not need to perform well in school because their mother was in 'foreign' – not an unusual phenomenon. These children were also known as 'barrel children,' and would prove difficult for teachers to educate as they were of the impression that life in 'foreign' (United States, Canada, or England) meant that they did not require any level of education. For clarity, the term 'barrel children' was given to children who had parents, oftentimes mothers, living overseas who would send back items of clothing and food in barrels in their effort to make life easier for their families at home. Conversely, the children would be of the impression that life in 'foreign' was easier than in their home country because the parent would not have been able to afford the items

of clothing and food sent in the barrels if they had remained. That mindset would lead them to devalue the need to acquire any form of education, and would only fuel the desire to rejoin the absent parent in ‘foreign.’ This mindset is solidified because the parents – mothers, specifically – who had the responsibility of telling their children that they were able to afford the things sent in the barrels by working two or three jobs did not communicate the harsh realities they faced in ‘foreign’ to their children.

Freire’s critical pedagogy. I knew that there were many different pathways that could be explored in finding the help that my son required if he was not able to succeed in Jamaica’s educational system. Therefore, always at the forefront of my thought process was the fact that I had to improve educationally to be able to give him the support he would need to overcome Jamaica’s school system – which keeps many in a state of oppression. I was very much aware of the fact that to be a great mother, I had to work at improving myself as a human being and as a woman. However, although I made room for self-improvement, I always ensured that I would remain present in the location of my child – up until that critical incident where he was barred from sitting the GSAT.

Looking through Freire’s (2000) lens, as a mother, I was now being confronted with a hegemonic structure situated in the Jamaican education system which was bound to keep my child in an oppressive existence – one from which he needed to be freed. Although I was consciously aware of this through my own emancipatory learning (Freire, 2000), I may have seen other mothers leave to pursue their educational goals and other life ambitions; but for me, that could not happen until my child was at the age where our bond was deeply established, and our connection could not be broken by any other human being. It was through the bonding times that many questions of “why?” emerged with my son, and I

realized that I needed to do more than the ordinary for this precious soul that I was getting to know as a human being. I would feel a wave of invisible electric shock when that precious soul called me “Mom,” and that would remind me of the awesome responsibility I had as a mother. I wanted to provide him with opportunities that accommodated his wealth of ideas and somehow, I knew Jamaica was not the environment for him, as the hegemonic structures did not allow for him to find countless opportunities. I knew that, at some point, I would need to leave my son to pave the road for these opportunities, but I grappled with so many factors that I had to address and handle to be capable of the move – including thoughts of what happened to Lee Boyd Malvo and other children who suffered from their mothers’ absence from their home due to migration. I also struggled with the issues associated with the transition, and the certain financial insecurity that was associated with my decision.

I am over 25 years old; therefore, I am categorized as an adult international student. Consequently, this is another essential component in undertaking this sociocultural reflective narrative study: to illustrate the issues experienced as an adult student in a foreign country in relation to intercultural competency. *Intercultural competency* is, “the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities” (Hammer, 2012, p. 26). It took me a while to realize why I was not coping well with the cultural shift. Jackson (2015) holds that for adult international students to be fully engaged in building intercultural competence, this should be structured as an academic credit so that students would be fully engaged in the process. This is especially necessary for adult students who juggle multiple roles (Fairchild, 2003). Unfortunately, this was not the format of studies at Brock University, and this contributed to many of the

anxieties I experienced as an adult international student in the domestic program. The cultural competence model used at Brock University did not align with Jackson's (2015) model of fully infusing the building of intercultural competence as a structured part of the academic process, giving academic credit so that students would be fully engaged in the activities.

I started to feel disconnected, but did not understand the reason for it. However, it was a significant concern and, so, I began to explore the reason I was not feeling more a part of this new community. Through my exploration, I became aware of what was causing the feeling of disconnect. Through research, I realized that I was culturally incompetent; I then immersed myself to learn of intercultural competence through academic literature. I learnt of Deardorff's (2004) process model of intercultural competence (PMIC) and Hammer's (2012) adaptation of Bennett's (1993) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS), which was used to create the intercultural development continuum (IDC), and I started to engage with them. I knew that for my migration to succeed, it was not only an academic endeavour, but also a personal one: to fully integrate into a new culture and society which would, in turn, benefit my son.

It has been a difficult adjustment for me in Canada, and I did not believe that the international programs at Brock University were helping me, as the activities they had planned were on an invitation basis and were not mandatory. In considering my own critical incident and the disorienting dilemma that led to my decision to migrate, think, for a moment, of the mindset of an adult international student with such significant personal weight on their shoulders. For me to be interested in any of the activities at Brock University for international students, they would have to be structured into my course of

study with academic credit as Jackson (2015) suggests.

I felt the brunt of not being able to participate in the programs geared towards building intercultural competence: I struggled to fit in, and felt anxiety when I attended my weekly Teaching Assistant (TA) meetings. A rush of cold sweat and fear would come over me each week when I was asked about my seminars. The seminars went well, but I could not put two words together to say what I did. I was picking up on an energy that in my mind said, “What are you doing here? Go back home!” Assuredly, it was all in my head. People were making every effort to make me feel comfortable, but I found it difficult to settle down. All I could think about was the life I left back home and how in charge I was in my role as Student Relations Officer at the University of Technology, Jamaica – a big fish in a small pond. Now in Canada, I was a small fish in a big ocean, and it made me nervous every time I was forced to speak.

It was not until the end of the first semester that I started to feel somewhat relaxed in my new environment. The grades for our first semester were released, and I performed well in spite of all the odds I encountered: anxiety, intercultural incompetence, and emotional distress because I missed my family. The goal was far more important than to allow for such things to derail my plans; I had to use this opportunity to create a better future for my son. I also received support from my professors, classmates that I worked with as TAs, and a few Jamaicans I met whilst in Canada. My first winter was difficult, but I prepared mentally for it and overcame the challenges of the season along with all the other issues I encountered.

Turning point theory. To overcome Mezirow’s (1992) disorienting dilemma and the critical incident involving my son, I knew I had to make significant changes to my life.

How I would be able to accomplish this was not very clear, but I knew I had to do something major. All this time, it just seemed as if I were doomed. However, it was not until after several years of thinking of migrating – and a few failed relationships established in order to migrate – that I read a story of someone on the Internet that changed my feelings. The story was simple: you have all that you need to get to where you want to go. The story was told by Dr. Shalette Ashman-East, a Jamaican who had gone abroad to study, but experienced financial issues and needed approximately \$3,000USD – and did not know where she would get the money (Ashman-East, 2018). ‘You have all that you need to get to where you want to go’ was a mantra she heard, and though I cannot remember the entire details of her story, from my recollection, the idea came to her to rent out her apartment for three months in order to earn the money she required. Ashman-East decided that she would take a road trip in her car for the three months when her apartment would be rented. However, as soon as the rental of her apartment was finalized, not knowing how things would work out, Ashman-East got a call from her friend who was offered her the opportunity to house stay at her house. Eventually, she was able to survive the three months when her apartment was rented, and she was able to meet her financial obligation.

I was so inspired by her story that I analyzed my own situation with the same mindset – ‘you have what you need to get to where you want to go.’ My evaluation led me to the educational qualifications I had acquired over the years. I looked to Canada, as it is one of the countries that have strong pathways to permanent residency. I applied to the University of Toronto, and was unsuccessful, but then applied to Brock University. My turning point came when Brock accepted me and offered me funding. I knew for certain, at that point, that I would end my 20-year career and leave Jamaica. This was a drastic

change, but I was willing to pursue this dream, and education was my pathway. My career had given me financial security, but now, it was giving me the opportunity to migrate.

Mother One's Story

I now turn to the experience of Mother One in this study, whose conversation with me will be structured to explain her disorienting dilemma, critical incident, critical pedagogy, and turning point.

Mezirow's disorienting dilemma. For Mother One, her younger daughter was struggling in school and being constantly compared to her older daughter, who excelled in Jamaica's education system. Her younger daughter was being labeled as having a learning disability based upon her poor academic performance. This was a disorienting dilemma for Mother One, as she was a Vice-Principal – and, so, the expectation was that her children would perform exceptionally well academically.

The experience of dealing with abuse had unfortunately left her to think frequently of its impact on the cognitive growth and development of her younger daughter, who had revealed in therapy that witnessing the abuse affected her. Although in her daughter's case, it was not conclusive, Mother One believed all of the abuse may have played a negative role in her poor academic performance. As an educator, she knew very well the connection between cognitive development and abuse. Despite spending a fortune on extra lessons and additional resources, her daughter continued to struggle in school. Even her own intervention as an educator did not help to improve her daughter's academic performance. She lamented the fact that the education system does not treat equitably those children who are outside 'the edges,' as no means of support or alternative assessment methods are available.

In that regard, Mother One expressed how fortunate she felt to be able to send her first daughter to university in Canada, and that turned out to be the pathway to change her and her younger daughter's future – all in light of her concern regarding the effect that seeing abuse may have had on them. At this point, Mother One had to think critically with regard to raising her younger daughter into a productive adult.

Tripp's critical incident theory. For many years, Mother One tried to work out the differences experienced in her marriage through counselling and family interventions. However, one day, she had an epiphany that no amount of effort was going to make things better for her. The worst part of her marital strife was that her husband was physically, verbally, and emotionally abusive. After several years, her girls were getting older and became witnesses to the abuse. Therefore, Mother One performed her own PTA and decided to not only leave her husband, but to migrate. To leave her husband was critical, as it was causing her personal and professional embarrassment due to his affair with someone in the community in which they lived and worked.

Mother One is the mother of two girls, and my conversation with her revealed great emotional attachment to both of them, including a level of sadness that she had allowed them to witness her being abused and be in such a vulnerable state. She spoke about her girls fondly; she had raised them in one of Jamaica's rural parishes where she was highly esteemed based upon her position of Vice-Principal at one of the high schools in the area. That esteem also came with great scrutiny, however, in relation to her relationship with her husband.

We paused and acknowledged that as Jamaican mothers, we held certain values as being significant, such as pride in overcoming the challenges of being a single parent; in

Jamaica, having a mother and father in the same household was considered a great accomplishment, and our goal is to raise strong, independent, productive, adult children regardless of their gender. However, as she is the mother of two girls, living in an abusive household was weighing heavily on her mind. Would staying make them believe that this is how they should be treated in a relationship? That thought made her very uncomfortable. We looked at the traditions of mothering in Jamaica in relation to how we were taught to do housework, such as washing, cooking, and cleaning the house, while still being taught the value of education. This is where we interjected Mary Wollstonecraft's advocacy for the vindication of women's rights, and the connection to our enslavement past, as we knew that our ancestors were strong women who worked the plantations and took care of offspring (although they could not seek education).

With this acknowledgement of our historical legacy, we delved more into her life as a mother living in rural Jamaica. As stated earlier, Mother One held a position of high esteem and gained respect in that regard. However, the constant abuse she experienced from her husband and his extramarital affairs made her decide to leave the marriage and Jamaica. Fortunately, her first daughter was already in Canada, and she had completed her studies successfully. Her daughter's successful completion of her studies provided the opportunity for her to migrate. She was fortunate to be granted visas for herself and her younger daughter. Therefore, she only experienced separation from her first daughter, who had migrated first. Mother One hastened to point out that she was doing all this in her efforts to create a better future for her children, and to demonstrate strength in leaving an abusive relationship.

She reiterated the traditions of Jamaican mothering; she had inculcated in her girls

the virtues of being able to take care of themselves and their families. Her girls had to perform domestic chores and were taught the value of becoming independent women. It was also important to teach them how to prepare Jamaican cuisine, like rice and peas, curried mutton and stewed peas made from pickled pig's tail, and beef with an assortment of Jamaican spices. At the same time, it was important to ensure the ideology that in our culture, there are no gender specific roles: our children could aspire to be whatever they wanted to become professionally. However, Mother One told them that to be good wives, they needed to be able to do domestic chores such as washing, cooking, and cleaning, whilst ensuring that they valued education in the way that Mary Wollstonecraft advocated for women.

Freire's critical pedagogy. Mother One's greatest concern, which is connected to Freire's (2000) CP, is that she stayed with her husband and accepted his abuse because she did not want to become a part of the statistic of being a single parent. She did not want her daughters to live in a household that lacked both a mother and father. That was her ideal, especially in light of the fact that she was a Vice-Principal who was well-regarded in her community. However, Mother One came to realize that she may have been doing more harm than good when her younger daughter was not performing well academically. Jamaica's standardized testing education system was not the environment for her, and she knew that too well, as she was an administrator in the system herself. Together, we lamented on the number of private schools that are established to help children to read – when, instead, this should be the role played by the government to fund special reading programmes. We also spoke about how disappointing it was to see parents with struggling children being financially burdened to get the additional assistance they require, especially

amidst the common practice of teachers using the children's weakness as a means to supplement their income. Mother One was a part of the system as a senior administrator, and yet her attempts to make things different came with great opposition.

We returned the conversation to her older daughter, who she said openly admitted that she was ashamed of her mother's decision to stay with their father, and that she did not think her mother was setting a good example for them. Mother One said, "It hurt me to the core when my daughter said she was teaching them to take abuse." The thought of the cycle continuing with her girls was frightening. This, along with her discontentment with the Jamaican education system, which started to label her daughter as having a learning disability, made her realize that she had to leave Jamaica – and any move would leave her financially vulnerable. However, the legacy of abuse would be too high a cost to bear, and her younger daughter being able to follow her older sister in becoming a productive adult became Mother One's only priority. Fortunately, she found her turning point through education.

Turning point theory. According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language - the definition of *turning point* is, "the point at which a very significant change occurs; a decisive moment, alteration or deflection in a long-term pathway or trajectory that was initiated at an earlier point in time" (n.d., p. 16), thus distinguishing it from a temporary change or a mere fluctuation in behaviour. Mother One's redirection came from her being accepted to come to university in Canada. That would have been her only escape, because staying in Jamaica would mean that her life story of her abusive husband and his infidelity would follow her to whichever school or parish she would move to. Jamaica was too small a space for her to stay and find personal restoration for her and

her daughters.

The final part of our conversation was so full of emotions, some which were negative, but mostly positive overall. Mother One has now been in Canada for two years, but she hastened to point out that it was not an easy journey. Experiencing the challenge of acclimatizing to her new context and gaining intercultural competency were discussed between the two of us. Again, Mother One pointed out that sending her older daughter first helped her to cope, as she had both girls with her when she moved. The first winter was really rough, and she became depressed when she thought of how she uprooted her life to come to Canada with this poor weather condition.

Despite that feeling, Mother One has completed her studies with all grades in the A range, although her husband continued his abuse long-distance. Her younger daughter, who was being labeled as having a learning disability by Jamaica's educational practitioners, was placed in the academic pathway at her high school in Canada, which means she would be able to attend university if she graduates. Mother One was also recently offered a job as a Principal at a school in Toronto aligned with the Seventh Day Adventist faith, and she was beaming with feelings of joy that her life was on a better path. Applying to graduate and for a work permit, among other things, was what she had on her mind. Recovery of her financial independence and well-being was making her feel whole again. The girls were now adjusted and acclimatized to Canada, as the older one had obtained her permanent residency and was employed. Mother One felt extremely happy and content with life at this point, and believed that everything happened for her to have this current life. A turning point was now being experienced both for herself and her girls, and this was because of education.

Mother Two's Story

Next, I relate the experience of Mother Two in this study, whose conversation with me will be structured, again, to explain her disorienting dilemma, critical incident, critical pedagogy, and turning point.

Mezirow's disorienting dilemma. The disorienting dilemma for Mother Two came following the Jamaica Labour Party's (JLP) elevation to political power in 2012, after 18 years of being in the political wilderness. At this point in time, Mother Two's daughter was also diagnosed as having Attention Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). The JLP regaining political power was to the delight of Mother Two's husband, who is a strong supporter of the JLP. The leader of the party in 2012 was a man who espoused a great idealistic political philosophy, in her husband's estimation. The party had won on the basis that they promised free education, free health care, and a major change to the constitution that would see the beginning of term limits for political parties and leaders. Mother Two said her husband was optimistic and full of hope that Jamaica would be able to move forward violence-free – thereby moving closer to the Vision 2030 ideals and be a safe place to live and raise families. However, a debacle began when the American Government requested the extradition of one of Jamaica's most notorious gangsters – Dudas Coke, who was a supporter of the JLP – and was met with resistance from the JLP government. America was resilient in their efforts to have Dudas extradited, and unleashed a slew of sanctions on the vulnerable economy and people of Jamaica. Amidst all this political turmoil, Mother Two's younger daughter's diagnosis with ADHD and that made her dissatisfied with the treatment of her daughter in Jamaica's education system.

Mother Two recalled the pressure that mounted on the Prime Minister's leadership

when top-ranking Jamaicans started to lose their American visas – many in transit at airports and at immigration checkpoints – because of their refusal to extradite Dudus. The Jamaican government’s refusal to cooperate with the American government led to an incursion of the JLP’s stronghold community – Tivoli Gardens – and a removal of the Prime Minister that Mother Two’s husband supported. Her husband finally lost hope in Jamaica after this occurred, and started to lend support to her efforts to migrate. The Tivoli Gardens incursion had resulted in a confrontation with the citizens, the Jamaica Constabulary Force, the Jamaica Defence Force, and operatives of the American Government. Mother Two said that when they heard that over 70 people had died during the raid of Tivoli Gardens, it affected them deeply. The public outcry of the JLP’s treatment of the people in Tivoli, which is an area in which they secured most of their votes, was disheartening. It was made even worse when the JLP government had to extradite Dudus in the end, making the decision to resist America’s request futile. Lives had been lost for no reason, and the days of the incursion will go down in history as one of Jamaica’s greatest atrocities.

Regarding Mother Two’s younger daughter, it was a struggle for her to see her daughter struggle in Jamaica’s standardized education system based on the fact that she was diagnosed with having ADHD. Her performance had to be closely monitored, and several interventions had to be made in providing extra lessons and tutoring support for her. Her daughter managed to pass the GSAT examination, but it was a constant pressure to have her daughter at the different academic support specialists she had to employ to gain success. Additionally, Mother Two had to put her daughter on ADHD medication to achieve this success. As parents, they were afraid of revealing this information to

educational administrators at her daughter's school, and the failure to reveal her daughter's diagnosis negatively affected her performance in the subjects she took in the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examinations. When the diagnosis was revealed to school officials, the support came – but Mother Two believed that it was only because her daughter was attending one of the high schools in Kingston with the reputation of offering quality education linked to the Catholic Diocese. She referred to the many children who she had witnessed with conditions like her daughter, who had not been so fortunate, for comparison.

Tripp's critical incident analysis. Like Mother One, Mother Two has two daughters, and spoke fondly of them. The critical incident for her and her family occurred when one day, they came home and found men in their home who robbed them at gunpoint. Being personally affected by crime and violence in Jamaica served as a critical incident that led to Mother Two's desire to migrate. The gunmen threatened to take their lives, and the horror of it made her want to be able to provide a secure environment for her children. Consequently, she started to seek opportunities to ensure that safe future. Unfortunately, when the opportunity arose, she was unable to take her family with her.

In her recount of the incident, she still had difficulty talking about it. The trauma experienced led her to live her life in constant fear. For instance, Mother Two would never go home alone and, when she had to, if no one was there when she arrived, she would go back into her car and drive to her in-laws that lived 10 minutes away on the same property. Other times, she drove several miles, as far away to Spanish Town, and stayed with friends until she was certain someone was home. The horror of the experience made her very tense and angry all the time, especially when her husband refused to support her desire to

migrate. Her husband was always patriotic and would say, “Jamaica is our country; Let us stay and help to build it.” Mother Two felt that if her husband would make her feel miserable, she would return the favour and treat him poorly, too – which made their marriage very tense.

We also paused and acknowledged that the privilege of being able to become mothers and have careers simultaneously was due largely to the advocacy of Mary Wollstonecraft. Also, the connection to our past enslavement did feature in the conversation on the basis that we knew that our ancestors were strong women who worked the plantations and took care of their off-spring. With the acknowledgement of our historical legacy, we continued to delve more into her life as a mother living just outside of Jamaica’s capital city of Kingston. Other than being miserable with her husband because he would not support her desire to migrate, their lives were good. They had the ideal family in that her marriage was solid and financially, they were stable. Mother Two was the one who had acquired education up to the graduate level, but her husband was the provider for the family. He owns one of the larger chicken farms that supplies Jamaica Broilers with poultry. She jokingly said, “They could be killed and buried on their land and nobody would know where to find their bodies as the land is approximately 100 acres.” Here, this highlights Mother Two’s fear of violence: even in recounting her family’s financial assets, she is cognisant that this big financial asset poses as a risk for crime to the persons given the right opportunity and motive.

As a Jamaican mother, Mother Two inculcated in her girls the virtues of being able to take care of themselves and their families. Her girls had to perform domestic chores and were taught the values of becoming independent women. It was also important to teach

them how to prepare Jamaican cuisine, like rice and peas, curried mutton and stewed peas made from pickled pigs tail and beef with an assortment of Jamaican spices along with the baking of pastries and condiments specific to Jamaica. On a Sunday, for desert, she and the girls would make *gizadas* a flour base pastry with sweet coconut filling made with sugar, and coconut drops, which were placed piping hot on banana leaves to cool. At the same time, it was important to espouse the ideals based upon Mary Wollstonecraft's philosophy that they are to seek education *as well as* to be good wives and mothers and learn how to perform domestic chores such as washing, cooking and cleaning. She also ensured to pass on the ideology that in our culture, there are no gender specific roles, as they could aspire to be whatever they wanted regarding their educational path, while still becoming wives and raising a family.

Freire's critical pedagogy. Mother Two's greatest concern, which is connected to Freire's (2000) CP, is that not migrating could leave her family at a great risk. Mother Two explained that she never thought there would come a day where they had to get firearms, much less to have her entire family go for firearm training. She questioned why they had to live in fear, and she wanted another option for her daughters' lives. Her concern did not have much to do with their education, as despite her younger daughter's challenges, her girls managed to fare well in Jamaica's standardized testing education system. She was mainly concerned about their safety, and she was happy when her husband started to support her in this regard.

Thus, Mother Two's greatest concern was the crime and violence she and her family experienced. Although she thought of migration as being a pathway for a better way of life for her family, she had to think critically of what would be gained from the separation

– and it had to be greater than the losses. She had the unfortunate legacy of her step-mother migrating and not returning. That ended her father’s first marriage and with her being the eldest, she had to take over the motherly duties for her sister and brother. During that time, she said her father would give her the money he earned, and she had to run the household by buying groceries, cooking, washing, and caring for her siblings. She saw first-hand how that devastated her father, and she felt the pain of separation as a child. Mother Two did not want to repeat that cycle, but felt that she had no other option. However, she was confident to know that her marriage was solid enough to make the transition.

When asked about her daughter who was diagnosed with ADHD, she said her concern was that her daughter was more into the creative subjects, like art, and that was not one of the mainstream academic areas in Jamaica. She thought that would be a problem as she got older, as there were not many opportunities for her in Jamaica in that field. Therefore, securing the opportunity to give her a better future via migration was also crucial. The turning point came when she finally was accepted to a Canadian school.

Turning point theory. To reiterate, a *turning point* is different than a temporary change. Following the definition of turning “the point at which a very significant change occurs; a decisive moment, alteration or deflection in a long-term pathway or trajectory that was initiated at an earlier point in time” (n.d., p. 16). For Mother Two, her redirection also came from her being accepted to come to college in Canada, much like Mother One. Pursuing education in Canada had long been her dream to escape and overcome the crime and violence she experienced in Jamaica. Sad to say, but Mother Two did not even want to own a Jamaican passport, as she was so ashamed of what had happened with the handling of Dudus’ case, and in her mind, Jamaica’s international reputation was tarnished.

At the final stage of our conversation together, Mother Two was overjoyed and excited. She came to Canada and completed two postgraduate diplomas: one in Human Resources Management and the other in Supply Chain Management. She was overjoyed that her dream had finally been achieved through the pursuit of education. However, she suffered loneliness, as she did not have her family with her, she did not enjoy her first Canadian winter, and adjusting culturally was also a difficult experience for her, as she was navigating the process alone. The only relief she had was that a friend's aunt would invite her to her house on a weekend, which helped her to cope. That feeling of cultural incompetence dissipated when she was successful in her courses of study and was settling in by doing volunteer work. She had a job, and was now financially stable and well-adjusted. She said what she underwent was well worth it, because in May 2018, she finally became a permanent resident of Canada, and was told she only had to wait two more years to apply for her Canadian citizenship. She said the look on her husband's face was priceless when she went back to Jamaica to handover the documents for him and their younger daughter; unfortunately, her older daughter aged out of the process, but she was also in Canada on a student visa, so she will be able to seek her own residency independently. In the end, then, Mother Two felt triumphant that she was able to leave this legacy to her children – and grandchildren – of becoming Canadians.

Summative Analysis

In drawing connections between the stories of Mother One and Mother Two, I saw many similarities to my own experience. I met Mother One whilst in Canada, and we were able to converse not only because we are Jamaicans, but on the basis that we were closely associated to the education system as educational administrators. Also, I found similarities

in the experiences retold by both women about some of the issues they expressed. We all had children affected by some form of learning disability. Moreover, Mother Two and I went to the same high school in Jamaica linked to the Anglican Diocese, and as such, we were fortunate to have attended a school with lots of resources – unlike many of the other high schools in the country.

The disorienting dilemmas and critical incidents we each encountered were different, however. But nevertheless, our escape, recovery, and turning point was to use our educational background as a pathway for migration, all in the hopes of changing the trajectory of our lives and that of our children. We were all at different points in the migratory process during the time of this study, as Mother One was applying for a work permit, Mother Two had recently acquired her permanent residency, and I am writing my final paper to complete my Master of Education program on a student visa. In sum, each story serves as a means of motivation, hope, encouragement, and a reminder that Jamaican mothers will do whatever it takes to improve their family's life prospects.

Chapter Summary

Caribbean mothers are among the most resilient women in the world: they have a history of being faced with critical incidents, but are able to use their resources to overcome them. Mother One and Mother Two are no different. They each have stories of hardship, and either overcame an abusive marriage or were the victim of crime and violence. They pass down their traditions of mothering to their children, and continue to teach them about the fluidity of gender roles. They are critical thinkers and will find a way to overcome any sociocultural or personal issues they face. These stories are a reminder that we can change

the trajectory of our lives if we are willing to take the necessary steps to do so, and to remain steadfast in our decisions.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I will present the final discussion of this study and my concluding thoughts on this sociocultural narrative by incorporating information from the review of the literature, the theoretical framework, my conversations with the two Jamaican mothers, and my own personal recollection of my story based upon the emerging themes of motherhood, education, and immigration. The central focus of this narrative was to reflect on my journey of fulfilling my dreams through education as an immigrant mother, which was to be done by examining the critical incidents, disorienting dilemmas, and the turning point that occurred which made me, a Jamaican mother, uproot my life to migrate to Canada in an effort to provide a better life for my family. Therefore, the discussion surrounds the themes that emerged in this study for fulsome conclusion drawing: the discussion will start with motherhood, move to education, and end with information about immigration.

Motherhood

I revert to Homan's (1982) description of the process of becoming a mother to begin this discussion. I am still not clear on the miracle of this "rite of passage" experience, and why it is concurrently filled with so much joy and great sorrow. The emotional withdrawals are more than the emotional deposits, yet that women would risk their lives to become mothers regardless of their socioeconomic status is a natural phenomenon. As an inquirer narrating the stories of two other Jamaican mothers and recounting my own story, this elevated the role of being mother to a level I never considered before. When Sprague (1992) recounted her trip to Jamaica, highlighting the conversations she had with her Jamaican friend, Maureen, this conversation became a fundamental part of the illustration of the

sociocultural practice of mothering in Jamaica as it emphasizes that women always played an important role historically in the Jamaican family. However, this story made me think of how difficult the role of being a mother had seemed to Sprague, to the point where she went on this trip to get away from her role as a mother – albeit, only temporarily. I examined my own experiences in light of Sprague’s expression of being overwhelmed, and had to acknowledge that it was not all a blissful experience for us as Jamaican or Caribbean mothers. I sometimes felt overwhelmed with the traditional dual role of provider and great homemaker – both with or without male partners for support.

I also felt fortunate, as I realized that the culture of not having gender distinctive roles had afforded me this opportunity to recount my story and inquire into the stories of two other Jamaican mothers. Me and other Jamaican women were allowed to have families whilst pursuing our academic goals (Sprague, 1992), which is a fortunate legacy. Unfortunately, our enslavement past – which is credited for building our resilience – has also left families of the Caribbean with a tradition of separation, which continues today on a voluntary basis. Albeit, most cases of voluntary separation are founded on the chance of a parent providing better opportunities for their children; however, in the worst-case scenario, separation leads to social ills for the children being mothered transnationally. The case of Lee Boyd Malvo was one example of such family separation which served as a critical incident for Caribbean mothers in making their decision to separate from their family through emigration.

The body of literature also revealed the cultural belief of not having gender specific roles: specifically, that women of the Caribbean were raised to value homemaking and caregiving for their family, but were also encouraged to pursue careers. This is evident

through my own experiences and those of Mother One and Two, as we had all acquired more academic achievements than our spouses – which was the typical representation of the Jamaican population. For us as mothers, we were able to recognize that the opportunity to pursue education in Canada was due to the early advocacy of education philosophers such as Mary Wollstonecraft – all in spite of the legacy of our enslavement past, which did not allow us to be educated. It is important to note that any reference to our enslavement past was not to demonstrate the atrocities, our weakness, or the ugliness of the legacy, but rather, to reflect on our strengths as a people and as women who are overcomers. Essentially, it was a reminder that if we were able to overcome the atrocities of that period of our history, then it could be deduced that we had in us what was required to overcome challenges that paled in comparison. We were standing on the shoulders of our ancestors, who had sacrificed even their lives for the freedom we now enjoy. It was that same euphoria we were now seeking as mothers in our own pursuit to fulfill our dreams through education, with the ultimate aim of benefitting the next generation of our families.

The critical incidents that we experienced were different: mine was my child's illness and his subsequent struggle with education; Mother One's CI was the failure of her marriage and her younger child's struggle with education; and Mother Two's primary issue was the effect of crime and violence in Jamaica and her family's safety, in addition to her child being diagnosed with ADHD. Despite the variance in what CIs we each encountered, we all had the same goal of making our children's lives better, and our opportunities to do so came through education.

Education

I felt closely connected to Mother One's experience with Jamaica's education system, as we were both educational administrators – and that came with an expectation that our children should do well. However, looking at Espeut's (2017) poor track record in education provided the answers to the issues that we were having with children who were not average. I seriously considered Espeut's (2017) second of three reasons for the Government of Jamaica poor management of education in that he believed that the staff at the church/trust schools are often highly dedicated and motivated church members and/or past students; often they are clergymen, deaconesses or vowed nuns. Also, these schools are usually guided by philosophies of education that strive for academic excellence with high moral values.

Mother Two's younger child attended one such school, and it was evident the difference in the treatment that she was able to receive for her child with ADHD when compared to the lack of support that myself and Mother One had for our children on 'the edges' of the same system. The economic background of all three of us was also different; this relates to Espeut's (2017) illustration of the economics of Jamaica's education system, in that the government does not provide adequate funding to properly educate children. Therefore, I was able to see the connection to the government's poor handling of education, and the experience that Mother One and I had, as our children did not do well enough to receive one of the coveted space in the trust or church schools.

Mothering our children with these issues was elevated and, as Valle (2009) asserts, being the mother of a child diagnosed by either medical or educational practitioners changes one's status to being the mother of a child with a disability – thus, metaphorically

stripping us of the credentials of being a ‘perfect’ mother. This was not as much in the case of Mother Two, as her financial resources aided her in providing the additional supports required for her child; her daughter was ultimately successful at the GSAT and, thus, attended one of the schools with quality education.

When it came to mothering, regardless of society’s labels, we were all committed to overcome our challenges. I saw the connection with Valle (2018), which reaffirmed that these mothers feel compelled to add long-range strategic planning to their maternal duties in hopes of giving their children a competitive edge in the race for success. In each of our cases, the long-range strategic planning was through education and immigration. I also revert to Mezirow’s TLT at Stages 6, 7, and 8 in that, respectively, we built confidence in new ways, we planned a course of action, and we acquired knowledge to implement plans on this transformative journey of fulfilling our dreams through education. We all learnt to build the confidence of our children in new ways that would not negatively affect their self-esteem by finding activities aligned with their capabilities. We also put plans in place, which included migration, and acquired the educational credentials that would allow us to do so.

Immigration

Regarding immigration, Mother One, Mother Two, and myself are all at different points in relation to our immigration status; however, we all had the same goal of improving the outcomes for our future generations. Again, the critical incidents and transformative learning through disorienting dilemmas we each faced were different, but there was a collective realization that a positive change in our circumstances required a geographical move. We were not unique in this perspective, as our enslavement past informs us of the

migration from the continent of Africa to the shores of the Caribbean. Migration is engrained in our culture, so much so that there are even odes to this activity, as illustrated in the poem written by Louise Bennett Coverley (2016) entitled *Colonization in Reverse*. The Wind Rush Generation to which she was referring also served as part of our legacy of migration, and informed our consciousness that we, as mothers, were not unique in this regard. Although education was the means through which we sought and are on the path to becoming citizens of another country, it was in an effort to overcome some system of oppression.

The World Economic Forum study provided the greatest insight by graphically demonstrating the number of countries with a fifth of their population living abroad. That table provided the most startling revelation of the extent of Jamaican's history of migration, as we were ranked third on the list of nine countries, with an estimated total of 1,070,000 Jamaican people living outside of their country of birth. This reiterates the point that socioeconomic opportunities are the main reason for the need of Jamaicans to migrate, regardless of the level of skills they possess. Three of us, as Jamaican mothers, sought migration not necessarily for ourselves, but for our children who experienced challenges educationally and, as in the words of Hughes (1921), "God put a dream like steel in my soul" (p. 1) that needed to be accomplished.

Conclusion

I have come to terms with and have accepted my fate as a mother. Therefore, this is not a sad story for me, but rather, one of triumph that has provided me with rich information for this narrative, and has also given me great purpose in my life. Why would a woman uproot her life to fulfill her dreams through education? The answer lies not solely

in the value placed on education as a commodity for success, but also with the identity of being a ‘good’ mother. Essentially, there is nothing that a ‘good’ mother would not do to ensure the well-being of her children and her family’s future generations.

Education is very important in this reality, and especially so for people from oppressed circumstances. For me, I do not believe that I would have much in life had I not have the ability to maneuver the rigours of the school system in Jamaica. It is fortunate for me that, being a mother – which is a God-given gift – I can now use this status to triumph over the critical incident involving my son. I have come to realize that no career could become more important than being the best mother for my son. Uprooting my life at any time is not burdensome, as the reward of my efforts would live on in my child – and that is the most important legacy. This was no different for the two other Jamaican mothers, either; they made sacrifices, but believe that they would be triumphant in the end over all the critical incidents and disorienting dilemmas they have encountered.

The gift of education to us as mothers has enabled us to pursue other life ambitions, like immigration. I never wanted my son to have experienced the illness that he did; however, in retrospect, it has provided me with a rich source of information to include in this study. My most important identity as a mother was also shared by the mothers I conversed with, and so, leaving careers and uprooting our lives paled in comparison to be called or given the title of being a ‘good’ mother – and that was our ultimate goal: to leave the gift of a mother’s love.

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