

Living Together Apart: Gender Differences in Transnational Couple Living Perceptions in the Ghanaian Context

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Abstract : Males and Females respond differently to life situations, including transnational living. Being in a transnational marriage relationship may put a strain on the relationship requiring partners to adjust their behaviors and expectancies of the other partner to accommodate the disruptions in the relationship. More so, when one partner is an immigrant to a new geographic location with the other in the native country, these disruptions may be intensive. This qualitative study examined gender differences in how married Ghanaian couples respond to making a life together as a couple while living across international borders. The study asked two questions: (1) What are the perceptions of males and females on transnational living? and (2) how do married males and females respond to transnational living situations? To answer these questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 married couples- with one partner living in the United States (U.S.) and the other spouse in Ghana via purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Participants were aged 26 to 59 years with an average age of 40; the average age of relationship: 10.41; and average years of living apart: 6.7. Induction and deduction hybrid analysis strategies were used to derive emerging themes. The results highlight significant gender differences in response to transnational living status and practices. The data indicate that transnational couples with the male spouse residing in the U.S. experience more relationship strains than is the case when the female partner is the immigrant. Three couples who were in divorce proceedings at the time of the interview had the male partner residing in the U.S. and the female spouse in Ghana. These gender differences also reflected spousal visitation frequency, duration of spousal reunification, amount of and frequency of spousal remittance(s), and immigration processing procedures. Finally, the data show female immigrant partners as better managers of transnational living stresses and strains than their male counterparts. Findings from this study have implications for marriage and family practitioners and immigration policy makers.

Keywords : gender differences, , ghanaian couples, ghanaian immigrants, transnational living

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