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## The Tensions between Culture and Human Rights: Emancipatory Social Work and Afrocentricity in a Global World

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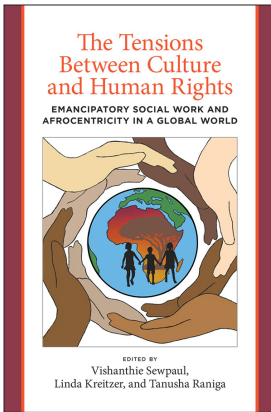
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## THE TENSIONS BETWEEN CULTURE AND HUMAN RIGHTS: Emancipatory Social Work and Afrocentricity in a Global World

Edited by Vishanthie Sewpaul, Linda Kreitzer, and Tanusha Raniga

ISBN 978-1-77385-183-9

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## Socio-Cultural Constructions of Intensive Mothering and Othermothering: Domestic Workers' Experiences of Distance Parenting and their Conceptualization of Motherhood

*Boitumelo Seepamore and Vishanthie Sewpaul*

Child bearing is regarded as an expression of femininity, and motherhood and fertility are prized throughout the world (Akujobi, 2011; Sewpaul, 1995; 1999; Sudarkasa, 2004; Walker, 1995). Women's ability to create life and to reproduce evokes feelings of self-worth, celebration, and power. However, locating womanhood and femininity within child bearing is short-sighted as it focuses largely on the event of childbirth, while minimizing women's work in child rearing (Frizelle & Kell, 2010), and their role beyond the domestic sphere. In this chapter, we argue that the dominant intensive mothering construction is oppressive, and that it engenders guilt in women who cannot live up to this ideal, primarily on account of structural constraints. Social criteria such as gender, race (which is not real, but a socio-political and cultural construct used by some groups to subordinate others), and class intersect in significant ways to impact motherhood. Sewpaul (2013) argued that "while race and gender have lost their scientific credibility, they have not lost their ontological power" (p.

121), as these social criteria play powerful roles in determining access to power, status, and resources. While *othermothering* (Collins, 1994), as a social construct and cultural practice, is rarefied in the African context, the results of this study reflect that, while noble and a positive moral value, it is perhaps a practice born out of necessity. It is used by women who are forced, on account of economic circumstances, to parent from a distance, and it is not always in the best interests of their children.

## Institutionalized, Intensive Mothering, and *Othermothering*

Mothering is multi-layered, with patriarchal, class, and racial undertones, and it is practised differently within diverse social and cultural contexts across the world. Ideas about what constitutes good mothering, while they appear innocuous and universal, are socio-culturally constructed. The intersections of race, gender, and class define mothering, and determine the conditions under which mothering is practised (Walker, 1995). The marginalization of women through the ideology of mothering is often overlooked, since mothering is considered normal, and something that all women should aspire to. Alldred (1996) highlighted the continuous contestation of mother identities and practices and argued that mothering is not necessarily normative. It is important to recognize the “diversity and multiplicity of women’s self-identification and experiences as mothers” (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999, p. 18), and that mothering can be simultaneously resistant to and complicit with dominant norms (Walker, 1995).

Mothering often removes women from participation in the public sphere and places the burden of child care on women. The gendered nature of caregiving and breadwinning is institutionalized by the state, the economy, and dominant patriarchal cultural norms (Fraser, 1997). Mothering is unpaid and undervalued, and it is not recognized as work although it requires “complex, analytical, interpretive” skills similar to those of professionals (Hays, 1996, p. 159). The conceptualization of intensive motherhood as universal and naturally occurring in all women requires mothers to be constantly present, ever-giving and selfless (Hays, 1996). It assumes that all women live in middle-class, heterosexual nuclear families and devote themselves to full-time caregiving of children,

while fathers act as providers and protectors. Others, for example young mothers (Macleod, 2001; Ntini & Sewpaul, 2017; Phoenix, 1991), mothers with disabilities (Malacrida, 2009), working mothers (Contreras & Griffith, 2012), single mothers (Ntini & Sewpaul, 2017), incarcerated mothers, and those in same sex relationships, tend to be “othered,” as they mother outside the constructs of ideal motherhood. Women who choose not to be mothers (Kruger, 2003; Sewpaul, 1995) or postpone motherhood (Gillespie, 2003) are often pathologized. White, middle-class women are also under pressure to conform to intensive mothering. In their study of white, middle-class mothers in South Africa, Frizelle & Kell (2010) found that their participants, although they had access to resources that were not always available to other mothers, struggled with the expectations of intensive mothering.

In contrast to intensive mothering, other forms of mothering are deemed to be less intensive. Collins (1994) presented the history of mothering among African-Americans from the period of slavery when African-American women formed women-centred networks to raise children—a form of care evident to date in America and Africa. Mothering was shared by slave women who were often separated from their children. These women-centred networks contributed to cooperative childcare by biological and *othermothers*, whose role was important in the care and socialization of children (Collins, 1994), while child rearing remained, almost exclusively, the responsibility of women. In contemporary societies, women-centred networks centralize the care of children; it is mostly women who staff day-care centres and are involved in other childcare arrangements, such as being day and foster mothers.

Sudarkasa (2004) discussed the role of female kin in child care in African contexts. In extended families the division of labour is such that mothering is shared; child rearing is not the sole responsibility of the biological mother. *Othermothers* assist the biological mother with child care and support (Collins, 1994), and are huge assets. For example, in the Nguni groups, a mother’s younger sister is *mamncane* (young mother), and the mother’s older sister is referred to as *mamkhulu* (or older mother). Similarly, in the Sotho groups they are referred to as *mmangwane* and *mamogolo*, respectively—signifying their roles as *othermothers* in a child’s life.

The absence of men from child rearing is glaring; the rigid status assigned to women in more patriarchal societies, in relation to reproduction and child rearing, keep gender roles firmly in place. While men are not entirely absent from day-to-day child rearing, they tend to have minimal child-rearing responsibilities. The emphasis is on their roles as providers, enforcers of discipline, and decision makers on behalf of the family, leaving the responsibility of child care squarely on the shoulders of women. But the results of this, and other studies (Gilbert & Sewpaul, 2015; Ntini & Sewpaul, 2017), reflect that men, for various reasons, often renege even on expected gendered roles.

In societies where other family forms operate, intensive mothering is not a norm (Sudarkasa, 2004). But its positioning as a dominant discourse places it at the centre and at the expense of those who “mother” differently, such as single-parent and working-class women. Their mothering skills are often questioned. The othering of mothers based on race is significant because Black mothers are often perceived as problematic and incompetent (Phoenix, 1996). Poor families with children are overwhelmingly Black, on welfare, and living in single-parent households (Phoenix, 1996). The implicit racism and classism in the interpretation of needs and the provision of welfare services marginalize women (Fraser, 1997), as bad mothering is equated with poverty and race. The labelling and pathologizing of Black mothers do not factor in structural issues, such as poverty and lack of resources, that affect caregiving (Gilbert & Sewpaul, 2015; Ntini & Sewpaul, 2017).

One group of othered mothers are domestic workers, whose employment occupies low status, is low paying, and is seen to be demeaning. Women in such positions, who do not have the luxury of exclusively looking after their children, are othered and marginalized. Intensive mothering “maintain[s] the privileged positions of those who are native-born, those who are white, and those who are members of the middle and upper classes” (Hays, 1996, p. 163). It is maintained and reproduced by normative standards, constructed by professionals in middle-class and privileged positions in society. Intensive mothering is perpetuated through dominant psychological theories that are used as a yardstick against which ideal motherhood is measured. They determine circumstances under which mothering should be practised and how mothers should

interact with their children (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991; Schwartz, 1994). These normative ideas have been heavily influenced by males, for instance Winnicott (1953), Bowlby (1969), and Spock (1946), studying able-bodied, middle-class, white women in heterosexual, nuclear families.

Mothering is continuously shaped by others—often males—who have come to be regarded as “experts” in the practice of mothering (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991). An emphasis on mothers as sole caregivers, whose intensive mothering practices will manifest in psychologically healthy and well-rounded children, tends to be reductionist, deterministic, linear, and mother-blaming. These theories attribute much of adult mental illness to mothers. They do not take into consideration intersecting structural influences, and different childrearing practices and beliefs. Mother-blaming in psychiatry reached its extreme with Fromm-Reichmann coining the concept “schizophrenogenic mother” in 1948.

Of particular relevance to the social work profession is that women who mother differently might be put under surveillance. Professional “support” might mask the control, instruction, and supervision of “unfit” and “incompetent” mothers, who are treated in punitive and judgmental ways. The expectation that all women will conform to intensive mothering expectations justifies the criticism, scrutiny, and blaming of mothers. The judgment of mothers against white middle-class norms, ethnocentrism, and the processes of othering are all evident in the following (see Ylvisaker et al., 2015), which is an actual recording of a social worker:

In the boy's home the family sits on the floor when they eat, and the apartment is hardly furnished. The visiting-home is a beautiful home according to Norwegian standards. The Norwegian family is engaged in aesthetics and cultural values. In the boy's home, food is just a necessity, whereas in the visiting-home meals are shared, planned and enjoyed. In the boy's home they do not speak Norwegian, whereas in the visiting-home they are all very social and love having conversations. The boy is occupied with after-school activities but is not guided by his mother. . . . In his home there are lots of different people that come and go—aunts, uncles and others. In the visiting-home they are engaged in life as a

nuclear family, but they meet with other families at planned activities (p. 227).

In the case above, it was a single, divorced mother of Indian descent who called social services to ask for help, saying that she was having difficulties and not coping. The social worker arranged for the boy to spend time in a Norwegian visiting-home that was “positive” and “resourceful” (Ylvisaker et al., 2015).

It is against this background of the dominant discourse on intensive mothering, and the alternative discourse on *othermothering*, that this study was conceptualized to understand distance parenting among domestic workers.

## Methodology

This qualitative study, informed by the lens of intersectionality, which “enables us to examine the social divisions and power relations that affect people’s lives” (Sewpaul, 2013, p. 118), was designed to understand the experiences of domestic workers who parent from a distance, and the meanings that participants attached to motherhood. The study was undertaken in the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality. Data were collected via conversational type, in-depth interviews, and two focus group discussions with the aid of interview guides, with 33 women, whose children were left in rural areas with female kin—and in rare cases, their fathers.

Incidental and snowball sampling were used to access the participants. The duration of the interviews ranged from one hour to two and a half hours, with either telephone or face-to-face follow-up interviews, when necessary. Participants were fully informed about the purpose and nature of the study, and all ethical requirements were adhered to. Pseudonyms are used to ensure the anonymity of the participants. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee. All interviews were conducted in isiZulu or seSotho and were tape recorded, with permission of the participants, and were transcribed and translated into English. Thematic analysis was complemented with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which sees language as a social practice, where discourse is understood as socially constitutive



and socially conditioned. CDA analyzes written texts and spoken words to unveil sources of power, dominance, resistance, and inequality, and how these are maintained within socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts. It accepts the central premise that language is not neutral; language not only reflects the world but actively constructs and reproduces the world that we live in, and it speaks to the complex relationship between structure and agency (Fairclough, 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The results focus on the participants' experiences, and their constructions of motherhood.

## Results and Discussion

The participants' ages ranged between 24 to 42 years. The women had an average of two children each. A majority (22) of the participants were not married; 11 of the 33 mothers were married, and 17 had their first child at or before 19 years of age. Two of the participants had seven children each; one had her first child at 14 and the other at 18 years. Another participant who had five children gave birth to her first child at 19 years. While poverty, and its concomitants, are important precursors to, and consequences of, teenage pregnancies (Ntini & Sewpaul, 2017), motherhood is often a way of gaining social status, recognition, and respect, symbolizing a passage to adulthood, despite single mothers being stigmatized and often having to carry the responsibility of child rearing alone (Macleod, 2001; Ntini & Sewpaul, 2017). Four participants had four children each, with their ages ranging from 16 to 21 years, and none of them was married when they had their first child. Almost a third of them were live-in domestic workers; others rented accommodation near their work and returned home to the rural areas periodically.

The results are discussed under four interrelated themes: (1) The legitimacy and the legitimating role of children; (2) Caregiving by *othermothers*; (3) The desire for, and the impossibility of, intensive mothering; and (4) Self-blaming in absent mothers.

## The Legitimacy and the Legitimizing Role of Children

For their children to gain legitimacy, customary law, as set forth in the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (Government of South Africa, 1998), requires that damages (*inhlawulo*) be paid in instances where men impregnate women out of wedlock. Ten of the unmarried participants in this study never had damages paid by the fathers, which is tantamount to denial of paternity and of legitimacy of the children. The men abandoned their partners either during pregnancy or soon after the birth of the children, a finding that resonates with that of other studies (Gilbert & Sewpaul, 2015; Ntini & Sewpaul, 2017). In almost all the cases, the participants wanted acknowledgment from the fathers, even if the fathers were no longer interested in them or their children. Puseletso's despair was clear:

They don't have one father. . . . Katleho's father . . . I last saw him when I was 3 months pregnant . . . with Bareng. . . . His father is alive, he knows him very well . . . but he does nothing. Nothing for the child." Similarly, Bavumile, who had seven children, none of whom had damages paid for, said: "They stayed with my mother from the beginning. . . . Their father was never there, I have two children with him.

The centrality of motherhood, and the legitimating role that children played in their lives, is noted in most of them having introduced themselves as "mother of . . ." For instance, one participant said, "They call me maItumeleng" (mother of Itumeleng) instead of using her birth name. The other participants, particularly from Lesotho, used their married names in introducing themselves, such as MaTebello, maTshepo, maPalesa. It is customary within the Basotho group to refer to women with their children's names—or names they were given when they got married. Those who are not married would not have these naming ceremonies for children born out of wedlock. Being given a married name not only prepares one for motherhood, but also puts pressure on women to procreate. The name of the child may also be gender-specific, which further pressures

one to produce children of a specific gender, usually male. Their identity changed with marriage and motherhood, and their children gained legitimacy with marriage.

## Caregiving by *Othermothers*

Of the 33 participants, five of the mothers identified as being the primary caregivers of their children even though their fathers stayed at home with the children. In almost a third of the participants (21), grandmothers were the primary caregivers, four were cared for by the participants' eldest daughters, and the rest by maternal aunts and uncles, neighbours, or paid caregivers. Caregiving is disproportionately feminized, and those who stepped in were women, often female relatives such as *mamkhulus*, *mmangwanes*, and grannies. Caregiving by relatives was taken for granted. When asked if they had negotiated caregiving, many of the participants said that they did not have to ask; it was a given that the female relatives would take over this role. Khanyo was cohabiting with her partner and left her children with her mother, and she did not see the need to take her children to live with her at any point. She said:

I will never turn my back on them. He [partner] understands my situation, so I will have to continue working so that I can support my children. . . . They will stay with my mother and I will continue staying with him.

The literature tends to rarefy the popular cultural adage “it takes a village to raise a child”—the importance of the collective in child rearing in African contexts. But villages in South Africa are in crisis. Systems of care have been eroded as families struggle under the weight of HIV/AIDS, poverty, and the onslaught of free-market capitalist ideology. *Othermothers*, especially grandmothers, do play a critical role, and often offer their services as a labour of love in unpaid service. But there are other realities too, as reflected in the experiences of some of the women, who spoke about relatives prioritizing their own children above theirs; harsh punishment being meted out to their children compared with those of the relatives' children; and of food, clothes, school uniforms, and toiletries

that they sent, intended for their children's use, being used by relatives. In their study of Zimbabwean mothers living in the UK, Madziva and Zontini (2011) found that the competition for remittances contributed to relatives fighting for the children, and some of the mothers were reluctant to leave their children with relatives, preferring paid caregivers to family members. While the experiences of the women were by no means homogeneous, they expressed a deeply held desire for intensive mothering, a privilege—perhaps more a right—that they were denied.

## The Desire for, and the Impossibility of, Intensive Mothering

By virtue of domestic employment, the participants either lived on their employers' property or rented a room nearby. None of them lived with their children, although they visited them periodically, generally once every one to three months. The participants from Lesotho, and those outside of KwaZulu-Natal, visited their children less frequently—about once every nine months or once per year, on account of distance and the costs of travel. While they were separated from their children, the women subscribed to the idea of intensive mothering, and saw good mothers as those who are involved in the everyday lives of their children.

The women had to constantly negotiate the tensions between two parallel, competing discourses—the universal discourse of intense mothering, on the one hand, and the contextual, normalized discourse of distant mothering, on the other. Feelings of “double belonging” (Boccagni, 2012, p. 266) were evident. Despite physical distance, their thoughts were with their children. The general wish was to co-reside with their children and raise them themselves, not through substitute caregivers. The centrality of their children in their lives was clear. MaTshepo, whose baby was 18 months old when she left home, said quite poignantly, “Some of us . . . our children even forget who we are.” Although it was impossible to mother intensively, the mothers tried to approximate intensive mothering as closely as they could.

In order to reduce spatial distance, and to maintain co-presence across geographical distances, the participants used technology. Contreras and Griffith (2012) found that Mexican mothers working in the US often called

their children numerous times a week to enquire about their well-being, school, and health, and even assisted with homework. Unlike other studies where the mothers had an array of means of keeping in touch (Merla, 2012), mothers in this study depended on the mobile telephone. They used WhatsApp because it was free to download, and enabled audio messaging and video calling. They could speak to their children, hear their voices, and see their faces even when they were hundreds of kilometres away. Rethabile said, “If not [visit] then I will have to continue speaking with them over the phone . . . and try to ensure that they remember why I am not able to stay with them. . . . They have to understand the reasons for my absence.” For Rathabile, her children making meaning of her absence was important. As reflected in the voices of some of the other women, the children needed to know that they were “working for them”; that they were, indeed, the self-sacrificing mothers that institutionalized, intensive mothering valorizes.

Other transnational mothers made an effort to speak to their children more than once a day, despite the high costs of airtime and data. Noma, who depended on the phone to supervise her son, explained:

I have to use the phone to wake him up [at 5 a.m.] because they sleep. They do, even when you are there. Yes, so I must have airtime to wake him up . . . and if I don't, he is late for school. . . . But then my boy does try . . . “today I was late at school and the teacher made me pick up all the papers” and I tell him . . . “my baby just hang in there. . . . It will get better one day.” There is nothing else I can do [softly], it is very hard.

Similarly, Puseletso phoned her children every night before she went to bed. This arrangement meant that her children and caregiver had to stay up very late so that she could speak to them after retiring at 10 p.m. when she returned to her room. These attempts to make up for a lack of face-to-face interaction were often expensive and time consuming, but they provided some semblance of normalcy and enabled daily contact, including real-time decision making and support. However, it did not make up for maternal absence.

## Self-Blaming in Absent Mothers

Mothers who parent from a distance often face negative consequences when their children do not behave (Macleod, 2001). Apart from societal condemnation, the women themselves had internalized the dominant constructions of intensive mothering and they felt embarrassed, guilty and responsible for things that went wrong with their children. Thandaza said:

Drinking, that's it. . . . I think that perhaps he [son] saw it as the right thing to do so he also did it, he started drinking very, very young. I mean if he is in high school now, then what does that say to you?

Although her husband stayed with the children, she blamed herself for not being around to guide them. She believed that her son would not have started drinking if she had been present.

The safety of children was a constant concern, and the participants yearned to protect their children from harm even across distances. Madziva and Zontini (2011) argued that the availability of suitable caregivers facilitated migration to places of employment, but that the unavailability of good caregivers placed children at risk. Rethabile was overwhelmed by grief after her child, whose sister served as the *othermother*, was raped. She said:

And I was very upset, I have never ever felt so hurt in my life. My child raped by my brother-in-law. . . . I really miss them, they miss me too. . . . I get worried because they get unhappy. They think about me all the time.

Rethabile blamed herself for her inability to protect her children and regretted leaving her children in the care of her sister. Her desire and that of her children was to live together. Although Frizelle's and Kell's (2010) study was with a different sample of middle-class, white women, the results of this study cohere with their conclusion that by "personifying the ideal against which marginalised mothers . . . are defined . . . they become particularly vulnerable to self-regulatory mothering discourses and practices" (p. 42).

The concerns expressed by the women, and their desire for intensive mothering, are understandable, given that children living in households with a migrant parent are more likely to experience abuse, frequent illnesses, chronic illness, and emotional and behavioural problems than children living in households where the parent is present (Heymann et al., 2009). Parreñas (2001) and Millman (2013) discussed the detrimental consequences of separating parents from their children for extended periods of time, in relation to emotional distance, erosion of family relationships, indiscipline, disruption of family roles and household routines, and insecurity and confusion on the part of children. Children may have feelings of abandonment, anger, and loss even in instances where the decision to migrate was discussed with the children beforehand (Bennett et al., 2014; Boccagni, 2012).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite the criticism of intensive mothering being “racist, colonialist, masculinist” (Aldred, 1996, p. 127), and its leaning toward white, middle-class, nuclear, able-bodied families, its centrality, as an ideal form of mothering, is not diminished. The women in this study yearned for togetherness with their children and for intensive mothering. Intensive mothering places a disproportionate burden of responsibility on women, and reinforces mother-blaming, as children’s difficulties and adult mental health problems are often located in mothering practices. Social workers have always played a central role in working with families, and more particularly in child protection, and they need to ensure that they do not collude with ideologies and practices that continue to marginalize women by deliberately or inadvertently maintaining the status quo. While social workers are bound by law and ethical imperatives to protect children and ensure their best interests, they must guard against being enforcers of punitive, abusive, and ethnocentric practices that other and disadvantage women.

The gendered nature of the discourse is such that there is no such thrust toward intensive fathering. Yet the importance of warm, loving, supportive, authoritative parenting (Baumrind, 1991; Querido et al., 2002) in ensuring the best interests of children must not be underestimated. Disarticulated from its negative connotations and consequences, which

are elucidated in this chapter, intensive parenting—where parents are validating of children, and are engaged and responsive to their needs—does work in the interests of children. But parenting does not occur in a vacuum; it is influenced by broader socio-economic and cultural contexts, and it is critical that mezzo- and macro-level policies and programs be put in place to support parenting by both men and women. Normative gender roles must be challenged and changed, with an emphasis on alternative masculinities so that men begin to appreciate and adopt their roles as fathers (Morrell & Jewkes, 2014). The women in this study lamented the fact that they had little or no support from the fathers of their children. Maharaj and Sewpaul (2016) asserted that “greater efforts must be made towards gender equality, and the inclusion of men in parenting practices, if we are to minimize the burdens of care that women carry” (p. 57). But we need to work beyond gender equality; structural interventions to reduce poverty and inequality across race must be prioritized.

The women in this study attempted to approximate, as closely as possible, the ideals of intensive mothering. As in Frizelle’s and Kell’s (2010) study, the women’s struggle with mothering, and their unquestioning acceptance of their responsibility as primary caregivers, led to their internalization of the dominant discourse around institutionalized, intensive motherhood. Yet there was a simultaneous normalization of their distant parenting and reliance on *othermothers*, as “everybody does it [leaves their children to go to work],” thus supporting the notion that women can both resist and be complicit with dominant norms at the same time (Walker, 1995). The normalization might be reflective of the women’s resilience, in coping with adverse and difficult life circumstances over which they had little or no control. In the face of competing discourses, intensive mothering gained pre-eminence. Rationalizing that they were “working for the children” so that the children “have something to eat,” providing for the children’s material needs and maintaining remote contact affirmed their mothering identities.

While the literature tends to rarefy *othermothering* and communal caring (Akujobi, 2011; Collins, 1994; Sudarkasa, 2004), which are positive moral values linked to the principle of *Ubuntu*, the practice allows for exploitation of poor women who often provide unpaid labour. Furthermore, research results detail the negative consequences of separation of children



from their parents, and the narratives of the women in this study reflect their concerns about their children living with *othermothers*. It would seem that the exalting of *othermothering* reflects a need to make a virtue out of necessity. The women loved their children, missed them, and wanted to be with them, but were forced to leave their children in the care of others. Rather than construct socio-economic deprivations and their consequences as cultural issues (IASSW, 2018), state and non-state actors in South Africa must challenge structural injustices, agitate for structural changes, and support, for example, the goals of the White Paper on Families in relation to the promotion, strengthening, and preservation of families (Department of Social Development, 2012).

The structural constraints of the intersection of race, class, and gender can be seen in the fact that less than a third (29 percent) of Black children lived with both their parents, while the majority of Indian (84 percent) and white children (77 percent) lived with both biological parents in South Africa in 2013 (Meintjes et al., 2015). Single-parent families are primarily female-headed. It is estimated that nine million children were growing up with fathers that were living, but absent from their lives, while 42 percent of Black children lived with their mothers but not their fathers (Mathews et al., 2014). These demographics are accompanied by huge disparities in the ownership of wealth along racial lines, where the life opportunities of Black children are compromised compared with those of their white and Indian counterparts. The women witnessed, on a daily basis, other women—usually their “madams” and their children—living with the advantages of intensive mothering, so whether “racist, colonialist, masculinist” (Alldred, 1996) or not, and perhaps precisely *because* intensive mothering is associated with “members of the middle and upper classes” (Hays, 1996, p. 163), the women desired this! They were Black women, struggling in low-wage labour, but they loved their children no less. To expect that they would want anything less than that deemed fit for women in middle and upper classes would be to maintain double standards; it is a violation of their dignity and a negation of their humanity, which are contrary to the core values of Afrocentricity, as discussed in the introduction and conclusion of this book. The discourse needs to shift from the *privilege* of intensive mothering to the *right* to intensive parenting for all people in South Africa, irrespective of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, family structure, or family type.

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