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CHAPTER 9

BETWEEN AND BETWIXT – POSITIONING NANNIES AS MOTHERS: PERSPECTIVES FROM DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

Boitumelo Seepamore

ABSTRACT

Nannies occupy a rather problematic position in childcare. Their presence facilitates intensive mothering for their employers' children, while their absence from their own children facilitates distance parenting. By moving away from home and working as nannies, they enable ideal mothering for their often White, middle-class employers, seemingly at the expense of their own children. Unspoken feeling rules further complicate their provision of emotional labor in childcare, while continuous efforts to avoid strong attachment with the children under their care become a source of struggle. Employers need them as invisible extensions of themselves with limited parental authority. In order to provide for their families, nannies, who are often Black working-class single women, also make parallel childcare arrangements. These arrangements differ, as community othermothers enjoy the respect and authority that nannies do not. The continuation of their caregiver role from a distance requires active nurturing of emotional bonds despite spatial separation using a variety of means. Gift-giving also features strongly as a means to bridge physical gap between nannies and their children. As Black mothers from communities which emphasize communal childcare, their support networks are well placed to care for their

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children and concurrently reinforce their position as mothers – a position they do not enjoy in paid employment.

Keywords: Othermothers; caregivers; nannies; childcare; distance parenting shadow mothers

INTRODUCTION

This chapter delves into the underexplored topic of migrant nannies. They violate key aspects of "normal" motherhood by parenting from a distance, a dominant practice in motherhood. In this chapter, I aim to highlight the dilemmas of nannies as they continue to parent their children despite proximal and spatial distance. This is in contrast to intensive mothering (Hays, 1996), which has become a standard of "good" mothering. I discuss this in the context of domestic work, an occupation representing class domination, gender, and ethnic oppression. In order to contextualize the chapter, I examine structural issues that affect mothering – such as ethnicity, poverty, and gender – in the context of South Africa. I also delve into the unenviable position of nannies, who on the one hand, entrench intensive mothering, and on the other challenge it through distance parenting.

Societal factors facilitate both intensive and distance mothering, and both nannies and their employers depend on other women to take care of their children while they engage in paid employment. Previous studies highlight the challenges of migrant domestic work and the impact of parenting from a distance (Carling, Menjívar, & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Madziva & Zontini, 2012; Parreñas, 2001; Seepamore, 2016). The reproduction and maintenance of dominant conceptions of motherhood maintain the centrality of intensive mothering from various perspectives that continue to disregard the convergence of race and social class in the performance of gender.

Although all women suffer oppression, Black feminist thought highlights the marginalization of Black women and their experiences in all aspects of life (Collins, 2000). However, within Black motherhood, social class further marginalizes those who are poor, and are in low-status employment, such as domestic workers, although the exploitation of domestic workers is well-documented (Ally, 2005, 2009; Cock, 1989; Parreñas, 2001). Meanings of motherhood in these women continue to be understudied, especially the experiences of nannies from South Africa. This study offers a glimpse into the contradictions and predicaments faced by nannies in parenting their own children and those of their employers.

THEORIZING ABOUT MOTHERHOOD AND MOTHERING

The discourse on good mothering is often a topic of contention. Psychological, medical, and religious discourses have shaped mothering and its practice globally,

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and the general blueprint remains one where women carry a disproportional amount of unpaid and undervalued care work in the private sphere of the family (Collins, 1994; Fraser, 1989). There is no remuneration for this constellation of mothering activities or "mother work" (Collins, 1994). By doing "the relational and logistical work of child rearing" (Arendell, 2000, p. 1192), this multifaceted and complex work of mothering involves nurturing, preserving, and protecting children (Walker, 1995). It is a practice synonymous with women and femininity (Chodorow, 1979; Rich, 1986).

Society expects mothers to bond successfully with their children, make sacrifices for them, and ensure that they become well-rounded adults who add value to society. However, this dominant discourse on the constructions of motherhood is a patriarchal role imposed on women by men (Walker, 1995), who continue to be at the forefront of policy formation, legislation, and declarations. Their "theft of childbirth from women" is pervasive and ostensibly gives men rights and privileges over children in spite of contestations by some women (Rich, 1986). Childcare, and by implication – mothering – is generally regulated and endorsed by other women as they carry out the everyday practice of mother work. Intensive motherhood, the ideal type of mothering which requires a selfless, ever present, and available mother who puts the needs of her children above her own (Hays, 1996), has become so universalized that even few critical feminist have challenged it (Alldred, 1996; Phoenix, Woollett, & Lloyd, 1991). Its criticism as leaning heavily toward White, middle-class, nuclear, able-bodied families, has not diminished its centrality or status of an ideal form of mothering.

Those who mother differently are continuously stigmatized and marginalized (Akujobi, 2011; Sewpaul, 1995) and their femininity is questioned (Wollett, 1991). Deviancy discourses tend to "other" single Black women who concurrently work and mother their children particularly from a distance through othermothers.

Emotional labor in caregiving is fraught with challenges (Hochschild, 1983). Nannies sell their physical labor, but this involuntarily comes with the provision of emotional labor. Constantly guarding against intense attachment with their employers' children tends to be emotionally draining, leading to "detached attachment," where caregivers attempt to maintain emotional distance from the children they care for to protect themselves by holding back emotionally to avoid complete attachment (Nelson, 1990, p. 598). The daily recreation of this detached attachment is difficult to maintain, and is a cause of burnout for caregivers. Providing warmth and love to their employers' children and concurrently maintaining emotional distance is part of the unspoken "feeling rules" which structure emotional labor in childcare and have to be strictly observed (Macdonald, 2010, p.114). Making nannies invisible extensions of their employers or shadow mothers (Macdonald, 2010) invalidate nannies' emotions, skills, and experiences. This lack of autonomy in childcare further exacerbates their marginalization. Although nannies may wish for some recognition as complete and independent "third parents" of the children in their care (Macdonald, 2010), the fear that they will replace mothers as substitute parents, exacerbates their limited authority and role.

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CONTEXTUALISING FAMILY LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA

With a history of racial segregation through apartheid laws and policies in South Africa, injustices rooted in social patterns of cultural domination abound. Race, gender, and ethnicity continue to impact South African society in all aspects of life. The heterosexual, male-headed family remains the ideal family structure regardless of many changes in the post-industrial world. Apartheid era legislation and practices still affect the composition, structure, and function of families in South Africa. Barring Blacks from owning property or businesses in the White, urban areas, and the imposition of various taxes, drove Blacks from their own lands to work in White-owned farms, mines, and homes, only to return home periodically. This internal circular migration is entrenched in post-apartheid South Africa despite new legislation that has scrapped segregatory laws. With the increased feminization of migrant labor within and outside the South African borders, split families are widely pronounced with children living with grandparents, aunts, and older siblings (Langa, 2010; Schatz, 2007).

Changes in the nature and structure of families, especially as a result of HIV/AIDS, low fertility rates, and the pervasive absence of fathers in South Africa, has reconfigured parenting, especially mothering. Despite the heterogeneity of families in South Africa, they still operate within Eurocentric norms. Single-parent households, typically headed by women, are characterized by high levels of poverty. Black families live in "atypical" extended families and deviate from "the archetypal White, middle-class nuclear family" (Collins, 1994, p. 46) where the male earns a family wage to support his family, and in turn the wife nurtures the children. In 2013, less than a third (29%) of Black children lived with both of their parents, while the vast majority of Indian (84%) and White children (77%) lived with both biological parents in South Africa (Meintjes, Hall, & Sambu, 2015, p. 103), yet these women are expected to be intensive mothers.

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MOTHERHOOD IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Motherhood in the African context is multilayered, complex, and bears historical significance. In most cultures, "religious imagery sentimentalizes and idealizes motherhood" (Akujobi, 2011, p. 2) as shown by the Madonna in Christianity, the Devina in Hinduism, and the "archetypal female Bodhisattvas" in Buddhism. Mothers embody creation, the gift of life, and nurturing. The significance of childbearing has always been celebrated in African communities (Walker, 1995) where motherhood is valorized and celebrated (Akujobi, 2011; Sudarkasa, 2004).

With the expression of womanhood through childbearing comes social restrictions and endorsements, and marital status is significant. Within the dominant marriage discourse, the paternal family has no claim to children born out of wedlock until *inhlawulo* (or damage in isiZulu) has been paid. The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (120 of 1998) provides for the payment of inhlawulo, an important practice among the Black people in South Africa, whereby a fine is imposed on someone who impregnates a (young) woman out of wedlock, thereby

"damaging" her (Nduna, 2014). Similar to inhlawulo, *ilobolo* (the payment of bride wealth) has cultural and social significance. The customary payment of ilobolo signifies marriage plans between parties, whereafter children belong to the paternal family, even though their everyday needs are met by the mother with the support of her extended family. This further emphasizes the significance of the extended family in childrearing where all female kin have culturally defined roles – and depend on their own women-centered networks for support. Within the Nguni languages in South Africa, the mother's younger sister is *mamncane* (younger mother), her older sister *mamkhulu* (older mother), and similarly in the seSotho groups *mmangwane* and *mamogolo*, respectively, mean younger and older mother – signifying their prominence in childrearing and care.

It takes a village to raise a child. Community ownership of children is prevalent in Africa, and other countries in the global south (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). Women other than biological mothers can raise children. These women are "assigned" or "given" children who are not "theirs" in an exclusive sense, but to whom they relate to "as a mother" (Sudarkasa, 2004, p. 1). Othermothers are central in childcare and support. Buchi Emecheta's classic, *The Joys of Motherhood* is an excellent example of the role of othermothers in the Nigerian community, albeit a work of fiction. It also captures mothering in the context of polygamy – a common practice in the Black and Muslim community in South Africa, legislated under the provisions of the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (120 of 1998).

In urban areas, where families often live far from one another, the practice of othermother continues mainly through women-centered networks (Collins, 2000). Othermothers care for all children as if they are their own in community-based childcare systems comprising family members, neighbors, friends, or paid caregivers. While it is a common practice for upper and middle class White women to employ nannies and day care mothers to look after their children, working class women tend to rely on family and kin for childcare (Collins, 2000; Smart, 1996). Both working-class and more affluent middle-class women depend on others for childcare; however, both are othered in varying degrees. Nannies enable mothering by proxy (Macdonald, 2010); they, in turn, depend on othermothers who practise intensive mothering with their children. They shift into a middle and in-between position where they do not have full parental authority as biological mothers of their own children, or those of the children they look after. They occupy a perpetually marginal position in mothering both their own children and those of their employers.

NANNIES MAKING SENSE OF MOTHERING – DISTANCE MOTHERHOOD IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa legalized domestic work through the Cape Ordinance 1 of 184, through apartheid policy – The Native Labour Relations Act 15 of 1911, and in the new democracy Sectoral Determination 7 (SD7) of 2002 under the Labour Relations Act (1997) (Republic of South Africa, Department of Labour, 2002)

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regulates the working conditions of domestic workers. A domestic worker is anyone employed in a household such as a gardener, nanny, domestic driver, one looking after children or the elderly/sick, etc. By the late nineteenth century, Black women were already synonymous with domestic service – which was, and still is, a regular point of entry into the labor market (Dinkelman & Ranchhod, 2012). They positioned themselves as wet-nurses, cleaners, or housekeepers, thereby feminising this sector and labor migration (Ally, 2009; Gaitskell, Kimble, Maconachie, & Unterhalter, 1983). The intersection of gender inequality, racial domination, and economic exploitation (Collins, 1994) continue to perpetuate their oppression, marginalization, and exploitation. They work for long hours and earn very little. Although they typically prefer to work part-time, employers favor live-in workers who are available round the clock. Of the estimated 1.4 million domestic workers in South Africa, a majority are Black women (Ally, 2009; Dinkelman & Ranchhod, 2012) who often leave their children in the care of others, and enact mothering from a distance.

Intensive mothering is a significant part of the dominant cultural construction of motherhood, and it marginalizes other forms of parenting. It is against these normative constructions that nannies negotiate mothering. Although stigmatized, and sometimes accused of child neglect, nannies are mothers who continue to be primary caregivers of their children, albeit from a distance. As single mothers, they do not have the luxury of exclusively looking after their children, while a partner provides for them. By leaving their children in the care of others, they become the subjects of deviancy discourses, even though they put the same childcare arrangements in place. The multiplicity and complexity of race and class lends itself to different interpretations of motherhood for women occupying different racial and social classes. Society interprets their behavior negatively and tends to condemn them.

Distance mothering is widespread in South Africa. In other global south countries, such as Mexico (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997), Peru (Illanes, 2010), Sri Lanka (Ukwatta, 2010), Salvador (Merla, 2012), and Zimbabwe (Madziva & Zontini, 2012), nannies continue to leave their children in the care of others. In addition to material provision for their families, they also maintain emotional connections with their children often over long periods and distances (Parreñas, 2005). This maintenance of closeness to their children relies on the use of creative and multiple means of connection to create a sense of co-presence. They use popular means of communication such as the Internet, mobile phones (Merla, 2012), Skype (Barber, 2008), or WhatsApp. From a distance, they are able to recreate a warm and supportive environment for their children as if they co-reside.

Leaving their children in the care of others deviates from the norm of intensive mothering. Othermothers are invaluable, and for working class mothers such as nannies, community networks are essentially established safety nets without which they cannot successfully carry on the role of mother. Similar to their employers, nannies mother by proxy. However, the caregivers of their children are valued and respected, and assume third parent status. Their presence therefore supports not only the mother but also minimizes the gap created by physical absence through distance. Both mother and children have a traditional safety net created through

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established social safety networks of care. This does not mean that distance parenting is problem-free. Van Breda (1999) and Pantea (2011) explicate and emphasize the impact of parental absence on families. Where there is continued absence from the home, a sense of unity or common purpose may be difficult to maintain (Madziva & Zontini, 2012). Parents may also lose some control over their children, as well as their own authority as parents questioned. The caregivers of their own children may form strong attachments to their children, thereby inadvertently, or even deliberately, sideline the mother. Her peripheral role is further exacerbated by the length of time spent away from home. Despite these challenges, these socially endorsed childcare and support systems remain significant.

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METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Durban, a metropolitan city in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa that attracts thousands of migrants seeking a better life in the urban areas. Twenty-seven domestic workers participated in the study; of these, five were married, including one in a polygamous marriage, two were widowed, four were separated, another two were divorced, and the rest (14) were never married. All the participants were Black nannies and all had been living and working in the Durban metro for a minimum of one year. Two participants were foreign migrants from neighboring Lesotho, which is in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. All the other participants were South Africans, a majority (22) being from KwaZulu-Natal, followed by the Eastern Cape province (4), and Limpopo province (1). The mean age was 42 years, ranging from 24 to 58 years old. Their length of work experience ranged from 2 to 24 years, and the age of their children ranged from 4 to 34 years. Twelve participants were live-out workers, and of these, two worked part-time, or "days" for different employers. The other 15 participants were live-in workers. The highest level of education was a one-year post-grade 12 qualification (secretarial diploma), and two participants had never been to school. Ten had primary (elementary) school education, and 14 had high school education.

I used incidental sampling, approaching women wearing domestic workers' uniforms to participate in the study. I also advertised about the study on a domestic workers' Facebook page as well as on the community notice boards at local supermarkets. Using a semi-structured interview guide, in-depth interviews were conducted from October 2015 to December 2017. I conducted 22 individual interviews and one focus group discussion with five participants. The interviews were about one-hour long and my identity as a young Black woman facilitated the discussions, which were in a language of their choice. I am fluent in both isiZulu and seSotho and found that this assisted with their own self-expression. Eight participants were interviewed more than once, and follow-ups were either face-to-face or telephonic. I later transcribed and translated the interviews. Drawing from a social constructionist perspective, I took an inductive approach to analyze the data to better understand how the participants made sense of their life experiences, particularly mothering from a distance (TerreBlanche, Durrheim, &

Painter, 2006). All the participants consented to the use of a tape-recorder, and I made detailed notes following every interview. The names used in this chapter are all pseudonyms.

RESULTS

Three key themes emerged from the data. First, the nannies viewed mothering from a distance as an economic necessity that allowed them to provide for their children. Second, mothers negotiated emotions associated with separation from their children. Lastly, the women had to negotiate their emotional attachment to their employer's children.

Economic Necessity: Breadwinning as Mothering

Participants in this study left their children to find work because of economic necessity. Similar to the Sri Lankan domestic workers in Ukwatta's (2010) study, the women wanted to improve the economic situations of their families and have a better life, which triggered the decision to work far from home. For example, Zama (33), stated:

> The thing is that my mother is unemployed…. My father passed on in 2004, so my mother was unemployed, working as a domestic, so … even for her, the job was just not a job … I have to keep working. All these people depend on me. If I lose this job or stop working, then who will support me? Who will maintain my child?

For these women supporting their families was not a choice but the only course of action to take. They felt that there was not much choice but to seek employment, and often supported their children and their extended families. Although Ntando (42) seemed to have a supportive family, poverty made it necessary for her to seek employment, leaving her children in the care of her mother:

> Well, my employer asked me to come and stay with her and when I told my mother she said it was fine. It was not an easy decision but I had to come. She had to take care of them (children), there was not much choice because I needed to go and see what I could put together to earn a living. My mother was the caregiver and these were her own grandchildren. She took care of them.

The decision to leave home was not an easy one. In the case of Msebenzi (51), abandonment by the children's father precipitated her decision to leave home. She indicated:

> Okay, so their father left me and did not support them. He didn't do anything for them. That's when I decided to come and work for them so that I could raise my children. I left them with my mother, until they got old enough to stay by themselves. They were with their grandmother. I continued to work, and I go home to see them or send them money when I cannot go.

All the mothers discussed making sacrifices to ensure that the needs of their children were met. Similar to prior research, one way that the nannies did this was by regularly sending remittances and gifts home (Boccagni, 2012; Illanes, 2010; Parreñas, 2005). For instance, Bavumile (52) said:

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> You see I always made sure that I sent them everything they needed … exercise books and things like that. So I made sure that I bought every single thing. I would buy stationery, uniform and all that. When I went home like in December … everything…. I made sure of that. I would buy everything so that when I got home it was paid. I made sure.

In the quote, Bavumile focuses on her ability to buy material goods for her children. The centrality of being able to provide economically for their children was echoed by other mothers. For example, Thandaza (52) stated,

> With my children, I really do wish that they could have stuff without having to ask for it. Okay, when I get paid, I buy it for him or for her. I try as much as possible to give them what they need. What I try to do is … I make sure that they don't go hungry, even if I don't have money, I make a plan to ensure that they get what they need. I sometimes tell them that they have to wait and I will do it for them, and I do!

The participants went to great lengths to meet the needs of their children. Similar to Boccagni's (2012) and Illanes' (2010) findings, employment increased their living conditions. However, they lived just above the poverty line and it was an ongoing struggle to meet basic needs. Some of the participants managed to direct their financial resources elsewhere. After eight years of employment, Nomusa (39) finally managed to scrape up enough money to start building a home for her children. She said:

> There is no other way, these children must have a home … Yes, so I am building and there has to be so many things, and now they want me to send money for the bricks, so I had no choice but to leave them … when you have children you have to make life work.

Being a financial provider was an important aspect of mothering and the participants were able to "expand mothering to encompass breadwinning," thereby continuing to nurture their children by taking care of their material needs (Parreñas, 2005; Ukwatta, 2010, p. 122).

Reconceptualising Motherhood – The Complexities of Distance

The second theme that emerged from the data was that the nannies maintained a strong motherhood identity, which required them to find coping mechanisms to deal with the physical separation of their children. All the participants valued their role as mothers, and the mother identity seems to have affirmed their sense of self despite not living with their children. The nannies foregrounded motherhood in introducing themselves and their discussions. For example, Msebenzi (51) introduced herself this way: "Okay, let me say that I have five children. I am a single mother. I work for them."

The mothers' centrality in the children's lives was clear. Feelings of "double belonging" (Boccagni, 2012, p. 266) were expressed by a few of the participants. Despite being physically separated, their thoughts were with their children. Perhaps Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila's (1997, p. 558) state that "I'm here, but I'm there" captures the simultaneous feeling of physical separation and emotional intimacy. This feeling was something that women struggled to negotiate, especially in the beginning. For example, Nkanyezi (39) said:

> You see, I never thought that I could get used to it. I never knew that one day I could stay far from my children and for a long time. It was very difficult in the first two months of my stay

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> here, but then I managed to get used to it … and from them on I got used to the idea that I will see them when I can. If not 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. It's a very common thing (to do) lots of people come here to work so it's not unusual.

Nkanyezi (39) emphasized the idea of living far from home as normal, and that many people in her community left their homes for work. Nkanyezi also noted that when she could not see her child physically, they still maintained contact by using the telephone.

In another case, Rethabile (35), a nanny from Lesotho, illustrated the difficulty of being separated from her children. Rethabile left her children with neighbors after her relationship with her sister soured. She made use of her social networks for childcare where neighbors supervised homework and "kept an eye" on her children, yet she worried about her children:

> You always have that thing that reminds you that they are by themselves, you as the mother are not there with them. You are here, you are full and you eat and you are well … even if you know that they have enough to eat, but there is still that gap where you feel like you want to call them again and again. It's not a very easy thing to do, leaving your children. I would call them and ask, "Are you all okay? Did you sleep well?" If there is anyone who is sick, then you find that you can't work at all.

While this arrangement was untenable and temporary, she did not have alternative options.

Similar to the above example and to other participants in the study, Thabiso (47), also from Lesotho, maintained daily contact using WhatsApp, a mobile phone application which she used to call her children multiple times during the day, starting with waking them up in the morning to helping with homework in the evening.

These attempts to circumvent spatial distance and the lack of face-to-face interaction are often expensive and time consuming. However, in order to maintain some semblance of normalcy, or to enable real-time decision making and problem solving, the nannies went to great lengths to achieve this.

Negotiating the Care of "Other People's Children" in the Absence of their Own

Hochschild (1983) captures the last theme well; the commercialization of human feelings, especially in caregiving, requires nannies to manage their hearts by loving "just enough" – not too much and not too little. Nannies concurrently facilitate intensive mothering for their employers while endorsing distance parenting of their own children. Their work requires a provision of emotional labor, and it was very common for them to transfer the love that they were unable to express to their children onto those they took care of. Although similar to other paid caregivers such as nurses or nursery school teachers, nannies do not enjoy the same status. They are often paid little, not registered with the authorities, work around the clock, and live in slave-like conditions (Cock, 1989; Mantouvalou, 2015). Puseletso's (29) narrative:

> I don't sleep before 10 pm … really, I sleep late and then I still have to sleep with that child … and she doesn't pay me overtime, I mean this is a special case (epileptic child). Sometimes I also want to watch TV, and sometimes…. I don't understand why they don't go and sleep.

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Similar to others, Puseletso contacted her children only after all her chores were completed. She called them just before her bedtime, meaning that her children had to wait for her to retire before she could attend to their needs ranging from homework to asking for advice, or just missing their mother.

Participants' occupation of an invisible status as extensions of their employers in childcare deprived them of the acknowledgment and recognition they craved. With partial parental authority over the children they cared for, they mothered from the margins. Employers defined and controlled parameters along which their children were to be mothered, and did not acknowledge the experiences, skills, or training of the nannies, which caused much frustration. Zama (33) was especially frustrated, she did not like her job and felt disrespected, overworked, and lonely. Since her employer worked from home, she felt micromanaged because her employer wanted to approve all aspects of her work.

However, there were some exceptions. For instance, Ntando (42) generally had a good relationship with her employer and the autonomy to make decision in relation to childcare. She was one of the few nannies who had the freedom to structure the children's day as she saw fit. Not surprisingly, she was very attached to the children and had been with her employer for over 15 years. She did not see the provision of emotional labor as work, and was very secure in her employment.

In contrast, some of the nannies were always aware of the possibility of termination of their employment. Puseletso (29) wanted to leave her employer but was also concerned about the likely confusion caused by multiple caregivers in a short space of time for the children she cared for. She believed that no other nanny would stay for as long as she did. Although abrupt termination of their services was agonizing, planned termination was just equally painful.

Maintenance of detached attachment was difficult even where there was a good relationship between nanny and her employer; Mimi (38) was one of those who had tried but was struggling to maintain emotional distance:

> They don't ask me to take the baby and sleep with him or anything, no, but I love him so much even when I am off and my door is open and he sees me … because he is used to me … and when he cries for me I say "come," and we spend some time together. I love him, and I worry about him when I am off because I know that his mother is busy, but he is not mine and I have to accept that.

There was always the awareness that these were not their own children. Despite spending time with them and developing their own routine, the mother was always the decision maker and had the power to terminate the nanny's employment at any time, maintaining her role of primary caregiver and nanny as an extension of herself with limited parental authority toward her child.

Similar to Nelson's (1994) findings, nannies in this study knew that their role was to facilitate the mother–child relationship and not replace it by becoming a third parent (Macdonald, 2010). They also tried to avoid interfering with how the children felt about their parents by painting a good picture of them. Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila (1997) found that their participants were often critical of their employers' mothering. While some mothers enjoyed the time spent with the

children, others appeared neglectful. The nanny role was supposed to complement the mother's role, and not to replace her. Winnie (39) explained:

> Even when she left to go overseas, she left me with her children … for about 6 months and I was the one looking after the gang. All was well and I made many decisions, she didn't have any complaints when she got back. Everything was ok. I had to step back when she came back because the real mother was back and needed space to be with them, but I didn't mind.

Childcare demands constant maintenance of a fine balance in the provision of emotional labor. While nannies facilitate the relationship between children and their mothers, they must also ensure that they maintain emotional distance from the children. Nannies continue to perform a valuable and important role in mothering, although their employers need them only as invisible extensions of themselves whose role is the provision of intensive mothering for the children.

CONCLUSION

The dominant discourse essentializes intensive mothering, and associates femininity with mothering where women's sole existence revolves around pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing (Glenn, 1994). However, motherhood is a complex patriarchal ideology (Walker, 1995) where women from all races and social classes respond differently to caregiving demands placed on them. Globally, the western conception of motherhood continues to dominate the ideology of motherhood; however, voices from the margins continuously challenge the dominant constructions of motherhood (Collins, 1994; Lorde, 2007; Sudarkasa, 2004). The gendered division of labor where femininity, reproduction, and motherhood are intertwined and seen as belonging to the private realm, reinforce the subordinate role of women in society (Fraser, 1989).

Women from different race and social class groups further segment mothering and care work (Glenn, 1994). Middle-class women have been able to free themselves from care work through the employment of other working-class women. In South Africa, this is also racialized as Black women enter paid employment through domestic work, often working for White middle-class women (Cock, 1989). The private sphere is merged with the public by nannies bringing employment into the private by "working" in a domestic sphere, or a place considered private secluded arena. Domestic work is unlike any other work (Anderson, 2001), and domestic workers simultaneously resist the conflation of femininity with motherhood by working while, at the same time, accommodating it by doing mother work.

Nannies find themselves in a difficult position, often fraught with inconsistencies where on the one hand they enable others to mother their children intensively, and on the other their employers to parent by proxy. The racialized division of labor among women means that Black working class enable their White middle-class employers to participate in paid employment, and they further facilitate middle-class women's pursuit of other activities outside their home without compromising childcare. These women can afford to buy themselves out of intensive mothering, while, at the same time, conforming to the good mother ideal. Nannies make it possible to maintain the status quo of intensive mothering.

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As mothers themselves, they depend on othermothers in community childcare networks (Collins, 2000) to buffer the impact of separation caused by distance. The intersection of race and social class impacts the nannies' experiences of mothering, and their marginal position seems to render them invisible (Ally, 2009). They are further nullified by becoming invisible extensions of their employers (Macdonald, 2010), whose labor is both physical and emotional.

Their performance of emotional labor is intricately linked to childcare, and in this space a constant recreation and maintenance of detached attachment is an unspoken, yet important feeling rule (Nelson, 1990). They have to find a balance in the provision of emotional labor by providing enough doses not to create the perception of taking over as an independent third parent, and also prevent appearing as uncaring or unloving toward children under their care. The independence and autonomy they so much desire eludes them, as employers establish firm boundaries along which they can mother.

For nannies, who are often mothers themselves, childcare is often carried out by othermothers who may be related or not related to the children under their care. Mother's marital status has significance in the allocation of caregivers. In the context of South Africa, customary practices, such as the payment of inhlawulo or damages, may (dis)qualify caregivers (Nduna, 2014). While nannies may gain social status as mothers, community mothers have carte blanche to make decisions on behalf of the absent mothers and there is respect for their skills and experiences in childrearing. Geographic separation from their children could have marked them as deviant and unfit mothers; however, their reconstruction of space and intimacy (Collins, 2000) defies spatial distance. Community approval of this type of parenting seems to be empowering and supportive of mothers as opposed to punitive and oppressive.

Findings from the study show the paradox of partitioned parenting, where mothers leave their children to care for them (Contreras & Griffith, 2012). The necessity of living away from their children in order to be good parents seems illogical; however, it has become normalized. This shows that the reconceptualization of motherhood and the centering of marginal mothering practices make it possible for both the nannies and their employers to carry out mothering. Both seem inadequate and inconsistent with intensive mothering, yet both seem to be the most practical, considering the resources available to them. The literature on marginal mothers needs further in-depth examination for the re-establishment of space and reconfiguration of mothering as a practice and an ideology. Nannies inhabit the middle position of mothering their own children from a distance, and that of their employers intensively. Their attempts to keep their children close through continuous contact, and attempts to remain detached from the children they care for leaves them in an indeterminate state. They are positioned in-between the two worlds and continue to make sense of these arrangements.

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