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"We Do This Too": Black Mothers' Engagements With Attachment Parenting In Britain And Canada

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Women's Studies and Feminist Research

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Abstract

This thesis examines black mothers' engagements with attachment parenting (AP), an increasingly popular parenting philosophy. AP promotes the development of a secure, close attachment between parent (mother) and child, developed through practices such as breastfeeding, babywearing and bed-sharing. Coined by William and Martha Sears, both medical professionals, in the late 1980s, attachment parenting has garnered increasing attention at this particular socio-economic moment, marked by the entrenchment of neoliberalism, a political rationality that centers the economic and emphasizes self-responsibility, consumption and individualism as defining features of good citizenship. In the context of neoliberal retractions in welfare state spending, AP emerges as a particularly apt parenting philosophy as it identifies childrearing as a solution to social ills. However, AP's emphasis on the importance of childrearing also offers the opportunity to undermine neoliberal values of economic productivity. This thesis explores this tension from the perspective of black mothers. Using a black feminist theoretical framework and drawing data from interviews conducted with nineteen black mothers living in the UK and Canada, I examine the gendered, raced and classed dimensions of AP and the broader ideology of intensive mothering it represents. I identify three themes that capture black mothers' engagements with AP: 1) black mothers' development of maternal expertise as they negotiate state-produced parenting advice that draws from and rejects AP; 2) black mothers' cultivations of belonging and 'good' citizenship in national contexts that frame them as outsiders; and 3) black mothers' claims on maternal responsibility as they navigate the division of parenting labour governed by parental leave policies. In each theme, I find that black mothers deploy expertise, belonging and maternal responsibility in an effort to claim 'good' motherhood. By grounding my analysis in the experiences of black mothers, I offer an intersectional analysis of AP, particularly as it represents 'good' mothering and attend to the philosophy's capacity to reinforce and undermine neoliberal ideology. In their varying interactions with AP, black mothers similarly conform to the norms and standards set by neoliberal rationality *and* upend them, articulating an oppositional or resistive model of good black motherhood that centers black children's value.

Keywords

Black motherhood, attachment parenting, intersectionality, black feminist theory, neoliberalism

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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

“[W]hen it comes to black mothers I think we want our voice to be heard about this, I think for a long time society kinda spoke for us and now that I think we’re getting a little bit more educated in a lot of, just our own...in our own experiences

I think now we’re, now we want people to know that “hey, we do this too,”

(Tracey)

In May 2012, *TIME* magazine published a cover story exploring the growing popularity of a parenting philosophy called attachment parenting (also referred to as AP by enthusiasts and critics alike). Headlined “are you mom enough?” the cover was a photograph of a young, slim, attractive white woman breastfeeding her three-year-old child. In this single image, *TIME* skillfully (and perhaps, unintentionally) captured some of the central tensions at the heart of AP’s rise to attention; first, the cover depicted breastfeeding, a simultaneously revered and reviled practice that embodies the contradictions of mothering discourse. Breastfeeding is encouraged and promoted by national governments and global health organizations but with seemingly little effect, breastfeeding initiation and duration rates remain low¹ and breastfeeding in public continues to attract angst and debate (Boyer, 2011). Second, the headline expressed the increasingly competitive nature of modern childrearing and its particularly gendered effects; mothers are framed as individually responsible for their children’s well-being and are measured by the level of energy, resources and attention they exert to achieve the goal of optimal child development (Hays, 1996). The range of tasks and duties mothers are

¹ According to the last infant feeding survey held in 2010, in Britain, 81% of women initiated breastfeeding but this fell to 34% by six months. Canada fares slightly better, in 2011-2012, 89% of women were recorded as initiating breastfeeding, 53.9% of whom were still breastfeeding at six months. The definition of ‘low’ is, of course, influenced by neoliberal health and cost-cutting targets.

responsible for is increasingly specific and onerous, especially in the early years of a child's life (Edwards & Gillies, 2011). Finally, the cover reveals the racial politics of contemporary mothering discourse and attachment parenting, in particular. Since the industrialization-era identification of 'parenting' as an essential and socially significant obligation that requires expert intervention (Hays, 1996; Lee, 2014b), race (as well as gender, class, ability, sexual orientation, citizenship, age and other social locations) has functioned to distinguish between those capable of 'good' motherhood and those who are not (Litt, 2000). AP's rise in popularity reflects this racialization of good motherhood; the philosophy draws inspiration from the parenting practices of so-called 'primitive' cultures for the purposes of delineating and affirming white, middle-class motherhood (Blum, 1999; Shome, 2011).

As AP journeys from 'extreme' practice of privileged white hippies to an increasingly accepted and influential dogma in the policies of the state and medical professionals (Faircloth, 2013; Freeman, 2016; Hamilton, 2016), its equation with good mothering demands greater critical scrutiny. By measuring women by the extent to which they dedicate themselves to this kind of mothering, AP philosophy and the ideologies it upholds, disciplines mothers, bolstering the status of white, middle-class mothers while constructing black, poor and other marginalized women as the sources of failed citizens. In this study, I disrupt this construction of good mothering and attachment parenting by interviewing black mothers who "do this too." By examining black mothers' engagements with attachment parenting, I advance a critical examination of AP, particularly as it emerges as a uniquely beneficial, state-endorsed style of parenting, and attend to its raced, classed and gendered dimensions. Attention to these aspects is a much-needed intervention in neoliberal contexts that disavow race, social class, and gender as informing contemporary experiences and institutions of oppression.

AP is well-suited to these contexts; it emphasizes individual child-rearing decisions as a solution to the "social and emotional diseases that plague our society" (Sears & Sears 2001, p. ix) and mobilizes the parenting practices of 'traditional' cultures as a measure of

white, middle-class motherhood, depriving ‘traditional’ women of expert status and disciplining all mothers. However, that does not preclude the possibility or space for alternative or unexpected interpretations of attachment parenting. As this thesis will detail, black mothers engage with AP in a myriad of ways, both embracing its reverence for ‘nature’ and rejecting its tendency towards the ‘extreme.’ Through an analysis of the mothering experiences of nineteen black women living in the UK and Canada and AP’s appearance in the state-produced parenting advice and policies of these countries, I unpick the complexity at the center of societal definitions of good motherhood, examining how mothers’ understandings of how to be ‘good’ are shaped not only by dominant ideas that emphasize individual responsibility and intense dedication of physical, emotional, social and financial resources, but also by broader structural concerns such as racism, particularly its current neoliberal articulation. Who a good mother is and how she manages to maintain that status is a far more complicated picture than previous scholarship on motherhood, which has largely focused on white, middle-class experiences, has revealed. In her assertion that black mothers “do this too,” Tracey points to this lack of complexity, particularly as it reflects the absence of black mothers’ experience. Tracey’s quote captures and rejects the dominant construction of attachment parenting and, by implication, good mothering, as the preserve of white, middle-class women. She also signals black women’s agency; in their claim on AP, the women in this study illuminate a vision of mothering that negotiates the individualizing, responsabilizing impulses of neoliberal ideology while centering their children’s survival. My focus on their narratives facilitates a critical and complex view of mothering as both inherently informed by oppressive structures such as racism and sexism, as well as shaped by women’s creative resistance to these oppressions. My examination of both these facets of contemporary mothering is guided by three central research questions: how do black women engage with the philosophy of attachment parenting? How do they craft different views of AP that allow them to see themselves as subjects? And how does the state contribute to or impede this process? In other words, how do black mothers “do this too”?

1.1 Thesis organization

The findings of this research are arranged into three thematic chapters that anchor my analysis of black women's engagement with attachment parenting and capture the strategies that the women employ to claim good motherhood in a neoliberal context. First, the politics of expertise as it appears in state advice and is deployed in mothers' narratives; second, mothers' cultivation of new, resistive visions of belonging and claims on 'good' citizenship; and third, women's negotiation of the division of parenting labour through parental leave legislation to claim maternal responsibility and good motherhood. I begin the thesis by contextualizing these themes in the literature review in Chapter 2, first, by linking AP's current popularity with that of its ideological predecessor, scientific motherhood. Scientific motherhood harnessed the emerging and enduring currency of science to settle racial and gender anxieties spurred by urbanization, industrialization and immigration in the early twentieth century (Litt, 2000). The scientific expertise produced in this era reduced women's autonomy but increased their responsibility (Apple, 1995), a particularly dangerous prospect for racialized and working-class mothers. Second, I examine the articulation of these ideas in the present, expressed in the ideology of intensive mothering. Intensive mothering requires mothers to claim individual and primary responsibility for their children, invest in time-consuming, financially-expensive forms of childrearing and rely on experts to guide their parenting (Hays, 1996). My analysis of AP frames it as a uniquely nature-focused expression of intensive mothering and it is in this emphasis on nature that the philosophy's race and class politics are revealed. Of the few studies of AP (Faircloth, 2013; Green & Groves, 2008), even fewer attend to these politics, documenting white, middle-class mothers' experiences with little examination of the broader significance of these raced and classed realities. Chapter 2 also includes a discussion of how I take up neoliberalism in this thesis, resisting its all-explanatory value and particularly focusing on its 'postracial,' individualizing features. Neoliberal rationality produces an absent presence of race (Lentin & Titley, 2011) in which *racism* is imagined as a long-overcome evil while *race* continues to inform idealized constructions of good citizenship. In such a context, black women's mothering

is both erased and hyper-visible, representing either the subordination of the black family to the demands of paid work outside the home (Glenn, 1992) or the construction of black women as burdens on the state and uniquely responsible for the ‘failures’ of the black community (Collins, 2000). Finally, I conclude the literature review with a discussion of the representation of black motherhood in the West. That is, I argue that the examination of black mothers’ contemporary experiences must be situated in the specifically raced and gendered histories of Western nations. Drawing examples from the United States, Britain and Canada, I trace the construction of black motherhood from slavery to its current articulation and lay the foundation for an analysis of black mothers’ engagement with attachment parenting, highlighting the salient themes of expertise, belonging and maternal responsibility in black women’s experiences that anchor the findings of this thesis.

In chapter 3, I discuss my theoretical and methodological approach. I describe my use of black feminist theory, deploying its central principles to frame my analysis of black women’s engagement with AP, exploring how the philosophy might reflect a “distinct cultural heritage” or enable empowering “self-definitions” (Taylor, 1998, pp. 234-5). Informed by these theoretical principles, I describe my adoption of an intersectional feminist methodological approach that centers women’s experiences and attends to the intersectional nature of the oppressions that shape said experiences. Fundamentally, such a methodology addresses power as it is expressed in the development of the research question, in the recruitment process, in the relationship between researcher and researched, in the process of analysis and writing up and more broadly, in the politics of knowledge construction and ownership. I outline these and other aspects of the research process and attend to how race, class and gender (among others) inform these negotiations of power and appear and interact in unexpected ways.

Chapters 4 to 6 are focused on the three findings named above and capture the three different ways the mothers in this study attempted to claim good motherhood. In chapter 4, I examine the politics of expertise. Drawing from three sources including the state, the

Sears' attachment parenting bible and mothers' own words, I examine constructions of appropriate parental expertise as they appear in the state's and mothers' identification of certain parenting techniques as appropriate methods of childrearing. I attend to the appearance of intensive mothering in this expertise and using the mothers' narratives, advance an intersectional analysis of the dominance of certain ideals of parenting that frames the mothers' attempts to assert maternal expertise. Chapter 5 captures the women's negotiation of belonging, especially in British and Canadian contexts that frame black people as outsiders to the nation (Gilroy, 1987; McKittrick, 2006). I discuss how the women's articulation of belonging and citizenship is expressed in their mothering, suggesting the development of a transnational subjectivity that facilitates the claiming of good mother status. In chapter 6, I examine women's accounts of the division of parenting labour in their households, particularly as they emphasize maternal responsibility to claim good motherhood. I also present an analysis of parental leave legislation in the two countries and highlight the raced, classed and gendered facets of parental responsibility, examining the women's claims on maternal responsibility and parental leave and their struggles to achieve 'work-life balance.' In each findings chapter, I argue that the women's cultivations of expertise, belonging and maternal responsibility both conform and resist and, in the tradition of black feminist theory, "confront and dismantle" exclusionary models of good motherhood (Taylor, 1998, pp. 234-235).

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with a discussion of the broader theoretical significance of my findings and the contribution this research makes to the discipline. I discuss the potential resistance the women's engagement with AP can offer, identifying the new "lifelines" (Collins, 2000) AP practice suggests and illustrating the potential futures of black motherhood.

Chapter 2

2 Literature Review

Interest in child-rearing practices has a rich and complex history. From the emergence of scientific motherhood to the current dominance of intensive mothering, maternal behaviour has long been the subject of state, public and academic scrutiny. Though the definitions and expectations of motherhood change with the times and advancements characteristic of a particular era (Roberts, 1993), one consistency has been the construction of mothers as responsible for preparing children as future citizens, ensuring that they grow up to be responsible, contributing members of society. This construction is particularly salient as transformations in the way we view childhood shift the way we understand child-rearing (Faircloth, 2014a). Parenting is now a task, “a form of learned interaction” that determines children’s success or failure (Lee, 2014a, p. 8). At this particular socio-historical moment, the task of raising future citizens is invested with increasing significance. Neoliberalism, which centers the market as the organizing principle of all aspects of life (Giroux, 2008), requires the retreat of welfare state services and redefines the contours of citizenship so that they rest on consumption, self-discipline and self-responsibility (Power, 2005), intensifies the duties of parenting. In this chapter, I discuss this context in greater detail, examining how and why attachment parenting has come to emerge at this particular moment and describing the sociological significance of attending to the rise of AP from the perspective of black mothers.

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first, I discuss the historical backdrop that has enabled the emergence of attachment parenting, defining scientific motherhood and the context in which it emerged. I also discuss the ideological debt AP owes to this early ideology² of mothering, particularly tracing a connection between the race, class

² By ‘ideology’ I mean a system of beliefs and ideals produced through a particular set of social relations and, following Marx, serving political purposes. As I discuss later, this

and gender dimensions of scientific motherhood and those same aspects in its ideological descendant. Second, I provide a definition of attachment parenting and its link to the contemporary dominant ideology of intensive mothering. I argue that in the few studies that examine parents' experiences of attachment parenting, race and social class are absent and that this absence obscures the raced and classed features of AP. The importance of acknowledging how race and social class inform parenting is made apparent in the third section in which I say more about the contemporary context that has enabled the emergence and popularity of attachment parenting. I define neoliberalism and identify the specific features of our current context that concern this thesis. Finally, I narrow my focus to the historical and contemporary experiences of black mothers. The construction of women as responsible for the work of childrearing has always been racialized, with some groups understood as more capable of 'good' motherhood than others (Litt, 2000). In this section I examine this racialization of childrearing, particularly focusing on how black motherhood has been disciplined historically. These historical realities contextualize my analysis of how black mothers negotiate AP, the most recent iteration of disciplinary practices that frame motherhood as requiring expert instruction.

2.1 Tracing the historical trajectory from scientific motherhood to attachment parenting

Scientific motherhood can be defined as "the idea that mothering should be guided by scientific supervision and principles" (Litt, 2000, p. 21). Though the ideology first emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the notion that science is best-suited to inform parenting has continued to define what we call 'good' motherhood, evident for example, in the current reliance upon neuroscience to shape parenting advice

does not suggest that ideologies are merely imposed with force or that people subject to them are "dupes or falsely conscious" (Faircloth, 2013, p. 25). Like Faircloth (2013), my use of the term 'ideology' is intended to draw attention to the constructed nature of these ideas.

(Lowe, Lee & Macvarish, 2015). The emergence of scientific motherhood coincided with the arrival of “scientism” (Wilkie, 2003, p. 177) in European and North American societies, during which major scientific innovations such as the discovery of germ theory completely transformed the way everyday people, particularly mothers, lived their lives. This discovery, and scientism in general, enabled the emergence of preventative medicine and thus began the first indication of medical interest in the behaviour and habits of mothers.

Physicians’ newfound interest in mothering behaviour reflected a larger cultural phenomenon that emerged alongside and as a result of scientism; medicalization. Medicalization is “the process through which medical interpretations have acquired cultural legitimacy” (Litt, 2000, p. 4) to the exclusion of other explanations. This process is most clearly evident in the shifts in the customs of childbirth over the last three hundred years (Stone, 2009). Medical involvement in childbirth transformed the process from a woman-centered activity that took place in the home to a thoroughly medical exercise located in a hospital and attended by a (male) physician. Medical interest in motherhood was not limited to the location and functions of childbirth; in keeping with the principles of the newly discovered notion of preventative medicine, physicians were also interested in the behaviour of mothers after they had left the labour ward. Thus, scientific motherhood was born.

Though scientific motherhood may have first appeared as a legitimate route through which women might access science (Apple, 2006; Wilkie, 2003), in practice it became a way for physicians to promote their expertise as superior to that of mothers, as well as extant birth attendants (Carter, 1995). Scientific motherhood required a ‘good’ mother who listened dutifully to the instruction provided by physicians and required no explanations. It was in this guise that the gendered, raced and classed values that scientific motherhood espoused became clear, as I will briefly describe, using examples from each of the study sites in this thesis: the marginalization of midwifery in Canada and the promotion of bottle-feeding in the UK.

2.1.1 The marginalization of midwifery in Canada

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, childbirth was a crucial site at which the superiority of science and medicine could be asserted. Given the high rates of infant and maternal mortality (for example, in Canada, between 1921 and 1925 the infant mortality rate was 99 per every 1000 live births), this line of reasoning was effective, despite the fact that these mortality rates were largely the consequence of poverty and urbanization. These rates were particularly alarming for Canada and other Western nations as they experienced the upheaval of world wars, immigration and industrialization. Physicians positioned themselves as a solution to these problems and, supported by newly established public health bodies (Arnup, 1990), endorsed an effective campaign to delegitimize the people responsible for overseeing childbirth in the home at the time: midwives.

The marginalization of midwives in Canada was definitively shaped by racism, sexism and classism and echoed similar attempts to displace midwifery in the United States and Europe in this same period. Male physicians were able to use the strength of their newly established professional organizations and the prevailing sexist ideology of the time to not only speak out against women's co-education, including their entry into medicine (Burke, 2007) but to condemn the practice of midwifery overall. Relying upon the credibility garnered from societal appreciation of the wonders of science, physicians asserted themselves as the superior alternative to midwives. The circulation of myths about midwives as "unsanitary, superstitious and dangerous" (Wilkie, 2003, p. 197) bolstered this process, alongside the association between midwifery and immigrant women (Plumming, 2000). Indeed, the racialization of midwives' inferiority (Nestel, 2006) was a particularly effective strategy to dismiss midwives' experience and expertise, especially in the larger historical context of majority-white nations worried about the diluting effects of immigration.

Midwifery's "alegal" status (Plumming, 2000, p. 169) also contributed to its decline. Lacking legal recognition, midwives were denied the use of life-saving innovations such

as forceps. Their legal status also had financial effects; as a result, in some provinces midwifery care could not be paid for using provincial health insurance. Physicians had a vested economic interest in laying claim to childbirth care and its ability to secure patients ‘for life’ (Baillargeon, 2009). The displacement of midwives had particular raced and classed effects on marginalized populations. The advice to seek out the care of a physician rather than a midwife was part of a broader medicalization of motherhood in which working-class and immigrant women’s motherhood was redrawn “in terms of white, middle-class values and attitudes” (Baillargeon, 2009, p. 5). For Indigenous communities, the derogation of midwifery was yet another apparatus of colonization (Jasen, 1997). The shift to physician-attended births disrupted cultural practices around pregnancy and childbirth and affected the transmission of cultural traditions associated with midwifery (Jasen, 1997). For immigrant and racialized communities, the realities of poverty and the limited number of physicians meant that many women were unable to pursue the scientific advancements offered by a physician-led birth but were forced to use the services of midwives in increasingly precarious positions, thanks to changes in legislation governing midwifery.

In almost every avenue midwifery was re-imagined as a dangerous pseudo-profession that ought to be done away with for the good of individual women and babies as well as for the good of the nation. The raced and classed elements of this reconstruction are clear and reflect the popularity of eugenics as an explanatory tool. Though it is currently undergoing a resurgence in Canada (Nestel, 2006), the legacy of the dismissal of midwifery as a legitimate, woman-centered profession continues to inform how childbirth is framed today.

2.1.2 The promotion of bottle-feeding in the UK

In Britain, the ways in which scientific motherhood was taken up was shaped by the state’s long-standing interest in policing women’s behaviour, particularly that of working-class and poor women. The notion that scientific, expert intervention was necessary to alter maternal behaviour expressed itself in the emergence of the “semi-

professions” of health visiting and midwifery (Carter, 1995, p. 49). Through the establishment of these professions and the institution of policies such as the building of milk depots, free milk programs and infant welfare centers, the state enacted its concern with and intervention in infant feeding. Scientific motherhood in Britain, particularly its social class elements, can best be understood by examining the contradictory advice offered to women about how best to feed their babies. Though breastfeeding was identified as the key to solving high infant mortality rates and, more generally, the attainment of good motherhood, state authorities relied upon the provision of artificial milk to maintain their interest in the control and surveillance of women’s behaviour (Carter, 1995). This is best demonstrated in the establishment of milk depots in which sterilized milk was made available to mothers in exchange for consenting to having their babies weighed and monitored, sometimes in their own homes. These depots underlined the importance of expert intervention both in the form of provision of scientifically sterilized milk and in the guidance (and surveillance) provided by “lady visitors” (Carter, 1995, p. 45) to ensure that infants were being fed hygienically.

The wider context of the increased medicalization of childbirth also contributed to the discrepancy between claiming the superiority of breastfeeding but tacitly encouraging the use of artificial milk. The transfer of birth from the home to the hospital, which involved the practice of keeping newly born infants in a separate nursery, away from their mothers, significantly undermined any attempt to establish and maintain a viable breastfeeding relationship (Nathoo & Ostry, 2009). The ideology that required mothers to cede authority to medical experts meant that, while mothers were in the hospital, it was often nurses who were responsible for childrearing in the first days of an infant’s life and, in these circumstances, bottle-feeding was the most convenient method (Carter, 1995; Faircloth, 2013).

During this period, much of the scientifically motivated state intervention in child-rearing was entangled with an attempt to discourage women from working outside the home (Hardyment, 1983; Carter, 1995). Encouraging breastfeeding was one way to combine

these two goals, emphasizing each child's need to be fed and nurtured by its mother. However, an entrenched class hierarchy that stressed working-class women's inferiority and ignorance combined with a strong belief in the power of science meant that the state preferred to rely on "'scientific' solutions" (Carter, 1995, p. 47) to maximize infants' well-being. Even the minority of women who continued breastfeeding could not escape these scientific solutions. For example, the advice to feed to a schedule shaped breastfeeding mothers' experiences and, because routine feeding is so unsuited to breastfeeding, often resulted in women switching to the bottle (Hardyment, 1983). Whether choosing to breast or bottle-feed their children, women found that their experience of motherhood was constrained by the expectation that mothering "required expert advice and intervention to be successful" (Faircloth, 2013, p. 40).

2.1.3 A fair exchange?

This is not to suggest that the rise of scientific motherhood was experienced as wholly oppressive by all women. In both the examples I describe above it is important to recognize that scientific motherhood was not merely an ideology forcibly imposed on women (Apple, 2006; Carter, 1995; Litt, 2000). For some working-class women, the demand for hospitalization during birth or the preference for bottle over breastfeeding allowed them access to pain relief or the opportunity to have a break from the burden of housework and work outside the home (Carter, 1995; Faircloth, 2013). Middle-class women could be similarly enthusiastic about the ideology of scientific motherhood, especially the professional status it granted motherhood. Some middle-class women actively encouraged the medicalization of childbirth as it offered reprieve from the pain associated with birth (Baker, 2010; Phipps, 2014) and were complicit in the displacement of midwives. However, overall, women exchanged access to scientific expertise for surveillance and intensified attempts to control their behaviour (Arnup, 1990). Scientific motherhood also rested on and reinforced a construction of mothers as responsible for their children's and therefore larger society's failures, ranging from high infant mortality rates to the poor quality of soldiers who signed up to fight in the first World War (Apple,

2006). This construction is maintained today, expressed in the language of neoliberal individualism and self-responsibility.

Though I have written about the marginalization of midwifery and the promotion of breastfeeding in country-specific settings I do not wish to suggest that these consequences of scientific motherhood were limited to Canada and the UK, respectively. While it is true that midwifery in the UK was able to survive the increased medicalization of birth that marks the turn of the twentieth century, the ideologies that lauded physicians' superiority over that of midwives are still recognizable in Britain (Carter, 1995). Similarly, Canadian policy about infant feeding named breastfeeding as the best option but nonetheless promoted practices that undermined it. In particular, the growth of paediatrics resulted in a fascination with developing artificial alternatives to breastmilk, grounded in financial incentives involving mutually beneficial relationships between doctors and infant milk manufacturers as well as physicians' suspicion of the quality of breastmilk (Nathoo & Ostry, 2009).

These examples mark a long trajectory of medical attempts to undermine mothers' power and autonomy and these attempts have affected the way breastfeeding and childbirth are understood today. For example, the movement that helped bring about the re-emergence of midwifery in Canada in the early 1990s could not escape the tacit racism that led to the marginalization of midwifery in the first place. The project of rehabilitating the image of the midwife in Canadian society required emphasis on the contemporary midwife as "respectable...knowledgeable, modern, educated, and Canadian/white" (Nestel, 2006, p. 7), resulting in the exclusion of immigrant and racialized midwives, especially those educated in the Global South. The promotion of midwifery and related practices of home and natural birth in North America remains dominated by white, middle-class women and has become implicated in the language of not only scientific expertise but also neoliberal notions of consumer citizenship (Craven, 2007).

With regards to breastfeeding, the 1956 founding of La Leche League, one of the most influential pro-breastfeeding organizations operating today, was spurred by seven

American mothers' determination to disrupt the image of mothering that scientific motherhood promoted. The League sought to redefine good mothering by linking it to breastfeeding and other mothering practices framed by what they called "naturalism" (Weiner, 1997, p. 363). This turn echoes our contemporary exaltation of nature in the face of growing anxieties about the "uncertain effects of technological progress" (Wolf, 2011, p. 17; Faircloth, 2013). Regardless of these uncertainties we continue to rely upon science to govern ourselves and our societies (Faircloth, 2013), transforming our preference for the 'natural' into an evidence-based decision. The elevation of breastfeeding as the most 'natural' infant feeding option is directly connected to its scientifically confirmed benefits. The promotion of 'natural' birth is justified through reference to the improved outcomes for babies and mothers. The science and expertise of scientific motherhood is draped in the language of 'nature' and reborn in parenting philosophies like attachment parenting.

The intersection of nature and science in the promotion of certain ideals of mothering has clear racial dimensions. Scientific motherhood rested on the belief that women were 'naturally' suited to mothering but nonetheless required expert guidance to get it 'right.' Those understood as especially close to nature, particularly black women and working-class women, did not benefit from this construction (Carter, 1995) and often found that their 'natural' capacity for motherhood was used as a pretext to deny them adequate healthcare (Bridges, 2011; Phoenix, 1990) and state support. These women were also subject to more stringent forms of surveillance and policing or, as in the case of some African-American mothers, understood as incapable of reaching the standard required of scientific mothers and simply ignored altogether (Litt, 2000). Scientific motherhood embodied the norms of white, middle-class motherhood and while it sought to disperse those values among all mothers, there were limited opportunities to meet its prescripts for marginalized women. These realities are much the same in our contemporary era of intensive mothering, an ideology that retains scientific motherhood's expert guidance and emphasizes women's responsibility to respond to their children's needs ahead of their

own. Attachment parenting emerges as a representation of this ideology with an added focus on nature and its corresponding racial undertones.

2.1.4 Summary

Using examples from the UK and Canada, I have demonstrated how changes in where and how women give birth and the advice offered to women about how best to feed their infants have been informed by the emergence of scientific motherhood, an ideology that subordinated women's expertise to that of scientific and medical authorities. These shifts are crucially inflected with beliefs about race and social class as illustrated by the marginalization of immigrant and racialized midwives in Canada and the encouragement of artificial feeding among working-class women in the UK. Attention to these particular manifestations of scientific motherhood ideology enable a link to be drawn between that era of mothering and the contemporary period, particularly as constructed notions of 'science' and 'nature' inform mothering today. In the next section I discuss attachment parenting, noting its relationship to attachment theory, describing the limited research on AP and explaining its appearance as an example of intensive mothering.

2.2 Attachment parenting

2.2.1 What is attachment parenting?

Most commonly associated with paediatrician-nurse couple William and Martha Sears, attachment parenting is a "child-centric parenting technique in which children's needs are ideally met on the child's schedule rather than that of the parent" (Liss & Erchull, 2012, p. 132). The central tenet of attachment parenting is the promotion of "secure attachment" (Dear-Healey, 2011, p. 383) between mother and child, facilitated by activities such as 'natural' birth, extended breastfeeding, babywearing and bed-sharing. Though its popularity is growing (as increasing news reports, features and social media groups demonstrate), the philosophy is often met with derision and characterized as 'extreme.' Its appearance in the mainstream reflects a broader discourse of expertise, which AP happily exploits, purporting to return expertise to where it 'rightfully' belongs;

the parent. As the Sears (2001) explain, “the first step in learning how to guide your child is to become an expert in your child” (p. ix). However, this process is supported by accessing the expertise offered by the Sears themselves in any one of their over thirty parenting books (Faircloth, 2014b).

The Sears claim that their expertise is drawn from the parenting practices of “traditional societies” (Green & Groves, 2008, p. 523). The claim is that parents in the West have become distanced from the “instinctual” (Sears & Sears, 2001, p. ix) behaviours of their ancestors and need to look to the biologically beneficial activities of ‘primitive’ societies for inspiration. This focus on the ‘naturally superior’ parenting capabilities of racialized women in the Global South puts their counterparts in the Global North in a precarious position; the culture of their ‘homeland’ should predispose them to AP philosophy and therefore locate them as ‘good’ mothers. However, the historical and ongoing pathologization of mothers of colour, particularly black mothers (Collins, 2000; Roberts, 1997a), in the Global North forecloses the possibility of black women being read as good mothers and overlooks the particularities and complexities of mothering practices.

2.2.2 A word on attachment theory

From its name alone, it is clear that attachment parenting draws and builds upon the foundation laid by attachment theory, a psychological and child development theory developed in the 1950s. Attachment theory posits that every child needs and should have “committed caregiving” from one or a few adults (Bretherton 1992, p. 770). Most commonly associated with John Bowlby, who coined the term, and Mary Ainsworth, who provided methodological insights and conducted one of the most well-known attachment studies, attachment theory argues that the relationship formed between parent and child in the early years of life is crucial for healthy mental development (Bretherton, 1992). Though there is much talk of ‘primary caregivers’ in more recent work on attachment theory, Bowlby prioritized the *mother*-child relationship, reflecting dominant cultural prescriptions that deem women the natural caregiver of children and develop models of good mothering based on middle-class norms (Contratto, 2002; Símonardóttir, 2016).

Extending this focus on the ‘natural,’ attachment theory draws on Ainsworth’s work in Uganda in which she first began to lay the foundations for her famous ‘strange situation’ methodology (Bretherton, 1992). The ‘strange situation’ enables the measure of children’s attachment to their mothers as either ambivalent, avoidant or secure and involves subjecting twelve- to eighteen-month old babies to a twenty-minute experiment in which they are separated from their mothers and introduced to a stranger over a series of eight stages. A baby’s response when the mother returns to the room in the final stage determines their level of attachment. Despite questions about cross-cultural applicability, the ‘strange situation’ remains one of the key measures of infant attachment today (Cox, 2006) just as a belief in the importance of mother-child attachment continues to inform modern parenting advice.

The same “infant determinism” (Contratto, 2002, p. 131) that underlies attachment theory operates in attachment parenting, evident for example, in the Sears’ claim that adopting AP will cause children to “turn out better” (2001, p. x). Further, the Sears similarly and problematically draw on the parenting practices of ‘traditional societies’ as proof of the superiority of attachment parenting. The distinction between attachment theory and attachment parenting lies in the latter’s emphasis on certain techniques that are said to aid the development of secure attachment (a phrase clearly lifted from Ainsworth’s measure of attachment). The explicit link between extended breastfeeding, bed-sharing and babywearing and the building of a securely attached relationship between mother and child is drawn by the Sears, rather than Bowlby, Ainsworth or other attachment theorists (Cox, 2006; Faircloth, 2013) and it is increasingly this vision of attachment, one focused on specific parenting behaviours, that dominates popular culture.

Continued reference to Bowlby and Ainsworth, who are both very well-known developmental psychologists, serves to offer credibility to the Sears’ project and is reflected in their decision to change the name of their parenting approach from ‘immersion mothering’ to ‘attachment parenting.’ As Martha Sears explains: “I realized we needed to change the term to something more positive, so we came up with AP, since

the Attachment Theory literature was so well researched and documented” (n.d.). Invoking attachment theory lends attachment parenting an immediate legitimacy and trustworthiness and helps boost the Sears’ claim that attachment parenting is supported by science, regardless of the numerous critiques of attachment theory itself (Eyer, 1992). While I acknowledge the theoretical debt AP owes to attachment theory (Símonardóttir, 2016), particularly noting how this theoretical foundation bolsters AP’s gendered approach to ‘good’ parenting and contributes to the assertion of the Sears’ expertise, I draw a distinction between the two, asserting attachment parenting as a unique parenting style that emphasizes techniques rather than a psychological theory of development. For the remainder of this thesis, I focus on attachment parenting, not attachment theory.

2.2.3 Attachment parenting research

At present, there is a limited number of studies of attachment parenting and its creeping appearance in state policy. The few studies that exist report that the majority of AP adherents are white, middle-class women but offer limited explanation for these raced and classed realities (Berry, 2010; Faircloth, 2013; Green & Groves, 2008; Liss & Erchull, 2012). This thesis is one attempt to address these dimensions, centering black women’s perspectives in an attempt to highlight the raced and classed aspects of attachment parenting’s popularity and its growing appearance in state-produced parenting advice, as I examine in chapter four. The way that past studies frame attachment parenting offers insight into how the philosophy’s entanglement with race and social class remain hidden.

One such example is Katherine Green and Melissa Groves’ (2008) study of 275 self-identified attachment parenting mothers, mostly living in the United States. While I identify attachment parenting as a specific articulation of the dominance of intensive mothering ideology, Green and Groves offer a different view; they see the practice of attachment parenting as defying the Western “cultural script” (2008, p. 523). They argue that North American cultural norms such as individualism have led to the promotion of parenting practices that facilitate separation between mother and child. In Green and

Groves' account of attachment parenting, the philosophy rejects these individualizing practices in favour of activities such as bed-sharing and extended breastfeeding.

The purpose of Green and Groves' study is "to more fully describe the practice of attachment parents from the viewpoint of the mother" (2008, p. 516). The authors identify their participants as mostly white but do not comment on how that may or may not shape the practice of AP. Although they recognize that breastfeeding on demand (a practice attachment parenting encourages) is difficult given the number of women in paid work, Green and Groves provide no critical commentary on how race and social class are implicated in the practice and popularity of attachment parenting. Instead, they argue that Western women's decision to practice AP is distinguishable from their non-Western counterparts, who are merely adhering to their culture's norms. This fetishization of choice elevates white women's mothering while rendering the 'natural' parenting practices of non-Western women as less worthy of analysis. In the focus on black women's engagement with attachment parenting I invert this examination, centering black mothers in the West and attending to the narratives and expertise they draw from non-Western locations. In this thesis, I illustrate how calling attention to black women's "distinct cultural heritage" (Taylor, 1998, p. 235) forces a more nuanced view of the practice of attachment parenting as the black mothers interviewed in this project describe juggling competing notions of expertise (whose expertise is elevated?), belonging (how does 'home' inform parenting?) and gendered expectations about parenting (who can or should stay home?).

2.2.4 Intensive mothering

The answers to these questions are informed by a broader ideology of intensive mothering of which attachment parenting is just one poignant example. Intensive mothering, a term coined by sociologist Sharon Hays in the mid-1990s, defines good parenting as the ability to invest significant levels of physical, emotional and financial resources into child-rearing (Hays, 1996). As Hays (1996) argues, intensive mothering calls for "professional-level skills" (p. 4) and access to "all possible information on the

latest child-rearing techniques” (p. 6). In other words, like scientific motherhood, contemporary mothering ideology calls on mothers to seek expert advice about an endlessly long list of specific behaviours but also requires that women retain this information in order to exercise the ‘right’ parenting choices.

Expanding the model laid out by scientific motherhood, intensive mothering emphasizes mothers’ responsibilities to not only ensure their children’s ‘normal’ development but to maximize it. Mothers’ success in this endeavour can be measured against the standards of ‘normal’ child development, standards which were only possible to establish because of the routinization of childbirth and infancy care characteristic of scientific motherhood (Faircloth, 2013). As I suggested in the section on scientific motherhood above, medical professionals were granted unprecedented access to large numbers of infants both at the time of birth and through repeated visits either to mothers’ homes (in the UK) or well-baby clinics (in Canada). Through these interactions, they established standards of ‘proper’ child development and afforded great significance to parents’ abilities to meet these standards. In the contemporary context, these standards are translated into norms of good mothering that require the transformation of “the everyday experience of mothering [into a] ... set of skills to be honed and perfected” (Faircloth, 2013, p. 22).

2.2.5 Resistance to intensive mothering prescripts

Both the content of these skills and the capacity to acquire them is structured by race, class, dis/ability, sexuality and other socially produced categories. The norms that determine intensive mothering are white and middle-class in origin (Hays, 1996) and thus implicitly exclude and exploit marginalized women (Bloch & Taylor, 2014) while continuing to judge their mothering by its standards (Ennis, 2014). However, marginalized women do not merely submit to this judgement. Black mothers, for example, have, in some cases, organized their parenting outside these boundaries, rejecting the individualism of intensive mothering in favour of a collective approach in which mothering is shared by extended family members and the community (Collins, 2000; Forna, 2000).

Black women's enactment of alternative parenting strategies is a site of resistance to the ideological pressures of intensive mothering as well as the practices of exclusion and exploitation through which intensive mothering is accomplished (Elliott, Powell & Brenton, 2013). In the face of racially informed welfare cuts (Fisher, 2006; Roberts, 1993), black women's mothering has constructed itself around principles unique to their particular social locations, centering themes of "sacrifice, self-reliance, and protection" (Elliott et al., 2013, p. 356) as they attempt to protect and uplift their children in the face of the intersecting pressures of sexism, racism, poverty and violence.

However, community mothering (Collins, 2000) is not an infallible form of protection from these concerns. Some scholars have argued that such an approach places excessive pressure on black women (Hill, 2004) and, given growing class polarization, is more likely an ideal than a reality (McDonald, 1997). As this thesis demonstrates, an examination of black mothers' engagement with attachment parenting offers a more complex view of how they negotiate and resist the broader neoliberal ideology of intensive mothering. For some black mothers, community mothering can be an important tool in this effort to negotiate and resist the restrictions of intensive mothering. However, mothers are limited by, for example, the absence of a geographically close community. If the community from which the mothers draw is located at a great distance, the help the community can offer is limited to emotional support. Other mothers rely on paid employees rather than their extended families. Can these mothers be said to be practicing community mothering? Is the combination of attachment parenting and community mothering even possible? Can submission to intensive mothering be a source of resistance, particularly for those mothers excluded by definition from its confines? I take up these questions throughout this thesis.

Evidently, expressions of resistance are shaped by specific, local contexts and different experiences of intersecting racism, sexism and income inequity. While there have been studies of the resistance strategies enacted by differently located, marginalized women (Blum, 1999; Elliott et al., 2013; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012), these studies have not

specifically addressed attachment parenting and its focus on the early years of motherhood. Although their conclusions are useful for drawing attention to the ways in which social location and socio-political context shapes women's experiences of and resistance to intensive mothering, there remains an absence of a situated, black feminist analysis of black women's engagement with attachment parenting. This thesis is an attempt to offer such an analysis.

2.2.6 The cultural contradictions of IM

One of the most crucial features of intensive mothering is its articulation of the contradiction between the rising numbers of women entering the workforce and the "increasing emphasis on the importance of labour-intensive, emotionally absorbing mothering" (Faircloth, 2013, p. 24; Hays, 1996). This contradiction is arguably the result of competing visions of efficient, self-disciplining workers and a resolute belief in children's need for dedicated and committed parenting in order to achieve their full potential (and themselves become efficient, self-disciplining workers). As I suggest above and discuss in more detail in chapter six, women respond to this contradiction in a variety of ways, including, for example, full-time commitment to mothering at the expense of paid work or attempting to maintain a balance between both.

Studies of how women balance the demands of intensive mothering with those of the paid workforce are numerous (see Christopher, 2015; Fox, 2009; Johnston & Swanson, 2006 for select examples) and many reach similar conclusions as those drawn by Hays (1996) in the study from which she developed the term 'intensive mothering.' That is to say, this ideology is incompatible with the self-interested rational capitalist logic of the workplace. However, as Bonnie Fox's (2009) study of forty first-time parents shows, the achievement of intensive mothering is often only made possible by a couple's economic productivity, especially the mother's, and other material and social resources such as family support, and mothers' self-confidence and sense of individual achievement associated with working outside the home. Fox's analysis demonstrates the contradictions of intensive mothering Hays identifies; Fox finds that access to resources, specifically

freedom from “economic pressures and financial worries that would cause [women] stress and divert their attention from mothering” (2009, p. 126), determines the likelihood that women will embrace intensive mothering. Fox also linked successful intensive mothering to a supportive partner, linking this support to the men’s ability to contribute financial resources. Those women who managed to mother intensively did so thanks to the physical and emotional support of their partners and an extended support network of family, friends and other mothers. The necessity of this support demonstrates how unrealistic intensive mothering ideology is; it positions mothers as exclusively and individually responsible for the intensive rearing of their children but in reality, cannot be accomplished without a wider network of support. The success of intensive mothering lies in the ideological work it performs to assert the superiority of a more traditional division of labour in households and workplaces, requiring that women return their attention to childrearing and other associated duties of the home.

Though race does not feature in Fox’s analysis, the contradictions that intensive mothering create are racialized and may be particularly acute for black women, who have higher rates of lone parenthood and higher labour participation rates than their white counterparts but are also more likely to be working low-status, poorly paid jobs. Black women’s experiences of work are shaped by racism and sexism but also by their experiences of “government policies, globalization [and] transnational migration” (Massaquoi, 2007, p. 6). Racially exclusive immigration policies in both the UK and Canada, for example, recruited black women to work in poorly paid, exploitative positions and often explicitly prevented them from bringing or starting families in their new homes (Lawson, 2013; Massaquoi, 2007). Social class further complicates black women’s experiences of work and migration. For example, the myth of the black superwoman, often portrayed in contrast to her ‘feckless’, working-class babymother counterpart, overstates black women’s achievements in employment and education for the purposes of perpetuating the myth of meritocracy (Reynolds, 1997) and postracism. Black mothers’ cultural legacy as workers has been a site of both oppression and resistance and enables them to offer a unique insight into new standards of good

mothering and economically productive citizenship. How this balance is struck is informed not only by this legacy but also the intersections of social class, ethnicity and national origin. Documenting black women's experiences contributes to "alternative ways of knowing" (Massaquoi, 2007, p. 18) that challenge dominant explanations of good motherhood.

2.2.7 Summary

While unrealistic, intensive mothering remains the dominant model of good motherhood, shaping the experiences of women located at different social locations (Elliott, et al., 2013; Hays, 1996; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012). The ideology's dominance reflects shifts in social, political and economic understandings of how society *ought* to operate and proposes a return to the traditional division of gender roles in families (McRobbie, 2013). In the preceding section, I described how attachment parenting encapsulates these shifts, harkening back to an imagined natural past in which social problems can be resolved through decisions such as where a baby sleeps at night. I suggest that, as an example of intensive mothering, AP demonstrates the raced and classed fallouts of such nostalgia and that exploring the experiences of black mothers, complicates the contradictions expressed by IM. Attempts to address conflicting definitions of good motherhood and good citizenship are informed by the context that produces these definitions in the first place. In particular, how we understand the former has become intertwined with a belief in the stability and superiority of nature, a comforting safe space in which to retreat from the uncertainties of our risky world. In the next section, I explore the socio-economic context that has enabled this retreat; neoliberalism.

2.3 Neoliberalism

One of the most significant gaps in scholarship that examines parents' engagement with AP philosophy is the absence of any focus on the socio-economic context in which attachment parenting has emerged. In this section, I turn my attention to this context, arguing that the growing popularity of AP ought to be understood in relation to the global dominance of neoliberalism. This is not to suggest that neoliberal ideology *produces*

attachment parenting or indeed that AP is a uniquely neoliberal manner of parenting. Instead, I argue that the specific styles of AP popular in Britain and Canada express neoliberal values. The neoliberal cultivation of certain kinds of maternal subjects aligns with the ‘good’ mother promoted by attachment parenting, a project complicated and compromised by race and social class. I reveal this cultivation by analyzing state policies and parenting advice that promote or align with AP as well as black mothers’ narratives as they respond to, conform with and resist such policy recommendations. While I focus on the state as the most significant neoliberal actor, identifying and examining policies that capture the overlap between the ‘natural’ values espoused by AP enthusiasts and the self-disciplining mode of governance favoured by neoliberalism, I also note the promotion of attachment parenting and the dispersal of neoliberal values carried out by other bodies and in different arenas, including popular culture and certain sectors of the charity sector. In this section, I define these neoliberal values, particularly focusing on the features most pertinent for this thesis including neoliberalism’s entanglement with race and social class, how the public apprehension of risk justifies and accelerates neoliberal ideology and using breastfeeding as a case study, how this translates into the promotion of certain parenting behaviours.

2.3.1 Everything is neoliberal and neoliberalism is everything

In the twenty or so years since ‘neoliberalism’ emerged as a key conceptual tool to analyze our current globalized socio-economic context (Peck, Theodore & Brenner, 2009), it has attracted a great deal of scholarly and, more recently, public interest (Monbiot, 2016). While critical scholars from a range of disciplines have engaged with the concept of neoliberalism, using it to articulate analyses of, for example, the state (Wacquant, 2012), contemporary feminism and the politics of the body (Phipps, 2014) as well as the practices and policies that govern health (Polzer & Power, 2016), there has also been sustained critique of the use of neoliberalism as a universal explanatory tool (see Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009 and Venugopal, 2015 for examples). These critiques have largely centered on the concept’s ambiguity, partly evoked by recognition of neoliberalism as “at once a global phenomenon, yet inconstant, differentiated,

unsystematic, [and] impure” (Brown, 2015, p. 20; Peck & Tickell, 2002). I respond to these critiques by attempting to lay out a clearly articulated definition of how I understand neoliberalism, particularly those aspects I find most relevant to the emergence of attachment parenting. I situate my analysis in the concept’s very ambiguity; I attend to the particular and sometimes contradictory ways neoliberalism appears in the specific contexts of each country site and discuss neoliberal ideology less as a uniform success story (indeed, neoliberalism anticipates failure and co-opts resistance) but rather as a lens through which to explain why an approach like attachment parenting might garner increased attention at this particular socio-historical moment. Such a discussion acknowledges and indeed, highlights narratives that disrupt a linear, uncomplicated account of neoliberalism. The very task of examining ‘parenting’, a concept whose emergence and intensified popularity in the late 1960s, could arguably be traced alongside the enactment of neoliberal ideology (Lee, 2014a), requires an understanding of the ways in which expectations of parents’ (mothers) responsibilities can both undermine and uphold neoliberal values. Attention to the contradictory nature of these ideas grounds my analysis.

2.3.2 What is neoliberalism?

My understanding of neoliberalism is influenced by political theorist Wendy Brown, who views neoliberalism as a “peculiar form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms” (2015, p. 17). This reason translates into particular kinds of policies that celebrate the free market, “dismantle welfare states and privatize public services” (Brown, 2006, p. 693). Neoliberal reason redraws the lines of democracy, citizenship and subjectivity and frames them in the terms of the market (Larner, 2000). The economy is centered in all avenues, with the state’s sole purpose conceptualized as the protection and facilitation of economic growth (Brown, 2015). In such a scenario, governments might champion ostensibly social justice initiatives but only insofar as they contribute to economic growth. Relations between people and their government are similarly structured with principles of individual responsibility, entrepreneurialism and self-investment taking center stage (N. Rose, 1999; Brown, 2015). For example, in a 2016

speech describing his government's approach to poverty alleviation, then-British Prime Minister David Cameron emphasized both the central role he imagines the family playing in overcoming poverty and the importance of addressing such problems for the purposes of protecting national "economic security" (Cameron, 2016a). Justin Trudeau's Liberal election promises centered on 'investing in the future' and 'helping the middle-class.' Economic growth is understood as a taken-for-granted good that can improve the lives of all.

The ruling political parties in both Canada and the UK express neoliberal values in the way they center economic growth in their policy agendas. However, they have each chosen different paths to achieve this goal, reflecting the 'inconstant and differentiated' nature of neoliberalism. During the recent federal election, Trudeau's Liberal party framed itself as distinct from the divisive politics and "austerity agenda" offered by Stephen Harper's Conservatives (Ruckert & Labonté, 2016, p. 212). During the campaign and the months following their victory, the Liberals have focused on helping 'middle-class' Canadians and have committed to investing in public infrastructure even if such investment requires running at a deficit. However, despite these shifts the emphasis on economic growth above all else have limited the progressive scope of Liberal policies (Ruckert & Labonté, 2016). In the UK, the Conservative government's commitment to an austerity agenda has remained unshaken despite several changes in governance. From 2010, in coalition with the Liberal Democrats to their current formation led by Theresa May, the Conservatives have committed to "£82 billion in cumulative tax changes and cuts in social security spending" (Women's Budget Group, 2016) in their pursuit of a balanced budget. The deleterious effects of these policies on women, the poor, refugees and people of colour have been obscured by the veneer of a "compassionate" Conservative ideology which purports to reward those who 'play by the rules' (Page, 2015, p. 118, 129).

Though proponents of neoliberalism might portray it as merely a "neutral, technical" (Duggan, 2003, p. xiii; Spence, 2012) exercise in achieving the "universally desirable"

goals of “economic expansion and democratic government” (Duggan, 2003, p. 10), the neoliberal project cannot be separated from the cultural and political context through which it has emerged and which it continues to shape. The explicit purpose of neoliberalism – “upward redistribution” (Duggan, 2003, p. x) – cannot be achieved without the construction and promotion of ideological justifications to enable it (Duggan, 2003; Giroux, 2008). This thesis is concerned with precisely these justifications as they manifest themselves in parenting ideologies, especially those that absorb and express the defining principles of neoliberalism.

2.3.3 The depoliticization of race

The ideological justifications that affirm neoliberal reason are fundamentally raced, classed and gendered. Though these social categories are declared as irrelevant to the fulfilment of good citizenship, neoliberalism functions *through* them (Duggan, 2003), relying for example, on entrenched racism to justify the gutting of the welfare state (Roberts, 1993; D.J. Roberts & Mahtani, 2010). With its emphasis on individual choice and freedom, neoliberalism rejects the notion that social class, race and gender present structural constraints that limit life chances. Ostensibly, individuals are ‘free’ to make the ‘right’ decisions to make the best and least burdensome contribution to society. In this new vision of self-sufficient citizens and subjects, thanks to the ‘successes’ of the civil rights and feminist movements, racism and sexism are no longer credible threats to the health, wealth and success of individual women and people of colour.

The belief that we are in a ‘post’ phase of identity discourses and politics (Dunn, 2016) is a crucial feature of neoliberal governance and is particularly the case for contemporary approaches to race. As Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley (2011) argue, in the current neoliberal context “[r]ace has been semantically conquered, but...remains deeply ingrained in the political imaginaries, structures and practices of “the West”” (p. 49). This absent presence enables the dismissal of racism as legitimately shaping the experiences of people of colour while simultaneously mobilizing race, especially blackness, as a signifier of failed citizenship (D.J. Roberts & Mahtani, 2010). Although neoliberalism

requires imagining racism as a historical problem that has been overcome, race continues to play a significant role in the construction of the “ideal neoliberal citizen” (D.J. Roberts & Mahtani 2010, p. 249) and in the very organization of the state (Kapoor, 2013).

In our contemporary ‘postracial’ context, the jettisoning of race as a legitimate framework through which to analyze and address the inequalities faced by people of colour is enacted through appeals to progress and fairness. If racism has been overcome, any attention to the disadvantaged experiences of racialized people is deemed suspect (Kapoor, 2013) and itself, ‘racist’. The depoliticization of race as a salient category of social analysis is further supported through the process of culturalization which demands that racialized people adopt ‘Western values’, a process which is framed not as neo-imperial imposition but rather as a polite request for integration. The perceived failure of people of colour to meet the standards of neoliberal citizenship are read, then, not as a consequence of entrenched racism but as a result of poor individual choices because “it is the cultural norms, values, traditions and lifestyles of outsiders which are now held to be problematic, rather than physiognomy” (Lentin & Titley 2011, p. 50). Further, any capacity to organize to resist these persistent but disguised forms of discrimination and oppression is stifled by the closing down of race as a site of shared community and the accusation of racism “against those who invoke it to point to its historical legacies and to use race for any kind of progressive purpose” (Kapoor 2013, p. 1035).

The consequences of postracialism and other post-identity discourses (e.g. postfeminism) serve to hinder attempts to build solidarity and coalition politics by “re-articulating [intersectional oppressions] as independent oppressions that can be repudiated one at a time, and thereby ensuring neoliberalism’s oppressions writ large are never fully or sufficiently confronted” (Dunn, 2016, p. 273). Recognition of interlocking forms of oppression and articulation of the precise and complex ways in which the interrelationships between race, gender and social class among others shape policy and lived experience, as this research seeks to do, is a crucial aspect of understanding and undermining the effects of neoliberal projects (Dillon, 2012). The objective of this

research is to examine the neoliberally-influenced assumptions about ‘good’ motherhood that inform policies that have material effects on mothers’ lives, a politically necessary undertaking in the context of neoliberal depoliticization and the effects I describe above.

The key contention underpinning the claim that we now live in a postracial society is that we have overcome a racially problematic past (Cho, 2009) (a past ‘multiculturalism’ tries to solve but could not). The specifics of this racially problematic past are shaped by the particular contexts of each society. While much of the scholarship on postracialism tends to be situated in the United States (indeed, many cite the 2008 election of Barack Obama as the “racially transcendent event” marking the disavowal of racism (Cho, 2009, p. 1597; Springer, 2007; Squires, 2010; Teasley & Ikard, 2010), the postracial in the UK and Canada appears and operates in ways uniquely suited to these locations. For both countries, comparison with the United States is made in order to claim political superiority on matters of race (McKittrick, 2006; Perry, 2015). In Canada, geographical proximity as well as close political and economic relations make comparison inevitable and enables the construction of the Canadian nation as a liberal, multicultural haven from the open racism and bigotry firmly located south of the border. One of the most pronounced examples of this dichotomous construction is the emphasis on the sanctuary Canada offered to enslaved African-Americans, an emphasis that facilitates the erasure of Canada’s own history of slavery and its practices of racial oppression (Walcott, 2003, p. 50; Abdi, 2005).

This dichotomy facilitates emotional distance from any racist policies and practices contained in Canada’s history. Even if such practices are identified and acknowledged, the twin narratives of ‘Canada as a mosaic’ (Bannerji, 2000) and ‘the USA is much worse’ (Abdi, 2005) operate to negate their impact. As race relations in the United States attract increased scrutiny and attention thanks to the activism of groups like Black Lives Matter and the notoriety generated by president Donald Trump, myths about Canada’s friendly, non-racism persist (Nelson, 2017).

In the UK, postracial discourses emerge as the result of the specific historical context, underlined by a long-standing “mystique of anti-racism” (Perry, 2015, p. 19). The widely held belief that British history, and therefore contemporary Britain, is free of any whiff of racial impropriety, especially legally entrenched racism, is key to Britain’s view of itself as a nation of “liberalism, tolerance, and ostensible benevolence toward racialized colonial subjects” (Perry, 2015, p. 92). For example, this mystique allowed the state to identify immigration restrictions as the most suitable solution to the ‘race problem’ posed by increased Caribbean migration in the 1950s and 60s and, following the events of September 11, 2001, it is this mystique that enabled the implementation of initiatives like Prevent, which explain terrorism and radicalization as a consequence of Muslims’ failure to integrate (Kapoor, 2013). In both examples, race is constructed as separate from the state, a problem that comes from the outside that the liberal, tolerant British nation is forced to deal with in the best way it knows how (Fisher, 2012). More recently, the British state’s approach is underlined by an intensification of individual citizens’ responsibility for themselves. In the few scenarios where racial discrimination is acknowledged as a problem (Cameron, 2016b), the solution is not an extension of state protections for racialized groups (on the contrary, people of colour are disproportionately affected by public spending cuts) but the proliferation of more ‘opportunities’ for individual success and self-improvement, for all. The language of ‘respecting difference’ associated with multiculturalism no longer meets new postracial demands for race-neutrality (Cho, 2009) and is widely understood as having failed (Lentin & Titley, 2011), replaced with the need to champion apparently racially neutral ‘British values’ in order to ensure social cohesion. In both the UK and Canada, this emphasis on racial neutrality contributes to the construction of each country as racially innocent, particularly distanced from the more overtly racist histories (and present) of countries such as the United States. From such a position of racial innocence, any effort to address racial inequity is inevitably sanitized by the belief that the ‘problem’ of race is not especially serious.

2.3.4 The construction of good motherhood in neoliberal risk society

Most commonly associated with Ulrich Beck, the concept of the risk society posits that “*all* citizens are threatened by mega-risks that know neither class nor geographic boundaries” (Rosa, Renn & McCright, 2014, p. 70, original emphasis). In risk society, the comprehension and avoidance of risk, especially health risks, consumes every aspect of individuals’ lives. Such an approach to risk is congruent with the vision of individual citizenship that neoliberalism proposes which emphasize self-responsibility and self-management (Reich, 2014). The ideal neoliberal citizen is expected to consume information about risk and alter their behaviour accordingly (Wolf, 2011, p. 50). For mothers, this expectation is heightened by the widely held (neoliberally enforced) belief that they are entirely responsible for the optimal development of their children, as summed up in the ideology of intensive mothering.

Linking motherhood to responsibility for children’s development is achieved partly as the result of the emergence of medicalization, which, as I describe above, can be traced back as far as the early twentieth century and requires that social processes and problems in society are understood through a medical lens. Medicalization necessitates that good citizenship is measured through health and its link to economic productivity which in turn, justifies the state’s surveillance and intervention in individual lives. Neoliberal ideology brings forth risk-consciousness, “where dangers are redefined as risk and individuals hold themselves ever more responsible for managing risk” (Faircloth, 2014a, p. 29).

The correspondence between intensive mothering and neoliberal risk society constrains mothers’ experiences of every aspect of parenthood as ever smaller child-rearing decisions generate increased significance and attention (Edwards & Gillies, 2011). Constructed as “managers of risk” (Reich, 2014, p. 682; Knaak, 2010), mothers are increasingly expected to access scientific expertise provided by health professionals and the state (e.g. public health) and arrange their mothering and risk avoidance accordingly.

In addition to this scientific expertise, mothers are also expected to develop their own expertise (Reich, 2014), evaluating and assessing information from different sources and acting as “informed consumers” (Murphy, 2003, p. 457) to justify their risk-avoidant parenting decisions. In assessing different and often competing sources of expertise, mothers are told that they ought to rely upon their ‘maternal’ insight and instincts to make childrearing decisions and yet are subject to a vast array of advice and recommendations suggesting that that ‘insight’ is insufficient. The neoliberal ideology of motherhood constructs mothers as “both responsible for their families and incapable of that responsibility” (Apple, 1995, p. 162).

While discourses of risk, especially health risk, pervade all aspects of our society and constrain all mothers’ experiences, these discourses can be particularly dangerous for racialized people in a ‘postracial’ context. Structural racism governs people of colour’s access to the resources used to manage risk while postracial discourses preclude the possibility of recognizing discrepancies in experiences of risk. As “surplus or expendable populations” (Dillon, 2012, p. 118), people of colour’s, particularly black people, experience of risk is deemed negligible and not worthy of the resources required for intervention. For black mothers, their capacity to be “managers of risk” is undermined by unequal access to healthcare, disproportionate levels of poverty and unemployment and other structural barriers that inhibit their ability to protect their children from risk and thus exclude them from this particular route to good motherhood.

The exclusion and othering of black mothers suggests a vision of idealized motherhood in a neoliberal risk society that is explicitly raced as white. However, despite their exclusion from the prescripts of racialized good motherhood, black women are not absolved of being judged by its standards. The risks they are obliged to avoid on behalf of their children are numerous and coalesce around the construction of an ideal, self-governing citizen who has avoided the pitfalls of poverty and inequality. That these risks are often beyond black mothers’ control (Chin & Dozier, 2012) does not lessen their burden of responsibility. Identified as particular drains on the welfare state (Reynolds, 1997), black

women's mothering is associated with an excess of ungovernable children who are likely to pose a danger to 'civilized' society (Roberts, 1993). Black women's mothering is measured by the capacity to meet neoliberal standards of 'good' motherhood but these same standards also preclude recognition of the structural constraints that make 'good' motherhood impossible. For black mothers in the Global North, this impossibility is marked by the contrast between "the myth of the primitive or Third World woman" (Johnson, 2008, p. 901) who is a 'naturally' capable attachment parent and their pathologized status in the West. How do black mothers manage this disparity? How do they negotiate risk and competing notions of expertise? And how might the pervasive apprehension of risk influence the state's embrace of attachment parenting principles in its policies? In the next section, I discuss one such example.

2.3.5 The case of breastfeeding: breast is best but for whom?

Breastfeeding features centrally in parenting-related state policies and advice, mothers' experiences and the philosophy of attachment parenting. In each of these, the belief that *not* breastfeeding poses a physical, emotional and psychological risk to babies is pervasive. And yet, breastfeeding rates are said to remain 'low' (Gallagher, 2016; Weeks, 2010). While initiation of breastfeeding, defined broadly as putting the baby to the breast within an hour of birth, is relatively high in Canada (89%) and the UK (81%), exclusive breastfeeding, in which babies are fed nothing but breastmilk for the first six months of their lives, is low. In Canada, a 2011-12 survey reported that 26% of mothers breastfed exclusively for six months while in the UK, the 2010 Infant Feeding Survey found that only 1% of babies were exclusively breastfed. Though attachment parenting enthusiasts tend to buck this trend, reporting not only high rates of exclusive breastfeeding but also extended breastfeeding beyond the age of two, this behaviour tends to attract derision and ridicule (Berry, 2010; Faircloth, 2013). In this section, I discuss 'breast is best' discourse, focusing particularly on how it reveals the racialized nature of 'good' mothering. This brief case study on breastfeeding reveals the gap in scholarship on the relationship between motherhood and neoliberalism, a gap this thesis begins to fill.

Breastfeeding is explicitly and vociferously promoted by public health bodies, governments, paediatric associations. However, this has not led to drastic increases in breastfeeding rates or the implementation of structural interventions to support breastfeeding mothers (Hausman, 2003). Nor has it generated widespread acceptance of and public support for breastfeeding, as the regular reports of breastfeeding discrimination, controversy and protest attest (Boyer, 2011). In the UK, for example, women lack the legal right to breastfeeding breaks when they return to work following maternity leave. The absence of such legal protections especially in the context of real time cuts to maternity pay (Maternity Action, 2013) and other neoliberal policies that have disproportionately affected women (Fawcett Society, 2012), shapes women's experiences of infant feeding in general and breastfeeding in particular.

The belief that 'breast is best' has led to the construction of breastfeeding as one of the most important signifiers of 'good' motherhood (Blum, 1999; Carter, 1995; Hausman, 2003). Attachment parenting similarly centers breastfeeding (Berry, 2010; Faircloth, 2013), identifying the practice as one of its seven "tools" (Sears & Sears, 2001, p. 3) to help achieve secure attachment between mother and child. Though state interest in breastfeeding predates our current socio-political period (Carter, 1995), its current status as highly revered and essential to the fulfilment of 'good' motherhood embroils the practice with some of the values of neoliberal ideology, including individual responsibility and self-discipline. While a number of studies that link breastfeeding to reduced rates of allergies, asthma, diabetes, ear infections, gastrointestinal illnesses and obesity (Wolf, 2011), the purpose of this thesis is not to challenge the biological benefits of breastfeeding but to question the emphasis placed on breastfeeding and other parenting activities as a societal panacea, linking breastfeeding to reductions in poverty, health inequity and other structural oppressions (Hausman, 2003), as I address in more detail in chapter four. This questioning is particularly important for marginalized communities who are expected to use all tools available to them to overcome their exclusion. When breastfeeding is named as one such tool it aids in the concentration on individual solutions to structural problems and promotes a particularly gendered view of parenting,

that burdens mothers with responsibility for children's well-being and complicates women's attempts at economic productivity. State breastfeeding advocacy can be particularly dangerous in this way, allowing governments to use breastfeeding recommendations as a symbol of their interest in supporting the health of mothers and children while simultaneously absolving themselves of all responsibility for them: "Infant feeding frequently operates as a symbol for a more fundamental and long term pre-occupation with whether and in what ways women carry out their mothering responsibilities" (Carter, 1995, p. 38).

Breastfeeding promotion can be particularly dangerous for marginalized women whose especially 'low' rates mark them as prime targets for specialized intervention programs. In the UK, a scheme titled Nourishing Start for Health (NOSH) was recently launched that rewards mothers who breastfeed for the recommended six months with up to £200 of shopping vouchers. The pilot version of this initiative started with mothers living in areas with low breastfeeding rates, which are also areas associated with low income, educational achievement and occupational status, as well as material deprivation and social exclusion. Though the social determinants of breastfeeding are well-known (Carter, 1995; Rippeyoung & Noonan, 2012; Wall, 2001), breastfeeding promotion campaigns continue to focus on altering individual behaviour rather than structural change. Public health bodies in the United States have similar concerns about breastfeeding rates in African-American communities. These result in campaigns that are ostensibly meant to encourage black women to breastfeed but instead further perpetuate the image of black motherhood as pathological (S.K. Carter & Anthony, 2015) and morally negligent, resisting expert advice about their children's health.

These racial dimensions as they appear in breastfeeding promotion have been given limited academic attention (for exceptions, see Blum, 1999; S.K. Carter & Anthony, 2015; Chin & Dozier, 2012). Pam Carter's *Feminism, Breasts and Breast-Feeding* (1995) is another exception. Her analysis of the ways in which race and social class make an impact on the meanings of breastfeeding demonstrate the need for an intersectional,

transnational analysis of breastfeeding. However, in her review of studies that examined the link between breastfeeding and race, she conflates the experiences of British women of colour with recent immigrants who are also women of colour. While it is important to acknowledge the large proportion of black and ethnic minorities in Britain who are recent immigrants (and the same is true of Canada), it is problematic to treat their experiences as wholly representative of the black or ethnic minority experience. The experiences of an Asian woman who arrived in England as a seventeen-year-old may not be the same as an Asian woman born and raised in the UK and who has no lived experience in her country of origin (Carter, 1995, p. 6). Carter's analysis is missing a framework that acknowledges both the specific, situated realities of women's lives and their connection to wider patterns of globalization and migration, a gap I seek to address in this thesis.

2.3.6 Summary

As I have suggested above, an analytical framework that attends to context, recognizes the interlocking nature of oppression and centers lived experience is a necessary tool in the examination of attachment parenting in a climate infused with neoliberalism, post racism and risk. As the example of breastfeeding shows, the complex interaction of race, gender, social class and the state through which neoliberalism unfolds lays the groundwork for the emergence of intensive mothering and the variety of parenting philosophies that express its assumptions, including attachment parenting. Black feminists have developed a framework rooted in these interactions and, as I describe in greater detail in the next chapter, enable the articulation of an intersectional critique of neoliberalism and motherhood. In a socio-political moment dominated by austerity, attention to the variety of discursive strategies and tools utilized to justify cuts in welfare spending is a necessary step in the effort to undermine and resist neoliberalism. The aim of this research is to identify the elements of attachment parenting that contribute to the construction of parents and mothers in particular as entirely responsible for their children's health and well-being for the purposes of sustaining a demand for greater support for all mothers. By examining AP through the experiences of black mothers this thesis highlights the gendered, raced and classed underpinnings of neoliberalism and the

ideologies of motherhood derived therefrom. Such an examination rests on and responds to the disparagement of black motherhood in the West.

2.4 Black motherhood in the West

The devaluation of black motherhood in the West is well-established (Roberts, 1991, 1997a, 1997b; Reynolds, 1997). From the racial exclusions that underlined both the creation of welfare and its reform (Davis, 2007; Kandaswamy, 2008; Roberts, 1993) to the initiation of drug-testing programs that criminalize poor black mothers (Roberts, 1991, 1997a, 1997b) to recent attempts to profit from low breastfeeding rates in African-American communities (Morrissey & Kimball, 2017), black motherhood has been constructed as inferior, incapable and undeserving. Most pressingly, black motherhood has been understood as the source of social problems (Roberts, 1997a, p. 961), inspiring a multitude of controlling images (Collins, 2000) and social policies (Jordan-Zachery, 2009) that in different ways regulate, discipline and criminalize black women's mothering. This thesis examines the disciplining of black mothering through the promotion of a particular parenting philosophy, attachment parenting, that has garnered increasing attention, I argue, precisely because it draws from an imagined Africa and advocates a 'natural' style of childrearing. These tropes suggest an obvious affiliation with black motherhood and yet the experts who represent AP, the Sears, are a white, middle-aged professional couple³ from the Midwestern United States. This disjuncture echoes a wider pattern of the exclusion of black women not only as good mothers but as knowledge producers, as knowing subjects of their own parenting experience and expertise. In this section, I detail significant moments in this pattern, particularly those located in Canada and the UK where this study was conducted. Though I focus on these two countries, I also draw attention to the broader history of devaluation in the black

³ More accurately, the attachment parenting brand is embodied by Dr William Sears, whose (solo) interview accompanied the controversial 2012 *Time* magazine cover on the subject.

diaspora, drawing particular connections to practices in the United States that reveal black mothers' exclusion from ideals of good motherhood.

Explicating the relationship between the contemporary devaluation of black motherhood and slavery-era rationales for the subjugations of black people as a whole is a core achievement of black feminist scholarship (Collins, 2000; Roberts, 1997b; Springer, 2007). These analyses tend to focus on the United States, where the link between controlling images of black womanhood such as the welfare mother (Collins, 2000) and the black diva (Springer, 2007) and slavery logics that positioned black women as always outside the bounds of appropriate femininity, is most salient. Though both Britain and Canada claim an ideological distance from slavery as part of their efforts to maintain the fiction of racial innocence, the mythologies developed to justify the enslavement of African peoples nevertheless inform racial hierarchies in both nations (McKittrick, 2002; Nelson, 2017; Reynolds, 2001, 2016).⁴

My analysis of the link between slavery and contemporary experiences of racism and sexism, and how this link situates black women's engagements with AP, draws on Didier Fassin's (2011) "trace." Fassin's conceptualization of the trace expresses his attempt to articulate the complex relationship between the state and the body, a relationship he argues is marked by violence. Using two case studies (seeking asylum in France and suffering from HIV/AIDS in South Africa), Fassin draws attention to the ways that the state enacts its power and reads (or dismisses) the truth on the bodies of asylum seekers and HIV-positive people. The 'truth' read about black women's bodies today reflects the history of violence enacted on their bodies by the state, from the sexual assaults, forced reproduction and back-breaking work of enslavement to the indignities of obstetric

⁴ This is not to suggest that every contemporary example of racism or sexism in these societies can be explained by reference to slavery. My goal here is to provide a broader historical context for some of the racial ideologies that shape motherhood, particularly opposing those explanations of the persistence of racial inequalities, produced by racial neoliberalism, that locate the problem and solution in racialized communities.

experiments and forced sterilizations. Black women's engagements with AP are entwined with these histories as contemporary mothering ideologies situate black women's bodies as sources of primitive knowledge and poorly paid labour. Such a contextualization illuminates black women's responses to public health inducements to breastfeed, for example. Infant feeding decisions are informed not just by commonly held beliefs about the nutritional value of breast milk or formula but by racist histories of bodily exploitation and animalistic stereotypes (Blum, 1999).

In his conceptualizations of the trace, Fassin points to the ways that historical circumstances can be revisited upon the present. My claim in this section is that the factors that shape black women's contemporary experiences of motherhood are "historically constituted" (Fassin, 2011, p. 293). They are not entirely new formations but rather new iterations of old structures. I do not intend to suggest that black mothers in 2017 are living the same lives as that of their 1845 counterparts, but rather draw attention to the continuities between historical representations of black motherhood and their contemporary expressions and explain black mothers' complications of the AP narrative as a consequence of long-standing constructions of expertise, citizenship and 'good' motherhood as beyond the reach of black women.

Indeed, the specific, simultaneously gendered and raced experience of enslaved black women is particularly relevant here as it informs contemporary constructions of black motherhood in Britain and Canada. While the stories and images produced about black motherhood in these two countries are not identical to those developed in the United States, they each share an exclusionary impulse that seeks to explain, in different ways unique to their British, Canadian and American contexts, why black women are incapable of good motherhood. I begin with the story of black motherhood developed in the United States, drawing parallels between the "brutal denial of autonomy over reproduction" (Roberts, 1991, p. 1437) that defined enslaved women's experiences and contemporary efforts to deny black women this same reproductive autonomy. In both, an insidious

belief in the threat posed by black women's reproduction can be identified, as it is expressed in legislation and dominant cultural beliefs about good motherhood.

2.4.1 Black motherhood in the United States

A spate of news stories featuring African-American mothers have generated global attention in recent years, each demonstrating the persistent if subtle suspicion of black motherhood that defines contemporary (post)racial ideologies. Take, for example, the 2016 story of Harambe, a gorilla killed by Cincinnati zoo officials after a three-year-old boy fell into the gorilla enclosure. Public outrage soon followed, with many commentators blaming the boy's mother for not taking better care of her 'brat' (as one protest sign referred to the boy) and British tabloid the *Daily Mail* reporting an exclusive 'expose' of the father's criminal record (ABC News, 2016; L. Collins, 2016). Calls for the boys' parents to be arrested or in some way held accountable were accompanied by earnest outpourings of grief for the seventeen-year-old gorilla. In another example in 2014, Shanesha Taylor was charged with felony child abuse for leaving her two children in her car while she attended a job interview (Walshe, 2014). While sympathetic reports of her story garnered international attention and an online fundraising effort that raised over \$100 000, the courts responded by requiring her to attend parenting classes and invest the bulk of the donations in a trust for her children in exchange for having the charges dropped. When she failed to comply with these requirements, particularly the trust fund stipulation, media reports became much less sympathetic, detailing her various 'inappropriate' use of the funds on "non-essential items such as cable TV, clothing and dining" (Associated Press, 2014).

There are several interrelated threads evident in stories such as the two I describe above. First, one of the fundamental tenets of contemporary mothering ideology, that mothers are primarily and individually responsible for their children (Hays, 1996), is complicated by the equally fundamental belief that black mothers are incapable of that responsibility. Shanesha Taylor's decision to leave her children in her car to attend a job interview is not contextualized within the absence of affordable childcare or the inflexibility of employers

who fail to accommodate working parents but is instead understood as the result of her lack of parenting skills. The state is thus required to intervene by offering her parenting classes and ordering her to spend her money ‘appropriately.’ By identifying Taylor’s ‘inability to parent’ as the problem that requires solving, the courts use the same logic that underpinned the 1965 Moynihan report (Collins, 2000) that blamed black ‘matriarchs’ for persistent inequality in black communities. This logic similarly echoes the nineteenth century census reports that attributed black people’s higher rates of infant mortality to black mothers’ “carelessness” (Pelot in Roberts, 1991, p. 1441). Second, the products of black women’s incapable mothering, black children, are framed as both disposable and a threat to the well-being of the broader society. The risk faced by a child who has fallen into a gorilla enclosure is minimized and dismissed in favour of a very public mourning of the gorilla and a demand that the zoo explain why it chose to take the life of an animal. Zoo officials’ explanations that the child’s life was in danger are insufficient for those who view Harambe’s life as more valuable than that of a three-year-old black child. Finally, the collision of expectations between the injunction that women dedicate themselves entirely to childrearing and the economic productivity required of good neoliberal citizenship, what Sharon Hays (1996) calls the cultural contradiction of intensive mothering, is shown to be unresolvable by black women’s mothering which is dismissed as lazy or uncaring, whichever path they choose. While white middle-class women might experience it as a recent phenomenon (Shirani, Henwood & Coltart, 2012), the requirement to work *and* mother has been the defining feature of black womanhood in the West and is the source of a “mythology that denies [black women] their womanhood” (Roberts, 1991, p. 1438). Despite the fact that Shanesha Taylor’s instance of ‘child abuse’ took place while she was attending a job interview, the focus on her inability to spend the donated money appropriately positions her as the lazy welfare mother, abusing the generosity of the taxpayer or in this case, the donors. Taylor is aware of the dangers of this figure, as she explains her decision to defy the judge’s orders to invest in a trust fund: “I’m not some lazy bum, sitting on my butt, sitting on the couch every day, I’m not someone who’s sitting up, you know, living off what was given to me” (Taylor in Bieri, 2014). Taylor’s children were both under the age of two at the time of her arrest and thus

are both potential beneficiaries of an early years focus that emphasizes the first five years of a child's life as a crucial developmental period (Field, 2010; McCain & Mustard, 1999). Within the logic of what constitutes 'good' mothering, Taylor should be lauded for staying at home with her children. Instead, her decision is identified as a sign of poor citizenship, reinforcing the already established association between blackness and "anti-market behaviors... [antithetical to] the ideal neoliberal citizen" (D.J. Roberts & Mahtani, 2010, p. 249). If both Taylor's mothering is incapable and her children disposable, the usual rules of appropriate childrearing for the purposes of producing good citizens do not apply but are instead deployed to discipline Taylor, to justify dictating how she ought to spend her money and how she ought to parent her children.

Traces of the past inform these recent news stories; the 'truth' read on Shaneshia Taylor's body marks her as a symbol of poor motherhood and citizenship, conforming to dominant narratives of black womanhood that sustain both racial oppression and postracial explanations of inequities (Collins, 2000; Fassin, 2011). Such news stories evoke histories of exploitation, as black women's productive and reproductive labour were directed towards the enrichment of not only their white owners but of the United States as a whole. The trace is present in the devaluation of a child's life in favour of a gorilla just as enslaved women's babies were devalued, their pregnancies and births granting them little reprieve from back-breaking labour in the fields. As reported in the story Dorothy Roberts (1997b) recounts in her influential book on black women's reproduction, *Killing the Black Body*, the potential value of a baby as a future worker was not sufficient to protect black babies from astronomically high infant mortality rates:

Mothers who were not allowed time out from work to return to their cabins had to bring their infants with them to the field...on one plantation, the women dug a long trough in the ground to create a makeshift cradle, where they put their babies every morning while they toiled. A former slave named Ida Hutchinson recalled the tragic fate of those babies as their mothers picked cotton in the distance: "When [the mothers] were at the other end of the row, all at once a cloud no

bigger than a small spot came up and it grew fast, and it thundered and lightened as if the world were coming to an end, and the rain just came down in great sheets. And when it got so they could go to the other end of the field, that trough was filled with water and every baby in it was floating round in the water, drowned. [The master] never got nary a lick of labor and nary a red penny for any of them babies” (pp. 36-7).

Today, the assumption is that such a life may not even generate economic productivity or ‘labor.’ This failure to contribute is then explained as a generational problem, an inherited and therefore racial tendency towards laziness that is located in black mothering, in the ‘carelessness’ of an enslaved mother who ‘accidentally’ smothers her baby (Roberts, 1991) or a mother who ‘allows’ her three-year-old to fall into an animal enclosure at the zoo. These stories also mark a shift in the productive and reproductive expectations of black women’s bodies from pressures to create more productive, enslaved workers to exhortations to reduce the economic burden on crumbling neoliberal states. The production of neoliberalism *through* the disposability of racialized bodies (Duggan, 2003; Giroux, 2006) contributes to the construction of a punitive criminal justice system that prosecutes Shaneshia Taylor for her reproductive choices. Through neoliberal state policies, appropriate (read: white, middle-class) motherhood is rewarded with “maternity leave and baby bonuses” (Harris, 2004, p. 73) while the inappropriate, burdensome motherhood of women like Taylor is met with “punitive regulation” (Wacquant, 2012, p. 67). This is evident, for example, in the ‘crack babies epidemic’ of the 1980s and 1990s, in which predominantly black female crack addicts were prosecuted for a variety of crimes including child abuse and distribution of narcotics to a minor. From the identification of crack as the drug most dangerous to babies (black women were more likely to smoke crack than other drugs) to the location of hospitals where the routine drug-testing of newborn infants was established (state hospitals serving predominantly poor black populations), the crackdown on drug use during pregnancy was a foil for the policing of black women’s reproduction (Roberts, 1997a, 1997b).

Roberts (1997a) draws links between the devaluation of black motherhood that marked slavery and the experiences of black mothers since that time, linking this devaluation to the criminalization of black crack addicts in the 1990s, the disproportionate likelihood of black children being taken into state care and the historical and ongoing patterns of sterilization abuse among women of colour. I build on these connections, gathering the threads of black motherhood across the black diaspora to contextualize the current focus on ‘nature’ as a source from which to derive ‘good’ parenting. In the next section, I turn to two examples from Canada and Britain to evidence further traces of historical exclusion and exploitation in the contemporary tales of black mothering.

2.4.2 Mothering and work: examples from Canada and Britain

Much of our contemporary notions of good motherhood were produced in the nineteenth century when the Industrial Revolution facilitated the severing of reproductive and productive activities (Fox, 2006; Glenn, 1992; Hays, 1996; Rich, 1986). This separation was justified through ideological claims about the proper place and duties of men and women and the recasting of the home as a site of refuge; men were thought to be best-suited to productive work outside the home while women were responsible for domestic tasks such as housekeeping and child-rearing. From its inception, such a separation was obviously gendered but also classed and raced and thus only ever available to a small minority of women. For working-class and racialized women, reproductive obligations have rarely exempted them from the need to earn a wage. Nonetheless, the now dominant construction of ideal motherhood is produced on the assumption that a good mother is available to dedicate all her time and energies to the task of preparing children for a “successful adulthood” (Fox, 2006, p. 235; Hays, 1996).

This ideal has, while purporting to be racially neutral, categorically excluded women of colour, particularly black women, from its prescripts (Bloch & Taylor, 2014; Elliott et al., 2013). From the nineteenth century expectation that mothers ought to be angels of their households to the contemporary demand that mothers must expertly balance economic productivity and intensive styles of childrearing, institutionalized racism, especially

ubiquitous stereotypes about black womanhood (Jordan-Zachery, 2009; Reynolds, 2016; Roberts, 1997b), have barred black women from accessing and performing the activities that are deemed to constitute ‘good’ mothering. Indeed, it is through the exploitation of black women’s labour that norms of white femininity and domesticity have been established (Glenn, 1992). The ethereal qualities expected of good (white) mothers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were only possible because the physical work required to maintain a good home was outsourced to racialized servants or migrants (Glenn, 1992; Kershaw, 2005; Webster, 1998; West with Knight, 2017). Today, the increasing influence of ‘natural’ forms of ‘good’ parenting repeats this pattern. The Sears recommend the employment of a housekeeper to ensure that mothers are free to dedicate the undivided attention to their infants, attention understood as critical to their optimal development (2001). Indeed, attachment parenting’s claims to superiority are underlined by references to the instinctive parenting activities of ‘traditional’ and ‘primitive’ cultures whose insights are translated into rational, scientifically supported parenting advice by the likes of the Sears (1993; Green & Groves, 2008). More than performing the physical labour that enabled white middle-class women to maintain the clean home and well-raised children required of ideal white femininity, black women’s purported failures, their sexual and reproductive excesses, are directly contrasted against the superior constraint possessed by white women.

It is *through* the construction of black women as incapable and undeserving that white women are understood as capable and appropriate mothers (Crenshaw, 1989). Similarly, when it comes to contemporary practice of attachment parenting, it is against primitive or traditional mothers’ unthinking adherence to a “cultural script” (Green & Groves, 2008, p. 523; Sears & Sears, 1993) that white Western women’s conscious choice-making, and implicitly superior mothering, can best be understood. In these ways and others, the popularity of attachment parenting, and the broader ideology of intensive mothering it expresses, reveal the historically established pattern of exploiting black mothers’ labour and excluding them from the prescripts and associated benefits of good motherhood.

The exploitation of black women's labour for the purposes of freeing white, middle-class women from the drudgery of domestic tasks has a long history and, in the United States, is best captured by the figure of the Mammy. As a representation of ideal black womanhood, the Mammy is subservient and wholly dedicated to her duties serving the white family (Collins, 2000). Most importantly for our purposes, the Mammy's dedication to raising white children comes at the expense of her own children whose needs are dismissed as part of a broader pattern of the racial degradation of black families (Roberts, 1997b). The denial of black motherhood (and the mothering of other racially subordinated groups) is a requirement of the racial and gendered division of reproductive labour that has, in different forms, shaped many Western societies. In the United States, the employment of black, Latina and Asian American women as both domestic and institutional service workers express complex racial and gendered notions about their suitability to perform this form of work (Glenn, 1992). Women of colour were (and are) disproportionately employed to perform the domestic duties white middle-class women consider beneath them thanks, partly, to racialized constructions of womanhood that deny women of colour's mothering and wifehood (Roberts, 1997b; Litt, 2000). The dismissal of black motherhood as unimportant enables the expectation that black women engage in paid employment, regardless of their mothering status, while at the same time attributing the failures of black people as a group to black mothers' inadequacies (Reynolds, 1997; Roberts, 1997b).

The racial division of reproductive labour that produces good (white) motherhood is expressed globally, captured in the claims made on 'primitive' natural parenting by white western 'experts' and successive waves of immigration legislation. In different ways, black women's labour is deployed to sustain a globally implicated construction of good motherhood from which they are excluded, such as in immigration programs that recruit black women into poorly paid, low-status service work. One such program was developed in 1955 in Canada. The West Indian Domestic Scheme (WIDS) sought to

solve the domestic labour shortage in Canadian cities by recruiting ‘suitable’ Caribbean women to work as domestics.⁵ WIDS began as an agreement between Canada and the Caribbean nations of Jamaica and Barbados. Criteria for participating in the scheme included age, educational achievement, marital status and crucially, for my purposes, the absence of any “encumbrances” (Lawson, 2013, p. 139) in the form of minor children. Though for many of the women the scheme was the only available method of migration to Canada, the state sought to place a check on the women’s capacity to settle there (Henry, 1968), especially those who already had children. While the women’s imagined maternal instincts were desirable when put into service for the benefit of wealthy white Canadian children (Lawson, 2013; Hochschild, 2009; Stasiulis & Bakan, 1997), when this same maternal care was directed towards their own children, Caribbean migrant women found their access to Canada under threat (Lawson, 2013). The case of seven Jamaican women threatened with deportation in 1978 aptly demonstrates this point. As detailed by Lawson (2013), the women’s right to live in Canada was threatened by revelations that they had lied during their original entry to the country and in fact had children living in Jamaica, many of whom were being supported by the low status, low paid jobs the women held in the Canadian economy.

The seven women’s experiences, and the attention their fight to remain in the country generated, embodied the contradictions at the heart of the WIDS, revealing the ideological dismissal and exploitation of black motherhood which underlies the scheme’s exclusionary and regulatory criteria. The financial and emotional support the seven women provided to their children, a complex form of caregiving Lawson names as transnational mothering, made visible what the WIDS, and other practices of constructing black women as particularly suited to domestic work, seeks to keep hidden - black

⁵ Though WIDS no longer formally exists, its ideological tenets continued to inform Caribbean women’s migration to Canada into the 1970s (Lawson, 2013) and it is arguably the foundation upon which Canada’s current Live-In Caregiver Program is built (Stasiulis & Bakan, 1997).

women's own families (Glenn, 1992). While the scheme sought to discourage the women from settling in Canada (Henry, 1968), the seven women evidenced black women's capacity for resistance and the subversive use of oppressive legislation and programs to improve their lives (Lawson, 2013). Though the seven women were deported in 1979, they were able to return six months later. It was precisely because of these efforts and their other forms of organizing that women from the Caribbean fell out of favour as the preferred domestic worker or live-in caregiver (Stasiulis & Bakan, 1997). This closed the door on one of the few routes to Canadian citizenship rights for Caribbean women and reflects the global and racialized power imbalance that sustains the exploitation of racialized women's labour.

Much of the way the British and Canadian states have expressed their disdain for black motherhood has been operationalized in anti-black immigration legislation (Bashi, 2004). While WIDS represents one example of Canada's ideological devaluation of black mothers, particularly as Lawson (2013) describes it, the British approach is wrapped up in a national vision that both celebrates colonial enterprise and disavows the British subjects produced through colonization, particularly those that journey from the colony to the metropolis. In other words, the devaluation of black motherhood in Britain has operated through varying attempts to exploit black women's labour while obscuring or policing their reproduction. This is evident, for example, in the postwar reconstruction period. Britain recruited workers to administer its growing welfare state and, like WIDS, took advantage of pre-existing colonial and postcolonial relationships with Caribbean nations, as well as recruiting from Africa, Asia and Europe. Migrant recruitment was racialized, with white Europeans preferred (Perry, 2015), but also acknowledged the role to be played by black women as nurses, aides and other occupations. In Britain, the invisibility of black motherhood was produced not through the direct subordination of black women's domestic labour to the maintenance of the white family; on the contrary, black women were not desirable as maids or nannies. Indeed, the racial discourse of this period was marked by a fixation on the danger black men posed to white women's motherhood thus obscuring black femininity altogether (Perry, 2015; Webster, 1998).

This invisibility made the exploitation of black women's labour that much simpler, concentrating the women in low-status, poorly paid work with little regard for the children they may be supporting, whether those children were in the UK or elsewhere (Mama, 1997; Webster, 1998). Indeed, the collapsing of all black women into the category of 'recent immigrants' (Mama, 1997), common in scholarship on this era and contemporary race relations in Britain, further aids this invisibility by conveniently locating their children beyond the nation's borders and therefore outside the state's responsibility.

However, the curtain of invisibility was lifted as female migration surpassed men's in 1958 (Perry, 2015) and though black women's presence was initially read as a check against black male 'interference' with white women (Webster, 1998), British society soon came to treat black motherhood as a threat to the well-being of the nation. Black women (as well as men) were constructed as lacking that emotional depth and psychological capacity that had attracted increasing attention in the postwar period (Carter, 1995). Black people were excluded both from pre-war discourses of physical hygiene that defined them as 'dirty' and from the postwar focus on emotional and psychological development which considered them emotionally bereft (Webster, 1998). Appropriate childrearing strategies from both eras were similarly classed and raced, whether the rigidity of scientific motherhood (Apple, 1995; Litt, 2000) or the child-centered, psychologically influenced style associated with experts such as John Bowlby (Webster, 1998). The construction of black women's inability to mother in this psychologically appropriate manner rendered black women's mothering practices particularly dangerous, made more so when fears about being 'overrun' by black children manifested in the construction of black mothers as a "burden on the welfare state" (Webster, 1998, p. 127).

This concern with the imagined threat posed by black women's reproductive capacities is present in contemporary stereotypes attached to black mothering (Reynolds, 2005), particularly those that signal inappropriate dependence on the state such as the conflation

between blackness and lone mothers, popularly depicted as reliant on public benefits (Phoenix, 1996). The anxiety about black mothers' burden on the welfare state is sharpened within the context of neoliberal austerity measures as citizens are implored to take greater responsibility for themselves in the midst of a public spending crisis. Contemporary immigration discourse is shaped by this context, expressed, for example, in the naming of health tourism as posing an as yet undetermined threat to the National Health Service (Jamieson, 2017⁶). Echoing 1960s concerns with black women's 'swarming' of the maternity wards, twenty-first century fears are focused on keeping black women and their babies deprived of any legal or moral right to citizenship, regardless of where their children are born. These efforts are captured in the immigration detention system, now a common feature of European immigration and complicit in the gendered and raced denials of black women's humanity (Tyler, 2013).

Britain's increasingly restrictive immigration legislation and practices reflect broader patterns in 'fortress Europe' (Yuval-Davis, 2007) and the Global North (Giroux, 2006). The "global discredit of asylum" has resulted in intensifying demands for documentable evidence of persecution to qualify for asylum (Fannin, 2011, p. 288) and the routine detention of asylum seekers (Tyler, 2013). These shifts are racially informed and reflect reinvigorated European fears of being 'overrun' (Webster, 1998). The desire to keep Europe white is inevitably imbricated in reproduction, involving both tacit encouragement of white, middle-class women's childbearing (Harris, 2004) and the "identification of migrant and/or other undesirable mothers as a target of border control mechanisms" (Tyler, 2013, p. 212; Shandy, 2008).⁷ In this context, black women's

⁶ As Jamieson's (2017) headline attests, "Health tourism warning as NHS chases £350,000 bill from Nigerian woman who gave birth in a British hospital," there are special concerns about so-called maternity tourism in which pregnant 'foreign' women allegedly fly to the UK for the sole purposes of taking advantage of the NHS's free at-point-of-use maternity services.

⁷ A telling example of the latter is the results of the 2004 Irish referendum on citizenship which replaced *jus soli* (citizenship by birth) with *jus sanguinis* (citizenship by blood), a

reproductive agency is increasingly compromised by legislative barriers that deny them and their babies citizenship and ideological obstacles that construct their mothering as both inadequate and threatening.

In her article, Tyler deconstructs the maternal politics underlying a 2008 protest by a group of women and mothers detained in Yarl's Wood detention center. She interprets the women's decision to expose their breasts and genitals as an attempt to make visible not only the inhumane conditions under which they and their children live but to demonstrate their refusal to accept these conditions as indicative of their worth as humans (Tyler, 2013). Like the seven Jamaican women described by Lawson above, the Yarl's Wood protesters draw attention to what the British and Canadian states wish to keep hidden; the survival of black families, even in the face of unequal global economic relationships. For the Yarl's Wood mothers the very existence of their children, and the mistreatment they suffer as a result of that existence, are stark evidence of the racialized fears that underpin British immigration and citizenship legislation. Their motherhood is a threat to the continuing whiteness of the British nation that must be prevented from entering or, if that fails, detained out of sight.

That the protest techniques of Yarl's Wood detainees invokes older traditions of protest and activism, especially against colonial powers (Tyler, 2013), is evidence of the trace (Fassin, 2011). Just as the Yarl's Wood mothers drew inspiration from histories of protest against transformed but sustained exploitation of black women's labour, so I argue that histories of exploitation inform the experiences of the mothers in this study. Such histories are apparent in the ideologies that deny black women's 'natural' parenting expertise, disrupt their attachment to their 'homes' and demand their complete responsibility for the labour of childrearing. This is not to suggest that these oppressions

shift which was informed by much-publicized cases of pregnant African migrants giving birth in Ireland as a means of gaining citizenship (Shandy, 2008).

are unchangeable (indeed, much of the chapters that follow will be taken up with documenting black mothers' negotiations with and challenges to such histories and exclusionary ideologies) but rather to draw attention to their socially constructed nature, to their emergence in specific social and political contexts and the often contradictory purposes that they can serve. The differences in the examples I have provided here, from the policing of black women's mothering through a moral panic about 'crack babies' in the United States to the legislative and ideological encumbrances posed by Caribbean women's children to the non-space in which threatening black reproductive bodies are detained, are evidence of these particular contexts and contradictions. These encumbrances are located and, importantly, resisted on the body, informing both the 'truth' read on black women's bodies (Fassin, 2011) and the ways black women confront this 'truth.'

The devaluation of black motherhood is enacted on and through black women's bodies, as evidenced by the criminal punishments exacted on pregnant black women crack addicts, achieved through testing their newborn babies without their consent and shackling them during the late stages of pregnancy and during childbirth. This bodily exploitation is apparent even further back in the history of black women's experiences in the West, evident in the sterilization abuses suffered by women of colour that persist today, under the guise of welfare and criminal justice reform, in the 'employment' of black women as wet nurses (West with Knight, 2017), in the use of enslaved women's bodies as sites of gynaecological experiment, in the very subjugation of black women's reproductive capacity to the profit-making efforts of white slave masters (Roberts, 1991). In each, the ideology underlying the abuse of black women's bodies renders them incapable of competent motherhood and therefore devoid of any need for protection. In short, it deprives black women of their humanity (Roberts, 1997a). The construction of black women's incapability as mothers, however, does not absolve them of responsibility for the alleged failings of the black community, as I have suggested above in my discussion of black motherhood in the United States. Instead, it operates as yet another site of censure; it enables the co-existence of contradictory stereotypes that deride black

women for working too much and emasculating their partners and male children (embodied in the figures of the matriarch or superwoman) and castigates them for not working at all, for living off the so-called generosity of the compacted welfare state (expressed in the stereotype of the welfare queen).

2.4.3 Summary

In this section, I have argued that in order to understand how black mothers negotiate philosophies of good mothering as they are produced in neoliberal contexts that disavow all but ‘appropriate’ (read: white) motherhood while locating racism, sexism and other structural barriers as obstacles that have largely been overcome, we must attend to the historical foundations laid about the nature and value of black motherhood. The notions of good citizenship and good mothering popularized today are made possible *against* black mothers as failing citizens (Tyler, 2010) and the source of burden and disposability. When black mothers negotiate with popular parenting philosophies they do so not just as an attempt to raise good citizens but to enable their children’s survival against legacies of racism of which I have provided only a brief snapshot above. They engage with these traces as they utilize AP in different ways, in response to their individual histories and circumstances. And they do so not just as ‘victims’ whose experiences can only be understood through the lens of “exclusion or exploitation” (Roberts, 2009, p. 785) but as agents, constrained by the structural oppressions, historical and present, as I have described in this section, but also capable of resistance and self-definition.

2.5 Conclusion

The experiences of the black mothers at the heart of this study do not occur in a vacuum. That their parenting is even the subject of scrutiny is the product of a myriad of historical, cultural and political factors. In this chapter, I have identified four of these factors, detailing the historical origins of contemporary mothering ideology, drawing a connection between the emergence of science as a new religion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the continued reliance on science to justify our decisions, even as we grow suspicious of it; documenting the birth of attachment parenting and the

ideological framework of intensive mothering that enables its existence; describing the socio-political context that lays the groundwork for and informs parenting-related policy and women's experiences of motherhood today; and delineating the specific histories of black motherhood in the United States, Canada and Britain, tracing continuities and changes in the historical and contemporary experience of black mothers. In the following chapter, I describe the theoretical framework that underlies my analysis of black women's mothering and the methodology it informs. Through my use of black feminist theory, and its necessary attention to the interlocking structures of oppression, I examine power and the construction of knowledge as it shapes the process of doing research.

Chapter 3

3 Methodology

In this chapter I discuss my theoretically-informed methodological approach. First, I will describe my theoretical framework before turning to how this framework underpins my methodological orientation and drawing a connection between black feminist theory and intersectional research methodology. This section is followed by a discussion of the study itself, describing recruitment challenges, the choice of method and other details about data collection recruitment. The next section documents my approach to data analysis and the chapter concludes with a section on the relationship between reflexivity and ethics.

3.1 Black feminist theory

A black feminist theoretical framework offers an important perspective through which to critically examine the historical conditions that continue to inform black women's contemporary experiences and social realities. One of the central tenets of black feminist theory is its identification of the relationship between "personal biography [and] wider historical processes" (Alinia, 2015, p. 2334) as crucial to understanding lived experience and the matrix of domination (Collins, 2000) in which this experience occurs. I draw on black feminist theory because it centers black women's experiences and through this process, offers insight into the complex, heterogeneous circumstances of black women's lives (Wane, 2002, 2009). In this connection between experience and broader social structures, a black feminist perspective facilitates a critical examination of attachment parenting, which is promoted as a 'natural,' cost-effective way to address social problems and precludes recognizing gendered forms of racism that shape both the experiences of and discourses about motherhood. The examination of attachment parenting from black women's perspectives reveals that the 'nature' upon which the philosophy relies is socially constructed, reflecting rather than challenging mainstream ideas about good parenting, and upholds a vision of motherhood that enhances the status of white, middle class women (Blum, 1999), who are positioned as ideal mothers.

The principles of black feminist theory are best summed up by Ula Taylor who, drawing from Collins, identifies four themes:

1. Black women empower themselves by creating self-definitions and self-valuations that enable them to establish positive multiple images and to repel negative controlling representations of Black womanhood.
2. Black women confront and dismantle the “overarching” and “interlocking” structure of domination in terms of race, class, and gender oppression.
3. Black women intertwine intellectual thought and political activism.
4. Black women recognize a distinct cultural heritage that gives them the energy and skills to resist and transform daily discrimination. (Taylor, 1998, pp. 234-235).

Each of these themes is connected to the black women’s standpoint that Collins proposes (Taylor, 1998). This standpoint argues that black women offer a unique insight into the structures that shape social experience, which can “stimulate a distinctive Black feminist consciousness” (Collins, 1989, p. 748). Such a consciousness lays the groundwork for resisting oppression through the principles described above. Resistance is a crucial component of black feminist theory; it is concerned not just with providing an analytical framework with which to describe oppression but with providing the tools to support social change through “activism and politics of empowerment” (Alinia, 2015, p. 2334). Thus, black feminist theory provides an explicitly political lens through which to read and interpret black mothers’ engagement with attachment parenting.

The central principles of black feminist thought emerge from black women’s articulation of intersecting oppressions as well as the political strategies that they devise to resist and challenge oppressive systems of power. Black women have a long and rich history of engaging in these practices, complicating narrow summations of injustice and grounding their activism in this complexity. Sojourner Truth’s oft-cited declaration ‘ain’t I a woman?’ is one example that both expresses an intersectional view of oppression and resists that oppression. Truth grounded her speech in her own lived reality, recalling her experiences as an enslaved woman to challenge singular and oppressive images of

womanhood. This tradition is followed by the Combahee River Collective, a Black Feminist Lesbian organization that in 1977 issued a statement that clearly linked historical racial and sexual violence to contemporary forms of domination rooted in white male supremacy and patriarchy. In particular, they articulated how black feminist thought draws from “the seemingly personal experiences of individual Black women’s lives” (1977, para. 6) to build a critique of the broader structures that oppress black women. In so doing, the women clarified how lived experience informs an epistemology that framed their political activism and their desire for social change. This is a central tenet within feminist standpoint epistemology which argues that marginalized groups such as women offer a different and hitherto unheard perspective on society and how it is organized. As such, the Collective illuminated a view of black feminism both as theory and practice and both as explaining historical conditions and informing their present manifestations.

In taking up black feminism as a theoretical framework in this study, I aim to analyze how participants forge a specific, unique epistemology of attachment parenting as this is shaped by their locations as outliers within the imagined and public communities of who ‘good’ mothers are and within the terrain of shifting demands imposed by neoliberal states. How do black women respond to attachment parenting philosophy and intensive mothering ideology? And how does their potential re-framing of these pressing issues offer new insights about better and supportive policies that more adequately address the needs of working mothers in the two countries that are my focus in this study? In the next section, I explicate the principles of black feminist theory named above, describing how they inform my analysis of black women’s experiences of mothering.

3.1.1 Black women create self-definitions and self-valuations

In its identification of black women’s capacity to develop “self-defined, counter-hegemonic knowledge” (Alinia, 2015, p. 2335), black feminist theory makes explicit the dialectical relationship between oppression and resistance. Black feminist thought is borne of the interaction between the two, and is expressed in the positive images of black womanhood black women create to counter the “controlling images” that demean them

(Collins, 2000, p. 72; Taylor, 1998, p. 234). Controlling images are dominant cultural representations that serve ideological purposes, namely, “to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life” (Collins, 2000, p. 69). One of black feminist theory’s central tasks is to challenge these images (Norwood, 2013), an especially important task given that these images have been used to justify the enactment of public policies that are harmful to all marginalized people and to black women in particular, including welfare and criminal justice reform (S.K. Carter & Anthony, 2015; Jordan-Zachery, 2009; Kandaswamy, 2008; Roberts, 1997a).

Rather than being static, controlling images change to reflect the social context in which they are developed, from the slavery and post-emancipation era Mammy (Collins, 2000) to the ‘Angry Black Woman’, popularized in our current ‘postracial’ context (Springer, 2007). The ‘Angry Black Woman’ is a particularly effective stereotype in these times, building on the belief that racism is no longer a serious concern and castigating those who ‘play the race card.’ This image has appeared in a variety of arenas from politics, where representations of Michelle Obama frame her as angry and militant (Guerrero, 2011), to reality television where black women’s disproportionate anger is linked to moral and sexual excess and the ‘realness’ of the medium is particularly adept at reinforcing dominant images of black women’s lives (Ward, 2015).

The common thread in the creation and circulation of these stereotypes is the othering of black women, particularly with reference to their sexuality and morality (Jordan-Zachery, 2009). This long-standing process of othering contributes to the dominant construction of black womanhood as not quite belonging to the societies in which they live and therefore as unworthy of societal resources (Lawson, 2002), a particularly vulnerable position given the increased emphasis on individual responsibility characteristic of neoliberal rationality. The positioning of black women as outsiders to the nation (Tyler, 2013) informs their experience of parenthood and is embedded in the stereotypes of black motherhood that predominate today. In a ‘postracial’ context, these stereotypes are

shaped by an emphasis on *cultural* differences, reflecting a reluctance to name race explicitly except in non-threatening terms of diversity (Lentin & Titley, 2011) and multiculturalism (Bannerji, 2000) and specifically, a deliberate disinclination to identify racism as a meaningful explanation for inequities. These ‘cultural’ differences have been expressed in both new and familiar stereotypes, from the welfare cheat, who is disinterested in the well-being of her children, to the trope of the African earth mother, both images articulated by participants in this study. Despite the obvious contradiction in these two images of black womanhood, the cultural explanation is used to account for both stereotypes; whether it is a black woman’s casual indifference to her children or her affinity for nature, these are commonly offered and understood in neoliberal contexts as an expression of an underlying and undeniable reality of black culture (Mullings, 2000). And it is in this same culture that (individual) solutions to inequities will be found (Spence, 2012).

Against these dominant ideologies that shape their lives, black women endeavour to assert themselves as fully human subjects (Samantrai, 2002). This is not to suggest that black feminist theory calls on black women to create flawless and narrow visions of black womanhood, nor does it discount the structural barriers black women face as they develop their subjectivities. For example, the question of authenticity can shape how black women resist oppressive representations. How can we criticize depictions of black womanhood, especially those featured on *reality* television, without invoking a politics of respectability (Ward, 2015) that suggests that ‘respectable’ behaviour is the most appropriate method for overcoming oppression? On the other hand, how do black women express an affirmative sense of self against dominant constructions of black womanhood while refusing the burden of representing an entire community? In the example I describe below, African-American women seek to reflect the diversity of black female experience by producing multiple alternative images of themselves. While these images do not cohere neatly and sometimes reflect problematic politics, that they exist at all is evidence of black feminist consciousness and resistance (Lawson, 2002).

In the United States, where much black feminist theorizing occurs, breastfeeding rates among black women are disproportionately ‘low’. While public health authorities have created targeted campaigns to increase breastfeeding rates in African-American communities, there is also concerted effort on the part of black breastfeeding mothers to promote breastfeeding through initiatives like Black Breastfeeding Week and the creation of social media groups to share advice, support and motivational images of black women breastfeeding. For some of these women, especially those who are middle-class, their decision to breastfeed represents the opportunity to ‘set a community standard’ (S.K. Carter & Anthony, 2015), evoking the classed history of the African-American women’s club and church movements (Collins, 2000; Litt, 2000). The celebration of black breastfeeding women as good mothers, providing the ‘best’ for their children, is directly contrasted with the pathologized images of black motherhood that circulate in US society (Bezusko, 2013; Bloch & Taylor, 2014; Collins, 2000; Roberts, 1991).

However, not all black mothers accept breastfeeding as a measure of good motherhood. For some black mothers, especially those who are working-class, the rejection of breastfeeding for its animalistic, sexual connotations and the additional opportunities it provides for state surveillance leaves space for the development of a more communal vision of motherhood in which neighbours, friends and relatives help each other to manage childrearing responsibilities (Blum, 1999). Embracing this community mothering (Collins, 2000), some black women refuse the demands of exclusive, child-centered motherhood associated with and arguably, only possible for, white, middle-class women (Forna, 2000).

These conflicting self-definitions demonstrate black women’s capacity to draw images of themselves that challenge dominant societal notions of black womanhood and also demonstrate the complexity of self-definitions as inevitably shaped by the contexts in which they are created. The construction of these images can shape black women’s experience of motherhood, directing them towards or away from philosophies like attachment parenting. The purpose of this research study is not to suggest that one or the

other is the correct or ‘authentic’ image of black womanhood; instead, I examine the different paths black mothers travel as they negotiate constraining discursive constructions, noting how they are informed by age, social class, citizenship and other factors. This purpose is articulated in the three findings I discuss in the forthcoming chapters, examining first, how the tradition of self-definitions and self-valuations might influence black mothers’ assertion of themselves as experts. Second, exploring how black mothers express their attachment to and claims on the British and Canadian nations. And, finally, how their attachment to their respective nations and their engagements with AP might affirm gendered ideals of caregiving and childrearing. As I address these findings, I attend to how the mothers’ experiences of parenthood are intersectionally framed by different social locations.

3.1.2 Black women confront the interlocking structure of domination

Recognition that the oppressive structures that constrain society are shaped by race, gender *and* social class is a foundational element of black feminist theory. The history of black feminist theorizing in the United States, for example, is centered on a rejection of the white feminist foregrounding of gender and the black nationalist emphasis on race to the exclusion of black women’s (and similarly multiply located groups’) experiences (Wane, Deliovsky & Lawson, 2002). Out of this rejection the concept of intersectionality emerges and posits that approaching discrimination and oppression through a “single-axis framework” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 39) not only erases those who experience more than one form of oppression, particularly black women, but also limits the theoretical potency of anti-oppressive politics (Crenshaw, 1989).

Though there is some question of its applicability beyond the North American setting in which it was conceptualized (Collins, 2009), in this study I use intersectionality to examine how race, gender, social class and other as yet unnamed expressions of identity and power shape and constrain black women’s experiences of mothering in British and Canadian contexts. I build on the theoretical interventions identified by Bonnie Thornton

Dill and Ruth Zambrana which call attention to how intersectionality centers the experiences of oppressed groups, focuses on both group and individual identity, considers different expressions of and relationships between “domains of power” and directs these insights towards social justice initiatives in order to make real change (2009, p. 5; Collins & Bilge, 2016). These interventions motivate my concentration on black mothers and my decision to use their experiences as a lens through which to examine attachment parenting as both an expression of neoliberal notions of citizenship and subjectivity and a tool of resistance against forces that seek to disavow the value of care and interdependence by and among black mothers, among others.

As an analytical strategy, intersectionality facilitates an analysis of black motherhood that is built from black women’s lived experiences. Through an intersectional approach I can attend to the different and sometimes contradictory or unexpected ways in which race, gender, social class, national origin, marital status, employment and other factors manifest themselves in black women’s narratives. While I do not attempt to fully explain every instance of these manifestations, such an attempt is not a requirement of intersectional analysis (Bowleg, 2008). Instead, the use of intersectionality necessitates an orientation that is always open to the ways mutually constitutive oppressions affect individual experiences and structures. Intersectionality allows for recognition of the complex interplay of structures as they constrain and inform black women’s lives and influence women’s experiences of motherhood.

3.1.3 Black women intertwine intellectual thought and political activism

One of the most important features identified by Patricia Hill Collins in her development of black feminist thought is the knowledge-building capacity of black women. Though it is rarely recognized in the academy and other traditional institutions of knowledge and learning (Wane, 2002; Brewer, 1993), black women’s thinking, theorizing and organizing has played a crucial role in the survival of black communities. Black women have grounded their activism in concepts like ‘intersectionality’ even when their activism is

not identified in these terms. As Njoki Wane (2002) describes, black women have long expressed the “fundamentals of Black feminist theory in their everyday lives and within their communities” (p. 30).

The marrying of theory and practice that this principle expresses is also evident in black women’s experiences of motherhood. As my analysis in the chapters that follow suggests, black mothers’ approach to parenting is informed by attention to the context in which they raise their children (Cooper, 2010). They draw on knowledge about parenting from a variety of sources, from mainstream or state-endorsed parenting suggestions to spiritual and culturally centered approaches to childrearing, and recognize the political implications of their parenting choices for both their children and their own subjectivities.

This principle of black feminist thought is the theoretical basis upon which this research is posed. The capturing of black women’s everyday experiences is crucial for the development of critical analyses of their experiences and their position in broader structural hierarchies (Brewer, 1993). It is upon this experience that the social justice initiatives central to black feminist thought are formulated. Rather than abstract theorizing, the purpose of black feminist thought, and the analytical tools it develops, is the protection and improvement of black women’s lives. Similarly, the aim of this project is not a theoretical exploration of the entanglements of attachment parenting and race but an articulation of how ideas about ‘good’ motherhood have real, material effects on the lives of black women. In so doing, this research aims to offer much needed insight into the raced features of motherhood and mothering and attend to the potential policy implications that follow, serving as a resource for social change.

3.1.4 Black women recognize a distinct cultural heritage (or transnational blackness)

The critical interpretive black feminist framework that I apply in my study of AP also attends to the transnationality of black women’s lives as mothers and workers; as they are located as citizens and non-citizens within the UK and Canada, and as they experience interlocking oppression and exercise different forms of political activism to press these

states for recognition and equity. Indeed, some black women grapple with the shifting meanings of identity as they cross borders, as they acclimatize to the demands of living in new countries, and as they come to terms with structural forms of gendered racism. These themes are evident in the scholarship that captures black Canadian feminism and black British feminism.

Both British and Canadian expressions of black feminism are integrally tied to and center the transnational experience in their analyses and politics. Black Canadian feminism is developed from the experiences of a diverse group of black women who differ across “class, sexuality, geography and national origin” (Wane, et al., 2002, p. 14). The experience of migration, whether recent or historical, plays a significant role in the shaping of black women’s experiences in Canada and thus informs their political organizing (Massaquoi, 2007; Norwood, 2013; Wane, 2009; Wane, et al., 2002). Migration plays a similarly important role in black British feminism, with close reference to how colonial relations shape black people’s migration from former colonies to the “mother country” (Perry, 2015, p. 61; Fisher, 2012). In fact, the very foundation of black British feminism is its attention to the transnational nature of oppression and resistance, expressed, for example, in African, Caribbean and South Asian people’s decisions to claim ‘black’ as a political identity (Anim-Addo, 2014; Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Fisher, 2012; Samantrai, 2002). Though the use of blackness as a political identity has since fallen out of favour (Fisher, 2012), it continues to inform how black British feminists organize today (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). Black British feminist organizing continues to be grounded in cultural specificities while simultaneously addressing shared experiences of racism, manifested, for example, in recent work on migrant mothers’ experiences (Erel & Reynolds, 2014) and black women in the academy (Maylor, 2009).

The themes at the center of British and Canadian black feminism are exemplified in the works of African Canadian feminist writer Notisha Massaquoi and black British feminist scholar Tracey Reynolds. In the telling of her own experiences of coming to terms with her identity as the child of African immigrants living in Canada, Massaquoi articulates

the complexity of the black diaspora's experiences. She argues that African people's experiences in Canada are characterized by "oscillation" (2004, p. 142), between an imagined home in the country of origin and minority status in the Canadian nation. These struggles reflect the need to consider black people's experiences contextually, attending to the "dynamic nature of transnational flows" (2004, p. 140) and its effects on black people's sense of self.

Reynolds' study of Caribbean mothers in the UK also points to these effects, revealing the complexity of these women's lives as they create "new modes of cultural identity," drawn from both Caribbean cultural traditions and the "particular social realities of being black and British" (2005, p. 48). For these mothers, cultural identity is "fluid, transient, [and] mobile" (2005, p. 51) and shaped by an array of factors, including experiences of racism and dominant ideas about nationhood, belonging and cultural difference.

Reynolds' analysis demonstrates the importance of locating experience within specific context; her participants' sense of self is shaped not only by location and audience but also by generational status. For example, Reynolds' third generation participants were more likely to see themselves as black British first, Caribbean second than her first and second generation interviewees. Reynolds' arguments illustrate how black women engage with the realities of living in Britain while relying upon a "transnational Caribbean cultural consciousness" (2005, p. 69) to ground their identities and practices as mothers.

Both Massaquoi and Reynolds identify collective memory as playing a significant role in the formation of black women's subjectivity in the Global North. The notion of collective memory demonstrates the importance of attending to transnational movement in the analysis of black women's lives, regardless of the women's date of arrival in Canada or the UK. Shared experiences of migration, whether recent or historical, shape black mothers' identities and reflect a core principle of black feminist theory. This principle anchors an analysis of black women's experiences of attachment parenting by acknowledging both the transnational aspects of attachment parenting itself and the effects of globalization and migration on black mothers' lives.

The transnational dimensions of attachment parenting are made apparent by how the philosophy draws on practices 'from' "traditional societies" (Green & Groves, 2008, p. 523) in the Global South and uses the 'happiness' of children in these societies as evidence of the success of AP, erasing the unequal relationship between the North and the South. The transnational dimensions of AP have the potential to influence black mothers living in Britain and Canada in a multitude of ways. AP might positively represent what they imagine to be 'home' leading them to object to the philosophy's white, middle-class appearance in the UK and Canada. Alternatively, AP might symbolize outdated and possibly 'uncivilized' practices that they have many reasons, some of them racialized, to avoid. From the perspective of the state and the general public, the image of attachment parenting as ancient and originating from the 'unsullied' cultures of the Global South could shape perceptions of black women as mothers and citizens. For example, if black women are imagined as recent arrivals, originating from the same 'primitive culture' as the philosophy of attachment parenting, how is their mothering understood? If black women are assumed to be familiar with attachment parenting, how is this read by the state and wider society?

3.1.5 Limitations

Black feminist theory recognizes black women's capacity for resistance as well as the intersecting oppressions that necessitate that resistance. Most importantly for this project, it offers a transnational perspective on black women's experiences that attends to their local and global realities. However, the theory has two potential limitations. The first limitation is in relation to black feminist thought's reliance on the notion of a standpoint, which has been criticized for its dependence on experience. Tracey Reynolds (2005) articulates one such criticism, arguing that the concept of experience is ill-defined and promotes "images of authentic and essentialized black women" (p. 21). Collins (1997) provides a response to this criticism, arguing that standpoint theory is less concerned with "individual experiences within socially constructed groups than [with] the social conditions that construct such groups" (p. 375). The focus on groups' "shared histories" (Collins, 1997, p. 376) as the basis for both standpoint theory and black feminist thought

thus does not seek to articulate a particular truth about individual black women or claim that all black women have identical experiences. Indeed, the existence of multiple self-definitions as I described above is evidence of this. The purpose of black feminist theory is to provide an argument about the nature of intersecting oppressions and global power relations and their effects on black women as a group (Collins, 1998). The very notion of theorizing through “everyday lived experience” is directly tied to this experience as a group (Collins, 2010, p. 15).

Linked to her critique of the ill-defined nature of experience, Reynolds further posits that only certain kinds of narratives of black women’s experiences are considered valuable and these narratives are usually produced by African-American theorists who have, to-date, dominated black feminist theorization (2002). This is not to discount African-American feminists’ contributions. Rather, Reynolds points to the ways this singular story of black women’s experiences can ignore the experiences of black women outside the United States and indeed, outside of the Global North. A similar point is made by Notisha Massaquoi (2007), who recognizes the influence of African-American scholarship in the Canadian context and seeks to articulate a particularly Canadian view of black feminist theory. It is through these articulations that black feminist theory’s application beyond the borders of the United States is made evident. This is accomplished by drawing on British and Canadian black feminisms that foregrounds the specific complexity of black women’s lives at the same time as attending to their shared experiences (Anim-Addo, 2014; Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Wane, 2009).

Massaquoi points to the transnational dimension in black feminist theory in its recognition that black women face “common challenges that are differently organized and resisted” (Collins, 2000, p. 235) and relying on this interpretation, I argue that black feminist theory can be utilized to examine black women’s experiences in locations other than the United States. By employing standpoint theory, black feminist thought offers a lens through which to examine social reality and facilitates a way to understand specific and global contexts through the eyes of black women who are located in them. Through

black feminist theory, I develop a “situated standpoint that emerges from rather than suppresses the complexity” (Collins, 1998, p. 228; Wane, 2009) of black women’s lives. The intention is not to portray a singular image of black motherhood - in fact, such an endeavour is not possible given the diversity of the women I interviewed - but to offer an analysis of attachment parenting rooted in the experiences of women who have engaged with it, detailing all its complexities and contradictions. For these reasons, I argue that experience remains an important location from which to begin an analysis.

Although widely associated with the experiences of African-American women, in fact, black feminist praxis is evident wherever black continental and diasporic women have encountered and resisted colonial, sexual and patriarchal violence (see for example, Norwood, 2013 who provides a concise summary of black feminist activism in Africa, North America and the Caribbean). Moreover, although the term is deeply contested among and between black women for reasons related to race, social class, nationality, sexuality, disability and ethnicity, black feminism engenders the epistemological specificities, similarities, and differences that emerge from the shared experience of colonial patriarchal domination that all black women have faced, and continue to face. In other words, at the center of black feminism is an appreciation of the shared “histories of oppression resulting from slavery, colonialism and racism” (Wane, et al., 2002, p. 15) while simultaneously acknowledging a diversity of experience in black women’s lives. Drawing on these shared histories, black feminist theory contributes a conceptual framework that “encapsulates the universality of intersecting oppressions as organized through diverse local realities” (Collins, 2000, p. 228). Therefore, black feminist theory constructs experience as both rooted and relational, recognizing its specificity and its link to a larger global context. This theory facilitates my analysis of attachment parenting by acknowledging that black women’s experiences with the philosophy are both entrenched within their specific Canadian and British contexts and shaped by global relations that, among other things, refashion the ‘primitive’ cultural activities of people in the South as the enlightened choices of privileged Northerners. This theory also enables an analysis of

black women's mothering as it is framed by transnational dynamics of "placement, displacement, and movement" (Massaquoi, 2004, p. 140).

My methodological and theoretical choices reflect these aspects of black feminist theory. By conducting a comparative study of black mothers in the UK and Canada, I draw attention to the ways black women's lives are "situated within specific historical and geographical locations" (Reynolds, 2002, p. 601). In emphasizing both the similarities and differences between the two sites, I argue both that black women have a shared history of racial oppression (Reynolds, 2002, p. 596) that may be reflected, for example, in both countries' Caribbean-specific immigration policies, and that each woman's experiences may be shaped by a myriad of concerns specific to their community, education and class position, to name just a few axes of difference. These collective similarities and individual differences are taken up in the examination of the following research questions:

1. How do black women engage with the philosophy of attachment parenting? How do they craft different views of AP that allow them to see themselves as subjects? How do these experiences influence how women manage neoliberal policies?
2. How does the state contribute to or impede this process? How is attachment parenting and intensive mothering taken up and promoted by the British and Canadian states?
3. What can black women's experiences tell us about the way race, gender, and class shape the promotion of intensive mothering? How do black women use popular parenting practices creatively?

To address these questions, I translate my theoretical framework into a qualitative, intersectional methodology which uses semi-structured, in-depth data from interviews to develop non-generalizable insights about how black women experience and engage with AP in two neoliberal contexts, Canada and the UK. An intersectional methodology expresses one of the core theoretical contributions of black feminist thought, intersectionality, building on a long history of black feminist theoretical work that asserts the value and particularities of black women's perspectives (Combahee River Collective,

1977; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981; Roberts, 1993). An intersectional methodological approach begins “with the experiences of groups that occupy multiple social locations and finds approaches and ideas that focus on the complexity rather than the singularity of human experience” (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 2). Through this approach, I draw on the contributions of feminist research that “centers women’s experiences, produces research for women and incorporates reflexivity into the process of knowledge production” (Conti & O’Neil, 2007, p. 65), while crucially facilitating an analysis of women’s lives that acknowledges the “matrix of domination” (Collins, 2000, p. 18) that structures their experiences.

This project’s methodology is also transnational in its scope, collecting data from black mothers living in the UK and Canada. Black feminist theory’s attention to the transnational nature of black women’s lives shapes the intersectional, cross-national methodology employed in this study. As I argued above, any examination of motherhood must be situated in a “transnational matrix of domination” (Collins, 2000, p. 231), attending to both the specificity of local experiences, such as black women’s historical and contemporary patterns of migration in each country, and the larger global inequity they uphold. By collecting data from black women in two countries, I acknowledge that the experience of motherhood is shaped not just by broader patterns of racism and sexism but also by the fact of its occurrence in a “particular cultural context” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 112). Acknowledging this cultural specificity challenges not only an essentialist view of oppression but represents a commitment to “transnational feminist practice” (Massaquoi, 2007, p. 7) central to an intersectional feminist approach.

3.2 The study

Over the course of eleven months between June 2015 and May 2016, I conducted qualitative, in-depth interviews with nineteen black women living in the UK and Canada. The data was collected in two stages, the first, during a 10-week research trip to the UK where I was a visiting PhD student at the University of Bristol. The second stage took place in Canada and was longer and more protracted, beginning in December 2015 and

ending in May 2016. Participants in both countries were largely concentrated in small geographical areas (the south of England in the UK and southern Ontario in Canada), reflecting broader patterns in the geographic distribution of racialized minorities.

At either the beginning or the end of each interview, I asked mothers to complete a demographic information form (see Appendix C), collecting information such as their ethnicity, age, highest educational achievement and number and ages of their children. The women were aged between 24 and 44 with more than half in their thirties. Eleven of the interviewees were born in either the UK or Canada while the remainder named countries in North America, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean as their places of birth. In order to protect participants' identities, I have not named specific countries nor have I recorded their occupations in the table that follows. Only three women were single at the time of the interview while the others were either married or in common law relationships. All of the women had pursued some post-secondary school education with four women holding graduate degrees. I asked participants to identify their class position, a question which provoked much fruitful, rapport-building conversation, and have recorded the women's verbatim answers. Most women identified themselves as middle-class or higher. The women had thirty children between them, aged between 1 month and 12 years. Further, two participants were pregnant at the time of the interview. Nine of the nineteen interviewees had only one child, seven had two and the remainder had three children, including the two who were pregnant. Tables 1 and 2 summarize this information on the pages that follow:

Table 1: Demographic information (Interviewees in Britain)

Name	Age	Place of birth	Marital status	Education	Class	Children (age)
Angela ⁸	35	UK	Married	Bachelor's degree plus	Middle-class	1 daughter (2 years)
Barbara	38	UK	Married	Graduate degree	Middle-class*	1 daughter (1 year)
Claudia	40	North America	Living with partner	Graduate degree	Middle-class	Twin boys (20 months), expecting
Demita	26	UK	Single	Bachelor's degree	Middle-class	1 son (3 years)
Eleanor	33	UK	Married	Post-16 qualification	Working-class	2 daughters (12 and 6 years), 1 son (4 years)
Florynce	29	UK	Married	Bachelor's degree plus	Working-class	1 son (6 years), 1 daughter (6 months)

⁸ All names are pseudonyms. The * indicates that participants stated that they are middle-class now but have working-class backgrounds or origins.

Gloria	34	UK	Married	Post-16 qualification	Middle-class	1 daughter (8 months)
Harriet	34	UK	Married	Bachelor's degree	Middle- class*	1 son (3 years), 1 daughter (1 month)
Ida	41	Africa	Married	Bachelor's degree	Middle-class	1 daughter (3 years), 1 son (8 months)
Jayaben	44	Asia	Married	Graduate degree	Middle-class	2 daughters (6 and 3 years)

Table 2: Demographic information (Interviewees in Canada)

Name	Age	Place of birth	Marital status	Education	Class	Children (age)
Kimberlé	24	CA	Single	Started Bachelor's degree	Working- class	1 son (3 years)
Lorde	33	North America	Married	Bachelor's degree	Upper middle-class	2 sons (4 and 2 years), expecting
Margaret	28	Caribbean	Married	Bachelor's degree	Middle-class	1 daughter (16 months)

Notisha	34	CA	Married	Bachelor's degree	Middle-class	2 daughters (3 years and 1 year)
Olive	28	Caribbean	Common law	College diploma	Working-class	2 sons (3 years and 2 months)
Patricia	41	CA	Common law	Some college	Working-class	2 daughters (6 and 3 years)
Rebecca	38	Caribbean	Married	Graduate degree	Middle-class	1 daughter (13 months)
Stella	37	CA	Single	Bachelor's degree	Mid-high class	1 daughter (4 years)
Tracey	31	Africa	Married	Bachelor's degree	Middle-class	1 daughter (5 months)

3.2.1 Recruitment

Participants were primarily recruited online. I posted a message (see Appendix A) calling for participants and providing a short summary of the study, including the “small compensation” offered for participation, on several location-, parenting- and ethnicity-based online groups hosted on a variety of websites. Locations were chosen based on the reported proportion of the population listed as ‘black’ in census and other informal sources and thus included Toronto (CA) and certain boroughs of London (UK). I also posted the call for participants on a new UK-based participant recruitment website. Further, I also contacted or visited over fifty churches, community centers, nursery schools, play groups, radio stations, libraries and other similar sites for recruitment purposes but this approach was largely unsuccessful. Only one participant was recruited

through this strategy, the remainder were either recruited online or through existing networks.

All flyers and online posts included email contact information so that potential research participants could initiate contact. Whenever I received an expression of interest from a potential participant I replied with a short explanation of the research project and what participation would entail. I also attached the letter of information and consent form (see Appendix B), which among other things, detailed the “small compensation” participants would receive (£10 in the UK, \$15 in Canada). Potential participants were sent this information to read before agreeing to participate. I then arranged interviews with those individuals interested in participating. Participants received their payment, in cash, at the beginning of each interview, along with a note explaining that the payment was a token of my gratitude for their participation in the research. I chose to compensate participants in recognition of the time and resources required to participate in research (Head, 2009).

In the UK, I conducted ten interviews in locations chosen by the participants to best suit their schedules: four took place at cafés, three in participants’ homes, two were conducted over Skype and one took place in the participant’s office at work. One of the Skype interviews began as an in-person interview held at the public library. However, we ended the interview early for several reasons, including the participant’s daughter’s interruptions, and completed it via Skype a week later. The average interview was just under 90 minutes long. In Canada, I conducted nine interviews, one took place in the participant’s home and the remainder were conducted in cafés and restaurants. The average interview was 82 minutes long.

All interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder and were guided by an interview guide I devised before data collection began (see Appendix D). The interview guide framed rather than strictly determined the discussion between the participants and I. The guide was broadly divided into two sections. In the first, I explicitly asked participants about their understanding and practice of attachment parenting; what did they know about it? Where did they hear about it? Do they associate any particular practices with it? The

second section focused on participants' specific experience of parenthood; what was the most difficult part of parenthood? How did they divide childcare with their spouse? These sections often overlapped especially for those participants who identified as attachment parents.

3.2.2 Interviews as social situations

One of the key differences between feminist and traditional, mainstream approaches to qualitative research is the feminist rejection of "positivist-empiricism" (J.M. Hall & Stevens, 1991, p. 16). The positivist approach to interviews frames the participant as the source of a truth which an objective observer can identify and reveal. An intersectional approach instead views knowledge as "partial, local and historically specific" (Sprague, 2005, p. 41) and centers the relational, dialogic nature of the research encounter (Collins, 2000). In particular, an intersectional feminist methodology attends to the researcher's contribution to the production and negotiation of meaning, viewing the interview and the analysis developed therefrom as an interaction and co-creation (Best, 2003). In this study, I employed the open-ended interview as a means of developing this co-creation, a method that is widely understood among feminists as a promising method that can fulfil many of the principles of feminist research. Interviews offer one way to access people's experiences of the everyday and cede them the authority to narrate their own experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Kirsch, 1999). Narrative authority is especially important for populations who have been marginalized in broader society and in the history of research, such as black women. In a cross-national study, narrative authority can also facilitate access to cultural specificities in women's experiences. Interviews, then, are well-suited to an intersectional feminist project that focuses on black women's experiences in two countries and how these experiences "may reveal [obscured] aspects of reality" (Collins, 1986, p. S15).

However, interviews, even feminist ones, are not without their tensions and complications. As many scholars have argued (Acker, Barry & Esseveld, 1983; Kirsch, 1999; Oakley, 1981), the intimacy and connection interviews can encourage can

sometimes have negative consequences, including “a participant’s sense of disappointment, broken trust, [and] even exploitation” (Kirsch, 1999, p. 27). The interview setting often evokes imbalances in power and authority that feminist methodologies attempt to reduce. A feminist interview, then, requires another central principle of feminist research; reflexivity. Reflexivity requires researchers to identify and consider the impact of their own personal and theoretical assumptions on the research process, both in the field and in the work of analyzing and theorizing. To monitor and engage with these assumptions, I kept detailed field notes and, as I describe in the next section, developed my accounts of the interviews based on these notes and the audio recordings of the interviews.

Fundamentally, reflexivity requires researchers to attend to how power operates in the research relationship and attempt to address or mitigate power imbalances where appropriate and problematize the notion of power itself. As I discuss in more detail in a later section, my experience of conducting interviews in the UK and Canada reflected the complexities named above. For example, I had limited time for data collection in the UK and for the first few weeks struggled to recruit participants. The traditional power balance that positions researchers as more powerful than participants shifted as I felt under additional pressure not only to find women who were willing to talk to me but to ensure that they particularly enjoyed the research interaction so that they would be more likely to recommend me to their networks.

Another risk that can arise with interviews is related to the feminist principle of unearthing women’s “subjugated knowledges” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 113). The idea that previously unarticulated aspects of women’s experiences deserve “greater visibility” (Oakley, 1981, p. 48) is noble but can be problematic in a number of ways. During data collection, I was aware of the possibility that the unearthing of hidden knowledge may be something women who practice attachment parenting do not desire. Though attachment parenting has grown in influence in the past twenty years, some of its tenets are still constructed as ‘extreme’ by the media and broader public. The furor that accompanied

Time magazine's infamous May 2012 'Are you mom enough?' cover story is evidence of the derision that women who practice attachment parenting are sometimes subjected to. In her study of natural mothering, a different but related contemporary parenting philosophy, Chris Bobel (2002) describes how groups that resist social convention can be suspicious of academic intrusion. Bobel found that her status as a self-described "quasi" (2002, p. 175) natural mother granted her some legitimacy as she engaged in her project. This pathway to credibility was not available to me as a non-mother, let alone a non-attachment parent. I did find that some participants, especially those who were not enthusiastic attachment parents but nonetheless viewed the philosophy as a measure of 'good' motherhood, treated the interview as a space in which to test the extent to which they met the standards of AP. I write about this in more detail in the section of the chapter dedicated to reflexivity.

Interviews also reveal the complexities of "political identity management" (Conti & O'Neil, 2007, p. 75). Feminist research ought to involve the building of "mutual dialog" between researcher and participants and, as R. Campbell, Adams, Wasco, Ahrens & Sefl (2010) suggest, this is particularly true of feminist interviewing. Building on Oakley's (1981) influential insights, they argue that researchers sharing information about themselves with interviewees is part of a feminist effort to undermine traditional power imbalances in the research relationship. However, sharing between researcher and participants can raise difficult questions about whether and when to share political beliefs.

Given the sometimes derisive manner in which attachment parenting is represented, and the deeply emotive nature of parenting decisions generally, I was cautious about how much of my opinions I shared with participants with regards to my own beliefs about parenting philosophy. I was conscious of respecting those participants who expressed appreciation and excitement about having the opportunity to discuss their parenting style, especially those who practiced a version of AP. It has never been the intention of this project to suggest that people who practice AP are victims of false consciousness nor is

my aim to dismiss attachment parenting as a ‘bad’ parenting approach. However, I was also aware that the purpose of the research interaction was not to engage in a debate about the ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ of AP but rather to discover the way participants engaged with the philosophy. With this in mind, I always made sure to answer participants honestly when they asked my opinion. For example, at the end of our interview, Rebecca asked me whether I thought that I would practice AP in the future. I answered yes, truthfully, but also told her that I was concerned about what I might have to give up to fulfil the remit of attachment parenting. Such a disclosure was only possible because Rebecca had already expressed reservations herself about the full commitment AP seems to require. In this way, I ‘managed’ my opinions about AP, sharing when asked but also measuring the tone of the interaction. My disclosure of my feelings about AP brought my interview with Rebecca to what felt like an appropriate end with each of us having shared our personal views on the complicated world of parenting and suggests the co-construction of meaning that anchors my broader analysis.

The practice of political identity management is also available to participants. Though they participate in the research as interviewees who answer rather than ask questions they are able to ‘manage’ their narratives both in how they choose to answer questions (if they answer them at all) and in the additional opportunities to alter their stories offered to them during the member checking process. Member checking in qualitative research is often discussed as performing two related roles; first, as one strategy of ensuring the ‘validity’ of the data collected and of the research project as a whole, and second, as a method of actively including participants in the research project (Koelsch, 2013). Shortly after transcription was completed I sent each participant a copy of their transcript and an invitation to make comments or have any piece of data removed. The purpose of distributing transcripts was twofold. Building on the criterion of lived experience black feminist theory uses to measure credibility (Collins, 2000), the first aim was to confirm that participants felt comfortable with the representations of themselves that might feature in the thesis. The second purpose was to keep those interested in the project apprised of my progress. While only five of the nineteen participants responded to my

member checking email, all five responses were positive and suggested that I had fulfilled both purposes. One participant informed me that she was so pleased with the transcript that she intended to print out a copy to keep for her young daughter to read in the future, signaling the importance she had assigned to the narrative she had created in the interview and reminding me of my responsibility to depict participants respectfully.⁹ Another participant sent me a recent photo of her child who had been present at our interview the year before. While I am aware of the possible dangers of participants feeling regret about sharing intimate information during an interview (Kirsch, 1999), by conducting member checks I offered participants the opportunity to respond to these dangers by either altering their narratives or withdrawing from the study altogether. That none did suggests that intimate over-sharing was not a problem for the participants in this study.

For some participants, it is not regret that they experience after sharing intimate details but happiness. During one interview a participant shared not only intimate information about her own life and family that I did not directly ask about but was nonetheless relevant to her experience of motherhood, she also expressed that she felt able to state beliefs that she felt could not be expressed in polite company. She laughed as she told me “good job my name’s not attached to this.” This participant reveled in her anonymity and her ability to tell the ‘truth,’ revealing the ways in which participants can sometimes seize the interview as an empowering process. This unexpected “subjugated knowledge” made the data richer and more intriguing, particularly given the subject matter. Especially in the contemporary context, discussions about mothering are often caught between individualist narratives about each mother doing ‘the best she can’ and dogmatic beliefs

⁹ It may also be indicative of the more ‘empowering’ stance to mothering this participant took throughout the interview and the persistence of generational modes of parenting, even as state and popular advice recommends ignoring childrearing recommendations from family members and participants themselves, this one included, often disparage the advice they received from their own families. I attend to these tensions in my analysis of participants’ maternal experiences.

about what defines 'good' motherhood. Anonymity allowed this participant to navigate this dilemma in a more straightforward manner.

Interviews are "embodied interactions" (Burns, 2003, p. 230). Situating the body in research is an important feminist practice more generally but is especially important in the study of black women, whose bodies have been imagined as "overexposed, abject and grotesque" (Henderson, 2010, p. 3) in Western culture and as the site of ongoing labour and reproductive exploitation and threats to the neoliberal state (Blum, 1999; Collins, 2000). Neoliberal ideology has also inspired greater attention to the maternal body (Lee & Jackson, 2002; Tyler, 2011) with an accompanying 'good' mothering discourse that focuses on birth, breastfeeding and other embodied practices. Interviews offer a significant site for the interrogation of these intersecting constructs and how "embodied power dynamics have the potential to dis/empower both researcher and participant in the interviewing interaction" (Del Busso, 2007, p. 310). During the interviews for this project, embodied interactions revealed much about participants' views and experiences of motherhood as well as demonstrating the complexity of power in the research relationship. Unsurprisingly, most of the embodied interactions centered around participants' maternal identities manifested, for example, in children being present at nine of the nineteen interviews. One interview that had been going well until that point was brought to an awkward end when the participant's baby started crying and she felt conflicted about whether to start breastfeeding. She had mentioned her ambivalence about breastfeeding in public during the interview and although she had stated that she had become more comfortable about doing it with her second child, her reluctance to breastfeed in my presence suggested that it was an ongoing concern. Our interview had begun to wind down at that stage and had already generated rich data but I wonder about what could have been missed in the closing stages of the interview. The traditional power assigned to researchers in such an interaction was upended with the participant's level of comfort determining how the interview ended. Nevertheless, the opportunity to view the participant negotiating the public display of mothering was a valuable one.

In other interviews, the children's presence offered insight into how the participants translated their stated parenting philosophies into practice. For example, although neither Demita nor Olive mentioned their approach to discipline in the interview itself, their young children's presence and the repeated disruptions that inevitably occurred enabled me to *see* rather than *hear* their philosophy on discipline. Seeing their version of AP in practice enabled a richer understanding and unique angle on the experience of parenthood. Similarly, watching Tracey interact with her young baby, especially her habit of narrating their interactions, provided more context about her experience of first-time motherhood. She would often ask the baby questions such as "are you teething?" or "are you tired?" articulating her attempt to develop her own expertise and demonstrating the uncertainty that many first-time mothers experience especially during babyhood. Philosophies like AP offer the suggestion of certainty and 'rightness' in circumstances where the answer is often not absolutely clear (Fox, 2006). Viewing these nineteen interviews as embodied interactions enhanced my analysis of the experience of motherhood as well as enabling a reflexive examination of the complex way power operates in the research relationship. I continue this discussion in the section on positionality.

3.3 Data analysis

3.3.1 Transcription

I transcribed all the interviews and aimed for a verbatim record of the digital recording. I completed the transcription of each interview over several days, transcribing between ten to twenty minutes of interview per session. When the transcript was complete, I listened to the entire interview again while reading the transcript to ensure that any errors were caught and corrected. This final stage was especially useful as listening to the whole interview in one sitting often made previously inaudible sections clear and helped to build a more complete picture of the interview itself. I made the deliberate decision not to employ a professional transcriptionist due to previous experience with qualitative research during which I found that transcription was an important first step in the data

analysis process and that valuable insights could be generated during this first stage of translating the data into text. I had a further, methodological reason to transcribe the interviews myself; for at least two participants, my assurances that I would be the only person who would listen to the digital recordings was a crucial part of the consent process. Thus, in addition to this ethical commitment, transcribing the interviews myself was part of my ongoing commitment as a feminist researcher to building rapport and trust with participants. As I have suggested above, my decision to complete transcription enabled me to grow more familiar with the data, spending many hours listening and re-listening to the audio recordings to ensure ‘accuracy.’¹⁰ It also allowed me to reflect on the data in both its written and aural form which as Poland (1995) points out, contain “inherent differences” (p. 292).

My approach to transcription acknowledged it as an “interpretive activity” (Poland, 1995, p. 298) and was informed by intersectional feminist methodological principles. While, as I state above, I focused on capturing participants’ words in the most accurate manner possible, I recognized the limitations of this effort. Audio recordings and indeed the transcriptions derived therefrom are not a “replication of objective reality” (Tilley & Gormley, 2007, p. 382; McLellan, MacQueen & Neidig, 2003; Poland, 1995). As I argue above, interviews themselves are a co-creation (Best, 2003; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Oakley, 1981; Poland, 1995) and as I compiled the transcriptions and began data analysis, I relied both on the information participants provided during the interview and on demographic forms *as well as* my own impressions of how the interview went, drawn from field notes written shortly after the interview and the memories of the interview that were evoked as I transcribed a few months later. While some methodological advice suggests that, in

¹⁰ I put the word in quotation marks to note my reframing of mainstream standards of rigour, validity and reliability in ways that reflect feminist and anti-racist critiques of these terms for their failure to acknowledge the socially constructed nature of knowledge (Jackson & Penrose, 1993; Poland, 1995; G. Rose, 1997). I do not assert that the transcripts are completely accurate renderings of the interviews or even of the audio recordings, though of course, I made a strong attempt at complete accuracy.

some cases, partial transcriptions are sufficient for analytical purposes (McLellan, et al., 2003; Poland, 1995), my black feminist methodology required full and detailed transcripts while maintaining participants' confidentiality. My methodological approach centers lived experience and the formation of knowledge through dialogue (Collins, 2000, p. 260) and thus relies upon as complete a record as possible of not only participants' words but our conversation as a whole.

Audio recorders can only capture one (albeit, significant) part of an interview interaction, the rest, including "the emotional context," body language, the atmosphere of the meeting place and so on must be gathered from field notes and the researcher's recollection and thus any transcripts produced from audio recordings cannot strictly said to be 'verbatim' (Poland, 1995, p. 291). Detailed field notes were integral for helping me to record this context. The conversations that participants and I had before and after the interview often helped me get to know the participants better and therefore contextualize the data collected. For example, during one interview, a participant repeatedly emphasized how much she enjoyed staying at home with her children during her maternity leaves and stated that if money was not an obstacle, she would not return to work. However, during our conversation after the formal interview ended, she told me about her passion for future educational and professional qualifications (as many of her childless friends had achieved). This information about her led me to view her interview in a different light, particularly drawing my attention to her struggles to negotiate her enjoyment of motherhood and her career aspirations. This 'contradiction' reflects many mothers' difficulty with trying to balance work and parenthood in a social context that expects excellence in both arenas while providing little support to accomplish it.

3.3.2 Data analysis

My data analysis strategy is best described as thematic analysis, defined as "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The thematic analysis approach is theoretically flexible and is "equally applicable in analyses with a focus on commonalities, differences or contradictions"

(Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 395), making it an apt choice for this research project. Using this approach facilitates an analysis that generates themes that are drawn directly from the data as well as identifying patterns that reflect my research questions.

My adoption of thematic analysis is informed by my larger methodology which is rooted in black feminist thought. My theoretical framework rests on the notion that, due to their position in the matrix of oppression, black women have an “epistemic advantage” (Sprague, 2005, p. 41) and therefore unique insight to offer. As I have stated above, a black feminist epistemology views “lived experience as a criterion for credibility” (Collins, 2000, p. 257) and acknowledges the importance of individual narratives in the formation of critical knowledge claims about black women’s lives. For this reason, I began the data analysis process from my participants’ experiences, using their articulation of experience of motherhood to identify broader themes. This approach is expressed in the two-step coding process, which I devised and describe below.

As I transcribed the interviews, I made notes about potential themes and highlighted key quotes. I collected these first indications of possible themes in a separate Word document so that they would not influence my two step-coding plan. The first step in this plan is line-by-line coding (Noble & Smith, 2014). I imported the interview transcripts into NVivo and read through each transcript, dividing it into its component elements and describing “key words or phrases” (Noble & Smith, 2014, p. 3) as they appeared in the transcript. I carried out line-by-line coding in sections, with data from the UK coded first followed by data from Canada. I then compared the two sets of codes to ensure that codes devised during this first stage remained consistent and relevant. The codes devised in each data set were fairly similar with a few context-specific exceptions, such as greater discussion of electoral politics in the British data which can be explained by the fact that data was collected shortly after a general election. By the end of this first stage over four thousand codes had been created.

The second stage of coding was a more selective activity (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012) and involved organizing codes into larger themes. These themes included, for example:

balancing work and parenthood, division of parenting labour, embodied parenting practices and racialized approaches to parenting. This process identified themes that appeared repeatedly in a single interview and across several interviews. The criteria used to develop themes at this stage included quantity, especially noting those themes that appeared in every interview as well as identifying those themes that spoke to the research questions. The fact that, ‘balancing work and parenthood’ for example, appeared in all nineteen interviews helped to focus my analysis of how these black mothers engaged with attachment parenting. For the women in this study, the ability to perform ‘good’ mothering, whether informed by AP or not, was constrained by their need to earn a living and for some, their investment in themselves as working women. While some women managed to strike this balance successfully, others struggled to manage their ambition to reach their career goals and their desire to raise their children ‘well.’ Furthermore, the popularity of attachment parenting and its creeping appearance in state policy compounded this tension. Even those who articulated AP in ways that deviated from the version espoused by the Sears, particularly rejecting the equation between good mothering and staying at home, grappled with contradictory feelings.

Themes that were recorded as repeatedly occurring in single interviews were also noted during this stage. Women’s stories of traumatic births, development disorder diagnoses, hobbies, postpartum depression, future career plans, relationship breakdowns and so on all enabled the development of a fuller, more complex picture of these mothers’ lives. Such stories have also informed my thematic analysis by contextualizing the themes I have singled out for discussion within the particular circumstances described in the women’s narratives about their lives. For example, Rebecca’s experience of belonging, a theme I discuss in greater detail in chapter six, is inseparable from her account of herself as a black woman immigrant in Canada. Eleanor and Stella’s future career plans are tied up in their racial identities and their financially conscious approach to parenting. Through their stories, I advance an analysis of attachment parenting that is grounded in lived experience and attendant to the contextual politics that shape women’s lives.

These two stages fulfil my methodological commitment to centering the participants' experiences and acknowledging participants' framing of their own experiences, in keeping with a black feminist methodology. They also facilitate the balance between "individual uniqueness" (Denzin, 1994, p. 510) and shared experience central to my black feminist standpoint. This is especially important for this project given the diversity of opinion about the central philosophy I analyze, attachment parenting. Because I draw data from women who enthusiastically champion attachment parenting, women who reject its precepts as freakish and those who fall somewhere in the middle, it is crucial to note both unique stories and common threads that were woven across these women's lives. Through this approach, I was able to include so-called negative cases, representing and respecting the views of those women who, for example, found balancing work and parenthood a remarkably straightforward endeavour.

The second phase of coding was interpretive, drawing on my black feminist theoretical lens, especially "core themes of work, family, sexual politics, motherhood and political activism" (Collins, 2000, p. 251). I found that, for example, while I had approached the data looking for race to appear explicitly, the participants often described their racial identity in terms of belonging, for example, by referencing a connection to Caribbean identity and culture. Connecting this expression of belonging to ideas about 'good' parenthood and citizenship was a direct result of my black feminist theoretical lens, which posits that black women draw on a "distinct cultural heritage" (Taylor, 1998, p. 235) to both survive and resist oppression in their everyday lives, and which enabled me to see how this manifest in women's narrations about attachment parenting and their experiences of motherhood more generally. This interaction between participants' ideas of themselves and my theoretical framework demonstrate the iterative, cyclical nature of qualitative research and my commitment to knowledge as a co-construction (Collins, 2000). As the three findings I describe in this thesis demonstrate, my analysis is drawn from themes identified throughout the coding process and during transcription.

My adoption of a thematic analysis acknowledges both the theoretical contention that black women have shared experiences of oppression that grant them valuable insight into how society operates (Collins, 1989) and the claim that each participant's experiences are shaped by their specific location in the matrix of domination. Attention to both these realities influenced my decision to maintain three separate lists of codes and themes; one based on British data, one based on Canadian data and a final list that combined the two (see Appendix E for an example). In this way, I developed context-specific analyses as well as those that address the shared experience black feminist theory champions. This approach allowed me to attend to earlier identified motifs, such as race, responsibility, and citizenship while also acknowledging the topics individual participants identify as important to their understanding of themselves as mothers, including, the notion of belonging. This approach coheres with a black feminist epistemology in its valuing of lived experience and the formation of knowledge through dialogue (Collins, 2000, p. 260).

3.4 Reflexivity

In this section of the chapter I address my feminist-informed approach to reflexivity, with a specific focus on its salience for this project's black feminist theoretical framework and intersectional feminist methodology. This discussion requires contemplation of positionality, both my own as researcher and that of the participants in this study, and how our respective positions complicate notions of insider/outsider status and power dynamics in the research process more generally. Here, I pay attention to how race and motherhood shaped research interactions. In the concluding section of this chapter I build on these insights to describe how reflexivity influences the ethics of this project. I follow Guillemin and Gillam (2004) in identifying reflexivity as an "*ethical* notion" (emphasis original, p. 262) and argue that the ethical parameters of this project cannot be discussed or understood in isolation from the attempt "to make explicit the power relations and the exercise of power in the research process" (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 118). Ethics are shaped by power and thus these sections build on one another, viewing reflexivity and ethics in conversation with one another. I use reflexivity to expand and

complicate the notion of ethical research practice, for example, pointing to the gaps between the basic ethical requirements emphasized by institutional ethics review boards and the actual experience of conducting research. While the examples I describe here do not amount to major ethical dilemmas or breaches they nonetheless remain important to note and examine how such “ethically important moments” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 265) shape analyses.

Reflexivity in feminist research is understood as “the process through which a researcher recognizes, examines, and understands how his or her own social background and assumptions can intervene in the research process” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 129). An intersectional feminist approach is specifically attuned to these power relations, recognizing the “differential effects” (Collins, 1998, p. 211) of the intersections of race, gender, class and other axes of difference and their impact on research. Black feminist theory foregrounds the relationship between power and knowledge (Alinia, 2015) and thus influences how I take up reflexivity (Nencel, 2014), especially the call to use lived experience as a “criterion of meaning” (Collins, 2000, p. 258), that is, to measure my research by its ability to reflect the lives of black women while also remaining committed to producing knowledge that creatively meets the standards of fellow black feminist scholars and the dominant Eurocentric, male-centered academic system (Collins, 2000, p. 266). Through this articulation of reflexivity, I examine my assumptions, recognize that my knowledge is developed as the result of dialogue both with participants and with other researchers and hold myself accountable for the conclusions I reach (Collins, 2000, p. 265). Further, reflexivity necessarily requires a recognition of positionality not only in terms of experiences of oppression but also of privilege. Following Hesse-Biber (2007) and Ramazanoglu (2002) who rely on Harding’s concept of strong objectivity, my intersectional feminist research methodology requires continuously examining what “specific power and privilege” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 130) that researchers bring to their work at every level of the research process. A methodology that is centered on representing the lives of black mothers must reject the exploitative turn traditional research demands, especially in the context of Eurocentric academic institutions’

historical engagement in oppressive research practices that have “reinforce[d]...negative images” (Daniel, 2005, p. 54) of black women.¹¹

There have been a number of critiques of how reflexivity has been adopted as a central principle of feminist research (Nencel, 2014; G. Rose, 1997; Turner, 2000). These include objections to purely cerebral and detached accounts of reflexivity that fail to take seriously the body (Turner, 2000), challenges to reflexivity strategies that assume that the nature of the research relationship is “predefined” (Nencel, 2014, p. 76) and critiques of the representation of reflexivity as a modernist panacea for unequal research relationships (Lather, 2001). In response to these critiques, I aim to articulate my reflexive approach by treating neither my positionality nor that of the participants as entirely static or fixed. The ‘assumptions that can intervene in the research process’ are contextual and require careful deconstruction. Despite my commitments to feminist research principles of inclusion and co-creation, for example, I recognize that participants do not always want to enthusiastically participate and make “the research their own project” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 271). The recruitment challenges and the limited response to transcript member checks (only five out of nineteen participants replied to the summaries of their transcript) demonstrate this reality but do not absolve me of responsibility to remain respectful of participants’ narratives and limit any contributions to the perpetuation of their oppression (Daniel, 2005). Throughout this section, I address the unexpected ways in which power can manifest itself during the research process, complicating the theoretical advice offered by institutional ethics boards and feminist methodology textbooks. While intersectionality remains a useful tool to tease out these dilemmas, it cannot pre-empt or solve all challenges.

¹¹ My work captures the tensions generated by participation in a Eurocentric, male-centered academic system and the challenges a black feminist theoretical and methodological framework pose to such a system. In this way, I follow a black feminist sociological tradition that has creatively and strategically used Eurocentric standards to confront and oppose the objectification of black women (Collins, 1998, 2000).

3.4.1 Positionality and power

I begin the process of taking up a reflexive research stance by attending to my values and beliefs and how they might shape the different stages of knowledge production. In this section I describe my positionality as a black feminist researcher collecting and analyzing data from black mothers living in the UK and Canada. I also consider and complicate notions of insider and outsider status through my articulation of an intersectional feminist methodological approach. By drawing attention to the ways in which intersections of race, class, immigration status and other social locations shape lived experience, an intersectional feminist approach challenges the assumption that women researching women or black scholars researching black communities will lead to greater rapport and deepened insight (Bhopal, 2010; Twine, 2000). I challenge the notion of a “special relationship” (Edwards, 1990, p. 480) between similarly located researchers and informants by drawing on Patricia Hill Collins’ notion of a “situated standpoint” (1998, p. 228). An intersectional feminist framework appreciates both that my identity as a black woman may not automatically lead to good rapport with participants who are also black women and that my childlessness may not inevitably create great social distance between researcher and participants. Attending to the multiple and intersecting aspects of my identity and social location as well as those of the participants including age, parenting status, citizenship, national origin, class, ethnicity and so on paints a more complex picture about the researcher-researched relationship and the power dynamics thereof. This also requires acknowledging that this process is always partial (G. Rose, 1997); while this section captures how I see my positionality informing the research process there are inevitable gaps borne of my inability to see *all* the ways in which aspects of my identity shape the production of knowledge. Further, I negotiate between recognition of the situated nature of the research relationship and the multiple and complex ways in which power can manifest itself in the process *and* the interpretive authority and power I hold as the sole author of the academic text that summarizes this process and the social and cultural capital that accompanies this authorship. Attending to these tensions is a

demonstration of the continuous process of self-reflexivity required by feminist scholarship.

I undertake this project as a black South African woman with all the implications of complex identities and their negotiations in research. While I share a racial and gender identity with most of the nineteen participants, we do not share ethnic affiliation. Fifteen of the nineteen women either named themselves as or mentioned having Caribbean or West Indian heritage while the remaining four named Africa, the United States and South Asia as their ethnic heritage. Although my experience of blackness is informed by the time I have spent in the UK and Canada, South Africa remains the dominant influence in my experiences and politics and produces a distinct identity I do not assume can seamlessly conform to Caribbean blackness. Further and significantly, I am not a mother and thus am not able to draw on any personal experience of parenthood in my analysis of these issues. My interest in attachment parenting began in 2004, when my older sister became pregnant. Together, we discovered an online world of what I called ‘baby politics’ in which debates raged about car seat legislation, delayed vaccinations, circumcision, elimination communication, natural birth and of course, breastfeeding. At the time, I believed that attachment parenting was the best way to parent but I wondered about the implications for working mothers. I was also curious about whether an allegedly ‘natural’ and African parenting style was in fact being carried out by South African women. Most importantly for this project, I was curious about how a black mother living outside of Africa might reconcile allegedly African parenting practices with state and public attitudes that pathologized and dismissed black motherhood.

This curiosity forms the basis for this project and while I imagine that AP is very likely to inform my own experience of mothering in the future, my motivation in conducting this research was to deconstruct its appeal and examine the ways in which such a philosophy can increase the burden of already encumbered and responsabilized mothers, dovetailing neatly with neoliberal ideology. My goal is not to dismiss the alternative ways attachment parenting can be enacted as described by participants such as Demita and Eleanor, which

I discuss in greater detail in chapter five. Indeed, my position is not that attachment parenting is ‘bad’ but rather that it is important to critically analyze how it comes to be represented as ‘good’ in the interests of responsabilizing and disciplining women in ways that elide social and racial inequalities.

The notion that the matching of certain social characteristics such as race or gender between researchers and participants is “destiny for access and rapport” (Mazzei & O’Brien, 2009, p. 359) has been increasingly challenged. Mazzei and O’Brien (2009) attribute this challenge to the influence of intersectionality, which they argue complicates a simple one-to-one matching of characteristics by drawing attention to the number of different ways a researcher and their participant(s) might have shared *and* different demographic attributes. Given this complexity, whether and to what extent certain characteristics are deemed more relevant to accessing and building rapport than others is determined by what Mazzei and O’Brien call the “field setting” (p. 363), comprised of the participant’s own ideas as well as the cultural milieu in which the research interaction takes place. Thus, as Beoku-Betts (1994) argues, the development of a research relationship, such as gaining insider status, is “based on a process of negotiation rather than granted immediately on the basis of ascribed status” (1994, p. 417).

As I have argued above, positionality is situated (Shinozaki, 2012) with different social locations or potentially, *intersection* of locations, appearing as significant at different moments in the research process. This dynamic approach to positionality shapes and complicates insider/outsider status. Most scholars agree that both insider and outsider status are capable of generating insightful data but also of producing disadvantages. Insider status is widely understood as leading to more quickly developed and potentially deeper rapport but can sometimes discourage research participants from providing detailed explanations of their views with which they assume the researcher as insider is already familiar (Bassett et al., 2008). Outsider status is constructed as a potential solution to this problem and, further, that the researcher’s lack of familiarity and connection to other members of the community allows participants to confide in the

researcher with the expectation that disclosed information will remain confidential. For many outsiders, however, their main obstacle is access. During this project, the multiple aspects of my identity I named above combined differently to produce a wide arrange of benefits and disadvantages, or what Patricia Hill Collins and Josephine Beoku-Betts might call “outsider-within” status.

3.4.2 Blackness and childlessness

As I have argued above, I did not approach research interactions with the assumption that shared blackness with the research participants would generate deeper or more easily achieved rapport. In fact, the limitations of the power of shared blackness were made clear to me even before the first interview, during recruitment. The vast majority of participants in both the UK and Canada were recruited online. In the UK, I began the recruitment process by selecting nursery schools, playgroups, churches, community centers and other potentially child-focused arenas to call and visit. After failing to generate much interest from several such calls and visits, I focused my attentions on the internet and identified several websites and forums likely to be frequented by black mothers. Though some of these sites required me to display a photograph of myself, others did not, which meant that any advantages that racial matching might have granted me were only partial. In many cases, participants would have no way of knowing my racial identity before we met and thus were unable to ascribe any advantageous “insider status” (Beoku-Betts, 1994, p. 413).

The UK’s particular history of racial/ethnic identification, political solidarity and organizing also complicated the assumed straightforward relationship between researchers and participants who share race and gender. At least one participant named this history in her explanation of why she decided to contact me and participate in the research. Despite identifying herself as ‘South Asian’ on the demographic form she filled out before the interview began, during the interview she articulated a black identity drawn from the political movement that began in the 1960s in which people of African and Asian descent formulated a political identity based on solidarity across ethnic and

cultural lines and resistance against fascism, racism and colonialism. Any sense of insider status I might have gained in this scenario was challenged by my only passing familiarity with this history of anti-racist activism. This unexpected challenge to my personal definition of blackness notwithstanding, rapport-building with this participant was successful and generated data that complicated my construction of 'black motherhood.'

Shared blackness was foregrounded and receded at different moments throughout data collection. The process of negotiating "cultural norms" (Mazzei & O'Brien, 2009, p. 363) and determining outsider-within status was made particularly complex by the fact of the research taking place in two countries with which I have a significant but brief history; the UK, where I have spent only five years, on-and-off, and Canada where I have lived for the last four years. In each country, my connection to the other study site opened room for rapport-building. In the UK, my status as a 'Canadian researcher' positioned me as a 'foreigner' and therefore as an outsider. This was further complicated by the fact that my flyers named an obscure Canadian university as my sponsor, which I believe contributed to the difficulties I had trying to recruit participants. The 'University of Western Ontario' did not legitimize me as a researcher in the same way that 'University of Bristol' might have. Therefore, while participants made statements such as "you know what black people can be like" (Gloria), thus relying on their presumptions of our shared blackness to explain approaches to family, for example, they also explained incidents they thought I might not be aware of as a recent arrival in the UK. This included, for example, the Claridges breastfeeding-in-public incident or Florynce's explanation of why a black British person might take offense at being referred to as 'English.' In Canada, participants similarly relied upon a notion of shared blackness with one participant explaining that she was happy to participate in my project because she "loved doing things for us" (Stella) while simultaneously assuming my foreign status, often asking me to explain how midwifery or maternity leave worked in the UK. By viewing the research interaction as an "interactive, negotiative process" (Mazzei & O'Brien, 2009, p. 363) one recognizes the ways in which both sameness and difference can shape rapport-building and access as well as serving as an analytic resource, offering new insights into the data.

When I told one participant that I was originally from South Africa she became excited and seemingly more enthusiastic about the interview. At the beginning of another interview the discovery that the participant and I had lived in the same city years before allowed us to build rapport as we discussed familiar landmarks and events. At the end of another interview, the participant explained that now she knew what I was “about” (Eleanor), she would be happy to share my call for participants with her networks. Given the tone of our entire conversation until that point, which included her articulations of the numerous ways white and black people are ‘just different,’ I understood Eleanor to be suggesting that now that she had confirmed that I was not just black but also ‘committed to blackness’ as well as to AP, she felt comfortable introducing me to her friends and acquaintances.

Shared blackness most certainly contributed to rapport. Shortly before our meeting, Stella texted me to inform me that she had arrived at our agreed meeting place and jokingly said that I would be able to spot her easily because she was “the only black woman here.” After my interview with Notisha, we talked about the city I currently live in and half-laughed, half-lamented about its lack of diversity. With Tracey, shared African-ness facilitated a lively discussion of the current political situations in our respective ‘home’ countries while shared immigrant status shaped my interaction with Rebecca as we laughed about Canadians’ tendency towards over-politeness. Each of these examples demonstrate how aspects of shared identity and experience and the resulting insider status can lead to a more relaxed and comfortable research interaction and thus, richer data (though of course, as I mentioned in the section on interviews, this kind of interaction can lead to over-familiarity).

However, this status also came with “responsibilities of blackness” (Beoku-Betts, 1994, p. 418), which was expressed in the interviews in two ways: first, in the politics of embodied interactions and second, the duty scholars of colour often feel is owed to the communities they belong to. Regardless of the quality of research training completed, as a novice researcher it can be easy to overlook the extent to which interviews are

embodied interactions (Del Busso, 2007; Reich, 2003). As I discuss above, I began the research process aware of how my social position, particularly my race, gender and maternal status, might influence interviews in unexpected ways. The difficulties I experienced during recruitment attest to this; I could never take it for granted that my blackness would guarantee the recruitment of black participants and this was especially true in situations where my race was not obvious, as I describe above. However, I did not anticipate that participants' reading of my body would go beyond mere confirmation that I was also a black woman and enter into the framework of respectability politics. During several of the interviews held in Canada, I became aware of the numerous ways in which my appearance was not 'respectable.' During discussions about the difficulties of raising black children in a racist society, Lorde and Notisha mentioned the importance of keeping their children's hair neat and tidy as well as ensuring that they were always well-dressed in an effort to protect their children from racist stereotypes. Immediately following these comments, I recall feeling anxious about my admittedly relaxed appearance. While I had made the effort to dress professionally, it was not on par with the decidedly fashionable outfits and hairstyles worn by these participants. While they never alluded to my hair or dress in a derogatory fashion (in fact, two complimented my hair), the anxiety I experienced forced me to think more reflexively about the political expediency of respectability politics, especially in a context widely understood as 'postrace.' Lorde and Notisha's decision to focus on appearance as a strategy to protect their children from racism was no less valid than, for example, Margaret's strategy of Afrocentric celebration.

The second instance during which I felt the "responsibility of blackness" particularly acutely was with those participants who endorsed attachment parenting. Throughout the research process, I had endeavoured to remain aware of my responsibilities not only as a black researcher but also as a researcher working with communities who, in the history of academia, have been subject to exploitation (Daniel, 2005; Mullings, 2000). In their articulation of attachment parenting as a protective mechanism for the black community, some of the participants in this project reinforced these responsibilities. For these

participants, insider status carried with it the expectation that I would protect both the black community and the potentially powerful role AP might play in it (Narag & Maxwell, 2014). This expectation underlines the importance of reflexivity in this project and shapes how I have gone about presenting participants' narratives, giving due respect to the potential for resistance participants identify in AP.

Before fieldwork began I anticipated that my childlessness would be the major division between participants and I. I expected that participants would be curious and perhaps even suspicious about my motivations for studying motherhood when I was not a mother myself. However, it rarely came up as a topic of conversation.¹² Unlike Shinozaki (2012) whose participants viewed her non-mother status as cause for explaining experiences of parenthood in greater detail (p. 1820), participants in this study described their mothering in a manner that assumed I was familiar with the experience. For example, during my interview with Stella she proudly informed me that she had only pushed for under five minutes during the birth of her child. At the time of the interview I did not know that this was far under the average length of time for pushing, especially for a first child, but Stella did not feel the need to explain. The fact that the study was explicitly about their experiences of motherhood may have also contributed to participants' assumption that I was familiar with the everyday realities of parenthood. Answering questions about daily routines or sleeping arrangements required them to provide detail but they also often assumed that I understood the meaning of specialist terms like 'baby-led weaning.' Given that baby-led weaning is often named as an attachment parenting practice, it is no surprise that participants expected a research project on AP to be conducted by someone familiar with AP. However, that can also have complicating factors.

¹² When participants did ask if I had children I responded that for now, my PhD was my baby but I hoped to have children in the future. This was not a deliberate attempt to direct the conversation away from my childlessness but simply the way I have responded to friends, relatives and strangers asking me about my maternal status. More often than not, however, answering in this manner shifted the conversation towards my experience of the PhD and academia.

Among those participants who enthusiastically called themselves attachment parents, several assumed that I was doing the research for the purpose of promoting the philosophy among black mothers and thanked me for undertaking such an important task. While writing my thesis, I felt (and continue to feel) anxious about their reactions to my analysis. My anxiety is also underlined by the sense of duty I feel to my participants as a black woman researcher (Narag & Maxwell, 2014). I began this project with the express intent to counter both the history of exploitation that is characteristic of academic research on black communities, particularly black women, and the tendency in popular and academic scholarship on attachment parenting to either omit black mothers' perspectives or, more commonly, to appropriate their experiences to serve as symbolic representations of 'good' motherhood in an imagined 'Third World'. I am also concerned about the potential consequences of an uncritical application of neoliberal ideology as a lens through which to read participants' experiences. Describing such experiences in the language of neoliberal discipline could imply that they are merely dupes or victims of false consciousness. Attending to the meaning they assign to their parenting activities and how this shapes their sense of selves as mothers is an important strategy to counter any appropriative tendencies of neoliberal policies. This is also the point at which anti-racist and feminist scholars' calls to "reflexively evaluate [the researcher's] standpoint throughout this process" (Beoku-Betts, 1994, p. 430) are particularly important. My standpoint as a black person and as a woman are important criteria through which to judge my interactions with participants but I also draw attention to my personal history with attachment parenting and the analytic journey I have embarked upon as I examine this philosophy.

Being read as an insider in this context, that is, as a supporter of attachment parenting, caused me to question how participants' motivations might shape the answers they gave during the interview. Attending to the influence of motivations allows greater analytic insight into the work AP performs for mothers, particularly black mothers. For example, if some self-identified attachment parents chose to participate in the project for the purposes of promoting AP, how might that purpose inform their answers? Would they

only portray attachment parenting positively in their efforts to ‘preach the gospel’? However, as I looked over the data it became clear that even those who most passionately believed in the superiority of this parenting style would nonetheless describe its disadvantages. Olive, for example, admitted that attachment parenting was harder than other types of parenting. Tracey criticized AP for excluding and judging mothers who did not follow its prescripts exactly. Demita described her fears that her child would grow up feeling different and perhaps even like an outcast because of her parenting choices. Each of these women were avid proponents of AP but felt comfortable enough to offer critiques and describe the negative implications of the practice. However, I do not discount the possibility that these critiques were chosen as the least likely to put off interested mothers.

In some ways, the assumption that I was a supporter of AP was conflated with the assumption that I was an expert on AP. Though no participant ever explicitly stated either of these assumptions, interactions before, during and after interviews suggested that this was the case. For example, during each interview I asked participants to describe their definition of attachment parenting. In an example of how successfully attachment parenting has been established as an example of ‘good’ motherhood, throughout many of the interviews, participants asked me not only to confirm that these definitions were correct but also wanted reassurance that they were practicing AP. These requests for reassurance suggest the importance of validation in contemporary parenting discourse (Fox, 2009) more generally, as well as its particular significance for mothers already constructed as failures. Margaret and Patricia were the two clearest examples of this phenomenon with Patricia stating that it was “good to know” that she fit the AP criteria. Both their belief that AP is a form of parenting to be proudly proclaimed and the notion that I had the authority to confirm that proclamation are examples of the complexity of insider status and the shifting dynamics of power in the research relationship. At the point at which I felt least powerful in that my knowledge of AP is purely theoretical, these two participants re-confirmed the power that accompanies a research affiliation with a

university. Regardless of my maternal status, it was assumed that I was a credible authority on attachment parenting.

The decision to recruit participants who had knowledge of attachment parenting rather than only those who practiced AP enabled access to the perspectives of women who rejected AP as a legitimate style of parenting, those who fully embraced it and those who fell in the middle. Each of these loosely categorized groups challenged my ability to control the narrative about attachment parenting. While I am largely critical of AP throughout this thesis, the stories participants told in interviews pushed me to consider the assumptions I had been making about attachment parenting more closely and critically, particularly the ways that women can use disciplinary knowledges to different ends (Heyes, 2006). I am also aware of how the fact of my childlessness may have contributed to my commitment to ‘take participants at their word.’ I do not have my own experience of mothering to draw on when formulating my analysis of attachment parenting and thus must rely not only on my critical and theoretical faculties and resources but must also take seriously, though not uncritically, the perspectives offered by participants, as all black feminist research must.

3.5 Ethics

Throughout this chapter I have signaled “ethically important moments” as they appeared throughout data collection, analysis and the process of writing. Governed by black feminist theory and an intersectional feminist methodology, I have emphasized the importance of treating participants’ narratives respectfully and acknowledging and presenting these women as full subjects as much as such an endeavour is possible given the limitations of the written text. Recognizing the responsibility and power I have to represent participants’ lived experiences is a direct result of engaging in a project of reflexivity. Without attending to the power relations entangled in research relations and how the multiple, intersecting aspects of my identity and that of the participants might shape those relations, ethical research practice is not possible. I have suggested above that there is a gap between what is asked of researchers by institutional ethics review

boards and what takes place in the field. I would argue that this is especially true for novice, student researchers and particularly dangerous for such researchers when they take up critical, emancipatory methodologies influenced by feminism or critical race theory. Belief that one has adequately prepared for fieldwork because one has received institutional ethical approval and that a feminist research methodology will definitively protect you and the people you engage with is not sufficient grounds for ethical practice. Instead, I suggest that reflexivity and ethical practice must be understood in conversation with one another, informing both how data is collected and how it is represented. A feminist methodology can make the questions researchers ought to ask themselves clearer but cannot provide the answers to these questions.

3.5.1 Rigour

One of these questions relates to how best to measure the quality or trustworthiness of the work produced from a feminist research encounter. Producing work that is recognized as credible and dependable is a crucial part of the ethical commitment to create knowledge that benefits participants. The goal of this research project as expressed in the introductory chapter is to critically examine the raced, classed and gendered dimensions of AP philosophy. This goal is undermined if the analyses advanced in this thesis are not deemed trustworthy. Thus, the demand for quality must be understood as not only a theoretical requirement but an ethical and political one. Such an interpretation is necessarily shaped by a black feminist epistemology that centers lived experience as the measure of meaning (Collins, 2000).

However, rather than uncritically adopting positivist, empiricist measures of rigour and reliability, I rely on feminist models of quality research that favour dependability and adequacy (J.M. Hall & Stevens, 1991). Rejecting the notion that there is a single, universal truth to be elicited from data, feminist measures focus on attending to the contextual nature of participants' experiences and the extent to which the research is "relevant and meaningful" especially when judged from the perspective of the research participants (J.M. Hall & Stevens, 1991; Seibold, Richards & Simon, 1994, p. 400).

These are ascertained and achieved through a research process that centers reflexivity, balancing both the significance of identifying recurring themes across data sets and capturing the complexity of mothers' individual experiences and circumstances. By keeping detailed field notes and complete interview transcripts and employing data analysis software that records every stage of analysis, I leave "methodological and analytic 'decision trails'" (J.M. Hall & Stevens, 1991, p. 19) by which the dependability of the research can be examined.

The use of member checks can aid this process and facilitate a more "recursive" view of validity and reliability that emphasizes reflexivity and researcher practice (J. Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 334). J. Cho and Trent (2006) suggest "the explication of researcher moves, thoughts, and theories" as well as, where possible, the ongoing participant involvement in the research process. I described my member check process above but it is worth reiterating the purpose of this process here. Member checking has been enacted not to suggest that interviews and transcripts are capable of capturing an objective snapshot of reality but to access participants' insight about the representation of their narratives. By centering black women's experiences and their perspectives, I aim to present the narratives of both those women who perfectly represent the analyses I develop and those who do not. This is not to suggest that I abandon rigour but rather to assert a different assessment of credibility shaped by the women themselves and informed by a black feminist theoretical framework that stresses reflexivity.

3.5.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

The expectation that participants' identities will be protected is a cornerstone of ethical research practice. Such an expectation is heightened for critical, emancipatory work especially when that work deals with sensitive subject matter. I have suggested above that attachment parenting might fall into that category given that it focuses increasing attention on private and minute parenting decisions. The freedom to parent in a way that some might view as 'freakish' is often connected to racial and class privilege that protects 'eccentric' parents from the potentially devastating consequences that can accompany

alternative lifestyle choices (Bobel, 2002) such as social services intervention and child removal. The need to protect the identities of the participants in this research project, then, is especially important. This was largely achieved through a commitment to confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were assigned pseudonyms which were not listed on consent forms and were stored separately. A list of pseudonyms was drawn up prior to data collection and were assigned alphabetically. In this way, I managed to avoid the risk of “deductive disclosure” (Kaiser, 2009) that could have occurred as a result of participants choosing their own pseudonyms or the use of ‘ethnically appropriate’ pseudonyms (Nestel, 2006).

I have also chosen to limit the amount of information I reported from the data drawn from demographic forms. For example, participants’ occupations are not listed and where possible, I have also avoided naming the specific country of birth of those participants born outside the UK or Canada. Assuring the confidentiality of participants had political implications and required balancing the need for ‘thick description’ commonly associated with qualitative research (Tilley & Gormley, 2007) with my commitment to avoiding the reproduction of stereotypical representations of black women. This is not to suggest that I present a sanitized view of participants’ lives but rather to acknowledge that the narratives I offer in this thesis cannot represent their full subjectivity. As I mentioned above, my commitment to confidentiality also influenced my approach to transcription, balancing the need for full and complete transcripts with the requirement to protect participants’ identities.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the relationship between the black feminist theoretical framework that guides this thesis and the methodological choices made during data collection, analysis and writing. The result of this relationship is an intersectional feminist methodology that centers lived experience and attends to the multiple and intersecting axes of difference that shape these experiences. This methodology (and the theoretical framework from which it is developed) influenced how the research project

was devised, who the target population would be, the choice of method, the kind of questions asked during data collection and the process of interpreting that data. It also required an attention to power in the process of conducting research both from the perspective of participants and that of the researcher. This chapter has been my attempt to examine the numerous ways in which power manifests itself in unexpected ways throughout the research encounter. I argue that without recognition of the influence and malleability of power as well as the situated nature of knowledge, ethical, reflexive research practice is not possible. These issues influence every aspect of the research process and thus cannot be ignored. In the three chapters that follow, I describe the three findings that emerged from my methodological and theoretical approaches.

Chapter 4

4 Attachment parenting and the politics of expertise

In this first findings chapter, I discuss black mothers' deployment of expertise to establish themselves as 'good' mothers. I examine the tensions between attachment parenting expertise as it is laid out in the neoliberally influenced parenting advice produced by the British and Canadian states and how mothers negotiate this expertise in their maternal practice. I use the word 'expertise' to capture what the state identifies as the appropriate techniques for good childrearing, and mothers' responses to and negotiations with that advice. In this chapter, I describe two interrelated findings. First, I detail the ways that AP techniques such as breastfeeding, bed-sharing and babywearing are promoted (or derided) by the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK and the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada. I find that the alignment between the states' parenting advice and AP reveals the philosophy's precarious position as both endorsed and rejected. Second, I examine the ways in which black mothers dialogue with this advice in their attempts to claim and assert themselves as experts. The findings I describe here reveal the ways that parenting expertise is raced, classed and gendered and illustrate black mothers' attempts to negotiate expertise to claim good motherhood.

4.1 Introduction

Scientific expertise has long played a central role in the articulation of good parenting. From the emergence of scientific motherhood in Europe and North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries¹³ to the contemporary promotion of intensive mothering, scientific expertise has informed what the state, the public and mothers themselves believe is the 'right' way to parent. Significantly, both the content of this

¹³ See chapter two for a more detailed explanation of the link between scientific motherhood and attachment parenting.

expertise and the way in which it is communicated has changed over time as social and cultural conditions determine what kind of parenting techniques are praised over others (Roberts, 1993). Today, good mothering is intensive mothering: “a hegemonic ideology that requires mothers to engage in self-sacrifice, consult and follow expert guidance in parenting matters, anticipate and respond to children’s changing developmental needs, express vast amounts of love, and prioritize the children’s needs above their own” (S.K. Carter & Anthony, 2015, p. 517). The injunction to “consult and follow expert guidance” obliges mothers to not only follow the advice offered by health professionals such as nurses, midwives, health visitors and doctors but also to carry out their own research by reading parenting books, watching documentary films and even staying up-to-date with the latest medical research (Thornton, 2011). Indeed, the ‘good’ neoliberal citizen simultaneously conforms to and evaluates medical research to fulfil the responsibilities of an informed consumer. Thus, her “expertise” is narrowly prescribed within a framework that is deceptively organized to present what looks like a range choices and an expression of autonomy (Murphy, 2003, p. 457).

Mothers are expected to parse through complex often conflicting information and come to a decision that best suits their child’s needs especially over and above their own. However, the decision to breast or bottle-feed, for example, is not made in a moral or political vacuum. Though they are framed as choices, they are made in the context of a disciplinary regime that makes some parenting practices more valuable, and more likely to conform to the dominant discourse of ‘good’ motherhood and the broader ends of neoliberal ideology, than others (Crossley, 2007; Murphy, 2003). It is not a coincidence that the parenting behaviours most heavily promoted are those that contribute to the reproduction of mothers themselves as neoliberal subjects as well as enabling the transfer of appropriate values of individualism, freedom, autonomy and self-regulation to babies and children (Thornton, 2011). Further, in the intensified focus placed on the capacity to use one’s freedom to make the ‘right’ choice, the raced and classed features of ‘good’ motherhood and of neoliberalism itself are obscured.

In this era of neoliberal hegemony, a mother's assertion of her own expertise is a risky endeavour. The choices available to women are limited to those deemed appropriate to the neoliberal enterprise. Black mothers' capacity to choose 'well' is limited further by the intersecting realities of racism, sexism and classism, expressed, for example, in the fact that the images available to black women, such as the racialized figures of the 'welfare mother' (Collins, 2000) and the 'baby mother' (Reynolds, 2005), link their reproduction and childrearing to inappropriate dependence on the state. The picture is further complicated for black mothers by the connection drawn between the expectation that mothers do what is best for their children and the belief that such children are future citizens. What is best for a child is to be raised to be a contributing member of society who has been given the required skills to succeed. This expectation is especially heightened for black mothers whose children are already assumed to be burdens on what is said to be an overly generous society and are thus already bad mothers. This burden is addressed through a politics of disposability which requires the "management, regulation, and immobilization" of problematic populations (Dillon, 2012, p. 118; Giroux, 2006). Black mothers cultivate a specific response to the disposability of their children by constructing and performing motherwork (Collins, 2000; Cooper, 2010), drawing on different sources of expertise to sustain their mothering. The work of imbuing their children with principles of independence and self-reliance cannot be understood only in terms of conformity to the "dominant set of cultural repertoires about how children should be raised" (Lareau, 2011, p. 4) or merely the affirmation of neoliberal values but something more urgent and vital; survival (Barnes, 2016; Collins, 2000; Kershaw, 2005). This kind of mothering is rarely afforded public recognition as black mothers are measured against purportedly neutral norms of 'good' parenting that reinforce racial neoliberalism (Rhee, 2013). Beginning from black mothers' experiences and perspectives, I challenge these norms and examine the tension between the expertise as laid down by allegedly objective authorities (the state, the medical community, parenting literature) and the expectation that parenting involves weighing decisions for oneself and doing research.

This chapter will address the following themes as they capture black mothers' negotiation of parenting expertise; first, I discuss the mothers' engagement with intensive mothering, the dominant ideology through which expertise is expressed. Building on the women's descriptions of their parenting strategies, I reveal the particularly racialized construction of expertise black mothers develop in their efforts to claim good motherhood, focusing on their deployment of expertise to claim responsibility for protecting or celebrating their unique black children and evoke a politics of respectability to protect their children from harm. In the second section of the chapter, I turn to the state-produced parenting advice that promotes certain childrearing techniques to guide how all children are raised and which informs black mothers' construction of their maternal expertise. How has attachment parenting (as represented by breastfeeding, bed-sharing and babywearing) appeared in British and Canadian parenting recommendations? Given AP's investment in particular parenting techniques in the early years of childhood and its emergence in a neoliberal context that frames good health as a key indication of good citizenship, I focus on parenting advice and the associated techniques promoted in the health arena.¹⁴

This analysis is situated in a discussion of how more general changes in the constitution of the welfare states in Britain and Canada have shaped parenting, particularly that of racialized groups. I find that black mothers develop their expertise in response to this context, accepting the superior health benefits of breastfeeding while still asserting themselves as good mothers when they 'fail' to breastfeed or breastfeed for 'too long'; drawing on other, more acceptable parenting practices, the value of 'nature' and intensive mothering to reject recommendations to avoid bed-sharing; and naming babywearing as African to claim a particular kind of good black motherhood. Through the participants' insights, I construct a more complex picture of how successfully the expertise espoused

¹⁴ Though I focus on health, AP's rise in popularity can also be read within the context of welfare reform, evident, for example, in the changes in benefit entitlement for lone mothers in both Canada and Britain. The classed features of good motherhood are starkly evident in the expectation that lone mothers return to work during the allegedly crucial early years of their children's lives.

by the Sears and other advocates of AP have promoted this style of parenting. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the women's interactions with experts to illustrate the complex juggling of expertise intensive mothering requires. In their resistance to expert surveillance and power, the mothers assert their own expertise, with some mothers linking that expertise to an African-origin AP. Throughout, I reveal how the women's negotiations of expertise illustrate the raced, gendered and classed nature of 'good' mothering.

4.2 Intensive mothering and expertise

Intensive mothering is the primary mechanism through which contemporary parenting expertise is expressed. The injunction to dedicate oneself entirely, physically, emotionally and financially to childrearing is informed by allegedly scientific expertise about the importance of the first five years of a child's life and the need to build cognitive and emotional bonds during this crucial period. This claim relies on a simplified interpretation of neuroscience research (Lowe et al., 2015; Wall, 2004, 2010) and has informed policy-making in both Canada (Jenson, 2004; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Wall, 2010) and the UK (Lowe et al., 2015; Broer & Pickersgill, 2015). That these claims are made in this period reflects the dominant rationality I described in chapter two; a neoliberal mode of governance that, in its promotion of self-discipline and self-responsibility, seeks to relieve the state of responsibility for providing for the health and welfare of its citizens (Wall, 2010).

To assert that the expertise relied upon and produced by state bodies is scientific is also to assert that this knowledge lacks "ideological or cultural preconceptions" (Raffaetà, 2015, p. 1201), revealing another dimension of neoliberal policy-making. Though what is widely understood as 'science' is produced from and reinforces Western hegemony, the claim that it is culturally and socially neutral abides (Harding, 1998). The parenting practices promoted by the state as 'good' or ideal are drawn from the practices of middle-class families and thus reproduce a class hierarchy when middle-class children are rewarded by parenting practices developed to benefit them (Gillies, 2012; see Lareau

(2011) for further analysis of the classed nature of childrearing guidelines). This is exemplified in the ideology of intensive mothering which informs policy definitions of ‘good’ parenting while precluding recognition of the economic and social resources required to meet its standards (Fox, 2009; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012). Through the promotion of intensive mothering, the neoliberal claim that all citizens begin on an equal footing and are thus responsible for their failures is overlaid with social class, and importantly for this analysis, race.

When it comes to parenting advice for the early years, ‘good’ parenting draws as much from scientific information about developing brains, the value of breast milk and so on, as from reference to ‘natural’ or ancestral behaviour, exemplified in the correspondence between the rise in attachment parenting’s popularity and British and Canadian parenting advice and recommendations that draw on narratives of nature, attachment and bonding. Though the promotion of attachment parenting itself is still seen as extreme (Faircloth, 2013), the philosophy’s encroachment into the mainstream is legitimated by its investment in certain cognate practices also advocated by institutions such as the NHS (Freeman, 2016).

These claims have obvious racial dimensions. In their numerous texts promoting attachment parenting, the Sears offer an expertise informed by frequent reference to the parenting practices of ‘primitive’ groups, claiming that women in Africa “don’t have the benefits of books and studies about mothering hormones. What they have is centuries of tradition” (1993, pp. 263-264). This version of ‘African parenting’ robs African women of the moniker ‘scientific’ and the accompanying social prestige such a description of one’s knowledge carries. This is not to dismiss the value of tradition or experience-based knowledge but rather to draw attention to how the decision to frame ‘African parenting’ in this way serves to elevate the Sears’ social standing at the expense of monolithic ‘African women.’ Furthermore, such a description constructs Western women as discerning, entrepreneurial citizens (Murphy, 2003) against the simple-minded actions of African women, driven by a “cultural script” (Green & Groves, 2008, p. 523). Black

mothers respond to these and other racialized constructions of expertise by, for example, describing AP as ‘just parenting’:

Well, before I read the book and before I went to school I didn’t have a name for it but like I said, like the main points of it, of attachment parenting, I did see from my family. Um, I have three sisters who have kids and they’ve all, they’ve all been worn, they’ve all been, for the most part they’ve all been breastfed and they’ve all shared beds and...those are the main three that keep popping back into my head. Um, but, and same with my mom like we all slept with my mom ’til *chuckles* longer than she’d probably have liked, um, so we, yeah, I do, like after reading the book and going to school then I do have a name for it but before that, it just, that was what parenting was gonna be like, yeah. (Tracey, CA,¹⁵ 31-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 5 months).

While such a description of AP appears to reinforce the Sears’ distinction between the practices of primitive cultures who ‘just parent’ and the modern Western mother, well-versed in the latest scientific studies, I suggest that Tracey’s locating of AP (or at least its “main points”) in her (African) family’s long-established practices implies that the philosophy predates the Sears’ naming and claiming of it. That African mothers have always ‘just’ parented suggests that black mothers have always been good mothers, bolstering Tracey’s deployment of AP expertise to herself claim good motherhood. Black mothers’ capacity to use AP and other forms of expertise in this way is made possible by intensive mothering and its emphasis on maternal responsibility, which work to embody neoliberal values of individualism and self-discipline. This emphasis on maternal responsibility aligns with parental determinism (Lee, 2014a), which posits that parents have the capacity to control and shape their children’s lives and future outcomes and thus, thanks to neoliberal rationality, parents, as individuals, are also made responsible for said outcomes (Wall, 2010). For example, the pressure to enroll children in a variety

¹⁵ ‘CA’ (Canada) and ‘UK’ (United Kingdom) indicates where the participant resided at the time of the interview.

of activities (but not too many) to enhance their intellectual and emotional capacities is manifested in the form of competition as mothers aim for their children to outperform their peers (Hoffman, 2013; Wall, 2010).

Black mothers negotiate responsibility and parental determinism by using expertise in different ways, locating themselves in different positions along what I call the parenting spectrum. As one participant, Jayaben, described it, there is “child-led” on one side, which tends to cohere with attachment parenting, ‘gentle parenting’, ‘natural mothering’ and other child-centered approaches to childrearing. On the other side, there is “Gina Ford” or parent-centered styles that advise scheduling and folding babies and children into adult lives rather than the other way around. Of the nineteen participants, ten women situated themselves nearer to the ‘child-led’ side of the parenting spectrum, five participants viewed themselves as occupying a “middle” (Jayaben), neither child-led nor parent-centered, and the remaining four rejected AP and its associated child-centered approach as “a bit strange” (Claudia). Despite this variety, there was universal acceptance of some “basic constructs” (Hoffman, 2013, p. 77) of good parenting such as the prioritizing of children’s happiness and ensuring that children are raised to be “reasonable citizens” (Angela). The point of contention among the mothers centered on the appropriate methods to go about achieving these aims, expressed most clearly in the women’s articulation of a distinction between expertise as provided by the state and other “legitimized” sources of parenting advice (Hoffman, 2013, p. 82) and a more “practical” or “experiential” expertise (Murphy, 2003, p. 449), drawn from their own experiences with their particular children. The oft-quoted mantra, popularized by organizations such as La Leche League,¹⁶ that each mother is “the expert of her own baby” does not accord with the overwhelming flood of information, often contradictory, provided by doctors, nurses, lactation consultants, childcare providers and public health advertising. Even

¹⁶ La Leche League is an international breastfeeding support organization staffed by volunteers who have extended breastfeeding experience. The organization shares some principal beliefs with attachment parenting.

where the message seems clear, such as in the claim that ‘breast is best,’ there exists a wide variety of ways to accomplish the goal with the likes of Gina Ford advising scheduled feeding and the Sears’ preferring “on demand” feeding (Sears & Sears, 2001, p. 32).

The tension between state and self-derived expertise was exacerbated by all nineteen women’s acceptance of the notion that they, as individual mothers, were mostly or entirely responsible for their children’s well-being and impact on society. The connection between parental determinism and the widely accepted notion that childrearing is primarily a task of “growing a certain kind of moral subject” (Valencia, 2015, p. 1236) means that the consequences for mothers’ expression of expertise are significant, particularly for black mothers. This is evident in the women’s attempts to manage their children’s interactions with wider society, in the realm of education and when facing the threat of racist violence. The distinction between Stella and Eleanor’s approaches to managing their ‘unique’ children and the differences in Lorde, Notisha and Margaret’s strategies of raising respectable children, reveals the intersection of race, social class and gender in black mothers’ deployments of expertise.

4.2.1 Celebrating or protecting the unique black child

Previous scholarship has suggested that social class informs parents’ responses to their children’s educational experiences. In her study of mostly white middle- and working-class families in the UK as they navigate primary school, Gillies (2012) found that the middle-class parents were apt to emphasize their children’s unique attributes, even going so far as to draw the attention of teachers to note and develop their children’s special abilities. Working-class parents, on the other hand, were more likely to downplay their children’s special skills or talents in an effort to avoid attracting unwanted attention and intervention. Like the (white) working-class parents in Gillies’ study, the women I interviewed were also at risk of attracting unwanted intervention. As black mothers, their children were disproportionately more likely to be removed from their homes by social services (Contenta, Monsebraaten & Rankin, 2016; Owen & Statham, 2009). However,

many of them took the opposite approach to that described by Gillies. Stella, for example, spent much of the interview singing her daughter's praises, calling her an "easy" and "mature" child who thrived at school:

She's very mature, you know, she's in school a year early. You know, she's a [year she was born] baby so technically she should be starting JK [junior kindergarten] this year but she's finishing JK this year. And she's in a split level class, JK/SK [senior kindergarten] and she's the leader of the class, you know, the SKs follow her around...she's like "yeah, this is what we're gonna play a-a-a-and this is how you're gonna like it and these are my rules, do you know, if you don't like the rules we can change it just a little bit just so you have some time and you can play with us" (Stella, CA, 37-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 4).

Stella describes her child's leadership skills not as a source of fear or anxiety but rather as a source of pride, a pride I suggest is linked to Stella's efforts to resist the racial stereotypes that circulate about black children. The support and praise Stella provides to her child is contextualized by her daughter's status as the only black child at her school. It is in this context, that Stella develops a racially (and generationally) informed parental expertise:

My mother, um...taught us from a young age that "unfortunately, because of your skin, you will have to work harder than the others, you will have to jump higher and run faster and speak more eloquently than the others...but if you can do that, your life may still be hard but it won't be as hard as you could be if you don't." Um...I didn't ever want to think that I would have to have those conversations with my child. But at three years old when she tells me she wants to have white skin I have to have those conversations with her.

I suggest that, though Stella's celebratory approach echoes the strategies of the white, middle classes Gillies described, her approach is grounded in a kind of racial parental expertise that redefines the project of good motherhood so that it responds specifically to the experiences of black children. Stella's approach can be contrasted with Eleanor who,

in similar circumstances (a mature child in a white-dominated school) chose to withdraw her daughter from mainstream education:

And I noticed that throughout her first years in school, it was a thing of that they used her as an example to the other children. I didn't like that. Some parents would like it but I didn't like it. And it, because of her intelligence, if a situation kicked off between her and another child, she would be the one to get in trouble because they think she knows better so she would be left out, to leave the classroom and miss out on missing class when the child who was actually doing the problem...so I thought, do you know what? It's not-, I don't want her to start her life like that. Especially as a black child and boy or girl, I don't want any of that for my children so I just took her out (Eleanor, UK, 33-year-old mother of two daughters and one son aged 12, 6 and 3).

In this case, Eleanor's assessment of her daughter as having unique abilities was framed positively but had negative consequences, resulting in her being held to a higher standard than other, less "advanced" children. Eleanor viewed the consequences of such exclusion as especially dangerous for a black child and began the process of home-schooling. Black mothers' awareness that racial stereotypes may lead to their children being overlooked or failing to acquire the skills they deem necessary to compete both at school and in future work lives led them to emphasize and celebrate their children's unique achievements. It also influenced the kinds of skills they wanted to teach their children. Despite the distinct responses that Eleanor and Stella took to their unique children, they shared the common interest in expanding attachment parenting beyond the usual confines of baby-related tasks. Their answer to the racism of British and Canadian societies was to focus on imparting financial skills, particularly the ability to start and run one's own business; Stella's four-year-old daughter was already expressing an interest in entrepreneurialism and talked about starting a toy-sharing scheme in their neighbourhood in the summer following our interview, while Eleanor's twelve and six-year-old daughters had both been running separate successful businesses for some time. While these skills would be particularly helpful for their individual children, Stella and Eleanor framed the teaching

of these skills as essential for the black community as a whole, helping the community to prepare for the disproportionate likelihood of financial insecurity by cultivating skills in financial and social support. As Stella explained:

But it's also preparedness because I find that we, as a people, unfortunately we don't...not all but we don't, one, support...each other, you know, um, we don't support each other's businesses. We're complacent at times...Might have to learn a lesson from the white people, you know, in, in that aspect, in finances and stuff.

While I argue that the practice of attachment parenting makes participation in community and other mothering difficult by its focus on individual embodied acts such as breastfeeding and babywearing, Stella and Eleanor frame their approaches to childrearing as having community-oriented goals. They understand their decision to impart these skills as a benefit not only to their child or children but as an attempt to cultivate more financial savviness and intra-community support. However, such a reading of the black community, as lacking the skills necessary to run businesses and achieve financial independence, risks drawing attention away from a more structural explanation of racial inequality. It also reflects a neoliberal reading of the problem of racism and defines the limits of the solution, resulting in what Lester Spence (2012) called “black governmentality” or “secondary governmentalization” which describes the “attempt of already marginalized populations to problem-solve their own condition...further generating inequality in these populations” (p. 155). The expertise used to advance these “technical” solutions to the problem of racism is not of the same sort that Spence describes, such as statistics and social science, but performs the same work by encouraging an individual response to a structural problem; the decision to support black-owned businesses is an admirable one, but is mired in a neoliberal consumerism that disadvantages black people disproportionately. Having said that, in a context in which traditional modes of protest and resistance appear to be less effective (Duggan, 2003) and parents are already pressed for time to dedicate to their children (Wall, 2004), the appeal to financial skills as a strategy to overcome racism is difficult to dismiss. It also has the advantage of conforming to dominant narratives about good parenting in its focus on

preparing children for economically productive citizenship, a narrative from which black parents are often excluded.

Spence's analysis of secondary governmentalization in African-American communities reflects a focus on neoliberalism's effect on intra-racial politics. According to Spence, the expertise exercised on black populations does not originate from outside the group but from within, namely from the black elite. The elite's endorsement of neoliberal techniques of reform serves to disguise their own privileged position within the black community. According to this argument, elites are in this position because they worked hard and thus their success reflects what is possible if only all black people would do the same. Spence's attention to class is pertinent for my analysis, especially with regards to understanding and examining the different modes of expertise adopted by differently located participants. For example, social class and the cultural capital (Lareau, 2011, pp. 10, 361-364) it carries could explain Stella and Eleanor's contrasting responses to their uniquely gifted children. Stella's confidence that her child can withstand and even thrive on the attention drawn by her intelligence and maturity is a reflection of Stella's own security in herself which she linked to her recent career success and satisfaction. She described herself as the happiest she has ever been, a happiness I would suggest is at least partly connected to her secure middle-class status as a homeowner and private school educator.

Eleanor, on the other hand, preferred to cultivate her daughter's talents at home but the self-deprecating tone with which she described her own education ("With her mum that has no degrees [laughs], no teaching skills") suggested insecurity about her abilities. She described her parenting style as requiring a lot of financial sacrifice to maintain but insisted that the cost was worth it, even using it as a tool to improve her children's financial literacy. Financial security marks the distinction between Stella's more public celebration of her daughter's talents and Eleanor's confinement to the private sphere; home education in Britain involves very little government involvement or assessment

(Weale, 2016) allowing Eleanor to ensure her child's optimal development away from the regulating gaze of a racist society.

4.2.2 Raising respectable children

As suggested by Eleanor and Stella's contrasting protective and celebratory approaches, the women in this study adopted a variety of different strategies in their attempts to protect and prepare their children for a racist society. Lorde, Notisha and Margaret, for example, identified appearance as playing an important role in the effort to counter racism but invoked different logics of expertise to inform their decisions. I argue that these logics are located in the context of respectability politics. An acutely classed ideology, respectability politics describes the notion that "minorities can best respond to structural racism by individually behaving in a "respectable" manner that elicits the esteem of Whites as a way to insulate the self from attack while also promoting a positive group image that can "uplift" the reputation of the group" (Obagosie & Newman, 2016, p. 543). Debates about respectability have been reinvigorated recently by Black Lives Matter and the critique it offers of the narratives used to justify the deaths of black people in interactions with the police (Obagosie & Newman, 2016). Though respectability politics can be traced back to early twentieth century black activism, it has garnered renewed interest in a 'postracial' neoliberal context (F.C. Harris, 2014), offering an individual and classed solution to the problem of racism.

In their analysis of how respectability politics informs local news media accounts of officer-involved deaths of black citizens, Obagosie and Newman (2016) distinguish between respectability politics as it operates within the black community and the politics that shape interactions between white people and racialized groups (though of course, these two levels are related). In this section, I focus on the intra-community respectability politics, contrasting the approaches adopted by Lorde and Notisha, on the one hand, and Margaret on the other.

Lorde was born in the United States but had been living in Canada with her Canadian husband for over a decade and at the time of the interview, she had two sons and was expecting her third child. Of all the participants, Lorde was among the most enthusiastic proponents of AP. Not only did it inform her own parenting but it also shaped her work, which involved helping pregnant women prepare for impending motherhood. Lorde was keen to promote natural birth, breastfeeding and the use of cloth nappies, among other parenting activities, because she believed that such practices were best for both babies and mothers. Lorde noted the importance of these insights for black mothers who, for example, were less likely to have access to larger, baby-friendly certified hospitals where such practices are encouraged. During our conversation, it became clear that race played an important role in how Lorde approached her parenting. As she explained:

unfortunately for me, both of my pregnancies [happened at the same time as] a lot of that mess was going on in the States like with Trayvon Martin and it made me painfully aware that I was birthing black men. It made me painfully, painfully aware ... So, when I was pregnant with my sons it made me painfully aware that this is my baby, this is my world, this is my joy but to someone else, it is their nightmare...it is their fear, so...when it comes to parenting and I think most black people have always heard the same, you know, you have to be twice as good...to get half of what they have...it affects my parenting, whether I want it to or not. I think that's why...the things that I teach my son beyond what he learns in books and what he learns at school, it has no choice but whether I want it to, it is second-nature to teach these things to my son. Something as simple as always carrying lotion and lip balm in his backpack at school and you know, why he can't do this or why he can't put this in his hair, it's very simple, it's a very, it's something that you do without even thinking (Lorde, CA, 33-year-old mother of two sons, aged 4 and 2 and expecting a third).

Echoing Stella's narrative, Lorde's awareness of the violence of racism, both past ("most black people have always heard the same") and present, determined, at an 'unthinking' instinctive level, how she experienced the birth of her sons and her approach to raising

them. Such an awareness has clear and significant emotional dimensions and suggests the significance of parental expertise for black mothers as a means of not just raising their children ‘well’ but ensuring their survival. Indeed, the meaning of a well-raised child is inseparable from that child’s survival, as the politics of respectability encapsulate. One of the strategies Lorde employed for helping her sons avoid this violence was ensuring that they always looked their best; no “chapped lips,” “ashy” skin or un-brushed, uncut hair (Lorde). The ideology of respectability politics suggests that black people looking their best works to counter racist stereotypes of them as lazy and feckless but Lorde explains this focus on appearance as a means of keeping her children “safe,” presumably from the violence enacted on Trayvon Martin and others whose deaths are justified by reference to unrespectable appearance and behaviour such as wearing a hoodie or saggy trousers (Obagosie & Newman, 2016). This claim of individual protection is what makes the analysis of the politics of respectability complex; suggesting that moisturized lips and skin can prevent a child from being unjustly assaulted or killed places the onus on members of marginalized groups to comport themselves “respectably” to avoid racist violence. However, one cannot merely dismiss the individual decisions parents make to keep their children safe (Reynolds, 2005). The claim that racist violence is solely the responsibility of the perpetrator is not sufficient protection for children who may be the victim of that violence. Parents seek to provide a shield where few exist and in this case, Lorde selects appearance as one method by which she can protect her children from violence. I suggest that this focus on appearance can only result in the displacement of the goals of community uplift and protection in favour of ensuring the safety of her particular children and thus, reveals the individualist limitations of respectability politics.

This distinction between the safety of one’s own children versus the well-being of the entire community is brought to bear by Notisha, a thirty-four-year-old professional and mother of two daughters. While she believed that her children’s gender was at least one form of protection against the kind of police violence Lorde described, she also cited appearance as another method:

I always wanna make sure that the children look put together, that they don't look, you know, rough, I guess, and I think that's kinda where it's come from, my parents, you know...always wanna make sure that their hair's in place, braided up nice or put in a ponytail or whatever, it's nice, clean, clothes ironed, um, that type of thing, yeah, I think that's instilled from my parents but...I think it could be just in the back of my mind, I don't want people to make an assumption that there's a raggedy black child or something like that, you know what I mean? And like I said, I think I come from...my parents, you know, in the back 'always look put together' you know, 'you wanna make sure you look nice and clean and neat.' Yeah. Always look your best (Notisha, CA, 34-year-old mother of two daughters, aged 3 and 1).

Like Lorde and Stella, Notisha's narrative highlights the persistence of racism as she refers to advice that her own parents gave her during her childhood, linking it to the kind of childrearing she carries out today. This inter-generationally learned response to racism is a common feature of respectability politics narratives, often summed up as 'the talk' black parents must give to their children. However, I suggest that, in Notisha's words, the class implications of protecting one's child from racist stereotypes are laid bare. The purpose of these particular children's moisturized lips and ironed clothes is to distinguish them from their "raggedy" counterparts. This kind of distinction does not require that Notisha *believe* that "raggedy" black children are any less deserving of protection or safety for it to perform the work of suggesting that some lives, middle-class lives, are more worthy than others. The practice of dressing her children well only works if there are "raggedy" children in whose direction racist attention can be drawn instead. In his defense of respectability politics, Harvard law professor and writer Randall Kennedy (2015) argues that adopting a respectable demeanour "may be the fastest way for some blacks to attain a semblance of the lives they want" (para. 28). I suggest that these strategies are only successful for "some blacks" at the expense of Other black people, who serve as storehouses for negative attention. If the original purpose of respectability politics, as identified by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, was to ensure the uplift of the

entire black community, these more individual expressions described by Lorde and Notisha result instead in a maintenance of the status quo with poor black children bearing the brunt of racism. These individual strategies are also well-suited to the neoliberal context in which racism is presented as an obstacle one can choose, through “self-correction” (F.C. Harris, 2014, p. 36) to overcome.

While Notisha and Lorde’s coping mechanism emphasizes a generic, if black-specific¹⁷ image of “respectable” skin, hair and clothing, Margaret suggests a different focus on appearance. Margaret is Caribbean-born but has lived in Canada for more than half of her life. When we met, she had one sixteen-month-old daughter with her husband, who works as a bus driver. When I asked her to tell me about how race informed her parenting, she answered by describing her black-centric approach to building her daughter’s self-esteem:

so all the dolls she has are black, um, the books she has, she has books about black kids, black protagonists and, um, you know, black history, there’s one, she likes books about, with um, photographs, actual photographs, so we have one called *Black is Beautiful* and it has like, you know, ‘my skin is the colour of caramel’ um, ‘my hair is like soft lamb’s wool.’ So it’s very positive, she loves that book so we try to give her books like that with positive black families, images, um, I want her to see herself reflected in those pages and feel important like it’s not just all these white people, there’s black people and there’s black books ... I feel kids need to be empowered in this day and age with black kids getting involved in all kinds of things. They need to know that they’re important and they’re valued and they’re beautiful, you know, apart from the standard beauty you see out there. It’s totally skewed and it’s not fair to these kids, they’re so impressionable. (Margaret, CA, 28-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 16 months).

¹⁷ The purpose of lotion and lip balm is not to approximate whiteness but to avoid looking “ashy” which is associated with a lack of care for oneself.

Like Notisha and Lorde, the purpose of this emphasis on appearance is to avoid some of the ‘trouble’ black children could become involved in. And in this emphasis, it does suggest that the solution to structural problems lies in the children’s appearance and behaviour. While Margaret criticizes the lack of positive black images available to black children, her proposed solution is “empowerment” through imagery rather than a transformation in the broader structures, such as education, that determine black children’s exclusion. The two approaches, focusing on appearance and imagery, adopted by Notisha, Lorde and Margaret reveal the complex contradictions at the heart of black mothers’ attempts to prepare their children to succeed and resist in a racist society (Reynolds, 2005). The women’s descriptions of their appearance and imagery-focused strategies are framed by their naming of themselves as attachment parents.¹⁸ Their descriptions of how to protect black children from harm are contextualized by their investment in attachment parenting, which constrains their ability to engage in a more community-oriented politics; AP’s emphasis on maintaining the mother-child relationship through practices like bed-sharing and extended breastfeeding tends to restrict women’s interests to their own families (Bobel, 2002). However, in their expressed interest in extending their expertise beyond their families, whether, as Margaret describes, through promoting alternative standards of beauty to help “black kids” who are vulnerable to “getting involved in all kinds of things” or teaching more mothers about the benefits of AP practice, as Lorde suggests: “if more people saw it, you’d probably see lots of people breastfeeding, you’d see lots more people baby wearing if they saw it,” the participants complicate this individualist construction of AP (and by implication, intensive mothering). In naming racism as a structural barrier that mothers must teach their children to manage, Margaret, Notisha and Lorde each undermine the neoliberal claim that we are living in a postracial era. Further, in their gestures towards helping other

¹⁸ Lorde refused the title ‘attachment parent,’ and stated that she disliked “labels” but nonetheless called herself a “very hands-on parent” who had only recently stopped bed-sharing with her four- and two-year-old sons.

black kids and their desires to make AP more “normal,” especially among black mothers, the women signal the limitations of the individualist image of motherhood expressed in the ideology of intensive mothering.

4.3 AP and state-produced parenting advice

Black mothers highlight the complexities of attachment parenting practice by drawing attention to the broader social and political context that informs parenting. Their attempts to ensure their children’s survival even as they prepare them for success demonstrate the limits of relying on an individual parenting philosophy to address social injustice and inequity. Nevertheless, such philosophies, particularly as they claim the moniker of ‘science,’ play a significant role in formulating the policies and parenting recommendations that govern all mothers’ experiences. The prominence of attachment parenting discourse in the health and social policy frameworks of the British and Canadian state reflects the highly ambiguous position the parenting philosophy occupies in a contemporary neoliberal context. On the one hand, AP’s emphasis on parents’ individual responsibility for their children’s success neatly coheres with neoliberal premises that aim to reduce the state’s obligation to ensure the well-being of its citizens. On the other, the intense focus on mothering that AP calls for, especially the bond between mother and child, could represent a challenge to neoliberal models of citizenship that value individualism and economic productivity, making visible the work that childrearing requires (Tyler, 2011) and upon which the state relies to replenish the workforce (Bezanson & Luxton, 2006). This ambiguity (or what Hays called the contradiction of modern motherhood) is revealed in the parenting advice I identify here, specifically those related to breastfeeding, bed-sharing and babywearing. In the chapter thus far, I have detailed the mothers’ negotiation of intensive mothering as it facilitates the development of a parental expertise informed by race and class. I now turn to AP as a representative example of intensive mothering that especially emphasizes the power of nature in producing good parenting. The Sears name seven ‘tools’ as the foundation of attachment parenting practice. In the following section, I explicate the appearance of

three ‘tools’ in British and Canadian parenting advice: breastfeeding, bed-sharing and babywearing.

These three activities were selected because they were frequently named as defining features of attachment parenting by the participants in this study and because they are commonly understood as representing AP (Russell, 2015; Liss & Erchull, 2012). British and Canadian state approaches to these three ‘tools’ reflect a wider focus on the early years as ‘crucial’ for children’s social and economic development and therefore, the wider economy (Field, 2010; Jenson, 2004; Lowe et al., 2015; McCain & Mustard, 1999). These approaches also express the shift in attention to “good parenting” (Field, 2010, p. 5) as the solution to social problems such as poverty and inequality. As British member of parliament and author of a 2010 independent review of anti-poverty strategies, Frank Field, explains:

[The task of nurturing children] is not primarily one that belongs to the state. We imperil the country’s future if we forget that it is the aspirations and actions of parents which are critical to how well their children prosper (2010, p. 11).

In other words, while the state plays a crucial role in articulating the parameters of childrearing understood as best suited to preparing children for future contributions to society and ensuring parents’ commitment to this task, such policy statements place the real responsibility on parents, particularly mothers. These ideas are communicated to the general public, and parents in particular, in a number of ways, not least through the promotion of specific parenting techniques as I describe below. While a number of factors inform policy-makers’ focus on these activities, I highlight two in particular and argue that the promotion of these parenting tasks reflects neoliberal rationality, including particularly neoliberal ideas about race and gender, and the dominance of an intensive model of good motherhood. Black mothers’ development of expertise is informed by their engagement with this advice and the neoliberal intensive mothering that they promote.

4.3.1 Neoliberal policies and the state

The context that informs the specific recommendations I examine below is driven by neoliberalism. Though recommendations about infant feeding, sleeping and carrying appear to be purely health-related, I argue that they reflect a wider social policy context that, above all other objectives, seeks to encourage “self-reliance” (Hicks, 2008) as the guiding principle of good citizenship. Many critical scholars have noted the effects of neoliberalism on policy-making in specific contexts (Clark, 2002 for a comparative approach; Bezanson & Luxton, 2006; Gazso, 2012, Polzer & Power, 2016; Wall, 2010 in Canada; S. Hall, 2011; Dowling, 2017 in Britain) as well as its global implications (Peck & Tickell, 2002). Feminist critiques in particular have examined the gendered consequences of the shift from the “mother-carer” model to the “mother-worker” model (Gazso, 2012; Orloff, 2006; Stephens, 2011) in which women’s capacity for paid employment is prioritized above their potential caregiving responsibilities. This is marked, for example, in the introduction of workfare for lone mothers (Gazso, 2012; MacLeavy, 2011) which requires participation in the labour force or a state-approved training program as a criterion of eligibility for benefits. Both the “mother-carer” model, in which full-time mothering is women’s expected occupation, and the “mother-worker” model, where women juggle good mothering around paid employment, are informed by expert claims about children’s developmental needs. In each case, mothers are constructed as responsible for ensuring the optimal physical, emotional and more recently, cognitive development of their children. These shifts have particular implications for racialized women for whom the ideal of full-time mothering has rarely been available (Kandaswamy, 2008; Kershaw, 2005; Roberts, 1995). Women of colour’s capacity for work has long been taken as a given and has contributed to the construction of their mothering as neglectful. The “mother-worker” model does not represent much improvement thanks to the combined effects of concentration in low-paid, low-status jobs, poverty, gendered racism and neoliberal restructuring (Fisher, 2006).

Such restructuring and the consequent policy shifts are constructed and implemented by the neoliberal state. Often theorized as requiring the shrinking of the state, I follow Loïc

Wacquant in his claim that neoliberalism *produces* a new kind of state which performs the necessary functions of circulating and upholding neoliberal values, including individualism, self-governance and the celebration of the market (2012, p. 74). The neoliberal state monetizes welfare and redefines citizenship through the lens of self-sufficiency all the while evading meaningful recognition of the raced, gendered and classed structures that govern society. More than just reducing public spending, the neoliberal state makes strategic use of the state budget to fund particular programs and initiatives that aim to cultivate values of autonomy and self-discipline. For example, the Ontario Early Years centers were created in 2001 to deliver information and awareness to parents about appropriate childrearing approaches rather than provide childcare (Wall, 2004). Such spending is understood as a more efficient use of tax-payer revenue than increasing benefit payments (Field, 2010) or spending to address social housing or poverty (Wall, 2004).

While the scholarship on the neoliberal effect on public policies is vast (see for example Clark, 2002; Polzer & Power, 2016 and others named above), there has also been growing criticism of the overuse of neoliberalism as an explanation for policy changes in disparate contexts (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009; Venugopal, 2015). I do not purport that neoliberalism can explain everything about the decision to, for example, promote breastfeeding. My intention is not to dispute particular health benefits of breastfeeding, such as the practice's capacity to reduce gastrointestinal infections, but to draw attention to the ideological work the promotion of breastfeeding performs in a neoliberal context. Put another way, my interest in this chapter is in the ideological assumptions that underlie decisions to promote one form of infant feeding (or sleeping or carrying) over any other.

The following section identifies the appearance of the three parenting techniques named above in state-produced parenting advice as well as participants' engagements with the promotion of these activities in the development of their own maternal expertise. I examine the tension between mothers' expertise and the expertise the British and Canadian states cultivate in their promotion of particular parenting techniques. First, I

focus on the promotion of breastfeeding in Britain; second, I address how bed-sharing is discussed in Canadian recommendations and finally, I examine the rising popularity of babywearing which has inspired advisory notices by public health agencies in both countries. In Britain, I draw evidence from the National Health Service (NHS), Britain's universal health care system, and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), which provides guidance and advice to support the NHS's activities. In Canada, I turn to the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada, both the responsibility of the minister of health. While both institutions focus on health promotion and prevention, the Public Health Agency tends to be responsible for specific illnesses and events such as cancer and public health emergencies while Health Canada offers more generic advice about maintaining health in everyday circumstances. Despite this division in labour, both institutions produced recommendations about the parenting techniques discussed below.¹⁹

4.4 Breastfeeding in Britain

The decision to promote certain methods of feeding, sleeping and interacting with babies is informed by a larger trend of evidence-based policy-making (Edwards, Gillies & Horsley, 2016). Purportedly drawing on evidence collated and developed by experts in a wide variety of disciplines including neuroscience, early childhood development and developmental psychology, policy-makers and politicians identify optimal parenting practices and seek to promote them across the population. The practice that generates the most consensus on its benefits and transformative capacities is breastfeeding.

Acknowledged by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations

¹⁹ My focus in this chapter is on these state bodies as the primary advocates of particular parenting techniques but I also note the various other methods through which neoliberal ideas and their convergence with AP practice are circulated, including popular culture. As participants describe, their spouses, friends, family members, fellow parents, medical professionals and others also act as conduits of this kind of expertise, sometimes supporting mothers' efforts to challenge the suggested advice and sometimes undermining them.

Children Fund (UNICEF) as the “crucial food for children’s health and development” (UNICEF, 2017), breastfeeding has been the subject of state and public interest in the UK since at least 1900 (Carter, 1995).

The claim that ‘breast is best’ has informed the NHS in Britain’s promotion of breastfeeding since the 2000s, evident in the development of a range of pilot studies and programs to increase breastfeeding rates and the creation of legislation to facilitate working women’s ability to breastfeed at work (Phipps, 2014). The promotion of breastfeeding is framed as essential for future health with the NHS Choices website²⁰ reporting that breastfeeding reduces the rates of infections, diarrhoea, obesity and diabetes in babies and ovarian cancer, postpartum depression and breast cancer in mothers. The Sears repeat much of this advice, identifying ten health benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and baby. For both the Sears and the NHS, breastfeeding also plays a crucial role in strengthening the bond between mother and child; both suggest that mothers initiate breastfeeding within an hour of giving birth to ensure the beginning of a successful breastfeeding relationship. The Sears go one step further, calling the hormones released during breastfeeding “attachment hormones” (2001, p. 53) and arguing that the release of these hormones helps to build the secure attachment AP encourages.

Though there has been growing criticism of the ‘breast is best’ model (Himmelstein, 2014) and even some assertions that the superiority of breastfeeding is overstated (Wolf, 2011) my concern here is not with the finer details of the biological benefits of breastfeeding. Nor is it my intention to undermine the potential benefits that might accrue

²⁰ Created in 2007, the NHS Choices website serves as a “one-stop shop” for health-related information and advice as well as offering patients access to a review-system of NHS services where they can read and report on their satisfaction with institutions and health professionals (NHS Choices, 2009). Recent research suggests that the website is an effective means of reducing the burden on an overstrained healthcare system by encouraging patients to manage their own ailments before turning to NHS services (Murray et al., 2011).

to women and mothers when breastfeeding is recognized as an essential activity that requires support. Instead, I draw attention to two phenomena; first, the justifications used to promote breastfeeding, especially as they coincide with the neoliberalisation of British public policy in general. Second, I examine black mothers' responses to these exhortations to breastfeed, how do they engage with the neoliberally influenced expertise offered by the state and its representatives? How are their notions of 'good' motherhood affirmed or contested by pro-breastfeeding expertise?

4.4.1 Breastfeeding is essential for future health and saves money

Though they were not all able to successfully breastfeed their children, all the mothers I interviewed suggested that breastfeeding was the optimal infant feeding method and described a wide-range of benefits that the practice conveys. Harriet, a married thirty-four-year-old mother of two, offered a thought-provoking summation of the advantages of breastfeeding, emphasizing its potential effect on the "next generation":

...I think they should [extend maternity leave] because you're talking, you know, breastfeeding is best for your baby. So, long term effects of that on people who are adults. And mums, it's meant to lessen your chance of breast cancer and things like that. You're talking about raising happy, healthy, confident children. That's gonna have a good effect (Harriet, UK, 34-year-old mother of one son and daughter, aged 3 and 1 month).

Harriet's claims reveal the weight of expectation on mothers' shoulders as the decision to breastfeed or not is invested with lifelong and society-wide consequences. Given the gravity of these consequences, the choice between bottle and breast is not a choice between two equal options but a "moralized and constrained choice" (Knaak, 2005, p. 198). After all, mothers' commitment to the project of raising "happy, healthy, confident children" is taken as a given (Baker, 2010). The significance of succeeding at this project and raising confident children is of grave importance for black mothers who, as I suggest above, are invested not just in the survival of their children but in arming their children with as many protections as possible against a society that constructs them as both a

threat and as disposable (Dillon, 2012). Breastfeeding might serve as an important tool in that effort, given the popular claims about the transformative effects of breastfeeding which suggest that it not only ensures children's physical survival but enhances their emotional, psychological and even financial capacities (Boseley, 2015). Indeed, some black mothers' efforts to promote breastfeeding in black communities draw a clear connection between the "health conditions that disproportionately affect the black community" and breastfeeding's ability to mitigate those conditions (Bayne, 2015). If breast is widely accepted as best, as it is among the participants in this study, the consequences of breastfeeding (or failing to) are especially significant for black mothers. The commitment to breastfeeding expressed by mothers like Harriet can be read in this context, underlining the deep significance of the production of "happy, healthy" black children and the "colossal sense of responsibility" black mothers feel in their efforts to mother against damaging stereotypes (Thomas, 2004, p. 222).

In her mention of the need to extend parental leave, Harriet pointedly signals the state's role in both supporting and undermining breastfeeding. According to Harriet's logic, if we accept that breastfeeding has this transformative capacity, the state similarly has a responsibility to ensure that breastfeeding is achievable. In her emphasis on the responsibilities of both women and the state, Harriet offers both a potential critique of neoliberal discourse and a resignation to its tenets; she demands the state's involvement in the production of "happy, healthy" children but only insofar as it encourages the individual act of breastfeeding. According to this logic, state spending is necessary but only within parameters that maintain the broader logic of individual responsibility. Having said that, Harriet's use of the state's own expertise to demand a reversal of its tendency towards cost-cutting is a significant act of resistance, particularly for black mothers discursively represented as 'undeserving', and reflects a wider pattern among the mothers I interviewed as they grappled with the pressures to breastfeed.

The health benefits breastfeeding is thought to provide are underlined by and conflated with the claim that breastfeeding saves money (Boyer, 2011, p. 430; Renfrew et al.,

2012). This is expressed at the level of the state and wider society, represented, for example, in a report commissioned by UNICEF UK and published in 2012, aptly titled “Preventing disease and saving resources.” In the foreword, written by Mike Kelly, director of the public health division of NICE,²¹ Kelly identifies two challenges facing the NHS: “the state of public finances and therefore the pressure in real terms on health services funding’ and ‘the recurring and vexing problem of health inequalities” (2012). Kelly suggests that breastfeeding holds the answer to both these challenges, situating the social problem of austerity and inequity in the bodies of mothers, particularly the ‘disadvantaged’ who are repeatedly identified as ‘at risk’ for choosing formula over breast milk (Chin & Dozier, 2012). By imbuing the individual act of breastfeeding with this level of significance and emphasizing the “cost savings” (Kelly, 2012), NICE and UNICEF UK shift responsibility for easing NHS budget constraints onto the shoulders of mothers.

Mothers manage this responsibility in myriad ways, negotiating the accepted belief that ‘breast is best’ with the material constraints of infant feeding. The claim that breastfeeding saves money operates at this individual level, too, apparent in mothers’ claims that breastfeeding is “free,” as reported by three participants. As a health-promoting and financially prudent parenting choice, breastfeeding upholds the neoliberal state’s cost-cutting impulses which facilitate the state’s emphasis on individualized breastfeeding promotion interventions rather than policies that would address the socio-economic inequality that underlies Britain’s ‘low’ breastfeeding rates (Hamilton, 2016). The twin claims of breastfeeding as healthy and “free” also facilitate the particularly neoliberal construction of an idealized version of motherhood that equates breastfeeding with ‘good’ mothering (Blum, 1999). The climate of ‘pressure’ on the state’s purse

²¹ The alliance between the state and UNICEF UK, a charitable organization, that produced this report is evidence of one vision of ideal neoliberal policy-making as articulated by ‘compassionate’ Conservative ideology (Page, 2015); charities’ increased involvement in service provision is portrayed as a positive and improved solution to the loss of state services (Hall, 2011; Gillies, 2012).

intensifies the state's (and broader society's) emphasis on breastfeeding and infuses the breastfeeding expertise the state produces and the responses mothers develop to this expertise. In such a context, women's capacity to dedicate all energies to the successful rearing of children and to themselves perform good citizenship is measured by the act of breastfeeding.

4.4.2 Accounting for breastfeeding 'failure'

The mothers I interviewed managed the pressure to breastfeed in a variety of ways. Florynce, for example, described ignoring midwives' advice about the apparently negative effects of giving babies dummies or pacifiers 'too early.' Claudia described her partner as the source of the pressure to get breastfeeding right, demonstrating the role family members can play in conveying state-produced expertise. For some participants, the pressure to adhere to this expertise was heightened by the fact that they 'failed' to breastfeed at all. In their attempts to maintain 'good' motherhood status even as they 'failed' in one of its central prescripts, these mothers framed this 'failure' not as a decision but as an occurrence that was beyond their will. Claudia told me that she "really wanted" to be able to breastfeed but "just couldn't," citing her twins and an inability to produce enough milk to feed them as the reason she was unable to breastfeed. Angela used similar language, expressing her keenness to breastfeed but finding that "it just didn't work out in the end." While neither woman identified the state as the source of this pressure, I suggest that the state-endorsed belief that 'breast is best' is so widespread that it informs mothers' interactions with their spouses, in Claudia's case, and as I note in Angela's narrative, with medical professionals. Both women described the pressure of needing to get breastfeeding right and the sense of failure that accompanied their realization that they would not be able to breastfeed. As Angela explains:

I had a really difficult time and that was 'cause breastfeeding wasn't working at all and I was getting mastitis and all sorts, and I just couldn't sleep and I knew that she wasn't getting enough milk so I knew that she was crying, she was always...and I just got to the point where I was just like, in tears and I'm just like "I can't do this anymore" and I'm just having a breakdown and stuff and I saw the

doctor and she said “you know, you just need to, I’m not saying take a break but just be a bit...not so hard on yourself” and that’s when I decided, fine, I’m gonna just give formula a go and see what she’s like and she was just...changed overnight *laughs* ‘cause she’d been fed and she was happy so I was like, okay, we’re just gonna, we’ll stick with it if, you know, if...next time if I have a child hopefully breastfeeding might work that time if it doesn’t, it doesn’t matter, it’s not done her any major harm I don’t think (Angela, UK, 35-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 2).

Angela’s account starkly captures the emotional effects of pressures to breastfeed which, when combined with the “painful” awareness of racial inequity described by Lorde earlier in the chapter, suggest mothering is an especially fraught endeavour for black and other racialized mothers. Angela’s experience of ‘failure’ is evidence of the trap mothers find themselves in as they attempt to balance the demands of attachment parenting practice, conflated with good mothering, and the physical and material limitations of childrearing. Indeed, the notion of suffering through pain and difficulties, especially to achieve a successful breastfeeding relationship, is a common feature of ‘breast is best’ discourse (Phipps, 2014). The heightened emotions that punctuate Angela’s narrative suggest her efforts to negotiate and assert her own expertise with regards to infant feeding when the dominant model of good mothering renders formula socially and ideologically unacceptable.

Given this pressure and the high stakes, embodied both in breastfeeding’s role as a guarantor of children’s future health and well-being and as a signifier of good mothering, it is unsurprising that some formula-feeding mothers go to great efforts to defend their infant feeding choices and re-present themselves as good mothers (Lee, 2008; Murphy, 2003). I read Angela’s narrative as an attempt at such a narrative recuperation, countering the association between a failure to breastfeed and poor mothering. First, she invokes the expertise and authority of a doctor to support her decision to stop breastfeeding. Careful to avoid portraying the doctor as advising her to stop breastfeeding altogether (“I’m not

saying take a break”) and thus assuring the doctor’s investment in the mantra of breast is best and the quality of her expertise, Angela describes the dramatic effect on her daughter’s well-being: “she was...changed overnight...she was happy.” Indeed, in Angela’s narrative, her daughter was *not* happy before, when being breastfed. If the aim of breastfeeding and good mothering is the production of “happy, healthy” children, as Harriet argues above, Angela affirms herself as a good mother, despite her ‘failure’ to breastfeed, through her daughter’s achievement of this wished-for happiness and health. Towards the end of her narrative defense of formula use Angela offers one final reference to the superiority of breastfeeding, suggesting that she might try breastfeeding again if she chooses to have a second child, but ultimately concludes that “it doesn’t matter” and asserting that her daughter has not suffered any “major harm” from the lack of breastfeeding. Angela concludes with her status as a good mother cautiously secured. Through a combination of her own experiential expertise (Murphy, 2003) and that of a medical professional, she attempts to disrupt the narrative of failure that accompanies not breastfeeding.

Angela’s narrative recuperation of her ‘good’ mother identity recalls the conclusions drawn by Lee (2008) in her analysis of formula-feeding mothers’ experiences in the UK. The mothers Lee spoke to expressed defensiveness and defiance against an ideology of motherhood that constructed formula use as bad mothering practice. The ‘risk’ that formula-feeding mothers live with as they challenge the “cultural problematisation of formula feeding” (Lee, 2008, p. 476) is intensified for Angela and other black mothers as they mother against the ‘cultural problematisation’ of black motherhood (Roberts, 1995). Angela’s claim on a good mothering identity is not straightforwardly achieved by relying only on experiential expertise but is bolstered through the invoking of a medical expert’s cautiously recited advice to “take a break.” This identity is further assured by Angela’s commitments to working and taking responsibility for her child; as our conversation turned to the recent general election, Angela told me that she did not mind the much-debated austerity measures and benefit cuts “because at the end of the day it’s not [the government’s] responsibility to bring up my child, it’s mine and my husband’s.” Firmly

locating herself against racialized stereotypes about welfare dependency, Angela shores up her good mothering, despite her ‘failings’ in the arena of infant feeding.

Florynce’s narrative offers another take on breastfeeding ‘failure.’ When we met, Florynce was in the middle of her maternity leave with her second child. She was enjoying breastfeeding (as she had with her first child, who was six at the time of the interview) and spending time with her baby. Though the UK secures parents’ jobs for twelve months while they take parental leave, the low level of funding provided to cover this time has often meant that parents feel compelled to return to work long before this period (Hawkins et al., 2007) and the same was true for Florynce. Though she was employed in a reasonably well-paid profession and married to a partner who financially contributed, Florynce could not afford to stay at home for the full twelve months. Her need to return to work (and the demanding nature of that work) shaped her parenting choices, specifically her decision to wean her daughter:

[If I could] I’d probably breastfeed for a year and a half. Probably up to maybe two...and there’s no reason why I still couldn’t do that, I just think it’d be difficult. You know, going back to work...they do have to allow you time to express if you want to do that. But actually, then that compromises the time I get home because I already work through my lunches and my breaks [...] So if I want to get home at a reasonable time...I’ll generally work through everything and I can’t be using those times to express milk. I know, you know, some people say “oh, but it’s for the benefit of the child, it’s good” and it is good but at that time she will be on solids, you know, she is getting her food from other places. And, you know, I’m going to make sure that she has a very a good diet, um, I’ve already met a childminder, you know, spoken about the types of things she cooks and if I want her to have anything different then I must provide it but the menu looks healthy enough (Florynce, UK, 29-year-old mother of one son and one daughter, aged 6 and 6 months).

Like Angela, the prioritization of health is used as a justification for the decision not to breastfeed. Florynce told me that she had already spoken to a childminder and assessed the quality of the services provided, emphasizing another characteristic of good mothering, the responsibility to carry out research (Murphy, 2003). As the Sears explain, one of the strategies for balancing the practice of attachment parenting and working outside the home is the employment of an “AP-friendly sub[stitute]” (2001, p. 37); Florynce demonstrates her commitment to good mothering by ensuring that her child will continue to achieve good health albeit not through the exalted act of breastfeeding. Further, it is her dedication to her family and her desire to get home from work at a reasonable hour to spend time with them that makes continuing breastfeeding difficult. In this case, it is not the absence of a legal requirement to support breastfeeding but the taxing demands of Florynce’s profession itself that prevent successful breastfeeding.

Florynce’s dilemma captures the contradictions as well as the raced and classed implications of attempting to perform good mothering. In weighing the benefits of staying at home to breastfeed and her financial need to work, including the ability to provide her household with what she called “luxuries” such as holidays, Florynce concludes that she would prefer to work. This is despite her belief that she would be a “better mother” if she did not work. However, earlier in the interview, Florynce praised the childrearing strategies of parents who are “interactive with [their children], take them to museums, take them away, take them on holiday, talk to them a lot.” For Florynce, good parenting requires time and the financial resources to provide children with stimulating activities. Her decision to work compromises the former but ensures the latter, thus making Florynce’s hold on ‘good’ motherhood precarious, a common refrain for black mothers categorically excluded from fulfilment of good citizenship through either economic productivity or dedicated mothering.

4.4.3 Breast is best, but not for too long

The length of time spent breastfeeding represents one point at which attachment parenting departs from British public health policy and parenting advice, demonstrating

the limitations of the alignment between AP and state-produced parenting expertise. Though the NHS adheres to the WHO recommendation that children can be breastfed for “up to two years or longer” (2017), NICE, UNICEF UK and other British health bodies have concentrated their efforts on improving the rates of breastfeeding in the first six months. Breastfeeding beyond this period tends to generate suspicion and negative attention for mothers (Faircloth, 2013) though the Sears (2001) attempt to remedy this view by emphasizing the health benefits of extended breastfeeding (p. 63). The prioritizing of extended breastfeeding signals attachment parenting’s unique and precarious position in contemporary British society; while the belief in the importance of attachment that underpins AP philosophy has largely been endorsed by the state and the wider public (Broer & Pickersgill, 2015; Gillies, 2012; Lowe et al., 2015), there is also apprehension about the ‘extreme’ (Faircloth, 2013) nature of some AP practices. News reports that frame attachment parenting as ‘extreme’ often equate the philosophy with extended breastfeeding which is constructed as especially problematic (see the 2012 *TIME* cover story for an example). This conflation of extended breastfeeding and ‘extreme’ attachment parenting is shared by at least two participants who voiced an aversion to breastfeeding beyond the ‘appropriate’ period. Gloria offered the following response when I asked her if she believed that attachment parenting was popular:

I think it’s getting more popular...when I was first quite a new mum I went to quite a few groups where, um, somehow I just felt I didn’t fit, you know, there was a breastfeeding group where they all seemed to be into, you know, eating nuts and breastfeeding their babies until they’re seven and that, you know, and like, it works for some people, it wasn’t gonna work for us (Gloria, UK, 34-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 8 months).

While Claudia offered a more overt critique and rejection of extended breastfeeding and therefore, of AP:

I have a friend whose sister-in-law is very much into attachment parenting and the child is eight and still breastfeeding and that really sort of freaks me out, like, that doesn’t, that seems a bit wrong to me and I don’t wanna be too judgemental here

but um, it just seems like after the point where they have teeth you should start to wean them (Claudia, UK, 40-year-old mother of twin boys aged 20 months and expecting a third).

Particularly for Claudia, the collapsing of extended breastfeeding and ‘freakish’ attachment parenting is racialized. At the beginning of our interview, I asked Claudia to tell me about her first impressions of attachment parenting and she responded that it was “more like a thing that white people do.” Angela, too, suggested that attachment parenting was probably more popular among white parents. I suggest that this association between white parents and ‘extreme’ AP practice complicates and, perhaps, facilitates claims on good motherhood. If AP is understood as freakish rather than an appropriate expression of good mothering, Claudia and Gloria’s distancing from its practices enables their own claim on good motherhood. For Claudia, this is tied to infant feeding expertise that determines when weaning ought to occur, favouring a more scheduled manner.

However, not all the mothers rejected extended breastfeeding. Two other women described people’s generally negative reactions to their decision to breastfeed beyond twelve months:

But I think the more, the majority of people think by the age of one it’s like enough breastfeeding. And when they would ask me when I’m gonna stop breastfeeding I’d be like “I don’t know, whenever he wants to stop” and they’re like “oh my god! That’s crazy! What if he’s breastfeeding until the age of five?!” I feel like that’s not normal, that’s not gonna happen. Maybe there’s one person in the world [who does that], you know? It’s extreme and it’s different (Olive, CA, 28-year-old mother of a three-year-old and a newborn).

Olive similarly distances herself from the activities of ‘extreme’ mothers but as an attempt to normalize extended breastfeeding. Her AP-informed expertise required her to adopt a child-centered approach that assigns the decision to stop breastfeeding to her son but also involves negotiating a social context that promotes breastfeeding but only under

particular circumstances. Her claim on good motherhood is precarious, as is AP's position as an appropriate parenting philosophy:

And I think what people's minds go to is like, the minute you say attachment parenting they think "oh, my gosh, you're gonna be breastfeeding your child at five." Like that's the, that's what everybody associates it with, that negative image, I guess (Rebecca, CA, 38-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 13 months).

The image associated with attachment parenting and with its associated practices influence mothers' ability to use an AP-informed expertise to claim good motherhood. If it is true that AP only evokes "negative" images of extended breastfeeding, those mothers who frame themselves as attachment parents risk drawing censure while those who reject AP as 'strange' can build their claim to good motherhood on this rejection. However, the alignment between AP and the dominant policy framework cannot be reduced to attitudes towards extended breastfeeding. As I discuss in the following sections, views on bed-sharing and babywearing complicate black mothers' embrace *and* rejection of an AP-derived expertise.

4.5 Bed-sharing in Canada

Advice about where a baby should sleep has generated a great deal of debate and consternation, especially given attachment parenting's rise in popularity. While the Sears' recommendations are guided by how choice of sleeping location facilitates bonding and attachment (2001), the advice proffered by institutions such as the NHS and Health Canada is focused largely on reducing the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). The cause of SIDS has not yet been determined but there are certain practices understood to reduce an infant's risk, such as breastfeeding and practices that increase it, such as having a parent who smokes. Among the risk factors for SIDS is co-sleeping, defined by the Public Health Agency of Canada as "when a baby shares the same sleep surface, such as an adult bed, sofa or armchair, with an adult or another child" (2014). However, this is not the only definition of co-sleeping. For example, Kellymom, a popular pro-attachment

parenting blog and forum, describes co-sleeping as more of an umbrella term that includes sharing the bed with one's baby, attaching a crib or cot to the parents' bed or simply sharing the same room as one's baby, even if the baby is in a cot and the parents are in a separate, adult bed (2016). This more open definition echoes the way participants talked about infant sleeping, using the phrase 'co-sleeping' to refer both to sharing a bed and sharing a room. Lorde's description of her family's sleeping arrangements is a typical example: "So...yes, not only were we co-sleeping, we were bed-sharing so there were all four of us in one bed."

In their preference for naming their attachment parenting tools so that they begin with the letter 'b,' the Sears advise that parents should 'bed share' or 'bed close to baby' (2001). The latter term reflects the looser definition offered by Kellymom and the participants and could arguably include room sharing rather than bed-sharing but generally, the Sears prefer bed-sharing, describing it as an activity that parents have participated in "for thousands of years" (2001, p. 89). Nevertheless, the Public Health Agency of Canada recommends room sharing not bed-sharing as part of their advice to "help create a safe sleep environment" (2014). While reducing the risk of SIDS is the agency's main priority, in a 2011 statement directed at healthcare practitioners they also note that room sharing "facilitates breastfeeding and frequent contact with infants at night" (2011, p. 2), demonstrating public health bodies' overarching investment in the promotion of attachment and bonding.

It was precisely these benefits that participants cited as an explanation for their decision to bed-share.²² Despite warnings against the practice, seven of the nine participants in Canada reported bed-sharing, suggesting the possibility of claiming good motherhood even against (and perhaps, especially against) policy guidelines:

²² For the sake of clarity, I will use the terms 'bed-sharing' (and 'room sharing' when appropriate) rather than 'co-sleeping.'

the co-sleeping, which I loved, for me, personally, it was twofold. It was, um, helping her sleep better, knowing that I was there for her...it made it easier to nurse in the middle of the night...and it was peace of mind for me, you know, it was peace of mind for me (Stella, CA, 37-year-old mother of one).

co-sleeping helps be able to breastfeed during the night, it makes it a lot easier. Even with him [refers to younger son] I'm getting enough sleep, I think...he just feeds and he goes right back to sleep, it's not like we're up and doing stuff you know? (Olive)

The overlap between breastfeeding and bed-sharing that Olive mentions is testimony to Berry's definition of attachment parenting as a "package" of parenting activities (2010, p. 1). The pursuit of a successful breastfeeding relationship, which is explicitly and vociferously promoted in public policy, engenders bed-sharing, despite policy warnings to avoid the practice. This contradictory coalescence between the two acts is further evidence of attachment parenting's ambiguous position; AP involves an extension of what public health bodies already advise, promoting breastfeeding and 'bedding close to baby' only for longer periods (Freeman, 2016) and yet it is often the subject of ridicule, particularly as it embodies an excess of "maternal attentiveness" (Stephens, 2011, p. 108). Mothers are forced to navigate cautiously between accusations of 'caring too much' and claims of maternal neglect, both of which have racial dimensions and are understood to have lifelong impacts on children's capacity to develop appropriately. Mothers can employ different sources of expertise to guide this navigation, relying on the widespread acceptance of one practice (breastfeeding) to justify their decision to perform a less acceptable one, as Olive demonstrates above, or they can tap into a broader and increasingly popular narrative of 'nature' to explain their practices, as Margaret and Tracey do, both of whom describe bed-sharing as "natural":

having her in a bassinet next to me felt so unnatural and I know it was probably just like the postpartum craziness but it literally made me upset *chuckles* to see her...so far from me so I woke her up and put her in my bed and then we never

looked back after that (Tracey, CA, 31-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 5 months).

Margaret and Tracey's (and other participants) decision to employ the language of the 'natural' to explain not only their preference for bed-sharing but their wider approach to parenting deserves close attention as it carries particular risks for racialized and especially black mothers. The claim that black women are closer to nature has a long history and has been used to justify a number of exploitative practices, particularly those related to reproduction. The same narratives of "obstetrical hardiness" that facilitated gynaecological experiments on enslaved women have informed neglectful treatment more recently such as the denial of adequate pain relief or the failure to provide support services during birth (Bridges, 2011, p. 117; Morris & Schulman, 2014; Phoenix, 1990). The belief in black women's 'natural' capacities that underlines this kind of negligence by disinterest is further bolstered by the stereotype of the 'strong black woman' which in turn facilitates the withdrawal of services. The 'nature' that is invoked in these kind of narratives can cohere neatly with neoliberal purposes; if mothers are naturally adept at caring for their babies there is little need for the provision of services to support infant care. And yet, the proliferation of advice in the form of leaflets, videos, posters and the booming parenting literature industry suggests that nature is an insufficient source of parenting expertise. While the Sears reference ancestral parenting practices, they also rely on 'science' to justify their claims about optimal parenting styles. Similarly, in the mothers' narratives, the coalition of science and nature, with each discourse foregrounded at different moments, was an effective defense for women's use of unsanctioned parenting practices in their ongoing and complex efforts to claim good motherhood.

However, the claim of 'nature' cannot be understood only in terms of the work it performs for the advancement of neoliberal ideology. Turning to the way mothers frame their reliance on 'nature' draws attention to how 'nature' can be utilized to resist oppressive narratives about black parenthood even if doing so requires rejecting policy recommendations. As I suggested in the first section of this chapter, Tracey describes her

practice of bed-sharing and natural parenting more generally as a reflection of her family background as the child of East African immigrants. Her assertion of expertise is against a purportedly culturally neutral form of ‘good’ parenting that has variably appropriated parenting practices, enabling Tracey to claim good parenting:

there’s a book, *Happiest Kid on the Block*, and it talks about baby wearing and things like that and, um, the...it associates it, and like it bugs me ‘cause it says “in Africa” it doesn’t pick a country but, um, that kids don’t cry, like African kids rarely cry, in Africa, and that’s because they’re worn all the time and that is a big, well, if you think about it, that is probably the biggest part of attachment parenting because that’s the thing that you’re doing all day long, wearing your child, and I know it’s because we don’t, they don’t have these fancy gadgets that we have but now...it’s making full circle that you don’t need all these fancy gadgets to be a, to have a baby that doesn’t cry and if that’s like the good parent then African babies have the best parents if that is the equation that you’re trying to make, right? (Tracey)

While Tracey’s focus is on babywearing in this quote, her broader claim about the origin of attachment parenting seeks to extract the philosophy from the white experts, like the Sears and the author of the book Tracey references, with whom it is currently associated and return it to its ‘source’, allowing black mothers, particularly African mothers, to name themselves as good mothers. But this championing of an African-derived attachment parenting carries risks if, as Tracey suggests, it is built upon a Eurocentric, monolithic construction of Africa in which all babies are worn and happy. Though she acknowledges the danger of such a construction, she exchanges acceptance of this homogenizing stereotype for the image of good African mothering it generates. This tension between Tracey’s support for and criticism of AP appears at other moments in her interview but is largely subsumed in the larger and arguably more important project of invoking her own immigrant African background for the purposes of claiming natural and therefore good parenting.

4.5.1 Bed-sharing as intensive mothering

The women's descriptions of their experiences of bed-sharing reflects not only racialized ideas about nature but also the gendered demands of good parenting. As I argued above, the participants justified their use of bed-sharing by drawing attention to its facilitation of other assuredly good parenting practices. Their defense for bed-sharing against public health advice is only legitimate if the optimal development of their children is their primary goal. In the cases where a mother did mention her own ability to get more sleep while bed-sharing, for example, it was only positively framed in so far as it enabled her to perform other good mothering practices. These additional pressures that mothers experienced, to subordinate their needs to that of their child by, for example, compromising their own ability to sleep well, was also expressed in the way many participants described their partners' involvement in the sleeping arrangements. For example, Kimberlé and Stella, both mothers to older children, recalled that they found bed-sharing nerve-wracking (Stella) or impossible (Kimberlé) because they feared that their partners would "crush" the baby. Though both women referred to the size and height of their partners as an explanation for this fear, the subtext of our conversations suggested that, as mothers, they could monitor their positions even while asleep and were thus more capable of successful bed-sharing:

I co-slept. That was cool, that was cool for a bit until it was like, her dad is really tall, he's about six foot five, big guy, and I'm about five eleven, right, and we have a queen-size bed which is fine but he's a big guy and she would sleep between the two of us and he'd roll and I'm like "you're gonna kill her! Smother her." *chuckles*... "get out of the bed," right, you know, but I just...she slept better when she was, you know, with us, you know, I think more so me than him because she would just kinda roll underneath him, it wasn't his fault, he was a heavy guy, in a bed you know somebody who's light's gonna...roll, *chuckles* all the time, "you're gonna, you're gonna kill her, get out of the bed!" (Stella)

Following the end of her relationship with her daughter's father Stella continued bed-sharing, even describing a lovely occasion when she spent the night holding her infant

daughter's outstretched hand. The implication in Stella's story is that co-sleeping or bed-sharing is gendered, a practice that mothers are especially suited to even as it might require compromising their own sleep or spending time away from their partners and thus, enables a claim to good motherhood.

Indeed, for some women, the solution to the potential threat faced by inattentive fathers was to have their partners sleep separately. Tracey, Rebecca and Margaret reported that their husbands either currently or previously slept in a different room while they bed-shared with their young children, a situation that Rebecca's husband hoped would soon change. Rebecca's explanation of her husband's reluctance was couched in a wider discussion about the limits of attachment parenting:

So it's almost like you go too far, maybe it's, maybe it's my kind of, my thing in that I've gone too far in that direction where I've made everything sort of baby-centric as opposed to taking into account...you know the whole family in terms of having a balance 'cause I'm sure for him, it's no fun...your wife's not there anymore basically...she's off in the other room and you've kind of been relegated to the guest room or whatever in favour of baby so that can't be easy, right?
(Rebecca)

In this quote, Rebecca claims full responsibility for the "baby-centric" approach her and her husband have taken to child-rearing. While I acknowledge that this is a natural consequence of conducting an interview about parenting with only one of the parties involved, I also suggest that in this claim, Rebecca reflects a model of good mothering that requires her, as the mother, to peruse the available expertise, make the decisions and holds her responsible for the results. As the quote above suggests, Rebecca's husband is "relegated" in this process because he does not bear the burden of responsibility that Rebecca does with regards to the well-being of their child. Her claim that bed-sharing is the superior option for her child is made not just against public health bodies that suggest that such a practice is dangerous, but against her husband who, despite sharing their daughter's care "fifty-fifty," is unable to match Rebecca's maternal expertise.

The contradiction of maternal expertise lies in the fact that it is only valid in so far as it conforms to the standards determined by hegemonic discourses about good parenthood, including its gendered and ‘scientifically natural’ dimensions. Its limits can be tested and perhaps even expanded (seen here in the fact that so many women reported bed-sharing) but it remains bounded by an external, and sometimes superior, expertise. This is evident in Olive’s description of her bed-sharing arrangements which involve balancing the needs of her oldest son, aged three, with those of her two-month-old baby:

it’s only been two months since [the younger son is] here, before that we co-slept...and I felt so bad to push [the older son] into his own bed because they say it’s not safe for toddler and baby to sleep together but if it was up to me, I would’ve kept him in the bed.

Olive’s explanation demonstrates the complex and contradictory nature of the kind of maternal expertise that intensive mothering ideology engenders; she has been able to choose bed-sharing, despite public health warnings about its risks, but this choice does not extend to practicing what the Sears call “family bed” (2001, p. 90). Her language is revealing; “if it was up to me” suggests an acquiescence to dominant ideas about appropriate sleeping arrangements and yet much of Olive’s interview was taken up with her objections to “normal” parenting. It reveals the limits of a mothering ideology that makes mothers too responsible and yet incapable of that responsibility (Apple, 1995). It also highlights the knot that mothers find themselves in as they attempt to and, indeed, are encouraged to, assert their own experiential or cultural expertise against the standards and boundaries set out by dominant ideologies about ideal parenthood.

These boundaries curtail choice and entrench responsibility for both mothers like Olive, who ignore advice about bed-sharing, as well as for mothers like Patricia, who reject the compulsions to room share altogether. Patricia, a 41-year-old mother of six- and three-year-old daughters, was unsure about whether to call herself an attachment parent, a reluctance that revealed itself in her attitude towards room sharing:

we were never really a big fan of [room sharing] ...it was just 'cause I had a bad, not a bad experience but I know what my sister went through with her co-sleeping and I was just like "no, we're not having this, right."

Patricia was concerned, in particular, about the long-term effects of room sharing and reported that her nieces, aged eight and older, still required extra attention at bedtime in order to fall asleep. This represents a popular criticism levelled at attachment parenting, that it produces coddled children unable to manage autonomy and who will fail to learn to be "independent" (Stella; Jenner, 2014). These critiques endanger attachment parenting's status as an appropriate parenting ideology and suggest, once again, the contradictory position the philosophy occupies as both conforming to a neoliberal model of good parenting and inevitably representing its limitations. At its core, parenting is an undeniable representation of human dependency; an infant is unable to care for itself and thus must rely on another to provide this care. Attachment parenting emphasizes this dependence, extending duties of infant care beyond the boundaries determined by public health bodies. Such dependence is an affront to the narratives of self-reliance and self-sufficiency that punctuate neoliberal discourse and form the basis of good citizenship, and thus requires strategies of governance that aim to cultivate these qualities. Attachment parenting survives as a 'good' parenting philosophy insofar as it represents itself as a tool capable of *developing* self-sufficiency in dependent infants and children. AP repairs its reputation by highlighting the greater levels of independence attachment practices can generate. Similarly, Patricia atones for her rejection of room sharing by emphasizing the bonding and security her particular articulation of AP can attain:

I think for me, feeling secure, you're still attached in a sense, right? Where I'm not just shutting you out. Like when we did sleep training I took a whole, I read a whole, like all the different types of methods that I could read up on and I meshed

it together to work for us so I didn't just stick with Ferberizing²³ or cry-it-, well I think Ferberizing and cry-it-out are just the same but I just did it so that it worked for us. And, um...yeah, like I mean for me I was...proud to know that at six months my daughter was able to...understand that...she could fall asleep, she could put herself to sleep.

Patricia's expertise is assured, despite her use of sleep training, through the evidence of her child's development. Any doubts about this expertise are put to rest by Patricia's name-checking of other parenting experts; she did not reach the decision to sleep train without carrying out the research and assessment required of all "entrepreneurial citizens" (Murphy, 2003). Indeed, Patricia is "proud" of her daughter's ability to "put herself to sleep," suggesting a claim on good mothering made against AP practice. Patricia's narrative demonstrates the pressures mothers experience, regardless of the actual choices they make about parenting. Whether bed-sharing, room sharing or sleep training, mothers' capacities to not only choose appropriately but justify that choice with suitable references to the accepted but sometimes contradictory industry of professional expertise and the particular kind of expertise crafted by state-produced parenting advice is the basis upon which their parenting is measured. For some women, a particularly African iteration of attachment parenting is an effective bulwark against critique of their mothering while also serving to undermine dominant narratives about black/African motherhood.

4.6 Babywearing in Britain and Canada

Babywearing is likely the most visible expression of attachment parenting and describes the act of carrying an infant in a sling or cloth carrier. The practice was mentioned in all but two interviews, often as being associated with AP, and was used as a measure to help

²³ A technique created by contemporary parenting expert Dr. Richard Ferber that advises controlled crying as a method of teaching infants to sleep through the night. This method is associated with more scheduled approaches to parenting.

participants determine how popular attachment parenting was in their specific towns and cities. The public health response to babywearing has been much less charged than breastfeeding or bed-sharing. Both the NHS and Health Canada name slings as one of many infant-carrying options available to parents including pushchairs and prams. Neither body goes out of its way to promote babywearing but has recently focused on safety concerns, particularly following media reports of infants who have suffocated while being worn in this manner (Howard, 2014). In both countries, sling manufacturers have issued advice about ‘safe babywearing’ with the consortium of UK sling manufacturers and retailers producing the TICKS rule²⁴ for safe baby wearing and the Baby Carriers Industry Alliance working with Health Canada to launch the “visible and kissable” campaign in 2013.

However, safety did not feature at all in the interview narratives, with the exception of Margaret who mentioned then quickly dismissed her mother’s concerns as “scare tactics.” Indeed, babywearing was the least controversial topic discussed during interviews with the vast majority of participants describing it as an enjoyable activity that aided bonding and had other positive effects. Olive, who wore her younger son throughout the interview, is one representative example:

I love baby wearing, I did with [older son] as well, even when he was like huge I used to wear him, it’s just, he was used to it so it was comforting and...you bond a lot, we’re very close, his dad says I spoiled him but it’s more important for me to, that he’s happy and I feel like it has made him a more confident person.

Olive’s description also effectively demonstrates the claim that AP produces coddled children, as I referred to above, and the deployment of superior maternal expertise (“it’s more important for me”) to dismiss this claim.

²⁴ Safe baby-wearing is achieved with a **T**ight sling, with the baby **I**n view at all times, **C**lose enough to kiss, making sure that the baby **K**eeps their chin off of their chest and **S**upports the wearer’s back (UK Slings Consortium).

Concern with safety was also almost entirely absent from the Sears' chapter dedicated to babywearing. They too, focused on the numerous benefits of wearing a baby including developing the child's language skills and making "discreet breastfeeding easier" (2001, p. 73). Once again, the overlap between attachment parenting practices is made apparent, as each of the tools of AP reinforce one another to produce an all-encompassing image of good parenting. Babywearing plays an essential role in ensuring the "all-encompassing" nature of this kind of parenting because it suggests that AP should be practiced "all the time" (Sears & Sears, 2001, p. 65). As Tracey explained: "that is probably the biggest part of attachment parenting because that's the thing that you're doing all day long, wearing your child." The all-consuming demands of babywearing bled into other areas of family life such as the Sears' suggestion that women wear their babies while completing housework tasks, thus reinforcing a gendered view of the appropriate division of labour in parenting and domestic duties. Through such demands the intense physical labour required of good mothering is made apparent.

4.6.1 Babywearing as African?

Babywearing also represents the most obvious example of AP's "primitive" (Sears & Sears, 2001, p. 62) origins and the philosophy's habit of drawing evidence from "traditional societies" (Green & Groves, 2008, p. 523). The Sears' babywearing advice references both this 'natural' or 'cultural' proof as well as scientific studies that claim that carried babies "cry less" and "are more connected" (2001, pp. 71, 75), producing the 'scientifically natural' hybrid I noted in the previous section. Indeed, this combination of science and nature has only intensified as babywearing has grown in popularity and the different kinds of slings produced have proliferated. In such a scenario, mothers are increasingly expected to turn to experts to learn how to perform this purportedly 'natural' activity, while still maintaining responsibility for any (negative) outcomes (Russell, 2015).

The construction of babywearing as both scientific and natural was similarly evoked by participants, with some conflating ‘natural’ and ‘African.’ Eleanor, for example, described her view of babywearing as both natural and associated with African women:

I grew up...watching African mums carry their children, it’s something that always stood out to me like it does with everyone else. It’s like something I always thought that was a normal and most natural thing to do and detaching yourself from your child just didn’t seem normal to me, if I can put it into words.

Later in the interview, Eleanor expanded on this African view of babywearing, particularly as a symbol of cultural appropriation and black people’s ‘loss’ of their ‘true’ culture:

babywearing is a concept that’s been happening for decades, for centuries especially in African cultures, South America and those places. They...put in place this contraption which is a pushchair, a pram...what was the reason? To make money? Because it wasn’t helping anyone really and then they try to make you feel like that was alleviating me of the burden of carrying your child. When they do something like that they’re making money, we as West Indians or whoever adopt that culture and because it costs money to do it, there’s that class thing now. If you’ve got a sling, you’re poor, if you got a pushchair, you’re rich. But now they spent, like, twenty years doing research, scientific research, into babywearing and the benefits of it, to now, they’re saying, proving that slings are better for your baby than pushchairs. But they know that, they’ve got the information, they’ve done the scientific clinical research but we as black people that have been doing it for centuries, we don’t know nothing about it.

The distancing from nature characteristic of modernity and progress is racialized; the loss of nature has simultaneously been a loss of culture not only for Africans but for the black diaspora. In turn, the resurgence of interest in babywearing operates as both the scientisation of what should be a natural activity and an appropriation of African

traditions. The experts that emerge from such a coalition are inevitably white, middle-class and Western. As Barbara explains:

[I'm] very conscious of this sort of split where it's, like, yeah, you know, there's African mothers carrying their children 'cause that's what they've always done and it makes sense and...there, I don't, my family are from...[the Caribbean], they don't have that heritage, I don't have an auntie or someone to teach me how to do it so kind of, my option is to access like the sling library and so on which tend, from my experience of it, tends to be white, middle-class mums, um, um...and just kind of feeling like it's weird this, like, yeah, kind of split in a way (Barbara, UK, 38-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 12 months).

The loss of cultural expertise is felt acutely in the distinction between Africa and the Caribbean. The women readily claimed babywearing as African but named the Caribbean as a site at which the practice was rejected. The authentic expertise, then, associated with babywearing was decidedly African. The turn to Africa as the source of a kind of authentic blackness (expressed here in African ownership of babywearing) echoes Reynolds' (2005) findings in her study of Caribbean mothers. Reynolds described visiting her interviewees in their homes and finding African "cultural artefacts" (2005, p. 89) and suggested that this was an indication of the mothers' investment in a "transatlantic black consciousness" (2005, p. 90) underlined by an imagined Africa. For Barbara and Eleanor, this imagined Africa features as a type of unadulterated source of parenting expertise where black women's claims on good mothering are assured. Though like the Sears, they risk homogenizing Africa and African women, their claims serve a different, oppositional purpose that complicates the simplistic story of good mothering upon which intensive mothering and attachment parenting rest.

4.7 Mothers' expertise in interactions with experts

In this chapter so far, I have argued that the intersection of race and class informs all mothers but specifically black mothers' ability to meet the contradictory standards of intensive mothering. This has largely been advanced by a focus on the parenting advice

currently being promoted by the British and Canadian states and the extent to which, if at all, this advice echoes attachment parenting. It is clear that AP appears differently in different sources; in state-produced parenting advice, it operates on the margins, feeding the promotion of activities that ensure attachment and bonding, while in the women's narratives it appears as both an extreme pastime of white, middle-class hippies and an African-oriented reclaiming of the mothering capacities of black women. In the following section, I extend this analysis to consider a final source; the individuals who are tasked with enforcing parenting advice. How do the mothers in this study respond to these representatives of intensive mothering? What role does race, gender or class play in their interactions?

Tracey's experiences offer one example. Throughout the interview, she offered examples of how she relied upon her own expertise, drawn from 'nature' and her cultural background to make parenting decisions. As I argue above, it was through this intermingling of 'nature' and her cultural background that Tracey asserted herself as a good parent, upending the usual dismissal and pathologizing of black African motherhood. It is also through this intermingling that Tracey is able to perform one of the key tasks of good parenting in a contemporary context; the assertion of oneself as an expert. She draws on a racially and culturally inflected 'nature' as a resource and a means of granting herself permission to make parenting choices (which are each invested with a great deal of significance). At the time of our interview, for example, Tracey had spent a lot of time weighing the decision to vaccinate her baby. She reported conducting research online, speaking to her family (although she found their advice unhelpful) and consulting with her naturopath, in her effort to decide:

We decided we're gonna vaccinate, yeah, we are *chuckles*. She's still late *laughs* but, uh, we're still gonna get it done. Yeah, sorry, I have a naturopath and she says [the baby] has a touch of thrush and that it's probably better that I wait to vaccinate her instead of not waiting but my rationale is that she's already had shots with it so whatever was gonna happen, like [the naturopath] thinks her immune system is probably not strong enough to do it. I'm gonna see her on

Monday and then I'm gonna go for her baby well check-up on Tuesday, so between Monday and Tuesday I'll make up my mind about it. My doctor's really supportive of...alternative medicine so I'm sure if I tell her that I don't wanna vaccinate she'll understand.

Tracey's account of her vaccination decision-making process offers a valuable articulation of the interplay between social class and race in the enactment of parenting expertise. Without access to the financial resources to, for example, pay for a naturopath, Tracey's ability to choose would be severely curtailed. That she can rely on the expertise of both a naturopath (though it is not universally valued) and a medical professional in her negotiation of the decision to vaccinate or abstain is evidence of the power social class holds not only in facilitating access to information but also offering protection from reprisals such as state intervention (Reich, 2014). That Tracey's doctor is "really supportive of...alternative medicine" grants her a respectable buffer from unwanted intervention. If Tracey's social class enables her ability to choose, I suggest that it is her natural, familial and therefore racial expertise that informs the choice itself. Indeed, she links her interest in alternative medicine to Africa, explaining that, for many Africans, "unless you were really, really wealthy you couldn't afford Western medicine" and so used traditional and alternative medicines.

While Tracey relies on a natural 'Africa' to explain and justify her decision-making, Olive combines 'nature' with experience to build the framework of her expertise. As a new mother to a baby that was only five months old at the time of the interview, Tracey is less able to invoke experiential expertise to justify her customized vaccination schedule. Olive, on the other hand, had just given birth to her second child and thus was able to draw on her experiences with her first child in a discussion with her doctor about breastfeeding:

I found out [younger son] has a bit of a tongue tie and then the doctor that's supposed to refer me to a paediatrician, he's kind of like "well, he's gaining weight fine just leave him, let him..." but I feel like it might give him a problem

further down the road that will cause breastfeeding not to continue [...] so I'm like "I need to get his tongue tie fixed because I need him to latch and continue breastfeeding as long as possible" but [the doctor is] like "oh, just leave it." Some people are like "breastfeeding's not important." [The doctor will say] "oh, if he's not latching on just give him a bottle." But it's like no, no, we're getting that fixed. It's very important that I breastfeed him.

I suggest that Olive's commitment to breastfeeding is more than an acquiescence to the dominant message that 'breast is best,' it is the defining feature of her mothering and a particularly important strategy for claiming good mothering. Through this claiming she challenges the doctor's dismissal of her insistence on breastfeeding and asserts herself as the definitive infant feeding expert for her child.

4.7.1 Mothers' resistance to expert surveillance

The ability to claim expertise is informed by the political and cultural context in which advice about child-rearing is distributed and assessed. For example, Tracey's use of a naturopath, another expert through whom she can legitimate her choices, is dependent on access to resources as well as dominant beliefs about the legitimacy of alternative medicine.²⁵ In the UK, the practice of health visiting provides more intimate opportunities for interactions between experts and parents. While there were participants who valued the practice (Demita, for example, viewed health visitors of one of the advantages of raising a child in Britain), I turn my attention to two participants who viewed the interaction with the health visitor as a site of potential conflict.

²⁵ Statistics suggest that use of complementary and alternative medicines is higher in Canada (74% of the sample reported use at least once in their lives in 2006 (Esmail, 2007)) than in England (44% of the sample reported use in their lifetime in 2005 (Hunt et al., 2010)).

The first participant to report these feelings was Claudia, who was born in the United States but had been living in the UK for over a decade. Claudia reported an intrusive experience with her health visitor that took on a particularly racial character:

Um, I feel very distrustful of health visitors, um. I, the concept is a bit new to me, um, 'cause we don't have it in the States, in the States you just take home your baby and then that's it unless there's a problem. But here I feel like...they are judging you and sort of...are...I'm trying not to sound crazy here but [...] I just feel like they...they are...um, I don't know, like, trying to, to spy on you, like. That, that phrasing isn't exactly what I intended, it's, I just feel like [...]And I feel like...it just makes me feel like the UK is more of a socialist state than US. I mean, I did not want a healthcare visitor, yet they came every week and I felt like I couldn't say no to it. And then at one point I went to the doctor and the doctor said "oh, the healthcare visitor told me x, y, z" and I was just, like, so they're reporting back...I just feel like...um...I just, it just makes me feel sus-, like I'm under a cloud of suspicion and I don't like that and I feel that...I, I feel like...they tend to be a bit more judgemental of black mothers and, this is only from my own personal experience so, so it could be the case that they aren't and I just had, you know, a bad healthcare visitor.

The sense of being monitored and judged captured by Claudia here is unsurprising given the role health visitors have played since the inception of a public health framework in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, with middle-class mothers attaining expert status through their pathologizing and regulation of working-class and poor mothers (Carter, 1995; Peckover, 2002). The surveillance and intrusion Claudia describes signals the racialized distinction between the self-policing, self-regulating subject neoliberal governmentality engenders and idealizes and the mode of governing it reserves for those deemed incapable of "properly governing themselves" (Power, 2005, p. 644; Murphy, 2003; Roberts, 2009; Wacquant, 2012). This distinction is classed, apparent in the classed history of health visiting, and raced, evident here in Claudia's narrative, particularly her sense that, as a 'newcomer' to Britain, she is unable to reject the services offered by the

health visitor. These veiled gestures of belonging, determining who the state liberates and who it castigates (Wacquant, 2012, p. 74), are negotiated and displayed in the health visitor-patient relationship.

These antagonistic feelings are intensified by a process of racialization in which Claudia's mothering is subject to greater scrutiny because of dominant ideas about black motherhood (Peckover, 2002). Black women's experiences of inadequate care in the maternity services has long been established (Phoenix, 1990), reflecting historical traditions of objectifying and exploiting black women's bodies (Bridges, 2011). Claudia's descriptions are of a more covert form of bias in which black mothers' ability to mother well is suspect. Claudia was not able to explain more specifically why she felt targeted as a black mother but I would suggest that this can be explained by the new subtleties of racism characteristic of neoliberal postracialism (Reynolds, 2005, pp. 72-73). Indeed, it is through the pretence of colour-blindness adopted in postracial policy-making that racial inequalities remain unacknowledged and addressed (Roberts, 2011). Through this racial practice of monitoring and judgement, Claudia's capacity to express herself as the expert of her own mothering experience was suppressed. Claudia moved back to the United States shortly after giving birth to the twins and reported significantly different experiences there:

I found it really helpful because even though the um, when we went to the [center], they asked some of the same questions the health visitor had asked me, I didn't feel like it was intrusive. Maybe because it wasn't in my home, I had to go to their office. Um, and I felt much more comfortable about the process, I felt more comfortable about asking questions and I felt less judged as a mother.

Claudia's preference for the US' less "socialist" approach to healthcare and childrearing guidance is very likely a result of the political differences between the two countries and the dominant beliefs of citizens in those countries. Persistent belief in the 'American dream' and individual enterprise is well-established in the United States (Lareau, 2011) and in this case, has expressed itself in Claudia's disdain for the more "intrusive"

provision of healthcare services characteristic of the UK. Claudia's perspective provides insight into the kind of expertise she values in her parenting, an approach that favours individual decision-making and self-responsibility, characteristics that are discursively at odds with black mothering.

4.7.2 Mothers' resistance to expert power

The second participant who offered a more critical take on health visiting was Ida, whom I met while she was in the middle of maternity leave with her second child. She identified herself as occupying a parental 'middle-ground,' embracing some aspects of AP and rejecting others. In her description of health visitors, Ida provided an apt summation of the duties and dilemmas of modern parenting:

Yeah, I think the system of health visiting and having someone to come and talk to you...[is] really useful and again that's more information-giving and advice if you need it. And also, the midwifery advice and information I think that's really, really good. [pause] I think, you know, they obviously have...an agenda, maybe they don't have an agenda but they, I suppose they would only promote something where they're not gonna be sued or gonna be done for negligence so I suppose they would only...promote approaches that, where they've got the information, good information on whether that works, you know...I think they could...yeah, I don't really have that much of a strong opinion but I suppose the one thing that I do feel though is that, it's remembering that it is down to me as a parent and yes, I may go and see a health visitor for advice and they might say "you've got to do it this way" but ultimately I'm the person in charge here and unless I'm being wilfully negligent or abusive or whatever, actually it's my responsibility and I think sometimes it's easy to forget that and not to have the confidence to make the decision based on information. So, to gather the information and say "right, this is how I'm *choosing* to do it" rather than "the health visitor says I've got to do this so I'm gonna do it" kind of. I think that's easy to forget and I think health visitors forget that they are simply giving you the

options rather than giving you one particular way (Ida, UK, 41-year-old mother of one daughter and one son, aged 3 and 8 months).

Ida captures the tension between many parents' desire for "information" and their resistance to having their childrearing dictated by an external "agenda." This tension demonstrates the limitations of an evidence-based policy-making strategy (Edwards, Gillies & Horsley, 2016), especially when evidence and resulting recommendations expand to cover an increasingly detailed range of parenting behaviours and tend to change over time with new discoveries in arenas such as neuroscience. Indeed, the tension is created because state actors no longer limit their intervention to cases of neglect or abuse but now advise on a wide range of everyday, mundane activities and cite evidence to support one recommendation or another. In her claim that, ultimately, she is "in charge," Ida challenges the notion that such recommendations promoted by health visitors and other representatives of the state are infallible. From this perspective, the science that underlies the decision to recommend breastfeeding or room sharing is always subject to interpretation. And crucially, as Ida suggests, because it is mothers who are deemed responsible for the outcomes of their parenting decisions, it is mothers who must choose just how they might feed their infants or put them to sleep. The need to balance scientific, external expertise with seemingly internally-derived individual expertise expressed in Ida's narrative reflects the currently dominant mode of governance that values entrepreneurial citizens who are flexible and capable of re-invention (Murphy, 2003; Harris, 2004). The ability to adapt, conduct research, to neither dismiss nor accept expertise without question and most importantly, to claim full responsibility, are each characteristics of good citizenship that are made more complicated and in some cases, impossible, by racial, gendered and classed inequities. When read in conversation with Claudia's experience, Ida's description inadvertently articulates which kind of mothers get offered "options" and which mothers 'need' to be instructed in a "particular way" of parenting.

Indeed, the choices and responsibilities affirmed by Ida and the variable expertise in which they are mired is further complicated by dominant ideologies about gender, race and class. These facets shape what kind of expertise is promoted, the capacity to carry out the duties of that expertise and the responsibilities that accrue to parents as a result of the success or failure of said duties. It is through this relationship that a parenting philosophy allegedly drawn from Africa can be reconstructed as a white, middle-class phenomenon (Faircloth, 2013), promoted as an individualist solution to persistent problems of inequity (Sears & Sears, 2001) and dismissed as an ‘extreme’ or ‘irrational’ indulgence of privileged mothers.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined expertise as it underlines contemporary parenting ideologies, particularly intensive mothering and its ‘natural’ variant, attachment parenting. I have argued that the scientific expertise that bolsters intensive mothering is gendered, raced and classed and affects the kind of parenting strategies enacted by working- and middle-class black mothers. Drawing on data from the interviews, I revealed the different ways in which mothers express their expertise as racial subjects and navigate the pressures created by the dominance of an intensive model of childrearing. Identifying this difference is important for two reasons: first, in revealing that race shapes investment in and experience of intensive parenting practices, I expose the lie of postracialism that underpins neoliberal rationality. Black parents parent this way not simply because of ‘cultural differences’ (Lentin & Titley, 2011) but in acknowledgement of and in response to structural racism. They seek to provide opportunities for their children where structural oppression has created barriers for them. Second, and perhaps more importantly, acknowledging the raced features of intensive parenting exposes the very limits of this ideology and reveals the spaces of resistance. Black mothers engage in intensive mothering in a way that both accepts the merits of the argument (that parental intervention is the controlling factor in better outcomes for children) and critiques it (in naming racism as a barrier that intensive mothering helps to overcome, they tacitly acknowledge that there are other factors beyond parental behaviour that shape children’s

futures). This ambiguity opens space for resistance where mothers can reject some of the demands of intensive mothering.

In the second section of the chapter, I turned my attention to the appearance of attachment parenting practices in state-produced parenting advice, focusing on the main three features commonly associated with attachment parenting; breastfeeding, bed-sharing and babywearing. I argued that by conforming to or rejecting these recommendations, black mothers developed maternal expertise that facilitated a claim on good motherhood. Finally, I concluded with examples of participant interactions with ‘experts’ to demonstrate the neoliberal complexities that underlie mothers’ abilities to claim expertise. My aim has been to highlight expertise as a socially constructed phenomenon, shaped by the neoliberal context in which it emerges and informed by raced, classed and gendered ideas about good motherhood and good citizenship, and in doing so, locate the ways black mothers deploy expertise to make claims on good motherhood and good citizenship. I take up this theme in the following chapter, expanding on the claim that black women own attachment parenting. For at least four of the women I interviewed, this kind of parenting was of African origin and had been rebranded as ‘AP’ by the Sears (either for the purposes of promoting themselves or the philosophy, participants disagreed on this matter). Their exclusion from AP as knowing subjects was a source of frustration to them and reflects a longer pattern of dismissing black women’s knowledge-making processes. I examine this take on attachment parenting in the next chapter, where it is contextualized as part of a larger discussion of how black women situate themselves in Britain and Canada. Black women’s ownership of their expertise is inevitably informed by their racialized positioning in western societies. This being the case, how does claiming AP root black women and how might rejecting AP serve the same purpose? I explore these questions in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

5 Belonging and citizenship

In the previous chapter I discussed my first finding, expertise, and identified it as a crucial theme both in attachment parenting's appearance as a popular parenting philosophy and its translation into state-produced parenting advice, and in black mothers' articulation of their engagements with AP. Asserting themselves as experts of their own childrearing and therefore, 'good' mothers, required a complex negotiation of neoliberal ideals of individual responsibility and raced, classed and gendered assumptions about ideal mothering. In this chapter, I discuss my second finding: black mothers' cultivation of belonging as a means of claiming good motherhood. I examine the histories of blackness in Britain and Canada to contextualize black mothers' negotiation of their sense of belonging in each country and how that sense produces and influences their engagement with attachment parenting. How might black women's interactions with AP be informed by a unique configuration of citizenship that both acknowledges and rejects a state of precarious belonging? How do they deploy this belonging to claim good motherhood?

5.1 Introduction

Traditionally, the relationship between belonging and citizenship is a straightforward one; those who have formal and cultural citizenship rights are understood as belonging to the nation-state that grants those rights. However, most nation-states include a precariously located group who, regardless of their legal citizenship status, are constructed as interlopers (Bonjour & Block, 2016; Castles & Davidson, 2000) and are framed as *not* belonging to the nation. For these interlopers, the accepted "discourses and experiences which attach identity to place, and vice versa" do not apply (McKittrick, 2002, p, 28). The experiences of interlopers make clear the distinction between citizenship in the form of legal rights, and belonging, the "*practical* deployment and significance of nationality" (Hage, 2000, p. 50, original emphasis). Indeed, the

intersection of race, ethnicity, class and gender (and occasionally and crucially, national origin) plays a central role in determining who is understood as an ideal citizen and consequently, who belongs.

The one-to-one relationship between citizenship and belonging is further challenged by the growth of “international mobility” (Castles & Davidson, 2000, p. vii; Tetey & Pupilampu, 2005), as more people cross borders but maintain relationships with their ‘home’ countries, traditional notions are disrupted. The informants in this study experience both these phenomena. As black women living in the United Kingdom and Canada their blackness renders them outsiders to the nation (Gilroy, 1987; McKittrick, 2006) regardless of where they were born. Their occupation of multiple sites of oppression further upsets their sense of belonging, as Patricia Hill Collins explains: “the act of being simultaneously a member of a group and yet standing apart from it [produces a] state of belonging yet not belonging [which] forms an integral part of Black women’s oppositional consciousness” (1989, p. 757). It is this consciousness that this chapter examines as I explore how black women’s sense of belonging and their claims to citizenship²⁶ shape their experience of motherhood.

Black people’s sense of belonging to both the Canadian and British nations is precarious. Frequently located outside the British and Canadian historical imaginaries (Gilroy, 1987; McKittrick, 2002) and the subject of evolving anti-black immigration legislation (Perry, 2015; Fisher, 2012; Bashi, 2004), black Britons and Canadians’ citizenship is insecure. Black Canadian and British writers and scholars have attempted to capture this sense of dislocation (see, for example, works by Dionne Brand and Andrew Moodie in Canada and Benjamin Zephaniah and Ingrid Pollard in Britain) describing black identities as characterized by oscillation (Massaquoi, 2004) and fluidity (Reynolds, 2005). In this

²⁶ In this chapter, I use ‘citizenship’ to address not only legal entitlements but also social and cultural ideas about appropriate and normative behaviour, especially shaped by neoliberal values and standards.

chapter, I examine these fluid and dynamic expressions of belonging, exploring how they might shape black mothers' experiences of parenthood. Such an exploration is particularly pertinent for these mothers' engagement with attachment parenting, a philosophy that draws on superficial narratives about African culture (Sears & Sears, 1993).

This chapter is divided broadly into two sections: the first provides the crucial background against which black mothers in this study expressed their views on belonging. I provide a brief introduction to the histories of blackness in Britain and Canada, particularly noting patterns of exclusion from ideal citizenship and belonging and linking good citizenship to good parenting. This first section serves as a contextualization of the narratives I discuss in the second section, identifying four themes that elucidate black mothers' accounts of belonging as they engage with attachment parenting: how participants describe 'home,' the use of AP for the purposes of uplifting the black community, how AP can underline claims that the philosophy facilitates superior mothering and finally, AP as a method of resisting racism. I argue that although the embrace of AP can serve neoliberal purposes, the women's embrace of the philosophy also undermines racialized norms of parenting and citizenship and therefore, belonging. The diversity in the participants' articulations of belonging notwithstanding, I conclude that AP provides a pathway to belonging that challenges dominant narratives and facilitates the crafting of an oppositional and in some cases, transnational subjectivity.

5.1.1 First, a word on blackness

The data examined in this chapter is drawn from interviews with nineteen self-identified black mothers living in the UK and Canada. My decision to use self-identification to draw the boundaries around the study population reflects my theoretical assumption that blackness is a nebulous category (Walcott, 2003). I began the thesis with the assumption that 'African blackness,' a loosely defined notion of blackness equated with 'African descent,' would be the focus of my analysis, an assumption influenced by the stereotypes

employed by AP enthusiasts as well as some of the participants in this study. However, experience in the field has emphasized the fact of blackness' "malleability and open-endedness" (Walcott, 2003, p. 27; Kumsa, 2005) and this quality of blackness remains salient in my analysis. It enables the inclusion of data gathered during an interview with a participant in the UK, Jayaben, who named herself as both 'South Asian' and 'politically black':

I maybe should've mentioned this via email, I'm black but not ethnically black. I identify as black politically not black racially. I link this to 1970s political affiliation, especially in Britain, between [racialized] people, a source of solidarity (Jayaben, UK, 44-year-old mother of two daughters, aged 6 and 3).

Her disruption of dominant ideas of what blackness entails (and recollection of a history of multiracial organizing in Britain which was itself a claim on belonging (Lewis, 2000)) allows for an accounting of how I use blackness as an analytical lens in this project; a diverse blackness that encompasses light- and dark-skinned black women, black women with one white parent, black women born in Africa, black women born in Canada or Britain, black women born in the Caribbean, black women who name 'Africa' as an ancestral home but have no immediate links to the continent, black women who believe that race no longer matters and so on. This approach to blackness enables a departure from more homogenous depictions that often plague scholarship on black people's experiences in the Global North (Tettey & Puplampu, 2005; Reynolds, 2005, pp. 43, 171), and because I begin from participants' own experiences, highlights black women's diverse narratives. I attend to the differences in these narratives, allowing the women's "unique characteristics and circumstances" (Tettey & Puplampu, 2005, p. 20) that reflect their particular expression and experience of blackness to inform my analysis of how they engage with attachment parenting. My intention is to capture "multiple black histories, geographies, and narratives" (McKittrick, 2002, p. 31) rather than present a homogenous view of black motherhood.

5.2 Blackness in Britain and Canada

Though black people's presence in Britain can be traced back to as far as the Roman times (James, 2004), it is the 1948 arrival of nearly five hundred Jamaican men on the *Empire Windrush* that many symbolically mark as the beginning of Black Britain (Perry, 2015; for an evocative example of this event's significance in the public memory, see the 2012 London Olympics opening ceremony). The arrival of the *Windrush* represented the thousands of black Caribbean people who migrated to Britain in the postwar period, substantially swelling the black population of Britain ("From no more than a few thousand in 1900...to a million at the end of the century" (James, 2004, p. 347)). It also marked the British state's growing realization of the consequences of trying to maintain the last vestiges of Empire, resulting in a slew of race-based immigration laws and culminating in the British Nationality Act of 1981, which revoked Commonwealth citizens' right of abode in the UK.

Though the *Windrush*'s arrival is clearly a significant event in black British history, the fixation on this ship reveals two significant characteristics of the nature of citizenship and belonging in Britain. First, concentration on this particular landing comes at the expense of recognizing black people's presence in Britain prior to the mid-twentieth century (Perry, 2015). If black people have only recently arrived in Britain, their claim to all the benefits of citizenship, legal and substantive, are weakened, especially those benefits that are framed in contributory terms (Hampshire, 2005). Second, through the mythic retelling of the *Windrush* migrants arriving to a joyous welcome, a particularly benevolent image of British society and empire is relayed (Perry, 2015; Hampshire, 2005). The myth of British anti-racism (Perry, 2015; Lewis, 2000, pp. 12-13), the notion that British history, and therefore Britain itself, is innocent in all matters racial and racist, is upheld through the construction of the *Windrush* and later Caribbean migration as "government-sponsored [and] encouraged" (Hampshire, 2005, p. 20). This myth necessarily informs the contemporary 'postracial' landscape; Britain is constructed as benevolent in both its history and its present. These two factors shape the dominant image of 'Britishness' and

frame how black people locate themselves within the nation, as Eleanor's description of the significance of *Windrush* shows:

when West Indians came over during the Windrush times...the system wasn't designed to benefit them in any way or form and automatically they were assumed to have no intellectual abilities at all so they just put them in the lower group and some people got tarnished with the brush of having mental disabilities so they were doomed for failure, you know? And that's just how it was to begin with and that system hasn't really changed (Eleanor, UK, 33-year-old mother of two daughters and one son, aged 12, 6 and 4).

Though Eleanor's account of *Windrush* aims to challenge the claim of British racial innocence it nevertheless accepts the narrative of recent arrival. Britain's practices of racial exclusion "begin" with *Windrush*, framing racial inequalities as a phenomenon that begins with the arrival of West Indians and thus eclipsing longer histories of racist oppression.

The story of black Canadian life follows similar lines. In keeping with the policy of multiculturalism central to modern Canadian nationhood, the Caribbean presence in Canada, especially Caribbean migration since the 1960s, has been foregrounded as a definitive marker of blackness in Canada, displacing a longer history of black presence (Flynn, 2011; McKittrick, 2002, 2006; Puplampu & Tettey, 2005; Walcott, 2003).²⁷ In cases where pre-twentieth century black history *is* acknowledged, it is usually through contrast with the overt racism of Canada's southern neighbour, the United States. Emphasizing Canada as the safe destination at the end of the Underground Railroad facilitates a widespread forgetting of Canada's own racist legislation and institutional exclusion (Abdi, 2005). Instead, the national imaginary is centered on the myth of two founding (white) nations, the erasure or tokenization of First Nations peoples, and the

²⁷ This is not to dismiss the importance of Caribbean migration in the creation of black Canadian communities.

recent arrival of immigrant groups who contribute “brightness” and “brilliance” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 545) in the form of ethnicised food and music. The construction of these groups as having just arrived befits Canada’s image of itself as a benevolent and welcoming nation while maintaining the dominant construction of whiteness as equal to Canadian-ness (Harder, 2010; Lawson, 2002). The story of Canada as multicultural only serves to perpetuate this exclusion, translating racialized people’s demand for equal rights and opportunities into the celebration of cultural differences (Puplampu & Tettey, 2005). These Othered groups are welcome to ‘celebrate’ particular aspects of their culture only so far as they do not threaten ‘core Canadian values.’

These contradictory notions are expressed in Canada’s approach to immigration which, unlike Britain, has purported to welcome immigrants. However, this welcome has been limited to those immigrants understood as capable of assimilation, whether through the explicit exclusion of “unassimilable” racialized populations or the enactment of target-based immigration policies that covertly excludes undesirable immigrants (Bashi, 2004; Smith, 1993). Whether welcoming or rejecting immigrants both the UK and Canada have adopted racially exclusionary immigration legislation and thus realized a similar outcome; the construction of blackness as separate from and in some ways, antithetical to the nation.

My point in affirming the long histories of blackness in Britain and Canada is not to lay claim to an expression of authentic or ‘real’ blackness. I do not intend to suggest that if black communities only recently arrived in Britain or Canada that this recentness serves as justification for exclusion from shared notions of citizenship and belonging. Instead, I seek to draw attention to the practice, common to the UK and Canada, of making the arrival of black people the problem and their removal, the solution. While this practice might contribute to a sense of uncertainty or ambiguity among the black diaspora, I follow McKittrick (2002) in viewing the rootedness and rootlessness, absence and presence of blackness as an opportunity to organize the self in unexpected and potentially, transformative ways. The feelings and “multiple creative and discursive

meanings” (McKittrick, 2002, p. 34) attached to black people’s location in these spaces is captured in the concept of ‘belonging.’

5.2.1 Belonging

Belonging can best be described as the emotional component of citizenship and identity (Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran & Vieten, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2007), expressing the extent to which people *feel*, and are made to feel, that they fit within their communities, cities and countries. The employment of feelings or emotion is a significant element in neoliberal governance (Fortier, 2010), both in describing how good citizens *ought* to feel about their nations and in the encouragement of certain kinds of feelings among citizens. Excluded or marginalized groups are framed as incapable of sharing the values of the nation so integral to feeling “attachment to the nation” (Fortier, 2010, p. 19) and belonging; they are objects of the nation, to be discarded if/when they fail to adequately perform their belonging as a marker of good citizenship (Hage, 2000). Belonging is cultivated through a complex array of factors including race, class, gender, ethnicity and so on and is made even more complex in a globalized context characterized by border crossing and diasporic movement. In Britain and Canada, belonging has been framed in particularly racial terms, spelling out who is understood as legitimately British or Canadian and who is not.

In Britain, the relationship between citizenship and belonging has alternately been discussed in more and less explicit terms, particularly in response to the global political position the country found itself in following World War II. As James Hampshire (2005) and others have explained, in an attempt to hang on to a crumbling empire and its position as a world power, the British government passed the British Nationality Act of 1948. The Act defined all those resident in the UK, its current and former colonies, protected areas and so on as British citizens, granting them the right to enter and reside in Britain. Intending the legislation as a symbolic act of Commonwealth unity, British politicians and policy-makers did not anticipate that its passing would enable significant levels of migration from the ‘New’ Commonwealth, particularly the Caribbean

(Hampshire, 2005). Following (or stoking) anti-immigrant fervour among the British public (James, 2004), both Conservative and Labour governments endeavoured to pass restrictive immigration legislation. But how to reduce migration from the Caribbean, Africa and South Asia while still allowing and even welcoming migrants from the ‘Old’ Commonwealth without antagonizing the former countries and appearing explicitly racist? By drawing a distinction between citizenship and belonging, distinguishing between those citizens who, by virtue of their place of birth or the birthplace of their father or grandfather, *belonged* and those who did not (Hampshire, 2005). Belonging had clear political currency, marking those who continued to have unrestricted access to Britain and those who faced administrative and discriminatory hurdles to residence in the UK. Although the state eventually revoked Commonwealth citizens’ right of abode in the UK in 1981, belonging continues to operate alongside citizenship, clearly marking which citizens have the right to access resources and name themselves as British, thereby acquiring social capital (Lewis, 2000). More recently debates around citizenship and belonging have focused on the integration (or lack thereof) of Muslim (Kapoor, 2013) and EU migrants (Erel, 2011), especially those from Eastern European nations. These debates are complicated further by devolution of certain powers to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and the UK’s membership of the European Union.²⁸

In each of these cases, the racialization of belonging and citizenship is clear; the British government has repeatedly defined the boundaries of ideal citizenship along racial lines (Hampshire, 2005; Tyler, 2010) and in ways that center English culture²⁹ (Bannerji, 2000; Lewis, 2000, p. 208). Even for those people of colour who have British passports,

²⁸ Following a racially charged public debate about sovereignty and the merits of immigration, the UK voted to leave the European Union in a 2016 referendum. Ironically, one of the reasons for strengthening anti-black immigration legislation in the postwar period was preparation to join the European Economic Community, the European Union’s predecessor (Bashi, 2004; Smith, 1993).

²⁹ A pattern that I inadvertently repeat in my data collection; all interviews took place in England.

the dominant narrative of Britishness equates it with whiteness, from the reliance on *arrival* as the key signifier of blackness in Britain to the veiled references to ‘British values and culture’ (Yuval-Davis, 2006) that serve as justifications for contemporary crackdowns on immigration, legal or otherwise. The entanglement of whiteness, Englishness and therefore Britishness is aptly expressed by Florynce who tried to explain her identity as black British rather than black English:

Well, for me...when I, when I was growing up, I don't know if they still di-, you know, distinguish in the same way now but we were always told that you could not be black and English, it was impossible because there's no, you know, Anglo-Saxon, um, no roots that...to be honest, now a lot of English people are mixed, from all over Europe but it's not, you know, obvious because of their appearance, um, yeah, we were always told, you know, you could not be English, you're British and I, I don't know, even to-, I wouldn't call myself English because I'm not white so you always had to be white English and, you know, on the form you would never see, um, 'Black English', it doesn't happen, it's always 'Black British'. So may-, I don't know if it's ingrained more subtly or if it's just because that's what, you know, we were told, um, but I find it quite offensive actually *chuckles* if my husband says to me, 'no, you're English' I feel like he's trying to insult me, like, actually, what's wrong with being English? But you know, it's quite insulting (Florynce, UK, 29-year-old mother of one son, aged 6 and one daughter, aged 6 months).

Florynce's account reflects the same erasure of a longer history of blackness I describe above and suggests a flexibility in whiteness not accorded to blackness, where being “mixed,” tracing one's ancestry to different (western) European nations, does not compromise one's claim on essential white English identity. For black people in Britain, however, the boundaries of citizenship and, by implication, belonging, are narrowed to the category of “black British.” And though Florynce takes ownership of and great pride in this category, it demonstrates the limitations of belonging in the UK, even for British citizens like Florynce. If Englishness remains the core authentic identity of British

citizenship, the experiences of those like Florynce, those who are racialized and therefore not English, are collected into secondary categories of citizenship, where the standards to measure loyalty or perhaps more accurately, belonging, are more onerous.

Despite its benevolent and welcoming reputation, Canada similarly racializes belonging and citizenship. In distinguishing between founding and following nations (and erasing pre-European indigenous settlement and ongoing colonization), the distinction is drawn between ‘real’ Canadians who are white and those whose Canadian-ness is tempered by hyphenated modifiers such as ‘African-’ (Puplampu & Tettey, 2005, p. 40). This discrepancy is cogently captured by the furor raised around the so-called ‘lost Canadians’ (Harder, 2010). Brought to national attention by changes to the rules regarding required identification necessary to cross the United States-Canada border (Harder, 2010), the ‘lost Canadians’ describes an unidentified number of people who, by virtue of the vagaries of Canadian citizenship legislation, have discovered that their assumed citizenship status is in question.

In her analysis of the judicial, parliamentary and media representations of such individuals, Lois Harder (2010) argued that the narratives that ‘lost Canadians’ relied upon to assert their right to Canadian citizenship was often directly contrasted with “racialized others whose attachment to Canadian-ness is viewed as less worthy, or at least less long-lasting” (p. 207). This emphasis on time as an indicator of belonging echoes the racialized constructions of British citizenship I describe above; the assumption that Canadians of colour are not only recently arrived but are also unable to trace their heritage to European ancestors cannot be separated from the belief that Europeans were the first and only legitimate settlers of the Canadian nation. Ironically, it is the claim to British heritage in particular that lost Canadians evoke as a marker of Canadian belonging (Harder, 2010). Furthermore, the British government enacted the 1948 legislation that caused Britain’s ‘colour problem’, described above, partly in response to Canada’s decision to create their own citizenship, separate from British subjecthood (Harder, 2010; Hampshire, 2005). British and Canadian discourses about belonging are

thus commingled and have produced a particular kind of whiteness as the core signifier of appropriate citizenship (Bannerji, 2000; Thobani, 2007).

It is in response to these discourses of whiteness that people of colour articulate their Britishness or Canadianness. For some, this means that even when they possess formal citizenship, they report that they never ‘feel’ Canadian (Flynn, 2011; Kumsa, 2005) or British. In an aside, Patricia offers one such example of this distinction between formal citizenship and a sense of where one belongs. As she attempts to describe the different cultural references she and her partner wish to relay to their children, she describes herself as: “from [Caribbean country], Canadian-born.” This sense of being “from” elsewhere, despite clearly possessing Canadian citizenship reflects the “state of belonging yet not belonging” articulated by Collins above. It is this ‘feeling,’ this “emotional dimension” (Yuval-Davis, Kannabirah & Vieten, 2006, p. 1) of citizenship as it interacts with maternal identity that I now turn to. The four themes below draw on the participants’ narratives to explore how black mothers draw on AP to negotiate belonging as they prepare their children for good citizenship, a fraught endeavour given the long-standing practices of exclusion that characterize historical and contemporary contextualizations of blackness in Canada and Britain.

5.2.2 The intersection of mothering, citizenship and belonging

As discussed in chapter two, dominant definitions of ‘good’ parenthood require the preparation of children for their role as future citizens (Lowe et al., 2015) and attachment parenting is no exception; in the introduction to the AP ‘bible’, the Sears argue that “how you parent your children in the early years really does make a difference when it comes to what kind of adults they become,” later promising that “your children will turn out better” if they are raised by an attachment parent (2001, p. ix). Thus, notions of ‘good’ citizenship crucially frame what we identify as ‘good’ parenting; that which produces responsible, contributing members of society, a connection that all participants in this study accepted as a given. However, what of those who are already excluded from the possibility of ‘good’ citizenship? The examination of mothering from the perspective of

marginalized women, such as black women, “questions the idea that bearing and rearing children ‘naturally’ transmits ethnically bounded, homogenous cultural capital to children” (Erel, 2011, p. 696). In other words, black mothers draw attention to the complexities of producing good future citizens; the practice of raising children is more than the expression of women’s natural tendencies towards nurture and care but is socially constructed and informed by broader gendered, classed and raced realities that determine who is a good citizen and who belongs. Black women’s exclusion from the normative bounds of citizenship does not induce in them a lack of interest or investment in the goal of preparing their children for good citizenship. Instead, they offer alternative conceptions of citizenship, both engaging with and challenging dominant ideas about good parenting to produce childrearing practices suited to raising black children in a racist society.

5.3 Home as a site of backwardness and inspiration

The women’s articulations of ‘home’ provide one entry point to an examination of their sense of belonging. Though only eight of the women I interviewed were born in a country other than Britain or Canada, all nineteen women articulated a connection to or affiliation with a third country or region. For a few, this connection was tangential (such as Kimberlé’s fleeting reference to her experiences in France) or distant (like Gloria’s description of her family as being of “Caribbean descent”) but a number of the participants made substantial links to this third place, exploring how this was an important aspect of their identity and informed their approach to parenting. This is expressed, for example, in women’s use of the word ‘home’ to describe this other location and its associated parenting practices. Patricia and Stella, both Canadian-born, each used the phrase “back home” when discussing the differences between their approach to parenting and that of their parents or community. For both women “back home” possessed an ideological backwardness, something they had to leave behind in order to offer their children better:

Back home, you know, babies slept on their tummies...I guess being back home...you did what they did and they did what they did...and there was no learning curve (Patricia, CA, 41-year-old mother of two daughters, aged 6 and 3).

Patricia prided herself on taking parenting classes and doing research, expressing a thirst for knowledge and betterment that she felt was lacking in the black community both in Canada and ‘back home’ in the Caribbean. The practice of ‘doing what you’re doing’ because that’s the way it has always been done is precisely the kind of ancestral knowledge espoused by the Sears but for Patricia it indicates a failure to take the work of parenting seriously by engaging in the work of assessing and evaluating childrearing expertise, a crucial indicator of good mothering as I discussed in the previous chapter. Similarly, for Stella, “back home” describes a place where people fail to parent appropriately. After proclaiming that her mother has been a better grandmother than she was a mother I asked her to explain why. She answered:

I think it’s just a different time, you know, and...she wasn’t back home, she’s here and seeing a baby maybe once, maybe it’s, you know, her getting to do things that she didn’t have the opportunity to do (Stella, CA, 37-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 4).

Because Stella’s mother is *not* “back home” she is able to access a different and, for Stella, better approach to childrearing. Stella also notes that her mother raised her children in a “different time” when expectations of parents were different and, implicitly, not as competent. Both women described a desire to be a different, better mother to their children than their own mothers had been to them. Thus, they understood the path to better mothering as distinct from the mothering practices they associated with ‘back home’.

However, despite the critique of its practices, this other place remained “home” in the mothers’ accounts, while Canada was described as a blank slate upon which they could

enact ‘new’³⁰ approaches to parenting, a place where this kind of parenting would be “accommodated” (Patricia). In this act, the naming of another place as “home” while also implicitly citing Canada as a superior location in which to raise children, Stella and Patricia both affirm and challenge the dominant narrative of Canadian citizenship. On the one hand, their narratives reify the belief that blackness belongs elsewhere; “back home” is not in Canada. On the other, by claiming Canada as a space in which good parenting, and therefore good citizenship, can be performed, they root themselves in the Canadian landscape. Their good parenting makes their presence in Canada acceptable, perhaps even desirable, particularly their engagement in parenting practices that aim to produce citizens well-versed in the neoliberal language of preparedness, resourcefulness and financial literacy (Erel, 2011), as I noted in chapter four and Stella so aptly describes:

Yeah. [Daughter’s] learning about financial literacy ... A friend of, um, I met this woman, another black woman, um, she has this book that...teaching about money from like birth to eighteen. So by the time the children go through this program and read the books they can get investors at this, you know, and she told me that her son basically loved Disney toys and she said, “since you like Disney so much, you’re gonna own a part of it” so she bought stocks. I was like “yeah! I’m gonna do that. Who do you like, [daughter]?”

The advent of neoliberal governance facilitates the “decoupling [of] national belonging and citizenship” (Erel, 2011, p. 702) by drawing an increasingly tighter connection between good citizenship and the capacity for economic productivity. However, this emphasis on economic productivity does not entirely displace racialized views of belonging; Stella’s efforts to ensure her daughter has financial skills, for example, are important not just because it will allow her daughter to compete in a globalized labour market but because it compensates for the obstacles produced as a result of racism.

³⁰ As Eleanor’s narrative suggests, for some participants these approaches are not new.

The “twice as good” mantra cited by several participants is relevant here to explain how racialized mothers address the additional burdens they shoulder in the effort to prepare future citizens; Stella stresses financial skills because in her mind, it is an arena that black people have yet to master while Rebecca chooses to work outside the home because she has a duty to show her daughter an alternative view of black womanhood:

I guess I’ve kind of always felt like...as a black woman it’s almost like you’re at the bottom of the social ladder to some extent, regardless of education and that kind of stuff, socially it feels like you’re a little bit below so I don’t want her...so it’s almost like you have to try that much harder, so I feel like if I were to stay home now it would be kind of like a, I don’t know, I’d be throwing everything away somehow and I don’t want her to see, I want her to see that “okay, you know what, here, yes, my mom looks different but you know what? She’s educated and she works” (Rebecca, CA, 38-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 13 months).

Recalling their memories of being told by their own parents that they had to work harder and better to achieve, some of the mothers repeated this message to their children and strive to ensure that they make appropriate and beneficial parenting choices to best enhance their children’s chances of success. These mothers’ path to citizenship through an expression of racial belonging is blocked so they turn to good parenting, using their preferred parenting style which, at least for Stella and Patricia, is constructed *against* “home,” as a demonstration of their commitment to Canadian society. As I explained in the preceding chapter, the framing of children as future citizens informs policy-making in both countries and so by utilizing this same language, even as their investments in their children serve the dual purposes of preparing them for economic productivity and saving their lives, these black mothers assert themselves as good mothers *and* good citizens.

Stella and Patricia’s access to both milieus, to “home” and Canada enables the expression of a transnational subjectivity in which their citizenship and belonging in *both* places is uncompromised. Through this subjectivity their right to exist and belong in both is

sustained, despite referring to an elsewhere as “home.” While this identification of another place as home might suggest that they ‘truly’ belong there, Stella and Patricia’s transnational subjectivity points to a dualistic vision of belonging. This subjectivity is predicated on their engagement in good parenting, their approach to which they have formulated in and through their attachment to both places; their good parenting is produced against “home” and is made possible in Canada.

While Stella and Patricia believed that their preference for affection and close bonding with their children was not socially supported “back home,” Eleanor described the opposite, defining “home” as the origin of attachment parenting:

I feel like a lot of the information about attachment parenting is obviously there but because we don’t see ourselves in it...we don’t necessarily take it on and we assume that it’s a white thing, not realising that these people have seen this in our cultures back home (Eleanor, UK, 33-year-old mother of two daughters and one son, aged 12, 6 and 4).

But for Eleanor, this “home” was not the Caribbean nation from which her parents hail nor could it be; according to Eleanor, the Caribbean has been “indoctrinated” by slavery, resulting in the loss of practices such as breastfeeding. The “home” that spurred attachment parenting was Africa, with whom Eleanor felt a deep spiritual connection. This framing of the Caribbean as a less authentic version of Africa was echoed by Harriet and Barbara, who noted the gap between the ‘African’ practice of carrying a baby on one’s back and its absence in the Caribbean. In noting this distinction, the women gesture towards the tensions and complexities of claiming ‘home’ and the questions about authentic expressions of blackness that can follow. Indeed, Eleanor’s claim that attachment parenting is African and that it had been unjustly but unsurprisingly appropriated by white parenting experts becomes a pathway through which she can assert belonging, not to Britain, whose culture she feels is not her own, but to a diasporic black community whose members need reminding of their ancestral practices. Through her attachment to an imagined Africa, Eleanor claims a “transatlantic black consciousness”

(Reynolds, 2005, p. 90) that informs her vision of black mothering, drawn from and practiced in Africa, the Caribbean and even the UK.

Eleanor's transnational consciousness is defined by celebrations of connections to "home" and elsewhere as well as rejections of a repressive Britain, where the culture requires stifling conformity, particularly from people of colour. Recognizing these limitations and their particular implications for her black children, like Stella, Eleanor emphasized the importance of teaching "business and economics" skills to her children:

business and economics is something that from young I'm teaching them in a way so that they understand, 'cause that's what life is really, not life so much but being able to eat is about.

Her correction of herself, that economics is *not* what life is "really about" but is only a means to an end (the ability to eat), reflects Eleanor's broader value system which both rejects and confirms normative neoliberal visions of good motherhood and citizenship. At the same time, Eleanor clearly invests a great deal of importance in providing her children with the skills that will allow them to eat. She emphasizes what seems like a basic, taken-for-granted aspect of lived experience, reflecting the extra work entailed in black motherhood of ensuring children's survival. Still, in distinguishing between "life" and "being able to eat," Eleanor prioritizes her children's happiness³¹ above all else and has chosen to home-school for example, to ensure that her children's needs are met and to protect them from racialized practices of exclusion. In this decision, her children's capacity for economic productivity, the central marker of good neoliberal citizenship, is subordinated to the more important, in Eleanor's eyes, goal of personal fulfilment.

³¹ However, some critics have suggested that a focus on emotional well-being can mask the prioritizing of economic productivity (Hoffman, 2010), in other words, happiness is only important in so far as it facilitates consumption and competitive involvement in the labour market.

The subordination of economic productivity sits alongside Eleanor's recognition that while "business and economics" skills might serve as methods of enhancement and optimization for white, middle-class children, such skills are essential to her black children's very survival. The tension in Eleanor's maternal practice shows the complexities of contemporary black motherhood, negotiating the fundamental of duties of black mothering (survival) and broader childrearing strategies. In her recognition of racism as an ongoing threat to her children's happiness and survival and her naming of a longer history of racist practices in which she names Britain as specifically complicit, Eleanor also rejects the 'postracial' characteristic of neoliberal Britain. At the same time, her decision to focus on individual strategies such as home-schooling suggests an affirmation of neoliberal values, particularly those that encourage "self-managing and self-enterprising" (Erel, 2011, p. 705). She also fails to challenge the construction of mothering as a practice through which moral worth is measured (Erel, 2011). Her transnational subjectivity is less a celebration of the occupation of both "home" and Britain than an expression of the awkwardness and discomfort that can accompany existing in these two places.

Eleanor's unsettled transnationality can be contrasted with Demita who, through her narrative, offered a rather more pragmatic approach to the fact of belonging to multiple places. Demita was born in the UK but had spent much of her life living in several other countries. She had recently chosen to return to Britain with her toddler son following the end of her relationship with his father. Demita talked candidly about her experiences in countries in North America, the Caribbean and Africa, contrasting the availability of advice for 'natural' approaches to parenting and the support system in place to help parents:

Things like the free healthcare, the free nursery hours, that type of thing is helpful...But now, like I said, coming from [Caribbean country], you know, being in [southern African country], there's nothing like that. So, you don't even know you're missing something until, I didn't even know I was missing anything until I got here and I was kinda like, okay, why haven't I been here his whole life? It

really, it made me think that, why haven't I been here his whole life when, you know, I could've been getting all this help for him, you know, you get free kid multivitamins and that type of thing, and especially for me who hasn't been working since I've been here, I did, I was doing like some [work] but not necessarily a job, that type of thing is really helpful and in fact, it makes me sit and think, oh, my gosh, if we just had this in [Caribbean country] how different it would be for mothers out there, how the children would be better off, you know? Coming up, they would have such a much better start in life than kind of everything stuck on the parents and the mothers who don't have it, to be honest. Growing up in depravity (Demita, UK, 26-year-old mother of one son, aged 3).

Demita's appreciation of the benefits of British citizenship, and the guilt she feels for 'depriving' her son of such advantages, is contextualized by her frustration about the absence of such advantages in the Caribbean and Africa, and reflects the global economic inequities that sustain the imbalance between what is available to parents in countries in the North and in the South. This frustration is expressed in the language of 'home'; she despairs because "we" do not have such a wide array of support services. Her appreciation of British benefits is underlined by a deeper gratitude to the Caribbean and the black diaspora for providing the ancestral source from which she draws her manifestation of 'good' parenting.

This tension between the resources to enact 'good' parenting and the most culturally appropriate venue in which to accomplish it is captured from a different perspective in Florynce's narrative. Though she does not refer to the Caribbean, where her grandparents migrated to Britain from, as 'home,' connection to the Caribbean informs and complicates her approach to parenting. Echoing her attempt to distinguish between Englishness and Britishness which I quoted above, she explains the different ways race has impacted her experience of parenthood:

So race has played an element, a part in, in some way shape or form. But I don't, I don't hold it very close whereas for my husband it's probably more apparent

because, you know, he's from the Caribbean, I'm British-born and in the Caribbean, you know, actually they wouldn't really see me as being Caribbean or having any sort of Caribbean heritage or roots, they just see me as English. And the amount of times I've had to say to him 'I'm not English, I'm British.' 'Oh, there's no difference, you're English.' Well, I'm not. And for him, he sort of says, like, you know, 'ah, you know, you're gonna parent just like *them*' as in, you know, talking about, um, wider society or, or, or white people (Florynce, UK, 29-year-old mother of one son, aged 6 and one daughter, aged 6 months).

Florynce's account hints at the malleability of blackness I described in the beginning of this chapter as she distinguishes between the kind of blackness (and related feelings towards race and racism) cultivated in the Caribbean as opposed to her own, where having been born and raised in Britain risks a black identity that has assimilated too many white values, especially those related to parenting. That Caribbean parents might produce 'better' children was repeated later in our interview, when Florynce told me that her husband jokingly threatened to take their daughter back to the Caribbean, where she would be raised away from the "nanny state," as he derisively referred to Britain. Florynce preferred her own "fusion" parenting style that drew both from the more "lenient" approaches apparently favoured by the majority culture in Britain and the discipline she associated with Caribbean culture. This fusion manifested itself in the deployment of AP techniques only when they complemented Florynce's other priorities, such as a return to paid work.

5.4 The limitations of building community through AP

While I argue that Eleanor's choices emphasize individual strategies for the achievement of good motherhood, she also expresses an investment in sharing these strategies with the wider black community. Eleanor revels in her self-appointed role of AP trailblazer, leading by example and sharing her knowledge with the wider community. This role fulfils a second purpose for Eleanor:

It's kind of funny because my appearance [chuckles] with black people they very, they...have a hard time accepting me and the way I look. It's not until I talk and say and share what I know then they kind of relax about it.

As a light-skinned black woman who could pass as mixed-race, Eleanor feels vulnerable to exclusion from the black community, a vulnerability that demonstrates the limitations of viewing blackness as 'malleable'. Her embrace of 'African' attachment parenting practices serves to counter this exclusion, shoring up her blackness and securing her a position in the community as a kind of elder. Indeed, for all three women who employed the language of 'home', choice of parenting style operated as a mechanism of belonging, not necessarily to the British and Canadian nations but to a community of like-minded people, whether they shared blackness or a commitment to more attached parenting, revealing the complex and ongoing illustrations of belonging produced by the fact of being "rooted and rootless" (McKittrick, 2002, p. 29).

The practice of AP as a service to the black community was voiced by two other participants, Demita and Olive. When we met for the interview, Demita had only been living in the UK for a few months. She was an enthusiastic supporter of attachment parenting (though she preferred the term 'natural parenting') and like Eleanor, she claimed AP as a practice "very many black people" had been doing for generations, "naturally." She argued that the practice had recently become less popular in the black community and hoped to inspire more black women to engage in AP:

I would love to see a lot more black women doing this also, you know. Not necessarily because it has a name but because...and not necessarily because we're trying to set ourselves apart but I am thinking about the future and I'm thinking about the future of black youths and having...good mothers, good examples to look up to (...) I just want some company, like, I just want some other mother, black mothers' company that know that them youths can be turned into special things...I just want company, I'm not trying to be the only one with a brilliant black child, you know? I'm not the only one that, I need, like, hundreds of

women, many thousands of women there with me...The more, the more we can get out there, the more info that people have and the more success stories also.

For Demita, the practice of AP was a sure-fire path to the development of a “brilliant black child.” Throughout the interview, she spoke earnestly about the confidence and independence that this style of parenting had afforded her son and the importance of cultivating these characteristics among black children given the damaging stereotypes that dominate British society. Her desire to spread the gospel, as it were, was motivated by a concern for the black community as a whole, even beyond the borders of the UK.

Similarly, Olive lamented the lack of interest in AP among the black community in Canada. Olive was born in the Caribbean but had lived most of her life in Canada. Her mother parented her in the “normal” way but, as Olive was pleased to report, she had recently shown interest in Olive’s ‘alternative’ choices. Though Olive expressed some feelings of isolation and a sense of feeling misunderstood she also expressed confidence in her parenting choices and described their potential long term impacts:

[Attachment parenting is] just not common and I don’t know why...maybe they don’t know about it or maybe it’s not the priority kind of thing like I said. I think just culturally or how we were brought up, the norm is just “put them in school, da-da-da” ...and maybe our parents not being into attachment parenting which they most of them weren’t ‘cause they’re just coming to this country and just getting, living, working to pay the bills type of thing. So it wasn’t really what we were raised around and that might’ve been the difference. Like maybe my son will think all this is normal like “my wife needs to breastfeed my kids” and you know, ‘cause that’s what he saw so I think maybe, maybe future generations, even black kids will start seeing that as the norm and even just little things like breastfeeding even it’s not all attachment parenting (...) hopefully at least a few things will become the norm for black people (Olive, CA, 28-year-old mother of two sons, aged 3 and 2 months).

The tension between the need to work and earn money and the desire to parent in a more attached manner was a common theme in Olive's interview³² and in this extract, operates as an explanation for why first generation immigrant parents might choose a more scheduled (Faircloth, 2013) style of parenting. It captures both the tension between the need for physical survival and the demands of 'good' parenting I discussed above, demonstrating the limitations of 'home,' and the classed dimensions of these struggles. As Olive suggests, attachment parenting requires a different set of financial priorities than that possessed by recently arrived migrants, specifically, delaying a return to full-time paid work and avoiding the use of institutionalized childcare. Such decisions are made possible by occupation of privileged positions in the economic structure. It is precisely these classed differences in access to 'good' parenting practice that limit AP's ability to build community in the way that many of the women strive for. By attributing distinctly anti-AP priorities to the black community as a whole, Olive reveals the racialization of poverty that persists in a 'postracial' context despite colour-blind claims to the contrary, but in such a claim also assumes the absence of a 'will to improve', echoing Patricia's criticisms, among the black community. Once more, a solution that centers AP in its power to improve black children's lives both undercuts and affirms neoliberal values.

Eleanor, Demita and Olive's hopes for attachment parenting as a racially specific childrearing practice is an expression of what Paul Kershaw (2005) calls "motherwork" (p. 107). Following the tradition identified by black feminist scholars Patricia Hill Collins and Dorothy Roberts, Kershaw describes the alternative visions of motherhood expressed by racialized women excluded from 'good' motherhood. In his attempt to challenge and expand the dominant conceptualization of citizenship which assumes participation in the labour market as defining characteristics of citizenship and social inclusion, Kershaw

³² And indeed, in most of the interviews conducted for this project. All but three mothers discussed the strains and stresses of balancing work and parenthood, a finding I discuss in greater detail in the next chapter.

argues that the care work carried out by racialized women serves not just the purpose of preparing children for future citizenship but performs the specific and “political projects of resistance and cultural survival” (2005, p, 119).

These “political projects” are evident in Olive, Demita and Eleanor’s narratives as each woman articulates the broader purposes that attachment parenting serves to the black community. Eleanor for example, by claiming AP as specifically African, resists the narrative exclusions executed by the Sears and other AP ‘experts.’ Eleanor draws on a cultural heritage to which she has no direct connection but nevertheless serves as a source of resistance to white retellings of the attachment parenting story. While it is important to note that the vision of Africa Eleanor creates is largely an imaginary one (Gilroy, 1993 cited in Reynolds, 2005), punctuated by the same problematically narrow beliefs about Africa for which I criticize the Sears, it nevertheless serves as a protective mechanism against both broader patterns of black exclusion and dominant ideas about attachment parenting, and by extension, good mothering.

Though they do not frame their versions of AP as African, Demita and Oliva put the philosophy to work as a means of “cultural survival” as they describe attachment parenting as having the potential to save their communities. The three women’s narratives reflect the tradition Collins and Roberts identify in the African-American community; mothering that is more than the preparation of children for responsible citizenship but encompasses the politics of identity formation as well as protection from and resistance to racist exclusion.

A crucial component of this form of mothering is a rejection of the exclusivity of the mother-child bond promoted in mainstream ideologies of motherhood (Collins, 2000; Forna, 2000). Collins notes the important role played by othermothers, “women who assist bloodmothers by sharing mothering responsibilities” (2000, p. 178) in African-American communities. As Roberts (1995) argues, because “the conception of motherhood confined to the home and opposed to wage labor never applied to black women” (p. 201), black women have rarely been afforded the opportunity to give up paid

work altogether to dedicate themselves to full-time motherhood. The realities of balancing participation in the paid labour force with childrearing and other caregiving responsibilities have led to the creation of what Collins calls “woman-centered networks” (2000, p. 178) in which women provide temporary and sometimes even long-term childcare for one another. Roberts (1995) traces this tradition to slavery where mothers had little guarantee that they would be able to stay with their children throughout their childhood. There are conflicting reports about whether othermothers remain a fixture of African-American communities (see Blum, 1999, Hill, 2004 and McDonald, 1997 for competing theories³³). For the women in this study, I argue that their choice of parenting style has largely undermined the potential for traditional othermothering.

This is evident in the fact that, for example, fifteen of the nineteen participants reported that their parents’ approach to childrearing was different from their own and for a significant proportion of the participants, this resulted in a reluctance to rely on their parents or other family members for childcare. This was particularly true for those participants who named themselves as ‘attachment parents.’ For some, like Eleanor, the lack of family support did not present much of a problem. Eleanor preferred to spend as much time as possible with her children and enjoyed home-schooling for precisely this reason. For others, like Lorde, they solved the problem with limited use of paid childcare, provided by an individual who shared their parenting philosophy. Regardless of how they addressed this problem, the attachment parents’ commitment to this philosophy meant

³³ Blum (1999) identifies a tradition of othermothering in her examination of working-class African-American women’s attitudes towards breastfeeding. She argues that African-American women’s decision to reject breastfeeding can be partly explained by the fact that the practice is incompatible with informal shared childcare arrangements. Hill (2004) and McDonald (1997), on the other hand, suggest that class stratification and the prison industrial complex have irrevocably altered what patterns of othermothering existed, isolating upwardly mobile African Americans in white-dominated, middle-class neighbourhoods and depriving working-class African Americans of the support they may have relied upon in earlier contexts.

that, while they sought to promote it for the purposes of community building and development, it remained an individual practice.

My argument is not intended to undermine the value of black mothers' stated commitment to uplifting the entire community but to draw attention to the ways that particular ideologies can shape people's expressions of resistance. Indeed, the same can be said of othermothering. It emerges as a response to the expectation that black mothers ought to participate in paid work rather than as an organic expression of more effective mothering. That black mothers have managed to find ways to continue raising their children despite the combined effects of poverty, racism and sexism that drive them into largely underpaid, little appreciated work is not grounds to claim that "such a system of mothering is in the best interests of the child" (Forna, 2000, p. 368). However, what othermothering *can* do is demonstrate that mothers require support in order to fulfil whatever kind of childrearing they deem appropriate. It also suggests that engagement in paid work does not preclude good mothering. The approach advanced by Demita, that of widespread but individualist adoption of attachment parenting as a salvo for the black community, need not necessarily undermine the political activism that Roberts and Collins argue is often an outgrowth of othermothering and woman-centered networks. Instead, it might inform a different kind of politics, perhaps more suited to the current socio-political climate in which rights are won on the basis of individual claims rather than collectivist struggles (Duggan, 2003). That Demita (as well as Olive and Eleanor) advances a simultaneously collectivist and individual argument might engender new approaches to social justice and activism.

5.5 AP as a source of belonging *and* alienation

My purpose in this chapter has been to explore how black mothers use attachment parenting to negotiate their sense of belonging, particularly as the philosophy provides a strategy for addressing racism in ostensibly postracial contexts. Participants have offered their varying versions of AP, some of which call attention to its alleged African origins and challenge Western narratives of citizenship and good parenthood that exclude black

mothers. In this section of the chapter, I draw more attention to this latter point and examine how AP might offer opportunities to claim or redefine citizenship in the respective British and Canadian contexts. Tracey's narrative presents one expression of this opportunity. In our interview, she described AP as both a continuation of her parents' cultural traditions and a way to feel a sense of belonging in a new, less diverse city.

Born in an East African country and raised in Canada, Tracey described attachment parenting as 'just parenting,' a common reframing of expertise among the more enthusiastic supporters of AP, as I discuss in chapter four. For Tracey, attachment parenting was the kind of childrearing that she had grown up with and witnessed in her family and community. However, when it came to her own practice of AP she found herself at odds with family members who were surprised by her desire for a homebirth and her persistent commitment to breastfeeding. Upon moving to a smaller, less racially diverse city than the one in which she was raised, AP became a source of community. She cultivated a supportive network of mothers with whom she shared an almost political commitment to attachment parenting, including the freedom to breastfeed in public. Moving to a new city away from her family also enabled Tracey to parent without judgement, particularly over those decisions where her family perceived her parenting choices as a step beyond the realms of appropriate attachment parenting, such as her preference for naturopathic medicine. Tracey speculated that the apprehension about her parenting choices was largely the result of its "all-consuming" nature which serves as a particularly vivid contrast against the ineptitude and laziness commonly associated with black mothering (Bezusko, 2013; Collins, 2000; Norwood, 2013; Roberts, 1991). As Tracey explained:

[W]hen it comes to black mothers I think we want our voice to be heard about this, I think for a long-time society kinda spoke for us and now that I think we're getting a little bit more educated in a lot of, just our own...in our own experiences, I think now we want people to know that "hey, we do this too," right? (Tracey, CA, 31-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 5 months)

“We do this too” expresses two interrelated claims; first, it forcefully illustrates black women’s performance of attachment parenting, especially against unspoken stereotypes about black women’s failures as mothers. Second, in the desire for “people to know,” Tracey suggests an equation between AP and good parenting. If black women “do this too” AP becomes a path for black women to assert themselves not only as good mothers but as good citizens, mothering being one of the few paths to good citizenship available to women. AP is a particularly effective device for the conspicuous performance of good parenting because, as I suggest in the preceding chapter, it takes the norms of ‘good’ parenting as determined by public policy and expands the associated duties (Freeman, 2016). For example, if women are expected to breastfeed, attachment parenting suggests extended breastfeeding. Further, through practices like babywearing, which the Sears encourage mothers to do “all the time...in the midst of their busy lives” (2001, pp. 65, 67), attachment parenting can be easily read on a mother’s body. The “all-consuming” nature that Tracey alluded to above is additional evidence of black mothers’ commitment to their children and therefore to good parenting.

As Tracey’s family’s misgivings suggest, however, this “all-consuming” characteristic can be grounds to dismiss attachment parenting as ‘extreme’, thereby compromising black attachment parents’ ability to access good parenting through their practice. However, some practitioners of AP have used the notion that attachment parenting is an ‘extreme’ or ‘difficult’ parenting style to assert themselves as not just good mothers but superior mothers (S.K. Carter & Anthony, 2015), especially when read against the parenting practices of white parents. As Olive acknowledged:

It’s hard. And it’s hard, too, not having so many rules and schedules because then it’s like maybe he’s not that mature to make the right decisions but at the same time I don’t wanna be that person that dictates “‘cause I’m your mother you have to do this.” I wanna treat him more like an equal kind of thing. But then when he’s not listening it’s hard. It’s hard.

However, the difficulty of attachment parenting was not a legitimate reason to discontinue the practice, especially when AP is understood as the ‘best’ approach to maximize a child’s development. Olive expressed her shock and disdain about an acquaintance who stopped breastfeeding at night so that her partner could share night feedings:

That’s, that’s crazy to me, that’s crazy. Like I would never do that to my kids. Give them the bottle because I, why am I getting up and not you? That’s, that’s crazy. So, that’s on you.

Olive’s good parenting, or more accurately, good *mothering*, is constructed and understood through the poor parenting choices of other mothers (Hoffman, 2013). Her claim on good mothering is not only individual, with underlying tones of neoliberal self-responsibility (“that’s on you”) but tied to an ideology of sacrificial motherhood (Baker, 2010) that requires mothers to subordinate their needs and wishes to their children’s ‘best interests’ (Hays, 1996). Stella takes this competitive claim on good mothering one step further by explicitly contrasting it with the childrearing behaviours of white parents. Stella proudly proclaimed herself as a good mother (“I’ve got it on lock,” she told me) and described other parents coming to her for childrearing advice, particularly with regards to improving their children’s poor behaviour. Stella was particularly keen to impart useful lessons to her daughter, especially with regards to financial savvy as I alluded to above, and suggested that white people were particularly adept at teaching their children financial skills. She objected, however, to white parenting styles:

Might have to learn a lesson from the white people, you know, in, in that aspect, in finances and stuff but in terms of parenting, mm-mm. I don’t like it *chuckles* I don’t like what they do. I don’t like it when the, I don’t like it at all. If your child is on the floor tell them to get up. You know. “Don’t embarrass me!” Are you kidding? ‘Don’t embarrass me?’ Are you kidding me? Better pick your little tail up off the floor [...] I don’t know if, I feel like we’re...as black women we have this boldness. You know. An amazing boldness about us, right? And hopefully we can teach that boldness to our kids and help parent with that boldness.

The failures of white parents (humorously represented here by a child misbehaving in public) is contrasted with black women's "boldness," underlined in other narratives by a reference to Africa as an ancestral home and source of good parenting practice. Stella's articulation of black women's "boldness" can be read as part of a larger history of black womanhood, embodied in the resilient capacity to survive against the injustices of slavery, colonial exploitation, violent racism and more recently, the emergence of a reinvigorated biological racism that exploits black women's bodies while claiming to be postracial (Roberts, 2011). I suggest that it is this "boldness" that informs black mothering and therefore, black mothers' claims to belonging as good parents and good citizens. That this view risks perpetuating the stereotype of strong black womanhood that facilitates over-burdening black women (Hill, 2004) and contributes an explanation for the withdrawal of social support from them does not dilute the power of such a claim to good black motherhood. The value of this perspective lies, perhaps, in revealing the racial character of 'mainstream' motherhood, often understood as neutral (which allegedly explains its dominance), in addition to providing a space for black mothers' belonging.

While Olive and Stella reach their path to belonging through adherence to an all-consuming AP enhanced by the failures of other mothers, particularly white ones, it does not overcome the problem Tracey identified; AP as leading to alienation. Tracey was able to find an alternative community among her fellow attachment parents which partly mitigated her family's distaste for her parenting style. Tracey could maintain her claims to both her family and her AP community despite her family's apprehension. However, in Barbara's case, her family's racialized derision of AP practices intensifies these risks of alienation:

I was at my parents' house and[...]I think I was washing up and I had [my daughter] on my back and [my mum] was in the next room and mum kind of said something like "Oh, these two, my daughter and her husband, they're always carrying this child around, I don't know if it's back to Africa or, you know, what it is" you know, it kind of, yeah, so it's almost like she kind of found it humorous and a bit sort of like, maybe a bit baffling and there's a slight notion of 'the child

has too much hand,' like she's gonna be too used to being held (Barbara, UK, 38-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 12 months).

For Barbara's mother, a return to Africa does not mark a turn towards good motherhood. Instead it suggests a temporal and cultural backwardness that engenders the adoption of outdated and potentially harmful parenting practices, an ironic juxtaposition with the similarly backward images of the Caribbean constructed by Patricia and Stella earlier. These conflicting discursive constructions of AP and where it belongs in turn compromise Barbara's critical belonging; her claim of good motherhood through an African AP can succeed even when she frames her mothering style as unique, indeed, mothers' belief that they are parenting against the norm can be part and parcel of their claim to be good mothers (Hoffman, 2013). However, the path to good motherhood via an African attachment parenting is less straightforward when Africa is dismissed as backward, especially when this dismissal originates in one's (black) family. Indeed, AP cannot be enacted for the community if it is understood as a harmful, antiquated philosophy, hence Eleanor, Demita and Olive's desire to 'spread the gospel' as I discuss above. Despite this critique of AP, Barbara maintains her critical claim on belonging by acknowledging the potentially African roots of attachment parenting but employing individualist language to justify her parenting choices: "I'm doing it for my reasons, I think that it works and, you know, that's all that matters ultimately." In the belief that AP works, in its production of an optimally developed, emotionally well-adjusted child, Barbara can prove the superiority of her parenting style, underlined by a covert reference to its non-Western origin. The successful, attachment parenting-influenced production of such a child is particularly powerful when it is enacted to counter racist constructions of black children. How can AP be used to resist racism?

5.6 AP to resist racism

In the preceding chapter, I discussed black mothers' reinterpretation of AP as an example of self-defined expertise to counter racist stereotypes about both black mothers and black children. One example of the kind of expertise expressed by some of the mothers tapped

into the long-standing politics of respectability, where a focus on clothing and other aesthetic choices was enacted as a strategy to avoid or, if that did not work, survive, racist encounters. In this section, I argue that such strategies also serve the purpose of claiming belonging in British and Canadian contexts that disavow the rootedness of black communities. Such strategies may or may not be successful and are governed by a “complicated and contradictory” (Reynolds, 2005, p. 74) decision-making process. Regardless of this success, I suggest that the mere act of survival (Collins, 2000) as well as the variety of approaches mothers in this study adopt in order to ensure their children’s *superior* development are acts of resistance against histories of exclusion and pathologization, particularly of black motherhood.

One of the strategies that women reported as a method of resisting racism and claiming belonging was to value blackness, which dialogues with the self-valuation principles of black feminist thought. As I quoted in the previous chapter, Margaret described her practice of buying black dolls and black-centered books that celebrated features commonly attributed to the black community including woolly hair and dark skin. Such a celebration also motivated her decision to avoid chemically straightening her daughter’s hair. Margaret herself had recently decided to ‘go natural’ and viewed this choice as a recuperation of black people’s ‘natural’ beauty. Other women reported similar experiences:

And it’s not something that I thought about until one day I was out with my mother, my son really, really wanted this book, I’m flipping through the book and there is not a single, not one brown, the book was two hundred and something pages, not one brown face. So, I spent an entire Saturday colouring the faces brown in the book. By the end of the day I was really pissed off like I’m clearly losing my mind, what the hell am I doing, it doesn’t matter. When I read that book to my son that night my son was like “it looks like me!” He was screaming, he was so happy, and he was, he’d just turned three, he was so happy. And I’m like the fact that it actually matters and he notices that at the age of three, it makes a huge difference, it makes a really big

difference (Lorde, CA, 33-year-old mother of two sons, aged 4 and 2 and expecting a third).

[M]y daughter's the only black child at her school. The *whole* school. That's a different pressure that I actually have to buy into. Because one day she told me she wanted to have white skin, because all of her friends have white skin and I was shattered. Shattered. But none of her friends talk about it, you know. It's just an observation that she made at three. She's so aware at three. [...] [So] we have brown girl time where we spend time every night after bath time in the mirror, you know, so while she doesn't get to see any representation of herself during the day she gets to see it at night time (Stella).

For Jayaben and Ida, the desire to expose their children to positive racial representations is made more complex by the intersection of gender and mixed heritage, respectively:

I look at toys differently, books, I want my girls to see themselves in the world, so, you know, I'm very conscious of the dolls I get the girls. In the same way that I want them to...see themselves in any role in the world, I make sure that dressing up doesn't just have princess dresses, there's also a doctor's kit and animals and whatnot so...yeah, and the stories that they read, I try and make sure that at least some of them and it takes some looking, but some of them have people of colour as protagonists. Girls who look like them (Jayaben, UK, 44-year-old mother of two daughters, aged 6 and 3).

And that really worries me because she's already into princesses and fairies and things like that and, you know, is there a black princess? Could I find a black princess here or a black, you know, and so things like that really play on my mind so we've tried to, and probably not doing it so well at the moment but try to make sure that she's at least got some role models or um, introducing her to, you know, having playdates with other mixed children (Ida, UK, 41-year-old mother of one daughter and one son, aged 3 and 8 months).

By enacting these strategies, mothers countered the dominant narrative about blackness and femininity that they assert their children had already begun to recognize and internalize. The complications highlighted by Jayaben and Ida are evidence of the intersectional nature of mothers' work as they attempt to manage contradictory and conflicting discourses produced by the intersection of race, gender and ethnicity. Further, class also shapes how mothers respond to these concerns (Reynolds, 2005). As Stella's narrative suggests, this work was especially necessary for children raised in predominantly middle-class, white contexts where exposure to representations of the black community, let alone positive ones, would be limited. Echoing the findings of Lareau's (2011) study of black and white families from the poor, working- and middle classes, beyond their investment in the dominant childrearing ideology of concerted cultivation, middle-class black mothers go to special efforts to protect their children, particularly in educational settings. Lareau (2011) describes one such mother who monitors her child's experiences and activities to ensure firstly, that he is not the only black child present and secondly, that "the whites with whom her son interacts [are] 'cultured'" (p. 121).

Lorde, who confidently³⁴ named herself as "upper middle-class," reported similar goals and described her reasoning for choosing her sons' private school:

So, for school the main focus for me was education, education and curriculum and diversity. I found *that* was the hardest thing for me, I never want my son to go to a place where he's the only black face he sees. That's very important for me. I don't want him to be... amongst everyone all black either because that's not the world and that's, that's just not the world. So, I needed education to be number one and then diversity be number two.

³⁴ This confidence was not shared by other participants, many of whom struggled with this question. Indeed, it was particularly those women who eventually called themselves 'working-class' who struggled to identify their class position. I take up this point in the discussion and conclusion chapter.

Lorde's interest in ensuring that her children receive a good education reflects broader cultural imperatives that require all parents to participate more actively in their children's education (Gillies, 2012; Lareau, 2011; Reynolds, 2005) but is clearly inflected with a deeper concern for the education of her *black* children. Even in the language she uses to describe her priorities when looking for a school she cannot help but entangle the need for a quality education with her desire for a diverse student body and curriculum. The preference for avoiding all-black spaces, on the other hand, was shared by Notisha and Harriet:

[W]here we live right now we like to live, we like living in a place where it's multicultural so it's not, you know, one culture. So, that's another thing that's kind of, where in terms of race playing a role. Like even in the church that we go, we wanted to make sure that it was, you know, that it was multicultural and it wasn't skewed, like an all-black church or, you know, or all-white or whatever but it was a nice good mix 'cause I think it's essential to understand other races and other cultures. Yeah, so I think in that regard that also, yeah, that also plays a part. Even their school, we chose a school that was multicultural, that had a good mix (Notisha, CA, 34-year-old mother of two daughters aged three and one).

Harriet: [T]he church we used to go to was very, like, traditional Caribbean Pentecostal church and we left for that reason. And that's a very, that's a good grounding for Caribbean children to grow up in because it is quite cultural and historic and that will give you a good sense of your roots but...the church we go to now is not and it's very mixed and, yeah. Yeah, so that's kind of lost, I don't know.

PH: What made you leave?

Harriet: Um...I think because it was kind of, it's more about tradition and, um, it was more, like, religious rather than the faith of, you know, what we believe in. So, decisions and actions were being made that were governed by culture which I

didn't always think was a positive demonstration of what we believe. So, we just wanted to leave. And it's sad because you miss aspects of it and it's funny and you can snigger and you remember times as a kid and all that kind of stuff but...it wasn't, um...yeah. It wasn't what, we couldn't see ourselves growing there (Harriet, UK, 34-year-old mother of a son and daughter, aged 3 and 1 month).

The desire for a “multicultural” school, neighbourhood or church setting was not shared by any participants who identified as working-class. Indeed, I suggest that such stated preferences are classed, especially when understood as a strategy for ensuring that children are best prepared to maximize their opportunities in “the world.” The language used, particularly by Notisha and Lorde, echoes a kind of corporatized discourse about diversity and opportunity where familiarity with other cultures is a marker of mobility, career and financial success. The kind of belonging they evoke places less emphasis on “black people fostering links with other black people transnationally” (Reynolds, 2005, p. 88) and more on a cosmopolitan, Benneton-like vision, reflecting neoliberal models of race that favour “individual multiculturalism” over collectivist, politically oriented racial identities (Rhee, 2013, p. 570). Such a take is understandable given these mothers’ efforts to counteract a stereotype of blackness that emphasizes black people’s poverty, laziness and dependence. To portray their children as ideal middle-class subjects, poised to employ their non-threatening blackness and knowledge of diversity in the world of work, is an attempt to protect their children from the actual, physical harm that could ensue from being read in a more stereotypical manner (Lawson, in press). Such a perspective also demonstrates the limited and contradictory options available to black mothers as they try to prepare their children to succeed in a racist society while also providing those children with the tools to resist racial oppression (Reynolds, 2005, p. 74). This is not to suggest that working-class parents do not share the same concerns with preparing their children for future success, but rather that they may advance different strategies that draw on the resources available to them, such as the emphasis on survival in Eleanor’s narrative and her desire to marry “business and economic” skills with a reverence for Africa. Attention to these and other differences in black mothers’ experiences (Reynolds,

2005) is a necessary step in the construction of an intersectional study of black motherhood as it engages with attachment parenting in a neoliberal context.

5.7 Conclusion

The complexities of using AP to belong reflect the larger contradiction that encompasses black mothering in a racially stratified and unequal society. In this chapter, I have focused mainly on those participants who embraced or drew from AP to discuss how the philosophy facilitated the construction of a critical claim on belonging which challenged dominant narratives about black womanhood that precluded good mothering and good citizenship. The strategies employed to claim belonging are not without issue, particularly as they variably affirm or critique neoliberal principles. However, I argue that they draw attention to black mothers' tradition of resistance and critique in a context in which race-attentive analyses are increasingly discouraged.

The thread that connects all the women's narratives in this chapter is an articulation of belonging that does not conform to rules of citizenship conceived in the west for the benefit of white people but is instead situated in a rooted rootlessness (McKittrick, 2002) that celebrates and draws strength from the black diaspora's connections to other parts of the world (Gilroy, 1987). The claim that black people belong elsewhere is intended to disarm black subjectivities in Britain and Canada and yet, the women in this study use that 'elsewhere' (through a claim on AP as also emerging from 'elsewhere') to claim belonging. This belonging is not fixed or static, nor is it determined by racist citizenship and immigration legislation which has purposefully worked to exclude black people, instead, the kind of belonging evoked here revels in its transnationality, suggesting a vision of black motherhood that draws from Africa, the Caribbean, Europe and North America. Such a vision is not monolithic and is differently articulated by women in different social classes, with different views on the usefulness of AP and in different national contexts. Neither is this vision shared by all the participants in this study. Gloria, for example, argued that black mothering was no different from white or Asian mothering, while Florynce derisively dismissed her husband's objections to European

“teefing” of African and Caribbean practices. Nevertheless, I argue that in their contradictory descriptions of home, their claims on AP as a tool of black community uplift, their assertion of superior black mothering and their resistance against racism, the mothers in this study construct a counter discourse, what Collins might call a “self-definition” (2000, p. 97), that rejects the standards of black motherhood set by dominant pathologizing discourses and claims a form of belonging that celebrates black mothering.

In her book-length examination of Caribbean mothering in the UK, Tracey Reynolds (2005) argues that analyses of mothering will always be incomplete if they lack critical attention to the effects of race and class, even in the examination of white, middle-class mothering. She highlights the different priorities that have motivated white mothers and black mothers and notes that while white mothering has been viewed as an individual act that occurs within the nuclear family, “for black and minority ethnic mothers, mothering reflects both individual and community concerns involving paid work for family economic provision; strategies designed for the physical survival of children and community; and individual and collective identity” (2005, p. 3). The chapters so far have examined these same issues; drawing attention to how black women reinterpret AP to serve anti-racist purposes and highlighting black mothers’ expressions of expertise as a means of claiming good motherhood. In the next chapter, I turn my focus to parental leave to explore black mothers’ management of paid work and parenthood, particularly how they divide parenting with their partners. How does attachment parenting, and its equation with ‘good’ mothering, contribute to the perpetuation of a gendered, raced and classed division of parenting labour?

Chapter 6

6 The division of parenting labour

In the previous chapter I discussed my second finding, exploring black mothers' cultivations of belonging, especially as they use attachment parenting to negotiate exclusionary models of 'good' citizenship and motherhood. In this chapter, I turn to my third and final finding which identifies the division of parenting labour, particularly how mothers claim greater responsibility for childrearing, as another significant feature of black mothers' articulations of themselves as good mothers. I analyze parental leave, exploring how the process of dividing parental labour is governed by leave legislation which determines who is socially and financially supported to stay at home with their children and thus, has gender, social class and race implications. In this chapter, I examine how the women divided parental labour and their use of parental leave legislation in Britain and Canada to support this division. How do black mothers, particularly those who are attachment parents, negotiate parental leave and the division of parenting labour it upholds, to claim good motherhood?

6.1 Introduction

Ideas about how parenting labour ought to be divided are influenced by the dominant ideology of mothering, which as I have described previously, is intensive, demands maternal obligation and self-sacrifice and reflects white, middle-class norms (Hays, 1996). In other words, 'good' mothers dedicate themselves entirely to the project of raising children. That this dedication might clash with neoliberal expectations of economic productivity is what Sharon Hays names the cultural contradiction of motherhood. Though black mothers have traditionally been excluded from its parameters, especially given the construction of "black female domesticity...as an economic commodity" (Guerrero, 2011, p. 69), the previous two chapters capture black women's attempts to not only meet the standards of good motherhood dictated by intensive mothering but to challenge them. The two preceding chapters have examined black

mothers' negotiation of these ideals, with particular focus on mothers' articulations of expertise and belonging to claim good motherhood. In this final finding, I direct attention to the division of parenting labour as offering a further opportunity for black mothers to affirm and challenge good motherhood. Using the women's negotiation of parental responsibility and parental leave legislation, I present their gendered, classed and raced experiences of dividing parenting labour and analyze parental leave. The women's claim on maternal obligation and responsibility is buttressed by their engagements with attachment parenting as they elevate maternal responsibility, claim parental leave and celebrate their gendered, attachment parenting-capable bodies even as they advance classed critiques of leave and the ever-elusive work-life balance. I analyze parental leave legislation in both countries and through the mothers' narratives, outline their attempts to not only claim good motherhood but advance oppositional challenges to its prescripts.

6.2 Claiming maternal responsibility

Despite their continued presence in the paid labour force in large numbers,³⁵ women continue to perform the largest share of childrearing and other domestic duties, what Arlie Hochschild named the "second shift" in 1989. Recent time-use studies have suggested that while today's fathers are spending more hours performing childcare than previous generations, mothers continue to perform the lion's share of child-raising work (Gray, 2006). This division of labour persists even in cases where men express commitment to an equitable sharing of household duties (Fox, 2009; Shirani et al., 2012). Indeed, as Fox (2009) points out, the birth of their first child often marks the point at which an otherwise egalitarian (heterosexual) couple begins to fall into traditional patterns, a phenomenon reinforced by the gendered patterns of parental leave taking

³⁵ In 2014, Canadian women's labour participation rate was 82% (compared to 91% for men) and they made up 47% of the workforce. In Britain, women also make up 47% of the workforce and their employment rate was 69.2% (compared to 79.3% for men) in 2016. In both countries, increases in mothers' employment rate account for a significant proportion of women's overall increases in the last forty years.

(Evans, 2007). The ideology of intensive mothering underlies these patterns, emphasizing *women's* responsibility to perform an intensive model of childrearing and submit to (often male) experts' guidance.

The women I interviewed demonstrated this emphasis on maternal responsibility, especially those committed to more intensive models of childrearing such as AP. Of the nineteen women I spoke to, only three reported that they divided child-rearing evenly or “fifty-fifty” with their partners while the remainder described a distribution of parenting labour that left most of the responsibility with the mother. When I asked Barbara, for example, how parenting was divided in her household she answered that it was “fairly evenly split” but “mum’s in charge.” Olive responded to the same question by calling herself “the first responder”:

...when he was smaller I never left him with his dad to like go out and give him a bottle and like ‘you can feed him.’ I usually took him with me all the time, especially ‘cause I was breastfeeding, I didn’t wanna pump and leave him, you know? If I couldn’t take him with me I wouldn’t go. Yeah. It was never like he wouldn’t be there, he would if I asked him to but at the same time we kind of both, I know, even though it was never discussed [...] It’s like he has fun with his dad and when he needs stuff I’m the one who does it (Olive, CA, 28-year-old mother of two sons, aged 3 and 2 months).

Olive’s division of parenting duties in her household reflects her commitment to attachment parenting practices (which as I described in chapter 4, emphasizes breastfeeding) and captures the relationship between AP and heightened maternal responsibility and labour. This relationship is reinforced by the fact that of the nineteen participants interviewed, there was only one clear exception to the trend of mothers taking greater responsibility: Claudia, who rejected AP as “a bit strange.” When asked to describe the division of parenting duties in her relationship, Claudia named herself as the “provider” and her partner as the “caretaker.” She explained that the combination of her twins’ boisterous energy levels and her current pregnancy made keeping up with her

children difficult. Indeed, when I asked her to describe the easiest part of parenting her answer reflected the reversal of traditional gendered labour in her household:

yeah, I think, for me, the easy part is, I guess, being the provider and being the one, you know, it's my income that provides you know, the house, the food, all the expenses, but to me that's a lot easier than staying home and looking after two energetic twins (Claudia, UK, 40-year-old mother of twin 20-month-old boys and expecting a third).

Claudia repeated the traditional narrative espoused by breadwinning fathers that equates financial provision with good fatherhood but in her account, this equation is a means of claiming good motherhood, even echoing the oft-cited assertion that childrearing is the most difficult occupation. Claudia's reversal represents a welcome challenge to the raced and classed assumptions that separate good mothering from economic productivity while also demonstrating the persistent appeal of good motherhood, even when rewritten through the lens of economic provision.

6.3 Claiming parental leave

The influence of good motherhood, particularly as it is captured in intensive mothering, is evident in parental leave legislation. As the product of the social, political and economic context in which it is developed, parental leave has been formulated in response to gendered beliefs about appropriate childrearing. Much feminist scholarship has been dedicated to examining parental leave from this perspective, with scholars delineating the gendered patterns in leave-taking and criticizing the gendered logic in legislation in order to devise new, gender-equitable approaches (Doucet, 2009; Macdonald, 2009). As Macdonald (2009) suggests, these gendered patterns cannot be challenged solely through legislative changes; the persistence of these patterns is linked to the dominant ideology of mothering. Attachment parenting represents one significant embodiment of this ideology; in its emphasis on breastfeeding, babywearing and other parenting techniques that center the maternal body, AP aligns with the underlying message of parental leave legislation that stresses the importance of the early years of an infant's life and mothers as uniquely

suited to perform care during this period. However, as the two previous chapters demonstrate, black mothers negotiate and deploy AP in ways that both affirm and undermine these ideals of good mothering. Black mothers' management of parental leave is similarly complex, revealing the raced and classed dimensions of parental leave legislation and through their narrative negotiations with leave, conveying a uniquely intersectional experience of motherhood.

The dominant narrative that describes paid parental leave policies throughout the globe defines such policies as a marker of the state's investment in gender equality (Baird & Cutcher, 2005; McKay, Mathieu & Doucet, 2016; Ray, Gornick & Schmitt, 2010). Though they are named 'parental' leave policies, they are widely understood to enable *women* to strike the balance between work and family and protect women's place in the labour force. This is true in both countries under study in this thesis: in Canada, the oft-touted 52 weeks are only available to mothers (Evans, 2007). In the UK, shared parental leave was only recently introduced (in April 2015) entitling fathers to up to 50 weeks of leave, provided that mothers are willing to 'share' (O'Brien & Twamley, 2017). The evolution of paid parental leave policies in each country also reflects this pattern, benefiting particular groups of women (and men) at the expense of others. While in the UK, paid paternity leave was only introduced in 2003 and only funds two weeks of leave (O'Brien & Twamley, 2017), in Canada, the 2001 expansion of parental leave to thirty-five weeks took place in the context of neoliberal cost-cutting that reduced the number of people eligible for unemployment insurance and a range of other benefits (Evans, 2007). Patricia Evans (2007) suggests that the surplus created in the Employment Insurance (EI) fund as a result of these cuts needed to be spent in a politically agreeable manner, resulting in a program of benefits that has largely served women from higher income groups (McKay et al., 2016). The histories and characteristics of these policies deliver a consistent message: the purpose of parental leave is to protect the employment prospects and enable early years parenting by *women*.

The gendered nature of parental leave policies and practice is contradicted by widespread rhetorical support for involved fatherhood and equitable sharing of childrearing duties (O'Brien & Twamley, 2017). While some scholars might argue that the intensification of mothering that characterizes contemporary notions of appropriate childrearing are being extended to fathers (Shirani et al., 2012), that parental leave policy continues to be constructed around women's needs suggests otherwise. This is particularly evident in the UK's much-heralded introduction of shared parental leave which extends fifty weeks of leave to fathers but only when transferred by the mother. The "maternalist design" of this policy reflects the dominance of intensive mothering ideology (in the belief that mothers are primarily responsible for the well-being of children) and shapes the decision-making practices of even those couples who aim for a more equitable division of leave and childcare labour (O'Brien & Twamley, 2017, p. 163, 172). For the black mothers I interviewed, maternalist logic weaved in and out of their narratives, producing a wide range of responses to the prospect of sharing leave with their partners. Some expressed an ardent claim on parental leave as belonging to the mother:

PH: Would he have stayed home with her, do you think, if you had qualified, for example, for this new shared parenting?

Gloria: No.

PH: No?

Gloria: No. No, I don't think he would. Actually, I don't think I would have wanted him to, really. It's my time.

PH: So you see it as your time to kind of bond with her?

Gloria: Yeah, to be a mum and it's quite nice actually, I've got time to, you know, take care of him a little bit more and, you know, make sure he's got clean clothes *chuckles* and there's food, like a decent meal cooked and so I'm enjoying my

time being at home, being a mum, being a wife and...it just feels...yeah, I don't think he would have done, I think he's quite traditional in that role, it's his role to take care of us so. (Gloria, UK, 34-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 8 months).

Gloria's claim on parental leave expands the work of mothering to include other "womanly activities" (DeVault, 1991, p. 95) such as laundry and the provision of "decent" meals. That she takes greater responsibility for childrearing is part of a wider distribution of roles in the household, where motherwork is entangled with wifework, an entanglement that requires subordination to her husband's vision of the appropriate division of duties. While she states that she is enjoying this time at home, her description of her husband rather than her family as traditional ("*he's* quite traditional" rather than "*we* are quite traditional") suggests a division of labour that organizes women's caring work in service of men (DeVault, 1991). Gloria's ownership of this time is thus only made possible by her agreement to relieve her husband of not just childrearing duties but also the tasks and activities associated with sustaining a household.

In Patricia's case, the Canadian (or rather, Ontario) parental leave system provides several weeks of leave available to either parent and has done so since parental leave was introduced in 1990 (Marshall, 2008). Unlike the UK, men's entitlement to leave is independent of his partner and in most provinces, parental leave can even be taken by both parents at the same time but for a shorter period of time and provided that the family can afford the reduction in income. Despite the arguably more equitable logic that informs Canadian leave policy,³⁶ Patricia still views this leave in gendered terms. Through circumstances beyond their control, her partner has managed to spend an extended period at home with both children in their early years but Patricia recoiled at the

³⁶ I suggest that because fathers' access to parental leave benefits is independent of the mother, the Canadian system is more gender equitable than its counterpart in the UK in which fathers' access to benefits is dependent on the mother's economic activity.

notion of sharing leave with him: “I didn’t wanna give it up, I was just like I’m not giving you my year, this is my year.” Gloria and Patricia’s claims on parental leave as belonging to them as mothers reflects the maternalist logic expressed in policy-making, employers’ attitudes and popular discourse. However, for each woman, their claim also communicates an assertion of good mothering often denied to black women. This is particularly true for Patricia, who viewed her approach to parenting as unique among the black, working-class community in which she lived. Her commitment to ‘good’ parenting, including attending parenting classes and reading parenting literature, is confirmed by her description of the 52 weeks of parental leave as ‘her year,’ both reinforcing the belief that mothers are uniquely suited to childrearing and undermining the assumption that racialized, poor mothers are uninterested in the well-being of their children. Patricia’s ownership of the year signals her occupation of the good mother position regardless of class and racial stereotypes and for Gloria, also facilitates the embodiment of an ideal femininity that centers wife- and mother-work.

Notisha’s recollection of her husband’s approach to parental leave offers a slightly different view of the maternalist embrace adopted by Gloria and Patricia:

[Husband] didn’t take any with both of them and he was fine with that, he, um, I asked him if we wanted to do it and he said, um...he, I think that, and it could be just him, you know, wanting to be the provider *chuckles* He was all “no, no, I’m good” so...so, then I was like “well, I’ll take the year, I have no problem with that” *chuckles* (Notisha, UK, 34-year-old mother of two daughters aged three and one).

Her narrative suggests that the decision was made after a dialogue of sorts, rather than an unequivocal maternal claim on all parental leave. However, the language she used indicates some ambivalence about the proper division of parenting labour. Earlier in the interview, Notisha was keen to emphasize her partner’s commitment to childrearing, describing him as “very involved” and the sharing of their duties as “fairly balanced” however, the image she constructs of him in their conversation about parental leave

suggests a more traditional outlook in which he plays the role of financial provider. This ambivalence is also evident in the way she represents the conversation: “I asked him,” suggests that parental leave is indeed a mother’s possession that she might gift to her partner whereas “if *we* wanted to do it” could signal shared possession. Notisha’s ambivalence about parental leave is reflected not only in previous studies of Canadian couples sharing leave (McKay & Doucet, 2010) but also in the broader scholarship on parental leave in general, as scholars struggle to capture the competing purposes parental leave ought to serve (Doucet, 2009; Galtry & Callister, 2005). However, Notisha’s commitment to attachment parenting allows her to resolve this ambivalence. By prioritizing AP practices, particularly breastfeeding, Notisha retreats to a traditional division of parental leave. This retreat is apparent even in the critique she offers of parental leave, as she criticizes the negative effect parenting often has on working women’s careers:

...last year I remember hearing on the news that, um, you know, women, some women, well, if you’re a mother and you’re working in the corporate world, your career will most likely be stagnant because you can’t put in the work and maintain your family life, you know what I mean? And you might be held back in your career and of course, it’s obviously not for everyone or the case in every family but for a majority they may not go as far in their professional career because they have children. And because they have to carry on those two things. And I think that’s, I mean, I think it’s true, um, I think it’s partially true in my case as well. And I mean, my husband and I we have those conversation, um, because with, um, I mentioned to you briefly, that with [oldest daughter], I, I had, you know, I went through a mental health issues phase, right, where I’m just like “oh, my gosh, I wanna work but I can’t.” Um, and part of that was, you know, I’m on Facebook or whatever and I’m seeing colleagues that don’t have children, they’re progressing, you know, they’re climbing up the ladder and I’m like, “well, when I go back to work I’m gonna be in the same place where I was.”

Notisha suggested that this negative impact on career prospects is not felt by her husband because “he doesn’t have to take time off.” In this throwaway comment, Notisha reveals the persistence of gendered approaches to childrearing, particularly as they are expressed in attachment parenting, and its effects on a seemingly egalitarian parental leave policy. Though earlier in the interview she suggested that it was possible for parental leave to be shared, the reality of her experience and those of her friends indicates that leave is for mothers and that by succumbing to this maternalist orientation, the policy fails in its stated effort to protect women’s careers and earning potential. In this failure, however, the policy opens space for the mothers in this study, especially those who identified as attachment parents, to perform good motherhood. After all, mothers who do not take all the parental leave available can sometimes attract suspicion for failing to fully embody good motherhood (McKay & Doucet, 2010). To *not* claim this leave, then, could create greater risks for these mothers’ already precarious hold on good motherhood.

Notisha’s quote also captures the cultural contradiction Hays describes and its far-reaching effects on mothers’ health and well-being. Notisha’s desires to work conflict with her obvious dedication to her children and her employment of a parenting philosophy as labour-intensive as attachment parenting. Given her partner’s expressed desires about parental leave, it appears this conflict cannot be resolved by his greater involvement, an arrangement she purports to have “no problem with” and leaving her with little choice but to cede to the appeal of good mothering and the higher maternal responsibility it requires. The tensions Notisha experiences between the appeal of ‘good’ motherhood and the desire to advance her career are echoed in the broader scholarship on intensive mothering but strike a particular chord for black mothers whose motherhood has long been defined by the negotiation of combining paid work and mothering (Collins, 2000; Reynolds, 2005).

6.4 Race, social class and parental leave

The differential experience of parental leave I discuss above is expressed in sociologist Anita Harris’ (2004) argument that, contrary to declarations that the state has abandoned

mothers altogether (Orloff, 2006; Stephens, 2011), financial support exists for a select group of women whose “appropriate participation in the workforce” grants them rewards in the form of “temporary baby bonuses or maternity leave,” rewards which exist only for those women who “enact motherhood in the correct ways, that is, juggled with a good job at a later stage in their career” (Harris, 2004, p. 73). Harris describes the simultaneous promotion of middle-class stay-at-home motherhood and the demand that poor and working-class mothers leave their children to take up poorly paid, low-status employment as a “class-inspired ideological reversal” (2004, p. 73). I suggest that these contradictory directives are also underlined by race; black women in Canada and Britain are more likely to experience poverty and unemployment than their white counterparts. Even for those women who attain middle-class status, stereotypes about black women’s capacity to work (Reynolds, 1997, 2001) and controlling images that devalue their motherhood (Roberts, 1991) inform black women’s experiences of mothering (Blum, 2011; Lareau, 2011).

Harris’ assessment of maternity leave as a reward for middle-class women is evidenced by consistent findings in the UK and Canada that access to and length of parental leave is constrained by earnings, family income and type of employment (O’Brien & Koslowski, 2016; Evans, 2007). In sum, middle- to upper-class women are more likely to access maternity and parental leave and their leaves tend to be longer and better paid. These findings are made more complex when race is considered. Though there is limited data available in the UK and Canada, studies in the US have revealed that race and ethnicity play a significant role in women’s use of maternity or family leave. Using longitudinal data, Manuel and Zambrana (2009) found that, among factors such as marital status, education and access to maternity benefits, socio-economic status strongly influences the length of leave taken. The authors call for more research to address how maternity leave experiences are shaped across individual, family and institutional levels. Manuel and Zambrana also found that “higher income middle-class Black women” take shorter leaves

than white or Hispanic women of a similar class and income group (2009, p. 139).³⁷ I suggest that the rate at which maternity and parental leaves are paid in Britain and Canada might explain these class and racial disparities; table 1 summarizes these benefits, as of March 2017:

	Britain	Ontario/Canada³⁸
Maximum length	52 weeks	54 weeks
Weeks available only to mother	2	17
Weeks available to father	50	37
Benefit	90% of weekly wage for first 6 week (no cap) £139.58 or 90% of weekly wage (whichever is lower)	55% of weekly earnings for whole period, aside from 2 week waiting period (cap of \$537 per week)

³⁷ Manuel and Zambrana suggest that this finding may be explained by the higher likelihood that such women are the sole or majority earners in their households and thus are unable to afford the reduction in income maternity leave requires. This explanation likely does not apply to the women I interviewed; sixteen out of nineteen participants reported that they were married or in long-term relationships and none identified themselves as the majority earners.

³⁸ The benefits paid to parents are part of Employment Insurance (EI), a federal program (with the exception of Quebec, which has its own) whereas the leave entitlements are determined by individual provinces. The entitlements for Ontario are shown here because all participants interviewed in Canada lived in this province.

	for 33 weeks Unpaid for 13 weeks	Low-income families qualify for a benefit that increases wage replacement to 80%, up to a cap
Eligibility	Continuous employment for 26 weeks ³⁹	600 insurable hours in the previous 52 weeks (benefit)
Average taken by mothers	39 weeks (2008 data)	31.7 weeks (2013/14 data)

Table 3: Parental leave in Britain and Canada (Ontario)

While the Canadian government’s 2001 decision to expand parental leave from 10 weeks to 35 weeks is often applauded as an indication of the state’s commitment to gender equality and early years development (Evans, 2007), moves to extend parental leave tend to benefit the same group of middle-class women for whom such leave seems to have been designed in the first place. Evans (2007) speculates that because women of colour “experience particular difficulty in meeting the qualifying period for ‘regular’ EI benefits” (p. 122) they likely struggle to qualify for maternity and parental leave benefits, which are sourced from the same Employment Insurance (EI) fund. In a study of couples’ decision-making around leave, McKay and Doucet (2010) suggest a similar conclusion. They describe their participant pool as largely “white, middle-class dual earners” which

³⁹ This is the requirement to be eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP). To qualify for Maternity Allowance, which amounts to slightly less than SMP, the individual needs to have worked for 26 out of the previous 66 weeks and earned at least £30 per week in 13 of these weeks. The distinction between SMP and Maternity Allowance offers self-employed and underemployed women access to maternity benefits.

they frame as a reflection of the “population that qualifies for parental leave benefits” (p. 304). While, on the whole, the women living in Canada described the benefits available to them positively, especially when contrasted with provisions in the United States, not all participants were able to have the parental leave experience they would have liked:

I feel like something they really need to consider is giving...partial because I had like, four hundred and something hours but you need six hundred so...I need six hundred to get a whole year but I have four hundred and fifty, why can't I at least get six months of parental leave kind of thing? That's what really upset me and I think that they should consider...they shouldn't be at six hundred it should be...this is how much you qualify for because of the number of hours you have which is...your EI...it depends on the hours you have, how much time you get paid for or something so that's what I think should change (Olive, CA, 28-year-old mother of two sons, aged 3 and 2 months).

The example above demonstrates the importance of distinguishing between “availability and use” (Baird & O'Brien, 2015, p. 206) in examinations of parental leave policies and their gendered effects. Indeed, the phrasing of this distinction reflects the two ways that parents might find themselves barred from enjoying the parental leave benefits offered by their governments; either parents are not eligible for parental leave, as in Olive's narrative, or they are eligible but cannot afford to take any or as much parental leave as they would prefer, as reported by Florynce. That these two examples are sourced from women living in Canada and Britain respectively, reflects a key difference between the two countries' policies; while parents in Canada might receive more in benefits over 52 weeks, Britain's less stringent eligibility criteria means that more women qualify for benefits in the first place.

While the mainstream narrative about Canadian parental leave provisions emphasizes the fifty-two weeks available to parents, the stories of women like Olive, who represents the one third of all mothers excluded from accessing parental leave benefits (McKay & Doucet, 2010), demonstrate the policy's uneven effects and thus, the barriers social class

and low income can create to accessing good motherhood. As Olive suspects, these are not the women who policy-makers have in mind when they propose extending parental leave to eighteen months, a campaign promise of the recently elected Liberal government: “Cause maybe they’ll extend it but then they’ll maybe raise the hours that you need to qualify...So that’s not helpful anyway.” The extension of parental leave further complicates the complex balancing act leave policies are attempting to achieve; longer leaves are associated with reductions in women’s long-term earning potential (Galtry & Callister, 2005) thereby encouraging women’s economic dependence on men to ensure the stability of family income. While such a campaign promise reinforces the Liberal image of family friendliness, in reality, it becomes yet another mechanism through which middle-class, financially privileged women are rewarded for their motherhood, particularly that which is supported by men, while a message encouraging economic productivity at all costs is directed towards poorer women, and in this distinction, good motherhood is only available to those women who can afford it.

The various and competing goals of parental leave frame the strategies black mothers use to claim good motherhood. Is parental leave necessary to enable women to recover from birth? To ensure that children receive the one-on-one maternal care that they ostensibly require? To protect women’s newly (for some) acquired positions in the paid workforce? To encourage fathers to play a more significant role in childrearing? The examination of such questions reveals the complexities and contradictions of state policy that is pressed into affirming social justice goals such as gender equality while attempting to minimize disruption to the economic productivity centered in neoliberal governance. These questions also capture the different ways the participants managed the division of parenting labour in their households as they negotiated classed expectations about which mothers ought to stay at home, minimizations of fathers’ roles and the emphasis on breastfeeding as ensuring good health.

6.5 Black mothers negotiate parental leave

6.5.1 Classed expectations of stay-at-home motherhood

The shift in focus between parental leave as designed for the purposes of ensuring women's continued attachment to the workforce and the increasingly frequent reference to "the well-being of the child" (Marshall, 2008) reflects states' investment in the early years narrative I described in chapter 4. The tension between a recognition of the "importance of female employment 'activation'" (O'Brien & Twamley, 2017, p. 164) and a belief that experiences in the first five years of a child's life have a transformative (and in some narratives, permanent) effect on their future development is what has facilitated the provision and extension of parental leave that is paid but that a growing number of women employed precariously are unable to access or afford. This classed extension of parental leave occurs simultaneously with the British practice of extending free childcare provision for children aged three and older (as well as offering provision for younger children in families that receive certain state benefits, the implication being that such children are better served by external childcare and economically productive parents (see MacLeavy, 2011)). This tension reveals the classed underpinnings of parental leave policies that are often overlooked in the celebrations of Britain and Canada's 'generous' offerings. They also obscure the racial implications of pitting women's ability to participate in the paid labour force against the developmental needs of their children; these arguments have rarely been sufficient to protect black children from the purported dangers of growing up with a mother who works outside the home. The construction of black children as disposable (Giroux, 2006), as already failed citizens, is entangled with the belief that black mothers have always been capable of work. This entanglement, along with the racialization of welfare, informs the repeated, cross-party decisions to reduce the point at which a mother on benefits must begin seeking employment to prevent the loss of those benefits. For example, in the UK, the "age limit for unconditional support" for lone parents has decreased under both Labour and Conservative governments (M. Campbell, 2008, p. 465), a change that determines which parents are understood as best suited to staying home with their children and frames

benefit-claiming parents' interactions with the state. In Florynce's case, the end of the traditional parental leave period (twelve months) was marked with frustration as she required access to welfare benefits to continue staying at home with her son but was met with an inducement into paid work:

I mean, with my son, I was home for the first year and then, uh, and then I went to train to be a [professional occupation]. Um, I did, I would have loved to have stayed a bit longer but actually I was just sort of frustrated with the system, I remember at one point, um, I, I went to, I was claiming income support and I had to go for some sort of review and they went and, you know, they'll question me about when I'm looking to go back to work and I'm thinking my son is, you know, just one, if I want to stay at home until he's five I'm allowed to do that. I'm allowed to do that as well and claim a benefit until he's five. I think at the time it might've been seven or something, um, and prior to that it was twelve. Under the Labour government, which is probably, maybe a bit steep but the point is, you know, that support just isn't, isn't there. (Florynce, UK, 29-year-old mother of a son, aged six and a daughter, aged 6 months).

The persistent pressure exerted on benefit-claiming parents to seek work is directly at odds with the stay-at-home parenthood that is promoted by parental leave policy. As Florynce reported, she experienced this pressure when her son was only twelve months old, during the apparently crucial early years when popular parenting discourse demands close, maternal-child bonding and attachment. The co-existence of such policies is further evidence of the contradictory messages aimed at middle-class mothers and those who are working-class and racialized; while the former is viewed as capable of 'good' mothering and is overtly supported in this endeavour by paid parental leave, the latter is subject to ever more coercive encouragement to pursue 'good' citizenship through economic productivity. Florynce described an attempt to resist this encouragement, to access stay-at-home motherhood even as state employees and cultural attitudes framed this kind of motherhood as unsuited to "scroungers." Even as Florynce criticizes this raced and classed contradiction, she also concedes to its underlying logic (an age limit of twelve is

“probably, maybe a bit steep”) that there is a point at which mothers ought to end their reliance on benefits and return to the workforce. This concession demonstrates the tensions black mothers negotiate as they attempt to challenge both prescripts of good mothering that exclude them and discourses of citizenship and economic productivity.

A child-centered justification for the existence of parental leave is belied by Florynce’s description of her thwarted access to benefits. Though focusing on children may appear to be neutral in that it focuses on children regardless of their socio-economic or racial location, the dominant constructions of black childhood reveal the limitations of a child first approach to policy-making. Even if a racially and socio-economically neutral interest in children’s well-being were possible, because such a framework is produced by a political rationality that situates responsibility in the hands of individual parents, particularly mothers, a child-centered approach merely highlights the great expanse of needs and goals for which women are ultimately responsible. A child’s physical, cognitive and emotional needs as well as the likelihood that they will be healthy, productive, well-disciplined citizens in the future are predicated not only on mothers’ ‘investments’ of time, energy and resources but the intensity of such investments. Like recent shifts towards focusing on addressing ‘child poverty,’ the larger context in which a child lives and the experiences of adult family members, in this case, mothers, are erased (Brah & Phoenix, 2004).

The introduction of a focus on child well-being within the context of economic restructuring that seeks to reduce the state’s welfare provisions and expand its punitive arm (Wacquant, 2012) results in the identification of individual policies or programs as the solution to persistent inequities rather than wholesale structural change. That I single out AP or parental leave is not to suggest that either practice is inherently problematic but rather reflects their capacity to be deployed in ways that serve a neoliberal agenda, particularly as interest in these activities can be read as indicative of the state’s progressive orientation without requiring much material investment. Black mothers’ attempts to claim good motherhood under these circumstances are fraught with

contradictions as they attempt to value ‘disposable’ children (and demand the right to stay at home with them) through the very mechanisms that render them failed citizens. These contradictions have a similar effect when considering how the women negotiate the role fathers play in their claims on good motherhood.

6.5.2 “Little details” and gifts: fathers’ roles and responsibilities

Despite a growing interest in the contribution fathers can make to good childrearing, the primary responsibility for parenting remains a woman’s concern. Tensions emerge from this simultaneous encouragement of active fatherhood and the pressures exacted on women to mother intensively and women respond to these tensions in myriad ways. One approach has been to suggest that fathers, regardless of their intentions and the goal of gender equality, are merely incapable of parenting appropriately. While the women I interviewed offered few explicit explanations for why their male partners failed to share childrearing in a more equitable fashion, underlying many women’s descriptions of their maternal expertise was the suggestion that men are ‘just different’. Though none of the participants reported that their partners were simply incapable of parenting to the same standard and male ‘difference’ was not always necessarily expressed as a negative characteristic, the women’s articulation of ‘difference’ resulted in the participants feeling obliged to claim primary responsibility for parenting in their households:

I think nature probably designed that way for a reason because I think *chuckles* imagine if both parents were just like mommy then our kids would never take risks...they’d probably be in bubble wrap until they’re twenty. So, I think nature purposely designed it that way ‘cause when I look at...how she is with her dad...he’ll throw her up in the air and I’m like “oh, my god, what are you doing?!” He’s like “she’s fine.” And I think they need that balance, you know what I mean? Otherwise, I’d be holding her hand and shadowing her everywhere she went whereas he’s like “no, just let her try it on her own, she has to fall” I’m like “what?! My child has to do what? No.” But it’s good, right? So...we need a balance...it’s, it’s good that we’re around because then we pay attention to all the details and so on...she has to put sunscreen on and we remember those little

details and then they kind of take care of the okay, the riskier, ‘gotta try it out’ kind of stuff, you know what I mean? (Rebecca, CA, 38-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 13 months).

Rebecca’s description of the distinct roles mothers and fathers play is predicated on “balance.” Though she assigns the “riskier” and, arguably, more fun activities to fathers, her division of labour does suggest that each parent has an equal part to play in the development of a well-rounded child. The suggestion that children *need* the unique input fathers can provide facilitates fathers’ more active involvement in childrearing. And yet, Rebecca’s naming of the “little details” that mothers ought to manage suggests a slight imbalance in the gravity of the tasks assigned to mothers and those that are assigned to fathers. These “little details” suggest a greater responsibility for the basic, everyday burden of childcare while fathers take care of the more superfluous, ‘fun’ aspects of childhood. I note this slight imbalance not only in Rebecca’s description of the difference between “little details” and “riskier...stuff” but in her own account of her parenting practice, where, though her husband’s work schedule allows him to carry out a significant amount of childcare, decisions over when to stop bed-sharing, for example, are still primarily hers. That an imbalance in the division of labour is centered on an archetypal AP activity is evidence of the philosophy’s covert promotion of maternal responsibility, as I described in Olive’s claim on “first responder” status.

If the women claim primary responsibility for the rearing and successful development of their children, they can claim good mothering, despite the ways their race and/or class location might impede such an assertion. However, this sometimes comes at the cost of displacing fathers who, as I suggested in chapter 4, are framed as lacking the specialized maternal expertise called for by all parenting philosophies in a context dominated by intensive mothering but especially by attachment parenting. Having located the maternal body as the site of an array of ‘essential’ childrearing activities, AP enthusiasts position fathers as helpers or assistants to the process of raising children. At best, fathers can hope to replicate the ‘natural’ bond understood as already established between mother and

child by engaging in the occasional bout of babywearing or skin-to-skin contact but ultimately, it is the mother-child relationship that is foregrounded. As the Sears explain:

Attachment fathering makes attachment mothering easier. Dad's knowledge of his baby helps him understand how important Mother is to baby, and this motivates him to create a supportive environment that allows Mother to devote her energy to the baby. An attached father is also ready to take a baby handoff from Mom when she is tired or needs a break (2001, p. 143).

The Sears summarize this division of labour as “sharing the baby duties” (2001, p. 143) despite the clear implications of the advice to fathers to be available to take care of their children *only* when their partners are “tired or need a break.” This advice reflects widely held beliefs about the proper role of mothers and fathers and has long-informed parental leave policies which, despite various changes and adaptations, have remained maternalist in their orientation, as I suggest above. In this convergence of interests, both AP and existing parental leave legislation leave room for a black practitioner of AP to claim good motherhood, obscuring the risks associated with taking on a greater burden of childcare labour and diminishing fathers' contributions (Hill, 2004).

Indeed, even when parental leave is constructed as ensuring fathers' contributions, it still results in greater pressure and an intensification of duties for mothers. As suggested by Notisha's description of the parental leave sharing conversation quoted above and as both Fox (2009) and O'Brien and Twamley (2017) report, the low take-up of parental leave among fathers in Britain and Canada means that when fathers *do* take parental leave the arrangement is framed as a gift exchange: “the woman ‘gives’ her husband the opportunity to take [parental leave], and he ‘gifts’ her father involvement by taking it” (p. 173). In this context, the responsibility to ensure that a child has access to all the necessary experiences for optimal growth remains with the mother; the father's involvement is an item she has had to procure through the relinquishment of her legal and morally encouraged entitlement to a lengthy maternity leave. Further, this exchange is not complete. The mother's acceptance of the ‘gift’ of fatherly involvement requires further

action in the form of “gratitude and praise” (O’Brien & Twamley, 2017, p. 179). Whether fathers accept the gift of parental leave or not, it is mothers who must offer it, as Notisha offered leave to her husband, and in the UK context, it is the mothers’ employment history that enables the father to accept such a gift in the first place.

This gift exchange maps onto a division of parental labour I described above, in which fathers are necessary but only in so far as they provide the light-hearted fun side of parenting while mothers take responsibility for everyday care. As I argued, the belief that fathers are not quite capable of parenting appropriately informs this division of labour and contributes to a trend in leave-taking in which mothers take the bulk of parental leave in the first months of a child’s life while fathers take the final months of eligible leave (McKay & Doucet, 2010). This pattern was identified by Tracey in her objection to sharing parental leave:

I just wouldn’t let him *chuckles* he still asks, like “can I do it?” It’s like “no, you can’t.” Um, especially now ‘cause...the first six months are so hard so he’s gonna do all the fun part? I don’t think so. It’s not gonna happen (Tracey, CA, 31-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 5 months).

The hard work of early infant care includes the three tools the Sears and AP enthusiasts identify as markers of attachment parenting: adjusting to disrupted, and in some cases, a lack of sleep, purportedly solved by bed-sharing; learning how to entertain a new baby and keep them safe while accomplishing other necessary household tasks like cooking and cleaning, enabled by babywearing; and the process of feeding which for Tracey, involved many weeks of concerted effort and practice to achieve the successful breastfeeding relationship she so valued. When this hard work is assigned to mothers, as the philosophy of attachment parenting and the state’s investment in policies such as ‘breast is best’ encourages, fathers are free to enjoy the ‘fun’ parts of early childrearing, especially when they take parental leave once a child’s sleeping, playing and feeding schedule have been developed. This is not to suggest that mothers are incapable of enjoying these everyday activities, many participants reported, for example, that they

loved their parental leaves for the time it gave them to bond and have fun with their children. Nor does failing to share parental leave automatically assign fathers ‘fun’ activities as Notisha reported.⁴⁰ My argument is that even when men’s contribution to childrearing is viewed as essential, whether it is to fulfil the requirement for ‘fun’ or to give mothers a break, as the Sears propose, the responsibility for ensuring such a contribution remains with mothers. In this way, whether mothers use all the parental leave or split it equally, they remain the “first responder,” to use Olive’s phrase, culpable both when fathers take parental leave and when they do not. While this construction of parenting labour, between fun and responsibility, can contribute to black mothers’ attempts to claim good motherhood, it requires mothers to carry a great burden, especially on the body as Margaret’s narrative captures in the next section.

The gendered pattern of fun and everyday parenting underlies parental leave policy itself. This is evident in the structure of the forerunner of the current shared parental leave policy in Britain. Under the Additional Paternity Leave scheme introduced in 2011, fathers were only entitled to the portion of leave remaining after the mother had taken twenty weeks. This is arguably a characteristic of Canadian parental leave policy if one interprets the breakdown of fifteen weeks of maternity leave and thirty-seven weeks of parental leave as suggesting that mothers take at least the first few months of leave while fathers are entitled to the months that come after. Margaret reported that she and her husband had shared parental leave in this manner:

my husband took three months off for pat leave actually so my daughter was nine months old when I went back to work and then he did nine months to a year. So very much hands-on as well. ‘Cause he wanted to kind of be there and he realised how hard it is and I’m glad he realised, he’s like “next time you can take the full year” (Margaret, CA, 28-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 16 months).

⁴⁰ Between her and her husband Notisha stated that she was the parent more likely to be “silly [and] fun.” Indeed, for Notisha, it was her husband’s subdued capacity for emotional expression that explained why he was not suited to taking parental leave.

Given the low uptake of parental leave among fathers in Canada,⁴¹ Margaret's husband's use of parental leave is outside the norm and demonstrates the long-term impact leave-taking can have on attitudes towards childrearing. Margaret's description of his realization is significant and she is clearly proud of his (implicitly unique) status as a "hands-on" father. However, the conclusion they both draw from the experience of sharing leave is that she ought to take the full year of leave with their next child, suggesting an unexpected retreat towards a more traditional division of parenting labour. Having given him the gift of parental leave, Margaret's husband rewards her with recognition of the difficulty of childrearing but does so in a manner that suggests her taking greater responsibility for it. The explanation for this unexpected retreat to tradition might be located in the maternal body, and its broader cultural recognition as the site of good mothering.

6.5.3 "Staying healthy for you": Gendered demands on the body

Putting Margaret's comments in the larger context of the interview introduces another dimension to the competing bodily agendas of neoliberal citizenship; the enactment of good fatherhood through the body. In addition to contributing 'fun' and financial provision, fathers' responsibility to the family can be expressed in another way. After she told me about the pressure she feels to ensure that she makes the time spent with her daughter 'count,' I asked Margaret if she thought her husband felt the same way:

No, like he definitely values time with her, um, but he, his priority is to stay healthy...he'll be around for her because he's aware, he's very healthy but he's aware of the fact that his grandfather died at a young age from...a heart attack but he was a heavy smoker and drinker, his grandfather, great grandfather so it's kinda different 'cause he's quite healthy but he still has that on his mind...he doesn't wanna leave us, you know, before his time. He's eight years older than

⁴¹ A 2013 study reported that 30.8% of fathers "claimed or intended to take" parental leave (Lero, 2015, p. 2).

me and you know, statistically women outlive men so he's very conscious of all those things so this is why, you know, he's like, "I'm staying healthy for you guys, I'm staying healthy for her and for you" so it's smart and I wanna do the same 'cause then...I wanna be around. I wanna be doing the right things too but I just have that, more guilt than him.

Margaret's husband's concern for his physical health may arguably be tied to wider beliefs that link good fathering to financial provision. The imperative to be healthy expresses neoliberal values, especially as health is linked to the capacity to be a productive worker (Ayo, 2012; Peterson & Lupton, 1996). In this way, Margaret's husband's serves dual purposes allowing him to fulfil both good father and good citizen roles. However, the "guilt" Margaret experiences constrains her ability to do the same. While mothers have not been able to escape pressure to remain healthy themselves, especially as their health is linked to that of their children (Lee & Jackson, 2002; Peterson & Lupton, 1996), there is little room in dominant maternal ideology for mothers who take time for themselves to go to the gym or take a yoga class. When mothers do carve out time for such activities they experience the guilt Margaret names above. Mother guilt and blame characterizes the narratives of many mothers who accept intensive mothering as ideal (Elliott, et al., 2013) and has intensified in a parenting policy context that emphasizes the brain-shaping importance of parent-child interactions. As the range of decisions parents are expected to make become ever more detailed, so the significance with which they are invested is heightened and so the stakes are raised, particularly for black mothers.⁴²

⁴² While pregnancy, for instance, might once have been a period of reprieve from the pressures of sexualization and aesthetic appeal, contemporary expectations of pregnant mothers are crystallized in the figure of the pregnant beauty, "a skintight, attractive, consumer-orientated version of maternity" (Tyler, 2011, p. 30). The pressure to 'bounce back' physically, after birth, is linked to returning to economic productivity (Tyler, 2011), a return both enabled and compromised by parental leave policies.

In its focus on the importance of birth bonding and breastfeeding, attachment parenting reflects wider trends in early parenting philosophies. In earlier chapters and above, I have discussed the intensifying significance assigned to breastfeeding by doctors, governments and global health bodies and suggested that this interest is yet another manifestation of the fixation on the early years of childhood as determining the fate of individual citizens and society as a whole. I have argued that the investment in increasing breastfeeding rates is evidence of a neoliberal approach to parenting policy in which state funds are directed towards inculcating particular kinds of maternal subjects, subjects for whom self-sufficiency and individual responsibility are defining features of good mothering (Bryant et al., 2007; Hamilton, 2016). In this chapter, I have extended this argument by attending to the tensions generated by the state's exhortation to breastfeed and its simultaneous professed commitment to promoting a more equitable division of parenting labour. As I argue above, the introduction of shared parental leave initiatives in the UK and use-it-or-lose-it paternity leave in Canada is often couched in the language of gender equality, regardless of the actual results of such policy changes. These tensions are heightened by adherence to attachment parenting, given its emphasis on embodied parenting activities as essential for children's well-being. As I suggested in chapter four, this promotion is centered on the *maternal* body, resulting in women performing even those activities that could be easily carried out by fathers, such as babywearing and bed-sharing, and performing them in such a manner that can preclude fathers' involvement. In this context, women's accounts portray their bodies as both sites of immense power and as an instrument of accessing good motherhood as well as the site at which the constraining effects of racial ideologies and mothering discourses are felt.

6.5.4 “He doesn't have a boob, so...”: maternal bodies, AP and the route to good motherhood

Indeed, the body has been the primary site through which black women have experienced gendered and racial ideologies and oppressions. Black women's reproductive capacity, in particular, has been framed as either a source of profit, as during slavery, or as a threat to the whiteness and well-being of Western nations, as expressed in ongoing practices of

sterilization abuse (Roberts, 1997a) and immigration detention (Tyler, 2013). The belief that black women are more ‘bodily’ than their white counterparts (Firth, 2012) is an expression of the same logic that constructs black women as closer to nature and therefore more likely to (unthinkingly) practice attachment parenting. It is this vision of black womanhood that the Sears evoke in their celebrations of ‘primitive’ cultures who, uncontaminated by the West, have managed to sustain their superior parenting practices. I have argued in earlier chapters that this vision strips black women of their subjectivity while also noting the ways that (re)claiming attachment parenting as African protects black mothers from these dehumanizing impulses; my intention here is to highlight how such claims on AP are made through mothers taking greater responsibility for childrearing, apparently deeming a less equitable division of labour as an appropriate price to pay for this protection.

This is true of Olive, who as I pointed out above, refers to herself as a “first responder” and through her prioritization of breastfeeding, has rarely left her sons in the sole care of their father. Tracey also offers another example:

PH: Did your husband take any of the parental leave? Did you think about doing that?

Tracey: *chuckles* We did and, uh, if I would’ve let him he probably would have *laughs* but I didn’t let him.

PH: Okay *chuckles* And what motivated that, what was the decision-making around that?

Tracey: Um, well, I think, number one he doesn’t have a boob so he can’t feed her so...

As I argued above and Tracey’s description of the decision-making in her household demonstrates, the concentration on women’s bodies that AP and other mainstream parenting philosophies encourage, complicate and in many cases, contradict, the

expressed aim of parental leave policies (Doucet, 2009). In Tracey's case, the prospect of sharing the responsibilities of parenting their infant daughter is subordinated to the need to breastfeed successfully. Situated in her broader investment in attachment parenting, this prioritizing of breastfeeding prevented a more equitable division of labour. In the overlap between attachment parenting and intensive mothering, mothers' bodies are foregrounded and thus their labour is viewed as essential to the current and future well-being of children. That such a goal (the well-being of children) is subordinated to a broader aim of gender equality is unsurprising in a postfeminist context; if the work of feminism has been completed and women's parenting decisions are framed as individual choices, black women's embrace of attachment parenting can only be read through its anti-racist effects and the pathway it provides to good motherhood, rather than as a potential source of overburdening.

As Tracey's declaration that "he doesn't have a boob" suggests, the message that 'breast is best' reinforces this overburdening. The moral impetus to breastfeed in a neoliberal context reinforces the belief that mothers 'own' parental leave (McKay & Doucet, 2010), allowing the need to decide how parental leave ought to be shared to become another manifestation of the primary responsibility women possess for maximizing the well-being of their children. This responsibility is intensified further for black mothers for whom decision-making around parenting techniques is invested with vital importance; the choice to breastfeed or formula feed is entangled not just with the requirement to ensure the production of a healthy, economically productive future citizen but also to protect the child from the health disparities, educational exclusion, employment discrimination and other consequences of a systemically racist society.⁴³

⁴³ As I explained in chapter four, the breastfeeding promotion efforts of movements like Black Women Do Breastfeed and activists like Kimberly Seals Allers, suggest that breastfeeding is a powerful tool for black communities to alleviate racialized health disparities, including infant mortality rates (Allers, 2016; Bayne, 2015).

If the promotion of breastfeeding contributes to mothers being more likely to take the leave during the first months of a child's life, as McKay and Doucet (2010) found, this reinforces the belief produced by mothering and gender ideologies that the reason mothers take greater responsibility for child-rearing is that they are 'naturally' better at it. Research has found that for first-time parents, the early experiences of childrearing determine the pattern of division of labour in the future (Asher, 2011; Fox, 2009). Due to prioritizing breastfeeding and the maternalist orientation of parental leave, it is mothers who are more likely to spend time caring for their children during those first few months, developing parenting skills that fathers do not. In such a scenario, mothers develop confidence about their capacity to perform the work of childrearing while fathers, who fail to share in these experiences, become less and less likely to develop the confidence to claim primary parenting responsibility in the same way. Jayaben referenced this phenomenon when she reported that as her daughters grew older (they were aged three and six at the time of the interview), her husband felt more comfortable asserting his parental expertise rather than relying on Jayaben to determine the appropriate course of action. Even noting this shift, Jayaben still claimed primary responsibility for not only caring for the children but determining the kind of childrearing she and her husband employed:

Well, I think as they get older...and as we, we both become more comfortable in our role as parents, um, in that he's gained confidence in saying 'well, I think this is what the girls need or this child needs this or I think this approach will be better' so there's, that is changing. But I think when they were very, very small, particularly when they were so physically attached to me, quite literally, I think that was, uh, he would defer to whatever I thought was necessary (Jayaben, UK, 44-year-old mother of two daughters, aged six and three).

The children's physical attachment to Jayaben required her husband to "defer" to her greater authority, demonstrating the significance of breastfeeding promotion and the consequent effect it has on the division parenting labour both in the early years of a child's life and in the years that follow. Though Jayaben's narrative reveals how patterns

of childrearing responsibility can change as children age, it also suggests the tensions between breastfeeding promotion and parental leave legislation that purports to encourage fathers' involvement. Her children's attachment is a necessary condition of successful breastfeeding and it is that attachment that state parenting advice names as a marker of good motherhood.

6.5.5 Balancing paid work and mothering

Parental leave legislation also draws focus to the first twelve months of a child's life, often at the expense of the months and years that follow. A common refrain in the interviews was the description of difficulties finding childcare, especially at the end of the parental leave period. While the UK government, for example, provides free childcare to children aged three and older, the dilemma of childcare between ages 1 and 3 is not supported by state services (Fagan & Norman, 2012). Mothers described the difficulties associated with returning to paid work after a lengthy parental leave:

Getting adjusted to, yeah, so big transition to go from being a year off to kinda going back to work and so on so I guess in terms of daily routine we're still trying to figure that out. Um, it's been a little bit challenging in terms of, I guess you know when you're off for the whole year and stuff and especially kind of being in the banking career which is kind of a bit more male-dominated so then you're sort of coming back to the office and, you know, older guys and stuff and then you kinda have to take some time off for baby and, so kinda navigating that a little bit and then she had a little bit of challenges adjusting to day care... (Rebecca, CA, 38-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 13 months)

For Rebecca, the challenges of this transition lie both with the necessary adjustment to a "male-dominated" environment where her commitment to her work is rendered uncertain by her parenthood and with the effect on her daughter, particularly how work may compromise her ability to parent in the manner she has deemed most appropriate:

I think when you...I found for me...the transition kind of happened more when my mat leave was over. So...it's almost like [attachment parenting is]

acceptable...when you're on mat leave and stuff but it's almost...when you go back to work then it's...you have to...there doesn't really seem to be a place for it. I would say...there was, and I mean for practical reasons and stuff as well...there just doesn't seem to be enough accommodation and stuff for that.

In this description of the collision between parenting practice and participation in the labour force, Rebecca illustrates both the contradiction inherent to intensive mothering ideology and the specific challenges this contradiction poses to black mothers. Sociologist Karen Christopher (2015) suggests that this collision is evidence of the primary purpose parental leave serves, as a “buffer zone” (p. 25) between ideal economically productive citizenship and ‘good’ mothering informed by the ideology of intensive mothering. Through taking twelve months of parental leave, mothers can show their dedication to childrearing and assuage the guilt often suffered upon return to the workplace (Christopher, 2015). However, Christopher found that this ‘buffer zone’ did not work as effectively for “low and lower-middle income” mothers whose poorly paid, low status employment made the prospect of returning to work neither financially nor emotionally appealing (Christopher, 2015, p. 33). Similarly, I suggest that the ‘buffer zone’ operates differently for black mothers whose paid work is not only a means of survival but represents achievement against racist and sexist odds and whose childrearing is informed by efforts to overcome these odds, on behalf of their children. While the specific ways black mothers use the ‘buffer zone’ may be different, each reflecting their particular intersection of social class, ethnicity, citizenship status and age, it offers a circuitous and, in some ways, oppositional route to good mothering. In their use of this buffer zone, black mothers can put participation in paid work to use in ways that specifically reflect a “cultural heritage” of combining paid work and mothering while also finding ways to claim a good motherhood constrained by the prescripts of intensive mothering.

The difficult transition from parental leave to paid work Rebecca describes, reveals one further significant contradiction of our neoliberal age; it embodies the increasing fluidity

between ‘private’ and ‘public’ spaces that dismantles the fiction of separate spheres, a fiction upon which the gendered division of labour (in parenting and beyond) rests. As more (white, middle-class) women enter the labour force, provisions to accommodate their mothering have similarly been introduced, including parental leave policies. However, as many scholars have argued, these policies serve to maintain a distinction between private and public, reinforcing a view of children as sacred, priceless and located in the home (Hays, 1996; O’Brien Hallstein, 2006) while requiring their mothers to engage in paid work outside of it (Johnston & Swanson, 2006). Breast milk pumping breaks at work serve as the most recent example of attempts to balance often contradictory desires to promote good mothering and good economic productivity (Boyer, 2014; Stephens, 2011), prioritizing continued employment above the “affective/interpersonal benefits” of breastfeeding (Boyer, 2014, p. 280). Despite these new pieces of legislation that apparently ‘help’ mothers, as Rebecca suggests, there is no “place” for a form of mothering that does not conform to neoliberal standards of maternal practice that stress consumerist choice and commodified responsibility. Even as attachment parenting is taken up in ways that serve neoliberal agendas, I have also highlighted its capacity to undermine its objectives, particularly as the all-encompassing effort it demands makes visible the work childrearing requires. In Rebecca’s account, attachment parenting uncovers not just the burden of childrearing but also its relational features (Tyler, 2011), the dependence at the heart of all maternal-infant relations (Stephens, 2011) for which neoliberal rationality can make no “accommodation.” AP demands a close, intimate and most importantly, *physical* bond between mother and child and while parental leave facilitates this bond, broader policies that require mothers’ return to the workforce at the end of their twelve months of leave and prioritize economic productivity as the defining feature of good citizenship conflict with this idealized bond.

6.5.6 The (neoliberal) class politics of challenging parental leave

While acknowledging that fundamental changes in workplace culture, gender ideology and the provision of state support for citizens are required for long-lasting change in unequal divisions of labour in families, what kind of parental leave policy can be

implemented immediately, as a means of achieving these wider goals? The solution proposed by some feminist scholars hoping to address mothers' disproportionate use of parental leave and its long-term consequences is to assign each parent six months of leave that cannot be transferred (Gornick & Meyers, 2009). However, such a policy would be limited by the dominance of particular kinds of parenting techniques growing in popularity among the public and promoted by the state (Macdonald, 2009). In the context of 'breast is best,' for example, how might this policy accommodate the recommendation that mothers ought to breastfeed for up to two years? Doucet (2009) argues that splitting parental leave evenly between heterosexual couples ignores not only the actual "differentially embodied experiences" of mothers and fathers but also, and perhaps more crucially, parents' *beliefs* about what those differences mean (p. 92). For feminist advocates of egalitarian leave policies especially, the tension arises from the effort to accommodate the choices of the mother whose belief in the importance of breast milk requires her withdrawal from the labour market for an extended period of time and the larger effort to improve women's position in the workforce. Such policy changes have clear racial implications; the choices of black mothers are undermined by their concentration in low-income jobs that make them less likely to be eligible for, or able to afford, parental leave. Though studies have suggested that for women in low-paying work, leave may not be as detrimental for their long-term career trajectories because career development is non-existent in such jobs (Fagan & Norman, 2012), the immediate financial implications of taking parental leave are still considerable. While these implications did not apply for the majority of my disproportionately middle-class sample, the account offered by Olive, who identified herself as working-class, suggests an interaction between parenting philosophy, low-income employment and leave policy that illustrates the limitations of even the equitable version of paid parental leave suggested by feminists above.

As I have already discussed, Olive was ineligible for paid parental leave because she had not worked the required six hundred hours in the twelve months prior to the birth of her second son. She chose to stay home with her son despite the absence of this financial

support largely due to her commitment to AP principles, including breastfeeding, bed-sharing and babywearing. Olive's dedication to attachment parenting and the vital importance the philosophy assigns to the early years of childhood allowed her to resolve the tension between work and stay-at-home parenting that features prominently in popular discourse about motherhood and in all but one interview:

I think it's worth the sacrifices that I'm making to have this lifestyle. Which is hard...I could be at work just making money...my sister's more career-oriented and for her it's... "oh, why don't you go back to school so you can do something that makes more money? ...You have two kids now." But...I'm going back to school, I'm working to support my kids and then...they've grown up and I have missed everything...what is that? What am I gaining out of this? Do you know what I mean? Maybe one day I'll do that, maybe once they're past a certain stage but when they need me the most I'm not gonna go try to do something to sup-, to be with my kids in the end, you know what I mean? Be there now and do something else later when they don't need me all the time.

Olive's belief in the importance of this "certain stage" negates efforts to share parenting more equitably between men and women to ensure women's labour force participation. Her particular emphasis on breastfeeding, for example, would make the proposed six months of non-transferable parental leave assigned to mothers and fathers unworkable. Unlike Notisha, who spoke at length about the effect twelve-month parental leaves had on her career prospects, Olive did not seem at all concerned about what the "something else later" might be. This "something else later" pales in significance compared to the kind of parenting she can offer her children in the early (and apparently crucial) years of their development, a style of parenting that requires her to forgo paid employment. The assumed attachment to the workforce that feminist alternatives to parental leave policy aims to protect is challenged by women like Olive for whom time spent with their children is paramount. Indeed, while traditional (white) feminist theorizing might read this preference for staying at home as an indication of conformity to patriarchal oppression, I suggest that there is something radical in Olive's insistence on her

children's needs and in her positioning of herself as being ideally and exclusively suited to meeting them. This is especially true in the context of a historical legacy that ties the introduction of parental leave to retrenchments in other forms of state assistance.⁴⁴

As I argued above, the link between such policies suggests that there are two contradictory views of ideal motherhood that “sort [mothers] into those who ought to stay home and give their children the benefit of their time and attention, and those who ought to work, and give their children the benefit of enriching activities” (Macdonald, 2009, p. 425; Harris, 2004). Just as retrenchment of the state's welfare provisions are racialized so too are these views of motherhood, framed by popular beliefs that equate blackness with failed citizenship, thus making black women unsuited to the work of raising their children and nevertheless deeming those children irredeemable and disposable. Viewing Olive's determined stay-at-home mothering through this lens challenges these constructions of blackness but comes at the cost of relieving women's care burdens and, without a supportive state apparatus, risks exacerbating black women's already disproportionate rates of poverty and unemployment. My aim here is not to reduce Olive's mothering to merely the expression of apparently revolutionary opposition to raced and classed stereotypes but to note the complexities of her maternal practices, to depart from critiques of mothering ideologies that frame mothers, particularly marginalized mothers, as victims of circumstance and oppression. The bargain Olive makes, exchanging financial security and a shared burden for dedicated, exclusive mothering, is both coherent and disruptive, it both undermines and accords with neoliberal rationality in ways that open space for alternative and resistive enactments of mothering.

⁴⁴ Manuel and Zambrana (2009) note that the introduction of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) in the United States occurred alongside the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), the legislation that signaled wide scale welfare reform. In Canada, Evans (2007) links the 2001 extension of paid parental leave to a surplus in the Employment Insurance fund, a surplus created by restrictive changes to entitlements for the unemployed.

The extent to which such alternatives are shaped by social class is complicated by the examination of middle-class participants' accounts of parental leave. Among the maternalist claims and work-family conflicts it inspires, participants' talk about parental leave also reveals the breadth of individualist, neoliberal frameworks (Phipps, 2016). By this, I mean the tendency to cede ground to the language and requirements of the economy in discussions of how best to implement parental leave policy. Unlike the feminist alternative, which assures women's continued employment as a means of staving off broader income inequalities between men and women, the 'business case' made for parental leave equates business interests with the other generally accepted goals of gender equality and child well-being. The 'business case' appeared in Stella's narrative in the form of an explanation for why the United States lacks a federal paid parental leave policy and in Rebecca's concerns about the proposed extension of parental leave in Canada from twelve to eighteen months:

You need to get that support. But you need a thriving government. A country that has money. The US is in a trillion-dollar deficit. It's not gonna happen there (Stella, CA, 37-year-old mother of one daughter, aged four).

Well, I think it's good and I think it's bad at the same time...I think the challenge that they're probably gonna have...it sounds really great...for women and stuff to be off...I'd love to have eighteen months and so with my kid but when I look at it kind of from the business side of...from an employer, when I see...for example, how difficult it was for them...they couldn't find somebody to cover my mat leave and stuff so when I came back it was... "oh, thank heavens, you know, we have the extra body here." I think on the flipside it's gonna make it very difficult for employers to find, 'cause they have to keep the job, they're supposed to keep the job open but now you're asking them to keep that position open for eighteen months so how are they gonna find somebody to temporarily cover that... (Rebecca, CA, 38-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 13 months).

I do not deny the possibility that this evoking of a language of business and economics is strategic; in a context where economic terms have infiltrated every sphere of life (Brown, 2015), to frame parental leave as a financial concern can incentivize state action. It can also provide further pretext for mothers who decide to stay at home with their children, especially those mothers whose presence is deemed risky. The language of ‘investment’ is helpful here, allowing mothers to both justify their parenting choices and to take responsibility for the (positive) outcomes of said choices. As Harriet explained in her interview, she has “invested” in her son and by doing so has raised a “bright” child. Of course, as I suggested above, claiming responsibility is only an effective challenge against oppressive structures when these outcomes *are* positive. The tendency to blame black mothers for black communities’ failures makes their use of ‘investment’ language dangerous but also upsets the traditional discourse around investing in children that frames such investments as a class-sustaining project for the white, middle classes (Koshy, 2008). When black mothers invest in their children they do so not merely as an attempt to maintain and transmit social mobility but as a means of addressing structural inequities in their communities, as Eleanor, Demita and Olive each espoused in chapter five. That such investments depend on mothers’ bodies complicates this effort by gendering the work of caring for the black community (Hill, 2004). The body weaves in and out of these conformist and resistive narratives of mothering, both requiring women’s ‘investment’ and representing the limits of policy attempts to resolve fundamental contradictions between work and family. These bodily expressions of maternity are especially fraught for black mothers for whom the body has been a site of long histories of oppression and resistance and are further complicated by adherence to attachment parenting.

6.6 Conclusion

The mothers I interviewed adopted different approaches to the ‘problem’ of dividing parenting labour; some used the maternalist design of parental leave to claim this time as their own, others asserted male ‘difference’ to narrow their partners’ parental role and responsibility, still others cited the bodily demands of attachment parenting to explain

their primary responsibility for childrearing while others negotiated the constraints of paid work in their efforts to affirm oppositional models of good mothering. Each of these attitudes is best understood when contextualized in this particular socio-historical moment as women confront both heightened pressures to mother intensively and repeated reminders to take (financial) responsibility for their children. These injunctions are intensified for black mothers thanks to a historical legacy that excluded them from the boundaries of good motherhood precisely *because* they participated in paid work. That mothers might zealously conform to dominant models of good childrearing or resist this model by an equally ardent commitment to economic productivity and good neoliberal citizenship is evidence of the lasting effects of this legacy. However, the women's narratives are more complicated than such a simplistic dichotomy suggests. This is perhaps best exemplified in the stories told by Olive, who I quoted above and Rebecca, both of whom offer very different methods of resolving the division of parenting labour question.

Though both women expressed interest in attachment parenting and discussed the importance of its core practices, between the two, Olive was the more enthusiastic proponent of its benefits. Though she acknowledged the difficulties associated with AP practice, both emotional and financial, her commitment to attachment parenting was visible in the way she interacted with her sons, the younger of whom she wore throughout our interview. This enthusiasm expressed itself in Olive claiming responsibility for most the parenting in her household and a desire to be available for her children "in every aspect." The price of her embrace of attachment parenting was financial instability but Olive believed it was worth it:

I'm...really struggling by making this choice in the way...I'm sacrificing a lot of things like even just fixing my car and stuff that I could do if I just put my kids in day care and went to work, I'm giving up those things because being with them is more important to me...they're never gonna be the same age again...

Work was secondary for Olive, especially while her children were young. The importance of building a bond during these early years was worth both giving up or compromising work and taking greater responsibility for childrearing. For Rebecca, however, these goals produced more conflict. While a ‘long’ maternity leave had allowed her to give her daughter the early attention dominant mothering ideologies frame as essential, it had not entirely eliminated the contradiction between work and family. I interviewed Rebecca shortly after she had returned to work after a twelve-month maternity leave. Our conversation was punctuated with her concerns about adjusting to life as a working mother, particularly the pressure to succeed in both arenas of work and home. However, she was also committed to many of the principles of AP, including breastfeeding, bed-sharing and babywearing and as I suggested above, this was entangled with a gendered view of childrearing that often required asserting her will over her husband’s parental expertise. This tension between a dedication to work *and* attachment parenting manifested in her response to the question “if money was no object, would you stay at home?”

No. I don’t, I don’t...I think it’s good, yes, like I can see why mums do it and stuff...I think it’s great for kids and stuff to have that constant support and so on but I don’t know, I think mentally I’d go bananas because...I feel, I don’t know, it’s like you know our minds need stimulation and that kind of stuff? ...Well, I guess my mind does anyways, I should say, ‘cause maybe they’re, everybody has different goals and stuff like that and that’s not to say that for a stay-at-home mom it’s not stimulating...they can find other activities...maybe they find their stimulation in other activities and so on but yeah, I don’t think for me it would and I, and I think part of the pressure for me is as well as having, you know, being a black woman and being an immigrant as well at the same time...I sacrificed so much to come here and do my Master’s...I gave up my whole awesome life I had at home or whatever to come here...I got a full scholarship and stuff but I gave all that up to come here, to study, you know, to, and I, I’m so grateful that you know that I have...the position and stuff when I see how...they’re other people who have to clean....people who are way more qualified than me are just out there cleaning

and that kind of stuff or working as a cab driver...I feel like I've done so much to get this far and I think for my daughter...I want her to see that you know what? These things are possible and so on 'cause I guess I'm also very mindful of the, the race aspect of things...you know what I mean? When she looks around her world and stuff she sees, she's gonna see mostly Caucasian people you know what I mean? And I don't want her to look and feel well...I'm sure mentally it's gonna be like "well, why is my mom different from everybody else's?" you know what I mean? And I, and I, and you know there's this kind of...I guess I've kind of always felt like you know as, as a black woman it's almost like you're kind of at the bottom of the social, social ladder to some extent regardless of, you know, regardless of education and that kind of stuff, like socially and so on it feels like you're a little bit below so I don't want her, so it's almost like you have to try that much harder to kind of, you know, so I feel...if I were to stay home now it would be kind of like a, I don't know I'd be throwing everything away somehow and I, I don't want her to see...I want her to see that "okay, you know what, here, yes, my mom looks different but you know what? She's educated and, and you know what? And she works and" you know...those are the things I guess that I don't know, that kind of tip the scales a little bit more, maybe that's, maybe that's not the right way of looking at it but you know...

Rebecca's struggle to negotiate dominant mothering ideologies that frame stay-at-home motherhood as best for children and her own experiences as a black immigrant woman is obvious. She seeks to distance herself from this kind of 'good' mothering, without belittling it, while actively asserting her own version that attends to the realities of raising a child of colour in a white-dominated society. In some previous studies of black motherhood, this tension between work and mothering has been framed as a white, middle-class concern (Forna, 2000). That black women have been constructed primarily as workers, regardless of their maternal responsibilities, is explained as a result of "slavery, British colonialism in the Caribbean and economic migration of black women...from the Caribbean during the post-war era" (Reynolds, 2001, p. 1049) during

which black women's capacity to be economically productive came to define their status. In chapter two, I argued that it is through this construction of black women as workers that their mothering has been devalued and dismissed, an argument shared by other black feminist scholars (see Glenn, 1992 for example). However, this argument is sometimes accompanied by the claim that, because the vast majority of black women experience paid work and mothering as "interlocking and interdependent functions" (Reynolds, 2001, p. 1054), those black women who value full-time mothering over paid work are victims of false consciousness, "trapped by a dominant, intransigent maternal ideal" (Forna, 2000, p. 370).

Forna (2000), in particular, makes such a claim. In distinguishing between an exclusive mother-child bond, seemingly preferred by white mothers, and a more community-orientated, collectivist approach to childrearing, apparently favoured by black mothers, Fornia argues that black mothers raise their children caught between "two co-existing scripts for motherhood; the one they received through their own family and cultural heritage and the other which predominates everywhere else in society" (2000, p. 364). However, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, many black mothers understand the predominant view as requiring distance between mother and child and refer to 'cultural heritage' to defend their commitment to close, maternal bonding. Instead of being caught between two apparently racially disparate ideas, these mothers produce a hybrid response, claiming an exclusive mother-child bond *through* a new, complex reading of community and collectivism. Thus, Olive's decision to stay at home with her children, regardless of the financial or career development costs, cannot be reduced to the entrapment Fornia suggests. Olive's parenting choices were carefully articulated and formed part of a broader commitment to leading a more 'natural' lifestyle, specifically rooted in "black culture" and "rebellion [against] the standards of society."

Neither can Rebecca's account be viewed as valuing economic productivity, and the access to 'good' citizenship it may generate, over her daughter's well-being. Though she chooses work, this choice is accomplished by overcoming a series of barriers,

acknowledging both the forcefulness of the injunction to mothers to stay at home and the specific contradictions such an injunction creates for black mothers. By framing her decision to work as ultimately benefiting her daughter, Rebecca responds to these forces and uses their contradictory logic to sustain her specific maternal practice. In telling both Rebecca and Olive's stories, I highlight the different paths black mothers choose in their attempts to raise their children in a racist society and claim an oppositional good motherhood. Whether they mother or work full-time, black mothers negotiate with constructions of their motherhood and citizenship that frame them as failures. That Rebecca and Olive in different ways confront such discourses with maternal practice that centers not only their children's well-being but their own, racially derived subjectivity is evidence of the variety of self-definitions black feminist theory identifies as characteristic of black womanhood and provides a glimpse of what alternative practices could be possible in viewing motherhood through the lens of black mothers' experiences.

What these insights show is that, in order for them to be successful, feminist efforts to alter the parental division of labour must do more than arrange for the "redistribution of childcare from women to men" (Gray, 2006, para. 3.1); they must advance a critique of the broader social context that holds women primarily responsible for childrearing. This is evident in, for example, the cultural pressures that good mothering ideologies impose on women while at the same time acknowledging and respecting women's investment in the well-being of their children. That many women accept the central tenets of intensive mothering cannot be dismissed as merely an indication of their 'false consciousness' but might be understood as a commitment to the relational aspects of maternal relationships even in the face of neoliberal disavowal (Hays, 1996; Tyler, 2011; Stephens, 2011). This nuanced take on mothers' dedication to these ideologies is brought to bear by the accounts offered by the black women participants of this study. I read their commitment to the health and success of their children not merely as submission to neoliberal modes of good parenting and good citizenship but as opposition to racial discourses that construct their children as disposable. That their choice of parenting technique might express both these notions (both submission and opposition) is testimony to the

complexity of all mothers' engagements with dominant ideologies and evidence of the need for structural changes to achieve a more equitable division of childrearing labour. As I have shown above, changes to parental leave policies are not sufficient especially considering the absence of state-funded childcare, the gender *and* racial pay gap, the 'long hours culture' (Gray, 2006) and a general belief that such problems ought to be solved by individual enterprise. While I acknowledge that scholarly research can only have a limited effect on policy-making, given the gamesmanship that characterizes contemporary politics (Galtry & Callister, 2005), I also argue that the promotion of equitable parental leave policy can only be successful if carried out within the context of, among others, demands for a reduction in the average working hours (Gray, 2006), the introduction of state-subsidized childcare (Gornick & Meyers, 2009) and the dismantling of a gendered, racialized and classed labour market that differentially determines how parents experience parental leave in the first place. When it interacts with dominant gender, racial and parenting ideologies (which are themselves gendered and raced), leave can operate as a policing mechanism, offering another avenue through which mothers can be scrutinized for failing to make the appropriate choices expected of a good mother. These moments of judgement can have damaging effects on efforts to divide parenting labour more equitably (McKay & Doucet, 2010).

The persistence of paid parental leave policies (and in some cases, their expansion) might appear to some scholars as a departure from or contradiction of neoliberal efforts to promote individualism and center the market (Baird & O'Brien, 2015). After all, neoliberalism assumes a reduction in state spending, particularly in areas broadly defined as 'welfare.' However, my analysis follows Wacquant (2012) who identifies the 'neo' in 'neoliberalism' as marking the emergence of a new kind of state, a "Centaur-state" that "uplifts" at the top and "castigates" at the bottom (p. 74). Building on Harris' (2004) argument, this suggests that the purpose of parental leave policy in a neoliberal context *is* the production of two messages – one, designed for white, middle-class mothers, for whom the poorly paid parental leave provisions can be topped up by individual employer agreements and the support of a well-paid spouse. For such women, the message suggests

that staying home with one's baby is essential for their optimal development. The second message is targeted at low-paid, low-status women and in some instances, racialized women who, because of barriers such as institutionalized racism and sexism, find it difficult to meet the requirements to access EI benefits in Canada (Evans, 2007) or experience a wider wage gap than their white counterparts in the UK, shaping the extent to which a 90% wage replacement will be a living wage. For these women, the experience of parental leave is short due to its unaffordability, after all, their children are understood as being best served in an institutionalized childcare setting. That the state's investment in parental leave pay is motivated by the "business case" (Baird & O'Brien, 2015, p. 213) is evidence of both the market-centered logic that governs neoliberalism and of the role social policies play in the production of new kinds of citizens (Polzer & Power, 2016). The stories told by the black mothers in this chapter and indeed in this thesis offer expansion and critique of these new parenting citizens, suggesting myriad approaches to expressing maternal subjectivity that variably undermine and reinforce dominant ideas about good childrearing. In the identification of both working and staying-at-home as expressions of good black motherhood my aim is not to offer a single pathway to 'revolutionary' maternal identity and experience but rather to illustrate the different ways black mothers, as individuals and as a group, organize their lives to best prepare their children for the futures from which neoliberal racial ideologies attempt to deprive them.

Chapter 7

7 Discussion and conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined black mothers' engagements with attachment parenting. Drawing on data gathered from interviews with black mothers living in Britain and Canada, I have explored black mothers' affirmations and rejections of AP philosophy and the broader ideology of intensive mothering it represents. My thesis grounds this examination in the particular socio-economic context of neoliberalism, identifying AP's appearance in contemporary policy and state-produced parenting advice and the ways that the philosophy both upholds and undermines neoliberal ideology. In their varying interactions with AP, black mothers similarly conform to the norms and standards set by neoliberal rationality *and* upend them, articulating a model of good black motherhood that centers black children's value.

I identified three themes that capture black mothers' interactions with and strategic uses of AP: 1) black mothers assert their own expertise in their maternal practice and their negotiation of health and infant care advice produced by the state; 2) black mothers craft their own view of belonging, upsetting practices of racial exclusion to claim a resistive form of good motherhood and good citizenship and; 3) black mothers negotiate raced and gendered practices of the division of parental labour, using parental leave legislation and challenging dominant constructions of black motherhood to assert resistive self-definitions. In chapters 4-6 I elucidated these themes and, advancing an analysis informed by black feminist theory and attention to neoliberal modes of governing citizens, I examined AP-influenced, state-produced parenting advice including breastfeeding, babywearing and bed-sharing recommendations and black mothers' interpretations of such advice in chapter 4; in chapter 5, I framed black mothers' cultivation of a transnational take on belonging with an overview of histories of blackness in Britain and Canada, contextualizing the mothers' deployment of AP to claim belonging to an 'elsewhere'; finally, in chapter 6, I contrasted British and Canadian parental leave

legislation, identifying a shared maternalist orientation that informed black mothers' approach to dividing parenting labour and buttressed their resistive visions of themselves as good black mothers. In this discussion chapter, I expand on the greater theoretical significance of these findings and delineate the contributions this thesis makes to the study of black motherhood and the burgeoning field of parenting culture studies.

7.1 Theoretical significance

Through each of the thematic chapters, I have presented a particular, culturally specific image of black mothering produced in a neoliberal context. In her articulation of the “five enduring themes”⁴⁵ that capture black women’s standpoint on motherhood, Patricia Hill Collins states that these themes are particularly visible during the “pre-World War II era” and that her discussion of the themes is rooted in the particular context of “slavery, Southern rural life, and class-stratified, racially segregated neighborhoods of earlier periods of urban Black migration” (2000, p. 177). She argues that these themes are dynamic and emerge in response to and negotiation with social practices which inevitably change over time. As social conditions change, new “resilient lifelines” (Collins, 2000, p. 177) may develop. The findings of this thesis suggest that black mothers forge new “lifelines” that respond to and are directly influenced by our neoliberal, purportedly postracial context. I argue that it is black mothers’ response to neoliberalism, both in accepting and questioning its central tenets, that informs the development of their maternal practice, practice that is inseparable from their engagements with AP. In particular, I claim that the ubiquity and influence of neoliberal values and its specific effects on intra-racial relations (Spence, 2012) have deemphasized community-oriented living and organizing in favour of the clarion call of individual achievement and

⁴⁵ These themes are: “bloodmothers, othermothers and woman-centered networks; mothers, daughters, and socialization for survival; community othermothers and political activism; motherhood as a symbol of power; the personal meaning of mothering (Collins, 2000, pp. 178 – 195)

consumption, and disguised the effects and explanatory value of social class (Tyler, 2008).

7.1.1 The neoliberal politics of class categorization

Transformations and disruptions in the politics of community ushered in by neoliberal emphasis on individual achievement are related to the absence and hiding of social class. The assumption that black people (and their experiences) can be collected under the “seeming unity” (Collins, 2009, p. 11) of the category ‘black community’ requires overlooking the ways gender, ethnicity, sexuality, dis/ability and, importantly for our purposes, social class, can intersect with blackness to produce varied experiences. The shift to individual measures of overcoming racism encompassed in contemporary forms of respectability politics, as I discussed in chapter four, is facilitated by the neglect of social class and its role in determining both how social problems are framed and the solutions proposed to address them (Spence, 2012). This is not to discount the class-effacing effects of neoliberal ‘postracism’ or to suggest that social class ought to supersede race in explanations of how neoliberal society functions, but rather to propose a genuinely intersectional analysis of black motherhood that attends to both similarities and differences across black mothers’ experiences. In each chapter, I have attended to social class, noting its effects on how black mothers deploy expertise, cultivate belonging and frame their maternal responsibility. I have also noted moments where middle-class black mothers’ attempts to resist racist dismissal of their children has come at the cost of their poor and working-class counterparts. For example, in my discussion of Lorde and Notisha’s strategies of focusing on appearance to protect their children from racist stereotyping and the violence that often follows from it, I draw attention to their classed construction of a “raggedy” black child as contrast against which their well-groomed and attired children can project respectability. My critique is not intended as a condemnation of Lorde and Notisha’s strategies which ultimately do and should prioritize their children’s survival but an attempt to highlight the classed complexities of black mothers’ parenting expertise and their consequent choices. Paying intersectional attention to the ways that social class (and other issues) inform expertise, even within marginalized

groups, is a crucial step in the construction of a more complex, complete and therefore relevant image of contemporary motherhood.

The interaction between social class and race functions in complex and contradictory ways in a neoliberal ‘postracial’ context. Though class has fallen out of favour both analytically and in popular culture (Tyler, 2008), it continues to shape and determine access to housing, education, healthcare and significantly for our purposes, policy-makers’ and the broader public’s conception of good parenting. As I have argued throughout this thesis, it is middle-class norms that determine the ideals of parenting (Hays, 1996; Fox, 2006; Gillies, 2005; Lareau, 2011) and because the production of future citizens is one of the duties of good parenting it follows that ideals of neoliberal citizenship are similarly rooted in middle-class values. For black middle-class parents, efforts to adopt middle-class strategies of investing in and preparing for their children’s success are always inflected with race, whether in the form of acknowledging the kind of danger their children face, regardless of their class position, or in others’ perception of them. As work by Blum (2011) and Maylor and Williams (2011) shows, racist narratives are often classed, with black people’s ‘badness’ explained as a consequence of their “lower class,” “deeply dysfunctional” families (Blum, 2011, p. 959). Similarly, Maylor and Williams’ study of black and white middle-class parents’ interactions with schools revealed that schools failed to make a class distinction with black parents as they did with white parents:

These Black parents reflected middle-class norms but not the embodied (Whiteness) norms, and unlike White parents who are demarcated as either ‘working’ or ‘middle’ class, they were simply viewed by schools as ‘Black parents’ with no distinguishing of their ‘classed’ educational knowledge *vis-à-vis* other Black parents (2011, p. 348).

Thus, while black mothers’ attempts to achieve such goals of good parenting and citizenship are hindered by simultaneously raced and classed constructions of black motherhood, regardless of their actual class position, nevertheless social class informs the

strategies they adopt to counter and resist oppressive constructions. This is evident in the diversity favoured by Lorde, Notisha and Harriet who each identified as middle-class and each rejected all-black environments as ill-equipped to adequately prepare their children for future success. Such an approach is contrasted by Eleanor who identified as working-class and in her decision to home-school her children, arguably restricted their racial environment. While all four women were clearly concerned with their children's survival and reflect Blum and Lareau's (2011) findings that, despite the protection offered by their financial privilege, black middle-class mothers must still do more to protect their children, I argue that there are still distinctions to be drawn between the experiences of working and middle-class black mothers and in such distinctions insight about both the specifically classed (and gendered) way racism operates and the multitude of resistances black mothers produce to challenge their oppression.

The classed distinctions between mothers' experiences is evident even in how they named themselves as belonging to a particular social class. During data collection, the most common experience across interviews in both Canada and the UK was the confusion and debate generated by one of the questions listed on the demographic form I asked participants to complete: 'how would you identify your class?' Most strikingly, it was the women who eventually identified themselves as "working class" that struggled most vividly with the question, while the only participant to name herself as "upper class" did so without pause. The difficulties the women had in expressing their class position reflects not only the depletion of meaning that 'class' has suffered in recent years, just at the historical moment when economic inequality has deepened (Tyler, 2008) but also communicates a significant complexity in intersectional analyses of black experience; for some black communities, class distinctions are viewed as a divisive tactic, designed to draw attention away from the "shared history of domination, subordination and collective struggles owing to slavery, colonialism and migration" (Maylor & Williams, 2011, p. 350). This view of shared black identity also upholds continued belief in the widespread practice of community or othermothering, despite evidence to the contrary (McDonald, 1997). As Collins suggests above, othermothering is produced out

of specific social conditions, particularly racial segregation and the “strong, cross-class maternal support” (McDonald, 1997, p. 774) enabled by the geographical concentration of black communities. To insist on its applicability to the contemporary context is to obscure the effects of class polarization, migration patterns and the changed lived experiences of families, as Angela describes:

I think mothering and I suppose parenting has changed in the fact that we don't live, well, we don't live close to my family and my husband's family live in [redacted] so that's about almost an hour away from here and I know a lot of my friends, their families don't live close by whereas you know, years ago, you'd have quite close-knit families where they were all together (Angela, UK, 35-year-old mother of one daughter aged 2).

The narratives I report in this thesis show that in the context of border crossing, class stratification and, I would argue, most significantly, the domination of neoliberal ideology, black mothers have constructed different views of motherhood that direct them away from practices of othermothering and towards philosophies like attachment parenting, especially as it is understood as ‘African,’ to solve the question of how to balance the need to work and the care of children as well as the broader question of how to “ensure collective survival” (Collins, 2000, p. 177; Mullings, 2000). I suggest that social class plays a significant role in this shift, offering working- and middle-class black mothers different routes to claiming good black motherhood and ensuring the survival, protection *and* success of their children. As I argue in the preceding chapter, this is expressed in the two approaches adopted by Rebecca and Olive, whose opposing decision to work and mother full-time respectively, are informed by their class position. Olive's rejection of work is made possible by the absence of a particularly fulfilling career, one key marker of working-class status in a contemporary neoliberal context (Christopher, 2015) while Rebecca's decision to work is bolstered by decision to continue the middle-class trajectory that is marked by progressive milestones such as an international master's degree and a well-paying job. This is not to reduce either woman's decision to merely the product of social class pressures but to demonstrate the intersection of classed, raced and

gendered ideologies in shaping black mothers' decision-making and in the kind of resistive self-definitions they create.

These self-definitions suggest new themes of black motherhood that emerge from the context I describe above, where social class has seemingly disappeared as a "central site of analysis" (Tyler, 2008, p. 20) and community has taken on new, expanded meaning. In their unique engagements with AP, the black mothers in this thesis suggest a new form of politics that both accepts the premise of individual responsibility and attempts to extend its benefits to a wider black community. Their complex negotiation of social class is evidence of the tensions and difficulties this form of politics generates and also calls attention to the dangers of neoliberal co-optation. Lorde and Notisha's classed respectability politics represent one such possibility of co-optation, where their middle-class maternal expertise is advanced as an "effective means of combating racism" (Spence, 2012, p. 145) to the exclusion of more collective and politically transformative methods. However, in implicitly identifying their AP-inspired maternal practice as political, the mothers I interviewed can resist co-optation and perhaps offer new models of motherhood and glimpses of alternative futures (McKittrick, 2013) for mothering.

Indeed, attachment parenting may be especially well-suited to resisting co-optation because of the attention it brings to the work of childrearing. Attachment parenting is often practiced on and through the body with breastfeeding, babywearing and bed-sharing each requiring physical and often public displays of maternal practice. This visibility can operate as a site of resistance (Tyler, 2011), where the work of raising children is plainly revealed upon mothers' bodies and for black women, is a particularly effective visual rebounder to stereotypes about black mothers' purported negligence. This style of childrearing marks parenting as *work* and crystallizes the contradiction of insisting on economic productivity while demanding maternal devotion. Visibly displaying the work of mothering also draws attention to the relational aspects of mothering, aspects that sociologist Imogen Tyler (2011) argues "troubles neoliberalism" (p. 31). To focus on mothering as a relationship between mother and child is to emphasize the essential

dependency this relationship is founded upon, a dependency that exposes the fantasy of self-sufficiency at the heart of neoliberal capitalism (Stephens, 2011). This mother-child relationship does not need to exclude others, as some critics suggest (Forna, 2000), but in fact, in the institution of black motherhood, this relationship forms the basis of connection to others, including the larger community (Collins, 2000). Many of the mothers I interviewed use AP in precisely this fashion, centering their individual relationships with their children while attempting to sustain links with a broader black diaspora. Whether their efforts are successful, either at reaching and ensuring change for the wider community or at troubling neoliberalism, is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, I aim to have developed a more complex picture of contemporary motherhood, attending to intersectional realities, than those advanced before.

7.2 Contributions to the field

The increasing attention and significance assigned to the tasks and duties of parenting have generated a host of research studies and projects, captured in the birth of a discipline alternately named motherhood studies (O'Reilly, 2013) or parenting culture studies (Lee et al., 2014). The analysis of intensive mothering is a central feature of this new discipline, with much scholarly work dedicated to examining the phenomenon's appearance in diverse locations and through different parenting philosophies (Hays, 1996; Ennis, 2014; Faircloth, 2013; Fox, 2006; Lareau, 2011). However, this flourishing of scholarship on parenting culture and policy has paid little attention to race (Reynolds, 2016), focusing instead on the interaction between gender and social class in the structuring of parents' experiences (Gillies, 2005; Fox, 2006; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012). This is especially true of attachment parenting; of the few studies that have examined AP as a popular parenting phenomenon (exceptions include Faircloth (2013) and Green & Groves (2008)) even fewer address how race informs both the promotion and experience of the philosophy. At the same time, black feminist theorizing has a long tradition of attending to mothering and motherhood, indeed emphasizing the crucial role played by mothers in black families and communities (Collins, 2000; Forná, 2000; Hill, 2004; McDonald, 1997). In such scholarship, mainstream (white) standards of motherhood are

challenged by the expansion of the role of mothering beyond the nuclear family to include fictive kin and wider communities (Collins, 2000), captured in the concept of community mothering, and by the integration of paid work into black mothers' conception of 'good' mothering (Reynolds, 2001).

While both sets of literature and theorizing have made significant contributions to the contemporary analysis of motherhood, the absence of a sustained critical race analysis in parenting culture studies and the little attention paid to intensive mothering in work exploring black motherhood has resulted in a failure to fully capture the experiences of black mothers today. This thesis has explored some of these experiences that cannot be explained solely by each school of thought and makes an important contribution to closing this gap, especially as it situates engagement with AP within neoliberal frameworks of good parenting that seek to attribute both society's ills and their solutions to the work of childrearing. Contrary to their postracial façade, these frameworks operate on a raced, gendered and classed basis, constructing appropriate childrearing techniques that reflect white, middle-class norms (Hoffmann, 2010; Lareau, 2011) and deploying these techniques in ways that perpetuate existing, but now increasingly overlooked or disguised, inequities. Through the intervention of a black feminist theoretical framework, I attend to black mothers' confrontation of these ideas as they are represented in attachment parenting philosophy. To analyze attachment parenting from the perspective of black mothers is to draw attention to both the material effects of race and racism (in charting the different ways that black mothers develop their parenting) and its discursive capacities and its ability to highlight "the processes by which meaning is constructed" (Lewis, 2000, p. 16). In other words, race provides an essential entry point to the analysis of how ideal parenting subjects and therefore ideal citizens, are produced.

Thus, to examine attachment parenting, not from the perspective of those stereotypically associated with its practice (i.e. white middle-class mothers in the West), but through the experiences of women categorically excluded from dominant notions of 'good' motherhood, reveals the complex relationship between individual parenting style choices

and the structures that govern appropriate childrearing and ideal citizenship. To choose to parent in an attached manner is to echo the prevailing ideologies that construct children as sacred; an especially fraught endeavour for the mothers of children whose sacredness is *not* assured but one that, nonetheless, asserts a right to belonging and citizenship routinely denied to people of colour. In documenting black mothers' engagements with the philosophy, I reveal both the persistence of racial and gender ideologies in constructions of 'good' parenting, especially as such constructions operate in policy and parenting recommendations, as well as mothers' capacity to resist these notions and offer alternative maternal subjectivities that alternately reject and appropriate dominant ideas.

By drawing on both these burgeoning fields of scholarship, I provide an analysis of both attachment parenting and contemporary black mothering that captures the neoliberal commodification of nature, a commodification enhanced by uniquely 'postracial' beliefs about the value and worth of 'nature' and the cultures of those associated with the natural. This is evident in the commercialization of attachment parenting paraphernalia, as expressed in chapter four, where the 'primitive' infant-carrying practices of 'traditional' cultures are re-branded as class-sustaining and status-enhancing parenting tools for middle-class parents in the West. Crucially, this re-branding is then also offered to financially privileged black mothers with the use of 'African' fabrics intended to reaffirm their lost connection to an imagined Africa (as I discuss in chapter five). The emptying out of these cultural signifiers represented in AP joins a long history of colonial practice where the celebration of 'African' and indigenous traditions are detached from the racialized humans who practice them and arrive, transformed, as measures of good motherhood for white, middle-class women. Even so, the failure to carry out these primitive practices is read as a particularly ironic racial failure for black women in the North, understood as cut off from their indigenous practices (the same reasoning used to explain why white European women struggled to give birth in the nineteenth century (Stone, 2009)). I examine black mothers' participation in this narrative not to undermine my claim that the embrace of 'primitive' parenting is a race- and class-sustaining project but rather to reveal the complexities of mothering experiences, especially in these

apparently postracial, postfeminist neoliberal times. The image of black motherhood as community-oriented and invested in paid work outside the home does not ring true for all the women I interviewed, nor does framing them as ideal neoliberal subjects, fully committed to the individualizing, self-responsibilizing paradigm of neoliberal governmentality. It is in this in-between space, where neither field of scholarship has captured their experience, that I locate my analysis.

7.2.1 Neoliberal openings

One of the most significant differences between black feminist scholars such as Collins' (2000) and Forna's (2000) articulations of black motherhood and the experiences examined in this thesis is the rejection of a more community-oriented form of mothering, a form that is often described as quintessentially black or African (Forna, 2000). While some of the women I interviewed referred to church, friendship groups and family members as playing important roles in their wider lives, for most, even those less enthusiastic about AP, their choice of parenting practices largely excluded other people's involvement in raising their children. From the kind of maternal expertise they asserted, often distinguished from and framed as superior to that of their mothers, aunts and sisters, to their approaches to the division of labour in their households in which their partners' involvement was subordinated to mothers' superior abilities, many of the mothers I interviewed favoured individualistic childrearing techniques and affirmed an exclusive bond between mother and child.

The elasticity of community (Collins, 2009) is evident further in the women's claims on belonging which travel almost seamlessly between local, national and global constructions of blackness and are anchored in their approach to parenting. Mothers articulated new visions of community where work for the community translated into promoting AP, as Demita, Eleanor and Lorde wished to do, rather than raising fictive kin as Collins (2000) and hooks (2007) describe. Such women's connection to the black community was of a more ephemeral, philosophical nature involving in many cases, attachment to an imagined Africa, where such parenting practices as babywearing and

extended breastfeeding were apparently ‘normal’. As I explain in chapter five and expand on above, such a view of community is inevitably shaped by the neoliberal context in which such community connections are forged. Constructions of community that center individuals are particularly relevant in neoliberal, ‘postracial’ times as the explanation and solution for persistent inequalities is reduced to individual behaviour (Spence, 2012). As I suggest above, class segregation (attachment parents are disproportionately middle class, as is my sample), geographic mobility and neoliberal ideology combine to disrupt traditional modes of community organizing (McDonald, 1997; Mullings, 2000), creating the conditions under which attachment parenting may appear as a worthwhile, all-encompassing solution to the problems of racialized poverty, discrimination and oppression. The question then shifts from whether breastfeeding may be compatible with shared mothering (as historical evidence from the antebellum South suggests it was, thanks to peer-to-peer wet-nursing among enslaved mothers (West with Knight, 2017)) to how the promotion of breastfeeding might both reinforce individualistic, responsabilizing regimes and provide an avenue for black mothers to claim good motherhood.

By shifting the question in this manner, I contribute to scholarship that considers the effects of neoliberal political rationalities in more complex ways, particularly that which rereads individuals’ negotiation of neoliberal ideas and frames them as neither “cultural dupes” nor “revolutionary characters” (Davids & Willemse, 2014, p. 2; Sa’ar, 2005). I follow Cressida Heyes (2006), who, in her Foucauldian study of Weight Watchers, advocates for a feminist critique of dieting that does more than read women’s participation in the industry as the result of false consciousness (or the production of docile bodies). Instead, she argues that in order to understand the attraction of the weight loss industry, despite mounting evidence of its failures and contradictions, we must attend to the “enabling of new skills and capacities” (2006, p. 128) the discourse of weight loss produces. In particular, she makes two points salient for my analysis: “(a) the unfolding of new forms of knowledge does not necessarily map to freedom; and (b) such forms may in fact represent new strategies of power that are yet harder to identify” (2006, p. 132). In their promotion of attachment parenting, AP enthusiasts and state representatives alike

frame the philosophy as representing both new and old childrearing practices. AP is ‘old’ in its claim to inspiration from ‘ancestral’ ways of being and ‘new’ in its reliance on scientific, especially neuroscientific, evidence that practices such as breastfeeding and skin-to-skin contact are exceedingly beneficial to babies. In the presentation of AP as a new form of knowledge (with its legitimacy bolstered by its ‘oldness’ and therefore ‘trueness’), attachment parents can align themselves with modernity and progress and demonstrate commitment to the broader project of maximizing children’s potential. AP operates along the same lines adopted by Weight Watchers leaders, who emphasized the advantages of the new approaches to weight loss that offered dieters more choice and freedom. Similarly, the Sears claim that their parenting advice is just that, advice, rather than a set of strict rules that dictate parental behaviour. Parents can *choose* to use one or many of the attachment parenting tools the Sears offer and it follows that from choice comes greater freedom. And yet, as Heyes points out and as the AP enthusiasts I interviewed explain, this abundance of apparent choice masks the “narrow[ing of] behavioral options and possibilities for flourishing” (2006, p. 132). Mothers are candid about how difficult this form of parenting is and detail the restrictions it places on their lives:

It’s hard. And it’s hard, too, not having so many rules and schedules because then it’s like maybe he’s not that mature to make the right decisions but at the same time I don’t wanna be that person that dictates “‘cause I’m your mother you have to do this.” I wanna treat him more like an equal kind of thing. But then when he’s not listening it’s hard. It’s hard (Olive, CA, 28-year-old mother of two sons, aged 3 and 2 months).

It doesn’t stop. *chuckles* It’s twenty-four hours. Seven days a week, it does not stop. Sorry. Um, that’s it and I think that’s all-encompassing kind of like I think you can, um...just, it doesn’t end. Not that like you want it to ‘cause that’s like the alternative is what, parenting ending and like you don’t want that to happen but, um, it is, it’s a lot of work and I think again, um, going back to...um, attachment parenting, that is really not just doing it twenty-four hours but doing it

in a way that...you, like, again, this child is in your bed, this child is being on your body, this child is being breastfed like eight or nine times a day. Now, so, like imagine when they were like newborn it was like twenty times a day, um, *chuckles* that is, that's a lot (Tracey, CA, 31-year-old mother of one daughter, aged 5 months).

However, this is not the only work ideologies of dieting, for Heyes, and good parenting, for this thesis, can perform. The enabling of new skills and capacities Heyes identifies “have a resonance and potential that could exceed the regime of normalization that has generated them” (2006, p. 138) and it is precisely this potential that draws my attention. AP offers an opportunity to black mothers; to focus attention on children a ‘postracial’ society has constructed as disposable and beyond redemption. To dismiss their investment in such practices as false consciousness is to miss the potential for resistance and/or alternative modes of mothering contained in their childrearing practice. That is not to suggest that it is not important to identify the ways that AP contributes to self-responsibility and shores up the state’s withdrawal of supportive services for parents but to expand this critique by attending to the avenues AP opens for black mothers and black communities at the height of neoliberal individualism and class polarization.

7.3 Concluding remarks

One of the primary goals of this research has been an examination of attachment parenting as it emerges at this particular socio-historical moment. How can the rise of AP be read as one of many variably successful attempts to resolve the fundamental contradictions of a neoliberal age? What answers does the philosophy offer to manage the competing demands of ensuring a vision of optimal child development tied to 'good' mothering and the economic activation of female citizens? How does it contribute to the requisite erasure of persistent racial, gendered and class inequities? These questions have been addressed through the experiences of black mothers. Living at the intersection of race, gender and social class, black mothers' engagement with AP reveals and complicates the socially constructed 'nature' upon which the philosophy relies and

illustrates the individualizing and responsabilizing work AP performs in its appearances in policy, media and individual mothers' experiences. Their rejections, alterations and embraces of AP offer a complex vision of mothering in the neoliberal states of Britain and Canada, where individual responsibility for economic well-being is heightened for racialized, working-class and other marginalized groups but where such emphasis on the deterministic power of parenting also opens space for black mothers to forge maternal subjectivities that are at once conformist and oppositional. In using (or avoiding) AP, the mothers in this thesis have carved out room for valuing their black children even as doing so involves, at times, conforming to neoliberal models of postracial, responsabilizing citizenship. This tension is captured in Collins' (2000) identification of the negotiation between physical survival and emotional well-being as one of the central tensions characterizing black motherhood. As Collins explains, black mothers balance the often contradictory tasks of teaching their children to navigate institutions that dehumanize them and imbuing their children with oppositional definitions of self that resist this dehumanization (p. 184). Though I do not pretend that these participants' individual decisions and strategies alone can upset the patriarchal, white supremacist, neoliberal order, I argue that through attending to their insights the possibilities for alternative futures (McKittrick, 2013) are laid bare.

In this thesis, I have traced histories of oppression, capturing how historical legacies appear, transformed and renegotiated, in the present (Fassin, 2011). But more than just documenting these enduring threads, I have drawn links between these histories and contemporary experiences of blackness and through such a connection, offer an anticipation of black life (McKittrick, 2013). I examined nineteen black women's experiences of motherhood, informed by traces of historical exploitation as manifested in the three findings that anchor my analysis of black women's mothering in neoliberal contexts. Mothers' claims of expertise, belonging and 'good' mothering are each underlined with long histories of racial oppression, sharpened by the cultural forgetting neoliberal postracial ideology demands. These narratives of maternal experience, however, also offer evidence of resistance and signal future possibilities. It is in the

tension between these two accounts of black mothering, oppositional and oppressed, that my analysis is situated.

My analysis attends to the contextual constraints and opportunities in black women's lived experience of motherhood. Indeed, the thesis is an exercise in situating women's maternal decision-making, practices and experiences within a broader social and political context, a key theme of intersectional analysis (Collins & Bilge, 2016). In each of these chapters, dominant narratives (of appropriate expertise, of rightful belonging, of acceptable divisions of labour) are disrupted by black mothers' articulations of their experiences of and approaches to mothering. The accepted narrative about maternal expertise, as well as the feminist critique which has focused on social class to the exclusion of race, are both challenged by participants' experiences. The dominant narrative about belonging that implies that whiteness is a prerequisite for claiming citizenship and situates black people as outsiders, especially by reference to their belonging elsewhere, is disrupted by women claiming this 'elsewhere' as a means of rootedness and a means of claiming good motherhood and therefore, good citizenship. The narrative of state-funded and endorsed gender equality through parental leave as well as the narrative of work/family balance (a fiction invented to disguise the dominance of work and the preservation of family for only a selected few) is confronted by attending to these women's experiences which highlight the limitations of a tacitly maternalist parental leave regime and the economically oriented imbalance upon which the construction of work/life balance is predicated. In these disruptions, I find not just challenges to accepted explanations of contemporary mothering but suggestions of alternative visions of motherhood, not utopian but signaling a future that holds the realities of racial, gendered and classed oppression in tension with the creative oppositional resistance the experience of oppression produces. This tension is encapsulated in the quote which gives this thesis its title; Tracey's assertion that "black mothers do this *too*." In this "too" I identify recognition (but not acceptance) of the stereotypes that purport to describe black mothering *in order* to refute and resist them. The "too" demands black women's inclusion in a construction of good motherhood that

has long excluded them and in such an inclusion, good motherhood is transformed, its boundaries are expanded and its foundational principles rocked. And it is in this destabilization (O'Reilly, 2004) that I suggest the possibility of something more, a glimpse or anticipation of a different vision of mothering.

7.3.1 Future directions and limitations

My aim in this thesis has never been to deride attachment parenting (nor to promote it, as some participants may have hoped) but instead to locate the philosophy, and its recent explosion in popularity, in a broader history and context of scientific expertise, increasingly altered by reference to 'nature' and a nostalgia for the unsullied past (Jensen & Tyler, 2012), and neoliberal postracialism that disguises the racial features of this nostalgia and construction of 'nature' and holds individual women responsible for managing the ubiquitous risks facing their children. By turning to and beginning with the experiences of black mothers engaged in the work of childrearing, my analysis of attachment parenting is rooted in lived experience, attends to the commonalities in black mothers' experiences as well as the differences, and traces the different dimensions that govern 'good' parenting from policy guidance to interpersonal interactions between mothers and healthcare workers and suggests alternative futures (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). It is in these alternative futures that opportunities for future research present themselves; while this research has considered mothering through the experiences of black mothers, particularly attending to the intersection of race, gender and social class in their maternal practice, an analysis that centers other, differently marginalized mothers or focuses on intersections I have not had the room to consider here, such as sexual orientation and disability, may highlight different nodes of resistance/conformity that offer alternative maternal futures. For attachment parenting in particular, an analysis of the experiences of black mothers in the Global South would directly address and problematize the philosophy's Western proponents' appropriation and objectification of 'African' parenting traditions. Such a project could directly challenge the Sears' assumed ownership of AP and facilitate a more complex view of an attached style of parenting situated in specific Global South contexts.

The study has two key limitations. The first, is the size of the sample. While this small size facilitates depth of analysis, it cannot tell us about the broader maternal practices of contemporary black mothers and the extent to which, if any, AP features in these practices. The examination of AP from the perspective of mothers who explicitly reject AP, represented here, to a limited extent, by Angela and Claudia, but embrace some of its practices regardless would effectively demonstrate the extent to which AP has entered mainstream mothering ideology and facilitate a different view of the philosophy. Further research that specifically addresses black attachment parents could further complicate my conclusions. Scholars have paid little attention to black attachment parents. While my recruitment struggles (and those of, for example, Bobel (2002)) suggest that this inattention may be the result of a small study population, further exploratory and perhaps quantitative research into the experiences of black attachment parents is necessary to establish the basic facts, including the extent of attachment parenting practice among black communities, the specific practices black attachment parents engage in and the different ways particular national contexts influence practice (for example, though I did not have the space to explore it here, I noted that at least two participants in Canada mentioned the use of cloth nappies or diapers as part of AP practice but this was not mentioned at all in the UK). The limitations of the sample are also apparent in the participants' concentration in southern Ontario and the south of England. I suggest that there may be new insights to be gained from research conducted in other parts of Canada and the UK, particularly as they reflect the broader racial demographics in both countries.

The second limitation is related to where participants were recruited from. While the internet clearly plays an important role in both the communication of and resistance to dominant parenting ideologies, that such a significant proportion of the study sample were recruited online could indicate that the study's conclusions reflect the experiences of specific kinds of black mothers, in particular, those participants who identify themselves as 'different' from the norm and were already well-versed in talking about and naming themselves as attachment or 'natural' parents. These might have class implications, as Barbara suggested: "my feeling is almost having the luxury of defining

your style of parenting is quite a kinda middle-class endeavour.” Other participants suggested that access to information about AP or more ‘permissive’ styles of parenting was limited and therefore particularly excluded poor, racialized parents:

It’s the information, the access to it and yeah, the availability of it to them. And so...they’re trying their best to make more baby friendly hospitals where formula companies are not allowed to distribute information in hospitals and that’s helping but unless you give birth at a baby friendly hospital you don’t get that and those are some of the bigger or better hospitals which most people don’t live near, most people of colour don’t live near because that’s right downtown and it’s super expensive in those condos so they don’t live near those hospitals (Lorde, CA, 33-year-old mother of two sons, aged 4 and 2 and expecting a third).

More research that specifically recruits poor and working-class parents could yield fruitful analysis about the contemporary experience of black motherhood. It may also complicate the departure from community-oriented living and mothering I describe here. If I had recruited from community organizations and churches, the mothers’ descriptions of their childrearing strategies might draw more closely from these existing networks.

7.3.2 Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to articulate the numerous strategies black mothers employ to ensure their children’s survival. I have expanded the traditional narrative of ‘risk’ understood to shape all parents’ experiences (Hoffman, 2010) to document the specific risks faced by black children and the sometimes contradictory methods their mothers adopt to protect them from said risks. However, to focus only on these strategies of survival would not tell the complete story of black women’s maternal practice. The constructions of black children as disposable and of their mothers as failures are “neither uncontested nor completely efficient” (Gilroy, 1987, p. 153). Black mothers resist these and other oppressive representations of their lives by claiming superior maternal expertise, by anchoring their mothering in a “distinct cultural heritage” (Taylor, 1998, p. 234), by highlighting the transformative capacity of their maternal

bodies, by staying home when policy and discourse demands that they work and by working when dominant stereotypes depict them as lazy. More than raising children who survive, which is, in itself, a radical act, black mothers strive to strike a balance between physical survival and emotional strength (Collins, 2000) and, in doing so, alter the norms and discourses that determine the racial and classed (and gendered) boundaries of neoliberal success. Black mothers do more than just prepare their children to survive the status quo, their resistive efforts challenge it, opening space for another way. The underlying message many black mothers deliver is not just that black children can succeed ‘no matter what’ but teach children that the boundaries of success are warped (as noted by Florynce) and that the institutions society has allegedly created to help all citizens, discriminate on racial grounds (as Lorde reported). In their recognition of and challenge to these realities, black mothers gesture towards alternative futures built from these tensions, between freedom from racial oppression and recognition that one’s subjectivity is, in part, borne of resistance to this oppression, what McKittrick (2013) describes as

a conception...imbued with a narrative of black history that is neither celebratory nor dissident but rooted in an articulation of...life that accepts that relations of violence and domination have made our existence and presence in the Americas possible as it recasts this knowledge to envision an alternative future (p. 14).

McKittrick draws attention to the continuities between the plantation and contemporary articulations of “antiblack violence and death” but crucially, suggests the possibility of something more; the scope to “notice” spaces of resistance, survival and the potential for black life (pp. 2-3). In her conceptualization of the plantation as representing both the site of black death and the anticipation of black life, McKittrick provides the theoretical room for an analysis of black motherhood that is more than just a catalogue of the oppressions visited upon black women’s bodies. The anticipation McKittrick identifies is evident in black mothers’ various modes of resistance, especially as they attempt to articulate a resistive vision of good mothering and suggest an ‘alternative future.’ This future (or futures, as I suggest) does not offer a single view of what a transformation in

discrimination and oppression might look like but instead alludes to a multiplicity of maternal subjectivities and embodiments of mothering that emerges from these tensions of the in between. While these futures may not be fully articulated, they ask critical questions about taken-for-granted aspects of contemporary mothering ideology; they uncover and begin to unpick the tangle of contradictions at the heart of much of the current policy guidance about appropriate childrearing, especially the work such guidance performs to uphold existing gender, race and class hierarchies. The questions I ask about parental expertise, citizenship and parental leave, all crucial components in the larger construct of 'good' mothering, are contemplated and complicated through black mothers' experiences and it is through the lens of their perspectives that the breaches in this construction are exposed. In their narratives, I highlight small, limited but potentially significant opportunities for disruption and resistance and it is in these instances that I identify the possibility of alternative ways of organizing, both in terms of childrearing policies and in the lived experience of motherhood.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment materials

Recruitment flyer:

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO RESEARCH PROJECT

Race and AP: Black women's experiences of attachment parenting in a neoliberal context

Are you a black mother with a child (or children) under age five?

Do you know about and/or practice attachment parenting?

You are invited to participate in a research project about black women's experiences of attachment parenting. The purpose of the study is to understand how race and class affect how society thinks of good mothering.

You're eligible to participate if you:

- Self-identify as a black woman,
- Have at least one child aged five or under, and
- Have heard of or practice attachment parenting

Participation involves one face-to-face, in-depth interview at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview should not take longer than 90 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked to describe your experiences and thoughts about motherhood and attachment parenting.

Small compensation will be provided.

If you have any questions or you are interested in participating, please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr Erica Lawson at X or Patricia Hamilton at X. Thank you!

Online/email script for recruitment:

Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research on motherhood

Title of study: Race and AP: Black women's experiences of attachment parenting in a neoliberal context

My name is Patricia Hamilton and I'm a PhD student. I'm conducting a research project about black mothers' experiences of attachment parenting and I'm looking for participants. The purpose of the study is to understand how race and class affect how society thinks of good mothering.

You're eligible to participate if you:

- Self-identify as a black woman,
- Have at least one child aged five or under, and
- Have heard of or practice attachment parenting

Participation involves one face-to-face, in-depth interview at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview should not take longer than 90 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked to describe your experiences and thoughts about motherhood and attachment parenting.

Small compensation will be provided.

If you'd like to know more or are interested in participating, please email me at X or send me a message.

Thank you!

Appendix B: Letter of information and consent form

Project Title: Race and AP: Black women’s experiences of attachment parenting in a neoliberal context

Principal Investigator:

Erica Lawson, PhD, Women’s Studies and Feminist Research, University of Western Ontario

Financial support for this research project was provided by the Ontario Trillium Scholarship.

Letter of Information

1. Invitation to Participate

This is an invitation to participate in a research study on black mothers’ experiences of attachment parenting. You are being invited to participate in this study because you responded to a request for participants.

2. Purpose of the Letter

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information about the study, enabling you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

3. Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to examine black mothers’ experiences with attachment parenting, a philosophy based on maintaining strong attachment between parent and child. The study aims to understand how race and class shape “good mothering” for black women. To do this, we will look at how black women think about and practice attachment parenting.

4. Inclusion Criteria

Individuals who:

- Self-identify as black women,
- Have at least one child aged five or under, and
- Have heard of or practice attachment parenting

are eligible to participate in this study.

5. Exclusion Criteria

Individuals who do not identify as black, whose youngest (or only) child is older than five years of age, who have no familiarity with attachment parenting are not eligible to participate in this study.

6. Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to contact the researchers to arrange the interview, at a time and place that is convenient for you. During the interview you will be asked questions about your experiences of and thoughts about motherhood. It is anticipated that the interview will take no longer than 90 minutes. You will be offered the choice to have the interview audio-recorded. If you do not consent to be audio-recorded, you can still participate in the study. There will be fifteen local participants and thirty total participants.

7. Possible Risks and Harms

It is possible that you might find discussing your personal experiences of mothering emotionally distressful or upsetting. If this happens, a list of support services will be provided to you.

8. Possible Benefits

You may not directly benefit from participating in this study but the information gathered may provide benefits to society as a whole. These include the growth of research that deals with race and motherhood and the discovery of information that might lead to improvements in public policy for services delivered to women and children.

9. Compensation

At the beginning of the interview, you will receive £10/\$15 for your time and participation.

10. Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future.

11. Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. The data will be stored in a locked office on the University of Western Ontario campus. If the results are published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed from our database and destroyed.

Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

12. Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Dr Erica Lawson and Patricia Hamilton

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics

13. Publication

If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact Patricia Hamilton

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Consent Form

Project Title: Race and AP: Black women's experiences of attachment parenting in a neoliberal context

Study Investigator's Name: Dr Erica Lawson and Patricia Hamilton

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to have my interview audio-recorded.

Participant's Name (please print):

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Demographic information form

Interviewee (pseudonym): _____

Age: _____

Place of birth: _____

If your place of birth is not Canada, how long have you lived in Canada?

Race/ethnicity/how would you describe your racial or ethnic identity?

Marital status: _____

Highest level of education: _____

Occupation: _____

How would you identify your class?

Number and ages of children:

Appendix D: Interview guide

Interviewee (pseudonym): _____

Date: _____

Hello X. Thank you for agreeing to talk to me today, your participation in this project is much appreciated. As you know from the letter of information, the purpose of this research project is to find out more about how black mothers experience attachment parenting. I've interviewed women in the UK and now I'm focused on interviewing in Canada, asking them the same sort of questions I'm about to ask you. I am conducting this research to fulfil the requirements of my PhD program. After I've finished conducting all the interviews, I'm going to write my thesis which will contain my analysis of these interviews. I intend to present this work at conferences and to publish articles drawing from this analysis.

In the months following our interview, I will give you a copy of your interview transcript. At this stage, you will have the opportunity to withdraw your consent. After five years, your transcript and personal information form will be deleted.

You don't have to answer any questions you prefer not to and you can end the interview at any time. You may also withdraw your participation at any time after the interview.

Your identity will be kept confidential; identifying information about you will only be accessed by me or my supervisor and will not be linked to the responses you give. In order to keep your identity confidential, you will be assigned a pseudonym.

The point of this kind of research interview is to learn from you. There are no right or wrong answers. My aim is to get to know your experience so please feel free to share any thoughts or observations you may have.

Research Questions

- How is attachment parenting and intensive mothering taken up and promoted by the British and Canadian states?
- How do black women in the UK and Canada define and practice attachment parenting in a neoliberal context?
- What can black women's experiences tell us about the way race, gender and class shape the promotion of intensive mothering? How do black women use the discourse of intensive mothering creatively?
- How do these experiences influence how women manage neoliberal policies imposed by the state?

Interview questions

Opening questions

1. To start, can you tell me a little bit about yourself and what a typical day looks like for you?

Understandings and definitions of attachment parenting

2. What is your understanding of attachment parenting? How would you define it?
 - a. What have you heard about it?
 - b. When did you first hear about it?
 - c. Where/from who have you heard about it?
 - d. Probe: the baby Bs/the seven attachment tools; birth bonding (natural birth), (extended) breastfeeding, babywearing, bedsharing/co-sleeping, belief in baby's cries, balance and boundaries, beware of baby trainers (cry it out etc.).

Practices of AP

3. In what ways, if at all, do you practice AP in your everyday life?
4. What principles/tools of AP do you follow and not follow? Why?
5. Have you read any Sears books? Have you ever been interested in attending AP meetings or joining AP discussion forums?

Opinions about AP

6. What does the typical AP parent look like?
7. Do you think attachment parenting is popular? What makes it popular/unpopular?
8. What do you think about AP? Attachment parenting is sometimes described as the 'natural' way to parent. What do you think?

Experiences of Mothering/Parenting

9. How would you describe your experience of motherhood/parenthood? What does motherhood/parenthood mean to you?
10. Tell me about your parenting style/philosophy. Do you have one? How would you describe it?
11. How would you describe the division of parenting labour between yourself and your partner?
12. What pressures do you face as a mother/parent?
13. What is the most difficult part of being a mother/parent? What is the easiest part?
14. What, if anything, would make mothering/parenting easier for you?
15. Do you look for/read parenting advice? Where? Do you find it useful? (Probe: Magazines? Books? Family or friends? The internet? The government?)
16. Have you read any parenting books? Which ones?
17. Can you describe a time you felt judged as a mother/parent? What happened? What was that like? By whom?
18. Do you feel responsible for your children's success?
19. What role/s if any do you think the government has or should have in raising children? How?
20. How do you think the experience of being a mother today is different from how it used to be twenty years ago? What about in the 1950s?
21. Is your experience of motherhood different from your own mother/parent's?
22. How is AP similar to or different from how you were raised?
23. In what ways, if at all, has your parenting been informed by race?

Constructions of 'good' and 'bad' motherhood

24. What is expected of mothers these days?
25. How would you describe a 'good' mother?
 - a. What does a 'good' mother look like to you?
 - b. What does a 'good' mother do?
 - c. What makes you say that?
26. How would you describe a 'bad' mother? What does she look like and do?
27. In what ways is AP compatible and incompatible with your definition of 'good' mothering/parenting?

Closing questions

28. If you could change anything about motherhood/parenthood, what would it be?
29. Is there anything you would like to add that you did not get a chance to talk about and that you think is important to this study?

30. Would you be willing to have a follow-up interview at some point? Most likely via Skype?
31. Do you have any suggestions about where I could recruit further participants?

Appendix E: Sample codes

UK code	CA code	Theme
75% AP	Accepting that childcare cannot replicate mother care	AP is good mothering Balancing work and parenthood Dividing parenting labour
A good start is no guarantee	Accepting that you can't protect child all the time	Early parenting as crucial Risk
Absent parents have too many rights	Access to information	Access to information Dividing parenting labour
Access to information	Access to money	Access to information Expertise Class
Active children	Access to technology	Children's behaviour Class
Adjusting to maternity leave	Acknowledging privilege	Balancing work and parenthood Class

Appendix F: Ethics approval



**Western
Research**

Research Ethics

Western University Health Science Research Ethics Board NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Prof. Erica Lawson

Department & Institution: Arts and Humanities/Women's Studies and Feminist Research, Western University

NMREB File Number: 106090

Study Title: Race and AP: Black women's experiences of attachment parenting in a neoliberal context

Sponsor: Ontario Trillium Foundation

NMREB Initial Approval Date: February 23, 2015

NMREB Expiry Date: February 23, 2016

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol		2015/01/19
Recruitment Items		2015/01/19
Letter of Information & Consent	UK	2015/01/19
Letter of Information & Consent	Canada	2015/01/19
Instruments	Canada: Interview Guide	2015/01/19
Instruments	UK: Interview Guide	2015/01/19
Data Collection Form/Case Report Form	Canada: Demographic Information	2015/01/30
Data Collection Form/Case Report Form	UK: Demographic Information UK	2015/01/30
Other	Master Log	2015/01/30

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.



This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

Curriculum Vitae

- Name:** Patricia Hamilton
- Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** University of the Witwatersrand
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2007-2010 B.A. Hons English and Sociology
- University of Sussex
Brighton, England, United Kingdom
2011-2012 M.A. Gender Studies
- The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2013-2017 Ph.D. Women's Studies and Feminist Research
- Honours and Awards:** Commonwealth Scholarship
2011-2012
- Ontario Trillium Scholarship
2013-2017
- Related Work Experience** Tutor
University of the Witwatersrand
2010-2011, 2013
- Teaching Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2013-2016
- Publications:**
Hamilton, Patricia. (2016). The 'good' attached mother: An analysis of postmaternal and postracial thinking in birth and breastfeeding policy in neoliberal Britain. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 31(90), 410-431.