

"Kusinda kwehlela": The collision of work faced by low-income employed mothers: in urban and rural KwaZulu-Natal.

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# INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- The different experiences of working women during apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa
- The implications of women entering the labour force post-apartheid
  - The feminization of labour
    - Low paid
    - Precarious
    - Low skilled
  - The home structure and reproductive work vs productive work
  - Childcare work the responsibility of women even when employed

The study aimed to understand the lived realities of low-income working mothers And the implications on the childcare strategies they employ.



#### THE STUDY SITES

- KwaZulu-Natal
  - Two Township sites:
    - Umlazi
    - Sundumbili
  - Two Rural sites:
    - Macambini
    - KwaNdaya
- The purpose of selecting these sites was to capture the experiences of low-income employed mothers in an urban townships, peri-urban township and rural areas.
- To grasp whether space affects the choices made when it comes to childcare, given the significantly different geographical positioning of these areas and historical context.



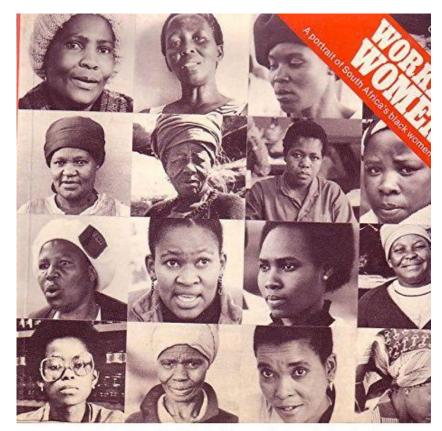
### **METHODOLOGY**

- Qualitative methods used to:
  - Explore the choices of low-income employed mothers in relation to childcare.
  - Describe the involvement of kin in childcare.
  - Explore the experience in rural and urban areas of KZN (in relation to childcare)
- Sampling and Study Participants
  - N=20 mothers equally distributed across the study sites
  - The sampling criteria and definition of low-income and employed, followed the child support grant criteria (the year this study commenced < 36 000 and < 72 000 p/a)
- Data collected using semi-structured interviews over a two-year period
  - The topics covered included: understanding biographical backgrounds and circumstances, childcare options utilised ,the role played by paternal/maternal kin in childcare, work experiences, economic and social constraints and the balancing of work and domestic/care responsibilities

### LITERATURE

#### The economy of paid work, unpaid work and cognitive work

- The sexual division of paid and unpaid labour
- Productive (market) and Reproductive (household) work and the "Second Shift" women work at home
- How the 'double burden' becomes a 'triple burden' when the cognitive work done by women is incorporated.
- The nature of Cognitive labour

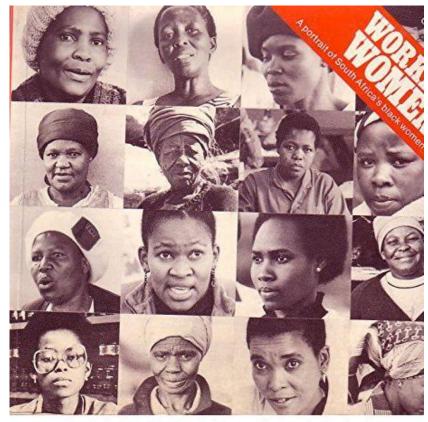


A Portrait of South Africa's Women Workers by Lesley Lawson

### LITERATURE

#### **Women and Social Reproduction**

- Includes the production of the means of subsistence (clothing, shelter, and food) which is necessary for production
- AND the production of human beings and the propagation of the species
- Feminisation of labour
- The lack of adequate care policy
- The location of social reproduction in its 'natural' place and the 'privatisation' of social reproduction relies on the unpaid work of household members, the commercialisation of reproductive needs, or both.



A Portrait of South Africa's Women Workers by Lesley Lawson

### LITERATURE

#### **Women and Social reproduction**

- Even where the working mothers are absent, the care of the children of employed mothers often become relegated to the remaining female household members
- Essentially, the black working-class households are sites of a crisis of social reproduction in contemporary South Africa, and the black working-class women are the shock absorbers of the crisis.
- The South African case of low-income mothers, childcare policy and social reproduction is interesting because it reflects on the experiences of disadvantaged women in townships and rural areas of post-apartheid South Africa, whose burden and responsibilities persist within their family and at work.

## **FINDINGS**

Trying to describe and understand the choices of low-income employed mothers pertaining to childcare the study found:

Paid, unpaid and cognitive work: the collision faced by women

- The concept of care in the household involves a range of tasks involving financial provision, and physical and emotional labour.
- Mothers did the **balancing act** of paid work, unpaid work and cognitive work to ensure that their children were receiving decent care and were living decent lives.
- Paid work refers to **the low-income employment** the mothers were participants of (as cleaners, domestic workers, cashiers and hairdressers).
- There is then the cognitive work the mothers perform.
- These forms of work are particularly more difficult for mothers in the low-income setting because they are performing this work with scarce resources and support.

## **FINDINGS**

- Women spend disproportionately more time on unpaid care work than men and spend an important part of their day on meeting the expectations of their domestic and reproductive roles.
- The fatiguing collision between paid, unpaid and cognitive work.

"When looking at my day and the household work and work I am employed to do, my working day starts when she wakes up and ends when she retires to bed in the evening." - Gabisile

### **FINDINGS**

#### More work: chasing money and involvement

- Strained relationship with the father
  - The fathers have exempted themselves from their responsibilities of fatherhood.
  - The mothers have an added labour of chasing fathers for involvement and participation
- Mothers are left with the sole responsibility of providing care for the children, financially and otherwise such as organising childcare arrangements.
- These cases depict that, indeed, cognitive labour is gendered as women in this study perform most, if not all, the cognitive labour regarding childcare.

