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Changing Motherhood in the South African Middle-Class Context

Rachel Zaidman Mograbi[1], Katherine Bain[2], and Edmarie Pretorius[1]

Abstract

Parenting has been found to be highly contextually and culturally determined and there have been calls to research parenting within culture as it is lived. Due to changing social and economic factors, middle-class South African mothers face unique challenges in relation to the navigation of culture and class in child-rearing. Foregrounding the complexity of acculturation, this paper uses social constructionist theory in the analysis of maternal narratives and responses to video-recordings of their interaction with their infants, of a group of middle-class South African mothers from various cultural and racial groups, with an aim to understanding how mothering is changing amongst middle-class South African mothers. The findings suggest that acculturation is complex and influenced by a combination of socioeconomic status, geographical location, contact with other cultural groups and personal emotional experiences of having been parented within a particular culture.

Keywords

attachment, maternal mental health, acculturation, infant mental health, culture

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Introduction

Motherhood in South Africa, as in many other contexts, is considered 'disrupted'. Many mothers are Black within a society where race is strongly associated with previous social and economic disadvantage, function within patriarchal cultures, and as a result of changing gender roles and historical and current social and economic factors, many mothers are either required to or choose to fulfil dual roles as primary breadwinners and caretakers (Maqubela, 2016a; Spjeldnaes, 2021). Changes in mothering in South Africa have been noted, and while society's cultural constructions of motherhood continue to shape the confines of 'acceptable' mothering, the ways that mothers choose to perform motherhood simultaneously shape and shift these cultural constructions (Moore, 2013; Roman et al., 2016).

The middle class in South Africa has become more racially diverse in the past three decades, alongside high levels of migration, urbanisation and Westernisation, and these mothers face unique challenges in relation to the navigation of culture and class in child-rearing (Igani, 2017; Maqubela, 2016a). Although the influence of the broader developmental context on parenting is coming into focus, there is insufficient cross-cultural research in parenting (Keller, 2015; Mesman et al., 2016). This is problematic as parenting has been found to be highly contextually and culturally determined and recognition of cultural diversity is recommended (Bornstein, 2012; Dawson et al., 2021; Keller, 2018). There have been calls to research parenting within culture as it is lived (Coll & Magnuson, 2000).

While we know that motherhood is changing, we do not have sufficient information as to how and why these shifts are occurring, especially within multi-cultural, African contexts. Using case study methodology, this paper examines the experiences of a group of middle-class South African mothers, foregrounding the complexity of acculturation, and answering the question: How is mothering changing amongst middle-class South African mothers?

Mothering in South Africa

Mothering in South Africa is shaped by a number of intersecting factors which include race, culture, class, colonialism, political change and the urban-rural divide (Moore, 2013; Walker, 1995). The transition from apartheid to democracy has led to educational, economic, employment, class and geographical mobility, changing the face of motherhood in South Africa (Seekings & Nattrass, 2008; Southhall, 2016). Increased urbanisation, social mobility and the rise of the Black middle class has led to shifts in mothering practices, often in response to more access to information (Maqubela, 2016a). In South Africa, like many other countries, the caregiver role has adapted for both married and unmarried mothers, to combine both the roles of carer and

provider for their children (Magwaza, 2003). The relationship between marriage and motherhood has changed in that most African women today want to achieve certain goals before marriage and there is a strong focus on high educational attainment and financial independence (Moore, 2013). Many women find themselves more financially empowered than their mothers were, but struggling in a workforce that is still predominantly male dominated and simultaneously carrying most of the demands of the household (Maqubela, 2016a). These changing gender roles for women are accompanied by changing gender roles for men, and these shifts undoubtably influence parenting roles. In South Africa, research has focused on the country's high levels of absent or non-involved biological fathers, high levels of violence against women and children, and issues of child support (Van den Berg et al., 2021). However, research in Western contexts has shown a pattern of increasing paternal involvement (Combs-Orme & Renkert, 2009). Fathers are being called on to be nurturing towards their infants and take an active role in caregiving (Combs-Orme & Renkert, 2009). These shifts towards more positive father involvement have also been reported in some South African studies, where fathers are also choosing to perform fatherhood in more active ways (Van den Berg et al., 2021). It is clear that mothering in South Africa is a site of transition where mothers are negotiating issues of culture, ethnicity, class and education.

Culture and Parenting in South Africa

Coll and Magnuson (2000) indicate the link between the concepts *culture* and *ethnicity* in that ethnicity refers to 'a group defined by a common nationality, culture, or language', whereas culture refers to 'a distinct system of meaning or a cognitive schema that is shared by a group of people … learned, shared and transmitted generationally within a population' (p. 97). Both culture and ethnicity influence people's way of life and behaviour patterns, including parenting, and are given power by values and beliefs that are put into action by means of daily interactions with people in the community (Bornstein, 2012; Coll & Magnuson, 2000; Louw et al., 2014). Parents play a large role in the intergenerational transmission of culture, and thus, how it is shaped and changed over generations; culture is continuously supplemented by the individual cognitions of parents, which govern their beliefs, values, goals and attitudes about parenting, and specific individualised cultural information is transmitted across generations (Bornstein, 2012). Parenting norms have been found to differ in varying cultural contexts and researchers have found a complex, mutually influential relationship between the sociocultural context and personal parental cognition (Bornstein, 2012; Bornstein & Lansford, 2010). Enculturation occurs as parenting behaviours, values and beliefs are

transmitted inter-generationally and learned, and both parents and children select, edit and refashion cultural information (Bornstein, 2019).

South Africa has four main population groups: Black African (81.6% of the total population), Coloured/Mixed race (8.8%), White (7.6%) and Indian/Asian (2.5%) (Statistics South Africa, 2022). However, with 11 official languages in South Africa, there is much cultural variation within these ethnic groupings. Rich and varied cultural traditions exist, influenced by different traditional ancestral and religious beliefs. South Africa is also home to hundreds of thousands of migrants from other African countries, each with their own cultural beliefs and practices (Trimikliniotis et al., 2008). It is therefore unsurprising that changes to culture and parenting goals and behaviours have been documented in South Africa across generations (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999; Frizelle & Kell, 2010; Moore, 2013). As people from varying cultures come into contact, acculturation occurs, where individuals choose what to maintain from their culture/s of origin and what to adopt from the 'new' cultures (Coll & Magnuson, 2000). Particular processes such as urbanisation, education and exposure to media have an impact on acculturation (Polek, 2007).

Historically, the cross-cultural psychology and parenting literatures have tended to utilise cultural dichotomies (i.e. Western vs. non-Western, individualism vs. collectivism, etc.) to describe variations in cultural models of parenting and child development (Huijbregts et al., 2009; Yaman et al., 2010). From this perspective, the Black African population in South Africa is considered to adopt an Afrocentric worldview and is considered to ascribe to collectivist principles (Eaton & Louw, 2000; Thabede, 2008). Indian and Coloured population groups in South Africa are also considered to be predominantly collectivist in orientation, but perhaps to a slightly lesser degree. The White population group is considered to follow more Eurocentric worldviews and ascribe to more individualistic principles (Eaton & Louw, 2000). The individualist versus collectivist culture binary is also understood as an autonomous versus a relatedness cultural orientation, or an independence-interdependence dichotomy (Adams et al., 2012; Mesman et al., 2016).

Broadly speaking, more authoritative parenting styles have been associated with individualist or autonomous orientations found in Eurocentric communities (Roman et al., 2016). In individualist cultures, an individual is favoured more than a group and parenting is focused on helping a child develop psychological independence and individual achievements (Mesman et al., 2016). This aligns with an authoritative style of parenting, which is characterised by high levels of face-to-face contact and verbal communication. In collectivist cultures, the group is favoured over the individual and parenting is focused on developing social relations between people (Mesman et al., 2016; Yaman et al., 2010). Authoritarian parenting practices that feature

higher levels of control over children and emphasis on obedience have been associated with collectivist cultures (Roman, 2013).

This binary system of classification between individualist and collectivist orientations has, however, been critiqued for generalisation and a lack of consideration of the effects of factors that are leading to increased contact and mixing of cultural groups, such as the internet, increasing global migration, acculturation and cultural assimilation (Bhavnagri & Gonzalez-Mena, 1997; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Mpofu, 2002). It has even been stated that 'in an increasingly interconnected world society, the concept of independent, coherent, and stable cultures becomes increasingly irrelevant' (Hermans & Kempen, 1998, p. 1111). Rather, it has been proposed that individualism and collectivism should 'neither be conceived as a dichotomy, nor as mutually exclusive and opposing systems of ideas, but as graded, interrelated, and multidimensional' (Huijbregts et al., 2009, p. 234). Thus, as inter-cultural contact has increased there is evidence of the selective maintenance of some cultural practices, and modification and alteration of others (Bhavnagri & Gonzalez-Mena, 1997). In South Africa, many individuals effectively operate across multiple cultures. Within this variation and flux, 'the variation across ethnic groups is much too complicated to be captured by the simple independence-interdependence dichotomy' (Adams et al., 2012, p. 385) and recent studies have found individualistic self-definitions to be prevalent in all ethnic groups and shifts from authoritarian parenting to more authoritative parenting styles across ethnic groups in South African parents have been reported (Roman, 2013; Roman et al., 2016).

Lastly, it is important to note that trauma has also been shown to influence parenting (De Carli et al., 2018). Parenting styles are often transmitted from generation to generation; thus, how a mother parents her children is influenced by her past experiences of having been mothered (Kerr & Capaldi, 2019). These experiences are embedded in the cultural and contextual circumstances of her past – and her current experiences of mothering which are also embedded within a particular context and culture (Dawson, 2022). The intergenerational transmission of trauma is understood to occur through a process in which parental distress has an effect on emotional regulation and attention, which in turn, has an impact on parental sensitive responsiveness, resulting in experiences of distress for children (Kerr & Capaldi, 2019). Notably, the influence of trauma in parenting has been found to occur most often outside of conscious awareness and is thus more readily identifiable in embodied interaction (Dawson & Bain, 2021; Shai et al., 2017).

Methods

A qualitative approach using a case study design was chosen for this study. Case study research is appropriate when examining complex, real-life

processes in-depth (Noor, 2008). Case study research values and encourages the subjective human creation of meaning (Nieuwenhuis, 2020; Yin, 2014). Racial and ethnic complexity can pose methodological problems when studying culture and customs (Afolayan, 2004). A multiple case study design allowed for in-depth inquiry and analysis of participants' subjective experiences of motherhood within their particular cultural and contextual circumstances, acknowledging that individuals' experiences of motherhood and their culture are not uniform but rather experienced within unique combinations of relationships within particular contexts, communities and family systems, all of which contribute to how culture is represented internally. In addition, a multiple case study design allowed the researchers to analyse each case and across cases (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Ethics clearance for the study was granted through the Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) at the University of the Witwatersrand. Anonymity has been ensured in the reporting of the findings using pseudonyms. Participants included six mothers from varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds who gave their written informed consent to participate in the study. They were recruited from a local Johannesburg day care facility in a middle-class suburb.

The data collection process involved two 40- to 60-minute semi-structured interviews, with a 20-minute video-recorded interaction session in-between interviews. With the participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded and the interaction between mother and infant was video-recorded. Semi-structured interviews were deemed most suitable as they provide focus on the topic area, but allow for more spontaneous, sometimes unexpected material to emerge (Adams, 2015; Dejonckheer & Vaughn, 2019). The semi-structured interviews included open-ended questions like, 'Please tell me a bit about what being a mother has been like for you? How do you think culture has influenced your mothering?', and flowed based on the narrative provided by participant. The interviewer also provided informal prompts for clarification. The video-recorded session, where the participants were requested to interact with their infant, 'as you usually do', on a mat with some age-appropriate toys provided, took place directly after the first interview. While the first interview invited mothers to speak about their experiences of mothering within their particular cultural and contextual circumstances, the second interview took place approximately two to three weeks later and involved clarification around topics raised in the first interview and joint video-watching of particular moments of video-recorded interaction with reflection around these moments. The excerpts or 'moments' to be watched together with the mother were chosen by the research team and included moments of heightened emotion, both positive and negative. Examples of these moments included a time where a mother and infant were delighting in playing with a mirror together and the mother spontaneously swapped languages, or where a mother was a little rough and controlling in her removal of her phone from her infant after having

encouraged her to dance to music playing on the phone. While co-watching, the interviewer expressed curiosity about the mother's thoughts when watching the video-recording. This allowed for deeper reflection on the mothers' behavioural motivations, which are underpinned by her perceptions of her infant and her emotional responses to this (Dawson & Bain, 2021; Kennedy et al., 2017). The second interviews also contributed to the rigour of the study as understandings could be clarified with the participants.

Social constructionist theory was chosen as the lens through which to analyse the narratives. Although social constructionism has been critiqued for relegating personal subjectivity to the margins, it draws attention to the role of the social in meaning-making processes (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). An awareness that meaning is influenced by both the personal and the social allowed for exploration of the intersections of the social and the personal in the participants' narratives and interactions. The transcribed narratives of the initial interviews and conversations while co-watching the video-recorded interactions were analysed using an interpretive thematic analysis from a social constructionist approach that paid particular attention to the discourses of parenting that were drawn upon by participants and areas of transition/shift in parenting styles that participants had chosen to make (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This analysis was conducted within each case initially, and information relating to the focus of the study was extracted and written into a brief vignette. Analysis across cases was then done in order to identify any shared experiences. Particular attention was paid to any decisions to continue or discontinue culturally learned/endorsed practices. This allowed for parenting shifts that were emerging across the group of mothers to be identified. Specifically, the researchers looked for relationships among the data collected that formed a coherent pattern. From these, logical arguments were made that captured the overall narrative of the data. The researchers agreed on the themes that allowed for the most suitable interpretation of the data in relation to the research question. These are presented in relation to current literature in the discussion section below.

The researchers maintained a reflexive stance throughout, for the purposes of both rigour and ethics, and remained mindful to avoid making moral judgements about good versus bad parenting (Keller, 2018). Participant demographic information is presented in Table 1.

By agreeing to participate in the study, these mothers demonstrated an existing curiosity about motherhood within culture and context, and a curiosity about their own style of mothering. They spoke openly about their mothering approaches in the first interview, and after initial, expectable anxiety in the video-recorded 'interaction sessions', most settled into the space and found ways to engage with their infants. In the second interviews, when reflecting on the first interview and particular moments of interaction in the video-taped sessions, participants engaged reflectively. The research

Table 1. Profile of Study Participants.

Pseudonyms	Age	Child age	Race	Culture	Language
Bertha	33	4 months (girl)	Black African	Pedi	Pedi/English
Boipelo	32	10 months (girl)	Black African	Tswana	Tswana/ English
Carla	39	3 months (boy)	White African	White South African	English
Chifuno	22	4 months (girl)	Black African	Malawian	Malawian
Evette	34	12 months (boy)	Black African	Congolese	French/ English
Noni	30	10 months (girl)	Coloured African	Coloured South African	English/ Afrikaans

experience was described by participants as thought-provoking and as increasing their insight into their own mothering behaviours. The space to speak about their mothering choices was appreciated. The non-judgemental approach of the interviewer appeared to allow for a normalising of maternal strengths and weaknesses, which was experienced as empowering.

Presentation of Findings

Each case study below presents an account of moments in the mothering experience of each participant that stood out in her narrative as representative of her negotiation of sociocultural influence on her mothering. Prevalent in the mothers' narratives were stereotypes about parenting in both their own identified cultural groups and those of others. It is important to note that the excerpts from their narratives are from the perspectives of each of the mothers and based on their personal experiences.

Bertha

Bertha, a thirty-three-year-old, Black South African, Pedi-speaking mother with a 4-month-old daughter was initially uncertain as to her mothering approach and any effects of culture on her parenting practices. However, at multiple points during the interview, she reiterated that she had moved away from her initial culture when raising her children. Bertha compared her rural upbringing with very few material possessions to the upbringing she was giving her children:

> We didn't have toys. In our days we didn't have toys. We were playing outside. No toys…we played so many games like the skipping ropes and playing

> stones…I think it's the thing of today. Kids have toys. Even when we go to the shops, the brother [her older child] will just pick the new ones, every time (Bertha).

Bertha attributed the change in access to toys to 'the thing of today'. While she is referring to broader shifts that may reflect the commercialisation of childhood, her comment also reflects how class shifts have come about as an indirect result of democracy in South Africa, with increased educational and economic opportunities for many more people of colour. She appeared proud to be able to provide a 'modern' childhood for her children. Bertha spoke about how she had chosen to use more Western parenting practices because it felt easier for her: 'You know the Western way is the easiest way' (Bertha). She also referred to this 'leaving' of her African cultural practice as a common occurrence:

> I mean where we come from like there's different cultures and then some people end up not following their culture, doing other people's cultures and not doing anything. It's a normal thing like [some] we just leave and some they do… (Bertha).

Bertha reported having been moved between family members when growing up, and experiencing distress in this regard, particularly in relation to her sense of belonging and feeling loved:

> At some point I was with my mother but not for long. Actually, I was with my granny firstly from the youngest age and then I went to stay with my mom and father and then I went to stay with my aunt for a very long time…. It hasn't had a great effect on me…But what I've noticed is that I just want to spend time with my kids, all the time. I don't want to see my kids being raised by someone else while I'm here…Because they need to feel my love but then if I'm far apart from them, they will not feel that (Bertha).

Bertha discussed being raised by her grandmother with very traditional Pedi ways of seeing life but feeling no allegiance to these cultural traditions. She reported relating more to Western practices and often turning to 'Google' for best practice ways to raise her children. Bertha described how she has made conscious decisions to keep her children with her so that they can have an experience different to hers. It is perhaps, then, also not surprising that Bertha spoke about 'leaving' her culture behind and finding more Westernised ways of parenting 'easier'. She shared feeling very angry with her grandmother for involving her children in traditional, cultural practices without her consent:

> *(describing the conversation she had with her grandmother)* 'You don't have to perform your cultural things on my kids. Just let them be or else I'm going to fetch my kids and you won't see them again'. So my granny was doing her things and then excluding us… (Bertha).

It is possible that Bertha's anger towards her family for her unstable upbringing 'that did not have a great effect on [her]', influenced her feelings about her cultural background and her decision to 'leave' it. It was notable that when Bertha spoke about interacting with her child, she focused on the attention and recognition given to her by her daughter: 'She even pays attention and wait for me to kiss again…and then she'd be like okay and wanting more…It means that I feel like I'm connected to her more'(Bertha). It appeared that the closeness she had not experienced with her own mother had informed her decision to develop an extremely close relationship with her daughter.

The shifts away from traditional African parenting that Bertha discussed also included the role of the father. When referring to her husband's desire for a second child, she reported having used this as an opportunity for her to renegotiate levels of father involvement:

> Because, I mean, this is our baby, we made this baby together, so we have to be together in this. And, I mean, he's the one who said that, no, we need to have a second baby. 'Oh, okay. Then at least you're going to be there' (Bertha).

Again, Bertha appeared to be making shifts towards ways of parenting that she perceived to be more 'Western', with her desire for her husband to fulfil a more modern, engaged father role. Overall, Bertha's motherhood narrative suggested some disidentification with her culture of origin, perhaps in an attempt to distance herself from the emotional distress of her childhood. By using Western-informed parenting, she hoped to give her children a different experience.

Boipelo

Boipelo, a thirty-two-year-old, Black South African, Tswana-speaking mother with a 10-month-old daughter, presented as a mindful parent and exhibited high levels of sensitivity throughout the interview. She was thoughtful and attuned to her daughter. She spoke of growing up in a poorer socioeconomic urban area than the one in which she lives today, and remembered having much less than her two children have:

> Ooh, in my childhood…we created our own toys, and we'd play in the street most of the…literally every day… (Boipelo).

Issues of class, race and culture were evident in Boipelo's narrative: 'In my upbringing as well, I grew up on the more urban side of the township, very exposed to Western culture even at a young age so I suppose it's nothing new to me' (Boipelo). Boipelo spoke about a straddling of both African and Western cultures and reported shifts in parenting roles in this regard. She also reported changing gender roles amongst Black fathers in her generation:

> I've got a lot of friends now our age who are fathers and they are so involved in their children's' lives …in my culture a lot of the people that I am close with, a lot of people that I'm exposed to now, a lot of young guys are really stepping up and really taking care of their kids in ways that often didn't happen (Boipelo).

While these shifts in parenting roles reflect mingling of cultures, it is also representative of class shifts. More involved parenting is often not an option for parents from lower socio-economic groups. However, given South Africa's history and the close associations between class and race, upward class shifts also presents challenges. Having chosen to move from the township setting where she grew up into a now multi-cultural, 'previously White' suburban setting, Boipelo briefly mentioned her employment of a helper:

> …maybe even the moving because we now live here in this area which is very different from [the township]…you know, the houses you need to clean for example is much bigger than the houses we were used to and so now there's a need for a helper, there's a need for someone to come and actually stay with you… (Boipelo).

While the employment of a domestic worker or helper is a common occurrence amongst middle-class families, domestic work is a known site for the oppression of Black women, with low wages, long hours and until recently largely unregulated (Cock, 2011). What is striking in Boipelo's comment is her felt need to justify her employment of a 'helper' – because 'the houses you need to clean are much bigger'. While the legitimising of social mobility is explored in the literature (Krige, 2015), her comment hints at mixed feelings that she may have about having the means to employ a domestic worker. Having the means to employ domestic helpers is historically associated with the White middle class, and this may be an uncomfortable identification for her (Maqubela, 2016b). As opposed to Bertha's experience, Boipelo expressed ambivalence about moving away from the African culture that characterised her childhood. She described ways in which she tries to hold onto her cultural identity and transmit this to her children, most notably through the medium of language. For her, language is one of the mediums through which cultural belonging is expressed:

> …for me it's very important for them to know that they are Tswana no matter the environment or the culture that we are surrounded by. It's very important for them to know their language, to be able to speak it very well and to be able to communicate. That for me should be their primary language and their mode of communication. It's very important as well that they know who they are in terms of being Tswana you know. As in… just in relation to our family and how we grew up and our traditions and customs. So that's very important for me and that's something that you know we teach. And even at home we speak Tswana…when I talk to the kids, I always talk to them in Tswana (Boipelo).

Interestingly however, one of the ways that Boipelo had chosen to parent differently to her own mother was in the area of communication. She reported having chosen to be more communicative and open in her relationship with her child than she experienced in her relationship with her own mother. She associated this increased communication with greater confidence in her daughter to express herself to her mother:

> Me being able to talk to her and you know be open with her. So, I think now I'm trying to do that more, to be more open or to talk a bit more and to allow conversation and dialogue about anything really with my kids now. So, you know my oldest being the one who can really communicate now. She's the one that I talk to like every day about everything and that's what I'm trying to almost do to… it just helps build her confidence to say look, you can talk to me about anything you know (Boipelo).

As an adult, Boipelo had also attempted to increase communication in her relationship with her own mother:

> …now as I'm older I think I'm also…me being the child I'm almost the one who then…I initiate, I try and initiate a lot of the conversation to almost say to her that look, you can talk to me, we can talk you know. And also given where I am, being married, having my own kids, I think she's also now at that point (Boipelo).

Although not explicitly stated, it is possible that Boipelo had wished for more confidence herself, and to have been able to speak more openly with her mother, given the choices she has made with regard to her communication with her children and her efforts to shift her current relationship with her mother. In the video interaction data, there was a lovely moment where Boipelo's infant daughter found a mirror. Much delight ensued from both the little girl and her mother. When watching the video with the researcher, Boipelo reflected on her emotional reactions in that moment:

> I really love that because… yeah, I think I'm loving the fact that I think she's able to… she's recognizing herself. I think I'm loving the mirror thing because I'm also in a way… when she kisses the mirror you know I'm almost trying to say to her that you know, look at yourself, see yourself, love yourself type of thing. So that's really what I'm hoping, trying to teach her with this. For them not to be afraid of looking themselves in the mirror and just loving what they're seeing (Boipelo).

When reflecting on this later, she recognised that her wish for her daughter to love herself was based on her own struggle with this:

> I must say it was a bit difficult for me. I had my own personal struggles if I can put it like that in terms of you know growing up, learning to love myself and accepting myself and around the environment that I was in. Around the people, the type of friends and relationships that I had at the time. So, I think a lot of the lessons I'm trying to teach is obviously based off of what I grew up with. So, it wasn't an easy thing for me to learn. Probably something I'm actually still trying to learn really you know. But yeah, that's something I'm trying to do with them now already (Boipelo).

When asked to elaborate on the relationships she had growing up, to which she refers above, Boipelo described not having had an open, communicative relationship with her own mother. Boipelo's decision to foster open communication with her daughter in order for her daughter to have a different experience of the mother-daughter relationship, suggests that she situates some of her struggles with self-recognition and self-love in the distance she experienced in her relationship with her mother. Also, not explicit but possibly linked to her identity struggles, was her experience of her race and class, growing up in an urban township setting. Her discomfort over being privileged enough to live in a suburban area and afford a helper, together with her strong need for her children 'not to forget their Tswana roots' suggest that her race, culture, and class have been aspects of her identity with which she has had to grapple. She wishes for her daughter to have a more positive, and perhaps less complicated, relationship with herself. Boipelo spoke of her allegiance to her family's culture, traditions and language and felt it important for her children to have knowledge and understanding of their 'roots'. However, she also wished for her children to speak English and have knowledge of 'Western ways'. It seems as if she hoped that her children could also find ways to straddle culture and class, but more easily than she had.

Carla

Carla, a thirty-nine-year-old English-speaking, White, South African mother, with a 3-month-old infant boy, appeared rather anxious but attentive and nurturing towards her baby. She described herself as 'open-minded' and even liberal in comparison to the older generation in her family. Carla spoke of her frustration of the older generation being limited in their views of what can be considered as normal. Changing experiences of race and culture are clearly evident in her speech. Carla often expressed annoyance at the 'limited views' of her parents with a distinct hope to raise her children with more open-minded views. Increased contact between races amongst the middle class has meant '…like you have to be quite open-minded and stuff like that – you can't live in a box' (Carla). However, she as aware of distrust of other races still existing, especially amongst older generations who remember South Africa's traumatic racial history: 'I know my mom is very old-fashioned. So, when she hears like [the child is] going to school with different races, different religions, different everything, she gets quite upset' (Carla). Carla's liberal views were also expressed when she spoke about an equal partnership, where both she and her husband are responsible for care of their children. Carla expressed gratitude that her husband was supportive and understanding and shared in the mutual work responsibilities throughout her pregnancy and post birth.

Like Boipelo, Carla had also chosen to adapt her style of communication with her child to a more open type of communication. Carla explained that there was not much communication between herself as a child and her mother and that she learned through watching her mother:

> …how I learnt…I watched. That's how I observed. There wasn't much communication though. So, I would like my children to learn via me, not just from observation….I do feel like he needs to hear your voice and stuff like that, not just your presence and stuff, but hear you…And how I raised my daughter before….as well, I liked to actually have communication with her. So, if she feels upset she must tell me why she's upset…Or if I'm upset with her, I tell her why I'm upset with her. I don't want her just to think I'm upset with her for no reason (Carla).

Carla's narrative implies that she experienced her mother's lack of communication as anxiety-provoking and confusing, feeling unsure as to why her mother was upset with her. Her decision to foster more openness in her relationship with her children appears to be based on a desire for her daughter not to have to experience this anxiety. She also commented that she had taken a much less strict stance with her children. She attributed this change to 'times changing' and referred to less authoritarian parenting as more 'modern':

> I like to think of myself a little bit more modern as in, you know, with like reprimanding kids and stuff like that, where in the olden days they'd believe in like getting a hiding and being sent to our room type thing, where I like to discuss things with my kids and stuff like that (Carla).

Carla did, however, acknowledge that despite attempts to shift her style of communication, at times, it was difficult not to fall back on the harsher styles of parenting that she had experienced herself when growing up:

> I don't just jump straight into reprimanding and judgements and punishments…but it is difficult, I won't lie because sometimes you do think that you have to go to that avenue [shouting and physical punishment] but you have to pull yourself back. And that's why we work off each other as well. So, if he [her son] gets angry and he wants to fight with [me]…I can discuss with him and vice versa (Carla).

Carla's less authoritarian style was also evident in her thoughts on infant communication, where it was evident that she was attempting to be more responsive:

> I think each parent is different because some parents believe that you should let the baby cry – they need to learn to self sooth and be a little bit more sustainable by themselves. Others believe that you shouldn't because it causes distress, and you don't want them to feel like they are not wanted or feel like they won't get care…I usually just go according to what I feel like is needing to be done right then (Carla).

Her comment highlighted a shift towards more intuitive parenting that attempts to respond to the infant's dual needs for dependence and opportunities to develop independence.

Chifuno

Chifuno, a twenty-two-year-old Black Malawian, Chichewa-speaking mother with a 4-month-old daughter, appeared demure and introverted. Chifuno was not talkative and found the interview process to be quite a strange and awkward experience. She could not speak English and a translator was used. Chifuno followed tradition more than the other mothers and had stayed with her family for three months post-birth and was still mostly doing all the childcare herself. Her husband works and she is staying home to take care of their daughter. While her views were more traditional, she spoke about having been influenced by other cultures since moving from Malawi to live with her

husband in South Africa. Chifuno referred to a necessity to 'leave' aspects of her culture behind while living in South Africa:

> Like we are not following much of our culture. We are doing actually what we can…we are following what others are doing here…we are in line of our culture but not really towards some of the things that our culture are doing, we cannot do because we are here out of our home (Chifuno).

Far less eye contact was noted between Chifuno and her infant than in the other dyads, as she faced her infant away from her for almost the entire duration of the observation. While Chifuno's lack of interaction with her infant may be the result of some cultural influence, it could also be as a result of maternal trauma that has impacted Chifuno's capacity to engage with her infant. At points in the interview, she alluded to difficult memories:

> '…actually like the way I treat the baby or the way [I am] with baby…makes [me] maybe to forgot some other things like some other memories. The baby makes [me] to forget that thing (Chifuno).

Although Chifuno did not provide details, her need 'to forget that thing' is highly suggestive of previous trauma. The fact that Chifuno's interview was conducted through a translator unfortunately limited the interviewer's ability to ask for more detail in this regard. Her representation of her child as a source of comfort for her, as opposed to the other way around, may give some context within which to understand her lack of attention to her infant's communications or needs in the video-recorded interaction. It is, however, held in mind that this was only a short sample of their interaction and that in circumstances where she is not 'watched' and less anxious, their interaction may be different.

Evette

Evette, a thirty-four-year-old Black Congolese, French and English-speaking mother with a 12-month-old son, described herself as 'Westernised' and open to new ways of raising children. Evette appeared as an active, expressive mother who tracked her son around the room quite well, but at points, slightly intrusive, engaging in rough play and communicating loudly in both French and English. Evette spoke of growing up in a poorer context and not having toys with which to play in her childhood but rather going outside and playing in natural settings: 'I didn't have that many toys. We had more of the…these activities where you actually play outside a lot, jumping, you know, whatever. Running…' (Evette). Having moved from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and being married to a South African man, she appeared to have been exposed to a variety of cultural influences and she struggled to pinpoint

specific cultural mothering practices that she had inherited or strongly believed in, referring to her family of origin's culture as having been influenced by religion more than by traditional cultural beliefs: 'But religion plays more of a part for me because I don't know any… I wasn't raised very culturally so I don't even know what they're really practise in [my] culture' (Evette). Evette tended to minimise cultural differences with regard to parenting: '…for me culturally you might find that I'm of this culture and someone else in wherever is of another culture, but we will raise our kids very… in a very similar manner' (Evette).

Evette alluded to a more traditional distant provider role for her husband, but also reported shifts towards higher levels of involvement. She referred to a 'more new age type of culture', which appeared to involve a renegotiation of traditional parenting styles:

> Look it's not like the dad doesn't spend any time at all with them, I mean when I leave the house he's always with them and stuff. I would say he's like the more new age type of culture if you want, it's not like where his dad would just go to work and wouldn't even play with the kids, wouldn't interact with them, so with this, during lockdown we didn't even have help so he would, when they would wake up I would still be sleeping with this one, he would make breakfast for the other kids (Evette).

Interestingly, Evette appeared to have found the COVID-19-related National Lockdown, where her husband was more present in the home, an opportunity for a renegotiation of parenting roles.

Noni

Noni, a 30-year-old Coloured [mixed race] South African, English and Afrikaans-speaking woman, with a 10-month-old daughter, presented as a liberal minded, modern mother who was very talkative, playful and active around her baby girl. Noni expressed a desire to break away from the traditional patterns of parenting that she had been exposed to in her earlier life. She described growing up in a poorer environment, and while she had made the shift to a middle-class lifestyle, she described that many children in the community in which she grew up still do not have access to toys: 'You don't generally find that [they] have sensory play toys, stuff like that at the house so I know for one, like I used to play with the Tupperware bowls' (Noni). In her shift to a middle-class lifestyle, she came into contact with a number of other cultures and this appeared to have caused her to choose to shift the way she parents from the style in which she was parented. Noni spoke frankly about how she values access to information available on the internet, viewing her choices to deviate from cultural practice as 'changing with the times'.

However, this is not without struggle as she explains how she felt pressure to follow tradition ('you have to do it') and that she was accused of becoming 'White' by her family for choosing to follow more Westernised ways of approaching her children's healthcare:

> So this is a good example, so when you're born, they take a few of those different medications, they mix it all into one specific oil and they massage the baby after that, so it does help with muscles and stuff like that because babies are very still when they come out. So, when I had my kids, obviously that's like, you have to do it. You have to do it and they actually have very sensitive skins, so they broke out in eczema and I stopped and it was like an uprising at home. 'How can you stop doing that, she needs this' and I'm like 'my children have got eczema, I need to take her to the paediatrician' and they were like 'you are the White Google in the family'...I said to them, 'you guys need to understand that you've got to change with the times. There is so much knowledge that you need to make yourself aware of those things' (Noni).

Noni expressed the need to interrupt intergenerational patterns of parenting and described choosing not to follow the authoritarian parenting style with which she had grown up with in a Coloured family. She had chosen not to use corporal punishment and rather try to speak more to her children. She attributed this change to what she had noticed amongst her White friends and compared the different styles:

> So, we've got a lot of different race group of friends, right, so I've noticed in the White demographic, they do a lot of talk, they work on feelings, they talk, they communicate. Do you feel like this, do you feel like that?... but can I tell you in the Coloured culture it's a hit, slap like beaten…. they [children] are not allowed to be expressive because then you are being called you are rude, you are disrespectful. You cannot have an opinion; you cannot be given the freedom to choose what you would like to eat (Noni).

Having adopted a less authoritarian approach to parenting, she noted that Coloured people from the older generations of her community commented on her alternative approach:

> There is no communication, no communication, so when people usually generally the older generation, Coloured people, when they see the way…I interact with our kids, they are like 'Wow, I would have just given her a hiding'…because we do the communication things, because we noticed that it actually, it works, like you cannot be hitting your child around every corner or you cannot scream. How you as an adult, if you cannot control your emotions as an adult, how do you expect a five-year-old to do the same, so you have to communicate (Noni).

In this excerpt, it is clear that Noni has chosen a notably different style of communication to the one most prevalent in her community. It is also clear that she has chosen to base her decisions about discipline on narratives that draw from developmental psychology, adjusting her behaviour to accommodate the emotion regulation capacities of a five-year-old. She attributed these adaptations to her parenting style as informed by education, access to online information on parenting, which is Western-dominated, and models of authoritative parenting in her middle-class social circles. Noni appeared to perceive the parenting she had grown up with, and which she generalised to her Coloured community, as authoritarian and potentially abusive:

> I can't even compare it to a…coloured household, so in [the area she grew up]… they are very violent and very hostile towards this little baby that's crying, so when they do pick the baby up it's with like force and anger. Like when you see these videos on Facebook and stuff and someone really picking the child up, like grabbing them, that's basically what I have witnessed my whole life. I haven't seen anybody of a caring and a soft nature towards a baby, it's always the baby is crying because the baby is out to get me (Noni).

Perhaps this is why she was so appreciative of the attention paid to the importance of bonding when her baby was born:

> …it was amazing because they didn't dress her for the whole day after she came out and she was with me literally the whole day, I was actually awake and could communicate with her (Noni).

She was grateful to be afforded the opportunity to be able to give her daughter the gentle caring she had wished for herself. Noni's narrative demonstrated that she has clearly worked hard to shift her understandings of infants' communications and appeared to have read extensively on child development and parenting. She reported making enormous conscious efforts to communicate more constructively with her children and to allow them more space to express themselves. However, despite there being an attempt to do better than the generation before by means of her avoidance of physical discipline, elements of her previous experiences of controlling parenting (or a 'going back' to known or familiar parenting behaviours to which Carla referred previously) were evident in her interactions with her infant. At times, she was controlling and intrusive, forcefully removing toys from her infant's grasp, and instructing her infant to sing on demand.

Significant in Noni's narrative were the comparisons she made between races and cultures and her perceptions of their respective 'ways of parenting'. In this sense, she appeared highly sensitive to race. However, there was also avoidance of race evident in her narrative:

> So we don't believe in seeing colour for them, so we were raised that you see colour. You are Coloured, you are an Indian, you are Black, you are White but when it comes to religion, we don't put a religion on our kids and we don't put a race on our kids, so….she doesn't know that she's Coloured. She just sees that her skin colour is a different but that's because pigment and melanin. That's all she knows. We don't teach her colour (Noni).

Discussion of Findings

When initially asked, most respondents expressed not perceiving their culture as having much of an effect on their parenting behaviours. This could be as a result of the phenomenon of 'culture blindness', where an insider status leads to an inability to 'see' or reflect on patterns of interaction that are familiar (Berry, 2019). This attests to the extent that culture is interwoven into experiences of family and community and 'patterns of relating' that are not often consciously considered. As the interview process unfolded, however, the influence of culture became apparent in the themes that emerged with regard to shifts in mothering styles and the respondents' negotiation of varying cultural influences on their parenting in their respective contexts. During analysis, these shifts appeared to fall into two broad categories, namely, parenting shifts in response to contextual or social influences and those made due to personal experience. Although presented in this way, it is acknowledged that the social and the personal are intertwined and often cannot be separated. Of particular significance were the times when contradictions appeared, within narratives, between narratives, and between observed maternal behaviours and the corresponding narratives, signalling points of tension.

Contextual and Social Influences: Parenting Shifts at the Intersections of Race, Class, Gender, and Culture

There was an acknowledgement amongst the mothers in this study that their parents had raised them in a different time with different contextual constraints and supports and that they were preparing their children to live as adults in a context different to the one in which they had grown up. Acknowledgement of a changing political and social context in South Africa included talk of increased mingling and assimilation between cultural and language groups leading to mothers becoming aware of and observing a variety of parenting styles, values, and beliefs.

'We Don't See Colour for Them': Changing Experiences of Race and Class. Race as a topic in South Africa is contentious and while there have been efforts to move towards a more integrated and tolerant society, the effects of historic racial trauma are still evident and socio-economic inequality continues to run

along racial and gendered lines, with many Black women living in poverty (Mdluli & Dunga, 2022). While the thirty years post-democracy has seen an increase in the number of Black, Coloured, Mixed race and Indian South Africans joining the middle class (Southall, 2016), this has necessitated some complex negotiation of issues relating to race and class. A tendency to avoid issues of race was noted in this study across racial groups. In some instances, this might have been a product of the cross-racial interviewer-interviewee dyad, where certain interviewees may not have felt sufficiently safe to express thoughts about race to an interviewer of a different race, in addition to the presence of complex, mixed feelings within the respondents about race and class. Discourse about race came up indirectly in the narratives, and most often intertwined with socio-economic circumstances. Many of the mothers referred to generational class shifts that had been made by their parents later in their lives or shifts they had made themselves. Class shifts made by Boipelo, Bertha and Noni were reflected in the ways that they spoke about geography. The areas in which people live are often reflective of societal class stratifications (Southall, 2016). This phenomenon is significant in South Africa with its history of racial segregation, where historically non-white racial groups were forced to live in more rural spaces or if urban, then in townships on the outskirts of cities. Class shifts were also apparent in the narratives through comments about how they did not have as many toys when growing up as their children do now. Boipelo, Bertha, Noni and Evette appeared to highlight their 'middle-classness' and the fact that they can give their children more. Despite this, however, the mothers were very aware that many others still live in circumstances of poverty. Some unease about being able to afford a 'helper' in her house was evident in Boipelo's narrative, suggesting some ambivalence about joining a class previously associated with oppression in South Africa, namely, the White middle class (Maqubela, 2016a).

The following of 'easier' Western ways was met with resistance in some instances, where extended family were described as disapproving or critical, accusing mothers of being the 'White Google'. Reasons for mothers' assimilation of White, Western culture into their parenting styles were varied. In some cases, migration necessitated acculturation, whereas in other cases, mothers reported conscious integration of Western parenting ideals. However, there was clear evidence that straddling multiple cultural influences was something with which the mothers had to grapple. This generation as a particular point of transition was noted. South Africa's transition to a democracy in 1994 meant that these mothers had grown up post-Apartheid – with access to their parents' memories of legally enforced racial discrimination, but having had a different experience themselves. These mothers appeared to be attempting to give their young children a different sense of racial identity to what they had experienced – they wished for them to have more self-esteem and in some cases, to not 'see colour'. However, not seeing

colour perhaps also suggests some avoidance of issues of race given their privileged middle-class positions. Some of the avoidance of race in the narratives seemed to reflect both a wish for a society less fraught with racial tension, and a denial or avoidance of racial aggression that is common in middle-class communities. The ideology of 'colour-blindness' has been argued to be part of a broader, overarching ideology of 'oppression blindness', that functions to uphold privilege (Ferber, 2012).

'A New Age Type of Culture': Changing Gender Roles. 'Hands-on fathers' was a prominent discourse in Carla, Bertha and Evette's narratives and transitions in gender roles were apparent in the mothers' talk about their children's fathers. What was striking in this sample is that all the mothers were either married or co-habiting with their children's father, which is unusual, given the high rates of divorce and father non-involvement in South Africa (van den Berg et al., 2021). This suggests some buy-in to the traditional Western nuclear family model, a trend to some degree noted previously in South Africa (Russell, 2003; van den Berg et al., 2021). With the exception of Chifuno, all of the mothers spoke of their partners taking up less traditional roles, albeit to varying degrees, and now engaging more in parenting practices initially considered to be a mother's function, such as bathing, feeding and playing with their babies, and sometimes even being as actively involved as the mothers in the raising of their infant babies. Noni supported the importance of father-infant bonding in the hospital, despite this not being commonplace in her upbringing. This level of father involvement appeared to be supported by Noni, Carla, Evette and Boipelo whose comments revealed critique of more traditional fathering practices in their own cultures.

'Leaving or Keeping Cultural Practices': The Changing Importance of Traditional Cultural Practice and Language. Although similarities in cultural practices with regard to parenting were mentioned, social change and the fluidity of culture were starkly apparent in these mothers' narratives. They described interacting with mothers from different cultures, comparing their own parenting behaviours with those of other mothers, and integrating ideas from various cultures into their own parenting. Some participants reported shifts away from traditional African views to religion-based beliefs that had already occurred, influencing cultural practice in the generations preceding their own.

It was clear in all the case studies that culture, race, class and religion were intertwined and discourse around selecting some cultural practices from their own childhoods to continue and some practices to discontinue was prominent. This selective maintenance of some cultural practices, and modification and alteration of others has been previously documented (Bhavnagri & Gonzalez-Mena, 1997). While some mothers spoke about having to assimilate due to having moved away from their countries of origin and having to adapt their

parenting accordingly, others spoke more about assimilating into a class that entailed more access to resources, more use of technology, more knowledge about parenting, and more use of Western healthcare. Associations between socioeconomic status and levels of knowledge about parenting have been previously found in the South African context (September et al., 2016). Authoritative, White, Westernised parenting was, to some extent, idealised, and aspired towards in this group of mothers. Interestingly, however, the stereotype of White, Western parenting as encouraging communication and self-esteem was challenged by the narrative of the one White mother in the study, who had experienced her mother as uncommunicative and was working hard to change this pattern with her children.

Assimilation was also language-based, and it was notable that all six participants in this study, despite their varying cultural backgrounds, had chosen to place their infants in an English-medium créche. However, some of the mothers used languages other than English to communicate with their infants during the video interaction session, which appeared to represent a tie to their culture of origin. The decision to 'leave' some cultural parenting practices also appeared to be personal and based on experiences of being parented that they had not enjoyed. This is explored further in the next section.

Re-creating Personal Culture: Interrupting Intergenerational Patterns of Parenting

For many of the mothers in this study, conscious efforts to parent differently to their own parents were noted. Most often these were attempts not to repeat aspects of their own parents' communication styles and parenting choices that had caused them distress.

Changing Communication Styles: 'The Importance of Open Communication'. A discourse identified as 'the importance of open communication between mothers and children' emerged in many of the mothers' narratives. These mothers reported that their present style of communication with their infants was different to the communication styles to which they had been exposed in their own childhoods. They described having been raised in conservative homes where the old-fashioned notion that 'children should be seen and not heard' was followed. Most described wishing to change this. Overall, a shift across cultures towards a more open, expressive style of communication between mothers and their children was noted, which is in line with the findings of previous South African studies that have found shifts towards more authoritative, as opposed to more authoritarian styles that were historically associated with African parenting styles (Latouf & Dunn, 2010; Roman, 2013; Roman et al., 2016).

In the above case studies, it becomes clear that alongside access to alternative parenting styles, many of the mothers had reflected on the importance of communication for children's development, and had drawn on their own experiences of not having had a voice or choice, or having experienced anxiety or a lack of confidence, and had adapted their parenting in an attempt to provide a better experience for their children. Communication was acknowledged in the group of mothers as being bi-directional and maternal responsiveness to infant communication, both verbal and non-verbal, was noted. All of the respondents from the represented cultures in this study expressed the importance of physical affection (touch) as a form of sensitive, loving parenting, despite not always having experienced it in their own childhoods. Overall, an attentiveness towards the individual physical needs of the infants was evident in these mothers' non-verbal behaviour in the video data; however, each mother–infant dyad's interaction was unique. Most of the participants watched carefully to follow their infant and were well-attuned and responsive to their infant's expressions and communications. In amongst much smiling and playful engagement, some of which was likely in response to performative pressure of being watched and video-recorded, there was authentic sensitive maternal behaviour, such as eye contact, gazing, and tracking behaviours. The exception in this regard was Chifuno who had recently joined her husband in South Africa from Malawi. While mothers from some predominantly rural African settings have been reported to exhibit less eye contact and less face-to-face interaction with their older children (Lancy, 2015), this has, however, been found to be no longer as prevalent in mothers from African cultures who live in modern, urbanised environments (Zaidman-Mograbi et al., 2019), as was evident in the majority of this sample. However, it was not possible to ascertain whether this particular mother's lack of eye contact and communication with her infant were culturally informed or due to trauma, as discussed in the case study above. Trauma has been linked to less attuned and less contingently responsive maternal behaviour (Vaillancourt et al., 2017).

Despite the wish to communicate more openly with their children and encourage agency and self-esteem, some of the mothers did exhibit interactions with their infants that could be considered intrusive or controlling. This was not reflected upon by mothers, as much non-verbal communication often happens outside of conscious awareness (Dawson & Bain, 2021); hence, most of the data in this regard was obtained from the interactional video material. While this may have been a result of performance anxiety experienced by all the mothers in the research setting, it may also indicate the subtle intergenerational transmission of relational patterns learned in their own childhoods (Flanagan et al., 2020; Van Ijzendoorn, 2006).

'Doing Better Than the Generation Before': Changing Parenting in Response to Past Trauma. Discourse around parenting differently in response to past trauma appeared spontaneously in all the mothers' narratives, mostly in their explanations of why they try to parent in the ways that they do. All the participants in this study reported experiencing elements of distress in their childhoods, for example, harsh parenting or parental absence. The mothers reflected on their difficult past experiences and the ways in which they were consciously choosing to parent differently to ensure that their children have a different experience, whether that be for them to have a present mother, a sense of belonging and love, a voice, more self-esteem or more freedom to choose.

However, despite both reporting the desire to be less authoritarian, in both Noni and Evette's behaviour, an expectation that their child must conform to their wishes was evident. These are likely examples of where unconscious, embodied templates for relating are repeated and aspects of their own experiences of having been parented in particular ways are repeated with their children, albeit, in less extreme ways. It is often inevitable that parents' experiences of being parented, particularly the patterns of relating learned in these early relationships and any unmet needs from these relationships, find expression in later relationships, including those that they establish with their children (De Carli et al., 2018; Kerr & Capaldi, 2019).

Conclusions

The findings of this study confirm shifts in mothering in South Africa, due to urbanisation, Westernization, increased social mobility, increased access to education and information, changing gender roles, and acculturation and assimilation, as documented by previous studies (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999; Frizelle & Kell, 2010; Moore, 2013; Roman et al., 2016). However, through a social constructionist analysis of mother's narratives and their responses to video-recorded mother–infant interactions, this study explored these shifts in more depth, providing some understanding as to how these shifts are occurring.

Most of the mothers in this study reported mothering differently to how they had been mothered in order to give their children a better experience than they had had. These differences included: giving their children more materially (bigger houses, more toys), living in a suburban setting, raising their children in a nuclear family environment, expecting more hands-on caregiving from the children's fathers, encouraging open communication between mother and child, encouraging confidence in their children, avoiding physical punishments, and using Western medical practice as opposed to traditional healing practices. Despite having experienced more authoritarian parenting in their childhoods, many of the mothers had incorporated various aspects of an

authoritative Western parenting model. This was done to greater and lesser degrees by each mother. Limitations to change appeared in the form of non-conscious 'patterns of relating', where despite verbally stated wishes to parent in more authoritative ways and give their children more autonomy, elements of their childhood experiences of having been parented in harsh, authoritarian ways found expression in more disconnected, directive, non-verbal interactions.

Significantly, common discourses emerged in the form of these mothers' motivations for these shifts. It was hoped that through parenting in more authoritative ways they could instil a more positive identity in their children. Some idealisation of Western models of parenting was noted in some of the mothers' narratives with regard to open communication and the perceived confidence and sense of positive identity this was thought to impart, in addition to the association made between access to information and Western medicine ('White Google'). It may be useful to bear in mind South Africa's history of racial trauma in this regard. For some mothers, an idealisation of White ways of parenting may be associated with internalised racial shame that they hoped their children would not experience (Adhikari, 2006; Long & Zietkiewicz, 2006). Notably, the narrative of the one White mother in the study contrasted with the idealised discourse of White parenting as encouraging open communication, challenging this stereotype.

The wish for their children to feel more confident and positive about their identities was not only linked to race. Motivations for this appeared to stem from personal experiences of having been parented in particular ways and discourse around 'doing better than their parents had done' was common. Many of the mothers shared experiences of having felt distant from their mothers for varying reasons, ranging from being sent to live with relatives, being shouted at and physically punished, to having had a non-communicative mother. The mothers linked these experiences to feelings of confusion, anxiety, and a later lack of confidence. These mothers were consciously attempting to avoid repeating this with their children and were attempting to give their children experiences of being loved, seen and heard. Mothers of all cultures reported similar wishes for their children in this regard.

Discourse around selecting particular cultural practices to 'leave' or keep was common. However, this cultural 'blending' process was not always straightforward and some ambivalence about adopting a middle-class lifestyle, that is strongly associated with White Western culture, was also evident. Ambivalence about cultural shifts was also evident with regard to the intersection of culture and class. The choice to live in a suburban setting, due to employment opportunities and a middle-class status, also meant relying on a suburban English-speaking créche and employed helpers for childcare as opposed to extended family. For some mothers, this stirred up identifications with 'White privilege', which, given South Africa's history of racial inequality, understandably provoked mixed feelings.

Mothers who clearly carried anger about painful experiences in their childhoods and spoke most critically about parenting approaches in their culture of origin appeared to experience less ambivalence about 'leaving' their cultural backgrounds. Those who spoke less critically chose to try to retain aspects of their cultural origins, such as language and contact with extended family, hoping to transmit a positive cultural identity and sense of belonging. This suggests that culture, while shared, is also uniquely experienced within a particular familial and community setting and that processes of acculturation are also deeply influenced by emotional experiences of culture.

It is important to bear in mind the limitations of this study. The interviewer and three researchers are White, which may have foreclosed discussion around particular topics and led to restraint by participants of a different racial group when answering certain questions. The sample was small, and thus, the results are not generalisable. The video recordings may also have led to some performance anxiety limiting the naturalness of the interactions observed in all six dyads.

As previously documented, mothers find ways to blend cultural approaches and draw from both new models and the models of parenting from their cultures of origin (Frizelle & Hayes, 1999; Frizelle & Kell, 2010; Moore, 2013). The results of this study suggest that acculturation, or the process of choosing what to maintain from one's culture of origin and what to adopt from a 'new' culture, is complex and influenced by a combination of socioeconomic status, geographical location, contact with other cultural groups and personal emotional experiences of having been parented within a particular culture. Thus, theories of mothering should incorporate individual perceptions and emotional experiences that mothers have of their cultures. This research demonstrates how culture is quickly becoming a dynamic concept with individual interpretations of ones' culture having an influence on maternal behaviours. Practitioners working in maternal mental health services should therefore be mindful of exploring the mother's individual experience and perceptions of her culture. There is a great need for further research on these effects in non-Western contexts as many mothers in South Africa today were raised in traditional, more rural settings and face a consistent struggle between these settings and their more Western suburban cultural influences.

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