

# The Involvement of Domestic Work Mothers in Their Children's Education: Cultural Capital and Migration

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## Abstract

The intention of this article is to contribute to the understanding of how migration, with its effect of repositioning social class, shapes the care given to and the education of the children of migrant mothers employed for domestic work in South Africa. This article utilises a qualitative methodology and employs an evocative autoethnography to provide accounts of the lived experiences of migrant domestic work mothers in their involvement with their children's education. The authors write about themselves and give a deeper insight into migrant domestic work mothers and how migration affected their children's education. Bourdieu's cultural capital approach is used to explore the multifaceted mechanisms and circumstances surrounding the authors' experiences of balancing work as migrant mothers employed as domestic workers and involvement in their children's education. The findings of the article indicate that the nature of the work, i.e. domestic employment, affects the participation of mothers in caregiving and involvement in their children's education. Further findings indicate that a mother's active involvement in her children's education contributes to successful achievements. It also emerged that children whose mothers are active participants in their lives and education do not struggle with their education.

**Keywords:** education; migration; mothers; domestic work; cultural capital

## Introduction

Domestic work has become one of the largest employment sectors in South Africa and part of the growing interconnected flows of labour resources (Du Toit 2013, 19; ILO



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2012). People, including women, now migrate for employment, which includes domestic work. Women who have joined in migration for work and have ended up in domestic work seem to have been motivated, among other reasons, by the need to educate their children. The increase of migrant women, including professionals, has transformed and radicalised the domestic work industry around the world, particularly in countries with relatively stable economies. In the Southern African Development Community (SADC), for example, women are attracted to South Africa. Their influx into South Africa reflects global patterns of increased movements of people, capital and culture across borders (SADC 2006). The migration of women to South Africa has changed the face of migration from predominantly male migrants to male and female migrants. Women are often the main or only breadwinners in families. The assumption that domestic work is for uneducated women has also been deconstructed as more educated migrant women take employment as domestic workers. The domestic work industry in South Africa comprises educated migrants from SADC countries including Zimbabwe (SADC 2006). The red tape in employing foreigners in the formal industry leaves many professional women with no alternative but to take up employment in the domestic sector. Some of these professionals hope to use domestic work as a stepping stone into the field for which they were trained (IOM 2012). While domestic work holds particular meaning in South African history, current opinions on the industry relate to growth in the global economy and the increasing need for service labour (Du Toit 2013). Although domestic work has become a significant part of the labour industry, it cannot be classified as secure employment. First, there is lack of consistency in salaries or wages; some employers pay below the regulated minimum wage whilst others pay more (Du Toit 2012). Second, there is limited protection according to labour law largely due to the absence of contracts or signed agreements between the domestic worker and employer (Du Toit 2012). Some domestic workers verbally agree on the work conditions and salaries with their employers, so when abused or cheated, there is little protection they can receive due to lack of a signed contract (Lundh 2004, 84).

This article is written from an exploratory qualitative perspective using Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital. It explores challenges facing migrant domestic work mothers in balancing paid domestic work and participation in their children's education. The article discusses how the process of migration, with its effect of repositioning social class, shapes the education of the children of domestic workers. Schools require active participation of parents in the education of their children. That requirement follows the observation that the quality of a child's learning experience in the family has a great influence on their educational achievements (Allen 2011, 57). Many mothers are forced to migrate in search of "greener pastures" to be able to provide for, feed and educate their children. This has a deep impact on mothering, including participating in children's education, hence many mothers choose to migrate with their children so that they are able to contribute to and directly participate in shaping their future by participating in their education. In the destination country, professional formal work is scarce for women, forcing many women to take work in the domestic sector to be able to provide

for the family, including paying for the children's education. This article seeks to add voice to the various bodies of literature on migration, domestic work and a mother's participation in her children's education. The authors have chosen to use autoethnography because this approach presents "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes 2000, 21). The purpose of writing about our personal lived experiences of migration, domestic work and participation in our children's education was precisely to consider the structural and personal challenges of migration, motherhood, and involvement in children's education. We have dealt with a variety of challenges in our experience as migrant mothers with schoolgoing children. These challenges include being employed by another woman to care for her children, including participating in their education, while on the other hand trying to prioritise the caregiving of our own children and participating in their education with the aim of securing their future. For the purposes of this article, migrant domestic work mothers include women who are employed in the domestic sector to care and perform domestic chores for a family for remuneration. This article uses a case of migrant women from across the borders of the country and is divided into four sections.

It starts by describing the theoretical perspective underlying the study. Second, the methodological considerations of the study are discussed. The third section critically presents our lived experiences as mothers in the domestic work sector in relation to cultural capital and involvement in our children's education. The final section discusses the implications and limitations of domestic work for mothers in terms of partaking in the schooling of their children.

### **Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theoretical Perspective**

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital identifies and exposes the underlying structures of social life. The theory provides the basic approach used to critically explore the importance of mothers' involvement in their children's education. Cultural capital is used to express how domestic work, particularly for migrant mothers, makes it difficult to be actively involved in their children's education. This theory distinguishes how class control links to forms of cultural and social influence and how it continuously relates to the economic sphere of influence. Similarly, the cultural capital of migrant mothers, in association with children's education, can be presented in three ways. First, mothers should possess a positive attitude towards education that entails knowledge gained from educational experience. Second, mothers need knowledge connected to education-related objects such as books, computers, and academic credentials. Finally, cultural capital is presented through the knowledge of connections to educational institutions through social groups, schools and libraries, among other ways (Al-deen and Windle 2015, 4). The three forms are summarised in Longhofer and Winchester's (2012) view that culture is capital embodied, objectified, and institutionalised.

The theory of cultural capital specifies gender roles in relation to the type of work assumed by mothers. Mothers are accredited a significant responsibility in the real and symbolic work of cultural reproduction, hence their importance to a child's education (Al Dweesh 2011). According to (Bourdieu 1986, 253), it is because "the cultural capital that is effectively transmitted within the family itself depends not only on the quantity of cultural capital, itself accumulated by spending time, that the domestic group possesses, but also on the usable time, *particularly in the form of the mother's free time available to it by virtue of its economic capital*" (emphasis added). The migration process modifies the status of a mother—the changes in her social status from being a professional to a domestic worker alter resources and social position, which in turn affect engagement with her children's schooling. This article relates cultural capital to practical time made available to children, the qualifications of a mother, language expertise, and adequate information about and familiarisation with the education system as ascertained by the educational achievements of children.

A mother's integral part includes experiences and embodiments. For the most part, experiences and embodiments are transmitted down the family through the mother's influence. Bourdieu refers to these life experiences as habitus. Habitus cannot be instantly transmitted (Longhofer and Winchester 2012). These practices could be the result of the family's own educational aspects combined with practices of the educational system with which they relate. The migration process of the mother and the form of employment she engages in transform the habitus. Thus, a mother can either consolidate or weaken existing cultural capital through the circumstances she finds herself in. Either way, the relationship between home and school is reconstructed. The product of this process may either result in conscious or unconscious nurturing choices (Bourdieu 1986). In domestic work, mothers do not have many choices.

While Bourdieu's framework examines the home–school relationship (Tzanakis 2011), Horvat (2003, 2) notes that "the habitus is generated by the social conditions of lived experience including race, ethnicity, geographical location, and gender." The findings (Kleanthous 2011, 7) concerning British women educated in countries other than Britain validate the argument that migrant women who were educated outside South Africa may be unable to easily mobilise cultural capital. Their experience of attending school in their home countries, and subsequently migrating, seems to make it difficult for them to accumulate the benefits of cultural capital for their children.

This article considers the intergenerational accumulation of cultural capital by migrant mothers who undertake South African domestic work. The authors critically examine strategies that include time management, convenient accommodation, homework guidance and the management of interactions with South African nationals. As Bourdieu (1977) argues, the impact of the involvement of mothers in their children's education can only be understood if examined as part of the larger social and cultural structures experienced by the mothers who participate in them.

## Methodological Considerations

This qualitative reflexive study follows the feminist approach of autoethnography because it focuses on the researchers as the subjects of research (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis 2004). In ethnographic research, “a researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography” (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011). The authors are two autoethnographers with similar lived experiences. As participants of this research, we explore our personal lived experiences as migrant mothers in the domestic work sector and our involvement in our children’s education. Our aim is to link our lived experiences to the wider sociocultural and political meanings of migrant domestic work and children’s education. “Autoethnography is a form or method of research that involves self-observation and reflexive investigation in the context of ethnographic field work and writing” (Maréchal 2010, 43). Autoethnographic research was chosen because it acknowledges and accommodates our mess and chaos, uncertainty and emotion (Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis 2014). The reflexivity of this method offers us a means to critically explore the social forces and practices that have contributed to shaping our motherhood strategies and involvement in our children’s education. This approach opens colonised spaces and discourses. We used the autoethnographic approach to give a voice to the everyday colonised spaces walked by migrant women and domestic workers. We met in 2012 in a research workshop as PhD candidates and discovered that we shared a life narrative. In our efforts to try to understand this, we agreed to provoke a debate by publishing our life narratives. The struggles and efforts of migrant domestic work mothers in the involvement in their children’s education are ambiguous. We therefore use our own lived experiences to describe the struggles of migrant domestic work mothers in the participation of their children’s education as well as in the creation of knowledge. One of the authors is married and the other is divorced and single. We are, however, not going to dwell much on the contribution of husbands or fathers towards the education of their children, because this is a story of the lived experiences of two mothers in relation to migration, domestic work and participating in their children’s education. Findings of this article cannot be generalised because they are based on our personal journeys as educated migrant mothers who tried to balance paid domestic work, our education as well as our children’s education in a foreign country with limited cultural and social capital.

Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2010) argue that autoethnographers write about “epiphanies”—remembered moments perceived to have significantly influenced the trajectory of their lives. Research by feminists supports this assertion because such writing helps to reposition the personal and political sphere (Harding 1987). In feminist research, an investigation of the social world is mainly grounded on subjective oppression (Wall 2006). We begin by discussing our personal lived experiences as migrant mothers who were once employed in domestic work in South Africa with

children attending South African schools, while “paying attention to *our* physical feelings, thoughts and emotions” (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 737; emphasis added). Collins (1986, 14) discusses the “outsider within” as a position from which black women can speak. Collins (1986) argues that intersectional identities such as race, gender, class, etc., can be used in the favour of marginalised women. She writes, “Black feminist scholars may be one of many distinct groups of marginal intellectuals whose standpoints promise to enrich contemporary sociological discourse” (Collins 1986, 15).

The challenge of autoethnographic research is that authors are vulnerable because they are not able to take back what they have written and do not have control of the readers’ interpretations (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 737). While we are aware that this method of research unveils our most private experiences, we believe our experiences will contribute to the transformation of domestic work, migration and education sectors in Africa. Furthermore, the issue of objectivity is highly contested in autoethnographic research. We used relevant substantive and theoretical literature pertaining to migration, domestic work, motherhood and education to support our perspectives and thus avoided making unsubstantiated claims. However, we were never completely able to disconnect our emotions from our experiences. Thus, we continued to work towards our explicit goal of expressing our views to our audience.

Our aim is to contribute to the broader debate on migration, domestic work, caregiving, education and gender by exploring the significance of motherhood in children’s education and how conditions of migration and domestic work influence that involvement. Our experience is drawn from having worked at all levels of domestic work. These experiences include working as full-time live-in, full-time live-out and part-time domestic workers. As a result, we integrate the autoethnographic research method with a literature review. The findings of this article may have methodological implications because of its reflexive and subjective nature. However, we are influenced by the feminist dictum, *the personal is political*. We have been employed in domestic work in South Africa regardless of the level of our education since we came into the country in the early 2000s, when the Zimbabwean economy started showing signs of distress. We have worked in the domestic sector as part-time domestic workers even after graduating with our PhDs in the period 2014 to 2016. We therefore have substantial experience of domestic work. As mothers ourselves, we found it difficult to juggle and balance our vocations as migrant domestic workers with our children’s education, leading to increased expenses in terms of educating our children because of looking for extra help from neighbours and other women.

### **Authors’ Lived Experiences as Educated Migrant Mothers Working in the Domestic Sector**

The authors lived experiences as educated migrant workers working in the domestic sector serve as the primary source of data for this article. While identities are fluid and contested, particular identities are shaped by the class position people belong to.

Therefore, our identities were complicated by the intersectionality of our race as black women employed in the domestic work industry with our education as highly educated women studying towards doctorates and later as migrant women with doctorates. We were expected to belong to the middle class because of our educational status, but the reality was that working in the domestic sector positioned us in the lower class or margins of society and overshadowed our educational levels. However, we knew the significance of education, which also made our children's education a priority. Nonetheless, as domestic workers we experienced some challenges when it came to our involvement in our children's education, which encouraged us to come up with alternative ways of participating. In this article, we present our lived experiences as mothers employed for domestic work and our involvement in our children's education as a critical enquiry that is embedded in theory and practice (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2010). We spent an average of 10 years working in the domestic sector. The time was unevenly spread across all categories of domestic work. The categories are shown in Table 1 below.

A critical literature review and content analysis helped us to come up with three broad forms of domestic work for which mothers are employed in South Africa as presented in the following table:

**Table 1:** Categories of mothers as domestic workers

<i>Mother category</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Interaction with children</i>
<b>Transnational mothers</b>	(a) Children remain in countries of origin.	(a) Money pays for care.
	(b) Send remittances to home countries.	(b) Money pays for the children’s education.
	(c) Child care is indirect.	(c) Money remains the primary link with children.
<b>Full-time live-in mothers</b>	(a) May have brought along children of schoolgoing age.	(a) Delegate childcare to another poor woman.
	(b) Children’s accommodation rented in townships.	(b) Long absence from involvement with children’s education.
	(c) Visit on weekends or holidays.	(c) Delegate maternal involvement with children.
<b>Full-time live-out mothers</b>	(a) Live with their children in townships.	(a) Delegate care and educational involvement to someone else through pay.
	Leave home early and come home late.	
	(c) Older siblings take over care after school.	(b) Come home too late to assist with homework.
	(d) Hire female nanny or leave children in nurseries.	(c) Rely on familial support and informal childcare service. (d) Keep the “boss” happy, but remain concerned about the well-being of their children.
<b>Part-time live-out mothers</b>	(a) Rely on paid female “friends” to look after children if they do not have older siblings.	(a) Have no time for children’s homework.
	(b) Believe in the importance of education.	(b) Do not have the resources to support children’s schooling at home.

Source: Authors’ creation based on the work of Du Toit (2013) and Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997).



The information in the table above concurs with Moors (2003) on the hierarchical chain of reproductive labour. The table also highlights the efforts of a mother to be involved with the education of her children. It also demonstrates the challenges faced in trying to balance work and the involvement with our own children's education and social life. We belonged to the fourth category of domestic workers although we had experienced all the levels. In South Africa, we did not have relatives to look after our children, which meant that we therefore mainly relied on paid women-friends. Our belief in the importance of education encouraged us to use most of our earnings from domestic work for our children's schooling. Our absence was filled by someone who was paid to monitor the children, make sure that they had eaten and completed their homework. This is consistent with Oliveira's (2013) findings that migrant domestic workers use third-party involvement in their children's education. We believed that adult participation was critical for our children to later live a better life than we did. We were forced to engage the services of paid women-friends because of the challenges we faced as foreigners and domestic workers.

Before we migrated to South Africa, we belonged to working middle-class families and both of us were employed as civil servants. We therefore relied on the full-time services of domestic workers to monitor and care for our children. As middle-class working mothers, we could afford to send our children to well-resourced schools, something we could not afford as migrant domestic workers in South Africa. Therefore, the process of migration introduced us to a new lifestyle and relegated us to a lower-class position. This affected our children's educational performance and social status. Although we developed supporting strategies, the nature of our work did not accommodate our personal contributions. Thus, cultural capital was neither satisfactorily cultivated nor transmitted, hence discords in family habitus.

We started as transnational mothers and in that state we experienced the hardships of indirect motherhood. We worked hard to raise enough money for our children to acquire passports and to cover their travelling costs to join us in South Africa so that they could go to school and later university. We had to simultaneously save and pay for our registration and tuition fees because we were studying towards our doctoral degrees. Due to pressures of our doctoral studies coupled with family that had joined us, full-time live-in work was no longer an option. Therefore, we took on full-time live-out and later part-time domestic work. The changes occurred due to the pressures of motherhood and the prioritisation of our children's security and education. However, in order to achieve this, income was required. Thus, we could not quit paid domestic work because it was providing economic capital for the family. Additionally, we were later forced to quit full-time live-out domestic work due to the pressures of our doctorates. This is because we needed time to do research in the library, and attend and participate in graduate studies workshops. Above all, we were supposed to complete our doctorates through "thick and thin," in order to be able to provide a middle-class lifestyle for our children and pay for their education up to tertiary level.

Previous studies on gender and migration highlight the fact that mothers who migrate for work purposes have limited access to the right kind of cultural capital (Dodson 1998, 913; Millman 2013). While we were highly educated migrants studying towards doctorate degrees, we had limited cultural capital, and we found ourselves in similar positions as migrant domestic work mothers who had not gone far with their education due to sociocultural and economic reasons (Kambarami 2006, 5–6; SADC 2006, 10–3, 26; Tuwor and Sossou 2008, 364). For the latter mothers, the way of life is derived from life experiences, predominantly childhood encounters with their parents, some of whom were uneducated. Despite their childhood encounters, changing societal obligations and narratives have encouraged them to prioritise educating all children regardless of their gender. Thus, mothers, regardless of their level of education, desire to play an effective role in their children’s education through work (Elborgh-Woytek et al. 2013, 5). However, restricted capital and the demands of domestic work limit their ability to do so.

In traditional gender roles, a mother is usually the first educator of her child and this augments essential involvement. The demands of migration and domestic work in the host country reduced the time we spent with our children, thus restraining us from imparting cultural capital. In comparison, South African nationals employed in the domestic work sector have more capital in the form of nuclear and extended families. In this article, cultural capital includes available time, educational qualifications of mothers, language proficiency, adequate information about the education system, familiarisation with the education system, and other resources to draw upon in engaging with formal schooling.

## **Challenges Faced with Efforts to Invest Cultural Capital**

We had limited time to invest any cultural capital in our children because we were domestic workers and migrant mothers. It was difficult to balance paid domestic work and our own unpaid domestic duties. We were mothers who needed to holistically participate in the lives of our children. We spent most of our time in paid domestic work that included involvement in the education of our employers’ children. Our own children were suffering while we were paid to care for, nurture and participate in the education of other people’s children. Being part-time live-out domestic workers in some cases allowed us to see our children after hours. Tired as we were, we made follow-ups on our children’s daily activities with the assistance in some cases of a paid female friend. However, we believe a mother primarily instils cultural capital in her children.

The number of hours we worked as part-time live-out domestic workers were not even. The amount of work determined the length of time spent at work. We were only paid for the number of days we worked. The nature of part-time domestic work included periodic part-time jobs and unpredictable working hours. This was disadvantageous because working conditions affected cultural capital in three ways, namely spending most of the time looking for work, not having enough time for our children’s

schoolwork and not having money to pay someone to help with extra tuition of our children, if we were not hired. Paradoxically, our migration to South Africa for work was primarily to support our families, particularly our children's education, hence we opted for part-time live-out domestic work (Sharpless 2010, 109). That way, we could financially, emotionally, socially and scholastically support our children. We could have opted for transnational mothering because of the availability of cultural capital in our countries of origin, but long-distance mothering was a challenge for us. In the conception of this article, we discovered that we both had migrated to South Africa with our children due to the challenges of mothering from a distance. Transnational mothering negates the value of involvement in children's schoolwork. The extended family and communal principle of raising a child is deteriorating and due to economic hardships many families are opting for the nuclear family. Chisale (2018) argues that many traditional African communities are guided by the communal principle in mothering children, using the African proverb "it takes a village to raise a child." Such beliefs encourage some mothers to leave their children in their home countries and take up transnational domestic work with the hope that there is disposable cultural capital at home in the form of the extended family and the community. However, communal responsibility in child mothering for us was not an option, particularly when it came to our children's education. Additionally, leaving children in the care of the extended family and community is equally disadvantageous because, in the current economic and social climate, fostering habits into adaptation requires presence and time, which domestic work mothers rarely have. Presence and time, as an asset for one's own children, cannot be invested through people other than the nuclear family.

Transnational mothers are physically and socially out of their children's lives (Horton 2009). Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) argue that transnational mothers are "here" as domestic workers, but "there" as mothers. Transnational mothers do not have time to visit their children who remained back home. Despite sending money, there is no time invested in their children's emotional, social and educational life. A lack of direct involvement equals the inability to transmit the culture of learning mothers represent. For transnational mothers, long separation creates a gap in raising children.

Full-time live-in domestic work mothers have less time with their own children due to work demands. In many cases, full-time live-in domestic work mothers work for long hours for unlimited days (ILO 2013). Services may be rendered to more than one employer. Mothers who stay in the employer's residence see their children much less. Absence from home implies scarce time for children's schoolwork even if the mother is educated, and hence no cultivation of cultural capital.

Cultural capital is acquired through a deliberate process and depends on family circumstances. The contribution of mothers to their children's schooling is purposeful. For us, this included non-availability of time coupled with low social status. Domestic work left us with very little time to spare for motherhood roles. Our social status as

migrants had endless legal and economic security limitations that controlled the deliberately planned imparting of the culture of helping with children's schooling.

### **Awareness of the Need for Involvement with Children's Education**

Since we are educated mothers, we were aware of how critical extra assistance was for our children's education. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) identify examples of children who were able to read after assistance at home as distinct profit yielded. The nature of our work limited us from instilling a culture of studying in our children because we had inadequate time with them (Winkle-Wager 2010). Although we were part-time live-out domestic workers, on the days we went to work, our children struggled to cope with a new coach (a paid woman friend), who mainly did not prioritise their education as we as educated biological mothers would have done.

The connection between economic and cultural capital is founded on the consolidation of time needed for achievement. Yet, that domestic workers have lives outside the boundaries of their employers' homes is disregarded, thus invalidating the reality that these women are also mothers. Bonci et al. (2011) found that concerned mothers are aware of the links that academic qualifications have to productive labour and the monetary value for which they can be exchanged on the labour market. Gratz et al. (2006) argue that if children of migrant domestic workers struggle to compete at the same level as children of parents with high cultural capital of transferred participation in their education, the former, like their parents, may remain at the bottom of the social ladder. Time free from work, coupled with a favourable environment, is a precondition for early accrual of cultural capital and its embodiment.

We needed time and a suitable environment to assist with our children's education. We also needed to possess the means of transmission so that those children would embody what we were trying to teach them. We desired to find a way of embarking on the personified investment, which was a precondition for the children to embrace a culture of learning. Lund and Budlender (2009) identify two types of mothers, namely mothers with high cultural capital but with low involvement and mothers with low levels of cultural capital because of low literacy levels. We belonged to the former type. We were optimistic that domestic work was a "port of entry to the labour market" (IOM 2012) which would enable us to contribute towards a better life and education for our children. However, migration and labour policies of the host country forced us to remain in domestic work longer than we expected. Although we used domestic work as a means to educate ourselves by enrolling with an open distance learning institution, we remained at the bottom of the ladder, first because of our gender as women and second because of our foreign nationality. Our education did not yield the anticipated results, especially the expectation that graduating with a doctorate would immediately lead to formal employment as academics or researchers. Thus, the challenge of a lack of economic capital due to low salaries persisted.

## **Challenges with Limited Resources**

The resources connected to a system of established relationships provide members with the support of collectively owned capital in practical, material and symbolic states (Bourdieu 1986). For us, practically this included networking, which is important for establishing links to social support for our children's schooling. Nevertheless, that association seemed impossible because of the nature of our work. We also could not draw on social capital that was supposed to help our children's education, because the nature of our work did not allow us to attend parents' meetings at school or attend our children's sporting competitions.

Our ability to network was restricted because of our employment status as paid domestic workers. Additionally, unfamiliarity with any of South Africa's indigenous languages restrained us from helping with schoolwork (Lund and Budlender 2009). The language barrier continues to be a limitation in the educational requirements of children in South Africa (Triandafyllidou 2013). This is because in every government and even some private schools, a child must study an additional language from the remaining 10 official languages (other than English). Other migrants from Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland and the Ndebele, Venda, Shangani and Sotho from Zimbabwe have an advantage, because they can easily adapt since their home languages bear resemblance to some of South Africa's native languages, particularly Nguni languages and Sotho. One of the autoethnographers of this article is from a Nguni ethnic group in Zimbabwe. As such, she and her children easily learnt the IsiZulu language. The other autoethnographer from a Shona ethnic group struggled to use any of the native languages and therefore mainly used English as her mode of communication. While her children have adapted well to Sotho languages, her struggle with all of the South African native languages affected her involvement in their education, particularly in the requirement of her children to be proficient in an additional language. The level of literacy, an array of subjects and a lack of familiarity with the education system called for a need to access skills that would depend on social capital and financial resources (Moors 2003). However, domestic work was so demanding that it left little room for learning anything new that could help her children's education. Due to security concerns in South Africa, we worked behind the high-walled houses of our employers, thereby having limited contact with the outside world. This also adversely affected our ability to form educational networks that could benefit our children's education. After finishing work, we were usually in a rush to go and help the children with homework and prepare dinner for the family.

It should be noted that networks are not naturally available, but are created through boundless association practices that result in the creation and reproduction of long-lasting and useful associations (Jehl, Blank, and McCloud 2001). Nonetheless, due to the high competition for jobs among South Africans and foreign nationals, there are tensions with the latter sometimes afraid to request help from the former due to fear of xenophobic remarks and other constraints associated with limited recognition. Further, a social network is not independent of economic and cultural capital. Rather,

interactions initiated through common recognition assume the acknowledgment of an actual similarity that makes use of the capital a mother owns in her own right (Norton and de Haan 2013). The unfortunate, yet widespread trope of stereotyping discourages many migrants from networking, since many cannot speak native languages. Thus, we minimised interactions and socialisation with South African citizens in public spaces where the situation is volatile and may trigger xenophobia. Admittedly, this fear may have deprived us of existing opportunities and to an extent we could not acquire the necessary knowledge required for our children's education.

## **Recommendations and Conclusion**

In this article, we presented the cycle of paid domestic work, where a mother who is a domestic worker is forced to hire the services of another woman friend to help her own children with their education. It is clear that for children to succeed in their education, their working mothers, whether employed in the domestic sector or other fields of work, should have a source of income to pay for more help. The cycle of domestic work, where domestic workers hire domestic workers to assist with the education of their children, challenges labour laws to revisit domestic work labour laws and address the challenges domestic work poses to children's education. Thus, there is a need for the South African government to realise, act on and improve the policy on the employment of domestic workers. They should be granted family responsibility leave in order to accommodate their children. Such a realisation would benefit not only migrants, but also South African domestic workers. The act would contribute to social progress and the country's economic development. A positive approach would greatly improve these women's cultural capital in terms of resources that would enable them to effectively participate in their children's education, guaranteeing the continent a large cohort of educated citizens and future leaders.

Every child's education requires focus and concentration. Yet, when children suffer from loneliness and uncertainty because of their mother's absence, they may easily lose the capability to deal with educational demands. South Africa is attempting to reduce such children's loneliness through its commitment to fighting gender disparities. Nonetheless, gender inequality still persists, particularly in the domestic work sector, where women, including migrants, do not adequately benefit from legislation meant to protect them. In this sector, wages are very low, and terms of employment are often extremely exploitative. Domestic workers struggle to afford quality extra lessons for their children. In many cases, they rely on friends who sometimes struggle to help in certain subjects. In 2015, South Africa's Department of Labour reviewed domestic workers' wages, coming up with a monthly payment rate of R1 900 (Republic of South Africa 2015). Such an amount is wholly inadequate to building enough capital to meet the educational needs of children. There is a need for greater government support for fair salaries, considering that domestic work makes productive work possible. The problem with low wages, especially when government gazetted, is that it constantly reminds migrants of their vulnerability to state practices of inclusion and exclusion.

Additionally, it is clear that even highly educated women take up employment in the domestic work sector, especially in the context of migration. This should be acknowledged in the review of salaries, since these women do not only provide domestic work services to the employer, but also participate and contribute to the education of the employer's children by helping with homework.

Despite legislation meant to protect the rights of women, a patriarchal society such as South Africa's has largely relegated housework and childcare to women. Migrant workers are also affected by these structural limitations. The above opinion, coupled with the largely informal nature of the job, results in the trivialisation of domestic work, an attitude which disadvantages mothers with children of schoolgoing age. Policy makers need to realise that, unless there is a change in approach, the feminisation and the cycle of domestic work will continue even though some of those affected are resisting.

Whilst we recommend that policy makers revisit laws involving domestic workers, it is necessary that feminist movements should participate in transforming the domestic work sector. This follows the perception that in domestic work the "oppressor" is a woman who in most cases is in full-time professional employment. The employer benefits from the status quo of domestic work by solely relying on the services of another woman to care for her children and do other domestic chores. For this reason, educated and professional women are encouraged to influence change in attitudes towards domestic work. Consequently, this article contributes to existing literature on how the human condition of migration limits mothers in their attempts to get fully involved in the education of their children.

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