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Towards Matricentric Feminism in the Caribbean: Inroads and Opportunities

Although feminist and nonfeminist scholars have attempted to debunk the stereotypical representations and framings of matrifocality in the Caribbean, many gaps remain. This article argues that even though much of the scholarship on the Afro-Caribbean family has not centred on the specific realities and struggles of Black mothers, there have been substantive attempts on the part of Caribbean feminists and other non-feminist scholars to trouble the inherent biases within early explorations and theorization of matrifocality in the Caribbean. Where the consensus has been on the persistent disparagement of the Afro-Caribbean family, these scholars have collectively carved out important starting points for the development of a scholarship on and for Black mothers in the Caribbean. However, moving the scholarship on Black mothers forwards requires more critical epistemological and ontological frameworks. The hope is for the advancement of maternal scholarship that captures both the oppressive and neocolonial representations of the Black mother and explores the relative weight and effects of existing structures and relations of power on their lives across time, contexts, and social backgrounds. Such line of questioning opens the door for new perspectives, complexities, and politics around Black motherhood within the context of the Caribbean.

Introduction

Although the notion of the matricentric or mothercentric family has been somewhat explored within broader examinations of the Black family, many theoretical and empirical gaps remain. Of note, is a general lack of research that speaks to the diachronic processes and relational aspects of the matricentric family, but with an inherent emphasis on the synchronic structures within (Staples; Barrow, *Families in the Caribbean*). Related concerns stem from a

general lack of distinction between the institution and the practice of mothering (Rich), and, of critical considerations for the misconceptions and misrepresentations of mothers (O'Reilly, *Matricentric Feminism*; Barrow, "Caribbean Masculinity"). In *Matricentric Feminism*, O'Reilly also contends that although mothers continue to be oppressed under patriarchal systems, there is a dearth of scholarship that explores how they have been structurally oppressed, how these social axes of power become embodied or resisted within their everyday experience, and how these social axes affect the specific identities, realities, and practices of mothers.

If we use these key areas as frames of reference to assess what O'Reilly (*Encyclopedia of Motherhood*, 736) referred to as "mother-focused" research or scholarship on matrifocality, then we have to acknowledge the many inroads made within existing Caribbean-based research. Of note is the centrality of matrifocal structures and practices to the research agendas of early European anthropologists and Caribbean feminists. Here, we see that the use of structural functionalism and the ideological references to heteronormative family systems and practices (particularly within early anthropological research on matrifocality in the Caribbean) served as a major impetus or "primary problematic of feminism in the post-colonial project" (Mohammed, "A Symbiotic Visiting Relationship" 122). In fact, such theoretical and ideological critiques largely underscore the weight of patriarchal thinking and practice, the extent to which these have historically structured the identity of women and mothers in the Caribbean, and, to which these have prompted varied adaptations overtime. No doubt, these points of examination counter oppressive patriarchal systems and cultural constructions related to motherhood and set important starting points for developing maternal scholarship in the Caribbean.

However, when we apply the governing principles and aims of matricentric feminism to the collective body of research on matrifocality in the Caribbean, inherent gaps persist. Of note, therefore, is the absence of an extensive scholarship that specifically interrogates motherhood as an institution, as identity, and as practice. What are also missing are noticeable attempts to reimagine mother-child relations, to develop activist agendas and practices related to empowering mothers, or, to address some of the social injustices that they confront. In fact, whether we explore the inherent thrusts of early anthropological research or the critical responses of Caribbean scholars, a tendency remains for the scrutiny of conjugal patterns and relations within the matrifocal family. As such, one can also argue that despite ongoing calls for giving voice to and for increasing the visibility of mothers within the Caribbean, this remains relatively untouched.

This article argues that even though much of the scholarship on the Afro-Caribbean family has not centred on the specific realities, struggles, and

practices of Black mothers, there has been substantive attempts on the part of Caribbean feminists and other nonfeminist scholars to trouble the inherent biases within early explorations and theorization of matrifocality in the Caribbean. As the focus has been on the persistent disparagement of the Afro-Caribbean family, these scholars have collectively carved out important starting points for the development of a scholarship on and for Black mothers in the Caribbean. To some extent, these investigations have produced counter-narratives and representations of Black families that are both culturally and relationally centred. However, given the need to develop a collective body of scholarship that explores the epistemic virtues (values, attitudes, and beliefs) within maternal thought (Ruddick), specific challenges and realities related to the institution of motherhood (Rich; Hays; Maushart; O'Reilly, *Matricentric Feminism*), and the diverse responses of mothers, many research possibilities remain.

The aims of this article are, therefore, threefold: to highlight the theoretical narrowness in the early anthropological research on the Black family; to draw on the contributions and inroads made by Caribbean feminists and other researchers in the early theorizations of Black woman and mothers; and to address the areas for further exploration in the advancement of maternal feminist scholarship. In assessing existing research on matrifocality in the Caribbean, the article addresses some of the early representations of the Black family, speaks to some of the scholarly contestations to existing constructions around the roles and structures within this family, identifies some of the areas of research that advance the scholarship on Black mothers, and explores some of the ways in which Caribbean researchers have spoken to issues of resistance and change related to mothers. These areas will be used to assess the scope of existing scholarship on Black mothers in the Caribbean and to underscore some of the prospects for moving this work forward.

Situating Matrifocality in the Caribbean

Matrifocality emerged as a core aspect of early (1950s) theorizations on lower-class Afro-Caribbean families (Barrow, *Families in the Caribbean*; Gonzalez). In such cases, the historical foci of anthropological studies within the Caribbean were on the mother-centred nature of the matrifocal family both as a structure and as a practice. At the heart of discussions and representations of the matrifocal family are those of the loosely configured nature of the mother-child relationship, the physical absence of the father, and the maternal nature of Black families. Such is evident in the diffusionist and cultural line of thinking around Black motherhood (Henriques; Smith, *The Matrifocal Family*; Simey), the general reference to the failure of the marriage movement in the Caribbean, and to the subsequent derailment of matrifocal relations. In the

case of the latter, attention to the affective roles that mothers are expected to take on and how these are embodied within their lived experiences as well as on the level of dominance or authority that the mother exerts within the household all unfold as expressions or manifestations of practice. These ideas are clearly discernable within the work of R. T. Smith (*The Matrifocal Family*), who spoke to the connection between matrifocality and cultural forms in the Caribbean and to others such as Michael G Smith and Hyman Rodman, who extended their analyses to issues of ideology and class.

What emerges within this body of work is the pathologization of matrifocality that imposes functional, heteronormative, and Eurocentric notions of the family. In fact, one can argue that an overriding concern among Caribbean scholars within the study of the family has been for the ideological biases within early explorations of matrifocal families. A more specific criticism has been for the use of Parsonian perspectives, which have rendered the practices and structures of Black lower-class families as inherently dysfunctional, stereotypical, and atypical (Barrow, *Family in the Caribbean*; Leo-Rhynie; Senior; Hall; Barrow, "Living in Sin"). Within such critiques are considerations for how the ideological and patriarchal frameworks have been discursively employed to justify claims of dysfunctionality within lower-class Afro-Caribbean families. Since the institution of marriage emerged as the reference point for analyzing conjugal family forms, criticisms advocated for the use of middle-class Western conceptualizations on what constitutes a family and on the roles and functions of men vis-à-vis that of women within the Caribbean. Such attention to the relative importance of race, class, and gender on understandings of motherhood as an institution, represents one of the many advancements within existing scholarship on Black mothers in the Caribbean (Anderson; Barrow, Caribbean Masculinity," *Family in the Caribbean*; Massiah; Mohammed, "The Caribbean Family Revisited"; Momsen, *Women and Change in the Caribbean*).

A clear extension of this theoretical progression also surfaces within nonfeminist treatment of issues related to maternal practice among Afro-Caribbean women. Of importance is the fundamental critique of the parallel reference to notions of the marginalized Black male with those related to the perceptions of the Black matriarch (Henriques; Smith, *Kinship and Class in the West Indies)*. The censuring of the association between matrifocality or matricentricality to male marginality becomes central to that of that process of naming and pigeonholing family systems in the Caribbean (Massiah; Senior; Barrow, "Caribbean Masculinity"; Clarke; Brereton, "General Problems"). As a case in point, Alfrieta Monagan has called attention to understandings of matrifocality that give relevance to or make sense of the functionality of marriage, mating patterns, and\or conjugal patterns within the household. In her work on Caribbean masculinity and family, Christine Barrow ("Anthropology") also argued against the normalization of the nuclear

family and gendered relations of power that affects understandings of their roles and statuses as well as influences how they are mutually constructed and constrained. A major push here is for more expansive frameworks that take into consideration the ideological and moral underpinnings around the constructions of the family and the extent to which these affect the relations of engagement therein.

Constructive examinations of the gendered ways in which mothering and fathering are perceived and practiced also represent another progressive area of research on Black families in the Caribbean. In many cases, researchers move towards an interrogation of the meanings and practices of mothering and from the historical foci on the structure and functions that emerge within. To some extent, Edith Clarke's seminal work *My Mother Who Fathered Me* represents a classical interpretation and representation of single women who raised and supported their children. However, a missed opportunity here is for a discussion around the processes through which the mother compensates for the absence of the father—a conversation that rests on the perceived importance of paternal functions within heteronormative sexual roles. Mindie Lazarus-Black contended however that while the work represents a way of rethinking family systems and practices among Afro-Caribbean peoples, it fails to trouble the value of gender hierarchies and ideologies that preconfigure the roles, functions and diverse engagements of men and women within the family. A call therefore is for deeper explorations of "culture's kinship events" as nonverbal expressions of the "rule governed events [which] give us a different perspective about how families operate, how they are shaped by a society's power relations, and why mothers never father" (Lazarus-Black 66). The central push is also for more critical examinations of the Afro-Caribbean family that connect the meanings and experiences of kinship to socially constituted axes of power that define maternal thinking and practice. Although there has been somewhat of an attempt to draw attention to the practice and thinking around mothering in the Caribbean, this gap still remains.

Capturing the Concerns of Black Mothers

The unique challenges and concerns that confront mothers in this process emerge as another aspect of matricentric feminism. Such concerns also remain core to feminist research on Black women and mothers in the Caribbean. In fact, although few narratives exist on the lived realities and complexities of Black mothers in the Caribbean, many Caribbean scholars have pushed for a movement away from what Monagan referred to as the "etic assumptions within notions of matrifocality" and towards more diachronic interrogations (related to the processes) as well as relational dynamics or realities of matrifocality. This is evident in the work of Michelle Rowley who argued that:

> The assumption that matrifocality exists primarily as a result of patriarchal contestations among men denies the fact that matrifocal forms are constructed within the dynamics of gendered inter and intra group relations, within institutional, ideological, and social forces which are challenged and supported by both men and women. The perpetuation of these forms cannot be seen as an unintended consequence of intra-male contestation. This denies the complex-and sometimes contradictory interrelatedness of gender relations and the constructions of our gendered identities. (27-28)

Where such theoretical questioning emerges, the issue becomes that of the broader politics of identity and gender relations that do not take into account various acts of resistance, agency, and autonomy both in the thinking and acting of women. An immediate consequence of this is the lack of visibility to the positionality, subjectivity, and responsivity of Black women. These create immense opportunities for furthering the scholarship on Black women in the Caribbean.

As a way of addressing such "contradictory subtleties of matrifocality," Rowley have called for renewed interrogations of gender dynamics as expressed through everyday narratives from the "matrifolk," described here as the "Afro-Caribbean, low-income, single female heads of households" (Rowley 29). In so doing, some germane issues or points for investigation emerge: sexuality, fertility, respectability, reputation, and the practices of Afro-Caribbean mothers. Even in so doing, there is still a need for new frameworks, new questions, and new ways of understanding these issues. Rowley, for instance, has warned in this case that unless such counter-narratives are engaged, then the likelihood is to ignore the specific realities, contexts, and ideologies that "relegate pregnancy, and by extension, womanhood, to little more than a lot and a burden to be carried throughout life" (Rowley, 37).

In advancing this line of thinking, Patricia Mohammed ("A Symbiotic Visiting Relationship") called for some sensitization that recognizes the extent to which the "creation of the nation state … the evolution of patriarchal control, the imposition of the dominant white male patriarchy, rules, regulations, and doctrines imposed by white colonialism, set the boundaries of black masculinity as it did for all femininity ("A Symbiotic Visiting Relationship" 122). The push here is for considerations of the political economy that also centres the cultural, social, and moral references embedded within historicizations and theorizations of matrifocality within the Caribbean. Such lenses have been substantively used in the interrogation of the social, economic, and historical factors that shape the peculiarities surrounding the politics of identity (Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad,* "General Problems"; Reddock; Barnes; Antrobus; Rowley and Antrobus; Rowley). Even here, many possibilities emerge for exploring new concepts and intersectional axes

of power (race, gender, class, ethnicity, just to name a few) that are relevant to the spatial and temporal realities of Black mothers within the Caribbean.

Clear examples of this the complexity within identity politics materialize through feminists' interrogations of issues related to sexuality, conjugality, as well as the respectability of Afro-Caribbean women. To a large extent, these empirical investigations have also provided important points of contentions for advancing the scholarship on Black mothers in the Caribbean. Within such analyses for instance are clear critiques of Eurocentric constructions of the family (Powell; Barrow, *Families in the Caribbean*), which have continued to (albeit in different ways) defeminize and desexualize Black women within the Caribbean (Beckles; Kempadoo; Robinson, "Beyond the Bill of Rights"). As a case in point, Robinson's treatise, "Properties of Citizens," captures the ways and extent to which colonialism—and its resultant structures of race, class, and heteropatriarchy—have shaped regulative regimes that control existing hierarchies within patterns of conjugality within the Caribbean.

Such conjugal hierarchies, where present, inherently lead to the marginalization of the unmarried and single mother, with little interrogation of how she continuously negotiates the need for legitimacy, equity, and equality within her everyday interactions. Some key points of contention, therefore, remain within perceptions of constitutional rights and the extent to which these mirror the lived realities of these women. The important contribution here is for the illumination of the complex connections between the ideological framing and structuring of the Black Caribbean mother and the extent to which regulative systems of power inadvertently shape the representations, identities, cultural expectations, and experiences of Black mothers.

On one level, such analyses provide critical points of reference and pieces of the complex puzzle that characterizes the realities for Black women in the Caribbean. On another level, these insights are relatively underexplored within existing examinations of the Afro-Caribbean family. More contemporary interrogations are needed that explore intersecting structures of power and how these both unfold and affect Black mothers who traverse various contexts and institutions.

Extending the Field: Complexities within Work-Family Domains

Examinations of the work-family challenges for women have also emerged as a specific field of research in the Caribbean, wherein scholars problematize the structured realities of women and mothers. However, there is a lack of attention to women's and mothers' roles within the productive sphere as well as sensitivity to the complexities and paradoxes embedded within. Such tensions are aptly addressed in what Barrow ("Caribbean Masculinity") referred to as the tensions that are created within the coexistence of "Afro-

centered economic autonomy and Euro-centered passivity" (169). In elaborating of this challenge, Janet Momsen ("The Double Paradox") has also addressed the tensions related to the coexistence of domestic ideology with that of the economic independence and engagement of women. An inherent thrust in this case has been on the weight of domestic responsibilities for women and the struggles that these introduce when women extend their economic activities to small-scale agriculture or other areas in search of new survival strategies in the hope of sustaining their families *(Momsen, Women and Change in the Caribbean*; "Development & Gender Divisions"). Rhoda Reddock has also pushed for greater exploration of global economic restructuring, structural adjustment policies in the region and their relationship to growing sources of tensions for women in the Caribbean. On the surface, the juxtaposition of economic autonomy with what can be perceived as cultural structuralism calls for a deeper interrogation of the structures and discourses that shape the everyday idiosyncrasies of women and mothers in the Caribbean. On a deeper level, these contradictions raise important lines of questioning related to the paradoxical nature of their social realities and the ambivalent nature of their experiences.

This is particularly the case for women within the entrepreneurial sphere. In fact, research within this area shows that Caribbean women (broadly speaking) continue to experience major barriers when they enter the labour market. In many cases, the main restraints have been those of gender discrimination, particularly concerning wage differentials (Barriteau, *Women Entrepreneurs and Economic Marginality),* the centrality of child birth and childrearing for women (Massiah; Reddock; Hart; Mohammed and Perkins; Lynch), and the lack of access to specific resources (training, finance, and networks) (Ferdinand; Reddock and Bobb-Smith; ACS). Victoria Gonzalez's interrogation of the realm of female familial responsibility also brings into disrepute the expectation that access to resources empowers women to carry out their maternal duties. Other Caribbean scholars have alluded to the important roles of cultural stereotypes and expectations on the choices that they make in relations to work and family (Mohammed and Perkins; Barriteau, *Women Entrepreneurs and Economic Marginality; Momsen*, "The Double Paradox," *Women and Gender Divisions of Labour;* Bailey and Rickett; Reddock and Bobb-Smith).

A major takeaway from these studies is that of how these stereotypes and expectations negatively shape the ability of women and mothers to meet the demands of work and family (Barriteau, *Women Entrepreneurs and Economic Marginality; Karides*; Verrest). The major contention is that moral expectations of mothering and gender relations remain central to their work-family practices, conflicts, and struggles located therein. It is against such findings that Eudene Barriteau has highlighted the oppressive nature and weight of gender constructions and relations that negatively impact the type and

intensity of work/family conflict that women confront ("Womem Entrepreneurs"). It is also for this reason that Momsen ("The Double Paradox") has contended that while Caribbean women exert a high level of economic autonomy, they remain overburdened. Barriteau has also addressed the gendered construction of Caribbean women and the extent to which these create dual pretensions of inclusion and exclusion ("Women Entrepreneurs" 221). In the case of women entrepreneurs, she asserts, for instance, that the "epistemological frame insists on perceiving and interpreting women's entrepreneurial activities through androcentric, patriarchal lens, and results in continued unwillingness by research officials to examine the factors, goals, and values that women decide are meaningful to informing their economic activity" (Barriteau, "Women Entrepreneurs" 231).

This research highlights the extent to which women's access to material and psychological resources are structured, embodied and contested within their lived realities. In my own research, I have attempted to make visible the nexus between the situational, moral, and cultural complexities for Afro-Caribbean mothers involved within the entrepreneurial sphere, the nuanced ways in which these intricacies are structured by varying axes or systems of power (race, class, gender, ethnicity, and nationality, for instance), and the specific choices that are made in relation to coping with the precarious nature of their work-life interface. I see these as important yet unfinished research agendas related to the work-family realities for Black Afro-Caribbean women and mothers.

Practice of Resistance; Impetus for Change

In *Matricentric Feminism*, O'Reilly outlines the need for political movements that actively seek to confront or challenge the burdens that motherhood as an institution create for mothers. This governing principle presents a significant imperative for research that centres the circumstances and experiences of mothers. In fact, there is a great need to consider how "mothering may be a site of personal agency and social change" (O'Reilly, *Matricentric Feminism* 20). Using the work of Wanda Thomas Bernard and Candace Bernard, O'Reilly shows the importance of critical consciousness, agentic expressions (whether spoken or enacted), and the politicization of the personal. As an agenda, O'Reilly asserts that "the overarching aim of empowered mothering is to confer to mothers the agency, authority, authenticity, autonomy, and advocacy-activism that are denied to them in patriarchal motherhood" (*Matricentric Feminism* 69). Since self-definition and determination emerge as central processes within agentic expressions and survival of Black women, research should underscore the socially constituted categorizations of women (those of race, class, and gender, just to name a few) that reaffirm the power that is

embedded within the Black experience; the patterns of epistemic violence that make invisible alternative ways of knowing or doing; and the ways in which Black women have challenged the status quo within their practices of mothering. Extending this focus to assessments of matrifocal research in the Caribbean requires asking questions related to how mothers challenge normative notions of mothering to develop systems and practices that sustain their children and themselves. These points of examination remain as critical starting points for naming while confronting the systems of oppressions that women continually confront.

An important aspect of demystifying the stereotypical and dysfunctional representations of Black Caribbean mothers is identifying and making sense of the alternative practices of mothering within the Caribbean. One such way in which Caribbean feminists have addressed this is through their attention to the value and significance of child shifting or shared mothering. In "The Double Paradox," Momsen called for contextualization and theorization that center the patriarchal nature of Caribbean societies and the ways in which these situate and provide meaning to notions of the family. As a way of counter-storying the realities of Black mothers, Momsen underscored the relative function and significance of shared mothering practices, which involve the use of grandparents and other relatives as a way of mitigating the strains of working within or across work and family boundaries. Other scholars also speak to the importance of these networks or mechanisms of support for the sustainability and social mobility of Afro-Caribbean mothers and women (Clarke; Rodman; Powell; Barrow, *Families in the Caribbean; Caribbean Childhoods*).

These maternal strategies were interpreted as an adaptive response to the particular set of circumstances that existed within these territories—an analysis that dismisses ethnocentric presentations of the Black family (Staples; Barrow, *Families in the Caribbean*). From as early as 1972, Robert Staples reminds us of the need to see female-dominated family structures as "very functional units which can maintain the stability of the social system" and to contextualize the many challenges or problems faced by female-headed black families (163). Such renaming serves as an important foundation for addressing the needs and concerns of Black women in the Caribbean. To some extent, this advocacy for the self-representation of Black mothers exists within the wider body of scholarship on families in the Caribbean. For instance, in *Families in the Caribbean,* Barrow also called for a reconceptualization of matrifocality:

> The proposal is to wipe the slate completely clean of persistent ethnocentrism and return to the fundamental questions of defining kinship within the Caribbean cultural context. Such an approach is intended to avoid the trap of synchronic economic reductionism and should therefore respond to the above criticisms by introducing

> cultural comparisons across race and class and by reinstating kinship ideology and history. (82)

A matricentric concept is needed that takes into consideration the complexities, flexibilities, pluralities, and ambiguities embedded within the realities and experiences of Afro-Caribbean women. On a deeper level, such critiques also problematize the ideological and historical underpinnings of early anthropological research on the family and the idealization of the co-resident and stable family as a cultural reference point to situate and reconfigure the Afro-Caribbean lower-class families. However, some caution is needed in the applicability of a matricentric lens. In thinking through notions of matricentric mothering, the challenge is for theorizations that unmask the colonial constructions of identity related to family and sexuality in order move beyond the ideological strata associated with matrifocality. If successful, this would serve as a crucial way of numbing the rigidity knowledge on and for Black mothers as well as function as an important way of advancing critical scholarship, praxes, and activism, which necessary for the empowerment of Black mothers.

Another contribution is that of Carla Freeman's presentation of issues related to the upward mobility of matrifocality. Specifically, she speaks to the emergence of new ideals of marriage and of matrifocality, which extend beyond lower-class Afro-Caribbean women to include white middle-class women. Using this as a starting point, she invites new examinations and treatment of matrifocality that centre some of the structural and relational changes within the family that continue to unfold under the neoliberal regime. Freeman contends therefore that as part of the neoliberal thrust towards entrepreneurialism, "the reconfiguration of domestic life, relationships, and identities has given matrifocality a different footing, broadening it purview for women in this group" (102). Here, upward mobility is presented as an "expansion of a particular kind of strong, caring femininity that stands at the economic and emotional center of social life" (102). Matrifocality is used in this sense to capture a "resilient gendered cultural model [that] emphasizes a woman centered kinship and social network … as a template for a robust, flexible, independent femininity not only for the poor … but for all women, even those imagined to be staunchest gatekeepers of respectability" (103). In this sense, matrifocality also emerges as an alternative yet conscious form of femininity and resistance among middle-class White women. These developments or observations redefine not only white femininity within the Caribbean context but also how matrifocality is both theorized to reflect "gendered sensibilities, feelings, and practices" (129). Such observations and writings, therefore, push for new lines of social inquiry that transcend race, ethnicity, and class boundaries and move toward storying the intra and inter-categorical struggles and strengths of matrifocal families within the Caribbean.

Conclusion

Although the mushrooming of Caribbean research on the Afro-Caribbean family has opened some critical conversations and spaces for confronting social inequalities and injustices of Black mothers, many areas of scholarship and activism await further advancement. The potential here is for creating a collective body of scholarship in the Caribbean centring the lived realities and narratives of Black mothers. Given the decades of misrepresentation and disempowerment of Black mothers within existing research, important questions still linger: what are the ideological, discursive, and spatial peculiarities that underpin existing constructions of Caribbean women? (ii); how have Black women attempted to negotiate or resist these constructions? (iii); and how do we deconstruct the historical "othering" of Black motherhood while engaging in new theorizations on and activism for black mothers?

The call is for epistemological and ontological frameworks on and for Black mothers in the Caribbean that move beyond oppressive and neo-colonial representations and that seek to underscore the relative weight and impacts of existing relations of power on the lives of these women across various geo-spatial contexts, socio-economic, or cultural backgrounds. On one level, the promise of matricentric research is for a theoretical and methodological shift that makes visible epistemic forms of violence levied against Black mothers and the multiple ways in which these have both othered and punished the Black body. On another level, the possibilities are also for countering the narratives and cultural caricatures that suppressed both the thinking and practices of Black mothers. Such scholarship opens possibilities for deconstructing while politicizing the activities of Black Caribbean mothers, while centering how they make sense of their subjectivities, sensitivities, and practices as mothers across time and context.

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