CHAPTER 1 **CITY OF MOMS**

If you've ever been pregnant, the "geography closest in" gets real strange, fast. Suddenly, you're someone else's environment. And everything about how your body moves through the world and is perceived by others is about to change.

I was pregnant with my daughter Maddy over a typically dreary London winter and through what felt like an unusually warm spring and summer. I had a part-time office job in Kentish Town. My commute from Finchley Central was only five Tube stops but most days it felt interminable. When I worked a morning shift, my nausea would force me off the train at Archway where I'd stumble to a bench and try to calm my stomach before gingerly re-boarding a new train. Before I was visibly pregnant there was no chance of being offered a seat, no matter how waxy and green my face. This lack of hospitality didn't improve much even after my belly expanded.

I was determined to be one of those pregnant people who carried on with their normal lives as though nothing had changed. This was long before Serena Williams won a Grand Slam tournament while pregnant but, I was channeling that kind of spirit. I was a recent women's studies graduate with my own copy of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. I was prepared to be fierce and stick to my feminist principles in the face of the pathologizing, misogynist medical profession. I soon found that since midwives still dominated pre- and post-natal care in Britain, my anger at the system was a little

misdirected. But I wasn't at all prepared for the way that my place in the city was changing.

I hadn't yet heard of "feminist geography" but I was certainly a feminist, and my feminist self was bristling at every turn. My body had suddenly turned into public property, available for touching or comment. My body was a big inconvenience to others and they didn't mind letting me know. My body's new shape had taken away my sense of anonymity and invisibility in the city. I could no longer blend in, become part of the crowd, people watch. I was the one being watched.

I didn't know how much I valued these things until they were gone. They didn't magically re-appear after my daughter was born, either. Pregnancy and motherhood made the gendered city visible to me in high definition. I'd rarely been so aware of my embodiment. Of course my gender is embodied, but it's always been there. Pregnancy was new and it made me see the city in new ways. The connection between embodiment and my experience of the city became much more visceral. While I'd experienced street harassment and fear, I had little sense of how deep, how systemic, and how geographical it all was.

THE FLÂNEUSE

As a woman, a complete sense of anonymity or invisibility in the city had never fully existed for me. The constant anticipation of harassment meant that any ability to glide along as one of the crowd was always fleeting. Nonetheless, privileges such as white skin and able-bodiedness gave me some measure of invisibility. Blending seamlessly into the urban crowd, freely traversing the streets, and engaging in detached but appreciative spectatorship have been held up as true urban ideals since the explosive growth of industrial cities. The figure of the flâneur, emerging prominently in Charles Baudelaire's writing, is a gentleman who is a "passionate spectator" of the city, seeking to "become one flesh with the crowd," at the centre of the action and yet invisible.[31] The philosopher and writer of urban life Walter Benjamin further crystallized the flâneur as an essential urban character in the modern city, and urban sociologists such as Georg Simmel located traits like a "blasé attitude" and the ability to be anonymous as inherent to the new urban psychology.[32] Not surprisingly, given the perspectives of these writers, the flâneur was always imagined as a man, not to mention one who is white and able-bodied.

Could the flâneur be female? Feminist urban writers have been divided here. Some see the model of the flâneur as an exclusionary trope to critique; others, as a figure to be reclaimed. For those who reject the idea, women can never fully escape into invisibility because their gender marks them as objects of the male gaze.[33] Others say the female flâneur has always existed. Calling her the flâneuse, these writers point to examples like Virginia Woolf. In Woolf's 1930 essay "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," the narrator imagines glimpses into strangers' minds as she walks the streets of London, musing that "to escape is the greatest of pleasures; street haunting in winter the greatest of adventures."[34] In her own diary, Woolf wrote "to walk alone in London is the greatest rest," implying that she found a measure of peace and detachment among the surging crowds.[35] Geographer Sally Munt proposed the idea of the lesbian flâneur as an urban character who sidesteps the usual pathway of the heterosexual gaze and finds pleasure in observing other women.[36]

Lauren Elkin attempts to recover the invisible history of the flâneuse in her book *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City*. Elkin argues that women have been simultaneously hyper-visible and invisible in the streets. Always watched, yet written out of accounts of urban life. She describes her own youthful experiences of *flânerie* on the streets of Paris, long before she knew it had a name: "I could walk for hours in Paris and never 'get' anywhere, looking at the way the city was put together, glimpsing its unofficial history here and there…. I was on the lookout for residue, for texture, for accidents and encounters and unexpected openings."[37] Elkin insists the reluctance of men like Baudelaire, Benjamin, and Simmel to imagine a female flâneur comes from their inability to notice women acting in ways that didn't fit their preconceived notions. Women walking in public were more likely to be read as streetwalkers (sex workers) than as women out for another purpose. But Elkin writes, "If we tunnel back, we find there always was a flâneuse passing Baudelaire in the street."[38]

I have to wonder though, is the flâneuse ever pregnant or pushing a stroller? Artist and scholar Katerie Gladdys' video "Stroller Flâneur" plays on the word stroller (a synonym for flâneur) as it depicts her pushing a baby stroller through her Gainesville, Florida neighbourhood. As the mommy flâneuse, she searches for "patterns and narratives in the genealogies of architectural structures and topographies while simultaneously searching for

items of interest for [her] son." Gladdys claims that "the performance of strolling a child is indeed one of the social processes of inhabiting and appropriating the public spaces" of the city. While I agree, and I would argue that moms pushing strollers are invisible in their own way, they're not usually associated with the classic figure of the flâneur.[39] And even the reclaimed flâneuse still inhabits a "normal" body, one able to move in unremarkable ways through the streets. None of the writers who talk about *flâneuserie* give mention to the pregnant body. While not all those who experience pregnancy are women (e.g. trans men), it's certainly a state rife with gendered assumptions. If it was already a stretch to imagine the female version of the flâneur, then the idea of a pregnant flâneur is likely beyond the pale.

A PUBLIC BODY

It's impossible to blend in when your body has suddenly become public property. Although women often experience comments on our bodies and uninvited physical contact, pregnancy and motherhood elevate these intrusions to a new level. People read my protruding belly as if it said, "rub here please!" I was expected to cheerfully welcome all manner of unsolicited advice and to express appropriate amounts of shame and remorse for any lapse in following the reams of often contradictory "expert" tips on eating, drinking, vitamins, exercise, work, etc. I was no longer an individual making my own choices. It was like they'd been crowdsourced without my consent.

All of this made me extraordinarily aware of my body, and not in a good way. If the urbanite's blasé attitude toward others is what allows each of us to maintain some sense of privacy in the crowd, its loss made me feel very public. I was embarrassed by my belly's showy-ness, tackily thrusting my intimate biology into the civilized public sphere. I didn't want to glow. I wanted to hide. I wasn't trying to disguise my pregnancy, but I was overcome with an urge to modesty that no amount of feminist body positivity could shake. My friends loved to tease me about the number of crop tops in my wardrobe, but I could never bring myself to wear a shirt that exposed my belly even a little while pregnant. Was I trying to put a barrier between myself and the many strangers who felt comfortable commenting on or touching my body? Was it part of my perplexing embarrassment over being such an obviously biological animal? Had I unknowingly embraced the

Cartesian mind-body split for so long that my body's sudden assertiveness made me doubt everything I knew about myself?

Perhaps ironically, strangers' fascination with my body didn't translate into much of an uptick in urban courtesy. In fact, I sensed a constant, low-grade reminder that I was now different, Other, and out of place. This was most obvious to me on the Tube, where I was rarely offered a seat during my rush hour commute. Posh businessmen deliberately buried their faces in the broadsheets, pretending not to see me. One time I relinquished my seat to an even more pregnant woman before anyone took notice of either of us. Anna Quindlen tells an identical story about being pregnant in New York, offering her seat to a woman who "looked like she should have been on her way to the hospital." "I love New York," Quindlen writes, "but it's a tough place to be pregnant.… There's no privacy in New York; everyone is right up against everyone else and they all feel compelled to say what they think."[40] People who have been pregnant share these sorts of stories with a wry chuckle, like old war stories, as if they're rights of passage when you're pregnant in the city. As if it's all to be expected for daring to leave your home with your messy, inconvenient body.

My efforts to reclaim the spirit of the flâneuse resumed after Maddy was born. Maddy would sleep for ages if she was strapped into a baby carrier, snug against my chest. I'd plot a route to a newly opened Starbucks with my trusted London A-Z map book and head out for a simple treat: a latté and fresh scenery. These breaks in the exhausting routine of feeding, rocking, bathing, and so on felt like a tiny bit of freedom. I almost remembered what it was to be a young person in the city before having a baby.

Sometimes these outings went well, sometimes not. My attempts to be the mommy flâneuse were continually interrupted by the messy biology of a newborn. Places that used to feel welcoming and comfortable now made me feel like an outsider, an alien with leaking breasts and a loud, smelly baby. It's hard to play the detached observer when the fleshy, embodied acts of parenthood are on full display. I wanted to be indifferent about it all, believe me. While Maddy snoozed away I could almost pretend that I wasn't seconds away from a wet disaster. When she woke, hungry or dirty, I scuttled off to the public washroom to ensure that no one had to bear witness to the natural realities of parenting.

I'd never realized how gutsy it was to do things like breastfeed in public. I knew intellectually that I was "allowed" to nurse my baby anywhere, but

the thought made me cringe. The weird mix of reactions to my body that I'd experienced while pregnant taught me that I could never predict how I'd be made to feel. It was jarring to be revered and resented in equal measure. I was a divine figure in need of protection, but also out of place and taking up space in ways that make other people uncomfortable. The fact that news items about people being asked to leave public places while breastfeeding pop up on a regular basis—with breastfeeding explicitly protected by human rights laws in Canada—suggests that strong convictions about the proper place of breastfeeding parents remain in place.

When behaving correctly, keeping my inconvenient body contained, and parenting my baby in ways that satisfied dozens of strangers at once, I received smiles and assistance. The instant my presence became too big, too noisy, too embodied, I met angry glares, snide comments, and sometimes even physical aggression. There was the man who kept shoving me forward while in line at the grocery store. When I asked him to stop he told me to "get my damn stroller out of the way." There was the woman on the incredibly crowded bus who called me a bad mother because Maddy accidentally stepped on her foot. There was the sales clerk in a Toronto department store who actually told me to wait while she finished serving a customer when I rushed up to the desk because Maddy had toddled off out of sight. Obviously she was found, but only thanks to another mom who rushed into action when she heard the panic in my voice.

This level of rudeness didn't happen every day, but underlying all of this social hostility was the fact that the city itself, its very form and function, was set up to make my life shockingly difficult. I was accustomed to being aware of my environment in terms of safety, which had a lot more to do with *who* was in the environment, rather than the environment itself. Now, however, the city was out to get me. Barriers that my able-bodied, youthful self had never encountered were suddenly slamming into me at every turn. The freedom that the city had once represented seemed like a distant memory.

A WOMAN'S PLACE

As I tried to navigate an unfamiliar set of everyday routines as a new mom, the city was a physical force I had to constantly struggle against. Wasn't the city supposed to be the place where women could best juggle the demands of their double and triple days of social reproduction, paid work, school, and myriad other roles? Didn't my PhD supervisor proclaim that a "woman's

place is in the city"?[41] If that was true, why did every day feel like a fight against an enemy that was invisible yet all around me?

It's true that I could walk to the grocery store, café, parks, and many other places I needed to access. I could take transit to school and the nearest subway stop was within walking distance. There were community centres and schools with programs for small children. Maddy's day care was reasonably nearby. I could function without a car. Compared to the suburbs, this kind of urban density offered a lot more ways to manage parenting, grad school, and domestic responsibilities. In fact, what Gerda Wekerle (my supervisor) was responding to when she wrote "a woman's place is in the city" in the 1980s was the nightmare of suburban living.

There is of course a long history of feminist critiques of the suburbs. Betty Friedan's 1963 diagnosis of the "problem that has no name" included a scathing indictment of suburban life:

> Each suburban wife struggles with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night, she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question—'Is this all?'[42]

From *The Stepford Wives* to *Desperate Housewives, Weeds* to *Mad Men*, suburban life has generated endless stereotypes. The Valium-popping housewife, the overprotective mom, the housewife with a dark secret, etc. And there's no small amount of things to critique in terms of lifestyle, gender roles, and racial and class inequality. But feminist geographers were also looking at the very material of the suburbs, their form, design, and architecture as foundational sources of the "problem that has no name."

We take the suburbs largely for granted now as a kind of organic outgrowth of big cities and a result of a natural need for more space and bigger family homes. However, the suburbs are anything but natural. Suburban development fulfilled very specific social and economic agendas. From providing much-needed housing for returning soldiers and their growing families to giving a boost to the post-war manufacturing sector, the suburbs were an essential component of a plan to sustain economic growth, especially after World War II. In North America, government programs facilitating home ownership turned us into nations of home owners, tying workers to their mortgages in a move that some felt would produce a more conservative, and importantly, anti-communist society. The residential real

estate sector grew into one of the most significant components of the twentieth-century economy—so significant, that when the U.S. housing sector was undermined by risky lending practices in 2007, it triggered a global economic crisis. Perhaps most critically, as feminist architect Dolores Hayden notes, "single family suburban homes have become inseparable from the [North] American dream, of economic success and upward mobility. Their presence pervades every aspect of economic, social, and political life."[43]

The economic role of suburban development was essential, but there was a social agenda as well, one that would massively affect race and gender relations. In the U.S., the post-WWII suburban boom coincided with a period when millions of African Americans were leaving the rural south in search of better opportunities in the industrial cities of the north. Rapid increases in the Black population of these cities tested the tolerant attitudes of the "progressive" north. Many white households preferred to decamp to the suburbs in a phenomenon that became known as white flight. Indeed, many early mass-produced suburbs such as the famous Levittowns were explicitly "whites only." Over the long term, this pattern meant that non-white communities were confined to the crumbling, underfunded, and over-policed inner city and denied opportunities for wealth accumulation via home ownership. This is a major factor in continuing urban patterns of racial segregation and wealth disparity well into the twenty-first century.[44]

If the racial effects of suburban development linger today, so too do the gendered effects. Hayden puts it succinctly: "Developers argued that a particular kind of house would help the veteran change from an aggressive air ace to a commuting salesman who mowed the lawn. That house would also help a woman change from Rosie the Riveter to a stay-at-home mom."[45] Post-war propaganda was explicit about the need for women to relinquish their wartime factory jobs to returning men and the suburban home was the perfect "fix" for re-establishing normative gender roles. By providing a spatial solution to the temporary widening of women's horizons, the public-private, paid-unpaid work divide could be "naturally" re-established between the sexes.

The suburban lifestyle both assumed and required, in order to function properly, a heterosexual nuclear family with one adult working outside the home and one inside. Large houses, isolated from transit and other services,

meant the stay-at-home wife and mother was required to perform a full-time domestic caretaker role, overseeing the home and managing the needs of the breadwinner and children. As feminist planner Sherilyn MacGregor states, this built form has "created a lasting infrastructure for the [gendered] division of labour," one that pre-supposes the traditional heterosexual nuclear family.[46]

Hayden contends that only a small fraction of households includes the sole male breadwinner/unemployed housewife with minor children. Indeed, this model has likely always been a small proportion of households and it rarely represented the lives of Black and working class women. And yet the predominant residential landscape is designed with this ideal. Because the built environment is durable over long time spans, we're stuck with spaces that reflect outdated and inaccurate social realities. This, in turn, shapes how people live their lives and the range of choices and possibilities that are open to them.

During one of my not-infrequent rants about this, a friend accused me of giving the suburbs "too much agency" in this example. So let me clarify: the suburbs are not consciously *trying* to keep women in the kitchen and out of the workplace, but given the assumptions they rest upon, the suburbs will actively (if not agentically) stymie attempts to manage different family shapes and working lives. The isolation, size of the family home, need for multiple vehicles, and demands of child care can continue to push women either out of the workplace or into lower-paying, part-time jobs that mostly allow them to juggle the responsibilities of suburban life. It's rarely the male breadwinner's career that is sacrificed or downsized. After all, given the long-standing gender pay gap, it makes no sense to limit the man's earning potential. In this way, the suburbs continue to support and naturalize certain kinds of gender roles in the heterosexual family and in the labour market.

THE CITY FIX

Gerda Wekerle and many others argued that relative to the suburbs, cities offered much better prospects for women working outside the home who needed to juggle multiple conflicting roles. For families headed by women, "their very survival," argues Wekerle, is dependent "on a wide network of social services frequently found only in central city areas."[47] Research in the 1970s and 1980s found women use the city more intensively than men, are "more involved in work, neighbourhood and cultural activities than suburban

women and most of these opportunities are lost when they move to the suburbs."[48] In the early 1960s, famed urban planning critic Jane Jacobs challenged the prevailing idea that the suburbs were good places for women and children. She noted isolation, a lack of people on the streets, and car dependency as concerns that particularly affected women while also contributing to the decline of the public realm in general.[49]

The city, however, isn't a magic fix for these concerns. Leaving aside the question of whether making it easier for women to take on disproportionate household burdens is the end goal, cities still contain multiple barriers. Cities are based around the same kinds of assumed social norms and institutions as the suburbs. Geographer Kim England writes that gender roles are "fossilized into the concrete appearance of space. Hence the location of residential areas, work-places, transportation networks, and the overall layout of cities in general reflect a patriarchal capitalist society's expectations of what types of activities take place where, when and by whom."[50] All forms of urban planning draw on a cluster of assumptions about the "typical" urban citizen: their daily travel plans, needs, desires, and values. Shockingly, this citizen is a man. A breadwinning husband and father, able-bodied, heterosexual, white, and cis-gender. This has meant that even though cities have a lot of advantages relative to the suburbs, they're certainly not built with the aim of making women's "double shifts" of paid and unpaid work easier to manage.

We can see this in the way that public transit has been set up, particularly since the rise of suburbia. Most urban public trans-portation systems are designed to accommodate the typical rush hour commute of a nine-to-five office worker. What little transit that does exist in the suburbs is designed to carry this commuter in a specific direction at a specific time. The whole system assumes a linear trip without detours or multiple stops. And this has worked pretty well for the usual male commuter.

However, research shows that women's commutes are often more complex, reflecting the layered and sometimes conflicting duties of paid and unpaid work.[51] A mother with two small children uses the local bus to drop off one child at day care when it opens at eight, then doubles back on her journey to leave the other child at school at eight-thirty. She gets on the train, rushing to work for nine. On the way home the journey is reversed, with an extra stop to pick up missing ingredients for dinner and a pack of diapers.

Now laden with packages, a stroller, and a child, she fights her way back onto the crowded bus to finally head home. Many transit systems will force her to pay multiple times for this trip and for the children, too. If she lives in the suburbs, she might even have to pay to access different municipal systems. Recent research has found that transportation is yet another area where women pay a "pink tax" (paying more for similar services than men). Women are more likely to rely on public transportation than men, although they're more poorly served by it. Sarah Kaufman's research showed that in New York City for example, women who are primary caregivers for children may be paying up to seventy-six dollars extra per month on transportation costs.[52]

When I became a mum, I quickly realized that using public transit with a baby stroller in London was a joke. Although a lot of Tube stations have elevators because the stations are so deep underground, only fifty out of two hundred and seventy stations are accessible.[53] Curved staircases, random steps, steep escalators, sharp turns, narrow tunnels, and of course thousands of commuters and tourists make navigating the system an adventure. One of our first big outings with newborn Maddy was to a baby show (like a home show, but with baby stuff). We had a big comfy pram, of the kind still common in the U.K. and Europe, that we'd found at a charity shop. It might as well have been a spaceship, that's how out of place it was on our journey. That was the first and last time we used the pram. We learned that the only accessible way to navigate the city with a baby was with her in a carrier.

Once back in Toronto, Maddy was rapidly getting too big for the carrier. There was no way to avoid taking the stroller on the TTC. At the time, none of my local stations had elevators or even down escalators. Every time I wanted to go down the steps, I had to stand at the top and wait for someone to offer help. We'd awkwardly and somewhat unsafely lug the stroller, taking up way too much space and slowing everyone down. Once Maddy was big enough, I moved her into the most compact stroller possible, one light enough to hoist onto my hip. It wasn't ideal, but better than the time a man insisted on helping me and ended up falling backwards down the steps. Luckily, he released his end of the stroller before he bumped down a dozen steps on his rear end. I was mortified, although he was ultimately unhurt. Young mother Malaysia Goodson wasn't so lucky. She died after stumbling on the steps of a New York City subway station while carrying her daughter in a stroller. Although her death wasn't a direct result of the fall, this dangerous moment

highlights a "nightmare scenario" that parents risk everyday on inaccessible and crowded public transit systems.[54]

Architect and new mother Christine Murray asks "What would cities look like if they were designed by mothers?"[55] Transit issues loom large in her discussion, as she recalls crying when her nearest Tube station was revamped without an elevator. She also laments the lack of space on buses for wheelchairs, connecting lack of accessibility for mothers to issues facing seniors and disabled people. Every aspect of public transit reminded me that I wasn't the ideal imagined user. Stairs, revolving doors, turnstiles, no space for strollers, broken elevators and escalators, rude comments, glares: all of these told me that the city wasn't designed with parents and children in mind. I sheepishly realized that until I faced these barriers, I'd rarely considered the experiences of disabled people or seniors who are even more poorly accommodated. It's almost as though we're all presumed to want or need no access to work, public space, or city services. Best to remain in our homes and institutions, where we belong.

The idea that the design, funding, and scheduling of mass transit systems are gender equality issues has seen little traction, despite transit being a major area of women's urban activism. In 1976, women in the northern city of Whitehorse developed the Yukon's first mass transit system (four minibuses) as a response to the lack of access to good paid employment that women faced in the cold, sprawling city.[56] In 2019, young women from a slum resettlement colony in South Delhi recorded a rap song about their urban lives, tackling one of their biggest concerns: "the absence of a safe and affordable commute."[57] Mostly, those who run mass transit systems have shown a willful ignorance about women's needs. When a pregnant commuter traveling to and from work in London in 2014 was forced to sit on the floor when passengers refused her a seat despite her direct request, she complained to the rail company. They suggested that if she felt unwell she could pull the emergency cord or simply avoid travel during rush hour.[58]

GENTRIFYING MOTHERHOOD

When we moved back to Toronto, high rents pushed me further out of the central city than I would have liked, but at least I had some access to shopping and services in my neighbourhood, right? True, but what I started to glean was that these conveniences stemmed partly from the fact that my

neighbourhood was in the early stages of gentrification. Gentrification is basically the process whereby working class, lower income neighbourhoods get taken over by middle-class households and businesses. There are a lot of causes and forms of gentrification, but my neighbourhood—the Junction—was experiencing a kind of start-stop slow motion transition when I first moved there in early 2000. My local "amenities" included a Blockbuster Video and a No Frills grocery store. There were a few playgrounds but at least one was often filled with trash and needles. Still, I could walk to the main commercial strip for most of our basic needs, and things weren't yet too expensive.

Early feminist writing on gentrification noted that a "back to the city" movement for middle-class families works like a geographic fix for the problems women face juggling work and home.[59] As women entered the higher-paying professional workforce in ever-greater numbers, postponed the age of marriage and child-bearing, and even opted out of the heterosexual family altogether, they sought urban environments that could accommodate their needs and provide the necessary services. As feminist geographer Winifred Curran puts it, "women were not only potential beneficiaries of gentrification, but drivers of the process" as well.[60] Theorists predicted that given these gendered trends in the workforce, family, and housing, major shifts in the land use patterns of cities would surely follow. However, no fundamental changes have occurred that actually alter the city in ways that serve women's equality. Indeed, we could argue that many changes, including widespread gentrification, have made urban environments less resourceful for the majority of women.

Gentrifying neighbourhoods attract amenities that serve middle-class parents: clean parks, cafés, bookstores, places to buy fresh and wholesome food, etc. They're often located near good transit routes and centred around good schools, especially in the U.K. and U.S. According to Curran,

> Gentrification offered a market-oriented, individualized, privatized spatial solution to the problem of work-life balance. With urban planning failing to catch up to the lived experiences of urban dwellers, those who could afford to found more advantageous spaces in which to attempt the balance, "rediscovering" inner city neighbourhoods which offered easy access to downtown jobs and other amenities.[61]

But Curran goes on to note that even the class-based advantages brought by gentrification don't fundamentally disrupt either the gendered division of

domestic labour or the urban infrastructure designed to accommodate the movement and work patterns of men. She argues, and I agree: "the narrative of urban living for the affluent tends to minimize, or ignore altogether, the role of care and family in urban design."[62] The lack of play spaces, preschools, and sometimes even grocery stores in proximity to new urban housing developments such as condominiums suggests that planners and policy-makers are still not interested in providing workable/liveable spaces for families, even those who can afford to live in these shiny new urban habitats.[63]

Care work is still very much an afterthought in cities, and gentrification doesn't suddenly make things easier, especially for the majority of women for whom the "amenities" of gentrification are out of reach. In my experience those amenities are a bit of a double-edged sword when coupled with the social trend that some have called the "gentrification of parenting." This concept builds on the idea of "intensive mothering," a term coined by sociologist Sharon Hays that she defines as "child centred, expert guided, emotionally absorbing, labour intensive, and financially expensive."[64] These accelerated expectations around the amount of dedicated, undivided attention parents are supposed to provide are unprecedented. As maternal scholars like Andrea O'Reilly argue, intensive mothering and a new "mystique of motherhood" emerged just in time to add fuel to the fiery backlash toward women's increased social, sexual, and economic independence in the 1970s and 1980s.[65]

This intensification manifests in a variety of conspicuous consumption practices and aesthetics that some have called the "gentrification of parenting." The norms and cultural signifiers of good parenting have been gentrified as they're increasingly defined by the particular product brands, styles, and kinds of activities purchased and practiced by middle and upper class urban households. This plays out in the urban environment as middle-class parents demand and draw resources to their neighbourhoods and provide a market for upscale shopping and carefully curated child-centred activities. [66] The amount of time, money, and emotional labour required to do this parenting work is simply not available to most families and mothers in particular.

Reminiscing about those early years of parenting in my gentrifying neighbourhood doesn't evoke a sense of ease. In fact, it evokes a deep bodily

sense of exhaustion. Sure, lack of sleep is typical for new parents. What I'm referring to is the physical exertion of intensive parenting in the city. I picture my younger self, pushing a plastic-wheeled stroller across sidewalks and streets choked with snow and ice. Loading the stroller full of groceries several times a week because we didn't have a car. Note: this is supposed to be one of the "convenient" parts of city living. Half-carrying, half-dragging that stroller home because a wheel would disintegrate after taking a battering on pocked pavements. Multiple daily trips to the park, a literacy drop-in, or a community centre play space to fulfill my daughter's "need" for enriching, sociable, exciting activities. Evening transit trips to swimming lessons downtown. The constant back and forth of day care, school, errands, lessons, visits to family and friends. I want to go back in time and tell myself: stay home. Lie down. Do less.

Doing less didn't seem like an option at the time, although many of the stay-at-home moms in my neighbourhood were stunned to learn I was taking a full graduate school course load. What they didn't know was that school was the easiest part of my day. Being in my head for a few hours, without being immediately responsible for the tiniest demands of another human *and* worrying about her mental and emotional growth … it was so peaceful. Even the archetypal suburban mom of the 1950s wasn't expected to constantly entertain her children. But the supposedly emancipated urban mom of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries must fulfill a complex set of domestic responsibilities alongside all of this child enrichment, usually while working outside the home as well. And she does it in spaces most decidedly not set up to support her labour.

I used to think that Maddy's city childhood—and my urban parenting—was much different from the suburban childhood I had in the 1980s. It seemed like she had a lot more fun activities oriented to her interests and a lot less sitting in the car waiting for parents to finish their errands. That part is probably true, but certainly intensive parenting was already on the rise in the 1980s. I remember weekends filled with synagogue, dance lessons, baseball practices, swimming, skating, and Hebrew school as well as chores and schlepping across Mississauga on a seemingly endless series of domestic errands. My parents were doing their best to manage the demands of home, work, and parenting in an increasingly sprawling landscape with one car and only one driver's license between them.

Before she learned to drive, my mom would often walk forty-five minutes or an hour just to run a simple errand. Maybe she just wanted an excuse to get out of the house, a little time to herself in the shops without grumpy children in tow. Looking back, I see that we were performing pretty similar juggling acts as moms. Although living in the city meant that I had better access to transit and services, it was hardly a magic solution to the multiple demands on my time.

More affluent families manage these contradictions by relying on others' low-waged labour. Immigrants, women, and men of colour perform the outsourced work of social reproduction when families can't manage on their own or when the state refuses to help (for example, by providing affordable child care). As a graduate student with a partner working in a low-paying blue-collar industry, I didn't have much to spare for paid services. Even so, when the time and energy demands of all that juggling wore me down, we justified going deeper into credit card debt for extras like grocery delivery and transit passes. Paying for Maddy's various activities wasn't all about enrichment; these activities functioned as childcare so I could steal thirty minutes to do schoolwork in the pool gallery. My own enrichment—completing higher education—relied in part on the availability of the underpaid labour of others (delivery people, child care workers), driving home for me how the lack of public infrastructure for care work deepens inequality among women as we participate in multiple layers of exploitation in order to keep ourselves afloat.

This imbalance has global implications, reshaping the lives of mothers in cities around the world. As the demand for help with domestic care labour rises among wealthier working women, transnational women migrants have been conscripted to fill this care labour deficit. In Singapore, domestic workers from the Philippines and Indonesia allow Singaporean women to participate in the city-state's drive to become a world-leading financial and communications-centred global city. Feminist geographers Brenda Yeoh, Shirlena Huang, and Katie Willis note that, as in many other cities, Singaporean women who work outside the home have been unsuccessful in transferring a sufficient share of domestic and childcare responsibilities to men, compelling them to rely, often reluctantly, on foreign domestic maids.[67]

In Canada, thousands of women—mostly mothers themselves—from places like the Philippines and the Caribbean come to Canada as temporary migrants to work as nannies, housekeepers, and home care workers. Feminist

geographer Geraldine Pratt's long-term research with Filipina migrants in cities like Vancouver has highlighted stories of loss and disconnection, as mothers leave their children behind—sometimes for decades—to care for children in Canada. Back home, their children are raised by husbands, grandparents, relatives, or neighbours in a patchwork of care arrangements that sow a heartbreaking emotional distance that might never be overcome. Pratt describes the ways in which the former lives of Filipina migrants are made invisible to us here in Canada, with separation from their husbands and children just a "shadowy existence" that our reliance on their labour forces us to forget.[68]

When my marriage ended, the demands only intensified. The nights Maddy spent at her dad's place weren't especially restful. Drop-offs and pick-ups meant more bus trips with the added stress of betting on the timing of an unreliable system to avoid irritating the other parent. Extra tasks and expenses now included journeys to lawyers and counselors, courts, and social workers. I struggled to figure out how I could possibly be everywhere I had to be while coordinating Maddy's care and supervision. I was writing my dissertation and teaching classes at three different universities, adding expensive trips on the Greyhound bus and commuter trains to my already inefficient daily travel patterns.

There were times when Maddy had to be left alone for short periods or walk herself halfway to school before meeting a friend. The gaps in the fabric of our household were constantly expanding. Looking back, I don't really know how I managed it all without disaster striking. Certainly, my privileges as an educated, white, cisgender woman helped to keep us all afloat, but I wasn't immune to increased surveillance from the state in the form of social workers who demanded that Maddy be provided with certain services. They of course didn't provide those services. That fell to me. I learned firsthand how the state shifts burdens to mothers and how poorly my neighbourhood and city supported me.

The really annoying thing is that there was nothing unusual about my situation. The traditional nuclear family is no longer the norm. Cities are full of blended families, complex kinship relations entailed by divorce and remarriage, lone parents, queer relationships, polyamorous families, foster families, migration of family members, non-family households, multi-generation households, empty nesters, and more. But you wouldn't know it by looking at the way our cities and their suburbs are designed to function.

Ideally, all of these diverse kinship networks could open up possibilities for sharing the work of social reproduction, care-giving, and child-raising in creative, even feminist, ways. For that to happen, however, our neighbourhoods and cities have to support it. The massive construction of small one or two-bedroom condominium units in high rise apartment buildings has left a shortage of affordable housing for families. Clogged roads and expensive transit systems make it difficult to get kids to and from the homes of extended kin, and then on to school, daycare, and activities. A lack of secure, full-time employment for many parents means juggling the demands of precarious work and perhaps being forced to leave a convenient neighbourhood to find suitable work. Gentrification pushes out single parents, low-income people, and affordable services, scattering kin across the city.

THE NON-SEXIST CITY

Although the full diversity of family and household forms may be somewhat new, ideas for creating housing developments and even whole neighbourhoods that collectivize and facilitate care work can be found as recently as the 1980s and 1990s and as far back as the late 1800s in North America. Hayden's book *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* detailed the utopian schemes and sometimes actual homes and communities designed by early materialist feminists who argued that housework and childcare must be socialized and incorporated into new spatial arrangements to facilitate women's entry into the workforce, equality with men, and intellectual development.[69] Visions of the "non-sexist city" often centre housing issues, noting that the nuclear family home is a really inefficient way to utilize labour, one that keeps women tied to the home with little time or energy for other pursuits.[70] Housing developments that allow households to share the work of cooking, cleaning, and caring for children are common features of feminist designs. Wekerle notes that in the 1970s and 1980s, before federal funding for subsidized housing was scaled back in the first wave of neoliberalism, a variety of cooperative housing developments that focused on lower-income groups with specific needs—single mothers, older women, disabled women—were built in cities across Canada.[71] These examples can remind of us that there are already existing alternatives. Some of the work of imagining the non-sexist city has already been done.

When I started my master's degree with a child under one year of age and no way to afford day care (wait lists for subsidized spots were outrageous), I scrambled to find time to complete my work. Luckily, I met Anneke. We had classes together and discovered that we were both the primary caregivers for very young kids. I started bringing Maddy to Anneke's house two days a week and we took turns watching the kids while one of us left for a few hours to study. The little bit of extra time afforded by what I liked to call the "city's smallest babysitting co-op" made a huge difference. At the time, I thought that we were just lucky. I didn't realize that we were part of a long tradition of mothers and other caregivers coming up with ingenious arrangements for doing care work in the city. These creative practices of "getting by" have informed feminist urban interventions since the nineteenth century.

Yet, many decades after trenchant critiques of how cities and suburbs fail mothers and other caregivers, the same problems remain. Under neoliberalism, most of the "solutions" generated for those problems have been market-based, meaning they require the ability to pay for extra services, conveniences, and someone else's underpaid labour. Very few changes, especially in North American cities, have re-imagined and re-worked the built environment and other aspects of urban infrastructure in ways that take care work seriously.[72]

In Europe, "gender-mainstreaming" approaches to urban planning and budgetary decisions have a longer history. Essentially, these frameworks mean that every planning, policy, and budget decision has to be considered with the goal of gender equality as the departure point. For example, policymakers must ask how a decision will potentially enhance or undermine gender equality. These approaches push cities to consider how decisions support or stymie the care work that literally keeps society functioning.

The city of Vienna has adopted a gender mainstreaming approach in several areas, such as education and health care. But it has had a profound affect on urban planning.[73] Echoing the experiences of women around the world, and my own experiences too, women responded to a 1999 transit survey with their stories of complex journeys balancing care and paid work: "I take my kids to the doctor some mornings, then bring them to school before I go to work. Later, I help my mother buy groceries and bring my kids home on the metro."[74] Transit use illustrated some of the vast discrepancies between men's and women's use of city services and spaces. Vienna

attempted to meet this challenge by redesigning areas to facilitate pedestrian mobility and accessibility as well as improving public transport services. The city also created housing developments of the sort imagined by feminist designers, including on-site childcare, health services, and access to transit. With the objective of making sure that everyone has equal access to urban resources, Vienna's gender mainstreaming approach is "literally reshaping the city."

Taking a gender-centred perspective on planning doesn't have to be limited to wealthy global north cities. Women in informal settlements in global south mega-cities are also working to reclaim urban planning. Faced with critical challenges such as poverty, lack of secure tenure, poor sanitation, and few sexual and reproductive health services, women have often banded together to form collectives that help them improve economic opportunities and advocate for security of housing and tenure. For example, the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia is a collective offering "shared security of tenure and housing to their members, thereby improving women's opportunities to get better public services and generate income."[75] Prabha Khosla identifies "gender-sensitive slum upgrading" as an area of action, noting that women must be included as decision-makers to ensure access to affordable land, with close proximity to work and essential services.

Gender mainstreaming is slowly making its way into more cities. Recently, news media seemed amused to report that some Canadian and U.S. cities were using a gender analysis on their snowplow budgets and schedules.[76] While it's fair to say that snow doesn't discriminate, decisions about which roads and areas to prioritize for clearance reveals a lot about which activities are valued in the city. In most cases, cities plow major roads leading to the central city first, leaving residential streets, sidewalks, and school zones until last. In contrast, cities like Stockholm have adopted a "gender equal plowing strategy" that instead prioritizes sidewalks, bike paths, bus lanes, and day care zones in recognition of the fact that women, children, and seniors are more likely to walk, bike, or use mass transit. Moreover, since kids need to be dropped off before work begins, it makes sense to clear these routes earlier. The vice mayor of Stockholm, Daniel Helldén, described the plan to Canadian media, arguing that instead of plowing in ways that reinforce car-centred behavior, Stockholm's method encourages everyone to use alternative modes of transportation. Instead of

replicating the status quo, their plan looks forward to "how you want your city to be."[77]

Gender mainstreaming has its limitations. City officials in Vienna note there's a danger of reinforcing already existing gender norms and roles around paid and unpaid work, for example.[78] For example, in Seoul, efforts to make working women's commutes easier—with everything from "high heel friendly" pavements to "pink" parking spots designated for women—have not been matched by state efforts to balance inequities in domestic and childcare labour.[79] Taking gender as the primary category for equality can also be limiting. While the typical urban citizen has too often been narrowly imagined as a white, cis, able-bodied, middle class, heterosexual man, the imagined female citizen of gender planning has been similarly limited. A married, able-bodied mother with a pink- or white-collar job has usually been the imagined beneficiary of gender-sensitive planning. This woman is increasingly likely to represent a minority in most contemporary cities, suggesting that there are large groups of women whose needs may be unmet by gender mainstreaming.

Travelling outside of the central city illustrates these disparities and their spatial components. When I started my PhD, my commute up to York University on the Keele Street bus took me through low-income, racialized neighbourhoods where even more outrageous demands on mothers became apparent. Although still technically urban, these are neighbourhoods where walking to a full-service grocery store is rarely an option. Taking public transit means waiting unsheltered in the freezing cold or blazing sun for inaccessible, unpredictable buses. Fulfilling daily needs means making multiple stops at different shops and strip malls. The prospect of these moms finding thirty minutes to read the paper in a Starbucks during the baby's nap seemed highly unlikely.

Geographer Brenda Parker writes compellingly about the experiences of low-income African American women in Milwaukee.[80] Parker argues that gentrification and cutbacks to urban social services result in "amplification" and "intensification" effects on the everyday lives and labours of these women, effects that get written on the body in the form of exhaustion, illness, and chronic pain. Navigating the city isn't just tiring in terms of negotiating treacherous stairs and overcrowded transit. These inconveniences are layered with the time- and energy-sucking work of navigating both "state and

'shadow' provisioning options, such as travelling to food pantries and churches; meeting with social workers, teachers, and food stamp offices; and the endless waiting at agencies and health clinics."[81]

Combined with over extended, poorly paid workdays, this labour meant that even the basic responsibilities and joys of parenthood fell out of reach. One of Parker's interviewees, "Audra," shared her experience: "Because you're spending fourteen hours a day on an eight-hour a day job. So when you get home you're too tired to help them with their homework."[82] These struggles are only exacerbated by gentrification. Low-income racialized women are more vulnerable to displacement, getting pushed into under-serviced areas where the benefits of urban living—interconnected access to places of employment, schools, services, retail, transit, and home life—are decidedly thinned out.

These areas may also be zones where air pollution and issues such as contaminated water further affect the work of mothering. Urban environmental geographer Julie Sze writes about the high rates of respiratory illness among children of colour in poor neighbourhoods, where mothers are centrally responsible for the intensive work of asthma management.[83] The struggle to provide clean water for drinking, cleaning, and bathing in the context of the Flint water crisis is another example, not to mention the work of caring for children affected by lead poisoning. As the work of motherhood becomes costlier via the gentrification of parenting, those who can afford privatized services benefit while those who cannot are shoved into neighbourhoods that make their lives even harder.

In Milwaukee, the racially-divided geography of the city also affected mothers' abilities to find good work close to home. Research with mothers in Johannesburg found that the legacies of apartheid and its lingering geographies of segregation continued to shape the choices mothers make with respect to home, work, and school in the city. For example, great disparities in the quality of schools, reflecting raced and classed geographies, meant that many mothers had to consider uprooting in order to move within the catchment range of a good school, even if that meant losing out on employment opportunities and family support. Dangerous public transport systems also meant that mothers were reluctant to send their children alone, meaning that they had to juggle work and home alongside school travel.[84]

Confronted with a dearth of support from city policy and infrastructure for their lives, low-income women are forced to find ways to weave care and paid labour together. In Parker's Milwaukee research, women "took their babies with them while they drove the bus for work; … not uncommonly, two or three families lived together in a one- or two-bedroom apartment. There, women watched each other's children while one person 'provisioned' the household through paid labor."[85] In Johannesburg, women sometimes made the heartbreaking decision to have their children live with relatives because the limited range of choice in places to live and work hampered their ability to give their children access to amenities or good schools. These kinds of strategies have long been described by Black feminist writers like bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins, who contend that Black women's social reproductive work has mostly been subject to punitive measures by the state, such as having children taken away or being subject to "workfare" policies.[86] Feminist activism around domestic labour has typically centred the white, heterosexual married woman and ignored the particular needs and concerns of women of colour.

While it can be dangerous to romanticize the survival strategies of low-income people of colour, their tactics and resistance strategies push feminists to think beyond gender mainstreaming. In *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance*,[87] Zenzele Isoke explores how Black women resist and rework the meanings of urban space and urban politics in what she calls a "despised" city: Newark. Facing long-term disinvestment in their communities and high levels of state violence, Black women in Newark, argues Isoke, use practices of "homemaking" in the city to reconfigure a "hostile and deeply racialized landscape."[88] Here, homemaking means "creating homeplaces to affirm African American life, history, culture, and politics. Homeplaces are political spaces that black women create to express care for each other and their communities, and to remember, revise, and revive scripts of black political resistance."[89] An urban politics of care is enacted not only through an attachment to place, but as "an active and *collective working toward* physical, symbolic, and relational transformations."[90]

As a state-centred, "single issue" strategy, gender main-streaming can only take us so far. And let's face it, relying heavily on the state for radical transformation is a waste of time, and perhaps even dangerous for Black and

Indigenous people and people of colour who have been deemed expendable or positioned as "problems" to be solved or disposed of in the "progressive" city. Isoke's study illustrates the power of forging alliances across diverse communities to combat racism, sexism, and homophobia to "confront and transform [the] structural intersectionality" of oppressions in the city.[91] I want cities to enact policies and create spaces that make care work and social reproduction more collective, less exhausting, and more equitable. However, I know we have to look for deeper change and more expansive and liberatory imaginings of the city in the spaces and communities that are already practicing ways of caring that bust the binaries of paid and unpaid work, public and private spaces, production and social reproduction.

Pregnancy and parenting as a woman in the city awoke my feminist urban consciousness. While experiences such as sexual harassment on city streets weren't new to me, the tightly tangled workings of social and spatial forms of exclusion—the ways the built environment and social relations collide and intermingle—were suddenly tangible. The limits on the kinds of urban subjectivities I could inhabit were crystal clear. The boundaries of anonymity, invisibility, and belonging were stark. The effects of overt forms of gendered embodiment on my day-to-day life were pressing. In this context, motherhood for me was a catalyst, one that operated through anger, frustration, disappointment, and occasionally joy, for wanting to imagine feminist urban futures.

What would care-full urban futures look like? Futures that were based around the needs, demands, and desires of women of colour, disabled women, queer women, single women caregivers, aging women, Indigenous women, and especially those for whom these identities intersect? It's clear that the time has come to decentre the heterosexual, nuclear family in everything from housing design to transportation strategies, neighbourhood planning to urban zoning. This means that city planners and architects can't take the white, able-bodied cis man as the default subject and imagine everyone else as a variation on the norm. Instead, the margins must become the centre. Although the lives of an aging widow in the inner suburbs and low-income lesbian moms renting in a gentrifying neighbourhood will look different, interventions to improve access to city services and amenities for one will likely benefit the other. Accessible transportation, plowed sidewalks, affordable housing, safe and clean public bathrooms, access to a community garden, a liveable minimum wage, and shared spaces for things

like meal preparation would relieve burdens on many kinds of households, not to mention contribute to other important goals such as environmental sustainability.

A feminist city must be one where barriers—physical and social—are dismantled, where all bodies are welcome and accommodated. A feminist city must be care-centred, not because women should remain largely responsible for care work, but because the city has the potential to spread care work more evenly. A feminist city must look to the creative tools that women have always used to support one another and find ways to build that support into the very fabric of the urban world.