

Extensive mothering: Employed mothers' constructions of the good mother ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Pdf available for purchase ^[2]

Abstract:

Social scientists have provided rich descriptions of the ascendant cultural ideologies surrounding motherhood and paid work. In this article, I use in-depth interviews with a diverse sample of 40 employed mothers to explore how they navigate the "intensive mother" and "ideal worker" ideologies and construct their own accounts of good mothering. Married mothers in this sample construct scripts of "extensive mothering," in which they delegate substantial amounts of the day-to-day child care to others, and reframe good mothering as being "in charge" of and ultimately responsible for their children's well-being. Single mothers describe extensive mothering in different ways, and their narratives suggest less accountability to the "intensive mothering" model. Mothers in this sample also justify employment in novel ways: They emphasize the benefits of employment for themselves-not only their children-and they reject the long work hours imposed by an ideal worker model. The article ends with the implications of extensive mothering for the motherhood and employment literatures and for gender equality.

Related link: Employed mums prefer working even if they don't have to ^[3]

Region: United States ^[4]

Tags: mother's labour force participation ^[5]

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