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A Critical Exploration of Ideology and Agency in Intensive Motherhood Literature

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of
Montclair State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

MAYA AUTRET

Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

January 2022

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Brad van Eeden-Moorefield

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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A Critical Exploration of Ideology and Agency in Intensive Motherhood Literature

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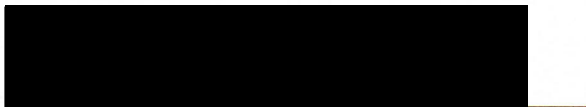
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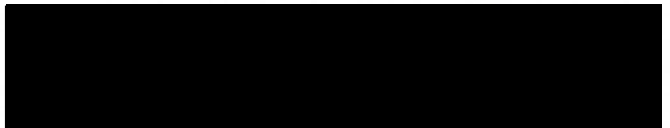
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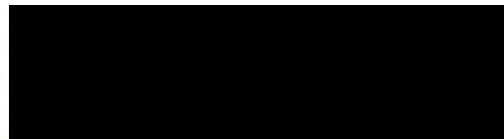
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AbstractA CRITICAL EXPLORATION OF IDEOLOGY AND AGENCY
IN INTENSIVE MOTHERHOOD LITERATURE

by Maya Autret

This dissertation explores how scholars have extended Sharon Hays' (1997) influential work on Intensive Motherhood Ideology (IM). In conceptualizing IM, Dr. Hays proposed that IM ideology leads women in cisgender heterosexual unions to spend more time caregiving despite increased participation in paid work, compared to prior decades. Dr. Hays further asserted IM is a form of resistance to neoliberalism (i.e., capitalism based on a free-market system). However, it is unclear to what degree women are driven by an oppressive ideology and/or are making important social contributions based on conscious choice, which carries important implications for women's agency. Through content analyses, I examine scholars' treatment of ideology and agency across IM literature. Additionally, I engage in an autoethnographic study to make meaning of how I perceive women's (and my) experiences reflected in the literature. Findings suggest limitations and androcentric perspectives that affect our understanding of motherhood. Most scholars focus on how women adhere to IM ideology, rarely why. Authors' positions on agency are clearly articulated in only a small subset of articles. Participants are often described as adapting to or negotiating with a pervasive ideology within their unique contexts and only some manage to resist. I also find that women's social constraints are ignored or considered in limited ways. Lastly, such limitations in IM literature risk tainting the larger motherhood literature with such perspectives. Implications of these findings are discussed, and suggestions made to promote a more representative and accurate understanding of women's lived experience.

Keywords: agency, autoethnography, contemporary motherhood, ideology, intensive motherhood, maternal gatekeeping, sharon hays, social influence, work-family conflict

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Dedication

To my family. You are my Everything.

And to all the parents and caregivers out there who want to and should Have It All.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation represents a journey rooted in a personal story (Wall, 2008), my story as a working mother, who left the corporate world and ventured into academia to explore the topic of motherhood. However, for a fuller understanding of this journey, we must go further back in time (Tummala-Narra, 2009). Recounting my story here, I include citations from the literature that reflect findings like my own experience. Prior to having children, I had always assumed I would somehow manage both a career and a family (Stone, 2007). As a child of divorce, I also resolved to be financially independent, to never rely on a man. Additionally, as a child of immigrant parents who worked long hours, I wanted to ensure my children a better experience than I had staying home alone as a *latchkey kid* (Katz Rothman, 1989). I wanted to be home for my children as much as possible. Inevitably, I discovered the same conflict many women experience when faced with the realities and demands of trying to balance work and family (Blair-Loy et al., 2015). I resolved that I would have to compromise. Thus, after achieving multiple degrees and careers and marrying a wonderful, supportive man, I decided to stay home with my children during their early years, a time that brought me unprecedented joy (De Marneffe, 2019). Yet, before my three children all turned three, I was back in full-time paid employment.

During the ensuing years, I led a successful career in business. My responsibilities and salary constantly grew, even as I transitioned from full-time to part-time to freelance positions in my efforts to secure greater flexibility to be home more (Stone, 2007). Yet, I also found myself increasingly overworked while excluded from important meetings and projects and underpaid relative to my male counterparts (Crosby et al., 2004). Additionally, I was discovering that contrary to my expectations, my children needed more care as they grew, not less (Slaughter,

2012). I also continued to shoulder the bulk of the care and domestic work at home (Hochschild, 2012). Eventually, feeling burned out and depressed, I decided to take a break from the corporate world, recover, and reassess (Stone, 2007).

Several months after I resigned, in the aftermath of the 2016 election when my dreams of seeing the first woman president elected in the U.S. were dashed, I reconsidered my long-time dream of returning to school in pursuit of a PhD while remaining at home with my children. My interests focused on feminist studies and understanding how other mothers fared in managing both work and family. Fortunate for my acceptance at Montclair State University's Family Science and Human Development doctoral program, I eagerly dove into research on motherhood.

This dissertation reflects the PhD journey that followed, in which my focus narrowed to explore the literature's treatment of how and why women internalize social ideals concerning motherhood (Hays, 1997), and whereby work and family are a central theme. Throughout, while aiming to build on existing knowledge and fill gaps within this body of scholarship, I also remained attuned to my relationship with the literature as both an academic and a mother (Crossley, 2009), constantly considering my own experiences with respect to the research. As such, this journey is both personal and political (Mies, 1998).

Given the personal facet of this work, it is crucial to acknowledge from the outset that my positionality as a cisgender heterosexual, married, middle-class, highly educated, White mother, plays an important role in this research. Most notably, it affords me opportunities and insights that would arguably differ substantially from those of a different positionality (Devault, 2010). Hence, my positionality inevitably also affects the way I view the research, a body of work nevertheless mostly focused on women of similar demographic traits as my own.

In the next section, I discuss briefly the evolving dynamic of motherhood literature, and the different aspects of maternal experience on which it focuses in recent decades, which are central to this dissertation. Subsequently, I look at the importance of how and why women mother intensively, the integrality of ideology and agency, as well as calls for new approaches to motherhood scholarship. Finally, I outline the statement of purpose for the overall research program, as well as for each individual manuscript.

Motherhood Literature

Adrienne Rich's (1976) oft-cited statement that, "All human life on the planet is born of woman" (p. 11) remains famous despite being obvious. Indeed, motherhood is a largely ubiquitous social experience and, in recent decades, has become a topic of prolific scholarship. This may be attributed to the constant change and evolution of mothers' roles and identities over the centuries (Arendell, 2000). Such developments have led scholars to see motherhood as a social construct (Loyal et al., 2017), its meaning changing within society over time. Consequently, scholarship on motherhood has similarly evolved in its attempt to keep up with new understandings of motherhood in its ever-shifting social context. For example, following the Women's Liberation Movement and its urging of middle-class women to join the paid workforce, women's participation in the paid workforce became more commonplace. This inevitably impacted family life (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000) as new care arrangements had to be found for many children. These significant societal changes prompted scholars to examine child outcomes in the context of maternal employment (Arendell, 2000). Subsequently, scholars became concerned with the increased commodification of caregiving and the importance and value of caregiving in society (Katz Rothman, 1989). More recent scholarship following decades of women's participation in the paid workforce has found that care work continues to be

undervalued whereas women's desire to spend time with their children is completely ignored (De Marneffe, 2019), regardless of women's paid work pursuits. Thus, scholarly examination of motherhood in the context of work and caregiving continues to develop.

Accordingly, motherhood is a dynamic concept studied within a constantly changing societal context. Yet, its dynamism can also potentially pose challenges to scholarship (Arendell, 2000). In scholars' attempts to elucidate the evolving nature of motherhood with the aim of better understanding it, the concept becomes vulnerable to oversimplifications (Scharp & Thomas, 2017) and monolithic perspectives (Murray, 2015). These can also limit or distort (Grabwoska, 2011) our knowledge of women's maternal identities and experiences (De Marneffe, 2019; Walls et al., 2016). For example, comparing employed and stay-at-home mothers (Johnston & Swanson, 2007) or low-income and middle-class mothers (Layne, 2015) helps to identify differences related to mothers' employment or class status, but leaves many other facets of their lived experience overlooked. For instance, we miss learning what motivates women's approach to mothering or the extent of their agency in making decisions related to work and caregiving.

Feminist literature has hardly offered any reprieve from the confusion and contestation concerning motherhood, particularly in the context of paid work (Lerner, 1986). Some feminist scholars see motherhood as an impingement to feminist progress and liberty (De Marneffe, 2019). Additionally, motherhood scholarship and feminists alike continue to increasingly emphasize the primacy of paid work (Smart, 2007). However, others argue that such perspectives are androcentric (Spade & Willse, 2016), a masculinist approach reflective of the historically male viewpoint that maintains a strict separation between private and public spheres. Moreover, some scholars have highlighted the increasingly pervasive influence of neoliberalism which

emphasizes individualism, paid work, and capital accumulation (Braedley & Luxton, 2010).

Hence, despite its ubiquity and longevity within our society, motherhood remains a complex and contested topic of scholarship (Arendell, 2000). Next, we look at the various aspects of maternal experience which scholars have addressed in recent decades.

Different Aspects of Maternal Experience in Motherhood Literature

Despite the inevitable overarching societal shifts, ambiguities, and challenges described above, literature on motherhood continues to grow significantly in many ways. The literature has come to address many aspects of life (Kawash, 2011) across a widening range of demographic traits, including economic class (Verduzco-Baker, 2017), sexual orientation (Suter et al., 2015), race (Dow, 2016), and age (Sheriff & Weatherall, 2009). That said, the extant literature most often focuses on cisgender heterosexual couples. Motherhood literature also includes discourse and empirical research on stay-at-home mothers and mothers in the paid labor force, part-time and full-time. Other areas of scholarship include mothers' need to juggle multiple roles (Murray, 2015), their work-family conflict (Rollero et al., 2015), and how it affects their careers (Kemkes-Grottenthaler, 2003; Kuperberg & Stone, 2008; Masterson & Hoobler, 2015) and mental health (Roest et al., 2010). Scholars have also looked at the role social policy plays with respect to maternal employment (Blair-Loy et al., 2015; Craig & Mullan, 2011).

A recurring concern raised within this burgeoning body of work relates to how women internalize and adhere to societal ideals relating to motherhood (Baker, 2009). This concern emerges from the intensifying demands surrounding both paid work and family. Literature has highlighted the increasing push for both women and men to spend more time and energy in paid employment and their striving to be ideal workers (Blair-Loy, 2001). At the same time, scholarship has also focused on the ever-increasing pressure on mothers to invest more time and

energy on their children (Nomaguchi, 2009; Warner, 2006) regardless of their employment status. It is in the context of the dual demands of devoted worker and mother (Blair-Loy et al., 2015; Pedersen, 2016) that the role of societal expectations surrounding motherhood comes into focus. Intensive Motherhood (IM) literature, a growing body of scholarship within the larger motherhood literature scholars, examines women's adherence to an ideology that endorses spending more time and energy mothering compared to prior generations (Hays, 1997). This area of research has expanded steadily and continues to influence the general body of motherhood literature (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020) since Hays' (1997) publication of her seminal book, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. As the number of women entering the paid workforce rose, Hays (1997) identified that despite spending more time in the paid workforce women were also increasing the time and energy they dedicated to their children. Hays (1997) attributed this behavior to women's adherence to an IM ideology that is, "child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive." (p.8). Yet, she also concluded that women do so in resistance to the growing influence of neoliberalism. In other words, women consciously invest time and effort in the relational work of caregiving to counterbalance against the ever-increasing centralization of paid work and capital accumulation. These features of Hays' (1997) thesis reflect two key tenants of ideology and agency, which are a central focus in this research program and are discussed in further detail below.

The Importance of How and Why Women Mother Intensively

Since its publication Hays' (1997) book is increasingly cited (See Chapter 2) and IM scholarship has become a research niche and influence on the broader swathe of motherhood literature (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). Hays (1997) devotes most of her book to describing how mothers are influenced by a seemingly hegemonic ideology. Her latter point, as to why women

adhere to IM ideology (as resistance to neoliberalism), only appears at the end of the book, and can easily be overlooked. Yet, understanding why women adhere to the ideology is as important as understanding how they adhere to it. Hays (1997) herself warns that overlooking why women mother intensively can be dangerous. Such oversight can result in mothers being perceived as merely influenced by social ideals and their social contribution undermined. Devoting time and energy to nurture and tend to children, family, and community (Robertson et al., 2019) foster important relational dynamics filled with important meaning and purpose within society (Nodding, 1986). Ignoring the value of such efforts can also result in a distorted, decontextualized perspective (Grabowska, 2011) of motherhood. For example, some scholars attribute women's preoccupation with ensuring healthy foods for their children as an adherence to IM ideology (Afflerback, 2013). Others (Mackendrick, 2014) characterize such maternal efforts as an important form of care that helps limit the ingestion of unhealthy chemicals and as mothers also take to the public sphere, advocate for healthier practices among food industries for all. Although both perspectives may be true to an extent, explaining women's behaviors solely based on the notion of adherence to IM ideology overlooks important intentions and contributions. Hence, both facets of Hays' (1997) thesis are important – how women adhere to the ideology as well as why. However, oversight of the latter point as to why women adhere can lead to misperceptions of women's behavior. Such perspectives also ignore or undermine women's agency. Even if mothers are influenced and motivated by ideology, their capacity to think and act independently must be considered in tandem (McNay, 2016).

The Integrality of Ideology and Agency

Indeed, agency is an important consideration in the context of Hays' point as to why women mother intensively in adherence to IM ideology. In examining one's adherence to

ideology, it is equally important to consider their capacity as autonomous actors (McNay, 2016). In other words, the two concepts of ideology and agency are interlinked and cannot be understood independently of each other (McNay, 2016).

Literature on ideology and agency often convey a certain ambivalence about how these two concepts work together. On the one hand, cultural ideology and social influences are frequently described as pervasive and hegemonic in their influence over individuals (Bourdieu, 1998; Foucault, 1978; Zizek, 2008), affecting us in every aspect of life (Bartky, 1990; Beard, 2017; Oksala, 2011; Silva, 2005). At the same time, individuals are not viewed as indiscriminate followers of social scripts (Chang, 2008). They have free will (Foucault, 1994), a capacity to independently think and act (Bourdieu, 1998) and create meaning through their actions as they actively contribute to the make-up of society (Zizek, 2008). In fact, agency is seen as a universal capacity, though one's social context and constraints (McNay, 2016) affects individual options and how their agency manifests within their unique context (Spade & Willse, 2016).

This latter point is especially crucial to consider with regard to maternal agency, to better account for the complexity of women's lives (Sinclair, 2017) and social structures that constrain them in ways that do not inhibit men (Budgeon, 2015). For example, although paid employment has offered women greater independence and choice in life, returning home to domestic and care responsibilities not adequately shared by their partners results in their having to shoulder the burden alone (Hochschild, 2012). This dual burden can lead women to burn out, scale back, or quit altogether (Stone, 2007). Hence, when examining mothers' adherence to ideology, agency is equally important to consider. Additionally, as the literature highlights, understanding one's social context is critical to better discerning their agency. Consideration of their social context

helps to avoid oversights, androcentric perspectives, and assumptions that often permeate the literature (Spade & Willse, 2016).

To sum, Hays' (1997) work carries important implications concerning women's adherence to ideology and agency. It has also increasingly come to influence the burgeoning motherhood literature (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). Additionally, our social context has continually evolved in the decades since the publication of her work, particularly when as many as 56% of women currently participate in paid employment (U.S. Department of Labor, 2020). As such, an assessment of how scholars have adopted her work is timely and warranted. Doing so would also allow us to increase our understanding of how IM scholarship has evolved (Krippendorff, 2019). Moreover, such a retrospective analysis would enable us to assess the more specific concern as to whether Hays' (1997) latter point about why women adhere to the ideology is addressed in IM scholarship. It also affords an opportunity to explore authors' positions on and descriptions of agency. In short, our interest focuses on maternal ideology and agency within IM literature.

The justification for doing so is that scholarship on motherhood shapes our understanding of women's experiences, motivations, intentions, and constraints. However, omissions and underlying assumptions can potentially limit and distort that understanding of motherhood (Grabowska, 2011) and of women's realities (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). We therefore narrow our focus to ideology and agency in IM literature while considering Hays' (1997) point about the importance of understanding why women adhere, their social contribution, and agency. To our knowledge, IM literature has not been examined to assess whether Hays' (1997) question about why women adhere to IM ideology has been incorporated. Nor has the issue of maternal agency been investigated directly within this same body of literature. While some scholars (Clarke,

2015; Peng & Wong, 2013) include agency as a facet of their empirical research, the coupled notions of ideology and agency has not been explored.

Calls for New Approaches to Motherhood Scholarship

Concern about potential limitations and distortions within the motherhood literature has led to calls for new approaches to understanding motherhood, both within the general motherhood literature (Arendell, 2000) and IM scholarship (Caputo, 2007; Myers, 2017). This trend is hardly novel and has evolved over the years. For example, in light of the dramatic increase of mothers' participation in the paid workforce, Katz Rothman (1989) highlighted the need to reexamine the notion of care work in a new way that demands a more collective approach to childrearing and places greater emphasis on the needs of the child. A decade later, Arendell (2000) stressed the need for new scholarship to address ambiguities surrounding the meaning of motherhood by examining such questions as what motherhood entails in our contemporary context. In the recent decade, other scholars have pointed out monolithic perspectives (Murray, 2015), oversights, and oversimplifications (Scharp & Thomas, 2017) that gloss over the complexity of women's lives (De Marneffe, 2019). For example, scholars have highlighted gaps in our knowledge about the connection between women's work and their social context (Walls et al., 2016), how personal experience influences their mothering (Tummala-Narra, 2009), and considerations of maternal desire and affect (De Marneffe, 2019). Further limitations have been identified specifically within IM literature, such as deliberations of children's needs, paternal responsibility, and what parenting should and does entail, which are often overlooked (Johnston & Swanson, 2007). Additionally, certain populations that fall outside the middle-class White heterosexual ideal are also often excluded from the IM literature (Verduzzco-Baker, 2017).

Hence, in studying motherhood (and IM in particular) and taking into account its potential for distortions and limitations, it is important to heed such calls for new approaches to researching motherhood. Further, new approaches can include methods that provide researchers opportunities to offer new perspectives garnered through personal experience (Tamas, 2016). Inclusion of personal perspectives can offer insights previously overlooked in the literature, such as personal experience (Tummala-Narra, 2009), maternal desire (De Marneffe, 2019), and social context (Walls et al., 2016). Such an approach can extend valuable new contributions to the literature (Chang, 2008).

Statement of Purpose

Based on the information presented above, we can suggest that IM literature continues to grow in quantity and influence in its aim to further our understanding of ideology among mothers, though it remains unclear to what extent agency has been accounted for in the research. In that vein, there have also been increased calls for new approaches to studying motherhood to address limited perspectives and approaches. This has caused two probable gaps in our understanding of women's experience in motherhood that will be addressed here. The first gap I seek to address concerns how scholars have extended Hays' (1997) work with respect to ideology and agency. More specifically, I look to identify whether IM scholars address both Hays' (1997) points about how women adhere to IM ideology as well as why. Additionally, I intend to explore how mothers' agency is perceived in IM literature, given that ideology and agency are integral (McNay, 2016). Moreover, if agency is overlooked, women's social contributions are potentially undermined (Hays, 1997), and our understanding of motherhood limited (Grabowska, 2011). The potential contribution of these studies is the insights gained into IM literature's evolution in recent decades and how it addresses women's agency. Additionally,

this work would allow us to identify possible limitations in the literature due to potential oversights or problematic perceptions, as have been identified and resisted through calls for new approaches to motherhood research. While such limitations have been called out in the larger motherhood literature (Grabowska, 2011), as well as the IM literature (Pedersen, 2016), they have not focused specifically on representations of women's adherence to ideology or their agency. Through this program of research we gain opportunities to become more aware of such limitations and its nuances, and to identify more effective approaches to employ in researching and understanding mothers' experiences and societal contributions in the future.

The second issue I focus on is the scholars' calls for new approaches toward understanding motherhood that address potential limitations and distortions outlined above. I draw on autoethnographic methodology to directly dialogue with the literature to examine the relationship between the research and my own experiences throughout this PhD journey. Autoethnographic method offers in-depth insights about the human experience through the intersection of scholars' personal and societal realities and concerns (Chang, 2008). In other words, in mining my own experiences as a mother, I examine social issues through a lens that affords an understanding of motherhood that cannot be found using other methods. This reflexive work includes considerations about my varied reactions when reading the literature, including resistance I felt toward certain facets of the literature. Hence, through autoethnographic method and research questions that probe for connections between personal experience and scholarship, I aim for a renewed understanding of the literature. In doing so, I hope to contribute to the literature by offering insights about its potential limitations (Murray, 2015) which tend to obscure the complexity and reality of women's lives (De Marneffe, 2019).

To sum, the purpose of this research program is to explore the themes of ideology and agency in the context of IM. In so doing, I also hope to identify potential limitations within the literature that could inhibit our understanding of motherhood. The program of research is split in three manuscripts. The first and second manuscripts involve content analyses of all IM literature since Hays' (1997) publication. The focus of the first manuscript is on identifying how scholars have extended Hays' (1997) work and whether they look at both how women adhere to IM ideology and why, or if they focus singularly on the how. The second manuscript looks at IM scholars' position on and descriptions of women's agency in their studies. The third manuscript takes an autoethnographic approach that represents a retrospective dialogue with the literature, as I systematically and chronologically revisit my notes on all the motherhood literature I read throughout the PhD journey. Each manuscript is outlined below.

Manuscript 1: Hays' Intensive Mothering Ideology in Motherhood Scholarship

A recurring theme in motherhood literature relates to women's internalization of social ideals about motherhood (Baker, 2009) and the personal cost of trying to adhere to such ideals (Roest et al., 2010). Hays (1997) finds that women spend more time and energy on caregiving at a time when women's participation in the paid workforce has significantly increased; she attributes this phenomenon to an adherence to IM ideology. However, she also claims many mother do so in resistance to neoliberalism. It is not clear whether scholars who have extended Hays' (1997) work have adopted both her claims-- how women adhere to the ideology and why. However, Hays (1997) herself pointed out that both the how and the why are important, otherwise, our understanding of women's motivations will be limited and distorted (Grabowska, 2011). As such, this content analysis seeks to analyze how IM scholars have extended Hays'

(1997) work and whether they have addressed both of her points concerning maternal adherence to IM ideology, the how and the why, in their work on IM.

Manuscript 2: Examining Agency within Intensive Motherhood Literature

McNay (2016) asserts that one cannot understand the influence of ideology without considering one's agency. Hays (1997) expresses a similar sentiment when explaining that women adhere to IM ideology as a form of resistance to neoliberalism. Ignoring or minimizing the notion of agency when focusing on mothers' adherence to IM ideology could potentially lead to a limited understanding of their actions and behavior (Grabowska, 2011). As illustrated earlier, mothers' food consumerism could be interpreted as an adherence to IM (Afflerback, 2013) as opposed to a social contribution of resisting adverse practices by the food industry (Mackendrick, 2014). As such, it is important to assess how maternal agency is addressed in IM scholarship, and how such treatment might affect our understanding of women's motivations and experiences. Accordingly, this content analysis explores scholars' position on and descriptions of agency within IM literature.

Manuscript 3: A Personal Autoethnographic Dialogue with Motherhood Literature

For decades, scholars have called for new approaches to better understanding motherhood, both in the general literature on motherhood (Arendell, 2000; Katz Rothman, 1989), as well as within IM-specific literature (Caputo, 2007). Such calls reflect my own reactions to the literature when considering my personal experience in relation to work and family. Scholars have resisted against monolithic perspectives (Murray, 2015) and omissions identified in motherhood literature, which result in a limited understanding of mothers' lived experiences (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). Autoethnographic method helps address such issues and offers richer insights than traditional methods (Tamas, 2015). It enables the use of personal story as data,

which "transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation." (Chang, 2008, p. 43). Importantly, autoethnography allows women to be centered in story, analysis, and pedagogy, and helps resist masculine discourse (Metta, 2016). Drawing on autoethnographic methodology, this study reflects my own resistance against limitations and distortions I have identified in the literature with respect to my experience. Through an open, direct dialogue with the literature read throughout the PhD journey, I draw on my personal reflections, reactions, and the richer complexity of my lived experience is brought into focus.

Chapter 2: Hays' Intensive Motherhood Ideology in Scholarship

In recent decades, literature about motherhood has substantially expanded in volume and scope (Kawash, 2011). A common underlying concern is how women internalize (Johnston & Swanson, 2006) and adhere to (Henderson et al., 2016), and cope with (Meeussen & van Laar, 2018) societal ideals surrounding their roles as mothers (Baker, 2009). This premise is especially manifest in literature on Intensive Motherhood (IM) which stems from Sharon Hays' (1997) pivotal work. Hays (1997) proposes that women are influenced by IM ideology, which leads them to spend increasing time, energy, and resources on mothering, despite the demands of paid work. For example, Hilbrecht et al. (2008) examined how working mothers make use of extra time afforded by more flexible work arrangements, including teleworking. Expecting the mothers to utilize some of that time toward their own leisure, they instead find that women's adherence to IM ideology leads them to devote those extra hours to care and domestic tasks.

In the decades following Hays' (1997) publication, IM literature has grown (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020) and morphed into a dedicated area of research. Scholars (Johnston & Swanson, 2006; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012) have since adopted and expanded Hays' (1997) thesis on women's adherence to IM ideology. However, it is not clear whether these same scholars have also latched onto an additional important facet of Hays' (1997) thesis, that women adhere to the ideology as a form of resistance against the market economy. This latter point not only explains *why* women adhere to the ideology. It also implies a more agentic perspective of women acting purposefully to assert their defiance of increasing neoliberalism. However, as Hays (1997) herself points out, overlooking or ignoring this latter point may suggest women are driven primarily by a prescribed set of expectations to meet a socially constructed ideal of motherhood. Such a perspective can limit or distort scholars' understanding (Grabowska, 2011) of women's

social contribution. For example, some scholars (Hilbrecht et al., 2008) conclude that women spend more time mothering because of their adherence to IM ideology. They do not consider other facets of women's realities, such as their partners' responsibility to help, lack of social supports, as well as other motivations that drive women, such as maternal desire (De Marneffe, 2019). Thus, when assuming the predominance of ideology's influence and ignoring other potential reasons for women's actions, women's motivations can be misinterpreted, and their agency ignored.

Given Hays' (1997) influence within the rapidly expanding field of motherhood research, it is important to take stock and gain a deeper understanding of the literature developed in recent decades (Boyatzis, 1998). We do so here through a content analysis focused on the application of Hays' (1997) work. To our knowledge, no such study has been undertaken, though there have been numerous content analyses that have examined media influences in the context of IM (Locke, 2015; Wall, 2013). However, those studies focus on how media may influence women, whereas our focus is on understanding how women's actions are interpreted by scholars. We also seek to identify potential underlying assumptions (including potential bias) about the degree of women's agency in contending with social ideals. Guided by a feminist framework (Spade & Willse, 2016), we undertook a content analysis of all empirical articles published about IM since the publication of Hays' (1997) book. Our aim was to examine how IM scholars have applied her work to their own research and how they have shaped IM literature as a result. More specifically, we looked at how scholars engage with both Hays' (1997) points about how *and* why women mother intensively. In doing so, we were guided by the following research questions:

Drawing on a feminist theoretical lens and content analysis methodology -

RQ1: How do scholars engage with Hays' (1997) point about why women mother intensively?

RQ2: How have scholars extended Hays' (1997) work concerning how women adhere to IM ideology?

Motherhood Literature

Motherhood literature has proliferated across many different aspects of life (Kawash, 2011), though the recurring theme of women's internalization of social ideals cuts across much of this body of work. Scholars examine how motherhood affects women even before they enter motherhood (Peterson, 2015), its impact on their attitudes toward work (Meeussen & Van Laar, 2018), how they shop (Burningham et al., 2014), dream (Coo et al., 2014), and exercise (McGannon & Schinke, 2013). Additionally, the literature has grown somewhat more inclusive in studying other cultures and demographics outside the historically American, middle-class, heterosexual, White mother's experience of motherhood. It includes mothering experiences around the globe (Aono & Kashiwagi, 2011; Basnyat & Dutta, 2012; Bermudez et al., 2014; O'Brien et al., 2020; Tsai et al., 2011), of low-income mothers (Elliott et al., 2015; Murray, 2015; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012; Verduzco-Baker, 2017), incarcerated mothers (Granja et al., 2015; Haney, 2013), disabled mothers (Frederick, 2017), mothers with disabled children (Zibricky, 2014), bisexual (Tasker & Delvoeye, 2015) and lesbian mothers (Suter et al., 2015), Black mothers (Dow, 2016), empty nesters (Sheriff & Weatherall, 2009), and childless women (Peterson, 2015). This proliferation across wider demographic and topical interests has offered valuable insights and perspectives about women's varied experiences in motherhood. Consequently, the samples are often segmented based on each study's specific demographic

focus. While such a focus offers depth about their unique experience, it becomes more challenging to draw a broad understanding that could potentially be applied more widely across varying demographics.

Literature on mothers and paid work has also grown in abundance. Great attention has been paid to work-family conflict (Rollero et al., 2015), juggling multiple roles (Murray, 2015; Rocha-Coutinho, 2008), the stress it produces (Roest et al., 2010), and the impact of family on women's careers (Kemkes-Grottenthaler, 2003). Many studies on work and family also tend to be comparative in nature. For example, some look at mothers who work outside the home relative to those who work in the home (Johnston & Swanson, 2006); others analyze time spent by mothers as opposed to fathers, in terms of quantity versus quality (Greenhaus et al., 2012; Nomaguchi, 2009; Schiffrin, 2014), as well as across different countries (Craig & Mullan, 2011). Studies have also focused on how employed mothers respond to the dual pressures of work and family by scaling back (Duxbury et al., 2007; Masterson & Hoobler, 2015) or opting out entirely (Kuperberg & Stone, 2008). Meanwhile, others highlight the role that social supports and policy, or the lack thereof, can have on choices women make (Blair-Loy et al., 2015; Zhu, 2010). Still, most of these studies are quantitative, and are therefore often focused on counting and comparing how many hours are spent at work or on domestic tasks, such as childcare or chores. They offer few deeper insights into the lived realities of mothers.

A recurring theme within this body of literature is whether and how women live up to social expectations in their roles as mothers (Baker, 2009). For decades scholars have been concerned with women's internalization of social expectations about their maternal role (Tummala-Narra, 2009), as well as how it impacts them, and, sometimes, how they resist such social expectations. Additionally, the research increasingly comparatively assesses how these

forms of internalization differ based on demographic groups, such as Black versus White mothers, low-income versus middle-class (Dow, 2016) and stay-at-home moms versus mothers who work for pay (Dillaway & Pare, 2008). This theme of assessing the influence of social expectations is particularly salient in literature on IM. Additionally, it has since increasingly pervaded the larger body of motherhood literature (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020) where the focus on comparing social influence across demographics seems to supersede a broader understanding of women's behaviors or realities.

The Double-Edged Sword of Hays' (1997) Contribution

This trend concerning women's internalization of societal expectations and mothering ideologies was of key concern for Hays (1997). She developed her seminal book, *The Cultural Contradictions for Motherhood*, at a time when women increasingly joined the paid workforce in the wake of the women's liberation movement and ensuing neoliberal backlash (Faludi, 1991). The 1990s represented significant economic change and technological advancement, which affected work life, and therefore, family life (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000). Meanwhile, scholarship at the time focused primarily on child outcomes due to maternal employment (Arendell, 2000). Within this context, Hays (1997) sought to understand and explain a newly manifesting phenomenon: women were devoting more time to mothering while also spending more time in the paid workforce compared to time spent on each in prior decades. She attributes this phenomenon to women's adherence to an IM ideology, which she describes as "child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive." (p.8). Three guiding tenets of the IM ideology include: a) mother as primary caregiver; b) dedicating abundant energy and resources to the child; and c) maternal role takes precedence over paid work. Hays (1997) devotes the bulk of the book to explaining *how* women internalize social

influences (such as childrearing advice books) and adhere to the ideology. She draws on extensive interviews conducted with mothers of young children across various demographic groups. At the end of her book, she concludes *why* women adhere to the ideology: in resistance to neoliberalism.

Hays' (1997) messaging throughout the book is complex and at times self-admittedly cynical. As a result, readers may be left with a different understanding than she intended. If readers do not read the entire book or focus primarily on the idea that women adhere to ideology, they may conclude that women mother intensively because they are irrational and passively driven by social influences that compromise their social standing (see below for examples from Hays' book). Early on in our readings of articles from IM literature (Afflerback et al., 2013; Henderson et al., 2016) this indeed seemed to be the case, as authors focused primarily on women's adherence and not on Hays' (1997) latter point. This prompted the need to probe whether this issue was prevalent across the rest of the literature. Importantly, when reading the book in its entirety, including Hays' (1997) final point that women mother intensively as a form of social resistance, women's actions can be interpreted as active, purposeful, and working for the collective good.

To illustrate the tone and juxtaposition of these points, in the early part of the book, Hays (1997) frequently makes statements such as, "this form of [intensive] mothering is neither self-evidently natural, nor, in any absolute sense, necessary," (p. 4) and "mothers who work in the paid labor force seem to be acting irrationally when they dedicate so much time and energy to child-rearing" (Hays, 1997, p. 10). Conversely in the final chapters, Hays (1997) references the Progressive Era, a time when women fought for protections against the abuses of industrialization and its social impact. She then proposes that women today are continuing this

work through IM: “it is through this same emphasis on loving, caring, and sharing, that mothering can help to make the world a better place” (p. 170). She then goes on to explain that the mother-child relationship has come to symbolize, “sustainable human ties, free of competition and selfish individualism, that are meant to preserve us...from an unbearable moral solitude.” (p. 175).

To sum, readers are likely to engage with Hays’ (1997) work differently depending on their reading of her thesis. In other words, given the uneven way in which Hays (1997) makes her somewhat paradoxical argument (of a pervading social influence and agentic perspective), the concern here is not only with how scholars interpret Hays’ (1997) work or whether they agree with it. It is also whether they engage with her latter point about agency. Hays (1997) warns that overlooking or misunderstanding women’s actions and social contribution is dangerous, “First, it tends to absolve the public world from responsibility... Second, it contributes to the continued power and privilege of men by creating a social role for women that marks them, in cultural terms, as ill prepared and unsuitable participants in the public world.” (pp. 175-176). Additionally, we are mindful of feminists’ warnings that wrong assumptions (Spade & Willse, 2016) in the literature, such as the one above highlighted by Hays (1997), can lead to misinterpretation of women’s experiences and motivations. Doing so could affect our understanding of their agency in the context of social ideals (Grabowska, 2011). In consideration of the concerns outlined above and Hays’ (1997) increasing influence in motherhood literature, this manuscript focuses on how scholars have extended Hays’ work.

Feminist Theoretical Approach

The paradox of how care work (which, in this context, is focused on childcare) simultaneously represents women's important social contribution and source of oppression has long been a contentious issue for women (Lerner, 1986). Feminists continue to disagree about how women should contend with the demands of work and family. Motherhood has often been pitted as a barrier to women's progress and liberty (De Marneffe, 2019). Liberal feminists assert that participation in paid work based on the male breadwinner model is a means through which women resist male power. However, this approach leaves the issue of care and domestic work unresolved, which often gets commodified through the exploitation of others or leaves mothers to carry the double burden (Bergerson, 2016). Scholars have warned that these added burdens women carry tend to be overlooked (Hochschild, 2012) without consideration for the responsibility of partners or the need for social support (Blair-Loy et al., 2015). In other words, women's participation in paid labor is likened to men but the added load they carry at home is ignored. Furthermore, this approach that paid employment liberates women hinges on the idea that women can elevate their social status by conforming to an androcentric perspective of society as opposed to contributing to and shaping society based on their own ideas and merit (Lerner, 1986). Following this reasoning, some feminists claim liberation cannot be achieved solely by women's adherence to male-dictated societal expectations. Rather it is also necessary for men to take on women's perspectives (O'Brien, 1981). A more inclusive approach that considers and reconciles more diverse viewpoints toward work and family can help to better account for and alleviate the additional care burdens women often carry.

Despite the complexity and contestation surrounding care work as both women's social contribution and oppression, feminist theory has a rich history of challenging knowledge

originating from androcentric perspectives (Spade & Willse, 2016) and breaking down monolithic views (Hesse-Biber, 2012). In the past, when women have not fit a mold determined by men, they were deemed to be the problem as opposed to the mold against which they were compared. This trend is at times perpetuated by women scholars, owing to “how accustomed we have become to seeing life through men's eyes.” (Gilligan, 1993, p. 6). As such, feminist theory enables us to confront existing knowledge intentionally or unintentionally ripe with omissions, thereby helping to identify and enrich our understanding of lived experience (Pillow & Mayo, 2012).

In doing so, a feminist theoretical approach also helps examine embedded social expectations and challenge their underlying logics that exert social influence and constraints (Spade & Willse, 2016). For example, studies that focus solely on women’s adherence to ideology to explain their actions (Hilbrecht et al., 2008) and ignore a lack of social support or maternal desire (De Marneffe, 2019). Thus, applying a feminist framework supports our work of analyzing IM literature by identifying and challenging assumptions that potentially undergird motherhood scholarship. Lastly, and more specifically with respect to motherhood, feminist scholarship has significantly helped spotlighting the valuable societal contribution of care work. Such contributions were previously invisible or considered inferior to paid labor (Bergerson, 2016). It also allows for discourse on the fulfilling facets of motherhood rather than disparaging or discouraging it (De Marneffe, 2019). In other words, feminist theory allows recognition of motherhood as something many women enjoy and find meaningful despite the hard, tedious, and unacknowledged work it often entails, which is an additional reason why women choose to devote more time it (Almond, 2010), though they should not necessarily have to parent alone

(Blair-Loy et al., 2015). Thus, a feminist perspective supports a more holistic approach to motherhood.

Methodology

Content Analysis

Content analysis is generally described as a method entailing coding, categorizing, and counting frequencies within text (Ahuvia, 2001). However, Boyatzis' (1998) definition of it as “a way of seeing” (p. 1) is more aligned with our research objectives. Themes are identified less based on explicit recurrences within the text and more on the subtler meanings they convey (Neuendorf, 2017). In other words, content analysis allows for interpretation of texts and their latent meaning in a systematic way, enabling researchers to make meaning of texts qualitatively (Boyatzis, 1998). Such a method can be especially useful in supporting feminist aims of searching for omissions and assumptions within a body of work and gauging how women's motivations and actions are interpreted by scholars. For example, de Laat and Baumann (2016) conducted a content analysis of Canadian television advertisements to examine what cultural messages and ideals were being subconsciously transmitted to and about women consumers who are and are not mothers. Using content analysis methods, they were able to find that women portrayed as mothers were primarily presented as consuming for the benefit of others whereas women who were not depicted as mothers were viewed as consuming for their own gratification, thereby enforcing maternal consumption ideals.

Sample and Procedures for Article Selection

We searched all peer-reviewed articles using the term “intensive mother*” published between January 1998 through December 2019 available in the *PsychInfo* research database. We selected *PsychInfo* for its comprehensive international catalogue of peer-reviewed journals

(Garcia-Perez, 2010) related to psychology, sociology, and other fields closely related to family science. Additionally, given the sheer volume of articles published about motherhood, it was important to specifically delineate articles with “Intensive Mother” in the title or abstract, to ensure that the article explicitly focused on IM. In fact, as long as the article focused on IM, it was not necessary that Hays (1997) be cited, though all but three articles in the final sample cited her. A list of 100 potential articles was identified based on these initial inclusion criteria. In seeking to ensure consistency and focus for our analysis, only empirical articles were retained due to their focus on scholars’ evaluations of women’s adherence to ideology through surveys, interviews, or discourse analysis of mothers (e.g., analyzing social media posts written by women). In other words, the next inclusion criteria were that articles had to be empirical, and include a sample of mothers or materials produced by mothers (e.g., social media posts). Literature reviews, theoretical articles, book reviews, special issue introductions, and other content analyses were excluded. Finally, it was not required that all articles necessarily have to be focused on whether and how women adhered to IM ideology to be included in the study, but the end result was that all the studies in the final sample of 54 articles did focus on either why or how women adhere to IM ideology.

Article Characteristics

A more general set of content codes centered on article characteristics, which included demographics of women studied (e.g., race, sexual orientation, class, etc.), the methods used (e.g., quantitative, qualitative), and theoretical framework (i.e., if and which one was explicitly applied). If authors used different response options for these codes, we approximated and consolidated their responses to match our coding scheme. We also felt that context of a publication matters in content analysis; to know and acknowledge the source of the text, and how

it may factor into the analysis (Krippendorff, 2019). We therefore also coded for study's country of origin, year of publication, journal of publication, and gender of authors based on authors' first names. On this latter code, we recognize that we relied on name stereotype resting on a binary gender system. However, taking such a best-guess approach also enabled a little more insight about authorship.

Across all 54 articles that comprised the data set (see Tables 2.1 - 2.4), all were authored by women, and most were published after 2014 (whereas Hays published her work in 1997). Almost half of the studies originated in the U.S. (43%), a third from Canada, UK, and Australia combined (33%), and the remainder from all other parts of the world (24%). More than half of the studies focused on middle class (52%), White (44%), heterosexual (80%+) participants with children of varied ages. Most articles drew on qualitative methods (76%) and did not explicitly state use of theory (83%), though those that did (17%) used feminist or constructivist theory. Lastly, coding surrounding theory did not include IM as theory although many authors cited Hays (1997) and used IM as a lens.

Analysis

The research questions' focus on how scholars engage with Hays' (1997) point about why and how women mother intensively guided our work. Given the subjective nature of this work of interpreting texts for their subtler meanings (Krippendorff, 2019), three distinct rounds of analysis were undertaken to ensure consistency in analyzing the data repeatedly (see Figure 2.1). Articles were read in their entirety each time (Schreier, 2012) to ensure we understood each author's work as a whole -- like our reading of Hays' (1997) work.

In the first round of analysis we began with the codes derived from the research questions and tested them on a subset of articles. Upon identifying anomalies in the coding scheme

(Boyatzis, 1998) we refined the codes until we achieved greater consistency. In cases where codes did not accurately capture information in an article, new options were added (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Schreier, 2012) and articles previously reviewed were revisited to assess whether the new code made for a better fit (Miles et al., 2020).

During the second round, codes were continually refined and narrowed to ensure they accurately described and distilled the text (Miles et al., 2020). If the code no longer seemed fitting during this second round, we assessed whether the original code needed to be further clarified or elaborated or if an additional code was needed. The third round was focused on ensuring consistency and accuracy of the codes across all the articles. Thus, during each round, constant comparative method was used (Glaser, 1965), as we compared code definitions to the coded texts to ensure their coherence and that they aligned with our research aims (Miles et al., 2020), and to identify repetitive and emergent patterns (Miles et al., 2020).

For example, during the first round of analysis, we identified variations in the way authors described IM ideological influence. At this juncture, we used many descriptors to reflect the coded text such as: Dominant, Pervasive, Social Pressure, Social Norms. During the second reading, it became clear that these categories needed to be further consolidated and distinguished from each other to be meaningful. We finally settled on two categories: “Hegemonic” and “Social Influence.” “Hegemonic” referred to authors’ descriptions of women being driven primarily by IM ideology. “Social Influence” was more of an input that women may consciously choose to consider or incorporate in their approach to motherhood. In the final round, we verified that the classification selected for each article was applicable. Throughout this process, drafting memos helped us clarify and expand on insights found along the way. This approach enabled

transparency into our interpretations of the texts and our thought process, thereby contributing to trustworthiness of the analysis work (Krippendorff, 2019).

Findings

Next, we describe our findings (see Figure 2.2 for overview) on how IM scholars engage Hays' (1997) point about why women mother intensively. We then look at how IM scholars have extended Hays' (1997) work concerning how women adhere to IM ideology. Finally, we consider important implications concerning women's agency resulting from these findings.

Whether Scholars Address *Why* Women Mother Intensively

Across the sample (n=54), only one article directly references or addresses Hays' (1997) point about *why* women mother intensively. In the single article that does so, Villalobos (2015) acknowledges Hays' (1997) point about women's adherence as a form of resistance to neoliberalism, but then contests it. Instead, the author proposes women mother intensively as a manifestation of their insecurities surrounding their partnerships or employment. Based on a theory of compensatory connection she explains that "children can become attachment figures for mothers, a sort of living security blanket" (Villalobos, 2015, p. 1953), to assuage their difficulties in paid work and marriage. While women's insecurities may have some effect on how they mother, women's intensive behaviors can also be understood in other ways. For example, mothering can be rewarding and meaningful, which can further motivate women to focus their efforts on their children (Almond, 2010) regardless of the challenges they face in their relationships or at work. However, this does not necessarily mean they objectify their child when struggling in other domains. In other words, the two factors – mothering and contending with challenges - may coexist but one may not necessarily cause the other. Additionally, other factors that contribute to women's behaviors should also be considered, such as mothers' own childhood

experiences, their relationships with their parents, their values and beliefs, and motivations for becoming mothers (Donath, 2017). None of these factors are addressed by the author as inputs into maternal behaviors. Instead, the study appears focused on illustrating the author's central claim concerning compensatory connection.

How Women Adhere to IM Ideology

Here, we found that IM scholars have extended Hays' (1997) work on how women adhere to IM ideology in six main ways (see Table 2.5 detailed breakdown and Table 2.8 for sample quotes). 1) Many scholars focus on women's adherence in varying contexts ($n=34$), and more specifically in the contexts of: a) paid work ($n=14$); b) less privileged mothers ($n=5$); and c) specific situations or interests ($n=15$), such as Post-Partum Depression (PPD). Scholars also examine: 2) how women adhere under the influence of advice literature and media ($n=5$); 3) how women are impacted in their adherence ($n=4$); and how 4) male participants adhere to IM ideology relative to women ($n=5$). We also found that in extending Hays' (1997) work, IM scholars have varied perspectives of the nature of ideology (see Table 2.6), with some depicting it as social influence ($n=21$), others as hegemonic ($n=20$), and a subset ($n=13$) describe ideology in both these terms. Additionally, some authors apply an IM lens ($n=22$), interpreting and explaining participants' actions and words as an adherence to ideology without considering other possibilities (see Table 2.7). A predominantly recurring pattern in how participants adhere to IM ideology relates to their unique social context and/or personal circumstances. We elaborate on these findings below.

Women's Adherence in Varying Contexts

Adherence in the Context of Paid Work. Studies that focus on women's adherence in paid work ($n=14$) often look at how employed women reconcile the demands of paid and care

work in the context of IM ideology. A few also examine employed women with distinct circumstances, such as pregnant women, while others are more comparative, differentiating adherence among stay-at-home, part-time, and full-time mothers. These studies reflect mixed results. While some find that women's circumstances or social context drive their ideological belief (for example, Johnston & Swanson, 2006; Lavee & Benjamin, 2015; Walls et al., 2016), others indicate that women's ideological belief can affect their life choices and circumstances (e.g., Gallagher, 2013; Liss et al., 2013; Murray, 2015) despite adverse outcomes such as depression (Loyal et al., 2017).

Adherence Among Less Privileged Mothers. A subset of studies focuses on how mothers outside the typical White middle-class ideal contend with the demands of IM ideology ($n=5$) as mothers who are low-income (Elliott & Bowen, 2018), Black (Elliott et al., 2015; Verduzco-Baker, 2017), imprisoned (Granja et al., 2015), or migrants (Peng & Wong, 2013). A consistent finding across these studies is that despite their lack of privilege, these women manage to strive to adhere to IM ideology in their own ways. At the same time, they also often suffer stigma, surveillance, and threats to their autonomy due to the perceptions that they do not meet these ideals by the institutions intended to support them (Elliott & Bowen, 2018).

Adherence in the Context of Specialized Situations or Interests. Another subset of articles investigates how women in various life stages and situations or with special interests ($n=15$) operate under IM ideology. For example, life stages examined include first-time mothers (Sevon, 2011), single mothers (Layne, 2015), middle-aged mothers (Gunderson & Barrett, 2017), mothers of special-needs children (Clarke, 2013; 2015), and even childless women (Meyers, 2017). Life situations include challenging circumstances such as Post-Partum Depression (PPD) (Cesar et al., 2018, Frankenhouer & Defenbaugh, 2017; Scharp & Thomas,

2017). Other areas of interest include the influence of IM ideology in conjunction with such topics as leisure (O'Brien, 2017), women's choices surrounding food purchases and feeding (Afflerback et al., 2013; Mackendrick, 2015), and vaccines (Reich, 2014).

Across these diverse contexts, authors identify differing patterns in women's adherence to IM ideology. One pattern reveals that mothers tend to adhere more to the ideology during some life stages or situations, and resist it more during others (e.g., Clarke, 2013; Jette et al., 2014; Layne, 2015; Le-Phuong Nguyen et al., 2017; Myers, 2017). For example, Gunderson and Barrett (2017) suggest that mothers adhere more during their earlier years of motherhood. Another pattern reflects that some mothers adhere less compared to other women, though why that is the case is unclear, and those who adhere less enjoy more positive outcomes (Afflerback et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2017; Scharp & Thomas, 2017). Meanwhile, Sevon (2011) finds that the way fathers respond to the demands of parenthood can affect how women experience parenthood and resist IM ideology. Mothers are also found to support each other in withstanding ideological pressure and resist blame as they contend with lack of social support (Clarke & Ameron, 2015). Yet, IM can also result in mothers sharing only positive feelings surrounding motherhood in public but negative feelings in private (Cesar et al., 2018), and a reluctance to seek help for fear of shame or stigma (Frankhouser & Defenbaugh, 2017).

Adherence Under the Influence of Advice Literature/Media

Hays (1997) devotes a full chapter to the influence of advice literature and other sources of media on women's internalization of IM ideology. She finds that they sort and apply only what seems relevant to them. Within our sample, scholars assess the impact of advice literature ($n=5$) on women's outlook and approach to various topics such as breastfeeding versus bottle-feeding (Lee, 2008). Several also look at how mothers interact online (Newman & Henderson,

2014), the nature of their discourse about good/bad mothering (Pedersen, 2016), and the impact of celebrity mothers in media (Chae, 2015). Across these studies, scholars find that some mothers struggle under the influence more than others (Chae, 2015); some negotiate internally with its influence (Lee, 2008; Wall, 2010), whereas others reject it outright (Pedersen, 2016), such as low-income mothers who resist pressure to conform to standards beyond their means (Romagnoli & Wall, 2012).

Impact of Adhering to IM

Throughout the sample authors often touch on the impact of adhering to IM ideology, however, four ($n=4$) studies focus specifically on this topic. They examine how mothers internalize and grapple with pressure to be perfect and whether and how it affects life satisfaction. Findings indicate that mothers experience adverse effects (Rizzo et al., 2013), including feeling burnt out, their work ambitions hindered (Meeussen & van Laar, 2018) and lives limited (Caputo, 2007), even when they do not subscribe to the ideology due to the ideology's hegemonic influence (Henderson et al., 2016).

Inclusion of Male Participants

Hays' (1997) work focuses solely on mothers. Here, five ($n=5$) articles include men in their studies in the context of IM ideology. These studies consist of male and female non-parent college students (Schiffirin et al., 2014), coparenting gay and lesbian parents (Herbrand, 2018), and heterosexual mothers and fathers in various contexts such as youth sports (Trussell & Shaw, 2012). The findings conclude that women tend to adhere more to IM ideology (Janning & Scalise, 2015; Schiffirin et al., 2014), though men are also susceptible to its influence (Herbrand, 2018; Trussell & Shaw, 2012; Yarwood & Locke, 2016).

Taken together, scholars have extended Hays' (1997) work primarily by focusing on how women adhere, but not why. They have also looked at its impact on women's lives, as well as men's, in general, in differing contexts, including paid work, and through media influence. A common difference found in participants' levels of adherence is often connected with individual life circumstances or social context. Next, we look at two additional themes identified in relation to how scholars extend Hays' (1997) work. One highlights two differing perspectives of IM ideological influence, the other concerns the application of an IM lens among a subset of articles.

Two Differing Perspectives on the Nature of IM Ideological Influence

An additional finding in relation to how IM scholars have extended Hays' (1997) work concerns variation in the notion of ideological adherence. The two primary perspectives of ideological adherence identified are: social influence or hegemonic (see Table 2.6). However, one's definition of ideological impact can affect the understanding of adherence to the ideology. If the influence is described as hegemonic, women may be perceived as not having a choice but to adhere (Foucault, 1978). Whereas, if the ideology is more of a social influence, it can potentially be resisted to some extent (Zizek, 2008). We therefore coded for scholars' description of the nature of IM ideological influence, which was typically implied rather than explicitly stated. In studies where IM ideology is coded as social influence the ideology was described as a cultural factor that may have some bearing on how women think or act or on the choices they make but does not necessarily drive their behaviors. In studies where IM ideology is coded as hegemonic, authors describe its influence as inescapable, driving women's actions, and leading most women to follow its tenets and live up to an ideal.

Across the sample, we found (see Table 2.6) that IM ideology was depicted as social influence ($n=21$) almost as frequently as hegemonic ($n=20$). A subset of authors ($n=13$)

simultaneously reflected both these perspectives in their studies. Given that Hays' (1997) own ambivalent description of the nature of ideological influence oscillated between these two perspectives throughout her book, this finding is not entirely surprising. However, as noted, such differing perspectives on the meaning of ideological influence results in inconsistency and confusion about our understanding of ideological adherence across the literature.

Further confounding our understanding of ideological influence, some scholars describe the ideology in abstract terms. For example, Afflerback et al. (2013) assert, "The ideology of intensive mothering holds mothers independently responsible for childrearing and accountable for each and every facet of their children's well-being." (p. 389). Similarly, Gunderson and Barrett (2017) discuss how IM ideology affects younger mothers more adversely "because the ideology targets this segment of mothers" (p. 1005) whereas older mothers feel "less targeted by the ideology." (p. 1005). In both examples, the ideology is seen as an external force that dictates or drives, even targets women in mysterious ways. Whether or how women have a role in internalizing the ideology, let alone resisting it, remains unclear.

Application of an IM Lens

Another important finding in connection to how IM scholars extended Hays' (1997) work is that to varying degrees, some authors ($n=22$) seem to interpret their data based on an IM lens (see Table 2.7). In other words, they tend to explain women's responses and behaviors on the premise that women are influenced and operating under IM ideological influence (O'Brien et al., 2017). Some attribute women's behaviors or attitudes to ideology without considering other possible reasons (Guendozi, 2005). As a result, some studies often appear more focused on illustrating women's adherence as opposed to gauging whether, to what degree, or why women adhere. Some authors (Trussell and Shaw, 2012) apply a similar lens to men, as well.

For example, in O'Brien et al.'s (2017) study on leisure time in the context of IM ideology, a participant is quoted explaining that she foregoes leisure time because she needs to cook dinner or do housework. Yet, the authors interpret her response as an "excuse" rather than a potentially valid reason for foregoing leisure; they attribute her behavior to an adherence to IM ideology. Meanwhile, throughout the article, husbands' responsibilities are never addressed, nor is the need for other forms of social support. As a result, it is difficult to ascertain whether the participant's response should be attributed solely to ideology, or to other valid potential reasons. Another example pertains to Afflerback et al.'s (2013) study on how mothers attribute meaning to the food purchases for their children. The authors assert that women's search for information about healthy food options for their children is due to their adherence to IM ideology, as they look to authorities for guidance. However, searching for information as a consumer is a task common to many people, including men, and not necessarily ideologically driven. Yet, here, when done by women in relation to their children it is interpreted as an adherence to IM ideology.

Discussion

Women's Adherence and Context

Through this content analysis conducted on articles published since the release of Hays' (1997) influential book we have found that scholars have extended Hays' (1997) work by focusing primarily on how women adhere to IM ideology in varying contexts such as paid work (e.g., Johnston & Swanson, 2006), less privileged mothers (e.g., Elliott & Bowen, 2018), and other life circumstances such as PPD (e.g., Frankhouser & Defenbaugh 2017). Across these studies, IM ideology is commonly described as pervasive (e.g., Elliott et al., 2015), though scholars' findings about how women adhere to the ideology vary. Importantly, women's

circumstances and social context are found to play a critical role in their adherence (e.g., Peng & Wong, 2013).

Notably, throughout these studies context is studied mostly in terms of categories, using simple indicators to group women based on demographic features such as employment status (Johnston & Swanson, 2006) or class (Lavee & Benjamin, 2015) or race (e.g., Elliott & Bowen, 2018). Context is rarely examined at a deeper level concerning their lived experience (c.f., Afflerback et al., 2013). For example, though most of the articles draw on qualitative methods, rarely are women's relational experiences considered with respect to their partners, children, employers, and others, or from their past. Yet, such relational encounters from the past and present can significantly affect women's thoughts, feelings, values, beliefs, and therefore, their actions (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008; Robb, 2006). Hence, women's context, which is an important factor in how women adhere, is studied at a somewhat superficial level.

Additionally, the current approach by scholars in the sample takes a static view of women's lives. In reality many factors of their lives change over time (Smart, 2010), such as family circumstances (like number of children), responsibilities, preferences, and work opportunities. This issue can be addressed through more longitudinal studies, or by asking participants about their past, as well as how their lives and attitudes have changed over time. For example, asking women about their childhood experiences, whether they look back on it positively, negatively, or neutrally, and whether and how they seek to replicate their parents' approach, can also shed light on why women mother the way they do (Robb, 2006). Gathering more information about women's lives in deeper, more thoughtful, and meaningful ways, can offer a richer understanding of their attitudes and behaviors (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008) with respect to their adherence to IM ideology and beyond. The finding that context seems to have

significant bearing on women's adherence to ideology further reinforces this last point. Future studies should consider context in greater depth.

Differing Definitions and Interpretations of IM Influence

Several key findings throughout this analysis raise concern about how women's adherence is perceived in IM literature. First, apart from one study, none of the articles address the question of why women adhere to the ideology. Second, in almost half the studies we found the application of an IM lens, whereby scholars interpret and attribute participants' attitudes and behaviors to ideology. However, overlooking, ignoring, misinterpreting, or misattributing why women devote more time, resources, and energy to caregiving, carries important implications for their agency and social contribution. As Hays (1997) pointed out, focusing solely on ideology emphasizes a submission to a cultural standard. It also misses and undermines women's work in ensuring important personal, familial, and communal connection and mutual support (Almond, 2010) in the face of increased individualism and capital accumulation (Braedly & Luxton, 2010; Warner, 2006). The positive and rewarding facets of motherhood are also ignored (De Marneffe, 2019; McMahon, 1995), which is a potential motivator for women spending more time with and energy on their children.

A third finding, that scholars differ in how they describe the nature of IM's influence (as a social influence or as hegemonic) also poses issues. Ambivalence about the nature of its influence can confuse our understanding of women's adherence to IM ideology. Depending on one's perspective of influence, as a social affect or a hegemonic driving force, participants' words and actions can be interpreted differently. Crucially, a hegemonic perspective that views women as passive actors without autonomy to think and act independently reflects a lack of agency (McNay, 2016). Such a claim is especially problematic, given that agency has often been

defined based on masculinist perspectives that do not apply to or account for women's lived experiences and social constraints (McNay, 2016; Spade & Willse, 2016).

Taken together, these findings indicate ambiguity and variation in scholars' definition of ideological influence. They also suggest a lack of depth with respect to women's social context and constraints, as well as assumptions, misattributions, and oversights in scholarly interpretations of their findings. Consequently, despite the many useful ways in which IM scholars have expanded upon Hays' (1997) work, such approaches affect and limit our understanding of women's lived realities and agency (Risman, 1998). Further, since women's attitudes and behaviors are typically explained based on the assumption of their adherence to ideology and other possibilities are not considered, we miss out on learning about what other factors motivate women in their approach to motherhood and their life choices (Hesse-Biber, 2012).

In light of these findings, as well as our feminist theoretical perspective, we offer several considerations for future studies in the hope of advancing our understanding of women's lives in the context of IM. First, given the ambivalence and varied perspectives of ideological influence in the literature, a clear definition of IM's influence should be expressed at the outset of every study. Doing so would ensure a better understanding of scholars' perspective of ideological influence and adherence to the ideology. Second, since one's interpretation of ideological influence can affect our understanding of adherence and agency, scholars' treatment of agency in IM literature should be examined, perhaps similarly to the way adherence was examined in this study. Such an undertaking could also potentially offer further insight into how and why women adhere to the ideology (Risman, 1998).

Third, it is important for IM scholars to be mindful of the potential risk of applying an IM lens. This entails reflexively tapping into our subjective and personal experience (Allen, 2000) to raise awareness of one's own assumptions, such as assuming women adhere to an ideology when interpreting their words and actions (Acker et al., 1991). Most importantly, greater effort should be made to directly ask women about their values, beliefs, and motivations as mothers, so that they can express and explain their attitudes and choices in their own words (Sharp & Weaver, 2015).

Lastly, having found across the sample that women's adherence to ideology can be affected by their individual context, greater attention should be paid to gaining a deeper understanding of women's context and constraints (Risman, 1998). This includes asking about relational facets of their lives – with their partners, children, parents, employers. Probing about their past and their desires in the present and future, particularly concerning work and family, can help us understand their motivations and constraints that possibly inhibit them (Robb, 2006).

Limitations and Conclusion

An important limitation of this study is the highly subjective nature of the interpretation of scholars' perspectives (Ahuvia, 2001) due to the vague definition of the influence of ideology throughout the sample. We had to decipher the authors' perceptions of the nature of ideological influence, as well as whether and how they applied an IM lens. Accordingly, our own interpretation may have been tainted inadvertently and unknowingly by our own context and beliefs. We attempted to mitigate this issue by drafting clear code definitions, coding the entirety of each article through multiple rounds of analysis, and logging detailed notes throughout (Neuendorf, 2017). Nonetheless, we hope that in pointing out such ambiguities and potential

application of a lens we have raised awareness about the issue and the need to achieve greater clarity and intention in future IM scholarship.

Furthermore, considering that participants across these studies are primarily White, heterosexual, middle-class participants, our analysis is limited in response to this population. Our understanding, expectations, and the criteria with which we considered this body of work relates significantly to this privileged population. However, there may be additional limitations, assumptions, and oversights in the literature that have not yet been uncovered, which would pertain to other demographics. We hope that future studies explore in greater depth other considerations for improving our understanding of maternal ideology and agency among a more inclusive representation of mothers. In spite of these limitations, this study has identified several important findings with respect to how IM scholars have extended Hays' (1997) work which shapes our understanding of motherhood. Oversights in the literature, such as why women adhere and a deeper appreciation for their contexts, limit our perspectives of women's realities and social contributions. Further, the application of an IM lens and inconsistency in scholars' definition of ideological adherence can affect how we view women's agency. We hope that these findings support a better understanding of women's maternal experiences in the context of IM.

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Tables

Table 2.1.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Article Participants

Baseline Characteristic	Articles Published	
	n	%
Socio-Economic Class		
Middle Class	28	52%
Mixed	12	22%
Low Income	7	13%
Unknown	7	13%
Race		
White	24	44%
Unknown	14	26%
Asian	5	9%
Mixed / Other	8	14%
Latina	2	4%
Black	1	2%
Sexual Orientation		
Implied Heterosexual	35	65%
Explicit Heterosexual	8	15%
LGBTQ	1	2%
Mostly heterosexual	4	7%
Unknown	6	11%
Children's Ages		
Unknown	14	26%
Under 6 Years Old	11	20%
School Age (6-18 Years)	10	19%
Mixed Ages	7	13%
Babies	6	11%
Pregnant	4	7%
Adolescents	2	4%

Table 2.2.
Articles' Year of Publication

Year	Articles published	
	n	%
2005	1	2%
2006	2	4%
2007	2	4%
2008	2	4%
2010	1	2%
2011	1	2%
2012	4	7%
2013	6	11%
2014	5	9%
2015	13	24%
2016	4	7%
2017	9	17%
2018	4	7%

Table 2.3.
Location of Studies' Origins

Country	Articles Published	
	n	%
US	23	43%
Canada	7	13%
UK	6	11%
Canada/US	3	6%
Australia	2	4%
Portugal	2	4%
Belgium	1	2%
Chile	1	2%
Filipina Migrants	1	2%
Finland	1	2%
France	1	2%
Hong Kong	1	2%
Israel	1	2%
Mixed Countries	1	2%
South Korea	1	2%
Spain	1	2%
Viet Nam	1	2%

Table 2.4.

Articles' Methodological and Theoretical Approaches

Baseline Characteristic	Articles Published	
	n	%
Primary Method		
Qualitative	41	76%
Quantitative	10	19%
Mixed Methods	3	6%
Secondary Qualitative Method		
Interviews / Focus Group / Observation	29	71%
Content/Discourse Analysis	9	22%
Case Study	2	5%
Autoethnography	1	2%
Theory		
Not provided	41	76%
Feminism/Social Constructivist	9	17%
Critical Discursive Psychology	1	2%
Relational Dialectic Theory	1	2%
Social Comparison Theory	1	2%
Symbolic Interactionist	1	2%

Table 2.5.

How IM Scholars Extend Hays' (1997) Work on How Women Adhere to IM Ideology

Findings		Research Focus	Authors	Year				
The Role of Context in Women's Adherence (n=34)	Paid work context (n=14)	Reconciling polarizing demands of care and paid work	Agocs, Langan, & Sanders	2015				
			Christopher Gallagher	2012				
			Guendozi	2013				
			Guendozi, J.	2006				
			Hilbrecht at al.	2005				
			Lavee & Benjamin	2008				
			Loyal et al.	2015				
			Johnston & Swanson	2017				
			Johnston & Swanson	2006				
			Liss et al.	2007				
			Diaz Gorfinkiel	2013				
			Murray	2011				
			Walls et al.	2015				
			Less privileged mothers (n=5)		Black, low-income	Verduzco-Baker	2015	
Black, low-income, single	Elliott et al.	2017						
Imprisoned	Granja et al.	2015						
Low-income	Elliott & Bowen	2018						
Migrant	Peng & Wong	2013						
Specialized Interests & Situations (n=15)		Childless women				Myers	2017	
						Feeding	Afflerback et al.	2013
						Feeding; Toxins	Mackendrick	2014
						First-time mothers	Eija Sevon	2012
						Leisure Time	O'Brien	2017
		Middle-age Plus other cultural influences (Confucius) PPD	Gunderson & Barrett	2017				
			Jette et al.	2014				
			Le-Phuong Nguyen	2017				
			Cesar et al.	2018				
			Frankenhouser & Defenbaugh	2017				
			Scharp & Thomas (2017)	2017				

Findings	Research Focus	Authors	Year
	Single moms	Layne	2015
	Special needs children	Clarke	2013
		Clarke	2015
	Vaccines, privilege, and choice	Reich	2014
Adherence	Brain development	Wall	2010
Under the	Feeding	Lee, E.	2008
Influence of	Government promoted	Dodd & Jackiewicz	2015
Advice	parenting literature		
literature/Media	Less privileged moms	Deeb-Sossa & Kane	2017
(n=5)	Media (good/bad mothering)	Pedersen	2016
	Media, celebrity culture	Chae	2015
	Online support groups	Newman and Henderson	2014
	Young, low-income moms	Romagnoli & Wall	2012
Impact of	Private Education	Caputo	2007
adhering to IM	Mental Health	Rizzo et al.	2013
(n=4)	Paid work	Henderson et al.	2016
	Paid work	Meeussen & van Laar	2018
Inclusion of	College students (non-parents)	Schiffrin et al.	2014
male	Family photos	Janning & Scalise	2015
participants	Gay and lesbian	Herbrand	2018
(n=5)	parents in co-parenting arrangements		
	Heterosexual couples	Yarwood & Locke	2016
	Youth Sports	Trussell & Shaw	2012

Table 2.6.

Authors' Perspectives of Nature of Ideological Influence

Perspective on Influence	Authors	Year
Social influence (n=21)	Cesar et al.	2018
	Chae	2015
	Clarke	2015
	Clarke	2013
	Dodd & Jackiewicz	2015
	Eija Sevon	2012
	Guendozi	2006
	Gunderson & Barrett	2017
	Herbrand	2018
	Johnston & Swanson	2007
	Lavee & Benjamin	2015
	Layne	2015
	Lee, E.	2008
	Le-Phuong Nguyen	2017
	Lui & Choi	2015
	Mackendrick	2014
	Magdalena Diaz Gorfinkiel	2011
	Milkie et al.	2015
	Murray	2015
	Pedersen	2016
	Peng & Wong	2013
Mix of both (n=13)	Reich	2014
	Scharp & Thomas (2017)	2017
	Schiffrin et al.	2014
	Villalobos	2015
	Walls et al.	2016
	Yarwood & Locke	2016
	Afflerback et al.	2013
	Agocs, Langan, & Sanders	2015
	Caputo	2007
	Christopher	2012
	Deeb-Sossa & Kane	2017
	Elliott & Bowen	2018
	Gallagher	2013
Johnston & Swanson	2006	
Liss et al.	2013	
Loyal et al.	2017	

Perspective on Influence	Authors	Year
Hegemonic (n=20)	Rizzo, Schiffrin, & Liss	2013
	Romagnoli & Wall	2012
	Elliott et al.	2015
	Frankenhouser & Defenbaugh	2017
	Granja et al.	2015
	Guendozi, J.	2005
	Henderson, Harmon, & Newman	2016
	Hilbrecht at al.	2008
	Janning & Scalise	2015
	Jette et al.	2014
	Meeussen & van Laar	2018
	Myers	2017
	Newman and Henderson	2014
	O'Brien	2017
	Trussell & Shaw	2012
	Verduzco-Baker	2017
Wall	2010	

Table 2.7.

Application of IM Lens

Authorship	Year
Afflerback et al.	2013
Agocs, Langan, & Sanders	2015
Clarke	2013
Elliott & Bowen	2018
Elliott et al.	2015
Frankenhouser & Defenbaugh	2017
Granja et al.	2015
Guendozi, J.	2005
Henderson, Harmon, & Newman	2016
Hilbrecht at al.	2008
Janning & Scalise	2015
Jette et al.	2014
Le-Phuong Nguyen	2017
Mackendrick	2014
Meeussen & van Laar	2018
Myers	2017
Newman & Henderson	2014
O'Brien	2017
Reich	2014
Trussell & Shaw	2012
Verduzco-Baker	2017
Villalobos	2015

Table 2.8.

Sample Quotes Related to How Women Adhere to Ideology

How Women Adhere		Authorship	Sample Quote
Women’s Adherence in Varying Contexts	Adherence in the Context of Paid Work	Johnston and Swanson (2006)	" Do mothers choose a work status on the basis of their mother-ing ideology, or does a mothering ideology emerge to fit the conditions of their work status experience?" (p. 517)
	Adherence Among Less Privileged Mothers	Walls et al. (2016)	“Our findings suggest that most employed mothers hold beliefs about mothering that are congruent with their employment status.” (p. 262)
Adherence in the Context of Specialized Situations or Interests	Adherence Among Less Privileged Mothers	Verduzco-Baker (2017)	“By listening to voices and perspectives of low-income women as they define their goals and the needs of their children, I have been able to describe and analyze their own, equally valid, form of intensive mothering and cultivation strategies.” (p. 1034).
		Granja et al. (2015)	“When mothering in the interface between prison and the outside world, prisoners are mostly prevented from measuring up to hegemonic ideologies.” (p. 1215)
	Adherence in the Context of Specialized Situations or Interests	Myers (2016)	Childless women: “I find that ideologies of intensive motherhood shape childless participants’ expectations of motherhood. For these women, egg freezing became a means of resolving the cultural–structural conflicts they faced by postponing childbearing until they felt better able to meet the demands of intensive mothering.” (p. 800)
		O’Brien (2017)	Leisure: "...the overwhelming workloads and assumptions of intensive mothering can leave women feeling a profound sense of embodied exhaustion. The performance of motherhood within the space of home and the subsequent exhaustion and emotional depletion women often experience can limit other performances of self, such as the enjoyment women may experience through engaging in [leisure].” (p. 224)
		Mackendrick (2014)	Healthy Food Consumption: “Together, these insights reveal how women engage with and reproduce mothering ideologies that prize a full and total commitment to children’s well-being...I interpret their orientation toward precautionary consumption as part of a negotiation with the larger cultural discourse of mother-blame, whereby mothers increasingly try to control children’s futures, as they are held accountable for them. (pp. 720-721)

How Women Adhere	Authorship	Sample Quote
Adherence Under the Influence of Advice Literature/ Media	Newman & Henderson (2014)	“In addition to simply acknowledging the challenge of intensive mothering, MOPS [support group] presentations focused on ways of being a ‘better’ mother and how to handle the stresses of motherhood, thus providing mothers with a toolkit to maintain and continue their intensive mothering.” (p. 486)
	Pedersen (2016)	"However, the users of Mumsnet demonstrated a clear consciousness of the role that the media plays in the construction of the ideals of motherhood and were also able to dismiss such ideals as unrealistic and created by the media." (p. 38)
Impact of Adhering to IM	Rizzo et al. (2013)	“So, if intensive mothering is related to so many negative mental health outcomes, why do women do it? They may think that it makes them better mothers (Sutherland 2010), so they are willing to sacrifice their own mental health to enhance their children’s cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes. However, research is needed on child outcomes because, currently, there is not any data to support this assumption. In fact, young children of over-involved or over-protective parents often experience internalizing disorders (Bayer et al. 2006). In addition, research clearly indicates that the children of women with poor mental health (e.g., depression) are at higher risk for negative outcomes (Bayer et al. 2006; Beardslee et al. 1983; Cummings and Davies, 1994). ” (p. 619)
	Meeussen & van Laar (2018)	"These findings contribute to previous research on parental burnout by indicating that parental burnout may not only be triggered by individual and family-level risk factors (Le Vigouroux et al., 2017; Mikolajczak et al., 2018b), but potentially also by intensive mothering norms at the societal level...this pressure could risk the opposite effect: research has shown that children’s development is harmed when their mother suffers from mental health problems (Beardslee et al., 1983; Cummings and Davies, 1994), parental burnout is related to neglectful and violent behavior toward one’s children (Mikolajczak et al., 2018a), and children experience more depressive symptoms and lower life satisfaction the more their parents experienced pressure to be perfect as a parent (Randall et al., 2015)."

How Women Adhere	Authorship	Sample Quote	
Inclusion of Male Participants	Schiffrin et al. (2014)	"Our data indicate a potential paradox in the expectations of young men and women about parenthood. While the role of the father may be idealized in theory, it is unlikely that men will be as child-centered or fulfilled as anticipated when they become fathers." (p. 1079)	
	Yarwood and Locke (2016)	"...there are inherent tensions between involved fathering and hegemonic masculinity. That is, men are challenged to be ‘involved fathers’ (Wall & Arnold, 2007) by expectations to be both paid worker and carer (Cosson & Graham, 2012). Yet these tensions do not appear to be the same as the challenges for mothers. Instead, within an ideology of ‘intensive’ (Hays, 1996) or ‘extensive’ (Christopher, 2012) motherhood, mothers are expected to demonstrate their ‘good mothering’ despite the constraints of paid work." (p. 375)	
Two Differing Perspectives on the Nature of IM Ideological Influence	Social Influence	Sevon (2011)	“Cultural narratives offer meanings, identity categories, genres and ways of constructing coherence and self-discovery... Women... may identify with and adjust themselves... They may also resist.” (p. 64).
	Hegemonic	Mackendrick (2014)	“In the next section, I show how mothers manage the expectation to mediate their children’s exposures to environmental chemicals—not as passive actors responding to a punishing discourse, but as part of crafting an agentic mothering project.” (p. 716)
	Newman and Henderson (2014)	“American women take on this seemingly ubiquitous ideology of motherhood as the ideal despite a general sense of dissatisfaction with it... Scholars have identified the omnipresent state of these maternal expectations across populations such that even if a group questions a particular aspect of the ideology, the hegemony of these maternal standards continue to affect how women parent.” (p. 474)	
Caputo (2007)	“For women, the construction of a ‘good mother’ has clear implications that serve to control or delimit what is appropriate and inappropriate for them to do. As a result, mothers have less ability to make free choices regarding their children and they experience greater pressures to conform to an imposed standard.” (p. 181)		

How Women Adhere	Authorship	Sample Quote
Application of an IM Lens	O'Brien et al. (2017)	"Gabby, for example, didn't have time during the day to engage in [leisure time] and when her husband came home, her excuse was, 'oh, no, I'm tired, I've got to cook the dinner, I've got to do the housework or whatever'. Gabby's comment illustrates how the overwhelming workloads and assumptions of intensive mothering can leave women feeling a profound sense of embodied exhaustion." (p. 224)
	Afflerback et al. (2013)	"Consistent with the ideology of intensive mothering, mothers look to 'authorities' (healthcare providers, experienced mothers, literature, etc.) cultural knowledge on how to mother appropriately and comply through their consumer behavior." (pp. 397—398).
	Trussell and Shaw (2012)	"Through children's organized sport participation, the fathers were able to publicly display a sense of their physical and emotional support for their children and meet cultural expectations for the new fathering ideal." (pp. 390-391).

Figures

Figure 2.1.

Constant Comparative Content Analysis Process

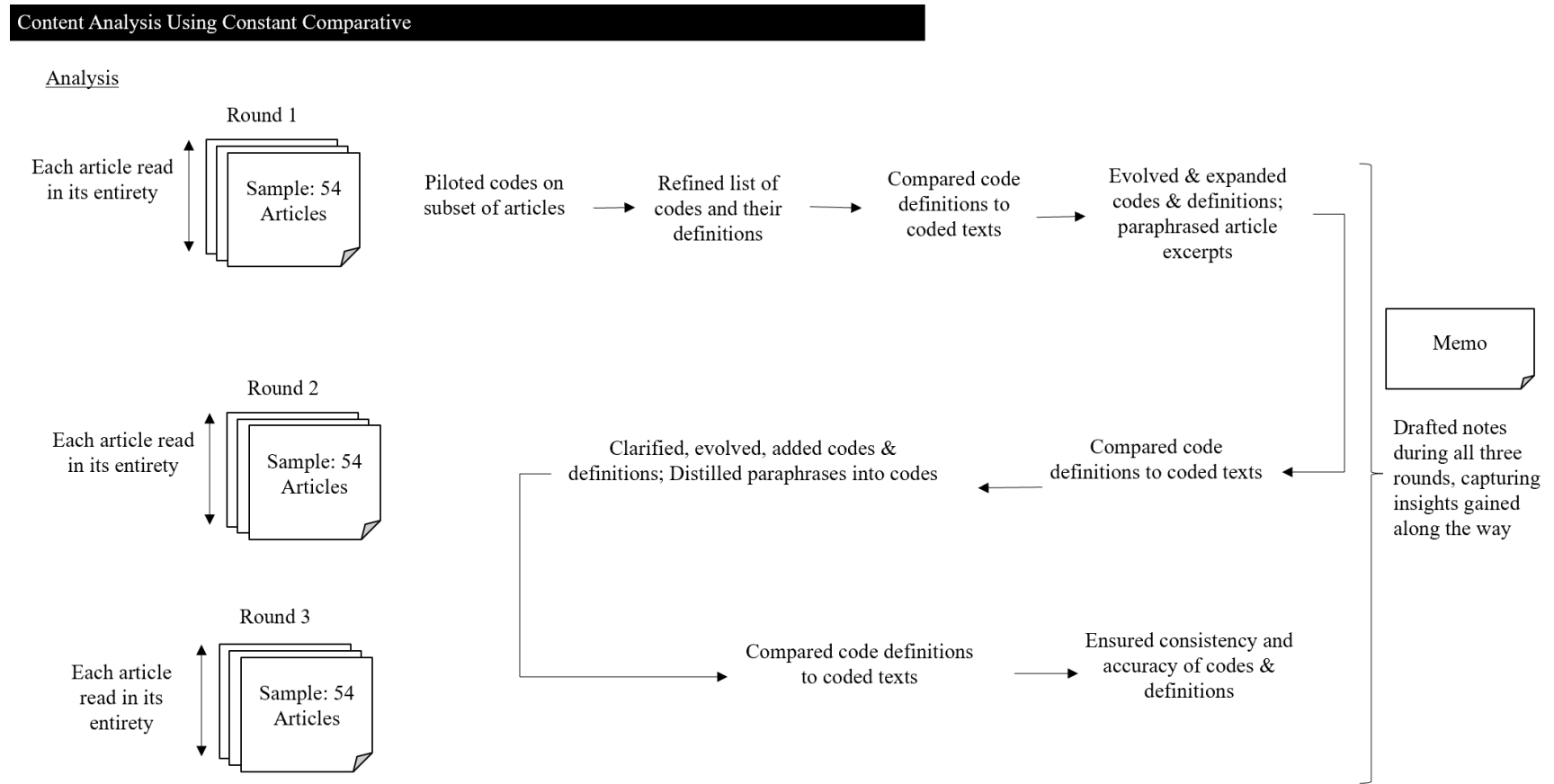


Figure 2.2.*Overview of Findings*

- I. Article Attributes (see Tables 2.1 - 2.4 for details)
- II. Whether scholars address *why* women mother intensively
- III. How Women Adhere to IM Ideology (see Table 2.5 for details)
 - a. Women's Adherence in Varying Contexts
 - i. Paid Work Context
 - ii. Less Privileged Mothers
 - iii. Specialized Situations or Interests
 - b. Adherence Under the Influence of Advice literature/Media
 - c. Impact of Adhering to IM
 - d. Inclusion of Male Participants
 - e. Two Differing Perspectives on the Nature of IM Ideological Influence
 - f. Application of an IM Lens

Chapter 3: Examining Agency within Intensive Motherhood Literature

In recent decades, women have increasingly been affected by the dual pressure to devote themselves to both work and family (Blair-Loy, 2001; Pedersen, 2016). Following the Women's Movement, more mothers have pursued paid employment (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000) and spent significantly more time at work outside the home (Blair-Loy et al., 2015). At the same time, they have also felt increased pressure (Warner, 2006) and have proceeded to invest even more time and energy in their children (Nomaguchi, 2009). Additionally, as both women and men have experienced increased stress from working longer hours, work stress has been found to spillover and affect family relations. Studies suggest women are affected more acutely than their partners (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000) and most of this research focuses on cisgender, heterosexual married couples. This skewed effect is likely due to women continually carrying a disproportionate share of care and domestic work (Blair-Loy et al., 2015) regardless of their employment status. Given the lack of flexibility in the workplace and partners' insufficient participation at home, educated career-driven middle-class mothers tend to opt out of paid employment (Stone, 2007).

Accordingly, in her widely cited book, *The Cultural Contradiction of Motherhood*, Hays (1997) investigated why women spend more time, energy, and resources on mothering when they have less time available. Given women's increased participation in paid employment in recent decades, Hays (1997) expected them to spend less time and energy on parenting. Hays (1997) refers to this as an adherence to Intensive Mothering (IM) ideology, comprised of three main tenets: mother as primary caregiver; mother dedicates abundant energy and resources to her child; and the maternal role takes precedence over paid work. Further, she defines ideology within the IM context as a "fully elaborated, logically cohesive combination of

beliefs...implicitly or explicitly, understood as the proper approach to the raising of a child by the majority of mothers.” (pp. 8-9)

Importantly, Hays (1997) also asserts that women adhere to IM as a form of resistance against neoliberalism, which adds an important agentic facet to her thesis. However, Hays’ (1997) overall treatment of agency reflects a somewhat paradoxical view on adherence and agency that are challenging to reconcile. She expresses that women are driven by a dominating ideology but for agentic aims. Hays (1997) dedicates much of her book to exploring how mothers are guided by ever-evolving cultural influences from multiple sources. This includes media, institutions, other individuals, personal values, past experiences, and one’s socio-economic position, which “fundamentally shapes the way mothers think about mothering.” (p. 96). Yet, she also proclaims that mothers “are certainly not cultural dopes who unselfconsciously mimic the child-rearing methods recommended by others.” (p. 75). Finally, in her last chapter Hays (1997) asserts, “Mothers operate in part according to a logic opposing that of self-interested gain – not because this is a necessity, not because they are irrational or selfless, and not because they are forced to, but because they are actively participating in a rejection of that logic.” (p. 173). In other words, the adherence to IM ideology is not merely women indiscriminately following social influence, but rather a form of active participation in which some mothers resist neoliberal norms. Thus, most of Hays’ (1997) book is focused on how women adhere to an almost hegemonic ideology, but at the end she takes a very agentic perspective of women’s actions that denotes women’s conscious and explicit adherence to the ideology. Together, these perspectives can be challenging to reconcile and leave the reader somewhat unclear about Hays’ view on maternal agency. It is unclear to what extent women are

cognizant of the ideology's influence or to what degree women are making conscious choices to adhere to it and resist neoliberal influences.

Perhaps due to the disproportionate treatment of ideology and agency across the book, it is not surprising that most IM scholarship (Rizzo et al., 2013; Schiffrien et al. 2014) focuses primarily on mothers' adherence to ideology and ignores or misses Hays' (1997) point about why they do so (in resistance to neoliberalism; see Chapter 2). Consequently, some scholars (for example, see Henderson et al., 2016) build their studies on the premise that all women are under the influence of IM ideology. Women's actions, behaviors, and responses are then interpreted accordingly (see Chapter 2). For example, Afflerback et al. (2013), who examine women's choices surrounding nutrition for their children, explain their findings as women's adherence to IM. They do not consider other possible reasons, such as mothers' personal experiences with food and health within their own families, or concerns about toxins, among other potential reasons (Mackendrick, 2014). Hence, mothers are described as being influenced by social norms without consideration of other relevant factors (see Chapter 2). Another very relevant element that when overlooked can affect our understanding of women's behaviors and their adherence to ideology is whether partners share responsibility (O'Brien et al., 2017) or if women have social support in shouldering both paid work and care work (Blair-Loy et al., 2015). Assessing women's adherence to ideology based on how much time and energy they spend on care work without accounting for the need or lack of such supports can impact our understanding of their agency.

Meanwhile, McNay (2016) asserts that when examining the influence of and adherence to ideology and social norms, it is crucial to account for individuals' autonomous capacity to think, rationalize, and act. In other words, ideology and agency are integral; one cannot be

understood without the other (McNay, 2016). Hays (1997) similarly warns that not understanding women's motivations and actions could lead to misunderstanding their actions and discounting their agency. Specifically, focusing on women's adherence to IM without considering their agency can result in the impression that women mother the way they do because of their vulnerability to social influences. However, such a perspective undermines their valuable social contributions, which are aligned with maternal beliefs and values outside the androcentric mold (Spade & Willse, 2016). Hence, focusing solely on ideology without considering agency can result in limited or distorted understanding of women's motivations and actions (Grabowska, 2011; see Chapter 2).

In light of the growth and influence of IM literature (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020) within the larger, ever-expanding scholarship on motherhood, it is important to understand how scholars who have extended Hays' (1997) work about IM ideology attend to maternal agency. To our knowledge, IM literature has not been examined to assess how women's agency is considered in the context of their adherence to IM ideology. As such, here we explore how women's agency has been addressed in studies that focus on their adherence to IM ideology. We did so through a content analysis, which is well-suited to making meaning across a body of literature (Schreier, 2012). Utilizing a feminist theoretical framework, which allows for a more nuanced and complex understanding of women's agency (Sinclair, 2017), we examined all empirical IM literature since Hays' (1997) book publication. The following research questions guided our work:

RQ 1: What position do authors take concerning women's agency in their studies?

RQ 2: How do authors describe participants' agency?

Below, we begin by reviewing literature on ideology and agency, followed by a feminist approach to agency that accounts for the distinct and historic nature of women's oppression.

Conceptual Framework

The discussion of ideology and agency is challenging in that both concepts are often ambiguously defined in abstract terms and independently of each other. Yet, they are interdependent and require a more integrated understanding with real-world application (McNay, 2016). Here, we consider both concepts together in the hopes of achieving a more holistic and practical understanding.

Ideology

Zizek (2008) refers to ideology as a “naïve consciousness” (p. 24) whereby one cannot recognize they are driven by it, and once one does realize its influence, the ideology’s distorting effect becomes clear and can be shed: “Ideology is not a dream-like illusion that we build to escape insupportable reality; in its basic dimension it is a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our ‘reality’ itself.” (Zizek, 2008, p44). Zizek’s (2008) approach draws on Foucault (1978), who upended traditional conceptualizations of power (Bordo, 1993), such as monarchic or state rule; he asserted that social influences serve as a ubiquitous, never-ending force that drives individuals to act according to societal expectations. Additionally, as individuals internalize such influences through media, public policy, and the actions of others, they self-regulate accordingly (Foucault, 1978; 1994; Oksala, 2011). This also serves to validate and perpetuate such social beliefs (Foucault, 1978). Furthermore, social influences pervade every aspect of our lives and our culture (Bourdieu, 1998), including our language (Bartky, 1990; Beard, 2017; Uhlmann & Uhlmann, 2005), our bodies (MacKinnon, 1983; Silva, 2005), our attitudes about love, sex, our feelings, and how we act towards, and treat others (Liskova, 2011). Hays (1997) and other IM scholars (Mackendrick, 2014) iterate similar perspectives as to how

ideology and social influence can pervasively affect women, propelling women to chase ideals of good mothering.

However, this perspective about the pervasive nature of internalized norms and ideology prompts the question of agency (Knapp & Wurm, 2019), particularly the extent to which self-regulation and the submission to norms occurs consciously (Sinclair, 2017). Interestingly, the same scholars that endorse the hegemonic nature of ideology also perceive some form of individual agency. Bourdieu (1998) reasons that, indeed, humans are not mindless automatons; they can think and reason independently. Zizek (2008) highlights that one's cultural context is the result of consensus among individuals about what is meaningful in their society; thus, individuals play an active role in attributing meaning and building consensus over what makes up their social fabric. Foucault (1994) believes that social influence can be exerted "only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are, 'free'" (Foucault, 1994, p. 342). He also claims that, through self-transformation, an individual can resist power to some extent (Allen, 2008; Oksala, 2011), famously positing, "Where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). Yet to what extent and how that extent is determined remains undertheorized (Ells, 2003). To sum, these perspectives claim that individuals self-impose and adhere to social norms and ideology. At the same time, they also reflect an ambiguous and varied acknowledgement of the potential for agency. Some IM scholars (Henderson et al., 2016) similarly assert that mothers should be more aware of and negate social influence, thus suggesting that it is within their power to do so. However, the scholarship does not sufficiently consider women's contexts and constraints, or other factors that motivate their behaviors (see chapter 2). Next, we look at literature further dedicated to agency.

Agency

McNay (2016) defines agency as “the capacity of a person...to intervene in the world in a manner that is deemed, according to some criterion or another, to be independent or relatively autonomous” (p. 40). This definition is intended as a universal capacity that exists among everyone (King, 2009). However, some individuals face more and/or different social constraints than others (McNay, 2016) based on their individual trait(s), such as their race or gender. Hence, agency can be considered as a function of individuals’ balancing, reconciling, and navigating the demands and constraints of society with their own sense of need and want (Epstein, 1973). Accordingly, agency can manifest in different ways, and one’s class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and/or other traits can affect the way individuals exert their agency (Spade & Willse, 2016). Thus, as individual agentic potential is unique to one’s specific circumstances (Parsons, 1953), no one model can apply to everyone (McNay, 2016). For example, a married stay-at-home mother who does not work for pay may be able to assert her agency differently compared to a married mother who works outside the home for pay.

Historic debates as to whether people act autonomously or are conditioned by their environment have given way to both/and perspectives (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). While people are constantly influenced and affected by their environment, they are also actively engaged with it. Individuals exert influence on the environment in different ways, including self-regulation, self-monitoring, adapting goals, reacting, neutralizing, evading, and accommodating new life aspects (Brandstadter, 2007). Consequently, while an uncontrolled action is a reflex, all other forms of action are more complex and require interpretation. Often, this is because they are consciously and unconsciously driven within a cultural context by intent, values, beliefs, and goals (Brandstadter, 2007).

Furthermore, in considering individual action, Bargh and Chartrand (1999) highlight that some cognitive processes that drive action become automatic over time, such as driving a car, which frees up attention for other more complex processes. Other processes can be semi-automatic, as individuals integrate information both actively and passively, such as observing and perceiving behavior, thinking about it, and then replicating it. Indeed, our cultural context and interactions with others render a framework within which we operate, learn to mimic each other, and develop expectations (e.g., stereotypes, past experiences as reference) that facilitate interactions. Hence, our cultural framework is comprised of automatic, as well as semi-automatic processes, and social behavior is not always fully conscious, nor is it passive (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999).

Taken together, and similar to Hays' (1997) thesis, the literature reflects both a pervasive influence stemming from ideology and social influence, as well as the possibility and nuances of agency. Individuals enact agency in many ways, though a holistic understanding of one's agency must also contemplate their social context, constraints, and supports (Brandtstaedter, 2007; Parsons, 1953). Likewise, many varied and subtle forms of agency must also be considered in analyzing and interpreting others' words and actions (McNay, 2016; Sinclair, 2017). Similarly, IM scholarship focused on women's adherence to ideology and social influence should consider maternal context and agency in its many potential forms.

A Distinctly Feminist Approach to Agency

Next, we further explore the notion of agency more specifically through a feminist lens that more aptly addresses the unique challenges inherent in maternal agency. The topic of agency is contested among feminist theorists, owing in part to its ambiguity and complexity, particularly in the increasingly neoliberal context which serves to simultaneously empower and oppress

(McNay, 2016). As debates on choice feminism reflect, while we celebrate mothers' freedom to make choices, such choices are made within a framework that can limit or exploit them (Budgeon, 2015) thereby also revealing the complex inter-workings of women's oppression (Sinclair, 2017). For example, asserting that women can pursue paid employment just like men while overlooking the fact that at the same time women will also likely still be primarily responsible for care and domestic responsibilities perpetuates a flawed understanding of her "choice" to get a paying job, assuming she even has a choice. Becoming employed does not necessarily put her on equal footing with a man, particularly when she is paid less and carries the domestic burden alone (Blair-Loy et al., 2015).

Meanwhile, some feminists argue that hegemonic ideologies cannot be challenged because they frame our realities. In other words, women's "choices" will not necessarily liberate them if their social context or ideals can only afford them options that will continue to oppress them. Others assert that reflexivity enables one to probe, question, and challenge such frameworks (Sinclair, 2017). Importantly, outdated notions of agency persist, particularly those that relate to a masculinist perspective (Spade & Willse, 2016) and are not applicable to women due to the many embedded ways in which women's agency is challenged and remains invisible or ignored (McNay, 2016). To sum, women's agency is expected to mirror that of men when their realities are not comparable.

Sinclair (2017) asserts that the complex and contested nature of maternal oppression prompts an exploration of agency that requires "a more nuanced approach" (p. 7) and accounts for unique contexts that affect their agency and how it is perceived (Acker et al., 1991). Additionally, feminists highlight the importance of understanding the motivations behind mothers' actions (Fonow & Cook, 1991) and of identifying omissions about their lives that

should be brought to light, “looking at what is missing, what is passed over, and what is avoided” (Pillow & Mayo, 2012, p. 196). For example, De Marneffe (2019) claims that understanding women’s agency in choices concerning motherhood and work is complex. Maternal desire can lead women to act in ways that reflect greater oppression and the absence of discourse on the topic perpetuates motherhood as a source of oppression rather than a rewarding or valuable social contribution. Additionally, whether women have social support or partners share in care work can also affect their choices, or how those choices are perceived (Blair-Loy et al., 2015). Meanwhile, mothers of racial and economic classes that fall outside the White middle-class ideal have often been critiqued for their approach to mothering rather than commended for their strength in adapting to and protecting their children from their more constrained and challenging realities (Dow, 2016). Mothers of children with special needs have similarly experienced and resisted against different forms of oppression, empowering themselves against the ostracism of those around them by withdrawing or remaining silent, which can be misinterpreted as complacency rather than agency (Austin & Carpenter, 2008). Thus, women face challenges to and exert agency in ways that fall outside of social norms and expectations set by androcentric perspectives.

Taking a feminist approach toward a better understanding of agency, McNay (2016) calls for a “fuller explanation of the ways in which an individual’s self-understanding may motivate or discipline her to act in certain ways.” (p. 42). In other words, in the context of IM, a more varied and nuanced approach is needed to evaluate maternal agency. De Marneffe (2019) reminds us to stay attuned to the inherent ambiguities and challenges of women’s realities when seeking to understand their agency, “women feel conflicting things, and so we give complex messages.” (p. 218). Sharp and Weaver (2015) encourage scholars to probe feelings of uncertainty and

discomfort to improve our perspective, accountability, and research, and make us more critical and self-aware of our own assumptions and biases, as well as the need for considering context and for being reflexive. They assert that such accountability is especially important as neoliberal influences continually pervade institutions, including those of higher learning. Peterson (1996) emphasizes the importance of relationality as opposed to a dichotomous approach, doing away with binaries. For example, a binary that is a fundamental part of this study and which can also affect scholarly interpretation of mothers' behaviors and motivations is the false choice between paid work and motherhood. This androcentric perspective is often perpetuated in motherhood literature as opposed to seeing work and family as central, integrated, and relational facets of life (Devault, 2003). It also reinforces a perspective of work that ignores the responsibility of partners and of social supports for child rearing (Blair-Loy et al., 2015). Attending to such assumptions and omissions can support efforts to better understand maternal agency in the context of IM. Therefore, such feminist perspectives have guided our analysis of women's agency in IM literature.

Methodology

Content Analysis

Krippendorff (2019) defines content analysis as “an *empirically grounded method*, exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in intent.” (p. 1). In other words, it is an empirical technique for analyzing data in its various forms that enables a better understanding of what those texts represent to both those who write and consume them. Content analysis has a long history rooted in analysis of religious texts centuries ago. In the early 20th century, the practice focused on analyzing journalistic press and was later extended to journals for more theoretical explorations. The method eventually expanded to many fields, including

anthropology, history, and communications. This led to an expansion and greater focus on the practice as method. The focus was initially quantitative but was increasingly applied to qualitative texts over time. (Krippendorff, 2019)

In more recent applications of content analysis, Schreier (2012) describes the method as a means for systematically explaining meaning across qualitative texts; to “interpret the whole, or the gestalt” (Drisko & Maschi, 2016, p. 4). This technique also enables researchers to interpret text for latent meaning where the messaging in the text may be more subtle (Ahuvia, 2001). It also supports identifying connections across various themes within the text (Neuendorf, 2017). Such a method offers a powerful approach toward evaluating perceptions of women’s agency across the literature, which can be subtle and indirectly inferred; it also helps identify omissions and assumptions embedded within the text (Ahuvia, 2001). For example, Johnson and Swanson (2003) utilize content analysis to examine which prominent motherhood ideologies feature in women’s magazines and how maternal myths are represented. The study entails grasping the meanings implied in visual and textual content to interpret enigmatic features such as women’s emotional state. In doing so, the authors were able to identify important trends, such as the contradictory nature of maternal myths, which also serve to undermine women’s confidence and discourage them from participating more fully in the public sphere. Based on its suitability in interpreting subtler meanings and offering valuable insights across a wide range of medium, including magazines (Johnson & Swanson, 2003), television commercials (de Laat & Baumann (2016), and academic articles (van Eeden-Moorefield et al., 2018), here we used content analysis to explore scholars’ position on and descriptions of agency across IM literature.

Sample and Selection

Using *PsychInfo*, the database with the most extensive catalogue of sociological and psychological journals relevant to family science (García-Pérez, 2010), we searched the term “intensive mother*.” We were interested in all peer-reviewed empirical journal articles published between January 1998, since Hays (1997) published her book, through December 2019. We chose to restrict the search to this specific term to ensure direct relevance to our research questions given the significant volume of articles published on motherhood, generally, during this time period (Shortz et al., 1994). We also focused on qualitative and quantitative empirical articles that directly engage participants through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and other such methods. We did so with the aim of better gauging authors’ position on and descriptions of participants’ agency through their questions and interpretations of their subjects’ answers. Accordingly, we excluded non-empirical articles, such as literature reviews, book reviews, and letters to editors. Additionally, among the articles that met these criteria, we also identified several content analyses related to IM but excluded them since they focused on interpreting media published about mothers, as opposed to engaging mothers as participants. The total number of articles that met these criteria was $n=54$, thereby establishing the final sample for this study. Basic article attributes based on codes such as year published, demographics of participants, origin of study offered initial, more general insights about the sample (see Tables 3-1 – 3.4 for details).

Analysis

A common concern in content analysis is that interpretations of latent meaning or meaning that can be inferred through the body of text can be subjective (Neuendorf, 2017). To address the complexity and ambiguity inherent in such an interpretive process, Ahuvia (2001)

highlights the importance of methodical, systematic, and consistent processes and detailed explanations to aid researchers in consistently arriving at similar conclusions during each round of analysis. Accordingly, each article was read and analyzed in its entirety at least three times per below (also, see Figure 3.1). A comparative analysis approach supported us as we sought to consistently compare code definitions with the excerpts (Glaser, 1965) and identify repetitive and emergent patterns (Miles et al., 2020).

During the first round, each article was read to assess how the “codable moment” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4) addressed our research questions while also remaining attuned to any new additional insights that might emerge. This process often entailed the paraphrasing of excerpts. These paraphrases would be further distilled to more concise codes that more accurately reflected the text (Schreier, 2012).

Through this initial round we began our examination of author’s positions on women’s agency in each article. In other words, we looked at whether participants are described as having agency. Excerpts in which women are described as having or exerting agency were coded “Representation of Agency.” Texts reflecting a lack of it, such as when participants are characterized as being under a hegemonic influence or unable to resist an influence, are coded “Lack of Agency.” An example of such an excerpt is Hilbrecht et al.’s (2008) article about how employed mothers with flex schedules utilized the spare time they gained from not working full-time or commuting, “These mothers often seemed caught up on an exercise wheel that was spinning with its own momentum, propelled by social and cultural forces beyond their control.” (p. 473).

Among many of the articles that reflected a “Representation of Agency,” we also found indications of a “Lack of Agency.” In such cases the author might, for example, describe

participants as having agency while also being influenced under a hegemonic effect of IM ideology that is beyond her control (Gendouzi, 2006). At the same time, the author does not explain whether or to what extent participants are consciously driven by the ideology or are capable of exerting agency. In other words, the two perspectives are challenging to reconcile and make it harder to understand the author's position on agency. Nonetheless, it was important that both these perspectives be captured in relation to the article, so we added a supplemental code that flagged the article as reflecting "Ambiguous or Unclear Position." We would gain further clarity about such ambiguous author positions in our examination of authors' descriptions of participants' agency.

Descriptions of agency focused on the ways in which the author explains how participants' agency is manifested through their actions or words. An example of a common way authors described participants' agency is "Adaptation & Internal Negotiation, Context Matters" which reflects that participants are conscious of the influence, adhere to it, but also try to resist it. Often, social context is a factor that affects this adaptation or internal negotiation. For example, in Walls et al.'s (2016) study about IM influence among employed mothers, the authors explain, "mothers in our sample rejected certain aspects of intensive mothering that necessarily placed them in the home...whereas they tended to endorse aspects of intensive mothering that could be accomplished within the context of full-time employment." (p. 262). In this study, paid employment was an important context that factored into the adaptation and internal negotiation by mothers.

Additionally, in assessing authors' descriptions of agency we also looked at whether they considered "social supports" and "partner responsibility" as part of participants' social context and constraints (see Chapter 2; Brandtstaedter, 2007; McNay, 2016; Sinclair, 2017). This was

important to gauge because if authors do not take such social constraints into account when assessing women's agency based on the time and effort mothers spend on their children, their assessments would be based on a limited view of their realities. The extraneous time and effort spent by women may be wrongly attributed to an adherence to ideology. Other factors such as women's own upbringing and other motivations could also certainly explain their behaviors (see Chapter 2). However, for the purpose of this study, we focus on the more structural aspects of social context – partner responsibility and social support (Blair-Loy et al., 2015).

During the second round of analysis, as we reread all articles a second time in consideration of the above factors, we focused on ensuring that the texts were interpreted consistently with respect to the previous round. If we found that the available codes did not fully represent the text, we refined the codes and definitions (Miles et al., 2020) to ensure a more accurate, clear, concise alignment between text and codes (Schreier, 2012). Doing so supported us in our aim for greater transparency into how we derived our code definitions and our eventual findings (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). During the last round, where all articles were reread a third time, we were able to ensure consistency and verify the appropriateness of all codes across the ensemble of the articles.

In reading all articles in their entirety during each round of analysis, the larger meaning of each article was considered. For example, when we found early on in an article that an author (Christopher, 2012) explicitly asserted that women had agency, we coded it as such. By the end of the article, however, we found that specifically working-class women were identified as having agency, whereas middle-class women were not. We therefore added two more codes, one to specify that with respect to agency, "Some (mothers) do, some don't", and another that

identified “Class Differences” as a distinguishing factor in agency. In this example, the broader meaning was that women’s agency is viable but contingent on class.

All three rounds of analysis were conducted across a span of several months. We found it helpful to conduct each round of analysis after allowing at least a month or two to lapse since the prior round. These processes supported our efforts to re-examine and ensure consistency in reasoning (Boyatzis, 1998; Schreier, 2012). The practice of writing memos served to help us crystalize ideas that emerged in the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). They also challenged us to clarify and sharpen our definition of nuanced depictions and explanations of agency across the sample and identify larger themes across the body of IM literature. These processes of clarification through documentation thereby also improved transparency in our analysis and contributed to the trustworthiness of the study (Krippendorff, 2019).

Findings

Article Attributes

The sample of 54 articles included the following article attributes (see Tables 2.1 - 2.4). We found that the studies focused primarily on White (44%), heterosexual (80%+), middle class (52%), participants. Their children varied significantly in age. Most articles in the sample were published after 2014 originated in the U.S. (43%), Canada, UK, and Australia (33%), as well as other areas around the globe (24%). Qualitative methods were used across most of the sample (76%), and most did not explicitly mention employing a theory (83%). Finally, based on authors’ first names, we identified that all articles were authored by women.

Authors’ Position on and Descriptions of Agency

Across the sample (n=54), there are two small subsets of articles in which scholars articulate a clear perspective about agency among their participants in the context of IM. In one

subset, the authors clearly indicate a representation of agency ($n=4$), in another a lack of it ($n=4$). The remainder of the sample ($n=46$) reflects a more ambiguous or unclear position on agency. Additionally, we identified five main ways in which agency was described. The five categories are as follows: 1) Resist IM Ideology; 2) Driven by Hegemonic Influence; 3) Adaptation & Internal Negotiation, Context Matters; 4) Some Do, Some Don't; 5) Unclear Author Position. (See Table 3.5 for definitions and Table 3.6 for count of articles for each position and definition and note that some articles employ multiple descriptions for agency. See Table 3.7 for sample quotes of agency position and description.) Next, we look at the different author positions and the related descriptions of agency and expound on these findings.

Representations and Descriptions of Agency, Or Lack Thereof

In articles in which authors' position indicates representation of agency, participants are typically described as thinking or acting autonomously regardless of ideological influence. Additionally, they have an ability to resist or reject IM ideals ($n=2$), or to adapt the ideology to their needs ($n=2$). This is exemplified in the way mothers interact online (Pedersen, 2016) and resist stigma surrounding their special-needs children (Clarke & Ameron, 2015). In fact, in these articles, IM ideology is often described as a social influence (Lui & Choi, 2015), merely one input among others into women's approach to mothering rather than a predominant driving force.

Among studies in which authors' position reflect a lack of agency, participants are described as not having autonomy and unknowingly adhering to IM ideology. Furthermore, the influence is depicted as hegemonic, driving participants to think and act in accordance with the tenets of the ideology ($n=4$). For example, Henderson et al. (2016) posit that all women are influenced by IM even when they do not buy into the ideology. Trussell and Shaw (2012) find that fathers' actions and words are also driven by this "ideological imperative" (pp. 390).

Hilbrecht et al. (2008) indicate a complete lack of mothers' control over their actions due to the ideology. As a result, women's relationship to the ideology looks starkly different in the two subsets. They either lack control or autonomy or are aware of the influence and can resist it.

Representations and Descriptions Reflecting Ambiguity Surrounding Agency

Across most of the sample (n=46) authors' position on agency is explained in terms that are more challenging to decipher. Most of these articles reflect some degree of representation of or capacity for agency. At the same time, authors also indicate some form of constraint to agency, such as over-adherence to IM ideology, though it is not clear to what extent participants are consciously aware of doing so. In short, among participants in studies coded as "Ambiguous," agency is less pronounced compared to articles where authors clearly articulate women's capacity for and exertion of agency. However, the issue here is less about the degree of agency and more about the contradictory, ambivalent, and confusing ways in which agency is explained. This issue comes into focus as we move on to how agency is described across the sample.

Adaptation/ Internal Negotiation/ Social Context Matters. The most frequent description of agency among articles reflecting ambiguity is women's Adaptation/ Internal Negotiation/ Social Context Matters (n=32). In such cases, participants are often portrayed as driven by IM ideological influence but having some ability to adapt the ideology and/or resist facets of it. Moreover, the individual's context is often featured as an important factor in participants' level of adherence to or resistance against the ideology. For example, paid employment is one recurring type of social context that plays a factor in whether (Loyal et al., 2017; Walls et al., 2016) and how (Agocs et al., 2015; Peng, 2013) women adjust their ideological perspective in relation to IM to justify paid work. Although these scholars describe

IM ideology as a pervasive influence that affects most or all women, they also indicate participants' capacity to resist or adapt the ideology to some degree in relation to their employment context. Some scholars (Johnston & Swanson, 2006; Liss et al., 2013) even question whether the ideology drives the context or vice versa: "Do mothers choose a work status on the basis of their mothering ideology, or does a mothering ideology emerge to fit the conditions of their work status experience?" (p. 517).

Hence, despite the lack of resolution offered with respect to whether the ideology drives the action or not, agency is reflected in authors' assertions that participants can resist or adapt the ideology based on their context. Another example is Sevón's (2012) study on mothers in Finland, where social policies are more supportive of families. The authors find that maternal expectations and paternal involvement can affect the extent of women's adherence to the ideology. Similarly, Elliott et al.'s (2015) study highlights how Black low-income mothers contend with the pervasive ideology despite their less privileged constraints that make it more challenging to comply, as does Peng (2013) in the context of migrant mothers who draw on telecommunications to meet IM ideals on their own terms.

Some Do, Some Don't. The second most common description of agency reflects that some women do have agency and others do not ($n=15$). In these articles, IM scholars indicate that some women display a greater capacity for agency than others, though the reasons for the difference in adherence vary. For example, younger mothers are described as having less capacity for agency relative to middle-aged mothers as they are less able to resist adhering to and are more negatively affected by IM ideology (Gunderson & Barrett, 2017). Older mothers' greater experience and confidence are identified as a buffer against such outcomes. Mothers who center their own needs, and/or have more than one child, are similarly portrayed as having more

agency in that they are more likely to resist or less likely to adhere to IM ideology compared to mothers who center their babies' needs (Afflerback et al., 2013). Similarly, women who do not make time for leisure seem to have less control over their lives compared to those who do, owing to their adherence to IM ideology (O'Brien et al., 2017). Additionally, employed mothers driven by personal spiritual strivings fare better than those propelled by the more abstract influence of IM ideology; spirituality is found to elicit more meaningful purpose and personal values (Gallagher, 2013). Thus, across these various studies, regardless of the specific topic scholars researched – whether leisure time or feeding choices – the findings reflect that some women adhere more to the ideology, whereas others manage to resist, and the reasons for their ability to resist are explained in relation to the circumstances of each study.

Ambiguous or Unclear Position. In a small subset of articles ($n=5$), the authors' position on agency is unclear and their descriptions of agency defy classification. In such studies, it is unclear whether women are consciously aware of the ideology's influence, can think or act autonomously, or resist it (Meeussen & van Laar, 2018). Among some studies, the authors describe a paradoxical view, indicating within the same article both the capacity for agency, and a lack of it. For example, in Caputo's (2007) study about mothers and children in private school settings, the author describes women as seemingly unaware of their total adherence to IM ideology that leads them to limit their own lives. However, according to the authors this adherence also causes them to jeopardize their children's agency. In other words, the author does not address directly whether women have agency and portrays them as lacking it. Yet, the author explicitly expresses concern for children's agency.

Resist IM Ideology / Driven by Hegemonic Influence. Two other descriptors of agency which were discussed in the previous section on representations of agency and lack of it, were

also found among articles in which authors' position reflected ambiguity: Resist IM Ideology ($n=8$) and Driven by Hegemonic Influence ($n=2$). These descriptors were often used in conjunction with other descriptors mentioned in this section, which reflected paradoxical perspectives that contributed to the ambiguity of the author's position on agency.

To sum, across the sample only a small subset includes clearly articulated perspectives reflecting either the representation or absence of agency and respectively indicate an ability to resist ideological influence or a lack of control. Most studies reflect an ambivalence surrounding agency. They either simultaneously express a hegemonic influence and varying capacities to resist it without explaining how these two views are reconciled; or some women are perceived as being able to resist while others are not. The implications of this lack of clarity and consistency in perspectives surrounding agency are discussed below.

Partner Responsibility and Social Support

In authors' descriptions of agency, we also coded for whether scholars took into consideration partner responsibility and social support. Such supports represent an important facet of women's social context and constraints, which also affect their adherence to ideology (see Chapter 2) and capacity for agency (McNay, 2016). It is also worth noting that throughout the sample, most articles include married participants, employed women, and/or less privileged mothers. Partner responsibility and/or social supports could reasonably affect the lives of women within these categories. We found (see Table 3.8 for examples) that across the sample ($n=54$), partner responsibility is addressed in about one third ($n=21$) of the studies and social support in about half ($n=30$). Interestingly, there is significant overlap between articles that include both social support and partner responsibility ($n=18$). In other words, scholars tend to either consider both topics in tandem or ignore both altogether.

Partner Responsibility. More often than not, whether or how partners shared in domestic and caregiving responsibilities was not mentioned. Rather women's agency is described in relation to the time and effort women spent on and their attitudes toward domestic and caregiving work independently of their partners' participation in these tasks. Most studies omit mention of partner responsibility entirely. In some cases, such as Caputo's (2007) article, partner responsibility is addressed but then dismissed at the outset on the basis that since women bear the most responsibility for their children anyway, the study remains focused solely on the mothers and does not include their partners. There is no further mention concerning the partners or their responsibility for caregiving thereafter. Among studies where partner responsibility is discussed, it is done to varying degrees. Several scholars address the topic more directly, explicitly asserting that fathers are equally responsible for caregiving and should be held accountable for their part (Sevon, 2011). Others acknowledge that partners' involvement has a direct bearing on the workload and pressure that women take on (Lui & Choi, 2015). Further, in studies where partner responsibility is taken into account, women are also described more explicitly as exhibiting greater degrees of agency (Lui & Choi, 2015). In other words, the time women spend on care and domestic work is attributed to their social realities as opposed to a lack of agency in their adherence to IM ideology.

Social Support. Among studies that address social support, again, the approaches vary as some scholars dwell on the point more so than others, while others ignore the topic. This is somewhat surprising given that many studies focus on employed mothers, as well as low-income participants, migrant mothers, and other women with more challenging circumstances than the White, middle-class, heterosexual married mothers. Such contexts play an important role in shaping women's agency (Almond, 2010; McNay, 2016). Among scholars who highlight the

need for social support, some find that spending more time with children, particularly adolescents, improves outcomes, and as a result, it is important to ensure supports for working mothers (Milkie et al., 2015). Others propose that social supports are needed for restructuring a more egalitarian society (Diaz Gorfinkiel, 2011), where work and family are an integrated part of life for women and men and where both bear responsibility for family care (Johnston & Swanson, 2007). Further, such measures are necessary to resist current IM ideology and neoliberal norms that emphasize individualism and de-emphasize collectivism (Romagnoli & Wall, 2012). Nonetheless, many articles in the sample ignore or dismiss partner responsibility or the need for greater social support. Yet both factors play an important role in affecting women's behaviors (i.e., the time and effort they spend on care work) but their agency is often interpreted and described in the absence of these important structural contexts.

Discussion

A central finding in this content analysis is the significant degree of ambiguity concerning women's agency throughout the sample. Authors' position on agency is clearly articulated in only a few articles that are explicit about women exhibiting or lacking agency. Otherwise, women are divided in categories of those having and not having agency or are described as internally negotiating with a hegemonic driving force. Given that the literature on ideology and agency are similarly ambiguous, this is not surprising. Ideology and social ideals frame our realities (Zizek, 2008) and pervade many facets of our daily lives (Foucault, 1978) and relationships (Bourdieu, 1998). At the same time, individuals are also actively engaged with and exert influence over their environment (Brandtstaedter, 2007). As such, ideology and agency are integral with each other and are also affected by one's social context (McNay, 2016). Broadly, this general perspective on ideology, agency, and social context is reflected well in our sample.

However, the application of this more general perspective surrounding agency to the context of maternal agency prompts important questions which the sample does not clearly address (Sinclair, 2017). Specifically, do women have autonomy to think and act? In other words, do they knowingly choose to comply with the tenets of IM ideology? Or do they lack the ability to think and act outside of a hegemonic influence? How scholars respond to these questions can reflect very different views about women's agency and affect how they interpret their participants' behaviors and actions (McNay, 2016). To illustrate, if a woman knowingly and actively chooses to comply with the ideology and she strongly adheres to it, that is a different scenario than a woman who is unaware of its influence and complies with it unknowingly. In the latter scenario, the woman exhibits a lesser degree of agency (Hays, 1997). In the former, she adheres to the ideology while exercising her agency to a greater degree, in which case it is important to ascertain her motivation for doing so (Fonow & Cook, 1991; McMahan, 1995). However, women's agency is not described clearly in such terms across the sample. Authors' position in relation to the questions above is unclear in most of the studies.

Consequently, such ambiguity about women's agency prompts yet another important question that is also rarely addressed in this sample. Assuming mothers adhere knowingly and are aware of allocating more time and effort to caregiving, why do they choose to do so? Hays (1997) proposed women adhere in resistance to neoliberalism, to foster human connection and family values as part of an important social contribution. However, most IM scholars overlook or ignore this point (see Chapter 2). Instead, they focus on the ways in which women adhere as opposed to why (see Chapter 2) or what other motivations lead them to mother the way they do. At times, they even assume women adhere to the ideology and interpret their behaviors based on that assumption (see Chapter 2). As a result, our understanding of women's agency and why they

adhere to IM ideology is distorted and limited. Further, we lack visibility as to whether and what other imperatives and rationales motivate women (Donath, 2017).

One plausible reason why women spend more time and effort mothering relates to whether they are mostly left to do it on their own, or if they have partners' and social support. However, another finding in this study is that scholars often ignore these important facets of women's social context. As such, women's agency is assessed and described without consideration for such supports. Hence, it remains unclear whether women are being labeled as "intensive" due to a lack of agency or because no one else is helping her do the work (Warner, 2006). Or both.

To sum, at a general level ambiguity about the nature of agency is understandable given its fluid dynamic (where individuals are simultaneously affected by and affect their environment (Brandtstaedter, 2007) and its inconclusive treatment in the literature. Additionally, social context plays an important part in shaping one's individual agency (McNay, 2016). Feminists have also highlighted the unique nature of women's agency in light of their more oppressive context (Budgeon, 2015; Sinclair, 2017), pushing back on parallel comparisons with male agency (Spade & Willse, 2016). In this content analysis focused on understanding IM scholars' position on and descriptions of women's agency, we have similarly found ambiguity concerning women's agency. However, such ambiguity in this specific context is problematic in that it remains unclear whether IM scholars in this sample perceive women as lacking agency to think and act autonomously in the context of a hegemonic ideology, whether mothers incorporate IM ideology as a social influence and knowingly adhere to it (see Chapter 2) for agentic aims (Hays, 1997), or perhaps there are other interpretations of agency that have not been considered here or in the sample. Further, if women do adhere knowingly, it is uncertain what motivates them.

Whether it is a resistance against neoliberalism as Hays (1997) had suggested. Or a lack of partner or social support, a factor we found many scholars ignored in this sample. Or other motivations such as their values, past upbringing, rewarding facets of motherhood (De Marneffe, 2019). These gaps in the IM literature represent important facets of women's realities.

Addressing such gaps in future studies can foster a greater, deeper understanding of women's agency and motivations, and of the maternal experience.

In addition, regardless of how scholars respond to the questions outlined above (i.e., whether women are driven by an oppressive ideology (Hilbrecht et al., 2008), or are knowingly investing time and effort (Clarke, 2015) due to a myriad of motivations, or because they lack support (Lui & Choi, 2015; Milkie et al., 2015), a critical factor is overlooked with respect to most of this sample. The biased and androcentric approach that emphasizes paid work and ignores and devalues the effort and value of the significant unpaid work at home. Rarely do the authors in this sample discuss the issue of women or men spending more time at work and striving to meet the ideal of the good worker (Blair-Loy, 2001). Yet all are concerned with how mothers invest more time at home and pursue motherhood ideals. Throughout the sample, it is taken for granted that paid work trumps all (Smart, 2007). However, the prioritization of paid work above care and domestic work is a masculinist perspective that is both harmful and unrealistic (Williams, 2000). Instead, the importance of *both* paid work and caregiving and domestic responsibility among women *and* men (Bakker and Gill, 2003) need to be centered. Indeed, ignoring the heavy physical, mental, and emotional labor of caregiving and domestic work does not make the problem go away (Petersen, 2020). Such perspectives leave low-income women, who often have no choice but to work outside the home, with less time to spend with or quality care for their children (Green, 2015). It leaves middle-class mothers with fewer

employment and economic opportunities, and greater dependency on their partners (Connell, 2010). The primacy of paid work, rather than the centering of both work and family, also ignores the needs of children (Katz Rothman, 1989), who are rarely mentioned throughout the sample. Additionally, parents and childless adults alike also remain with fewer resources to support parents or other family members who are ill, aged, or disabled (Williams, 2000).

Finally, throughout the literature domestic and caregiving work are often collapsed together or conflated and treated simply as a chore, a job that no one wants to do and should be commodified (Connell, 2010). However, raising children – or caring for adults in need - should not be equivocated with doing dishes or laundry. There is significant mental and emotional labor involved (Robertson et al., 2019) that contributes to important relational dynamics, filled with meaning and importance (Nodding, 1986) beyond the rewards of paid work or resulting capital accumulation (Bakker and Gill, 2003).

Taken together, when viewed from the lens of an agentic ethic of care, rather than an androcentric perspective, a woman who devotes significant time and energy can be perceived as making important societal contributions to an important facet of life (Hays, 1997) rather than adhering indiscriminately to an ideology (Risman, 1998). Further, if *both* she and her partner were afforded more flexibility and support with respect to meeting the needs of both paid work and caregiving and domestic work, and both contributed their fair share, women would not have to carry a heavier burden or end up more oppressed as a result (Risman, 1998). And men can contribute to and enjoy more of the rewarding facets of caregiving (Williams, 2000).

As such, and based on our findings, we offer several considerations for future studies. First, we highlight the importance of clarifying one's perspective of both ideology and agency in IM scholarship, and motherhood literature in general. While we may be unlikely to reach

consensus on a singular definition of both these terms, transparency about scholars' perspective will help us better understand their interpretation (Fonow & Cook, 1991) of women's adherence to ideology and their agency. Additionally, women's context is important to consider (Spade & Willse, 2016), particularly with respect to whether they have social support and partners undertake their share of responsibility for caregiving and domestic work. Lastly, we emphasize the need to focus more on new approaches to researching motherhood while also avoiding masculinist perspectives that overlook or undermine the value of unpaid work outside the "office." Although such tasks are often uncompensated or commodified, they are deeply embedded in relational dynamics that make up a vital facet of daily life, and therefore a valuable societal contribution to be undertaken and enjoyed by women and men alike (De Marneffe, 2019). Moreover, women's willingness to engage in such tasks should not be conflated with an unknowing adherence to ideology (Gilligan, 1993).

Notably, such concerns about androcentric and biased perspectives, as well as the importance of recognizing women's social contribution through their unpaid labor, have long been raised in motherhood literature (Bakker and Gill, 2003; Katz Rothman, 1989; Warner, 2006; Williams, 2020). However, it has often been ignored in IM literature. Yet, these factors can affect how women's agency is viewed and agency is a core feature of this literature. Consequently, this study contributes to the literature in several ways. To our knowledge, it is the first study to delve into how agency is perceived and described among IM scholarship, and whether important social constraints (of partner responsibility and social support) are considered with respect to women's agency. Importantly, the study highlights the ambiguity of scholars' position on agency, prompting important questions that need to be answered in order to clarify their perceptions on the degrees of agency women can and do exert in motherhood. Finally, we

point out the androcentric and biased perspectives within IM literature, which affect how women's agency is portrayed and understood.

Limitations

Despite these contributions, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The nature of this study was highly subjective. The lack of explicit discussion or clarity about women's agency required us to interpret scholars' texts for their perspectives (Ahuvia, 2001). We attempted to mitigate this issue by coding each article in its entirety multiple times, constantly clarifying our definitions for the codes, and maintaining detailed notes throughout the analysis (Neuendorf, 2017). Despite our best efforts, we may have inadvertently misinterpreted other scholars' definitions of agency. However, we hope that at the very least, our findings highlight the potential risk of ambiguity surrounding agency and encourage greater transparency in the interpretation of women's attitudes and behaviors in the context of IM ideology.

Additionally, this study has narrowly focused on IM literature though other related scholarship such as helicopter parenting and maternal gatekeeping would merit inclusion and similar analysis. However, we bound this study to ensure a more manageable scope. Additionally, literature on IM ideology originated earlier than other related literature. We therefore hope our work on IM literature can serve as a useful reference and can contribute to extending similar analyses to similar areas of scholarship. Lastly, although ideology and agency are recurring themes in the wider motherhood literature (Arendell, 2000; Kawash, 2011) we focused on it in the context of IM literature since this body of scholarship deals with it more directly.

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Tables

Table 3.1.

Aggregated Sociodemographic Characteristics of Study Samples

Baseline Characteristic	Articles Published	
	n	%
Socio-Economic Class		
Middle Class	28	52%
Mixed	12	22%
Low Income	7	13%
Unknown	7	13%
Race		
White	24	44%
Unknown	14	26%
Asian	5	9%
Mixed / Other	8	14%
Latina	2	4%
Black	1	2%
Sexual Orientation		
Implied Heterosexual	35	65%
Explicit Heterosexual	8	15%
LGBTQ	1	2%
Mostly heterosexual	4	7%
Unknown	6	11%
Children's Ages		
Unknown	14	26%
Under 6 Years Old	11	20%
School Age (6-18 Years)	10	19%
Mixed Ages	7	13%
Babies	6	11%
Pregnant	4	7%
Adolescents	2	4%

Table 3.2.

Articles' Year of Publication

Year	Articles published	
	n	%
2005	1	2%
2006	2	4%
2007	2	4%
2008	2	4%
2010	1	2%
2011	1	2%
2012	4	7%
2013	6	11%
2014	5	9%
2015	13	24%
2016	4	7%
2017	9	17%
2018	4	7%

Table 3.3.

Location of Studies' Origins

Country	Articles Published	
	n	%
US	23	43%
Canada	7	13%
UK	6	11%
Canada/US	3	6%
Australia	2	4%
Portugal	2	4%
Belgium	1	2%
Chile	1	2%
Filipina Migrants	1	2%
Finland	1	2%
France	1	2%
Hong Kong	1	2%
Israel	1	2%
Mixed Countries	1	2%
South Korea	1	2%
Spain	1	2%
Viet Nam	1	2%

Table 3.4.

Articles' Methodological and Theoretical Approaches

Baseline Characteristic	Articles Published	
	n	%
Primary Method		
Qualitative	41	76%
Quantitative	10	19%
Mixed Methods	3	6%
Secondary Qualitative Method		
Interviews / Focus Group / Observation	29	71%
Content/Discourse Analysis	9	22%
Case Study	2	5%
Autoethnography	1	2%
Theory		
Not provided	41	76%
Feminism/Social Constructivist	9	17%
Critical Discursive Psychology	1	2%
Relational Dialectic Theory	1	2%
Social Comparison Theory	1	2%
Symbolic Interactionist	1	2%

Table 3.5.

Descriptions of Ideology

Descriptor	Definition
Resist IM Ideology	Participants described as resisting IM ideology. In other words, women were conscious of the influence of IM ideology and were able to resist it to varying degrees, depending on their context. This approach reflects greater degrees of agency.
Driven by Hegemonic Influence	Participants described as being driven by ideological influence and are either unaware or unable to resist it, which reflects lesser degrees of agency.
Adaptation/ Internal Negotiation/ Social Context Matters	Reflects that participants are conscious of IM influence, adhere to it, but also try to resist it, which signifies greater degrees of agency. Often, social context is a factor that affects this adaptation or internal negotiation.
Some do some don't	Some women adhere to IM ideology more so than others, though the reasons for the difference in adherence vary. This reflects that some women have more agency than others.
Unclassified	The author's position on agency is unclear, or in some respects represents paradoxical views without explaining how they can be reconciled with respect to women's agency.

Table 3.6.

Count of Articles by Authors' Position on and Descriptions of Agency

Authors' Position on Agency	Resist IM Ideology	Adaptation/ Internal Negotiation/ Social Context Matters	Some do some don't	Driven by Hegemonic Influence	Unclassified
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
Ambiguous/Unclear	8	32	15	2	4
Lack of Agency	0	0	0	4	0
Representation of Agency	2	2	0	0	0

Table 3.7.
Sample Quotes of Authors' Position on Agency

Position on Agency	Description of Agency	Authorship	Sample Quote
Representation of Agency	Resist IM Ideology	Clarke & Ameron (2015)	<p>“This portrayal also highlights a resistance to the individuated, rationally motivated intensive mothering style characteristic of intensive mothering and mother blaming discourses.” (p. 347)</p> <p>“...the users of Mumsnet are very conscious of the role that the media plays in the construction of the ideals of motherhood.” (p. 32). Pedersen (2016) further explains that ideals related to IM were “resisted and rejected, and we again see some assertion of other models of motherhood...with its emphasis on mothers finding fulfillment and empowerment outside the home and a more equal share of childcare with others” (p. 37).</p>
Lack of Agency	Driven by Hegemonic Influence	Henderson et al. (2016) Hilbrecht et al. (2008)	<p>“...the behavioral and psychological expectations of intensive mothering are ongoing, and arguably inescapable at multiple levels.” (p. 516).</p> <p>"These mothers often seemed caught up on an exercise wheel that was spinning with its own momentum, propelled by social and cultural forces beyond their control. Flexible scheduling led to perceived greater control, but also created an optimal situation for the wheel to continue turning at an even more accelerated pace." (Hilbrecht et al., 2008, p. 473)</p>
Ambiguous or Unclear Position	Adaptation & Internal Negotiation, Context Matters	Frankenhouser & Defenbaugh (2017) Loyal et al. (2017)	<p>Describing her challenge following the birth of her first child with Post-Partum Depression (PPD) due to stigma and the hegemonic influence of IM ideology, she explains that after subsequent births, “I struggled less with admitting I was sliding back into the dark place of failure and guilt...I know...that the ideals I tried and still try so desperately to live up to are not realistic...I slowly make progress every day.” (p. 544).</p> <p>Examining how pregnant women reconcile the demands of paid work and IM ideology, the authors find that women undertake “different cognitive acrobatics, i.e. patterns of endorsement of IMI and work involvement were observed in pregnant women. These different patterns were linked with socioeconomic factors and psychological distress.” (p. 2930).</p>

Position on Agency	Description of Agency	Authorship	Sample Quote
		Agocs et al. (2015)	“Police mothers practice their own brand of intensive and extensive mothering in ways that are specifically tied to, and uniquely informed by, their work as police officers.” (p. 282).
		Elliott et al. (2015)	Studying Black low-income single mothers, the authors find “Their stories thus illustrate the profound contradictions and inequalities embedded in the ideology of intensive mothering. The mothers engage in intensive mothering using the resources available to them.” (p. 366)
Some Do, Some Don’t		Gunderson & Barrett (2017)	Looking at maternal adherence to IM ideology across the lifespan, younger mothers adhere more “because the ideology targets this segment of mothers” (p. 1005) whereas older mothers feel “less targeted by the ideology, [they] may have greater comfort in navigating dominant social expectations of mothers, stemming from greater confidence in their parenting choices and skills and perhaps a critical perspective on the ideology born from their mothering experiences.” (p. 1005).
		Newman & Henderson (2014)	Study finds that some women seem to conform less compared to others owing to their frustration with “their ability to fulfill the dominant expectations of intensive motherhood. Because of the hegemonic power of these standards.” (p. 477). In other words, mothers who hit a wall in their adherence are more capable of resisting its influence.

Position on Agency	Description of Agency	Authorship	Sample Quote
		O'Brien et al. (2017)	The authors find that some mothers make time for leisure, whereas others do not. The authors explain those who do not as having “difficulty women often have in relinquishing ‘feminised emotions associated with not being a good enough woman’ (Fullagar, 2008, p. 43) and fall into ‘gendered emotional traps’ that limit the performance of selfhood and undermine any sense of entitlement to leisure.” (p. 224). Thus, mothers who did not make time for leisure seem to have less control over their lives compared to those who do.
Unclear Author Position	Unclear Author Position	Caputo (2007)	Author explains IM ideology serves “to control or delimit what is appropriate and inappropriate for [mothers]to do. As a result, mothers have less ability to make free choices regarding their children and they experience greater pressures to conform to an imposed standard.” (p. 181). As a result, children are “anchored by characteristics such as vulnerability, incapacity, passivity and innocence...this kind of conceptualization renders children invisible and inaudible.” (p. 189). In other words, women do not have agency to resist ideology, yet their adherence limits their children’s agency.

Table 3.8.
Sample Quotes Related to Partner Responsibility and Social Support

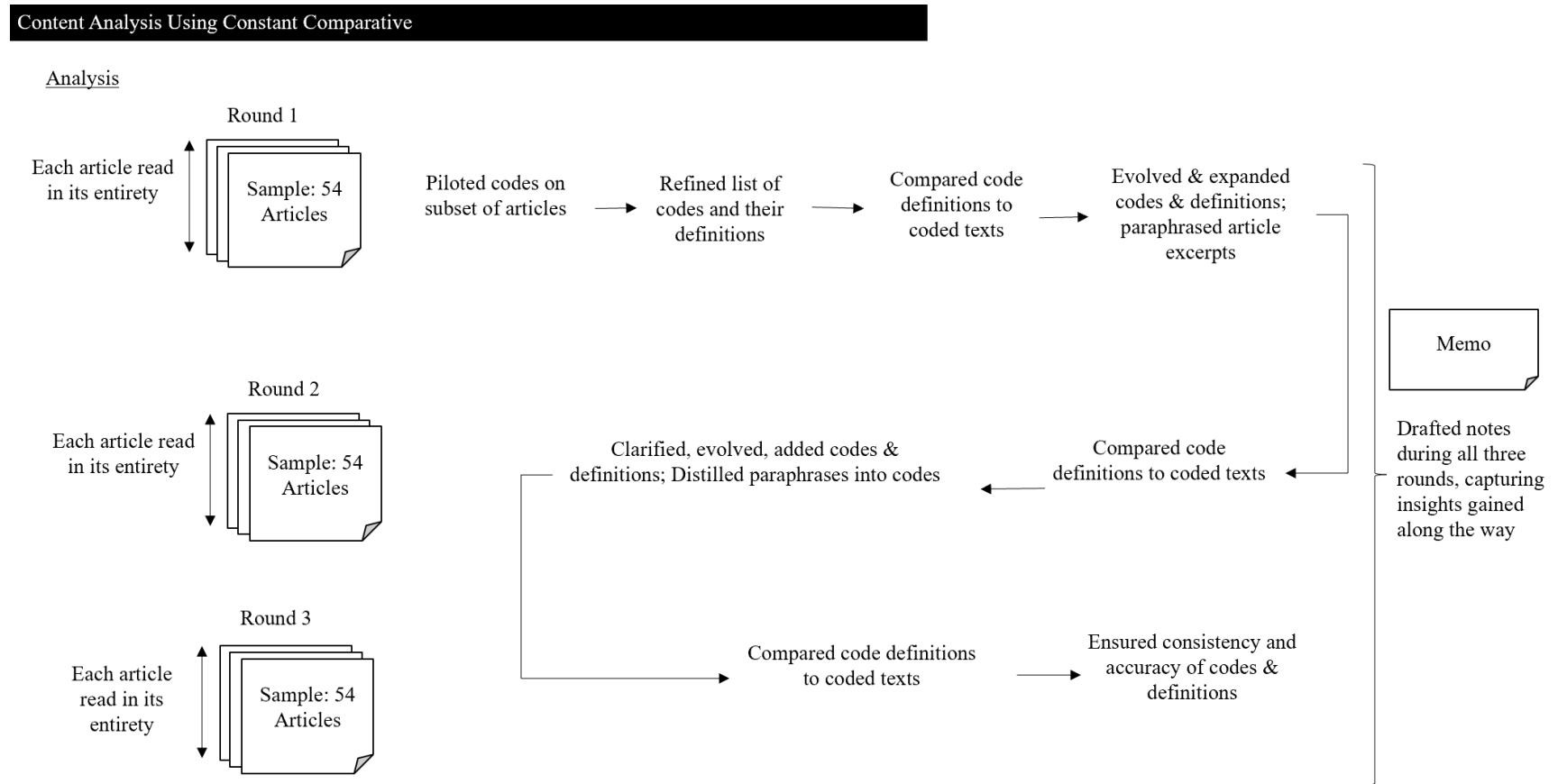
Supports	Authorship	Sample Quote
Partner Responsibility	Lui & Choi (2015)	In discussing how mothers contend with the demands of their children in the IM context, they explain, “But the success of such resistance very much depends on the father’s willingness to jump in and ‘rescue’ the exhausted mother. If he refuses, then the mother has no choice but to give in to her children’s demands.” (p. 1841)
	Sevon (2011)	"In these families the men were willing to do their fair share. This resulted from the men’s commitment and interest in care-taking and from the women’s persistence in demanding that their partners share the burden... The ideal of shared parenthood proposes notions of reciprocity, sharing and gender equity in parenting, but in practice it often fails (cf. Gatrell, 2007). Sharing does not come for free; it demands moral commitment, negotiations and the ability of both parties to question gendered narratives and practices.” (p. 78)
	Caputo (2007)	In the only mention concerning paternal responsibility, the author states, "Despite evidence of fathers’ roles having undergone positive changes in Canada over the past decade with regard to childrearing and other family responsibilities, mothers continue to have primary responsibility for caring for children. This statement reflects the situation in this study; that is, mothers were by far the most visible parent in the school settings that I studied. It is their interactions that are the primary focus of this study." (p. 174)
Social Support	Milkie et al. (2015)	“...our findings underscoring the critical importance of economic and social resources and thus the urgency in supporting mothers and families.” (p. 369)
	Diaz Gorfinkiel (2012)	"The changes in the conception of motherhood and childcare should be linked to the new possibilities offered to women to develop as independent actors in society, as much as to a broader consideration of maternity care as a social responsibility. This current opportunity to restructure the balance between the productive and reproductive spheres should not be missed, and should not, under any circumstances bring further segmentations to society where a specific group of women bears the burden of global care needs." (p. 748)

Supports	Authorship	Sample Quote
	Johnston & Swanson (2007)	"A cultural ideology of co-parenting would reframe the work/mother dialectic such that employment and parenting would no longer be construed as oppositional forces... all workers and all workplaces share responsibility for familial care and community building. It means that communities share responsibility for flexible employment programs, community facilities, and support for caregiving." (pp. 457-458).
	Romagnoli & Wall (2012)	"By constructing children as the private responsibility of parents, and mothers as responsible for child outcomes, intensive mothering ideology fits well within the neo-liberal model of social policy that characterises Western states (Fairclough 2000, Wall 2004). This model promotes individual responsibility, self-governance and self-improvement whilst simultaneously reducing social spending and state responsibility for collective social problems. (p. 275)

Figures

Figure 3.1.

Constant Comparative Content Analysis Process



Chapter 4: A Personal Autoethnographic Dialogue with Motherhood Literature

This autoethnographic study chronicles my PhD journey as a mother and academic studying motherhood. Autoethnography is a method that enables researchers to better understand society by utilizing personal experience as data to reflexively examine the intersection of culture and self (Chang, 2008). According to the extant motherhood literature, I would likely be described as an intensive mother who devotes significant time, energy, and resources to my children (Hays, 1997). After years in the corporate world, I opted out of paid work (Stone & Lovejoy, 2004) and stayed home with my children, for a myriad of reasons, including feeling burned out and depressed (Henderson et al. 2016) from juggling work and family demands (Hochschild, 2012). After a short time, I decided to pursue a PhD to make sense of my experience, a work endeavor that enabled me to remain available to my three children who were approaching their middle school years at the time.

Accepted to a Family Science and Human Development program at an East Coast university, I began my exploration of motherhood literature with work-family conflict literature (Greenhaus et al., 2012), before moving on to gender socialization (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016) and identity (Duxbury et al., 2007). I eventually began looking more broadly at motherhood literature (Kawash, 2011), which led me to maternal gatekeeping (Puhlman & Pasley, 2013) and intensive mothering literature (Hays, 1997). Across these different areas within motherhood literature, I garnered many helpful new insights and found certain aspects of my experience validated. However, I was also surprised to find that, in many ways, the literature did not reflect me or my experience accurately (O'Shea, 2019) though I am a White cisgender, heterosexual, married, middle-class birth mother, the most prominently studied demographic across most motherhood studies. I could not relate (Crossley, 2009) to, and even became

uncomfortable with, how scholars interpreted women's words and actions. I kept thinking: *But if a researcher asked me, I would have so much more to say and explain. There is so much more to this...*

The more I studied the literature, the more I became preoccupied with how the literature represented motherhood and why, rather than my original quest to better understand motherhood in the work-family context. As I discussed my growing preoccupation with my advisor, highlighting how my personal experiences did not reflect the literature, he reminded me of my new role as a researcher, and cautioned me about how to balance my identities, objectivity, and rigor when researching topics near to my heart (Tamas, 2015; Trussell, 2015). Over time, I learned to apply traditional methods, primarily qualitative, to my research, with the hopes of adding my own contributions to the literature. At the same time, we also sought, and eventually found, a means for me to dialogue with the literature in a more open, direct manner while also incorporating my lived experiences with motherhood-- through autoethnography (Wall, 2008). By dialoguing with the literature I mean that I reflexively revisit the literature not as a detached researcher (Andersen & Glass-Coffin, 2016), but as an academic who is also a mother, and consider how the research pertains to me and my experiences (Wall, 2008).

For the purpose of this study, I systematically revisit my notes from my earlier readings of the various bodies of motherhood literature I studied over the past three years. I also consider my personal experiences and how they relate to the literature. In revisiting and reflexively writing about these notes, I reflect on my reactions when I initially read them then and gain insights in revisiting them cumulatively now, with hindsight. Through this more personal, autoethnographic approach, I seek to contend with limitations I identified in the literature as a scholar and mother. I also hope to contribute new knowledge in a way that responds to scholars'

calls for new approaches to understanding motherhood (Arendell, 2000; Caputo, 2007; Myers, 2017) and that counter limitations identified in the literature (Murray, 2015; see Chapters 2, 3).

The Conceptual Ambiguity of Motherhood

Literature on motherhood is a vast field that covers many facets of maternal life (Kawash, 2011), including such topics as maternal identity (Lee et al., 2016), work-family conflict (Rollero et al., 2015), gender ideology (Bulanda, 2004) and socialization (McHale et al., 2004), to name just a few. Additionally, research continues to grow substantially to examine how motherhood affects women based on their different social locations, including various life stages (Sheriff & Weatherall, 2009), race (Dow, 2016), economic class (Verduzco-Baker, 2017), and sexual orientation (Suter et al., 2015). Across decades of scholarship, scholars have also advocated on behalf of mothers for the various challenges they face, such as the need for social policy and support (Blair-Loy et al., 2015) to address the additional burdens they carry in managing both paid work and family (Hochschild, 2012). Maternal health and well-being (Rizzo et al., 2013) are other examples of scholarly and advocacy concerns that feature prominently in this body of literature.

A recurring underlying theme of motherhood literature is the constant evolution of the concept of motherhood, such that it has come to be seen as a social construct (Hays, 1997; Loyal et al., 2017). Accordingly, the role of motherhood is somewhat ambiguous (Arendell, 2000) as our social context continually changes, which can complicate and challenge our understanding of motherhood. For example, as middle-class mothers have joined the paid workforce alongside fathers, women's historic role as primary caregiver has proliferated into multiple categories, including working mothers, stay-at-home mothers, and part-time mothers, which often entails both paid work and care work. It has also resulted in the increased commodification of care work

(Katz Rothman, 1989). Meanwhile, women of lower income (Seccombe, 1995) and Black women (Landry, 2000) have historically been a staple of the paid workforce but were often excluded from literature on work and family.

As a result of motherhood's shifting and ambiguous meaning, the concept risks being vulnerable to assumptions and oversimplifications (Scharp & Thomas, 2017) about women's roles as mothers, as scholars attempt to streamline the complexity and scope of motherhood to achieve valuable insights. For example, scholarship often draws on comparisons between employed and stay-at-home mothers (Johnston & Swanson, 2007) or Black and White mothers (Elliott et al., 2015). Doing so enables us to identify helpful differences between such groupings, but also ignores many other facets of women's experiences beyond their employment status or race.

Additionally, androcentric perspectives (Spade & Willse, 2016), masculinist views which often entail assumptions and bias in the literature, continue to prevail and affect how scholars approach and interpret the research (see chapters 2 and 3). Consequently, certain facets pertaining to motherhood get overlooked, such as children's needs, partners' responsibility (Johnston & Swanson, 2007), maternal desire and affect, rewarding facets of motherhood (De Marneffe, 2019), and how women's past experience (Tummala-Narra, 2009) and social context (Walls et al., 2016) might influence their mothering, and maternal agency (see Chapters 2 and 3).

Thus, motherhood is a ubiquitous topic that both encompasses and touches on so many different aspects of life. It is simultaneously complex and prone to oversimplifications that can result in a monolithic approach and bias that restrict and distort our perspectives of how and why women mother the way they do (Grabwoska, 2011). Yet, gaining a more accurate understanding of why women mother the way they do is critical to better comprehending women's societal

roles (Arendell, 2000) and contributions (Hays, 1997). Women's continued role as primary caregiver places them at the center of family interactions and processes (Sprey, 2000) throughout the lifespan. Further, these interactions influence the development and experiences of children (Gunderson & Barrett, 2017), women's relationships with their partners and other family members (Hochschild, 1989). They also impact the larger economy through women's increased participation in the paid workforce and as consumers. At a more individual level, such insights about women's experiences also help us understand their agency (Amigot & Pujal, 2009) and sense of identity. They can be seen as autonomous individuals who inhabit many relational roles that have historically bound them at home as mothers, wives, and daughters, as well as employees and employers. Next, we look at how feminist theory supports the challenging of androcentric perspectives and in exploring previously overlooked aspects of women's lives.

Feminist Theory

Feminists have long endorsed the idea that the personal is political, which is also an important feature in autoethnography (Averett, 2009; Denzin, 2016), as is the use of reflexivity (Fonow & Cook, 1991) for better making connections between personal and societal concerns. However, scholarship has historically tended to keep separate the personal from the political and focus less on the emotive facets of life (Weaver-Hightower (2012). Correspondingly, feminist theory has highlighted the issue of women having to constantly fit their experiences into men's language and concepts which do not reflect their experiences accurately, or the personal or emotive. Indeed, adhering to such masculinist scripts can prevent us from listening to and hearing others; it also limits the depth of our understanding of women's lived experience (Smart, 2009).

As such, feminist theory has a rich history of resisting knowledge-building originating from androcentric perspectives (Hesse-Biber, 2012). This theoretical lens advocates breaking down such limited perspectives by enabling a space for women's self-expression about their unique lived realities (Devault, 1990). Doing so also helps women speak more easily about their experiences. When categories are more in line with their realities, they better enable us to uncover more material, including that which has been taken for granted (Devault, 1990). In sum, feminist theory helps address issues of family science and sociology, such as bias, oversimplifying messy lives, particularly due to its attending to emotionality and parlance (Smart, 2009). Moreover, feminist theory also helps spotlight important features and contributions that make up women's experiences, and particularly those of mothers. Such features include affect (De Marneffe, 2019) and care work, which have been and continue to be invisible and considered inferior relative to paid labor (Bergerson, 2016). As it has throughout my PhD journey, feminist theory also guides this study, allowing me to resist androcentric perspectives, oversights, and oversimplifications in motherhood scholarship. Feminism also encourages me to speak out more openly (Devault, 1990) in pursuit of more activist aims (Averett, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to dialogue with motherhood literature to better understand my varied reactions to the literature over the past three years. Using autoethnographic method I reflexively engage in a retrospective dialogue with the motherhood literature encountered throughout my PhD journey, while considering my own maternal experiences (Wall, 2008) and guided by the following research question: *Drawing on autoethnographic methodology and feminist theory, and dialoguing with the motherhood literature I read throughout my PhD*

journey, in what ways does the literature validate, offer new insights, and frustrate me as I consider my lived experience in motherhood?

Methodology

Considerations for Choosing Autoethnography

As I explored the motherhood literature, I considered how to go about contributing to the research in a way that was comfortably aligned with my scholarly ethic (Richardson, 2006). It was important for me to gain better clarity regarding what lens I (un)consciously hold (Tamas, 2015) prior to developing studies about others' experiences. At the same time, I had to grapple with the challenge of writing in a way that is both academic and personal, in my own voice (Coons, 2013). Shoemaker (2016) highlights autoethnography as a way of allowing academic mothers a means to express ideas rather than hide their maternal selves. Indeed, I quickly came to see autoethnography as a means to speak out more directly and openly about the literature and my maternal experience in an academic setting and offering novel perspectives on motherhood literature to others. The more I read autoethnography, the more I felt I had found my methodological home; a home that also aligned perfectly with my feminist ideals (Averett, 2009).

What I found most powerful about autoethnographic methodology is its memorable (Pelias, 2016), multi-genre (Minge, 2016) storytelling approach to offering profound understanding of social critiques (Chang, 2016). I have learned a great deal about experiences both similar to and different from my own. When reading autoethnographies about similar experiences, I feel seen, heard, understood. For example, Shoemaker's (2016) creative *Mamafesto* exhilarated me with a simple list of her basic desires related to work and family – of having an egalitarian and balanced combination of both without being perpetually torn and short-

changed by policy, pay, opportunity, and quality time with one's child. In the aim of making research more inclusive and accessible, allowing such works to represent the experiences of some offers greater variety in our attempts to communicate and make meaning of our personal experiences and our world.

Resolved that my experiences with the literature during my PhD journey were important to me, and important to share with others, I endeavored to do so with the same openness and reflexivity that I had benefited from others' work, in the hopes of contributing to furthering our understanding of motherhood, or at least our difficulty in doing so. To sum, autoethnography would enable me to document a scientific analysis process in which the literature can be critiqued while incorporating insights from lived experience.

Autoethnographic Methodology

Autoethnographic methodology draws on personal experience as data, thereby enabling an examination of how self and culture are intertwined and extending our comprehension of social phenomena (Chang, 2008) through reflexive thought processes that yield transformative insights (Berry, 2016). Simply put, autoethnography is a methodology that supports cultural understanding through self-examination (Chang, 2008). As such, autoethnography recognizes the researcher's connection with their community, not its separation from it (Andersen & Glass-Coffin, 2016), while honoring the ever-shifting nature of our social context (Allen-Collinson, 2016).

Autoethnography's roots as a qualitative method developed in light of limitations in positivistic research (e.g., Adams & Manning, 2015; Holman Jones et al., 2016), as the importance of re-examining what constitutes empirical data and tapping reflexively into our subjective and personal experiences became an increasing concern (Allen, 2000). Accordingly,

Bochner (2016) describes autoethnography as inquiry, not by stating facts, as facts alone do not offer meaning, but rather through the autoethnographer's interpretation of such facts. Reflexivity and interpretation are required through the interworking of multiple identities – of researcher, mother, daughter, etc. (Metta, 2010) to enable deeper insights into the human experience. Consequently, support grew for the need to push back against positivism inherent in traditional methods and to allow more space for personal knowledge has grown significantly, with the caveat that it is done ethically and with academic rigor (Wall, 2016). This is especially true when considering the juxtaposition of studying embodied experiences, such as motherhood, while using a disembodied approach toward contributing knowledge (Huopainen & Satama, 2019). Next, we look at both the advantages autoethnography has to offer, as well as important considerations to ensure the necessary rigor and academic contribution.

Benefits of Autoethnography

Feminists have decried the ways in which methodology remains underdeveloped (Devault, 2010) due to its detached view. Such a view can suppress, ignore, and exclude many aspects of oppression that are experienced by individuals related to class, gender (Tamas, 2015), and other traits. Autoethnographic methodology helps fill such gaps, among other advantages not available through most traditional methods. It does so by creating a space for vulnerability, (Weaver-Hightower, 2019), introspection (Chang, 2008), and deeper insights (Adams & Manning, 2015) for both reader and author about the human experience and our social ills (Sparke, 2016).

Further, autoethnography also helps center women and tell their truths through story, analysis, and pedagogy that resist masculine discourse (Metta, 2010) and that does not resonate women's experiences (Heilbrun, 1999). It does so through attention to emotion (Pelias, 2016),

thereby enabling deeper understanding and greater empathy of others' experiences (Defrancisco et al., 2007). Some hold fast that engaging emotions in research is not professional or fear judgement from colleagues (Wall, 2016). Dickson-Swift et al. (2009) argue that while women have historically had to carry the burden of emotion, as we study human realities that entail emotion, it is important for all scholars to consider emotion as part of the research process.

Autoethnography also allows for acts of agency and social activism within research under the premise that we can enable change through our actions, as well as through knowledge that we create (Minge, 2016). Acts of social activism, beyond such typical forms as protest, includes listening to and understanding others, as well as joining them in spirit and community (Toyosaki & Pensoneau-Conway, 2016). Further, autoethnography allows us to both examine our own privilege while also exploring our personal pain and identity (Tienary, 2019). Indeed, my experiences are imbued with privilege. Yet I share my story knowing it is not unique, that many people experience similar issues despite their privilege. I therefore feel it is important to share for both those who relate (Coons, 2013) as well as those who cannot.

Important Considerations for Rigor in Autoethnography

While autoethnography offers distinctive benefits, it also requires unique considerations to ensure sufficient rigor that results in quality, trustworthy findings (Wall, 2016). Particular attention should be paid, and effort made, to consider aspects of research such as legitimacy, balancing insider and outsider perspectives, and ethics (Chang, 2008; Wall, 2016).

Legitimacy. Legitimacy with respect to autoethnography refers to the use of personal experience as data and analysis *for the purpose of* cultural understanding (Chang, 2008; Wall, 2016). Legitimacy requires a balance between emotion and storytelling (Sparke, 2016) and sufficient analysis of the self and its tie to society (Chang, 2008; Wall, 2016). Additionally, in

undertaking autoethnographic study, it is important to clarify one's aims, why they chose the method, how they will account for their positionality, and how it may help or hurt the process (Chang, 2008; Wall, 2016). As such, I kept these guidelines in mind by creating a checklist against which I would verify whether my coding descriptions and analysis process complied. When finding that my coding or notes did not adhere to these aims, I would refine the codes and revisit my notes in relation to my research aims and to ensure the right balance between personal and societal connections.

Balancing Insider/Outsider Perspectives. As part of the autoethnographic process, a good balance is needed between insider and outsider perspectives. One's perspective can be lost when there is insufficient or too much distance; theory and analysis offer the right level of distance and support exploration of perspective (Wall, 2008). Through reflexive practice and the process of writing memos, I constantly toggled between my insider and outside roles, academic and subject, which helped convey insights garnered from my personal experience (Tienari, 2019) while contributing to knowledge-building. Lastly, I constantly kept top of mind Chang's (2008) prompt to contemplate how my identity can offer opportunities, insights, and innovations for readers, and for the body of research more generally.

Ethics. In consideration of ethics in autoethnography, researchers must be thoughtful about whether and how those included in the study may be affected by its publication (Tullis, 2016) as our relationships with those in our studies are also part of the study (Allen-Collinson, 2016; Hernandez & Wambura Ngunjiri, 2016). Additionally, it is important to disclose only what is necessary (Wall, 2016), to provide transparency on one's process as to which stories are selected and why (Tullis, 2016), and to consider that others may have differing accounts (Pelias, 2016). Accordingly, I narrowed my research question to focus on myself and my interactions

with the literature as a mother, thereby also limiting any detailed discussion of my family members and divulge only anecdotes necessary to explain key insights. Lastly, my spouse has read the final draft and I have incorporated all edits requested concerning our family.

Data (Pre-Dissertation and Dissertation Data)

Data I drew on for the study includes both pre-dissertation data, and data collected during my work on the dissertation. Pre-dissertation data comprised of data originating from the start of my PhD program up until I began work on the dissertation. Dissertation data included documentation created for the purpose of this study. Each of these are described in further detail below.

Pre-Dissertation Data

Pre-dissertation data included notes taken on all motherhood literature (1990s- present) I had read (Chang, 2008) throughout the PhD journey totaling more than 200 peer-reviewed articles and books. I had read hundreds more articles and books in other areas of research related to motherhood, such as in the context of Interpersonal Violence, historic perspectives of motherhood and childhood, intersectionality, among other areas of interest. However, here I limit my scope specifically to research directly relevant to my primary focus when entering the program: motherhood in the context of work and family, as well as maternal ideology. Further, throughout the program, I was encouraged to focus on journal articles published in more recent years, though I often delved back further and read books from prior decades, as far back as the 1960s.

Early in the program, when selecting articles, I often began with more general search terms, such as “contemporary motherhood” and scanned hundreds of titles and abstracts. Doing so helped me get a sense of the various areas of research across this vast literature while also

helping me identify articles most relevant to my research focus. For example, during my searches I found many articles on motherhood about specific topics not aligned with my research interest, such as infant death syndrome or child sex abuse. Those articles were not reviewed in detail. Studies about such topics as how women juggle motherhood and paid work, or how mothers interact in online support groups, I read and commented on more extensively. Additionally, I was also interested in studies conducted outside the U.S. because they focused on my research interest and contributed to a broader understanding of motherhood beyond just the U.S.

Notes on my readings typically included a brief summary of what the article or book was about, key findings, as well as reactions and critiques. At the time, I also included hashtags to catalogue such attributes as methods, theories or topics, so that I could easily identify them when I needed them later, e.g., #quant, #qual, #litreview, #gendersocialization, and other attributes such as #crosscountrycomparisons. Additionally, about a year into the program I adopted a helpful software program, Weava, which helped consolidate highlighted passages and notes I jotted during readings (see Figure 4.1). Thus, articles read with this software captured more detailed reactions during my readings.

Pre-dissertation data also included more than 20 papers and reflexive memos I had drafted on motherhood throughout my program. The papers I wrote were for class assignments, conference proposals, and a couple for publication. They were mostly of a non-empirical nature, such as literature reviews, methodological, or theoretical papers. During my work on these papers, I often wrote reflexive memos to capture themes and insights as I read articles and reflected throughout my writing process. The papers and reflexive memos are helpful data sources for this study in that they offer insights into my understanding and impressions of the literature during those initial pre-dissertation years.

Dissertation Data

Documentation developed throughout this study included an Excel spreadsheet in which I created a tab for each body of literature to be reviewed for this study (see Figure 4.2). In each tab (representing each body of literature), I included: 1) columns that listed the author, year, method, and briefly described the topic and focus of each article based on the summary of each article included in my notes; 2) three additional columns representing the three different categories of reactions I had defined as my codes; and 3) a final column for notes related to my reactions. I used this tab to record my reactions to the literature as I reread my notes. I then created a second tab for each body of literature, which served as a summary tab, in which I summed up in tables the count of articles across each reaction, method-type, topic, and year published for that body of work.

Another important data source is the reflexive memos I drafted throughout the analysis for this study. I wrote a memo for each body of literature I examined. Additionally, I drafted a reflexive memo to capture my thoughts on the cumulative bodies of literature. Having these varied forms of data to draw on aided me in more accurately documenting my journey and exploring it reflexively for this study (Ortlipp, 2008).

Coding and Analysis

My coding and analysis processes (see Figure 4.3) centered around methodically and iteratively rereading my notes on all the literature read throughout my PhD journey. These notes included my article summaries, comments on specific findings, reactions, and often the original abstracts for and highlights from every article. During the rereading of the first body of literature, I inductively coded my reaction to a first a batch of 20 articles. Three categories of reactions emerged as the most recurring and prominent.

The first reaction category was “Validated,” which meant that I felt the findings described similar experiences, observations, or reflections to those I had prior to the initial reading of this article (and before entering the program). An example of a validation is an article finding that most employed women spend substantially more hours caring for their children compared to their husbands (Craig, 2006). The second category, “Taught Social Process,” referred to new insights gained about social processes. This could include scholarly findings I had not been aware of or experienced myself prior to the reading and found interesting and helpful in expanding my knowledge of motherhood. One example is an article that focused on how lesbian mothers grappled with marriage and divorce (Allen & Goldberg, 2020), a topic of which I knew little. The category “Frustrated” referred to findings that I found concerning or vexing. For instance, when I perceived that authors interpreted women’s actions and words based on a narrow lens of intensive mothering rather than considering other potential factors (Rizzo et al., 2013). In such cases, I included a note about the source of my frustration. These three categories were not mutually exclusive, and often coexisted; for example, some articles validated and also taught new experiences or taught new processes and also frustrated. Overall, the categories worked well as I continued reading the remaining articles in that body of literature, as well as when I subsequently continued my analysis of all the other bodies of literature.

Two-Part Analysis

My analysis process began with a first cycle of In Vivo coding (Miles et al., 2020). This entailed reviewing my notes on *each article individually*. After rereading my notes for each article, I would code my reaction(s) to those notes and log additional comments on what aspect of the article finding prompted such a reaction. I read, coded, and logged comments on the notes of every article systematically within a single body of literature, before moving on to the next

body of literature in the same way. I moved from one body of literature to the next in the same chronology in which I had read it from the start of my PhD program: 1) work-family conflict (e.g., Greenhaus et al., 2012) and gender socialization (e.g., Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016); 2) contemporary motherhood (e.g., Kawash, 2011); 4) intensive mothering (e.g., Hays, 1997); and 5) maternal gatekeeping (e.g., Puhlman & Pasley, 2013).

The second part of analysis was comprised of two subsequent cycles of comparative analysis. These latter two cycles focused on identifying emergent, repeated patterns (Miles et al., 2020) and drawing comparisons between the different bodies of literature while developing a greater understanding – the gestalt - of my varied reactions more cumulatively (Glaser, 1965). Thus, the second cycle focused on a rereading of my *cumulative* notes and coded reactions to *each body of literature* (as opposed to my notes on each individual article as I had done during the first round). For example, as I read my cumulative notes on work-family conflict literature, I realized that this body of work was more validating of my experience than I had initially recalled prior to commencing the dissertation. I kept a running log of thoughts and insights as I continued through this cycle. The third cycle entailed a rereading of my cumulative notes and coded reactions *across all of the different bodies of literature combined*. Once again, I logged thoughts and insights on this cycle, as well. It was through this last cycle that I was able to identify that certain bodies of literature elicited very different reactions compared to other whole bodies of literature.

Connecting Between Personal and Cultural Themes

During the analysis process, I became overwhelmed and struggled in relating my personal experience to the literature in a systematic way. How to distill my lifetime experience while relating it to multiple bodies of literature in a meaningful way (Weaver-Hightower, 2019)?

To overcome this issue, I adhered to Chang's (2008) advice to go beyond chronological descriptions of stories. Instead, I considered the relationships between things, between the present and the past, constantly zooming in and out in search of cultural themes and comparisons. I soon came to realize that I would need to repeatedly return my focus specifically to the patterns I found in the literature and relate them to my personal experiences.

One example concerned articles on gender socialization. In thinking about my own experience, I found it challenging to sum up concisely my lifetime experience in gender socialization. However, refocusing my attention to patterns in the literature, I noticed that most articles were quantitative, focused on measuring self-reported attitudes of parents and children to draw comparisons as to how mothers and fathers influenced their sons or daughters (Cordero-Coma & Esping-Andersen, 2018). Turning back to the personal, I considered whether my experiences in gender socialization, as a child, or as a parent, could be explained by such measurements. I concluded that my gender socialization was the product of intricate, complex, and multi-faceted social processes – far more than the article measurements allowed. Additionally, my socialization was influenced in many other ways, including media, school, and other family members, who were not accounted for in the measurements. Thus, I constantly narrowed my focus to patterns in the literature and whether and how I could relate to it.

Dialogue with Each Body of Literature

In the following section I share my findings and insights about my emotional responses, as captured by the three codes outlined above, to each body of literature in the chronology in which I read them throughout my PhD journey (see Table 4.1). As a reminder, I allowed for overlap in terms of my reactions to articles. For example, an article could both validate my experience and frustrate me or offer new insights. Following, I also share additional insights

gained through this retrospective analysis across the cumulative bodies of literature. Throughout, I share anecdotes from my own life in relation to the literature, as well as excerpts from my notes on my reactions to the literature.

Work-Family Conflict and Gender Ideology & Socialization

I began my PhD journey with work-family conflict literature and when I soon discovered it did not address my specific research quest, I moved on to gender ideology and socialization with the hope that it would better address my research interest. This concentration of literature I read ($n=30$) had been published during the recent two decades and were mostly quantitative. My emotional response to these articles was mostly positive in that I felt most ($n=20$) validated my experience, a fair number ($n=12$) offered new insights about social process, and few ($n=8$) frustrated me.

Validation

Articles which felt validating of my experiences typically focused on how women tend to take on more domestic and care work regardless of their employment status (Jolanki, 2015; Mastersoon & Hoobler, 2015). They found that mothers are challenged in reconciling the demands of work and home (Blair-Loy, 2001), and inclined to adapt their work arrangement based on the family life they seek (Becker & Moen, 1999). Further, employed women and men draw on different coping strategies in contending with work-family conflict (Schnittger & Bird, 1990) and such conflict often affects the marriage, as social changes do not occur “around marriage. They occur inside marriage, and transform it.” (Hochschild, 2012, p. 11).

Stone and Lovejoy’s (2004) article and Stone’s (2007) subsequent book about why non-traditionalist high-achieving women opt out of the paid workforce, truly resonated with me. Almost every finding describing women participants’ experiences happened to me. Stone (2007)

explained that women felt they did not truly have a choice but to quit their jobs. Many tried to work part-time or scale back at first. Mothers also found themselves mommy-tracked and their career trajectories restricted. Some women had good work arrangements, but management changes often cancelled prior flexible arrangements. The work culture itself felt less positive over time, more grueling and impersonal. As for their husbands, most left it up to their wives to choose, and were not present enough themselves or stepping up at home. Stone (2007) concludes that the primary reason women in her study opted out was lack of flexibility at work.

My experiences reflect much of Stone's (2007) study. After taking three years off when my three children were born (my prior job refused a flexible work arrangement), I rejoined the paid workforce at full-time at a job I enjoyed located a five-minute walk from home. I was home by 5pm and could enjoy plenty of time with the children, though I was often exhausted. When a few years later we moved to the suburbs and I began to commute more than an hour each way, a new management team had taken over at work. Although I was promoted, I discovered that even after a raise I still earned tens of thousands of dollars less than my male colleague. It also meant less time at home with my family and increased hours working in a more challenging environment (Blair-Loy, 2001). I also found that the relatively egalitarian way my husband and I had shared care and domestic tasks had become far less so in recent years (Hochschild, 2012). The dynamics had changed. I am not sure why. Perhaps because conversations on the topic often ended in conflict (Duxbury et al., 2007) but as a child of divorce I preferred to avoid such situations.

Soon after, I quit my job and found a new one with more responsibility. However, I took a major pay cut so that I could work from home two days per week (Becker & Moen, 1999). Having more time with my children was a major boon for me as they entered their early years in

elementary school. I could spend more time with them and occasionally participate in activities at their school, which helped me get to know the teachers and other parents. I felt a sense of community for the first time in many years, having moved around in my past. However, since I was not physically in the office full-time, I was excluded from many management meetings. Meanwhile, many of my all-male colleagues were also often out in the field and not physically at the office but were included in the meetings. Over time, I realized my career trajectory would remain limited there (Crosby et al., 2004) and when a colleague approached me with an opportunity at a higher managerial level while working primarily from home, I switched jobs. Within a year I quit due to the abusive environment and demands to be physically present at far-off locations at odd hours. I decided to take a hiatus, unsure if or when or what type of job I may pursue in the future (Stone, 2007). While my husband wasn't thrilled about the loss of income, he was supportive of my decision. He saw the toll that the past years had taken on me and how our children benefited from my presence, particularly as their medical issues would soon require more of my attention.

Insights Offered

Throughout my readings of work-family conflict literature, I also found articles that offered many new insights. For example, how women's employment patterns differed based on race (Florian, 2018), women's perceptions of their caretaker role when caring for elders (Jolanki, 2015), and how social support affects women of different generational cohorts and race when pursuing careers (Blair-Loy & Dehart, 2003). Some studies were especially enlightening, such as Craig and Mullan's (2011) comparison of data on time spent by women and men across multiple countries, including France, Italy, Denmark, and Australia. It taught me that even when more family-friendly policies prevail, women still carry more of the burden at home. Furthermore,

though men take on more responsibility at home, they focus less on routine (i.e., not fun) tasks. Yet, these findings only whetted my appetite to understand the reason for these dynamics and complexities so we could learn out how to improve our circumstances. Additionally, I became curious about how such studies could be further expanded. For example, in my notes on Craig and Mullan (2011), I wrote, “*Article does not account for differences when there is one child or more than one child. The addition of a child, or two, can completely change the domestic dynamic.*” This certainly was the case in my house. Additionally, the nature of the caregiving tasks changes substantially as the children grow; my kids need me in different ways as they grow older, but not necessarily less. Yet most studies focus on single snapshots in time, and more typically on younger children.

Frustration

While many of the articles in this category reflect many of my experiences, I often also felt frustration when reading them. Many of them seemed overly focused on measuring and comparing various facets of work-family conflict. For example, scholars compare time spent on work (Greenhaus et al., 2012) and family between women and men (Nomaguchi, 2009), based on their race (Florian, 2018), class (Sanches de Almeida, 2012), the impact of stress (Fagan & Press, 2008), and how gender affects work status and satisfaction (Rollero et al., 2015). While these are all important findings that clarify *how* women and men struggle with work and family, few articles explore *why* this is the case. Additionally, though I was encouraged to focus on articles rather than books, I found that books allowed scholars to explore such issues in greater depth (Stone, 2007), consider both women’s and men’s perspectives (Hochschild, 2012), and elaborate the need for greater social support (Blair-Loy et al., 2015).

I was also occasionally frustrated by the articles focused on typologies, categorizing couples based on whether they were traditional, non-traditional, egalitarian, if they outsourced most of the domestic work, or if they put family first (Masterson & Hoobler, 2015). While typologies can be useful, they represent a static idea of families' realities, missing the ongoing fluidity and dynamism of real life. Additionally, articles in this category, some of which are often cited across the work-family conflict literature, often excluded certain categories of employment such as part-time work, volunteer work, or time spent on higher learning, all of which have taken up a substantial chunk of my time. While such frustrations with the literature may make sense given the constantly evolving nature of the social sciences, they still offer a limiting view of more dynamic life processes and experiences and serve as a basis on which future studies are also built. I was therefore concerned about what such limitations might mean for our understanding of motherhood in the context of work-family-conflict.

In light of these limitations, and more importantly given that I did not feel this literature was sufficiently addressing my research interest, I wondered if perhaps I was reading the wrong literature. I then expanded my quest, venturing into gender socialization (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016) and ideology literature (Adams et al., 2007) in the hopes it might help shed more light on the work-family conflict literature. Here, too, there was a lot of measuring and less explaining. While the findings offer important contributions on how children may adopt behaviors and attitudes in relation to their parents, I did not feel comfortable with the way these studies seemed to gloss over complicated realities (McHale et al., 2004). I was not convinced that the findings explained people's realities if so many important facets of people's lives were oversimplified or overlooked. Noting my reaction at the time, I wrote: *How could you boil down*

such a complicated dynamic based on a set of presumed criteria? With the realization that I needed to cast a wider net, I moved on to explore more general motherhood literature.

Contemporary Motherhood

I returned to *PsychInfo* for articles with the keywords “contemporary mother*” published since 1996. I went as far back in time as the database would allow since the search term brought up just over 100 results. As I began reading the articles, I also noted some commonly cited articles, which I proceeded to include in my readings. I did not use such terms as “mother*” or “motherhood” because they seemed too general and brought up thousands of results, which felt too overwhelming to scan. Scanning titles and abstracts, I focused on more general themes aligned with my research interests, such as maternal identity (Spector & Cinammon, 2017), media influence (Johnston & Swanson, 2003), and cultural comparisons (Gracia et al., 2019). Of the articles I read ($n=59$), the majority were qualitative. My emotional response was that most validated my experiences ($n=34$) and offered insights on social processes ($n=51$); only a handful felt frustrating ($n=5$).

Validation

Validating articles included a variety of findings and discussions, such as how maternal identity evolves as children get older (Lee et al., 2016; Sheriff & Weatherall, 2009). Others touched on how the ethic of care affects mothers as consumers (Burningham et al., 2014; Cook, 2013). Some also focused on how maternal identity changes women's perspective on work and family (Pas et al., 2011; Spector & Cinammon, 2017).

Insights Offered

Many of the articles also offered me new insights, particularly about the unique experiences of women who live different realities than I do though despite our differences I still

share certain aspects of their mothering experiences. Examples include articles about how queer couples negotiate marriage, divorce, and heteronormativity (Allen & Goldberg, 2020) and their maternal identities (Tasker & Delvoye, 2015). Others looked at how notions of good mothering compare across countries (Aono & Kashiwagi, 2011; O'Brien et al., 2020; Tsai et al., 2011) or how kids spend time differently with parents across countries (Gracia et al., 2019). Some looked more at how social policy influences ideology and how women internalize it (Basnyat & Dutta, 2012; Read et al., 2011).

Frustration

There were only a few articles which I found frustrating within the broader contemporary motherhood category. Here again scholars attempted to measure highly expansive and complex topics and realities, such as Bornstein et al.'s (2020) quantitative study on how different forms of parenting knowledge across countries can affect child development. Another remarkable article was Puhlman & Pasley's (2013) proposal for a more advanced theoretical model of gatekeeping, a practice where mothers discourage or prevent fathers from participating in care work. At the time, I had noted: *Lots to critique here: it looks at power relations in a calculated and theoretical way as opposed to an approach that accounts for the more complex and relational realities of marriage and parenting. Also, no discussion of context, work/life/culture. Also, why is it all one-sided negative on the mother?* As my first introduction to maternal gatekeeping literature I was surprised by the authors' assertions but would soon discover that Puhlman & Pasley (2013) are the ones trying to course-correct some of the more harmful claims made by this specific body of literature. This article prompted me to explore more of this literature.

Maternal Gatekeeping

Most Gatekeeping literature was published in the recent decade, with a handful that go back as far as 1999. Most studies are quantitative, and topics vary. They include the impact of maternal encouragement (Schoppe-Sullivan et al. 2008), beliefs (McBride et al., 2005), ideology (Gaunt & Pinho, 2018), and identity (Gaunt, 2008) on women's gatekeeping and/or on paternal involvement. Other topics include paternal competence (Fagan, 2003) and depression (Thomas & Holmes, 2019). Among the articles I read (n=18), I felt that few validated my experience (n=4) or taught new insights (n=3). The majority (n=16) frustrated me.

Validation and Offer Insights

Among the few coded as validating, I found that I could relate or agree to some of their claims. For example, Cannon et al. (2008) assert that gatekeeping can be bidirectional and paternal behavior can affect gatekeeping. Puhlman & Pasley (2013; 2017) find gatekeeping behavior is not binary, shifts over time, and manifests in different models that tend to be both bidirectional, and more role-based than gender-based. I noted: *This article reflects that this dynamic is more complex than other gatekeeping articles from the past.* I also discovered helpful insights, such as Stevenson et al.'s (2013) study explaining that mothers' work issues may not affect the child-parent relationship, but mothers' marital issues do have an impact.

Frustrated

However, most articles frustrated as they appeared biased and held assumptions, although their methods appeared to be sound and rigorously follow academic protocol. For example, Allen & Hawking (1999), an oft-cited article, explains gatekeeping as “a collection of beliefs and behaviors that ultimately inhibit a collaborative effort between men and women in family work by limiting men's opportunities for learning and growing through caring for home and children”

(p. 200). While most of the article focuses on identifying women's flawed behaviors in gatekeeping the reason for such behaviors remains ambiguous, i.e., whether fathers' low involvement is the reason for gatekeeping or vice versa. Yet, this seems like a very relevant point to understanding women's behaviors. Why harp solely on mothers' behavior if fathers are not doing their share? It is an essentialist perspective to expect women to know and do most of the work, and to expect less of the father. At the time, I noted: *Women have learned to become doctors, lawyers, astronauts, stock traders, etc. despite men's reticence. Surely men can learn how to change diapers satisfactorily. Why must we be so much more understanding of men, their challenges and sensitivities, and then take the blame when they fall short?*

In another study found within gatekeeping literature, but which did not appear among my readings on work-family conflict, Pedersen and Kilzer (2014) find that women who experience work-family conflict are more likely to gatekeep because it makes them feel more powerful at home. Here, like in most of these articles, the focus is constantly on the mother's shortcomings, rarely on the father's responsibility in caregiving. Meanwhile, Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2008) emphasize that maternal encouragement affects paternal behavior. Here, I noted: *So, I work a full day, just like my husband. Except I must work harder to prove myself, for less pay. Then, when coming home to overwhelming care and domestic work, I should take time to encourage him to help? If I don't, it's my fault he doesn't do his share? This all makes me feel power-less, not power-ful. And then, if I complain again, we fight. I'm too tired to fight.*

In reflecting truthfully with myself on this literature, I also recall times when my husband complained that my standards were too high. Indeed, I wanted the diapers fastened properly so that pee and poop would not leak out. So that I wouldn't have to bathe the kid again and do extra laundry. I also recall the many weekends when I sat with our children in the living room,

playing, reading, watching movies together, but felt my husband's detachment. I was never sure if I had done something to push him away or if he simply wanted to be elsewhere, often escaping to the garden for hours. Did we have different needs, desires, or a sense of responsibility with respect to the children? Were these differences distancing us from each other?

Now that our children are teenagers and we have had a chance to explore and talk, we have discovered that we had both been overwhelmed in adapting to the constant demands and changes in our lives with respect to both work and our children. We could not understand or articulate these challenges clearly at the time. Today, I am so appreciative and happy for the great connection he has forged with our kids. It is one of the reasons I married him. Having had a difficult relationship with my own father I somehow knew he would make a great dad. Nonetheless, in reading this body of work, my experiences feel misrepresented, as though my reality is reflected in a distorted mirror. Certainly, some mothers may gatekeep to some degrees at some point. Yet, the complexity and unfairness of many of our realities is lost and misunderstood in this literature.

Intensive Motherhood

The intensive motherhood literature I read prior to starting my dissertation is mostly qualitative and varies widely across topics: mental stress (Henderson et al. 2016), class differences (Murray, 2015), maternal identity (Johnston & Swanson, 2006), childless women (Myers, 2017), employment differences (Walls et al., 2016), media influence (Chae, 2015), among others. During my dissertation, I continued to read all intensive motherhood articles published since Hays (1997) coined the term as part of a content analysis (see Chapters 2 and 3). However, this sample focuses on those read prior to commencing that work, though a subset overlaps with the dissertation readings. My emotional reaction to this literature (n=38) seems

more mixed and overlapped compared to the rest of literature detailed in prior sections: validation (n=20), offering social insights (n=23), and frustration (n=18).

Validation and Offer Insights

Among those I found validating, I agreed with Fiona's (2015) and Guerrina's (2001) calls for a more collectivistic approach to child-rearing. I also concurred with Kaptijn et al.'s (2010) findings on the positive effects of having grandparents help working parents. I had experience this firsthand when my mother lived with us for several years though she too was employed full-time. I also learned valuable insights such as Austin & Carpenter's (2008) and Frederick's (2017) articles on how mothers of children with ADHD resist ideals and ostracism. Additionally, the authors' highlighting of agency was a rare and welcome inclusion, as many of the articles seem ambiguous concerning women's agency in the context of intensive mothering ideology (see Chapter 3). Sayer et al.'s (2004) article was especially intriguing, highlighting how parenting practices have changed over time in light of shifting social context.

Frustration

Articles that frustrated me most include Meeussen and Van Laar's (2018) and Rizzo et al.'s (2013) articles on how striving to be perfect mothers leads women to curb work ambitions to focus more on motherhood, which consequently results in stress. I kept thinking how my work ambitions and stress levels had everything to do with the inflexibility at work and my partner's reticence to help and little to do with chasing any ideals. I found especially infuriating the way women were described as lacking agency, such as Theodorou and Spyrou's (2013) study on how pregnant mothers overwhelm themselves with concerns about medical risks. At the time, I noted: *The authors seem more intent on showing how women are manipulated by ideology. But where is our agency? Are we merely zombies?*

Similarly upsetting were some authors' claims that parents affected by intensive mothering ideology enrich their children with activities to promote their class (Vincent & Ball, 2017). When I consider why I signed my children up for piano lessons, it was because music had always been therapeutic to me as a child. My parents could not afford lessons for me, but I could afford them for my kids now so that my kids had other means to channel their feelings and anxieties. Similarly, signing my kids up for French camp was not about status or appearances (Takseva, 2014). Growing up, hearing my parents fight in French, I could not understand them and vowed to learn it for myself. When I eventually married a Frenchman, I was similarly determined that our children must always be able to understand interactions between their parents. In my notes, I wrote: *Reading this feels downright insulting. This literature is overly critical of mothers for wanting to enjoy a better life with their children – more time, more connection, better experiences than we had as kids.*

To sum, intensive motherhood literature was rich and complex and offered important perspectives with which to consider women's experiences - more so than maternal gatekeeping literature had accomplished. However, it too reflected biases, assumptions, limitations, and distortions with respect to my experiences. I do not doubt that many women are influenced by intensive mothering ideology to some degree. But the way it is currently studied represents a monolithic perspective of a hegemonic influence rather than one of many social affects that shape our beliefs, values, thoughts, and actions (see Chapter 2). Further, this body of scholarship mostly ignores women's agency in the context of mothering ideals, despite a prohibitive social context (see Chapter 3).

Dialogue Across the Bodies of Literature

While making progress on my dissertation, constantly rereading and reflecting on intensive mothering ideology and literature, COVID raged. I found myself surrounded by my kids and husband day and night, suddenly saddled with homeschooling, preparing additional meals, cleaning up more, worrying more about their physical and mental health. Like many, my reality became more intensive (Guy & Arthur, 2020). But I kept wondering: *Am I acting intensive but too consumed to know it? Or is this reality intense and what else can I do but respond to the call of duty? We're living in crazy times. My husband can't shirk Zoom meetings to teach the kids or prepare lunch. He's our "breadwinner." I can wake up earlier or stay up later to work on my dissertation.* The fact that I was immersed in my analysis of intensive motherhood literature, with its claims of women's adherence to ideology (see Chapter 2), only furthered my ambivalence about whether I was an intensive mother and what that actually meant. All I knew was that I cared about my family, not just my work, and why was that an issue?

At the same time, the more I thought about the impressions that these readings left on me the more disheartened I became with academia. It seemed so much time, energy, and resources spent on research resulted in what seemed to me like a distorted perspective of women's lives. Fortunately, my advisor and I began discussing the idea of an autoethnography, which would allow me to revisit the literature but speak more directly about it while exploring and expressing my concerns (Wall, 2008). It has been this return to the literature in a systematic, methodical fashion that has helped me resee the literature differently (Chang, 2008). Rather than perceive it as one body of scholarship, in which I conflated useful and validating findings with significant bias and distortion, I was able to see each body of literature on its own and to compare them with each other.

For example, as I reread my notes on work-family conflict literature, I was surprised to find how many of the articles validated and enriched with new insights about social processes. Prior to rereading my notes, I had inadvertently melded this body of literature with my most recent readings on intensive mothering and gatekeeping. As a result, the work-family conflict literature had become tainted by the problematic perspectives in the intensive mothering and gatekeeping literature. That said, my earlier frustration with work-family conflict literature's lack of depth or explanations about the disproportionate burden on mothers became increasingly apparent to me. I found that these studies reflect our society but rarely explain why (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). I had similarly forgotten how much of the contemporary motherhood literature focuses on maternal identity, which offered me more profound insights into women's experiences and to which I could relate. Yet, my identity as a mother is deeply intertwined with my identity as a woman, employee, wife, daughter, citizen, etc. (Tamas, 2016). These other identities are often ignored in literature on motherhood, as are relational dynamics with others (Palkovitz et al., 2014). As such, there remain many more facets to uncover of women's realities to better understand their identities (Laney et al., 2014).

My retrospective look at gatekeeping literature also prompted an important realization. When I read the literature the first time I was taken aback by the level of accusation against women for men's lack of involvement. When I returned to the literature, I still found myself shaking my head as I read the abstracts and my notes for these articles. But I also realized that more recent articles are expanding the gatekeeping model to reflect the greater complexity inherent in couples sharing parenting responsibility (Puhlman & Pasley, 2017). Additionally, recent articles seem to focus less on laying all blame on women and taking a somewhat less biased perspective (Cannon et al., 2008).

As for intensive motherhood, the body of literature which I have explored most extensively, I find that my initial impression held true. Although it focuses on the important topic of maternal ideological influence, women's experiences are examined in a limited way. Scholars have extended Hays' (1997) work by focusing on how women mother intensively but have not addressed her point as to why (See Chapter 2). They have also ignored women's agency (See Chapter 3). As such, the scholarship reflects a limited perspective of women's actions, motivations, and intentions in their mothering. Further, at times it seemed as though the purpose of some studies was more to prove the intensive mothering phenomenon true rather than understand women's experiences. Moreover, motherhood is not a static experience (Huopalaainen & Satama, 2019), it changes significantly as her children grow (Hallett, 2020). Therefore, to learn about women's lived realities, we need to ask questions that are not loaded with assumptions but rather attempt to understand a more complex, ever-changing, multi-faceted, relational reality (Smart, 2010). In short, we must consider women's social context, supports or lack thereof, past experiences, desires, motivations, and certainly their agency (Kawash, 2011; Palkovitz et al., 2014).

Discussion

To sum, in response to the call for new approaches to researching motherhood (Arendell, 2000), the aim of this autoethnographic study was to openly and honestly dialogue with several bodies of literature that were the primary focus of my doctoral journey. Such a retrospective has afforded me new insights on each body of literature, as well as on the ensemble of the motherhood literature read throughout my PhD journey included in the scope of this study. Prior to revisiting the literature for this study, I had come to perceive these various bodies as a whole, under the larger umbrella of motherhood literature. Further, the literature I read more recently

under this umbrella – which focused on maternal gatekeeping (Allen & Hawking, 1999) and intensive mothering (Hays, 1997) – had come to taint my view of the prior motherhood literature I had read. In other words, the problematic perspectives I found in some areas affected my view of motherhood literature as a whole.

It is only in returning to this ensemble of literature, and in classifying and differentiating them from each other, that I was able to see that problematic perspectives were primarily concentrated in only two areas – gatekeeping (Allen & Hawking, 1999) and intensive mothering (Hays, 1997). Having found this to be the case, I was able to better acknowledge the valuable and relevant insights that other bodies such as work-family conflict offered (Craig, 2006). Furthermore, revisiting my notes systematically and cumulatively led to a very different level of understanding and appreciation. It has also enabled me to appreciate the concentrations of literature with the most problematic perspectives. In systematically looking back at gatekeeping and intensive motherhood literature, I was able to see how some scholars were identifying and contending with bias, assumptions, and masculinist perspectives (Puhlman & Pasley, 2017). Moreover, the use of autoethnographic method, bolstered by trustworthiness strategies employed throughout the study (Wall, 2016), offered important novel perspective and insights that would not have been possible through more positivist methods.

As such, a broader implication of these findings is that, to echo Moore and Abetz, (2016), “How we communicate about motherhood matters.” (p. 60). In other words, every article published has the potential to make a significant impact, not only on the narrow focus of its research question or hypotheses, but also on a much larger body of literature. In my case, a single article on gatekeeping (Puhlman & Pasley, 2013) made such an impression on me that it diverted me from other concentrations of motherhood literature. It led me to a new area within

motherhood literature that held very different assumptions from other areas of scholarship I had read (Hemmings, 2011). However, in my case my experience as a mother led me to resist some of the central claims of gatekeeping literature based on what I perceive as harmful assumptions. Others with different experiences may be more likely to accept, endorse, and even build on those same problematic assumptions. Consequently, those who may not identify such issues could potentially evolve the literature while maintaining those same assumptions. Accordingly, as we design our studies, refine our research focus, gather our data, and interpret it through analysis, we must be reflexive and critical of embedded assumptions (Hesse-Biber, 2012). Moreover, we must be mindful not just of the contribution we are looking to make, but also the impact our work may have in a larger sense.

Even with the best intentions, our work may inadvertently entail assumptions, biases, and oversights (Sharp & Weaver, 2015). While we cannot help but reflect, read, and write from within our individual positionality we can be more thoughtful and mindful of how it can impact our research (Averett, 2009). As feminist theorists have advocated (Kawash, 2011), drawing on methods that allow for greater transparency and reflexivity with respect to our positionality can support us with these aims (Fonow & Cook, 1991).

Additionally, we hope that beyond this study's findings concerning useful insights and problematic perspectives across various bodies of literature on motherhood, we have showcased a way in which autoethnography can play a powerful role in scholarly research, beyond more conventional methods (Douglas and Carless, 2016). Mining and analyzing personal experience while applying academic rigor enables added dimension to our understanding and research outcome. Often throughout my doctoral journey, I was reminded of my role as a researcher and warned about not drawing heavily on my experiences in considering the literature I read (Tamas,

2016). Indeed, it is important to respect distance and boundary between research and personal experience (Wall, 2016). However, when balancing the two in a way that respects such boundaries, we can gain powerful insights that those who do not relate to the research personally can achieve (Kawash, 2011). For example, although I am interested in conducting a similar analysis on fatherhood literature, it is unlikely that I would identify potential issues as effectively as I did on motherhood literature, or as effectively as a father. Moreover, I would relish the opportunity to read an autoethnographic dialogue with fatherhood literature by a scholar who is a father. Additionally, it would also be useful to undertake such an analysis on other parenting issues, such as helicopter or mindful parenting, to identify if similar assumptions and biases undergird those areas of scholarship. Particularly since they fall under the umbrella of “parenting,” which does not connote gender in the same way as “mothering.”

Finally, regardless of whether one’s personal experience relates to the literature they engage, an important consideration for future studies is to investigate not only the *how* of participants’ social realities, but also the *why*. Such an approach can help us gain a better understanding of lived realities and insights into how we can effect change (see Chapter 2). One critical way to uncover the *why* is to *ask* participants (Smart, 2010). In other words, we need to not only ask them to describe their realities, but also their interpretations as to how those realities came to be. We need to offer participants opportunities to share insights about their choices, motivations, and constraints (Acker et al., 1991).

Limitations

A key limitation of this study is that it is based on my unique, individual experience, though I have made every effort to be rigorous in my scholarship and ensure transparency into my thinking process and experiences (Wall, 2016). Notably, my dialogue with the literature

reflects my White, middle-class, heterosexual, nuclear identity. That said, the literature with which I dialogue here is primarily focused on the same demographic. Nonetheless, this study has highlighted that despite my privilege, limitations in the literature exist and carry important implications. I hope that my findings in relation to my own experiences (Hemmings, 2011) help reveal other potential issues with respect to the experiences of those who are less represented and who contend with greater social constraints, including insights that I have inadvertently overlooked by virtue of my privileged lens.

Additionally, the articles in this sample and the concentrations of literature that they represent make up only a small percentage of the much larger swathe of motherhood literature. A different sample and different concentrations of literature may have brought up very different findings, even in relation to my personal story. Similarly, the same sample of literature in relation to another scholar's experiences would likely bring up other findings. Nonetheless, my hope is that at the very least this study prompts others to use a similar approach to critique the same or other bodies of literature, and to offer additional perspectives. In revisiting research while drawing on connections between personal and societal concerns (Chang, 2008), we can only further enrich our understanding of lived realities (Hemmings, 2011).

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Tables

Table 4.1.

Summary of Reactions Across All Bodies of Literature

	Work- Family Conflict*	Contemporary Motherhood	Maternal Gatekeeping	Intensive Motherhood
	n	n	n	n
Total Articles Read	30	59	18	38
Method Type				
Quant	16	37	1	19
Qual	8	11	16	12
Other	6	11	1	7
Reaction				
Validation	20	34	4	20
Social Insights	12	51	3	23
Frustration	8	5	16	18
Decade Published				
2011-2020	10	51	11	26
2001-2010	15	5	6	12
Pre-2000	5	3	1	0

**Includes Gender Socialization and Ideology Literature*

Figures

Figure 4.1. Screenshot of Weava Software in My Note-Taking Process Throughout Readings

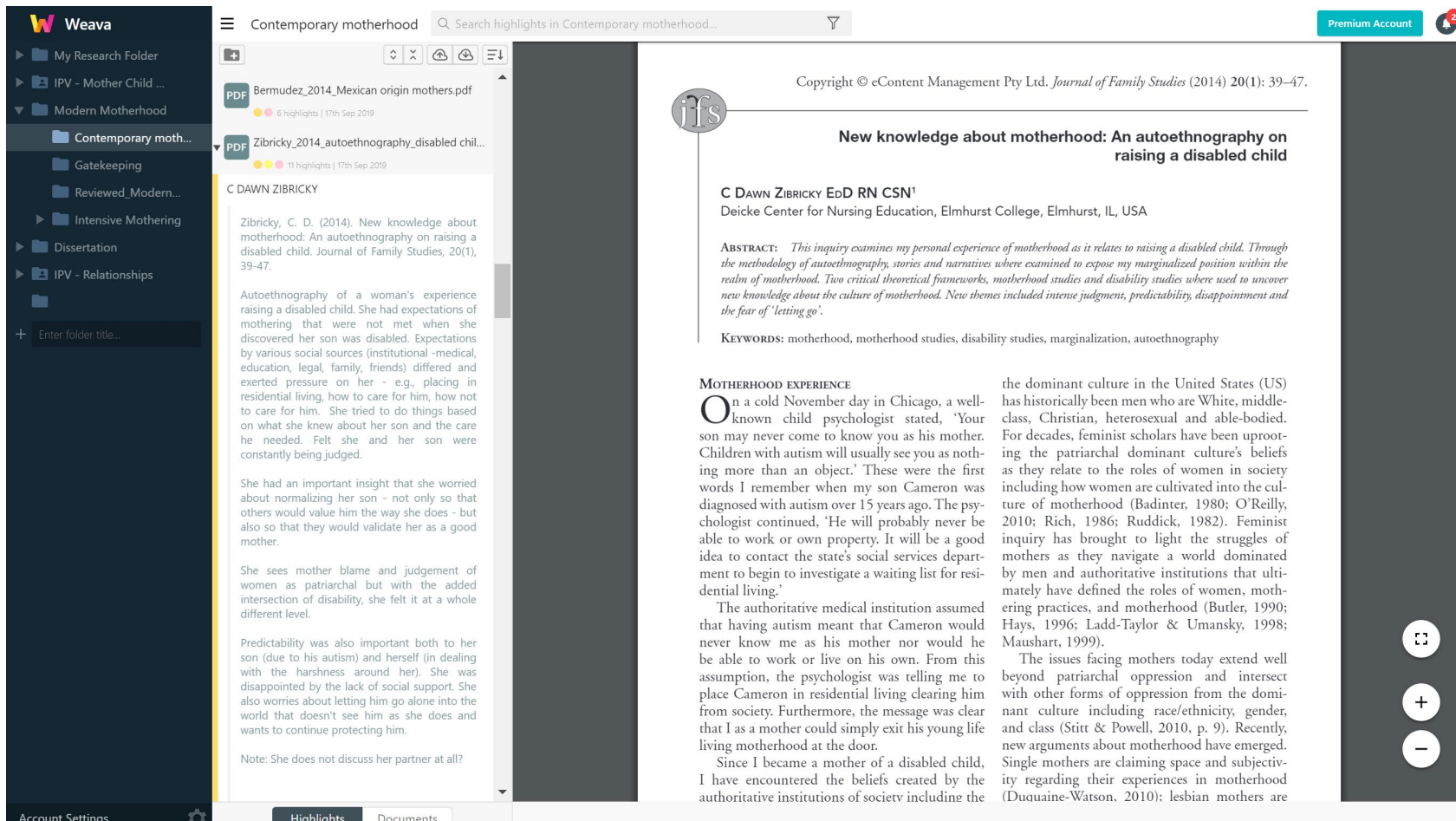


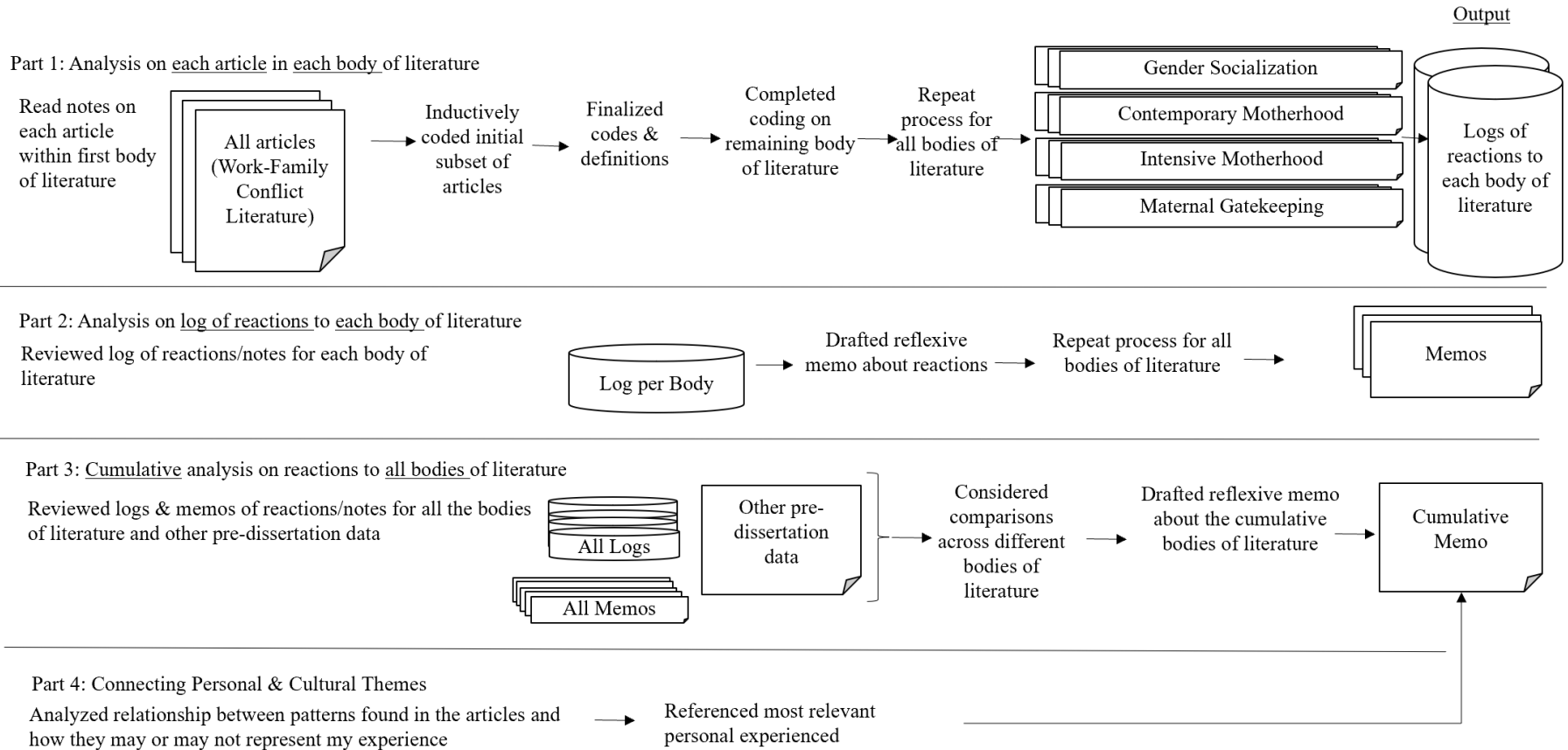
Figure 4.2.

Screenshot of Excel Spreadsheet Used During Analysis Process

Author	Year	Topic	Type	Focus	Special Focus	Validat	Taught	Frustra	Notes
Cordero-Coma & Esping-Andersen	2018	Gender socialization	Quant	Parent's housework affects kids' gender	Parent-child influence			x	Seemed convoluted. Doesn't disc
Florian (2018)	2018	Work-family conflict	Quant	Measures differences in employment	Race among women		x		
Blair-Loy, Hochschild, Pugh, Wil	2016	Social policy	Discourse	Assess lack of progress	Lack of social support	x			Very reflective of my experience
Halpern & Perry-Jenkins (2016)	2016	Gender socialization	Quant	Parent's influence on kids' ideology			x		
Jolanki (2015)	2015	Work-family conflict	Qual	How caretaker role is perceived/exe	Elder care	x	x		Taught about a more egalitarian s
Masterson & Hoobler (2015)	2015	Work-family conflict	Theoretical	Expands typology model of dual ear	Impact of flexibility of workplace	x			States what seems obvious to me
Rollero, Fedi, De Piccoli (2015)	2015	Work-family conflict	Quant	Measures how gender and work status affect satisfaction		x	x		
Greenhaus, Peng & Allen (2012)	2012	Work-family conflict	Quant	Measures differences in hours worked women/men		x		x	Doesn't get at why such phenome
Bulanda (2011)	2011	Gender + Ideology	Qual	Couple power relations	Later life	x			
Craig & Mullan (2011)	2011	Labor division	Quant	Measuring/comparing parent time	Cross-country comparisons + policy	x	x	x	Even when there are better polici
Roest, Dubas, Gerris (2010)	2010	Gender socialization	Quant	Measures differences in how wome	Focus on leisure	x	x		I had known this on some level, b
Nomaguchi (2009)	2009	Work-family conflict	Quant	Measures time/conflicted feelings between women/men		x			
Fagan & Press (2008)	2008	Work-family conflict	Quant	Measure impact of husband's stress on women				x	Convoluted. Shouldn't be so hard
Heponiemi et al. (2008)	2008	Work-family conflict	Quant	Assesses how agency on the job affects WF conflict			x		
Kuperberg & Stone (2008)	2008	Media	Qual	Media portrayal of women who ope	Compares to past portrayals of 195	x			Highlights overlooked realities
Adams, Coltrane, & Parke, 2007	2007	Gender + Ideology	Quant	Measuring time	Race, traditional ideology	x			
Duxbury, Lyons, & Higgins (2007)	2007	Gender + Ideology	Theoretical	Modelling: how ideology affects bel	Call for better social policy	x			
Stone (2007).	2007	Work-family conflict	Qual	Elaborated examination of why wor	Opting out	x			Book. Expanded explanation. Res
Craig (2006)	2006	Labor division	Quant	Measuring/comparing parent time on care/domestic work		x		x	Doesn't discuss the dynamic well,
Voydanoff (2005)	2005	Work-family conflict	Theoretical	Model explaining interplay of work, family, resources, demands, boundaries				x	Too convoluted. Had to read mult

Figure 4.3.

Autoethnographic Analysis Process



Chapter 5: Conclusion

This dissertation represents a journey rooted in my story as a working mother, which propelled me toward an academic exploration on the topic of motherhood. With time, my focus narrowed further to the literature's treatment of how and why women internalize social norms concerning motherhood (Hays, 1997). Throughout these investigations, as my understanding of the topic increased, I found that the literature offered many new insights and validated my experiences in some respects. In other ways, I also felt myself resisting the literature (Crossley, 2009). I became increasingly uncomfortable with how scholarship represented mothers in the context of Intensive Mothering (IM) ideology. Thus, my learning took on an iterative parallel duality: as I further delved into my examination of IM literature, I also sought to understand reasons for my resistance of certain facets of it (Chang, 2008).

Furthermore, I explored the delicate balance between traditional methodology and its demands of objectivity (Tamas, 2016) with the valuable insights that could be garnered from reflexively considering one's own personal experience (Denzin, 2016). Feminist theory has also guided much of my work and exploration, particularly in challenging masculinist perspectives, assumptions, oversimplifications concerning women's lives and agency (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Hesse-Biber, 2012; McNay, 2016). The structure of this dissertation has followed a similar parallel track. I began by analyzing the literature utilizing the qualitative method of content analysis across IM literature. I ended by dialoguing with the literature while considering my personal experiences through autoethnography (Chang, 2008), all with the intent of contributing new knowledge (Saraswati, 2019).

To sum, in this research program we explored the themes of ideology and agency in the context of IM. In so doing, we have found several limitations in IM literature which affect our

understanding of women's experiences. Assumptions, oversights and androcentric perspectives identified here contribute to shape perspectives of women's realities and agency, and undermine their social contributions (Hays, 1997). Furthermore, keeping in mind that new studies build on past research and that such problematic perspectives can carry into future scholarship, these issues with the literature can become further entrenched and harder to identify or course-correct. In highlighting these problematic perspectives, we hope that future scholars be more aware and mindful of such issues and are encouraged to take an approach that better considers women's constraints, motivations, and intentions.

More specifically, in the exploration of how IM scholars have extended Hays' (1997) work, we found that why women adhere to the ideology is rarely addressed. Instead, scholars have focused on how women adhere (see Chapter 2). Further, although women's social context is found to contribute toward their adherence, there is a lack of consideration pertaining to whether partners share in care and domestic responsibility or if there are sufficient social supports for women (see Chapter 3). Additionally, women's context is mainly considered in terms of basic demographic traits, but does not take into account her past experiences, constraints, motivations, desires, or relationships with others (see Chapter 2), which can result in a narrow understanding of women's realities, ideological adherence, and agency. A deeper, more holistic understanding of women's experiences is needed (Green, 2015) that considers their past, relationships with others, their motivations, desires, and constraints.

Further, ambiguity surrounding the definition of IM ideology's influence and of women's agency (see Chapter 3), as well as the application of an IM lens by some scholars (see Chapter 2), can result in a less agentic perspective of women's attitudes and behaviors. It also undermines our understanding of women's motivations and intentions (Risman, 1998). Attending to these

issues in future scholarship can help us gain a deeper, more accurate understanding of women's lived experiences, and ensure greater consistency and clarity in IM literature (Hesse-Biber, 2012). It can also contribute toward shaping policy that better supports families across all demographics.

These findings add to the extant literature within the larger body of motherhood literature that advocates for the need to better understand women's experiences, particularly given the continued need to push for greater gender egalitarianism and social support (Risman, 1998; Warner, 2006; Williams, 2000). Women should not have to continue shouldering most or all of the caregiving and domestic work alone, in addition to paid work (Bergerson, 2016). Additionally, their actions and words should also be interpreted with the understanding of these constrained realities (Blair-Loy et al., 2015; Sinclair, 2017). However, more recent literature advocates on behalf of women while emphasizing the primacy of paid work (Smart, 2007). Our approach aligns more closely with earlier scholarship, written following the Women's Movement and women's increased participation in the paid workforce, which centers *both* paid work and family among women and men (Warner, 2006). This reconstructive feminist approach (Williams, 2000) aims to course-correct other feminists' focus on enabling women to work for pay to ensure economic independence that overlooked the needs of children and the importance of family and community (Bergerson, 2016).

With the corrective lens proposed as part of this research program, the masculinist and neoliberal perspectives that seem to penetrate more recent literature become more visible. Indeed, as identified in the autoethnographic study (see Chapter 4), most IM and maternal gatekeeping literature was published in the recent decade, and androcentric assumptions and gender bias appear most frequently in these bodies of work (see Chapter 3). Furthermore, such

perspectives found in one area of motherhood literature risks tainting other segments of the literature (see Chapter 4). These findings raise concerns as we move further away from the gains of the Women's Movement and further under the influence of neoliberal ideology (Braedley & Luxton, 2010). We must therefore be mindful of gender bias and assumptions in our research concerning the lives of women (Bordo, 1993).

An important limitation across the dissertation was the highly subjective nature of these research initiatives. Given the lack of clarity surrounding the definition of ideological influence and agency, we had to infer authors' perspectives on these two principal terms in relation to women's adherence, attitudes, and actions. The autoethnographic study is also subjective, and very personal (Chang, 2008). Nonetheless, at the very least, the hope is that these studies have helped shed light on the concerns (Hemmings, 2011) raised about the need for a better understanding of women's realities in motherhood scholarship.

Importantly, it is also crucial to acknowledge that my positionality as a heterosexual, married, middle-class, highly educated, White biological mother, plays an important role in this study. Most notably, it affords me opportunities and insights that would arguably differ substantially from others of a different positionality (Devault, 2010). Hence, my positionality inevitably also affects the way I view the research, a body of work nevertheless mostly focused on women of similar demographic traits as my own. I am also cognizant that inherent in this positionality are feminist perspectives based on values and interests directly tied to this privilege, and do not account for those held by women and feminists often excluded from academia due to their lack of privilege (Zakaria, 2021). Accordingly, future studies should ensure their voices are heard and perspectives incorporated in evaluating policy and supports needed to offer a better quality of life for everyone, not just the privileged who have been studied to date.

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Appendix A: Key Terms

Agency: An individual's ability to think and act autonomously and rationally within their social context.

Caregiver: A role performed by women or men toward children that may or may not be biologically related, or for which they may or may not be materially compensated. The term can entail physical, mental, and emotional caregiving work toward the child pertaining to all facets of the child's needs prior to reaching adulthood.

Caregiving: The act of performing the role of a caregiver.

Father (noun): A role performed by men toward their biological or non-biological children of all ages, as well as by caregivers vested in a child's life. The term can entail physical, mental, and emotional caregiving work toward the child pertaining to all facets of the child's needs throughout the lifetime.

Father (verb): To perform the role of a father. The term can also be used solely to indicate a biological relation.

Fatherhood: Cultural ideas, norms, and activities surrounding the performance of the role of father.

Fathering: The act of performing the role of a father.

Ideology: A system of beliefs and values that influence to varying degrees an individual's thoughts, attitudes, and actions.

Intensive Mothering Ideology: An ideology developed by Sharon Hays (1997) that asserts women spend more time, energy, and resources mothering, despite the demands of paid work.

Mother (noun): A role performed by women toward their biological or non-biological children of all ages, as well as by caregivers vested in a child's life. The term can entail physical, mental, and emotional caregiving work toward the child pertaining to all facets of the child's needs throughout the lifetime.

Mother (verb): To perform the role of a mother. The term can also be used solely to indicate a biological relation.

Motherhood: Cultural ideas, norms, and activities surrounding the performance of the role of mother.

Mothering: The act of performing the role of a mother.

Parent: An ungendered term to indicate the role performed by women and/or men toward their biological or non-biological children of all ages, as well as by caregivers vested in a child's life.

Parenting: The act of performing the role of a parent.

Parenthood: Cultural ideas, norms, and activities surrounding the performance of the role of parent.

Social Influence: Cultural ideas and norms in their varied forms (such as through media, or family or religious values) that may affect one's beliefs and attitudes.

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