LATVIJAS
UNIVERSITĀTE

PROMOCIJAS DARBS

Rīga
2025

UNIVERSITY OF
LATVIA

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Elza Lāma

CONTEMPORARY MOTHERHOOD IN MEDIA AND WOMEN'S NARRATIVES: INTENSIVE MOTHERHOOD AMONG HETERONORMATIVE MIDDLE-CLASS WOMEN IN LATVIA

DOCTORAL THESIS
Scientific discipline: Social sciences
Subsectors: Media and communication

Academic advisor:
Dr. hist. Prof. Vita Zelče

Riga 2025

The doctoral thesis was carried out at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, University of Latvia, from 2020 to 2024.

The thesis contains the introduction, five chapters, publication list and reference list.

Form of the thesis: collection of articles.

Supervisor: Dr.hist. Professor, Vita Zelče

Reviewers:

1) Agnese Dāvidsone, Dr. phil., associate professor, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences;
2) Jānis Buholcs, Dr. sc.comm, professor, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences;
3) Daina Eglītis, Ph.D., associate professor, George Washington University, Washington DC, USA.

The thesis will be defended at the public session of the Doctoral Committee of Sociology and Social Work, Political Science and Media and Communication Science, University of Latvia, at 15.00 on May 9, 2025.

The thesis is available at the Library of the University of Latvia, Raiņa blvd. 19.

ANNOTATION

Title of thesis: Contemporary Motherhood in Media and Women's Narratives: Intensive Motherhood among Heteronormative Middle-Class Women in Latvia
Author: M. sc. soc. Elza Lāma
Supervisor: Dr. hist. Prof. Vita Zelče

The subject of the thesis is contemporary discourses of motherhood and forms of mediatization of motherhood, focusing on the group of heteronormative middle-class women in Latvia. The study, first, examines the discourses of motherhood, particularly intensive mothering ideology, and their interrelationships in mass media and social networking sites, new mother's narratives and public discourse in Latvia, and second, analyses the forms of mediatization of contemporary motherhood by focusing on how social networking sites, especially *Twitter* (*X*) and *Facebook* shape views and intertwine with mothering experience. The study is based on primary data analysis. The thesis consists of seven publications, mixing qualitative and quantitative data as well as case studies. The thesis reveals a fragmented map of motherhood discourses, that share ambivalent relationships with each other. It provides empirical evidence of the presence and, to some extent, the dominance of intensive mothering discourse among Latvia's general population and social networking sites users, particularly, Latvian-speaking *Twitter* users, as well as mass media; it also shows the destructive effects of intensive mothering discourse, revealed in mothers' narratives. The thesis also approaches the subject of mediatization of contemporary motherhood in Latvia, particularly, the formation of a "portable community" on *Twitter*, revealing that, while social networking sites provides an "extension" of experience through creating a space for discussion of motherhood experience and (re)production of hegemonic discourses, it also may serve as a safe space, even a source of sense of community, as well as provide informational, emotional and even physical support that mothers often lack.

Keywords: motherhood, mothering, discourse, mediatization, social networking sites, mass media

ANOTĀCIJA

Promocijas darba nosaukums: Mūsdienu mātišķība medijos un sieviešu naratīvos: intensīvā mātišķība heteronormatīvo vidusšķiras sieviešu vidū Latvijā
Promocijas darba autore: *Mg. sc. soc.* Elza Lāma
Promocijas darba vadītāja: profesore *Dr. hist.* Vita Zelče

Promocijas darba tēma ir saistīta ar mūsdienu mātišķības diskursiem un mātišķības mediatizāciju, fokusējoties uz konkrētu grupu: heteronormatīvām vidusšķiras sievietēm Latvijā. Pētījuma pamatā, pirmkārt, ir dažādie mātišķības diskursi un to savstarpējās attiecības masu medijos un sociālās tīklošanas vietnēs, jauno māšu naratīvos un publiskā diskursā Latvijā, un, otrkārt, mātišķības mediatizācijas formas, darbā fokusējoties uz to, kā sociālās tīklošanās vietnes, īpaši *Twitter* (X) un *Facebook* papildina mātišķības pieredzi. Pētījums ir balstīts primāro datu analīzē. Promocijas darbs sastāv no septiņām publikācijām, kurās izmantoti gan kvalitatīvi, gan kvantitatīvi dati un gadījuma apraksti. Promocijas darbs atklāj fragmentētu dažādo mātišķības diskursu karti, kurā īpašu vietu ir ieņēmis intensīvās mātišķības diskurss, un kurā iezīmētas atšķirīgo diskursu ambivalentās savstarpējās attiecības. Pētījums atklāj intensīvās mātišķības diskursa klātbūtni un zināmā mērā arī dominanci publiskajā diskursā Latvijā, masu medijos un arīdzan klātbūtni starp sociālās tīklošanās vietņu lietotājiem, īpaši *Twitter*, kā arī tā destruktīvo ietekmi, kas parādās māšu naratīvos. Promocijas darbs arī aplūko un atklāj mūsdienu mātišķības mediatizācijas formas Latvijā, t. i., "portatīvo kopienu". Sociālās tīklošanās vietnes, kuras piedāvā pieredzes "paplašinājumu", var radīt gan platformu mātišķības pieredzes diskusijām, gan hegemonisko diskursu (re)produkcijai, bet var arī piedāvāt "drošu telpu", pat kopienas sajūtu mātēm, kas savukārt var rezultēties informacionāla, emocionāla vai pat reāla, fiziska atbalsta formās, kuru sievietēm bieži vien pietrūkst.

Atslēgvārdi: mātišķība, diskurss, mediatizācija, sociālās tīklošanās vietnes, masu mediji

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

The thesis is based on original publications, which are listed in the order they are discussed in the thesis. All the publications have been published. The thesis includes the following seven publications: I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII. The total number of characters is 334,820 (with spaces).

I. Lāma, E., Lāma, G. (2024). Tracing Views of the Intensive Mothering Discourse in Latvia and on Twitter (X). *Journal of Baltic Studies.* 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2024.2406225

II. Lāma, E., Zelče, V. (2024). 'Am I Grateful Enough?': Emotions and Communication in the 'Deep Story' of New Mothers in Latvia. *Gender a výzkum / Gender and Research*, *24*(2), 231–254. https://doi.org/10.13060/gav.2023.013

III. Lāma, E., Lāma, G. (2023). Mothers on Twitter (X): Exchanging Support and Narrating Motherhood. *Culture Crossroads*. *23*, 257–271 https://doi.org/10.55877/cc.vol23.372

IV. Lāma, E. (2023). Challenging and Reproducing the Discourse of "Intensive Mothering" in Family Magazine "Mans Mazais" (2018–2022). In: Daniela, L. (ed.). *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education, 2023. Proceedings of Scientific Papers*. Riga, University of Latvia. P. 67–83. https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2023.05

V. Zitmane, M., Lāma, E. (2023). "Wake up and think of the children!": The ambivalent relationship between motherhood, femininity and anti-vaccination. In: Winiarska- Brodowska, M. (ed.). *The New Communication Revolution*. Uniwersytet Jagiellonski – Instytut Dziennikarstwa, Mediow i Komunikacji Spolecznej. P. 245–271. https://media.uj.edu.pl/documents/1384650/134373778/The+New+Communication+Revolution

VI. Lāma, E. (2023). 'Intensive Mothering' Discourse in Narratives Pro and Against 'Daddy Quota' in Latvia. In: Zelče, V. (ed.). *Media and Society, 2022. Proceedings of Scientific Papers* Riga, University of Latvia. P. 61–69. https://doi.org/10.22364/ms22.07

VII. Lāma, E. (2022). Unspoken Truths in Narratives of Contemporary Mothers Towards Their Mothers in Latvia. In: Daniela, L. (ed.). *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education, 2022. Proceedings of Scientific Papers*. Riga, University of Latvia. P. 121–137. https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2022.09

I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary motherhood, on one hand, comes with a set such luxuries, safety, security and support in the form of modern technologies and services that no previous generation has ever experienced. Internet and social networking sites provide seemingly endless possibilities of informational, emotional, and even physical and financial support at the tip of one's fingertips, whereas previously, regarding the subject of motherhood, traditional mass media could offer to some extent one-way communication of a glossy story, instructions or advice, leaving the mother to decide whether to accept it or not. Moreover, social networking sites not only entice but rather insist on sharing personal experience, thus, revealing the subjectivity of motherhood. On the other hand, the social networking sites limelight may blind oneself and expose the darkest corners of motherhood, where anger, sadness, doubts, even regret and ambivalence are hiding, clashing with the traditionally acceptable emotions towards the mother's role.

Although modern technology may assist with daily chores and ease the physical toll of mothering, contemporary motherhood still comes with a set of challenges new mothers face, needing all forms of support – even remote via social networking sites. Mediatization is an appropriate, though, up to this point, rarely applied prism through which to observe and analyse the different aspects, discourses and practices of contemporary motherhood, which, as other aspects of daily life have become intertwined with mass media and social networking sites. Mediatization is a conceptual construction as individualisation, commercialisation or globalisation that refers to the process of technological communication media saturating more and more social domains, drastically transforming at the same time; it is to be understood as "a panorama of sustained metaprocess of change"[1]. Mediatization research, which has previously been explored in the last decade by such prominent researchers as Hepp, Krotz, Hjarvard, Lundby, Couldry and others, focuses on not only media effects, but also the interrelationship between transformation in media and communication, on one side, and changes in culture and society, on the other side. Mediatization does not consider media as the sole power orchestrating the transformation but takes in account the cooperation between media and society.

Motherhood is perceived and communicated differently in social networking sites and mass media; moreover, the reality of mothering and subjectivity of motherhood is experienced and shared differently by mothers themselves. Mass media often construct news through a masculine prism, ignoring or rendering themes of interest to women un-newsworthy, thus, social networking sites add a new dimension to the dominant discourses of motherhood and create a "performative space", where women may articulate their views and experience.[2] Women turn to social networking

[1] Hepp, A. (2020). *Deep Mediatization*. London: Routledge. P. 3; Hepp, A. (2013) *Cultures of Mediatization*. Cambridge: Polity Press. P. 69.

[2] North, L. (2016). Still a 'Blokes Club': The Motherhood Dilemma in Journalism. *Journalism*, 17(3), 215–330. P. 328.; Archer, C. (2019). How Influencer 'Mumpreneur' Bloggers and 'Everyday' Mums Frame Presenting Their Children Online. *Media International Australia*, 47–56.

sites to raise questions, gain information and advice, "vent" and share frustrating episodes.[3] Social networking sites help combat the isolation of motherhood and gain empowerment, as well as gain validation of a "maternal identity" or realization of one's role as a parent.[4] The digital, extended space also embodies unresolvable conflicts and duality, as some research suggests the link between social networking sites and postpartum depression, and other mental health issues or competitiveness between mothers.[5]

As topical research mainly focuses on the use of such social networking sites as *Facebook* and *Instagram*, there is a significant gap in exploring, how parents, especially mothers, use the social media platform *Twitter* (www.Twitter.com) – globally and in Latvia, although mass media frequently use *tweets* in the production of news. According to Eurobarometer survey 2023 only 17% of EU respondents listed *Twitter* among the platforms they had accessed in the last seven days and in Latvia, this figure was 11%.[6] *Twitter's* capacity to form or reflect public opinion has been studied to some extent. Scarborough provides some empirical evidence that "*Twitter* sentiment about feminism does in fact measure cultural environments around gender that correlate with local populations' dominant gender attitudes" (Scarborough 2018, 19), however, there is a research gap regarding the subject of mothering and parenting and whether the views of a *Twitter* sample would differ from a representative sample of a larger population.[7] The forms of mediatization of motherhood, however, have not been thoroughly explored.

The diverse discourses of motherhood and their relationship with one another constantly transforms, merges, interacts, even collides, reacting to and consequently causing shifts in society. The most visible and dominant motherhood discourse in Western society is the intensive mothering ideology, initially proposed by Hays in *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* (1996) and developed by other renown researchers as Faircloth and Ennis; and even in the 21st century it is a "continuing, yet controversial representation of modern motherhood".[8] Intensive mothering

---

[3] Lee, J. Y., Grogan-Kaylor, A. C., Lee, S. J. (2020). A Qualitative Analysis of Stay-At-Home Parents' Spanking Tweets. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 29, 817–830. P. 826; Archer, C., Kao, K. (2018). Mother, Baby and *Facebook* Makes Three: Does Social Media Provide Social Support for New Mothers? *Media International Australia*, 168(1), 122–139. P. 123.

[4] Archer, C., Kao, K. (2018). Mother, Baby and *Facebook* Makes Three: Does Social Media Provide Social Support for New Mothers? *Media International Australia*, 168(1), pp. 122–139. P. 126.; Schoppe-Sullivan, S., Yavorsky, J., Bartholomew, M. (2017). Doing Gender Online: New Mothers' Psychological Characteristics, *Facebook* Use, and Depressive Symptoms. *Sex Roles*, 76, 276–289., P. 279.; Lee, Y.–J., Chen, H. (2018). Empowerment or Alienation: Chinese and Korean Immigrant Mothers' Perception of Mobile Media in Constructing their Social Role and Facilitating Parenting Practices in the US. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 6(3), 390–406.

[5] Chalklen, C., Anderson, H. (2017). Mothering on *Facebook*: Exploring the Privacy/ Openness Paradox. *Social Media + Society*, 3(2).; Chae, J. (2015). "Am I a Better Mother Than You?": Media and 21st-Century Motherhood in the Context of the Social Comparison Theory. *Communication Research*, 42(4), 503–525. P. 519.

[6] European Parliament. (2023). *Media & News Survey 2023*, European Union. https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3153

[7] Scarborough, W. J. (2018.) Feminist Twitter and Gender Attitudes: Opportunities and Limitations to Using Twitter in the Study of Public Opinion. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 4(4). https:// doi.org/10.1177/2378023118780760

[8] Ennis, L. R. (2014). "Intensive Mothering: Revisiting the Issue Today" In: Ennis, L. R (ed.) *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, 1–24. Bradford: Demeter Press. P. 1.

suggests that there is a "correct" form of mothering, "urging mothers to give unselfishly [..] their time, money and love on behalf of sacred children" in a "model of rationalized market society"; it is an "an ideology that speaks to a more prevalent set of social and moral concerns" and "suggests that all the troubles of the world can be solved by the individual efforts of superhuman woman".[9] Similarly, Douglas and Michaels speak of the "mommy myth" or "new momism" – "a set of ideals, norms, and practices, most frequently and powerfully represented in the media, that seem on the surface to celebrate motherhood, but which in reality promulgate standards of perfection that are beyond your reach" – being the latest, "more hip and progressive" version of Friedan's "feminine mystique".[10] Motherhood, therefore, no longer is a gender fate, but it does come with strict norms and possibly unattainable goals, set by society.[11]

Other motherhood discourses, not compliant with the idealized norms of intensive mothering, include a variety of different experiences, patterns of behaviour, and/or (constrained) choices, from emotional struggles and "inappropriate" feelings of ambivalence or regret to mothers and families belonging to different social groups, for instance, divorced, single or solo mothers, LGBT+ couples, families with a different social or ethnic, etc.[12] These "other" discourses are automatically approached with caution and considered borderline precarious and in need of social surveillance; however, they are (re)produced and discussed more freely and open-mindedly particularly in social networking sites, where the women themselves may lead their personal narrative, if desired.

Motherhood is a subjective experience, and contemporary mothers cannot be viewed as a homogeneous group.[13] That said, according to Trapezņikova and her colleagues, "most responsive to child planning [..] is a woman aged about 28, living with a partner (in an unregistered cohabitation), employed, with a higher education, with a moderate to high personal income [..] and a high total family income (in the fifth quintile), residing in Riga", whereas a mother open to another child in the family would be "most likely to be a woman aged 29, living with a partner in an unregistered cohabitation or in a registered marriage, with higher education, in employment or economically

---

[9] Hays, S. (1996). *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. P. 97; 177.

[10] Douglas, S. J., Michaels, M. W. (2004). *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women.* New York: Free Press. P. 15.; Friedan, B. (1963). *The Feminine Mystique.* New York: Norton.

[11] Miller, T. (2005). *Making Sense of Motherhood: A Narrative Approach.* New York: Cambridge University Press. P. 48.

[12] Cronin-Fisher, V., Parcell, E. S. (2019). Making Sense of Dissatisfaction during the Transition to Motherhood through Relational Dialectics Theory. *Journal of Family Communication, 19*(2), 157–170.; Canetto, S. S., Trott, C. D., Winterrowd, E. M., Haruyama, D., Johnson, A. (2017). Challenges to the Choice Discourse: Women's Views of Their Family and Academic-Science Career Options and Constraints. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy,* 29(1–2): 4–27.; Buzzanell, P. M., Remke, R. V., Meisenbach, R., Liu, M. (2017). Standpoints of Maternity Leave: Discourses of Temporality and Ability. *Women's Studies in Communication, 40*(1), 67–90; Moore, J., Abetz, J. S. (2019). What Do Parents Regret About Having Children? Communicating Regrets Online. *Journal of Family Issues, 40*(3), 390–412.; Valiquette-Tessier, S., Gosselin, J., Young, M., Thomassin, K. (2018). A Literature Review of Cultural Stereotypes Associated with Motherhood and Fatherhood. *Marriage & Family Review, 55*(4), 299–329; Elliott, S., Brenton, J., Powell, R. (2017). Brothermothering: Gender, Power, and the Parenting Strategies of Low-Income Black Single Mothers of Teenagers. *Social Problems 65*(4), 439–455.; Chib, A., Malik, S., Aricat, R. G., Kadir, S. Z. (2013). Migrant Mothering and Mobile Phones: Negotiations of Transnational Identity. *Mobile Media & Communication, 2*(1): 73–93.

[13] Lazard, L., Capdevila, R., Dann, C., Roper, S., Locke, A. (2019). Sharenting: Pride, Affect and the Day-to-Day Politics of Digital Mothering. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 13*(4). P. 4.

inactive, with a personal income in the lowest quintile but a high total family income (fifth quintile), living in Riga or in the countryside"[14]. Therefore, the thesis focuses on this particular group: heteronormative, middle-class women, living in urbanized areas in Latvia, understanding "heteronormativity" as a gendered, cultural discourse, dictating the terms of women's engagement in private family relationships, and a "heteronormative image of family" being a "husband and a wife who are legally married", rooted in a "highly gendered perception of women as nurturers, caregivers, and protectors of children"[15].

As the intensive mothering ideology sets strict and unrealistic norms to which mothers cannot comply (all the while punishing women who cannot meet the standards of ideal motherhood), it is through "challenging" and "alternative" or "other" discourses that women narrate their struggles and redefine, what is "normal" or "beautiful".[16] Research, especially in the last 20 years, has fragmentally explored the different discourses and aspects of the motherhood experience, but there lacks a conceptual approach to modelling the interrelationship and connectiveness of these discourses.

Actual motherhood in Latvia differs from the intensive mothering discourse which constructs the ideal family consisting of two heteronormative, preferably married adults with two or more children, the mother managing the household, while the father being the main breadwinner and assistant-parent. According to the Population and Housing Census of 2021, the most common family type in Latvia of a total of 503,100 family nuclei were lone-parent families with children under 18 (24%), followed by couples without resident children; only 16,3% of all family nuclei were married couples with children under 18.[17] This social phenomenon of lone-parent families is particularly pronounced in Latvia and Estonia.[18] Latvia also has high divorce rates compared to other European countries; moreover, more than half of divorces involve couples with children under 18.[19]

Although Latvian society has seen a noticeable positive transformation toward gender equality since the collapse of the USSR, caring for small children and household management is still regarded as a "woman's territory".[20] The Gender Equality Index 2023 still shows an imbalance regarding time devoted to housework; for instance, in the EU, 63% of women but only 36% of men report

---

[14] Trapezņikova, I., Goldmanis, M., Koroleva, I., Aleksandrovs, A. (2019). *Latvijas ģimenes paaudzēs. 2018. Analītisks ziņojums [Latvia's Families in Generations, 2018].* Rīga: LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts. P. 46.

[15] llen, K. R., Goldberg, A. E. (2019). Lesbian Women Disrupting Gendered, Heteronormative Discourses of Motherhood, Marriage, and Divorce. *Journal of Lesbian Studies, 24*(1), 12–24. P. 13–14.

[16] Yam, S. (2019). Birth Images on Instagram: The Disruptive Visuality of Birthing Bodies. *Women's Studies in Communication, 42*(1), 80–100. P. 93

[17] Zukula, B., Purona-Sida, P., Beinare, R., Bunte, V. (2022). *Latvijas 2021. gada tautas un mājokļu skaitīšanas galvenie rezultāti* [*Population and Housing Census of Latvia 2021*]. Rīga: Centrālās statistikas pārvalde. P. 92–93.

[18] Eurostat. (2020). How Many Single-parent Households Are There in the EU? Retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20210601-2; Saar, M., Aavik, K. (2022). Negotiating Neoliberalism in the Private Sphere: Narratives of Estonian Single Mothers. *Journal of Baltic Studies, 53*(1), 1–18.

[19] Eurostat. (2021). Divorce indicators [Data set]. Retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/product/page/demo_ndivind; CSB. (2023). *Demography 2023, in Latvian. Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia*. Retrieved from: https://stat.gov.lv/en/statistics- themes/population/population/publications-and-infographics/15178-demography-2023-latvian?themeCode=IM P. 12.

[20] Trapezņikova, I., Goldmanis, M., Koroleva, I., Aleksandrovs, A. (2019). *Latvijas ģimenes paaudzēs. 2018. Analītisks ziņojums [Latvia's Families in Generations, 2018].* Rīga: LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts. P. 65–68.

engaging in cooking and housework activities every day. Latvia has seen an improvement in its overall score but is still performing significantly lower than the EU average, and regarding the care activities sub-domain, inequalities have even grown substantially.[21] Among married couples with children, women initiate divorce more often than men, the most frequent reasons for conflicts being household work, money, and how to spend free time.[22] Other researchers also point to the uneven distribution of housework and care work as significant reasons for conflict.[23]

Although motherhood and problematics of intensive mothering discourse as a distinct and separate issue has not been underscored, several documents of international and national importance have accentuated the significance of gender equality, improvement of life among families with children and a healthy work-life balance, including the United Nation's "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", where, under Goal 5, are articles emphasizing the necessity to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work, and such directives of the European Commission as Directive 2006/54 that regulates legal protection for maternity leave, paternity leave and adoption, and Directive 2019/1158 otherwise known as the "daddy quota" that regulates the work-life balance and supports equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work.[24] Even though the Guidelines of the Media Policy of Latvia 2016–2020 or the project for the Guidelines of the Media Policy of Latvia 2016–2020 do not accentuate any particular points regarding family of motherhood discourses, some core themes have been highlighted in the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027 and the Social Protection and Labor Market Policies Guidelines 2021–2027 of Latvia.[25]

---

[21] EIGE. (2023). *Gender Equality Index 2023: Towards a Green Transition in Transport and Energy.* Brussels: Publications Office of the European Union. P. 12, 23, 45.

[22] Trapezņikova, I., Goldmanis, M., Koroleva, I., Aleksandrovs, A. (2019). *Latvijas ģimenes paaudzēs. 2018. Analītisks ziņojums [Latvia's Families in Generations, 2018].* Rīga: LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts. P. 28–29.

[23] Putniņa, A., Pinka, M., Mileiko, I., Kalēja, J., Jakunova, I., Muižniece, M. (2015). *Reģistrētas un nereģistrētas kopdzīves faktoru salīdzinoša analīze [Comparative Analysis of Factors of Registered and Unregistered Cohabitation].* Rīga: Publiskās antropoloģijas centrs. P. 16–17.

[24] United Nations (2015). *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations.* https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda; European Union (2006). *Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast).* European Union. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32006L0054; European Union. (2019). *Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU.* European Union. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal- content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32019L1158#PP1Contents

[25] Latvijas Republikas Ministru kabinets (2016). *Par Latvijas mediju politikas pamatnostādnēm 2016.–2020. gadam [On the Guidelines for Media Policy of Latvia 2016–2020].* LR Ministru kabinets. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/286455-par-latvijas-mediju-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2016-2020-gadam; Latvijas Republikas Valsts kanceleja (2024). *Latvijas mediju politikas pamatnostādnes 2024.–2027. gadam. Pamatnostādņu projekts.* [*Guidelines for Media Policy of Latvia 2024–2027.Draft guidelines.*] LR Valsts kanceleja. https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/db4e5704-a451-4ab0-b8b1-96a71a36d19d; Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center. (2020). *National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027. Crossectional Coordination Center,* Rīga. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027 ENG.pdf; Latvijas Republikas Ministru kabinets (2021). *Par Sociālās aizsardzības un darba tirgus politikas pamatnostādnēm 2021.–2027. gadam.* [*On Social Protection and Labour Market Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027*]. LR Ministru kabinets. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/325828-par-socialas-aizsardzibas-un-darba-tirgus-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2021-2027- gadam

Recognizing the demographic challenges, the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027 stresses the importance of "strong families across generations" and sets a target value of a total birth rate of 1,77 (the rate being 1,6 at the base year, 2018), which is going to be met by "strengthening national family support policy," mitigating "the fall in disposable income per family member when a child is born" and improving the availability of childcare services and pre-school education.[26] A work-life balance is another of the priorities set out by the plan. Moreover, The Child, Youth and Family Development Guidelines 2022–2027 state that it is the duty of the state to ensure the "wellbeing of children, youth and families, broadening the existing scope of policies and including the ethical and economical dimension to reduce poverty risks and create an inclusive society, respecting the individual needs, desires, resources, rights and ensuring the equal access to opportunities"; under article 4.3. it stresses the need for "mindful, individualized and flexible support for all kinds of families with children, especially solo-parent families, families close to the poverty threshold, families with a child or parent with a disability, and families, specifically mothers who welcome their first child after reaching 40 years of age or teenage-mothers, raising the child without support from a partner, and to which society frequently refers to as a "burden to tax-payers".[27]

Motherhood discourses, mothers' use of new and mass media, as well as mothers' narratives from a sociological, anthropological or humanitarian perspective have been explored to some extent in the global research community and in Latvia as well. While the extensive European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme's project "Developing a New Network of Researchers on Contemporary European Motherhood MotherNet" did not include participants from Latvia, several Latvian researchers have focused their work on this theme, including Kārkla, who explores the genealogy of female subjectivity in Latvian writers' prose, Kukaine, who concentrates on feminist art in post-socialism and has explored motherhood themes in art, Putniņa and, to some extent, Jansone-Ratinika, who in her dissertation on the father's pedagogical competences (2013), recommends media to focus on egalitarian forms of family, and, in doing so, gradually transform the hegemonic stereotypes in society.[28]

Therefore, against the backdrop of a demographic crisis both in Latvia and European Union, the thesis aims to contribute to the local and global motherhood and family studies in several ways: first, examining motherhood discourses and their interrelationships and prevalence in public discourse as well as mass and social networking sites – focusing on Latvia, but also providing

---

[26] Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center. (2020). *National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027.* Crossectional Coordination Center, Rīga. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline- files/NAP2027 ENG.pdf P. 21–22.

[27] Latvijas Republikas Ministru kabinets (2022). *Par Bērnu, jaunatnes un ģimenes attīstības pamatnostādnēm 2022.–2027. gadam.* Latvijas Vēstnesis. https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2022/252.1

[28] Mothernet (2021). *About.* Mothernet. https://www.mothernet.eu/about/; Kārkla, Z. (2022). *Iemiesošanās. Sievišķās subjektivitātes ģenealoģija latviešu rakstnieču prozā.* [*Genealogy of Female Subjectivity in Latvian Writers' Prose*]. Rīga: Latvijas Universitātes Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūts; Kukaine, J. (2022). *Feminist Art in Postsocialism: A Perspective of Visceral Aesthetics.* (Doctoral Thesis). Latvian Academy of Art.; Kukaine, J. (2016). *Daiļās mātes.* [*Beautiful Mothers.*] Rīga: Neputns.; Jansone-Ratinika, N. (2013). *Father's Pedagogical Competence in Family Nowadays.* [*Tēva pedagoģiskā kompetence mūsdienu ģimenē*] (Doctoral thesis). University of Latvia, Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Arts.

a broader scope of understanding of motherhood discourses and merging the discussion with research from other Western countries; second, bringing to light the personal narratives of new mothers regarding their mothering experience in contrast to the dominant mothering discourse and unfolding the conflicts and struggles of contemporary motherhood that are underrepresented and even unrecognized in mass media, and third, exploring and analysing the mediatization of contemporary motherhood, focusing on social networking sites and the benefits, as well as problems that arise from a mediatized mothering experience. The thesis consists of several publications (see Table 1. Table of publications) approaching the theme from different angles under the theoretical umbrella of mediatization and motherhood research: social networking sites, mass media, mother's personal narratives and public discourse, employing both quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis methods and working with primary data. Thus, although the focal point of research is Latvia, conclusions and recommendations are applicable to both a national and European scale.

Table 1. **Table of publications**

	Publication number	**Channel**	**Name of the publication**	**Indexed**	**Theoretical approach**	**Year**	**Characters**	**Status**	**Type of data**	**Data**	**Data gathering methods**	**Data analysis methods**
Motherhood and mediatization	I	Public discourse; new media	Tracing Views of the Intensive Mothering Discourse in Latvia and on Twitter (X)	Scopus	Intensive mothering (Hays 1994, Ennis 2014)	2024	68 058	Accepted for publication	Primary	Quantitative	Survey	Intensive Parenting Attitutes Questionnaire (Liss et al. 2013), SPSS and Microsoft Excel, (descriptive statistics)
	II	Women's narratives	'Am I Grateful Enough?': Emotions and Communication in the 'Deep Story' of New Mothers in Latvia	Scopus	Deep story (Hoschild, 2014), intensive mothering (Hays 1994)	2024	64 234	Published	Primary	Qualitative	Deep, semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis and creation of 'deep story' (Hoschild, 2014)
	III	New media	Mothers on Twitter (X): Exchanging Support and Narrating Motherhood	Scopus	Mediatization (Hepp & Krotz 2014), portable communities (Chayko 2007), intensive mothering (Hays 1994)	2023	35 380	Published	Primary	Quantitative and qualitative	Netnographic approach: data mining through Twitter API; deep, semi-structured interviews	Descriptive statistics, sentiment analysis and interpretative thematic analysis (Grant 2016) of tweets; narrative analysis

	Publication number	Channel	Name of the publication	Indexed	Theoretical approach	Year	Characters	Status	Type of data	Data	Data gathering methods	Data analysis methods
Motherhood and mediatization	IV	Public discourse; mass media	Challenging and Re-producing the Discourse of 'Intensive Mothering' in Family Magazine 'Mans Mazais' (2018–2022)	To be indexed in WoS	Intensive mothering (Hays 1994; Auðardóttir, 2022), challenging and alternative mothering discourses (Micalizzi, 2020; Tiidenberg and Baum, 2017; Malatzky, 2017 etc.)	2023	51 952	Published	Primary	Qualitative	Data gathering through selecting particular issues and articles	Critical discourse analysis (Foucault, 1972; Fairclough, 1992; Jørgensen, Phillips, 2002)
	V	New media	'Wake Up and Think of the Children!': The Ambiva-lent Relation-ship Between Motherhood, Femininity and Anti-vac-cination	No	Intensive mothering (Hays 1994)	2023	49 511	Published	Primary	Quantitative and qualitative	Netnograph-ic approach: data gathering through key-words in social media forum	Thematic analysis
	VI	New media; mass media	'Intensive Mothering' Discourse in Narratives Pro and Against 'Daddy Quota' in Latvia	No	Intensive mothering (Hays 1994)	2023	22 749	Published	Primary	Quantitative	Data gathering through key-words in social media forum and media outlets	Thematic analysis and quantitative content analysis
	VII	Women's narratives	Unspoken Truths in Narratives of Contempo-rary Mothers Towards Their Mothers in Latvia	To be indexed in WoS	Deep story (Hoschild, 2014), intensive mothering (Hays 1994)	2022	42 936	Published	Primary	Qualitative	Deep, semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis and creation of 'deep story' (Hoschild, 2014)

II. PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

The thesis aims to first, pinpoint the intensive mothering discourse, as well as to map the other competing motherhood discourses and their interrelationship in mass media and social networking sites as well as new mothers' mothers' (heteronormative, middle-class women in Latvia) narratives, and, second, to analyse the forms of mediatization of contemporary motherhood in Latvia, focusing on social networking sites and the "portable community" phenomenon. The following research questions, closely connected to the aim of the thesis, determine the structure of the thesis:

1. **What are the competing motherhood discourses in Latvia, what are their interrelationships and how does the intensive mothering discourse unravel in mass media and social networking sites, particularly *Twitter* (*X*), in public discourse and in new mothers' narratives?**
   Reflecting on recent research and discussing topical academic insights on mothering and motherhood, the thesis maps out the competing discourses and discursive themes of motherhood in contemporary Western society (article IV[29]), and discuss the dominance of intensive mothering discourse to some extent in public discourse (see article I[30]), in mass media (see article IV) and social networking sites as well (see article I and III[31]). The thesis also approaches the theme of new mothers' narratives, focusing on views of women who, according to Trapezņikova et. al, "are responsive to child planning", and analyses core themes of contemporary mothers' "deep stories" in contrast to hegemonic motherhood discourses in mass media and social networking sites (see articles II[32], VI[33] and VII[34]).
2. **How does the mediatization of motherhood occur through new media, particularly *Twitter* (*X*)?**
   Focusing on topical research on mediatization, the thesis analyses, how mothers use social networking sites to – in McLuhan's words regarding media becoming "extensions of some human faculty"[35] – "extend" their motherhood experience, how they incorporate social networking

---

[29] Lāma, E. (2023). Challenging and Reproducing the Discourse of "Intensive Mothering" in Family Magazine "Mans Mazais" (2018–2022). In: Daniela, L. (ed.). *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education, 2023. Proceedings of Scientific Papers*. Riga, University of Latvia. P. 67–83.

[30] Lāma, E., Lāma, G. (forthcoming). Tracing Views of the Intensive Mothering Discourse in Latvia and on Twitter (X). *Journal of Baltic Studies*.

[31] Lāma, E., Lāma, G. (2023). Mothers on Twitter (X): Exchanging Support and Narrating Motherhood. *Culture Crossroads*, 23, 257–271.

[32] Lāma, E., Zelče, V. (2024). 'Am I Grateful Enough?': Emotions and Communication in the 'Deep Story' of New Mothers in Latvia. *Gender a výzkum / Gender and Research, 24*(2), 231–254.

[33] Lāma, E. (2023). 'Intensive Mothering' Discourse in Narratives Pro and Against 'Daddy Quota' in Latvia. In: Zelče, V. (ed.). *Media and Society, 2022. Proceedings of Scientific Papers* Riga, University of Latvia. P. 61–69.

[34] Lāma, E. (2022). Unspoken Truths in Narratives of Contemporary Mothers Towards Their Mothers in Latvia. In: Daniela, L. (ed.). *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education, 2022. Proceedings of Scientific Papers*. Riga, University of Latvia. P. 121–137.

[35] McLuhan, M. (2006 [1967]). *The Medium is the Massage. An Inventory of Effects*. Corte Madera: Gingko Press Inc. P. 26.

sites in their everyday life, and how they gain informational, emotional and even physical and financial support through their "portable community"[36] in social networking sites, for instance, *Twitter* (*X*) (see article III[37]). The thesis also explores the discussion and (re)production of motherhood discourses, mothers and others navigating their everyday life and engaging in public debate in social networking sites regarding topical motherhood and family themes, for instance the "daddy quota" (Directive 2019/1158) and "antivaxx" or anti- vaccination attitudes (see articles V[38] and VI[39]).

The object of the study is contemporary motherhood in mass media and social networking sites, particularly *Twitter*, and woman's, new mothers' (heteronormative, middle- class women in Latvia), narratives. The subject of the study is competing motherhood discourses, particularly intensive mothering ideology, and forms of mediatization of motherhood. The thesis is based on seven publications that focus on the competing contemporary discourses of motherhood in mass media, social networking sites, public discourse and new mothers' narratives, and the mediatization of mothering and formation of a "portable community" on *Twitter*. The third chapter maps out the methods used in publications that the thesis is based on and reflects on the connections of these publications to the subject of the study. The fourth chapter lines out the theoretical background of the thesis, exploring topical and interdisciplinary research on motherhood, motherhood communication, motherhood discourses and mediatization. The conclusions and recommendations chapter presents the main findings and thesis for defence, as well as practical implications for the study.

---

[36] Chayko, M. (2007). The Portable Community: Envisioning and Examining Mobile Social Connectedness. International *Journal of Web Based Communities*, *3*(4), 373–385. P. 375–377

[37] Lāma, E., Lāma, G. (2023). Mothers on Twitter (X): Exchanging Support and Narrating Motherhood. *Culture Crossroads*. *23*, 257–271.

[38] Zitmane, M., Lāma, E. (2023). "Wake Up and Think of the Children!": The Ambivalent Relationship Between Motherhood, Femininity and Anti-vaccination. In: Winiarska-Brodowska, M. (ed.). *The New Communication Revolution*. Uniwersytet Jagiellonski – Instytut Dziennikarstwa, Mediow i Komunikacji Spolecznej. P. 245–271.

[39] Lāma, E. (2023). 'Intensive Mothering' Discourse in Narratives Pro and Against 'Daddy Quota' in Latvia. In: Zelče, V. (ed.). *Media and Society, 2022. Proceedings of Scientific Papers* Riga, University of Latvia. P. 61–69.

III. METHODOLOGY

The overall set of publications is written under the metaphysical umbrella of a transformative paradigm that covers the research and evaluation and that is "designed to challenge the status quo"; this paradigm involves various approaches and techniques, and, thus, does not have a specific set of methods or practices of its own.[40] Focusing on contemporary motherhood discourses and forms of mediatization, each individual publication, that is part of the thesis publication set, targets different channels and aspects of media, combining case studies (with quali-quantitative primary data, analysed in individual publications, with a publication analysing two quantitative surveys (see Table 1. Table of publications).

Focusing on primarily the intensive mothering discourse as the hegemonic discourse in Western societies, the publications also analyse the "challenging" and "alternative" or "other" mothering discourses, who either challenge or suggest an alternative to the hegemonic discourse of intensive mothering (*Figure 1. Discourses of motherhood*), regarding mother's identity and social roles, behaviour and actions, and emotions.

"Challenging" and "alternative" or "other" motherhood discourses lift the veil from otherwise shrouded other forms of normality, permitting the woman to have her own voice and agency. The discursive themes and other characteristics of mothering discourses are discussed in chapter four and in all publications.

To determine and assess the dominance (to some extent) of the intensive mothering ideology in public discourse and social networking sites (*Twitter/X*)[41], publication I uses primary data in the form of two surveys (one for a representative sample of Latvia's population, one – an equally large sample of *Twitter/X* respondents) and analyses them by using descriptive statistics. Whereas

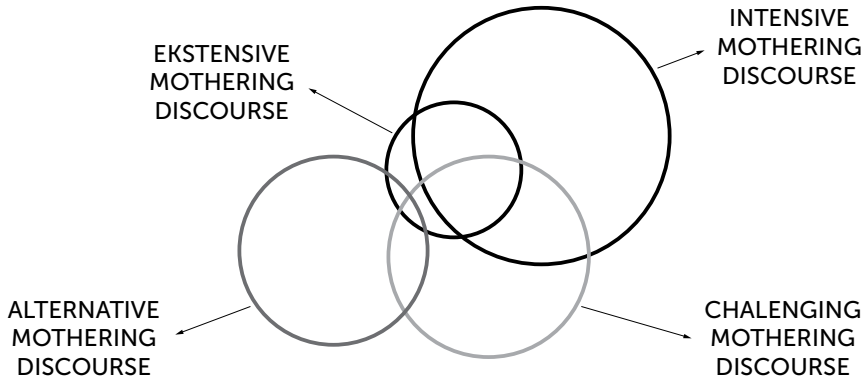


Figure 1. **Discourses of motherhood**
Source: author.

[40] Mertens, D. M. (2009). *Transformative Research and Evaluation*. New York: The Guilford Press. P. 41., 59.

[41] Although on 23 July 2023, Elon Musk, owner and CTO of X, announced on his *Twitter* profile the graduate change of name and brand of the social networking site to *X*, as the study was conducted previous to these changes, the authors continue to use the original name.

to map out the competing mothering discourses in mass media and public discourse, publication IV, a case study of the family magazine "Mans Mazais" (2018–2022), uses critical discourse analysis to analyse qualitative primary data, gathered through selecting particular issues and articles.

Then, to explore the mediatization of motherhood and how media "extends" the experience of mothering, publication III, a case study of a portable community of mothers on *Twitter/X*, uses a netnographic approach to extract quali-quantitative primary data through by data mining, using *Twitter* API, and by conducting eleven deep, semi-structured interviews of mothers, who themselves identify as part of this community. Data is analysed by using descriptive statistics, sentiment analysis and interpretative thematic analysis. Moreover, to determine the presence of intensive mothering discourse in social networking sites and to expand on the characteristics of mediatization of motherhood, two case studies (publication V and publication VI), also employing a netnographic approach, analyse quali-quantitative and qualitative primary data (comments on the most popular parenting forum "Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums") through thematic analysis of comments and also quantitative content analysis of mass media outlets (news portals).

Lastly, to gather discursive themes of mothers' narratives and map out the harmful influence of the intensive mothering discourse, publication II analyses qualitative primary data in the form of ten deep, semi-structured interviews through thematic analysis and creation of a "deep story"; publication VII widens the sample of women's narratives and also expands the study by focusing on contemporary mothers' relationships with mothers of previous generations, by also analysing qualitative primary data in the form of eight deep, semi- structured interviews through thematic analysis and creation of a focused "deep story".[42]

Table 2 (see Table 2. Statistics illustrating the demographic background of the studies, 2020–2024[43]) paints the background and pins the group that is the centre of attention of the thesis – heteronormative, middle-class women with small children, living in urbanized areas in Latvia –, displaying both the group's vulnerability and value in the context of demographic crisis. Bearing in mind the previously mentioned Trapeziņikova's study, noting the woman who would be most likely be open to a child, according to the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, of on average more than 1 million women the majority (over 700 thousand women) live in cities. Of (on average) more than 175 000 women ages 25 to 39, the majority, more than (on average) 94 thousand women, have higher education. The table shows slow increase of the average age of the mother at birth of a child (approximately 30 years old), mothers with higher education being even older. Lastly, the table also shows that children, ages 0 to 5, most frequently live with both parents, in a marriage or in an unregistered partnership, but the number of children living only with their mother increases with age, displaying the most common family type in Latvia: a mother with a child or children.

[42] Hochschild, A. R. (2016). *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press.

[43] Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. (2024). Official Statistics Portal. Tables IRS010, IRD070, IDM020, IDM050, MVG051, IZT010. https://stat.gov.lv/en

Table 2. **Statistics illustrating the demographic context of the studies, 2020–2024**

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population in Latvia at the beginning of the year	1 907 675	1 893 223	1 875 757	1 883 008	1 871 882
Total number of women	**1 026 719**	**1 017 998**	**1 006 700**	**1 010 687**	**1 003 142**
Total number of women living in cities	**717 660**	**713 227**	**703 454**	**724 916**	**719 360**
Population in Latvia between ages 25–39	383719	374883	365519	360358	–
Total number of women between ages 25–39	**186263**	**181699**	**176528**	**174613**	–
Total number of women, ages 25–39, with no school education, lower than primary, primary or primary (ISCED levels 0–2)	18502	17349	16292	15243	–
Total number of women, ages 25–39, with general secondary or secondary vocational training (ISCED levels 3 and 4)	70378	68281	65557	65516	–
Total number of women, ages 25–39, with higher education (ISCED levels 5–8)	**97383**	**96069**	**94679**	**93854**	–
Average age of the mother at birth of child	30	30,2	30,3	30,4	–
Average age of mother at birth with no school education, lower than primary, primary or primary (ISCED levels 0–2)	25,9	25,9	25,7	25,9	–
Average age of mother at birth with general secondary or secondary vocational training (ISCED levels 3 and 4)	28,9	29,1	29,1	29,3	–
Average age of mother at birth with higher education (ISCED levels 5–8)	**32**	**32**	**32,4**	**32,5**	–
Number of live births in Latvia	**17 552**	**17 420**	**15 954**	**14 490**	**…**
Children under 17 in total	348 552	347 790	346 314	346 420	344 006
Children under 17, living in families of couples living in unregistered cohabitation	28 433	30 150	29 331	29 675	28 595
Children under 17, living in married couple's families	**136 767**	**142 122**	**142 918**	**143 436**	**143 635**
Children under 17, living with their father	26 137	24 395	25 002	25 198	25 144
Children under 17, living with their mother	**157 215**	**151 123**	**149 063**	**148 111**	**146 632**
Children ages 0–5 in total	122 594	118 381	114 008	109 472	103 352
Children ages 0–5, living in families of couples living in unregistered cohabitation	10 435	10 583	10 110	10 128	9 329
Children ages 0–5, living in married couple's families	**48 036**	**48 260**	**47 188**	**45 482**	**43 844**
Children, ages 0–5, living with their father	10 412	9 990	9 847	9 452	8 864
Children, ages 0–5, living with their mother	**53 711**	**49 548**	**46 863**	**44 410**	**41 315**
Children ages 6–11 in total	117 492	117 274	118 951	123 957	126 709
Children ages 6–11, living in families of couples living in unregistered cohabitation	9 486	10 060	9 959	10 256	10 357
Children ages 6–11, living in married couple's families	**46 677**	**48 516**	**49 662**	**51 945**	**53 559**
Children, ages 6–11, living with their father	7 753	7 167	7 440	7 873	8 242
Children, ages 6–11, living with their mother	**53 576**	**51 531**	**51 890**	**53 883**	**54 551**

To conclude, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative primary data, linking empirical evidence with topical global research on motherhood and mediatization, the thesis provides a comprehensive review of the subject and detailed insights into the problematics of contemporary mothering against the backdrop of a demographic crisis in Western societies.

IV. CONTEMPORARY MOTHERHOOD AND MEDIATIZATION

The theoretical background of the thesis is based on topical research regarding motherhood, motherhood communication, motherhood discourses and mediatization, which is shortly discussed in the following chapter.

4.1. Competing motherhood discourses

To begin with, it is essential to distinguish between terms "intensive parenting" and "intensive mothering". Some researchers consider them to be equal, although Hays speaks of "intensive mothering", while Rizzo, Schiffrin and Liss speak of a "parenting" ideology and reflecting on Hays ideas, define three tenets, "which are the belief that mothers are inherently better parents (essentialism), the belief that mothering should be child centred, and that children should be considered sacred, delightful, and fulfilling to parents", also stressing that with "the intensity required to parent well, parenting can be quite challenging and require wide-ranging skills and expertise".[44] Some aspects of intensive parenting – "stimulation", "fulfilment" from childcare and "child-centred" attitudes – are in regard to both parents, while "intensive mothering" refers to mothers. Therefore, as, for instance, Forbes calls for further research to differentiate between parenting and mothering attitudes, in the study, the term "intensive mothering" is used, as the research mainly focuses on the mother's role.[45]

Historically, intensive mothering is a "raced and classed discourse, driven strongly by white, middle-class values" within a neoliberal society; however, there is evidence of its influence on other groups and even cultures.[46] This form of mothering is "held on a pedestal as an ideal form of parenting", even though not all women have an equal opportunity to exercise it.[47] It implies parents to be responsible "not only for their children's physical, cognitive, and intellectual development, but also for their social and emotional wellbeing and for their overall success in life", "investing vast amounts of emotional labour and energy into raising their children [..] above and beyond the perhaps obvious strength of emotions", often neglecting the mother's own needs and desires. Intensive

---

[44] Hays, S. (1996). *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Rizzo, K. M., Schiffrin, H.H. Liss, M. (2013). Insight into the Parenthood Paradox: Mental Health Outcomes of Intensive Mothering. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 22*, 614–620. P. 615.

[45] Forbes, L. K., Donovan, C., Lamar, M. R. (2020). Differences in Intensive Parenting Attitudes and Gender Norms Among U.S. Mothers. *The Family Journal, 28*(1), 63–71, P. 70.

[46] Das, R. (2019). The Mediation of Childbirth: 'Joyful' Birthing and Strategies of Silencing on a Facebook Discussion Group. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 22*(5–6), 495–510. P. 495.

[47] Gross, C. L., Turgeon, B., Taylor, T., Lansberry, K. (2014). State Intervention in Intensive Mothering. In: Ennis, L. R. (ed.) *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, 163–179. Bradford: Demeter Press. P. 163.

mothering is internalized by women, although it offers a "privatized" motherhood model tailored to the middle class and does not recognize the limitations that may be experienced by women in other socioeconomic classes or with a different ethnic background, education level, age, nationality, etc.[48]

Even though, as Faircloth stresses, there has been "a shift away from traditional, patriarchal couple relationships, based on an inherent inequality between men and women, towards a more equitable, mutually fulfilling model", the discourse of intensive mothering still reproduces what are perceived as "traditional" gender roles, even idealizing them.[49] The mother mainly assumes the role of primary caregiver and manager of the household, and the father is seen as the bread-winner.[50]Some researchers recognize "extensive mothering" as a branch of the overarching discourse of intensive mothering, tailored to the needs of working mothers and the working class, thus, allowing mothers who work full-time outside the house still to show their devotion and investment in bringing up children by delegating their tasks to experienced professionals. Peculiar products of this discourse are also mothers-influencers or mothers- entrepreneurs, who, amidst the culture saturated by neoliberal values, try to balance work and life with children and make a profit through blogging and "playbour".[51]

The idealized and romanticized intensive mothering discourse not only dictates a preferable form of family and parenting modes but also regulates the proper way to practice, perform, and even feel motherhood. Parents, especially mothers, both expect and are expected to feel fulfilment in their role despite problems or challenges like cluster feeding, sleepless nights, and emotional exhaustion in the long run.[52] The idealized discourse rejects negative emotions, failures, and doubts about oneself as a parent. As Auðardóttir puts it, "under neoliberalism, feelings of anger, insecurity and frustration are viewed as personal failures to be replaced with happiness, humour and

---

[48] Mainland, M., Shaw, S. M., Prier, A. (2016). Parenting in an Era of Risk: Responding to the Obesity Crisis, *Journal of Family Studies, 23*(1), 86–97. P. 86.; Das, R. (2019). The Mediation of Childbirth: 'Joyful' Birthing and Strategies of Silencing on a Facebook Discussion Group. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 22*(5–6), 495–510. P. 499.; Valiquette-Tessier, S., J. Gosselin, M. Young, and K. Thomassin. (2018). A Literature Review of Cultural Stereotypes Associated with Motherhood and Fatherhood. *Marriage & Family Review,* 55 (4), 299– 329; Cummins, M. W., and G. E. Brannon. (2022). Mothering in a Pandemic: Navigating Care Work, Intensive Motherhood, and COVID-19. *Gender Issues, 39*, 123–141.

[49] Faircloth, C. (2021). *Couples' Transitions to Parenthood: Gender, Intimacy and Equality.* Springer Nature. P. 21.

[50] Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., Yavorsky, J. E., Bartholomew, M. K., Sullivan, J. M., Lee, M. A., Kamp Dush, C. M., Glassman. M. (2017). Doing Gender Online: New Mothers' Psychological Characteristics, Facebook Use, and Depressive Symptoms. *Sex Roles,* 76, 276–289. P. 77.

[51] Meng, B. (2020). When Anxious Mothers Meet Social Media: Wechat, Motherhood and the Imaginary of the Good Life. *Javnost – The Public,* 27(2), 171–185, P. 180.; Lazard, L., Capdevila, R., Dann, C., Locke, A., Roper, S. (2019). Sharenting: Pride, Affect and the Day-to-Day Politics of Digital Mothering. *Social and Personal Psychology Compass,* 13(4).; Archer, C. (2019). Social Media Influencers, Post-Feminism and Neoliberalism: How Mum Bloggers' 'Playbour' is Reshaping Public Relations. *Public Relations Inquiry, 8*(2), 149–166, P. 152–153.

[52] Mainland, M., Shaw, S. M., Prier, A. (2016). Parenting in an Era of Risk: Responding to the Obesity Crisis. *Journal of Family Studies, 23*(1), 86–97; Malatzky, C. (2016). Abnormal Mothers: Breastfeeding, Governmentality and Emotion Amongst Regional Australian Women. *Gender Issues,* 34(4). 355–370; Liss, M., Schiffrin, H. H., Mackintosh, V. H., Miles-McLean, H., Erchull, M. J. (2013). Development and Validation of a Quantitative Measure of Intensive Parenting Attitudes. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 22*, 621–636.

positivity".[53] Archer and Kao point out that women, in fear of judgment or being misunderstood, or, on the contrary, due to pride, often do not seek out social support and fall silent about their failure to comply with the model of a "perfect" mother.[54] The internalized intensive mothering ideology also manifests itself in feelings of guilt when going against the "rules," for instance, not so much as for returning to paid labour as not being able to spend as much quality time with children.[55] Moreover, not only has intensive mothering created a list of taboo topics or behaviours, but it also suggests monitoring others and the self, even conducting surveillance, in order to check compliance with set standards.[56]

Childrearing and parenting in both Western society and other cultures in the recent past was perceived as a collective effort, however, neoliberalism and "investment parenting" have changed the focus toward individualism and investment of seemingly unlimited resources into the wellbeing of a child so as to ensure "good market returns" .[57] In a way, intensive mothering rejects and opposes the values of a rationalized market society as it directly contradicts the logic of capitalism, "in which self-interested actors pursue individual ends in the competitive marketplace".[58] However simultaneously at the backdrop of intensive mothering is consumerism, stimulating competition and driving parents, especially mothers, to overload, leaving personal, individual needs in the background, and take on risks. Hays and other researchers highlight the obvious incapability of the intensive mothering discourse to solve the problems of modernity.[59] Das points out, this discourse creates two kinds of risks: first of all, determining a single appropriate style of mothering and parenting, and, second, placing groups out of the primarily middle-class discourse in a position of risk, urging them to strive for ideals possibly out of their capacity.[60] Steiner and Bronstein see motherhood

---

[53] Auðardóttir, A. M. (2022). From Progressiveness to Perfection: Mothers' Descriptions of Their Children in Print Media, 1970–1979 versus 2010–2019. *European Journal of Cultural Studies,* 26(2). 212–229, P. 3.

[54] Archer, C., Kao, K. T. (2018). Mother, Baby and Facebook Makes Three: Does Social Media Provide Social Support for New Mothers? *Media International Australia, 168*(1), 122–139.

[55] Buzzanell, P. M., Remke, R. V., Meisenbach, R., Liu, M. (2017). Standpoints of Maternity Leave: Discourses of Temporality and Ability. *Women's Studies in Communication, 40*(1), 67–90; Sullivan, C. (2014). 'Bad Mum Guilt': The Representation of 'Work-Life Balance' in UK Women's Magazines. *Community, Work & Family, 18*(3), 284–298.

[56] Tiidenberg, K., Baym, N. K. (2017). Learn It, Buy It, Work It: Intensive Pregnancy on Instagram. *Social Media + Society, 3*(1).; Lazard, L., Capdevila, R., Dann, C., Locke, A., Roper, S. (2019). Sharenting: Pride, Affect and the Day-to-Day Politics of Digital Mothering. *Social and Personal Psychology Compass,* 13(4).

[57] Steiner, L., Bronstein, C. (2017). Leave a Comment: Mommyblogs and the Everyday Struggle to Reclaim Parenthood. *Feminist Media Studies, 17*(1). P. 63–64.

[58] Brown, S. (2014). Intensive Mothering as an Adaptive Response to Our Cultural Environment. In: Ennis, L. R. (ed.) *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, 27–46. Bradford: Demeter Press P. 27.; Milkie M. A., Warner, C. H. (2014). Status Safeguarding: Mothers' Work to Secure Children's Place in the Social Hierarchy. In: Ennis, L. R. (ed). *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*. Bradford: Demeter Press. P. 66.

[59] Ennis, L. R. (2014a). Intensive Mothering: Revisiting the Issue Today. In: Ennis, L. R. (ed.) *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, 1–24. Bradford: Demeter Press. P. 2.; Hays, S. (1996). *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press. P. 12.; Walker, M. (2014). Intensive Mothering, Elimination, and the Call to Eden. In: Ennis, L. R. (ed.) *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, 233–246. Bradford, ON: Demeter Press P. 233.

[60] Das, R. (2019). The Mediation of Childbirth: 'Joyful' Birthing and Strategies of Silencing on a Facebook Discussion Group. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 22*(5–6), 495–510. P. 498.

discourses as a spectrum, where there are "free-range parents, who believe that children must learn to be independent and self-reliant from an early age by being given greater freedoms, learning to make choices, and being less supervised," and "'helicopter' parents, who foreground parental responsibility and risk in every encounter, representing the intensive model at its most extreme".[61]

As the "real face" of motherhood and the average family profile differs from the intensive mothering rigid norms, several mothering discourses are distinguished in other research. These either "companion" or "conflicting" discourses challenge or suggest an alternative to the hegemonic discourse of intensive mothering (*Figure 1. Discourses of motherhood*), regarding 1) mother's identity and social roles, 2) behaviour and actions, and 3) emotions. "Challenging" and "alternative" or "other" motherhood discourses lift the veil from otherwise shrouded other forms of normality, permitting the woman to have her own voice and agency.[62]

As illustrated in Figure 1 by the author, the dominant discourse of intensive mothering has a prominent position with "extensive mothering" as a complimentary discourse by its side, differing only in the fact that "extensive mothering" allows the mother to be employed and, thus, to become a "manager" of the household, delegating different tasks of child-care to others, while maintaining the strict intensive mothering guidelines, absolute responsibility and sacrifice of mother's needs over the interests of the child.[63] Within the intensive and extensive mothering discourses, mothers adjust their expectations, depending on work status: stay-at- home mothers emphasize "accessibility"; part-time working mothers emphasize "quality interactions", and full-time working mothers emphasize "empowering children and providing financial resources to support their children's activities" as central to their ideal mothering, justifying their status as beneficial to children.[64]

While "challenging" discourses accept the prevailing norms of intensive and extensive mothering discourses, they try to cause a disruption. The scene of these "counter-narratives" is fragmented, as they contrast and interact with one another and the hegemonic discourse as well.[65] Tiidenberg and Baum, and Malatzky speak of "yummy mummies" who challenge intensive mothering by accenting their sexuality and femininity in contrast to the "saint-like" predisposition of a mother in the dominant discourse, whereas Orton-Johnson reveals a "slummy mummy" discourse that rejects superficial beauty and endless beauty-routines and focus on the average woman and need for rest, alone-time and casual appearance. However, the disruption of intensive mothering

---

[61] Steiner, L., Bronstein, C. (2017). Leave a Comment: Mommyblogs and the Everyday Struggle to Reclaim Parenthood. *Feminist Media Studies, 17*(1). P. 69.

[62] Sunderland, J. (2000). Baby Entertainer, Bumbling Assistant and Line Manager: Discourses of Fatherhood in Parentcraft Texts. *Discourse & Society, 11*(2), 249–274. P. 249.

[63] Orton-Johnson, K. (2017). Mummy Blogs and Representations of Motherhood: "Bad Mummies" and Their Readers. *Social Media + Society, 3*(2).; Meng, B. (2020) When Anxious Mothers Meet Social Media: Wechat, Motherhood and the Imaginary of the Good Life, *Javnost – The Public, 27*(2), 171–185.

[64] Liss, M., Schiffrin, H. H., Mackintosh, V. H., Miles-McLean, H., Erchull. M. J. (2013). Development and Validation of a Quantitative Measure of Intensive Parenting Attitudes. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *22*, 621–636, P. 623.

[65] Micalizzi, A. (2020) Exploring Gender and Sexuality Through a Twitter Lens: The Digital Framing Effect of the #Fertilityday Campaign by Female Users, *Information, Communication & Society*, 1157–1174, P. 1163.

discourse is relative, as "challenging" discourses acknowledge the dominance of the hegemonic discourse.[66]

Lastly, "alternative" or "other" mothering discourses include discursive themes otherwise invisible to the dominant discourse, trying to detach from norms and values of the neoliberal, patriarchal society, and more aggressively pursuing the individual voice and agency of the mother. Alternative discourses include mothers with different social roles, identities or choices, for instance, younger or older than average mothers, mothers with physical or psychological challenges, as well as mothers from marginalized communities due to ethnicity or sexuality, as well as relationship status (single or solo-mothers, divorced mothers, or stepmothers, etc.), income and social status, etc.[67] For instance, solo-mothers are often perceived as a risk as they do not provide a "traditional" family model and opportunity to explore one's genetic origin, thus, earing the title of being "selfish".[68] As intensive mothering discourse also regulates normative and "correct" behaviour as well as feelings and emotions, alternative discourses open space for discussion about otherwise "taboo" topics – domestic violence, reproductive challenges, death of child, maternal ambivalence and regret, etc.[69] Mothers, represented in alternative discourses, often face and acknowledge stigmatization as they supposedly pose a risk to the child's wellbeing and development, according to prevailing social norms, even though not complying to social norms is not always an individual choice.

Lastly, in the context of motherhood in Latvia, it is essential to shortly discuss the background and accentuate some historical differences from other Western countries. Saar and Aavik point out that the stay-at-home mother was not practiced during the socialist period.[70]

---

[66] Tiidenberg, K., Baym, N. K. (2017). Learn It, Buy It, Work It: Intensive Pregnancy on Instagram. *Social Media + Society,* 3(1); Malatzky, C. (2016). Abnormal Mothers: Breastfeeding, Governmentality and Emotion Amongst Regional Australian Women. *Gender Issues, 34*(4), 355–370; Orton-Johnson, K. (2017). Mummy Blogs and Representations of Motherhood: "Bad Mummies" and Their Readers. *Social Media + Society, 3*(2).

[67] Sniekers, M., Rommes, E. (2020). Acting Their Age? An Intersectional Approach on Young Motherhood From Young Mothers' Perspectives. *Affilia, 35*(4), 466–484; Shea, R., Bryant, L., Wendt, S. (2016). 'Nappy Bags Instead of Handbags': Young Motherhood and Self-Identity. *Journal of Sociology, 52*(4), 840–855; Ylänne, V. (2016). Too Old to Parent? Discursive Representations of Late Parenting in the British Press. *Discourse & Communication, 10*(2), 176–197; Cummins, M.W., Brannon, G.E. (2022). Mothering in a Pandemic: Navigating Care Work, Intensive Motherhood, and COVID-19. *Gender Issues, 39*, 123–141; Tiidenberg, K., Baym, N. K. (2017). Learn It, Buy It, Work It: Intensive Pregnancy on Instagram. *Social Media + Society,* 3(1); Ray, R. (2017). Identity of Distance: How Economically Marginalized Black and Latina Women Navigate Risk Discourse and Employ Feminist Ideals. *Social Problems, 65*(1); Mackenzie, J., Zhao, S. (2021). Motherhood Online: Issues and Opportunities for Discourse Analysis. *Discourse, Context & Media, 40*, 100472; Elliott, S., Brenton, J., Powell, R. (2017). Brothermothering: Gender, Power, and the Parenting Strategies of Low-Income Black Single Mothers of Teenagers. *Social Problems, 65*(4), 439–455; Roper, S., Capdevila, R. (2020). Hapless, Helpless, Hopeless: An Analysis of Stepmothers' Talk about Their (Male) Partners. *Feminism & Psychology, 30*(2), 248–266; Jovanovski, N., Cook, K. (2019). The Vulnerable-Empowered Mother of Academic Food Discourses: A Qualitative Meta- Synthesis of Studies of Low-Income Mothers and Food Provisioning. *Health Sociology Review*, 107–125; Lazard, L. (2022). Digital Mothering: Sharenting, Family Selfies and Online Affective-Discursive Practices. *Feminism & Psychology. 32*(4), 540–558.

[68] Graham, S. (2017). Being a 'Good' Parent: Single Women Reflecting upon 'Selfishness' and 'Risk' When Pursuing Motherhood Through Sperm Donation. *Anthropology & Medicine, 25*(3), 249–264.

[69] Moore, J., Abetz, J. S. (2019). What Do Parents Regret About Having Children? Communicating Regrets Online. *Journal of Family Issues, 40*(3), 390–412.

[70] Saar, M., Aavik, K. (2022). Negotiating Neoliberalism in the Private Sphere: Narratives of Estonian Single Mothers. *Journal of Baltic Studies, 53*(1), 1–18. P. 5.

During the Soviet occupation of Latvia, Soviet propaganda created a new type of "ideal" family – an illusion, constructed through fictional family stories, portraying a financially and morally well-off "model" family that resembled a friendly collective with love and support at the base of it all.[71] The emancipation of the mother was key, as everyone's participation was essential in the construction of communism and the fight against capitalism; moreover, as Ķestere, Stonkuviene, and Rubene stress, the "New Soviet Man" was a human with a woman's body and the mind of a man.[72] The state propaganda portrayed the woman actively engaging in paid labour – driving a tractor, metalworking, teaching children, etc. – but in reality, the burden of household chores was not equally shared.

Gender equality, solidarity, and equal rights at home and in public, regulated by propaganda, were present only on paper, as the ideology was based on patriarchal traditions, and talk of equality was only a tool for control and manipulation. Even though women and men were equally employed outside the home, household chores and care for children was the mother's responsibility due to "natural talent," whereas the father's engagement was minimal; as Jansone-Ratinīka stresses, a specific type of an "invincible" mother/woman was constructed, monopolizing the mother's position in family life and, therefore, excluding the father from active participating in caring for the children, actualizing the devaluation of the father's authority in the private sphere.[73] The regime of Soviet republics stimulated women's participation in paid labour; however, no discussion regarding the lack of equality at home and the pressure of the patriarchy was permitted, hence providing the mother with a "second shift", burdening the majority of women in the Soviet Union with "back-breaking physical labour".[74] According to Jurciņa, the toll of household work for employed men was 2–3 times smaller than the burden for their wives, even when working outside the home; moreover, girls were also spending 2,1 times more time doing household chores than boys, and these patterns were passed down and continued in later life as well.[75]

In restored Latvia, as in other European states, the model or "ideal family", consisting of a heterosexual couple with several children, where the mother is the primary caregiver and father acts as an assistant-parent with his primary goal to provide for the family financially, differs from the reality families face. The problematics with contemporary motherhood in Latvia are discussed in chapter 1.

---

[71] Jansone-Ratinīka, N. (2013). *Tēva pedagoģiskā kompetence mūsdienu ģimenē* [*Fathers' Pedagogical Competence in the Modern Family*]. PhD diss., University of Latvia. P. 142

[72] Kestere, I., Stonkuviene, I., Rubene, Z. (2020). The New Soviet Man with a Female Body: Mother, Teacher, Tractor Driver… *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia, 45*, 97–109. P. 102–106

[73] Jansone-Ratinīka, N. (2013). *Tēva pedagoģiskā kompetence mūsdienu ģimenē* [*Fathers' Pedagogical Competence in the Modern Family*]. PhD diss., University of Latvia. P. 159.

[74] Saxonberg, S., Szelewa, D. (2007). The Continuing Legacy of the Communist Legacy? The Development of Family Policies in Poland and the Czech Republic. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society, 14*(3), 351–379; Hochschild, A. R., Machung, A. (1989). *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home.* New York: Viking; Schuster, A. (1971). Women's Role in the Soviet Union: Ideology and Reality. *The Russian Review, 30*(3): 260–267. P. 264.

[75] Jurciņa, A. (1975). *Sieviete – Personība [Woman – Personality].* Rīga: Liesma. P. 83–84.; Jurciņa, A. (1986). Sieviete *un sociālistiskais dzīvesveids [Woman and the Socialist Lifestyle].* Rīga: Avots. P. 106–107.

4.2. Mediatization of motherhood

Mediatization is more than simply the process of mediation through media; it is a conceptual construct – like individualization, commercialization or globalization – and is "to be understood as a panorama of a sustained metaprocess of change".[76] Hjarvard's "working" definition of mediatization is that it implies "a process through which core elements of a social or cultural activity (like work, leisure, play etc.) assume media form", where "media" is understood a "technology that allows transfer of or interaction with a symbolic content across time or space".[77] Hepp defines it as – a "process of change" through which "core elements of a social society or cultural activity (like work, leisure, play etc.) assume media form".[78] Mediatization research, incorporating the more recognized term "mediation", turns its focus on not only the media logic and media effects, but also the transformation and change in media and communication, in society and in culture. As Clark phrases it, mediatisation links scholars, who are "engaged in an international conversation about the role of communication technologies in relations to social and cultural change".[79]

Interest in mediatization among researchers has steadily grown since the end of 20th century and first decade of the 21st century.[80] While "mediation" in media research is typically understood as "the act of transmitting something through the media"; it is "fundamentally, but unevenly, dialectical process", "mediatization" describes the "transformation of many disparate social and cultural processes into forms or formats suitable for media representation".[81] Mediatization covers the communication process and changes along with it, asking more fundamental questions like, how media and communication is connected with sociocultural formations and their transformations.[82] The pioneers of mediatization theory, Krotz, Schulz, Hjarvard, Hepp and others, focus on the transformative logic and the process that is inherent with the nature of media.[83] As Hepp concludes, "mediatization research has a broader perspective that runs parallel to medium theory" and, referring to Meyrowitz, he adds that mediatization research focuses on the "nature and capacities of each medium itself".[84]

---

[76] Hepp, A. (2013) *Cultures of Mediatization*. Cambridge: Polity Press. P. 69.

[77] Hjarvard, S. (2004). From Bricks to Bytes: The Mediatization of a Global Toy Industry, in I. Bondebjerg & P. Golding (eds.) *European Culture and the Media*. Bristol: Intellect. (pp. 43–63). P 48.

[78] Hepp, A., Krotz, F. (2014). *Mediatized worlds: Culture and Society in a Media Age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. P. 21.

[79] Hepp, A., Krotz, F. (eds) (2014). *Mediatized Worlds: Culture and Society in a Media Age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan P. 307.

[80] Chambers, D. (2023). Mediatisation's Tensions and Tendencies. The Context of Homes, Householders, and Emerging Screen Interactions. In Kopecka-Piech, K., & Bolin, G. (Eds.). *Contemporary Challenges in Mediatization Research*. (pp. 131–147). Routledge. P. 132.

[81] Couldry, N. (2008). Mediatization or Mediation? Alternative Understandings of the Emergent Space of Digital Storytelling. *New Media & Society*, *10*(3), P. 379–380, 377.

[82] Hepp, A., Hjarvard, S., Lundby, K. (2015). Mediatization: Theorizing the Interplay Between Media, Culture and Society. *Media, Culture & Society, 37*(2), 314–324. P. 321.

[83] Hepp, A., Krotz, F. (eds) (2014). *Mediatized Worlds: Culture and Society in a Media Age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. P. 376.

[84] Hepp, A. (2020). *Deep Mediatization*. Routledge. P. 55–56.

Hepp emphasizes that the transformation and relationship between media and communication, on one hand, and culture and society, on the other hand, may be approached both quantitively and qualitatively; other researchers point out that the role of media in sociocultural transformation is obvious, thus, further research should be directed to specific contexts, incorporating various experiences.[85] Quantitative aspects of mediatization may be measured temporally, spatially and socially, focusing on the development and intensity, as well as saturation of media use in society.[86] Whereas qualitative aspects of mediatization may be studied, researching "the specificity of certain media within the process of socio-cultural change", i. e. the role specific media plays in a particular context.[87]

In 2020 one of the leading mediatization researchers, Hepp, presents an elevated concept – "deep mediatization" – through which he shines the spotlight on the problematics of mediatization and the untamed entanglement of media in our lives, and seeks for ways (deep) mediatization should occur in order to help the individual to construct a "good life". He uses the German word *Gestaltung* as it "expresses the process of giving something a *Gestalt*", that means not only "'designing', 'making' or 'crafting', it also implies forming something in a positive way"; therefore the *Gestaltung* of one's own life, "refers to leading the best and most productive life possible".[88] According to Hepp, "deep mediatization" is a new phase of mediatization brought upon by digitalization, it is "an advanced stage of the process in which all elements of our social world are intricately related to digital media and their underlying infrastructures" and, therefore, "deep mediatization" presents a challenge to researchers as attention must be paid to "digital infrastructures that underpin contemporary media".[89] As Kaun concludes, agreeing with Hepp, is that one should understand "mediatization as a moulding force of media reflecting a multi-level phenomenon", as "media are part of what constitutes liquid modernity", because "liquid modernity was partly made possible by commercial, digital media as an *omnipresent factor in this liquid life*".[90]

Lastly, regarding the mediatization of motherhood, it is essential to shortly discuss topical research, focusing on social networking sites' use by women and mothers particularly. Motivation for using *Facebook*, *Instagram* and other social networking sites platforms among new parents has been examined in many studies. Even though research covers also fathers using social networking sites to share their parenting experience, mothers engage in social networking sites to visually

---

[85] Hepp A. (2020). *Deep Mediatization*. London: Routledge. P. 3–4.; Petersen, L. N. (2023). Challenges in Research on the Mediatisation of Culture. In Kopecka-Piech, K., & Bolin, G. (Eds.). *Contemporary Challenges in Mediatization Research*. (pp. 13–26). Routledge. P. 24.

[86] Hepp, A. (2020). *Deep Mediatization*. Routledge. P. 4.

[87] Hepp, A., Krotz, F. (eds) (2014). *Mediatized Worlds: Culture and Society in a Media Age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. P. 5.

[88] Hepp, A. (2020). *Deep Mediatization*. Routledge. P. 180.

[89] Hepp, A. (2020). *Deep Mediatization*. Routledge. P. 5–6.

[90] Kaun, A. (2023). The End of Media? From Mediatisation to Datafication. In Kopecka-Piech, K., & Bolin, G. (Eds.). *Contemporary Challenges in Mediatization Research*. (pp. 161–174). Routledge. P. 166.

document their mothering journey more frequently.[91] Some mothers are eager to normalize their experience, others feel the need to actualize and empower themselves, to strengthen their identity, and to create their own narrative or even autobiography.[92] While to some mothers the opportunity to present themselves, to "perform motherhood" is important, there is a distinguished part of mothers who seek social support, a "safe space", and a digital community.[93]

Researchers have more frequently focused their gaze on *Facebook* and *Instagram*, and there is a significant gap in exploring, how parents use the social networking sites platform *Twitter.* Given this social networking site's particular asymmetric and decentralized nature, *Twitter* resembles a public forum, where one may share one's views with a wider network of followers than, for example, on *Facebook*.[94] The role of social networking sites in the negotiation of "new representations of women and of procreation as personal issues" has been noted, and studies have stressed the value of creating a "public arena" for the creation of new visual and narrative elements, as well as the potential for using *Twitter* not only as a tool for the dissemination of information but also as "as an interactive platform for advocacy and community engagement".[95]

---

[91] Holiday, S., Densley, R., Norman, M. (2020). Influencer Marketing Between Mothers: The Impact of Disclosure and Visual Brand Promotion. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 42(3), 236–257. P. 238–239; Lazard, L., Capdevila, R., Dann, C., Roper, S., Locke, A. (2019). Sharenting: Pride, Affect and the Day-to-Day Politics of Digital Mothering. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 13(4).

[92] Locatelli, E. (2017). Images of Breastfeeding on *Instagram*: Self-Representation, Publicness, and Privacy Management. *Social Media + Society*, 3(2); Lee, Y.–J., Chen, H. (2018). Empowerment or Alienation: Chinese and Korean Immigrant Mothers' Perception of Mobile Media in Constructing their Social Role and Facilitating Parenting Practices in the US. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 6(3), 390–406; Archer, C., Kao, K. (2018). Mother, Baby and *Facebook* Makes Three: Does Social Media Provide Social Support for New Mothers? *Media International Australia*, 168(1), 122–139.; Yam, S. (2019). Birth Images on *Instagram*: The Disruptive Visuality of Birthing Bodies. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 42(1), 80–100.; Schoppe-Sullivan, S., Yavorsky, J., Bartholomew, M. (2017). Doing Gender Online: New Mothers' Psychological Characteristics, *Facebook* Use, and Depressive Symptoms. *Sex Roles*, *76*, 276–289; Zappavigna, M., Zhao, S. (2017). Selfies in 'Mommyblogging': An Emerging Visual Genre. *Discourse, Context & Media, 20,* 239–247.; Micalizzi, A. (2020). Exploring Gender and Sexuality Through a *Twitter* Lens: The Digital Framing Effect of the #Fertilityday Campaign by Female Users. *Information, Communication & Society*, *24*(8), 1157–1174.; Locatelli, E. (2017). Images of Breastfeeding on *Instagram*: Self-Representation, Publicness, and Privacy Management. *Social Media + Society*, 3(2).

[93] Schoppe-Sullivan, S., Yavorsky, J., Bartholomew, M. (2017). Doing Gender Online: New Mothers' Psychological Characteristics, *Facebook* Use, and Depressive Symptoms. *Sex Roles*, 76, 276–289; Archer, C., Kao, K. (2018). Mother, Baby and *Facebook* Makes Three: Does Social Media Provide Social Support for New Mothers? *Media International Australia*, 168(1), 122–139.; Locatelli, E. (2017). Images of Breastfeeding on *Instagram*: Self-Representation, Publicness, and Privacy Management. *Social Media + Society*, *3*(2); Mourkarzel, S., Caduff, A., Rehm, M., del Fresno, M., Perez-Escamilla, R., Daly, A. (2021). Breastfeeding Communication Strategies, Challenges and Opportunities in the *Twitter*-Verse: Perspectives of Influencers and Social Network Analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(12), 6181.

[94] European Parliament. (2023). *Media & News Survey 2023*. Eurobarometer. https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3153; Gruzd, Wellman, A. B., Takhteyey, Y. (2011). Imagining Twitter as an Imagined Community. *American Behavioral Scientist, 55*(10),1294–1318; Lee, J. Y., Grogan- Kaylor, A. C., Lee, S. J. (2020). A Qualitative Analysis of Stay-At-Home Parents' Spanking Tweets. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 29*, 817–830.

[95] Micalizzi, A. (2020). Exploring Gender and Sexuality through a Twitter Lens: the Digital Framing Effect of the #fertilityday Campaign by Female Users. *Information, Communication & Society, 24*(8), 1157–1174, P. 1171– 1172; Mourkarzel, S., Caduff, A., Rehm, M., del Fresno, M., Perez-Escamilla, R., Daly, A. (2021). Breastfeeding Communication Strategies, Challenges and Opportunities in the *Twitter*-Verse: Perspectives of Influencers and Social Network Analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(12), p. 4.

Talbot, Charron and Konkle have used *Twitter* to gain insight into the reality of pregnant women and mothers, living through the Covid-19 pandemic, whereas other researchers have explored "hashtag activism" on *Twitter* regarding abortion, breastfeeding, etc.[96] Although "*Twitter* was not originally designed as a tool to support the development of online communities", they exist as both "real" and "imagined"; *Twitter* may be used "to facilitate community creation and bonding", which is of essence in the context of motherhood. Chayko proposes the term "portable community", highlighting the "the ability of people to 'bring' their communities and community members with them wherever they go", being "'plugged in' – almost literally, but also socially and emotionally".[97] *Twitter* as a community has previously been explored by Stewart, as well as Lee, Grogan-Kaylor and Lee, and Mourkazel, Rehnm, del Fresno and Daly, illustrating the "unique sub-communities" of breastfeeding, exploring advocacy and community engagement, etc.[98] As Hepp stresses, "support is also about individual personality development, a point that has rarely been addressed empirically nor from a normative point of view in mediatization research".[99] Therefore, the forms of mediatization of motherhood, particularly creation of "portable communities", is a topical area of research.

---

[96] Talbot, J., Charron, V., Konkle, A. (2021). Feeling the Void: Lack of Support for Isolation and Sleep Difficulties in Pregnant Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic Revealed by Twitter Data Analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(2: 393). Ahmed, W. (2018). Public Health Implications of #ShoutYourAbortion. *Public Health, 163*, 35–41.; Grant, A. (2016). "#discrimination": The Online Response to a Case of a Breastfeeding Mother Being Ejected from a UK Retail Premises. *Journal of Human Lactation, 32*(1), 141–151.

[97] Chayko, M. (2007). The Portable Community: Envisioning and Examining Mobile Social Connectedness. *International Journal of Web Based Communities, 3*(4), 373–385. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJWBC.2007.015864. P. 394, 377.

[98] Stewart, M. (2020). Live Tweeting, Reality TV and the Nation. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *23*(3), pp. 352–367. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877919887757; Lee, J. Y., Grogan-Kaylor, A. C., & Lee, S. J. (2020). A Qualitative Analysis of Stay-At-Home Parents' Spanking Tweets. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 29*,pp. 817–830. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-019-01691-3; Mourkarzel, S., Caduff, A., Rehm, M., del Fresno, M., Perez-Escamilla, R., & Daly, A. (2021). Breastfeeding Communication Strategies, Challenges and Opportunities in the Twitter-Verse: Perspectives of Influencers and Social Network Analysis. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18(12), p. 6181. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126181; Mourkazel, S., Rehm, M. & Daly, A. (2020). Breastfeeding Promotion on Twitter: A Social Network and Content Analysis Approach. Maternal and Child Nutrition, 16(4), pp. 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1111/mcn.13053; Mourkazel, S., Rehm, M., del Fresno, M. & Daly, A. (2020). Diffusing Science through Social Networks: The Case of Breastfeeding Communication on Twitter. 15(8). International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18(12). Https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0237471

[99] Gruzd, A., Wellman, B., Takhteyey, Y. (2011). Imagining Twitter as an Imagined Community. *American Behavioral Scientist, 55*(10). 1294–1318. P. 1297–1313; McArthur, J., White, A. (2016). Twitter Chats as Third Places: Conceptualizing a Digital Gathering Site. *Social Media + Society, 2*(3). P. 8; Hepp, A. (2020). *Deep Mediatization*. London: Routledge. P. 198.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The thesis presents case studies and quantitative results, illustrating, to some extent, the scene on contemporary mothering Latvia, revealing a fragmented map of various motherhood discourses around the prominently centred intensive mothering ideology. The thesis also reveals how mediatization of mothering transpires via social networking sites, creating – specifically on *Twitter*, a portable community to exchange informational, emotional and even physical support.

First, the thesis provides empirical evidence to some extent of the dominance of the intensive mothering discourse among Latvia's general population and its presence among social networking sites users, particularly, Latvian-speaking *Twitter* users. The intensive mothering discourse's notion of exercising concerted cultivation and ensuring the stimulation of the child's cognitive development with meaningful activities has very strong support in Latvia, as does the safeguarding of child's and, hence, the family's status, from an early age. However, in contrast to other research and statistical data, both Latvia's general population and *Twitter* users reject essentialism, the view that mothers are inherently better than fathers regarding childrearing and housework, thus, opening the floor to further discussion about initiatives and policies that encourage fathers to engage more in family life, and address the pressing problems of the "second shift" and other challenges that mothers in Latvia face.

Second, the thesis also provides evidence and, to some extent, even the dominance of the intensive mothering discourse in mass media, particularly, the family-oriented magazine "Mans Mazais", a magazine which has been the most prominent and visible mass media source of information regarding childcare, pregnancy and family themes for three decades, to some extent, shaping and influencing the views of new parents in Latvia. Although the magazine offers different narratives and a variety of discursive themes (in interviews from 2018 to 2022), the dominance of the intensive mothering discourse, is overwhelming. The magazine is presenting mainly the glamourous side of parenting and motherhood, displaying mostly "traditional" family patterns and stressing the importance of child-centred attitudes. Even though the dominance of the intensive mothering discourse in is confronted with challenging and alternative discourses, the hegemonic ideology still prevails as counter-narratives are presented less frequently, through laughter, as well as focusing on perseverance despite outer challenges. Even though, the publication that is part of the set of the doctoral dissertation, focuses only on one particular magazine in a restricted time period, it is essential to conclude that at present the single family-oriented print media product in Latvia primarily reproduces the ideology of intensive mothering, painting an unrealistic image of idealistic family life with small children to inexperienced new parents.

Third, new mothers', narratives, while trying to navigate their journey into motherhood, reveal the destructive influence of the dominant discourse of intensive mothering, present in public discourse and mass media. New mothers, on one hand, search for emotional support and opportunities to normalize their sometimes not-so-glamorous experience and to feel authentic. They seek frank and open conversation, and a safe place to share their true mothering experience. On the other

hand, women fear being condemned for not complying with the intensive mothering discourse and characteristics of a "good mother". They fear judgement – whether from other mothers or from an abstract entity (manifesting as "pressure from society") – to a level that sometimes forces them to isolate themselves from the outside world. Moreover, even though the publication, revealing the "deep story" of new mothers, does focus on a particular group of women – urbanized, educated, in married a heterosexual relationship – as it coincides with the group, identified by Trapezņikova et. al, as most likely to be open to welcome more children in the world, the results are attention-worthy in a broader context of demographics and family policies in Latvia.

To continue, similarly to women's narratives, also mothers' posts on social media, particularly, tweets on *Twitter*, provide a different and unique journey into "real motherhood" that respects all emotions, complications and victories as opposed to intensive mothering that acknowledges only heteronormative, middle-class "happy" couples, fully content with their role as a parent and oblivious to problems of any kind. In the safe space of their "*Twitter*- bubble", occasionally behind a veil of anonymity, mothers narrate truthful stories and validate personal feelings to normalize their authentic experience and feel supported in the journey into motherhood. Therefore, according to results presented in publication I, while the views of the general public of Latvia reflect a stronger inclination toward the intensive mothering discourse, for instance, the child being a source of fulfilment for a parent and the necessity to prioritize the child's needs more strongly compared to, for instance, parents' needs, social networking sites show a more colourful display and a richer variety of competing motherhood discourses. The thesis shows evidence that social networking sites users, particularly *Twitter* users, recognize the challenges that motherhood and parenthood more distinctly and hold less conservative views. *Twitter* users, especially childless men and women, and fathers, are less supportive of intensive parenting attitudes, thus, also indicating the internalization of the discourse among mothers.

The thesis also approaches the subject of mediatization of contemporary motherhood in Latvia, focusing of the forms of mediatization through social networking sites. While social networking sites provide an "extension" of experience through creating a space for discussion of motherhood experience and (re)production of hegemonic discourses, it also may serve as a safe space, even a source of community. The thesis provides evidence, to some extent, that social networking sites, particularly *Twitter*, an asymmetric and decentralized social media network, may serve as fruitful soil for creation of a "portable" community for parents, especially mothers. *Twitter*, thus, provides socialization at time and place of convenience, ensuring a "virtual village" that travels alongside the mother, empowering, encouraging, as well as providing emotional, and even physical and financial support, if needed, during periods of isolation from society or other hardships. As contemporary motherhood may be turn out a lonesome experience, social networking sites may provide informational, emotional and even physical support that mothers often lack, bearing in mind the ever-present threats of disinformation and possible privacy violations.

To conclude, the thesis provides, on one hand, a fragmented snapshot of the discursive themes of mothering in Latvia in a specific mass media outlet, social networking sites and women's

narratives, belonging to a particular group, and, on the other hand, draws together the in-depth conclusions from qualitative research with a broader perspective, reflected in quantitative results from two surveys. The presence and, to some extent, dominance of intensive mothering discourse is evident, as well as the destructive effects of this ideology, from which women seek refuge in, for example, safe spaces in non-judgmental conversations with emotional confidants or "portable communities" or other forms of extended motherhood experiences in social networking sites.

The thesis serves as a steppingstone to further in-depth and broad-scope research on motherhood in Latvia, the Baltic region and possibly other post-socialist countries, opening the floor to such topics as discursive themes in narratives of mothers from other family or background characteristics (particularly, solo-mothers or mothers from rural regions), as well as longitudinal research opportunities, analysing the transformation of such discourses and discursive themes in mother's narratives over a longer period of time, as the child grows more independent and women rejoin the workforce, facing new challenges. The thesis provides both theoretical contribution to the field of motherhood communication and, to some extent, the forms of mediatization, reflecting on the "extension" of motherhood experience in social networking sites, as well as practical implications, listed in recommendations.

Recommendations for mass media representatives

- *Challenge the intensive mothering discourse in mass media and normalize the struggles of contemporary motherhood*: counternarratives and discourses challenging the intensive mothering ideology should be more visible across mass media. Stories of "average" struggles and injustices that are faced by mothers all over Latvia and beyond, starting from access to childcare and healthcare services to feelings of guilt and pressure from society, not just only in niche mass media as "Mans Mazais", but also other lifestyle and national media outlets, starting from public media (LSM, *Latvijas Radio, Latvijas Televīzija*) to privately owned media, especially internet portals, e.g. *Delfi, Tvnet* etc., would help to tackle the dominance of intensive mothering discourse.
- *Address the gender equality issues more frequently and normalize the notion that both parents are equally responsible for the child*: the father's (or partner's) role of assistant-parent, present in the intensive mothering discourse, shifts all the childcare responsibilities on the mother's shoulders, simultaneously stripping the father from the ability to be an engaged, competent and present parent. Not only stories of equally present and engaged fathers, balancing work with family responsibilities, should appear in mass media (and not just in channels for women's target audience) more frequently, but also other stories and profile- interviews, could include a segment of family matters – similarly as women's interviews often do, for instance, in profile interviews in *Klubs*, *Ieva* etc, as well in live interviews on television.

Recommendations for policy makers and government representatives

- *Addressed to the Ministry of Welfare in Latvia: recognize the destructive influence of intensive mothering discourse in government policies and actions; address the struggles of contemporary motherhood and provide support*: include both parents by default instead of referring just to mothers or women (for instance, referring to parental leave as "mommy- holiday"), addressing the public and media, thus, providing a more inclusive form of communication. Acknowledge various motherhood challenges and taboos, for instance, post- partum depression, instead of dismissing them as trivial and unworthy of real attention.
- *Addressed to the Ministry of Welfare in Latvia, the Ministry of Health in Latvia, Riga Maternity Hospital and Children's Clinical University Hospital: reach out to families and provide fact-checked informational support via social networking sites, addressing mothers through their preferred channels, thus, counter-attacking disinformation*: as social networking sites provides a platform for various motherhood discourses and discursive themes, and disinformation is a constant threat, medical professionals and institutions should be more present among channels used by families, providing fact-checked news regarding health, child- development and other topical themes, as well as debunking myths about vaccination etc.
- *Addressed to the Ministry of Welfare in Latvia and regional municipalities: foster offline support in the form of community spaces for mothers*: as (especially first-time) mothers may seek emotional and other forms of support, as well as a sense of community, local authorities may provide a space for creation of offline communities. Places for mothers to meet in the form of affordable mommy-and-me classes that focus on the wellbeing of the woman (not only the child), as well as more available psychological support may ease the sometimes burdensome journey into motherhood.

VI. THESIS FOR DEFENSE

1. To some extent, there is evidence of the dominance of the intensive mothering discourse among Latvia's general population and its presence among social networking sites users, particularly, Latvian-speaking *Twitter* users, and mass media, particularly, the family-oriented magazine "*Mans Mazais*".
2. There is evidence of the destructive influence of the dominant discourse of intensive mothering, present in public discourse and mass media, in narratives of urbanized, educated and married new mothers in Latvia.
3. Mothers' posts on social media, particularly, tweets on *Twitter*, provide a different and unique journey into "real motherhood" that respects all emotions, complications and victories as opposed to intensive mothering that acknowledges only heteronormative, middle-class "happy" couples, fully content with their role as a parent and oblivious to problems of any kind.
4. The mediatization of motherhood occurs through "extension" of experience via social networking sites that may provide informational, emotional and even physical support that mothers often lack, a space for discussion of motherhood experience and (re)production of hegemonic discourses.
5. To some extent, social networking sites contribute to the mediatization of motherhood for example, *Twitter,* serving as fruitful soil for creation of a "portable" community for parents, particularly mothers.

VII. SET OF PUBLICATIONS

7.1. Publication I. Tracing Views of the Intensive Mothering Discourse in Latvia and on Twitter (X). Journal of Baltic Studies

Lāma, E., Lāma, G. (2024). Tracing Views of the Intensive Mothering Discourse in Latvia and on Twitter (X). *Journal of Baltic Studies.* 1–24.
https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2024.2406225

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rbal20

Tracing views of the intensive mothering discourse in Latvia and on Twitter (X)

Elza Lāma & Gatis Lāma

To cite this article: Elza Lāma & Gatis Lāma (27 Sep 2024): Tracing views of the intensive mothering discourse in Latvia and on Twitter (X), Journal of Baltic Studies, DOI: 10.1080/01629778.2024.2406225

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2024.2406225

JOURNAL OF BALTIC STUDIES
https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2024.2406225

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Tracing views of the intensive mothering discourse in Latvia and on Twitter (X)

Elza Lāma [a] and Gatis Lāma [b]

[a]Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia; [b]Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia

ABSTRACT
While each new generation since Latvia regained independence has been slowly edging toward libertarianism and equality, childcare in everyday life is still understood as primarily a woman's burden, echoing both the intensive mothering discourse of Western neoliberal societies and patriarchal traditions inherited from the Soviet gender system. This article aims to map the saturation of 'intensive parenting' discourse and differences in opinion between Latvia's population and Twitter (X) users by comparing the results of a survey involving both samples.

KEYWORDS Motherhood; intensive parenting; intensive mothering; discourse; survey; Twitter; X

In the decades since regaining its independence from the Soviet Union, Latvia has experienced a turbulent and still ongoing transformation from a post-Soviet state toward a Western democracy that values, for example, gender equality and individualism but also embraces capitalism and neoliberalism, which, according to Saar and Aavik (2022, 2), 'has become a prevalent ideology in most central and eastern European (CEE) countries,' including the Baltic states. In Latvia, with each new generation slowly edging toward libertarianism and gender equality in all matters of life (Trapezņikova et al. 2019, 26), views on childcare in many cases are still anchored in 'traditional' gender roles, echoing both the intensive mothering discourse of Western neoliberal societies (Hays 1996) and patriarchal traditions inherited from the Soviet gender system (Jansone-Ratinīka 2013, 144).

Even though the intensive mothering ideology is focused on mothers, it also establishes a 'complimentary social script for fathers' (Forbes et al. 2022, 472), prescribing instructions and norms that see 'mothering as exclusive, entirely child-centered, emotionally involving and time-consuming' (Valtchanov et al. 2016, 53). The intensive mothering ideology, along with the rise of individualism and emphasis on personal responsibility, aims to prepare children for an increasingly competitive labor market (Klímová Chaloupková and Pospíšilová 2023, 516). Many researchers have raised the alarm regarding the ideology's destructive effects, primarily affecting the mother's wellbeing but also the family as a whole by excluding the father from active participation in household and childcare responsibilities (Canetto et al. 2017; Christopher 2012;

CONTACT Elza Lāma elza.lama@lu.lv Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Latvia, Lauvas Street 4, Riga, Latvia

Cronin-Fisher and Parcell 2019; Cummins and Brannon 2022; Das 2019; Hays 1996; Miller 2005). As Ennis stresses, this form of mothering 'seems to have morphed into a way for a patriarchal society to demand that its mothers be preoccupied with their children, in conjunction with the expectation that mothers work outside of the home, which has resulted in enormous ambivalence for mothers' (Ennis 2014a, 333).

There have been efforts to measure the pervasiveness and prevalence of this discourse in society; the Intensive Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire (IPAQ; Liss et al. 2013), focusing on five characteristics of this discourse, has been applied in research in the USA, as well as in Europe in exact or modified versions (Klímová Chaloupková and Pospíšilová 2023; Long et al. 2021; Loyal, Sutter Dallay, and Rascle 2017). Qualitative attempts to trace intensive mothering have been made in Latvia as well (Lāma 2022b, 2023; Lāma and Zelče 2024); however, quantitative research has not been carried out yet.

The presence, and in many cases dominance, of the intensive mothering discourse in Western society has been documented in individual narratives as well as in traditional and social media. Researchers, studying the mediatization of motherhood and use of social media by parents, have noted that social media may provide a platform to 'perform motherhood' and 'do gender' (Schoppe-Sullivan et al. 2017), but also may serve as a place to normalize experience, actualize and empower oneself, as well to strengthen one's identity (Archer and Kao 2018) outside the constraints of the dominant discourse. Even though the most popular social networks in Latvia are Facebook and WhatsApp, according to Lāma and Lāma (2023, 267), in the context of motherhood, Twitter may provide 'socialization at time and place of convenience, ensuring a "virtual village" that travels alongside the mother, empowering, encouraging, as well as providing emotional, and even physical and financial support, if needed, during periods of isolation from society or other hardships' (though the owner and chief technology officer of Twitter, now 'X', Elon Musk, announced the gradual rebranding of Twitter in a post on 23 July 2023, this article continues to use the original name of the social media platform, as the data were gathered beforehand). Other researchers have noted the role of social media in the negotiation of 'new representations of women and of procreation as personal issues' and have stressed the value of creating a 'public arena' for the creation of new visual and narrative elements (Micalizzi 2021, 1171–1172), as well as the potential for using Twitter not only as a tool for the dissemination of information but also as 'as an interactive platform for advocacy and community engagement' (Moukarzel et al. 2021, 4).

Moreover, even though according to a 2023 Eurobarometer survey only 17% of EU respondents listed Twitter among the platforms they had accessed in the last seven days (just after TikTok), and in Latvia, this figure was 11% (European Parliament 2023), its capacity to form or reflect public opinion has been studied to some extent. Given this social media platform's particular asymmetric and decentralized nature (Gruzd, Wellman, and Takhteyey 2011), Twitter resembles a public forum, where one may share one's views with a wider network of followers than, for example, on Facebook (Lee et al. 2020). Furthermore, some research has been done in order to conclude whether Twitter may serve as a resource for 'big data' and/or whether views expressed on Twitter may illustrate the views of a larger population. Scarborough provides some empirical evidence that 'Twitter sentiment about feminism does in fact measure cultural environments around gender that correlate with local populations' dominant gender attitudes' (Scarborough 2018, 19), however, there is a research gap regarding the

subject of mothering and parenting and whether the views of a Twitter sample would differ from a representative sample of a larger population. Scarborough also stresses the importance of approaching such research topics with caution, as aggregated Twitter data may 'erase the perspective of disadvantaged groups and produce results that largely represent the socially privileged' (19).

Therefore, the aim of this research is to capture and document views regarding parenthood, motherhood, and childrearing in Latvia, evaluate the presence and saturation of the intensive mothering discourse in Latvia, and map the differences in opinion between Latvia's general population and Latvian-speaking Twitter users. The research questions, consequently, are as follows:

- Is there evidence of the intensive mothering discourse in views expressed by mothers and the general public across Latvia and Latvian-speaking Twitter users, according to the IPAQ (Liss et al. 2013)?
- Do the views of the general public across Latvia differ from views expressed by Latvian-speaking Twitter users and how?
- Are there differences in parenting attitudes between mothers, the general public across Latvia, and Latvian-speaking Twitter users, and, if so, what are they?

The research was carried out using a survey based on an adapted version of the IPAQ with 25 statements about parenting attitudes distributed to two samples: one representative of Latvia's population (1,005 respondents) and one distributed through the author's personal Twitter profile to Latvian-speaking Twitter users (1,195 respondents).

Intensive mothering and neoliberalism

The most visible and dominant motherhood discourse in Western society is the intensive mothering ideology, initially proposed by Hays in *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* (1996); and even in the twenty-first century, it is a 'continuing, yet controversial representation of modern motherhood' (Ennis 2014b, 1). Intensive mothering suggests that there is a 'correct' form of mothering, 'urging mothers to give unselfishly [. . .] their time, money and love on behalf of sacred children' in a 'model of rationalized market society' (Hays 1996, 97); it is an 'an ideology that speaks to a more prevalent set of social and moral concerns' and 'suggests that all the troubles of the world can be solved by the individual efforts of superhuman woman' (177). Similarly, Douglas and Michaels (2004, 15) speak of the 'mommy myth' or 'new momism' – 'a set of ideals, norms, and practices, most frequently and powerfully represented in the media, that seem on the surface to celebrate motherhood, but which in reality promulgate standards of perfection that are beyond your reach' – being the latest, 'more hip and progressive' version of Friedan's (1963) 'feminine mystique.' Motherhood, therefore, for many women is no longer regarded as 'a gender fate' (Miller 2005, 48), but it does come with strict norms and possibly unattainable goals, set by society.

Historically, intensive mothering is a 'raced and classed discourse, driven strongly by white, middle-class values' within a neoliberal society; however, there is evidence of its influence on other groups and even cultures (Das 2019, 495). This form of mothering is 'held on a pedestal as an ideal form of parenting,' even though not all women have an equal opportunity to exercise it (Gross et al. 2014, 163). Intensive mothering is internalized by women, although it offers a 'privatized' motherhood model tailored to the

middle class and does not recognize the limitations that may be experienced by women in other socioeconomic classes or with a different ethnic background, education level, age, nationality, etc (Cummins and Brannon 2022; Valiquette-Tessier et al. 2018).

Even though, as Faircloth (2021, 21) stresses, there has been 'a shift away from traditional, patriarchal couple relationships, based on an inherent inequality between men and women, toward a more equitable, mutually fulfilling model,' the discourse of intensive mothering still reproduces what are perceived as 'traditional' gender roles, even idealizing them. The mother mainly assumes the role of primary caregiver and manager of the household, and the father is seen as the breadwinner (Schoppe-Sullivan et al. 2017, 77). Some researchers recognize 'extensive mothering' as a branch of the overarching discourse of intensive mothering, tailored to the needs of working mothers and the working class (Meng 2020, 180), thus allowing mothers who work fulltime outside the house to still show their devotion and investment in bringing up children (Lazard et al. 2019) by delegating their tasks to experienced professionals. Peculiar products of this discourse are also mother-influencers or mother-entrepreneurs, who, amidst a culture saturated by neoliberal values, try to balance work and life with children and make a profit through blogging and 'playbour' (Archer 2019, 152–153).

The idealized and romanticized intensive mothering discourse not only dictates a preferable form of family and parenting modes but also regulates the proper way to practice, perform, and even feel motherhood. Parents, especially mothers, both expect and are expected to feel fulfillment in their role (Liss et al. 2013; Mainland, Shaw, and Prier 2017; Malatzky 2016) despite problems or challenges like cluster feeding, sleepless nights, and emotional exhaustion in the long run. The idealized discourse rejects negative emotions, failures, and doubts about oneself as a parent. As Auðardóttir puts it (Auðardóttir 2022, 3), 'under neoliberalism, feelings of anger, insecurity and frustration are viewed as personal failures to be replaced with happiness, humor and positivity.' Archer and Kao (2018) point out that women, in fear of judgment or being misunderstood, or, on the contrary, due to pride, often do not seek out social support and fall silent about their failure to comply with the model of a 'perfect' mother. The internalized intensive mothering ideology also manifests itself in feelings of guilt when going against the 'rules,' for instance, not so much as for returning to paid labor as not being able to spend as much quality time with children (Buzzanell et al. 2017; Sullivan 2014). Moreover, not only has intensive mothering created a list of taboo topics or behaviors, but it also suggests monitoring others and the self, even conducting surveillance (Lazard et al. 2019; Tiidenberg and Baym 2017) in order to check compliance with set standards.

Childrearing and parenting in both Western society and other cultures in the fairly recent past was perceived as a collective effort; however, neoliberalism and 'investment parenting' have changed the focus toward individualism and investment of seemingly unlimited resources into the wellbeing of a child so as to ensure 'good market returns' (Steiner and Bronstein 2017, 63–64). In a way, intensive mothering rejects and opposes the values of a rationalized market society (Brown 2014, 27), as it directly contradicts the logic of capitalism, 'in which self-interested actors pursue individual ends in the competitive marketplace' (Milkie and Warner 2014, 66). Simultaneously, however, consumerism forms the backdrop of intensive mothering (Ennis 2014b, 2), stimulating competition and driving parents, especially mothers, to overload, leaving personal, individual needs in the background and forcing parents to take on risks. Hays and other researchers highlight the obvious incapability of the

intensive mothering discourse to solve the problems of modernity (Hays 1996, 12; Walker 2014, 233). As Das (2019, 498) points out, this discourse creates two kinds of risks: first, determining a single appropriate style of mothering and parenting; second, placing groups out of the primarily middle-class discourse in a position of risk, urging them to strive for ideals possibly beyond their capacity. Steiner and Bronstein see motherhood discourses as a spectrum, where there are 'free-range parents, who believe that children must learn to be independent and self-reliant from an early age by being given greater freedoms, learning to make choices, and being less supervised,' and '"helicopter" parents, who foreground parental responsibility and risk in every encounter, representing the intensive model at its most extreme' (Steiner and Bronstein 2017, 69).

To the spectrum of motherhood discourses, Lāma (2023) adds 'challenging' and 'alternative' discourses that overarch several discursive themes; however, the scene of counter-narratives is fragmented (Lāma and Lāma 2023), underrepresented, and, as Housman and Joy (2014, 101) conclude, as the loudest voices tend to favor intensive mothering, alternative conceptions of motherhood are simply drowned out. Other motherhood discourses, not compliant with the idealized norms of intensive mothering, include a variety of different experiences, patterns of behavior, and/or (constrained) choices, from emotional struggles (Cronin-Fisher and Parcell 2019) and 'inappropriate' feelings of ambivalence or regret (Buzzanell et al. 2017; Canetto et al. 2017; Moore and Abetz 2019) to mothers and families belonging to different social groups, for instance, divorced, single, or solo mothers (Valiquette-Tessier et al. 2018), LGBT+ couples, and families with a different social or ethnic background (Chib et al. 2013; Elliott, Brenton, and Powell 2017). These discourses are automatically approached with caution and considered borderline precarious and in need of social surveillance.

Family, motherhood, and mothering in Latvia

Regarding motherhood, 'unlike in the West, the ideal of a stay-at-home mother is not popular in the contemporary CEE region and was not practiced during the socialist period either' (Saar and Aavik 2022, 5). During the Soviet occupation of Latvia, Soviet propaganda created a new type of 'ideal' family – an illusion, constructed through fictional family stories, portraying a financially and morally well-off 'model' family that resembled a friendly collective with love and support at the base of it all (Jansone-Ratinīka 2013, 142). The emancipation of the mother was key, as everyone's participation was essential in the construction of communism and the fight against capitalism; moreover, as Kestere, Stonkuviene, and Rubene (2020, 102–106) stress, the 'New Soviet Man' was a human with a woman's body and the mind of a man. This propaganda portrayed woman actively engaging in paid labor – driving a tractor, metalworking, teaching children, etc. – but in reality, the burden of household chores was not equally shared.

Gender equality, solidarity, and equal rights at home and in public, regulated by propaganda, were present only on paper, as the ideology was based on patriarchal traditions, and talk of equality was only a tool for control and manipulation (Jansone-Ratinīka 2013). Even though women and men were equally employed outside the home, household chores and care for children was the mother's responsibility due to 'natural talent,' whereas the father's engagement was minimal; as Jansone-Ratinīka stresses, a specific type of 'invincible' mother/woman was constructed, monopolizing

the mother's position in family life and, therefore, excluding the father from actively participating in caring for the children, actualizing the devaluation of the father's authority in the private sphere (Jansone-Ratinīka 2013, 159).

The Soviet regime stimulated women's participation in paid labor; however, it permitted no discussion regarding the lack of equality at home and the pressure of the patriarchy, hence providing the mother with a 'second shift' (Hochschild and Machung 1989; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007), burdening the majority of women in the Soviet Union with 'back-breaking physical labor' (Schuster 1971, 264). According to Jurciņa (1975, 83–84), the toll of household work for employed men was 2–3 times smaller than the burden for their wives, even when working outside the home; moreover, girls were also spending 2.1 times more time doing household chores than boys, while these patterns were passed down and continued in later life as well (Jurciņa 1986, 106–107).

In independent post-Soviet Latvia, as in other European states, the contemporary model or 'ideal family' – a mother, blissfully taking care of children and the household, and a father, spending most of his time outside the home to earn a living capable of sustaining a growing family – differs from reality. According to the Population and Housing Census of 2021, the most common family type of a total of 503,100 family nuclei were lone-parent families with children under 18 (24%), followed by couples without resident children; only 16.3% of all family nuclei were married couples with children under 18 (Zukula et al. 2022, 92–93). This social phenomenon of lone-parent families is particularly pronounced in Latvia and Estonia (Eurostat 2020; Saar and Aavik 2022). Latvia also has high divorce rates compared to other European countries (Eurostat 2021). Moreover, more than half of divorces involve couples with children under 18 (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia 2023a, 12). Recognizing the demographic challenges, the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027 stressed the importance of 'strong families across generations' and set a target value of a total fertility rate of 1.77 (the rate being 1.6 at the base year, 2018), which will be met by 'strengthening national family support policy,' mitigating 'the fall in disposable income per family member when a child is born' and improving the availability of childcare services and pre-school education (Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center 2020, 21–22). A good work-life balance is another of the priorities set out by the plan.

Although society has seen a noticeable positive transformation toward gender equality since the collapse of the USSR, caring for small children and household management is still regarded as a 'woman's territory' (Trapezņikova et al. 2019, 65–68). The Gender Equality Index 2023 still shows an imbalance regarding time devoted to housework; for instance, in the EU, 63% of women but only 36% of men report engaging in cooking and housework activities every day. Latvia has seen an improvement in its overall score but is still performing significantly lower than the EU average, and inequalities have even grown substantially in the care activities subdomain (EIGE 2023, 12, 23, 45). Among married couples with children, women initiate divorce more often than men, the most frequent reasons for conflicts being household work, money, and how to spend free time (Trapezņikova et al. 2019, 28–29). Other researchers also point to the uneven distribution of housework and care work as significant reasons for conflict (Putniņa et al. 2015, 16–17).

To conclude, even though contemporary motherhood in Latvia is set against a backdrop of independence and advancement in knowledge and technologies, modern mothers speak of daily challenges, still being burdened with the toll of unpaid labor

at home and a lack of support from family and community, as well as from the state in the form of childcare services (Lāma 2022b). Moreover, new mothers in Latvia recognize a 'pressure from society, directing women to "sacrifice" their mental and physical resources for the good of the child and to manage emotions so as to conceal challenges and negative emotions' (Lāma and Zelče 2024, 249). Qualitative findings also indicate the presence of the intensive mothering discourse in the Latvian media landscape (Lāma 2023).

Methodology

In order to trace the evidence of the intensive mothering discourse in views expressed by mothers and the general public across Latvia and Latvian-speaking Twitter users, as well as to map the differences in opinions expressed between the samples, a survey was created, partially based on the IPAQ (Liss et al. 2013), slightly adjusted to the cultural context, and translated, respecting the suggested adjustments and limitations noted in other research (Forbes et al. 2022; Klímová Chaloupková and Pospíšilová 2023; Long et al. 2021; Schiffrin et al. 2013).

The IPAQ focuses on parenting attitudes, and although some researchers consider 'intensive parenting' and 'intensive mothering' as practically identical terms, this research, focusing on attitudes expressed regarding motherhood, mothering, and the mother's role, uses the term 'intensive mothering' and also stresses the gender aspect and the factor of 'essentialism.' Rizzo, Schiffrin, and Liss define 'three tenets of this parenting ideology, which are the belief that mothers are inherently better parents (essentialism), the belief that mothering should be child-centered, and that children should be considered sacred, delightful, and fulfilling to parents,' emphasizing that with 'the intensity required to parent well, parenting can be quite challenging and require wide-ranging skills and expertise' (Rizzo, Schiffrin, and Liss 2013, 615). Therefore, according to the intensive parenting discourse, the parenting attitudes on which parents should base their actions are: 'a) mothers are inherently better parents ["Essentialism"], b) parenting should be a fulfilling endeavor ["Fulfillment"], c) parents are responsible for their children's cognitive stimulation ["Stimulation"], d) parenting is challenging ["Challenging"], and e) children's needs should be prioritized over parent's needs ["Child-centered"]' (Forbes et al. 2022, 472; see also Liss et al. 2013), consequently forming the IPAQ's five parenting attitude categories. Consequently, the adapted IPAQ consisted of 25 statements, formulated in a direct and reversed form according to the intensive mothering ideology and scored on a six-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree); the questionnaire also included demographic questions (gender, age group, residence, presence of children). The same survey was distributed to two different samples: a representative sample of the Latvian population with 1,005 respondents, approached by the research agency Norstat (with 95% confidence, the margin of error is 3.09%) (see Table 1), and a sample of Latvian-speaking Twitter users with 1195 respondents, approached by the author using network sampling by posting the survey link on their personal Twitter profile.

The original tweet, encouraging people to participate in an anonymous survey, was posted only once on 21 April 2023, and it gathered 30,500 views, 86 retweets, 123 likes, and 50 comments, thus, far exceeding the author's range of followers, which at the time was less than 1,800 user profiles. Of respondents of the Twitter sample, 61% had one or more children under the age of 18, 38.05% did not have children, and 0.95% chose not

Table 1. The representative sample of the Latvian population.

Gender		Age		Region		Children		Nationality	
Male	48%	18–29	17%	Riga	33%	0	65%	Latvian	61%
Female	52%	30–39	19%	Pierīga	20%	1	17%	Russian	27%
		40–49	19%	Kurzeme	12%	2	13%	Other	12%
		50–59	20%	Zemgale	12%	3	3%		
		60–74	25%	Latgale	14%	4	1%		
				Vidzeme	9%	5 or more	1%		

to share this information. Some 81.19% of respondents were women, 18.31% were men, and 60.93% lived in the capital, Riga. Of the total number of 1,195 respondents, 598 (50%) were women with children, 50% were men (with or without children) and women without children. Further demographic questions were not included in the survey, as participation was voluntary and there was a risk of respondents choosing not to finish the questionnaire if it was too lengthy.

Data gathering was carried out over two periods: one week in March 2023 and two weeks in April 2023. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous; no minors or individuals who were unable to express their will were eligible to participate. Only fully completed forms were included in the data sample. The data were analyzed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel, focusing on descriptive statistics. Cronbach's alpha values were calculated to determine the reliability of the Likert scales. The Mann-Whitney U test was carried out to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the responses given by Twitter users and the general Latvian population, as well as between the responses given by mothers and other respondents.

Findings

An analysis of both samples reveals the presence of the intensive mothering discourse and statistically significant differences between both samples, as well as between mothers and other respondents. While none of the categories indicate an extremely high rating, all of the parenting attitude categories have a median over 3.5 (except 'Essentialism'), therefore, leaning toward the intensive mothering end of the scale. The internal consistency of the Likert scales, and, thus, their reliability, is satisfactory as Cronbach's alpha is 0.761 (25 items) (Taber 2018).

Parenting attitudes between twitter users and the general public

The category 'Stimulation,' which encapsulates the notion of parents' obligation to ensure the cognitive stimulation of their child so as to guarantee proper development, received the highest rating from both samples. Responses from Twitter users and the general population show no statistically significant differences according to the Mann-Whitney U test ($p = 0.42$), with Twitter users evaluating this category on average at 4.25 (Mdn = 4,25; SD = 0.80) and the general public at 4.30 (Mdn = 4.25; SD = 0.67). Therefore, it is evident that both samples recognize the significance of parents spending quality time with their child, actively engaging in games, and talking with them. Moreover, it is important for parents not only to stimulate development when the child is born but also to ensure contact while the mother is still carrying the baby. The statement, 'It is

important to spend quality time frequently with the child, playing games of interest to him/her, talking, etc.,' was rated particularly high, with Twitter users rating it on average as 5.44 (Mdn = 6, SD = 0.87) and general public as 5.15 (Mdn = 5; SD = 0.97). Finding the best educational institution is also seen as crucial (see Appendix B).

Both samples also rated the category 'Challenging' similarly (see Table 2), with Twitter users rating this category as 3.84 (Mdn = 3.83; SD = 0.87) and the general public rating it as 3.82 (Mdn = 3.83; SD = 0.71). The Mann-Whitney U test ($p = 0.46$) also shows no statistically significant differences. The category 'Challenging' included six questions that characterize parenting as challenging and even 'exhausting,' as 'being a parent means having almost no time for oneself.' The highest rated statement of the category was 'Parenting is the most demanding and important job in the world,' with a mean score of 4.06 from Twitter users (Mdn = 4; SD = 1.52) and an average rating of 4.69 from the general population (Mdn = 5; SD = 1.25). The statement 'A good parent doesn't need a specific range of knowledge and skills,' which was rated in reverse, also received high ratings, suggesting the 'complicity' that respondents feel the role of a parent holds. Respondents also stressed the lack of leisure time for oneself (both samples had a median of 4).

Other parenting attitude categories show statistically significant differences; moreover, all these categories were rated higher by the general public sample, suggesting a more visible leaning toward the intensive mothering end of the scale. While Twitter users rated the categories 'Child-centered' ($M = 3.60$, Mdn = 3.67, SD = 1.00) and 'Fulfillment' ($M = 3.57$, Mdn = 3.50, SD = 1.22) with a mean value lower than 4, the general public sample evaluated these categories higher, rating 'Child-centered' with a mean score of 4.02 (Mdn = 4.00, SD = 0.93) and 'Fulfillment' with a mean score of 4.36 (Mdn = 4.50, SD = 1.04). Both categories, in contrast to 'Essentialism,' 'Stimulation,' and 'Challenging,' also have a higher data dispersion, pointing to data polarity and a broader amplitude of personal views.

The statements under the 'Fulfillment' category measured the sense of personal fulfillment and gratification gained from being a parent. The highest rated statement in this category was 'A parent's role brings true fulfillment and happiness,' with Twitter users rating it with an average of 4.19 (Mdn = 4; SD = 1.52) and the general public rating it with a mean score of 4.78 (Mdn = 5; SD = 1.28); however, the statement 'Being a parent is the highest fulfillment in a person's life' is rated lower.

The statements under the 'Child-centered' category were aimed at registering the parenting attitude of placing the child's needs before those of the parent(s). The highest rated statement in this category was 'Children are our future – they should be a priority,' with Twitter users rating it with a mean score of 4.03 (Mdn = 4; SD = 1.49) and the general public rating it with a mean score of 4.74 (Mdn = 5; SD = 1.27). The two other statements regarding prioritizing the child's needs were rated lower.

The category with the lowest overall score is 'Essentialism.' The general public rated this category with a mean value just below 3 ($M = 2.82$, Mdn = 2.88, SD = 0.89), whereas Twitter users rated it even lower with a mean score of 2.05 (Mdn = 1.88, SD = 0.83). Analysis of a histogram of the Twitter users' responses (see Figure 1) shows that in the lowest bracket ([1–2]), there were 680 users (~57%), and in the second-lowest bracket ((2–3]), there were another 374 respondents (31%); only 2% of Twitter users evaluated statements in the 'Essentialism' category above 4.

The 'Essentialism' category contains gendered statements focusing on essentialism beliefs. The lowest scoring statement was 'Both mothers and fathers can take care of

Table 2. Twitter users and general public: parenting attitude comparison.

	'Twitter' users (n = 1195)					General public (n = 1007)					
Parenting Attitude	Mean	Median	St dev	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	Median	St dev	Skewness	Kurtosis	p-value
Essentialism	2.05	1.88	0.83	0.97	0.98	2.82	2.88	0.89	0.02	−0.42	0.00
Stimulation	4.25	4.25	0.80	−0.23	−0.16	4.30	4.25	0.67	−0.17	0.47	0.42
Challenging	3.84	3.83	0.87	−0.10	−0.33	3.82	3.83	0.71	−0.11	0.37	0.46
Child-centered	3.60	3.67	1.00	−0.14	−0.11	4.02	4.00	0.93	−0.29	0.21	0.00
Fulfillment	3.57	3.50	1.22	−0.10	−0.63	4.36	4.50	1.04	−0.67	0.37	0.00

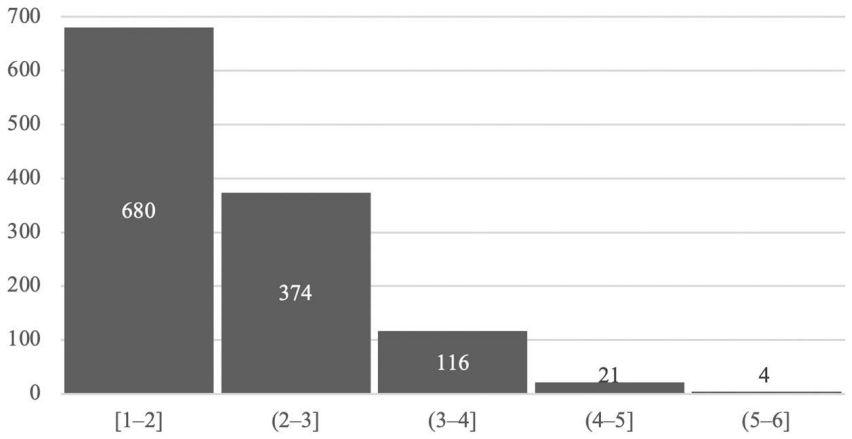


Figure 1. Twitter users: 'essentialism' histogram.

children equally well' (which was scored in reverse), with Twitter users rating it with a mean score of 1.69 (Mdn = 1, SD = 1.03) and the general public rating it with an average of 2.15 (Mdn = 2, SD = 1.28). The highest scoring statement was 'Even though fathers are important, the child needs her mother more,' which still had a relatively low score – Twitter users scored it with an average of 2.77 (Mdn = 3, SD = 1.49) and the general public with a mean score of 3.87 (Mdn = 4; SD = 1.50). As the category 'Essentialism' was evaluated the lowest in comparison to others, it may be concluded that both samples – especially the Twitter users – signaled the importance of both parents in bringing up children and, in general, lean toward the notion that mothers are not naturally better than fathers at childrearing and managing housework. It is also important to note that the majority of the Twitter sample's respondents are women (81.19%) and most respondents also have children under the age of 18 (61%).

Parenting attitudes of mothers and others: the general public

A deeper analysis of answers to compare mothers and other respondents within the general public sample shows no statistically significant differences according to the Mann-Whitney U test (see Table 3).

While mothers gave higher ratings to such categories as 'Fulfillment' ($M = 4.48$, Mdn = 4.50, SD = 0.93), 'Challenging' ($M = 3.87$, Mdn = 3.83, SD = 0.70), and 'Essentialism' ($M = 2.86$, Mdn = 2.88, SD = 0.94), other respondents gave 'Stimulation' ($M = 4.30$, Mdn = 4.25, SD = 0.68) and 'Child-centered' ($M = 4.04$, Mdn = 4.00, SD = 0.94) a higher rating. The overall differences, however, are insignificant; thus, it may be concluded that the attitudes expressed by mothers and other respondents within the general population are quite similar.

Parenting attitudes of mothers and others: Twitter users

An analysis of answers to compare mothers and other respondents within the Twitter sample shows slight but statistically significant differences according to the Mann-Whitney U test in all five parenting attitude categories (see Table 4).

Table 3. Mothers and other respondents within the general sample.

	Mothers ($n = 173$)					Other respondents ($n = 874$)					
Category of parenting attitude	Mean	Median	St dev	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	Median	St dev	Skewness	Kurtosis	p-value
Essentialism	2.86	2.88	0.94	0.27	−0.29	2.81	2.88	0.88	−0.04	−0.48	0.73
Stimulation	4.29	4.25	0.65	−0.19	1.25	4.30	4.25	0.68	−0.17	0.34	0.80
Challenging	3.87	3.83	0.70	−0.06	0.83	3.81	3.83	0.71	−0.12	0.28	0.25
Child-centered	3.94	4.00	0.91	−0.36	0.41	4.04	4.00	0.94	−0.28	0.18	0.21
Fulfillment	4.48	4.50	0.93	−0.56	0.42	4.33	4.50	1.07	−0.67	0.32	0.19

Table 4. Mothers and other respondents within the Twitter sample.

	Mothers ($n = 598$)					Other respondents ($n = 597$)					
Parenting Attitude	Mean	Median	St dev	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	Median	St dev	Skewness	Kurtosis	p-value
Essentialism	2.14	2.00	0.85	0.91	0.90	1.96	1.88	0.79	1.04	1.05	0.00
Stimulation	4.17	4.25	0.79	−0.17	−0.07	4.34	4.50	0.81	−0.31	−0.17	0.00
Challenging	3.95	4.00	0.89	−0.14	−0.56	3.73	3.67	0.85	−0.08	−0.03	0.00
Child-centered	3.80	3.67	0.91	−0.10	−0.16	3.40	3.33	1.05	−0.04	−0.15	0.00
Fulfillment	3.87	3.75	1.10	−0.17	−0.55	3.28	3.25	1.27	0.10	−0.66	0.00

The 'Essentialism,' 'Challenging,' 'Child-centered,' and 'Fulfillment' categories were rated higher by Twitter mothers than other respondents in the sample, with 'Stimulation,' the category representing statements about the need to ensure cognitive and appropriate stimulation for the child, being the only exception. The average differences between the two groups are relatively small; the most noticeable difference is between the 'Child-centered' and 'Fulfillment' categories, indicating that Twitter mothers are more inclined to prioritize their child's wellbeing above parental needs and to gain fulfillment from being a parent. The 'Fulfillment' category responses of other Twitter users also show the highest data dispersion (SD = 1.27) among all categories, signaling a high polarization of views.

Parenting attitudes of mothers from both samples

Even though the Twitter sample included more women ($n = 598$) than the general population sample ($n = 173$), statistically significant differences have only been noted in only two categories (see Table 5): 'Essentialism' and 'Fulfillment.'

Both categories were scored notably higher by the women in the general public sample, indicating a stronger inclination toward the intensive mothering end of the scale, especially the 'Fulfillment' category. This suggests that mothers among the general public feel stronger than Twitter users that the parenting role may provide gratification and fulfillment and may be one of the most satisfying roles one can experience in life.

Discussion

After analyzing both samples, it is evident that the intensive mothering discourse is present in respondents' views and the discourse is especially prevalent among the general public in Latvia. Yet the data do not show extreme support for the intensive mothering ideology, rather a strong tendency toward it, as all the categories (except 'Essentialism') show a mean value over the average of 3.5.

Similarly to previous research, the highest rated categories in both samples were 'Stimulation' (Forbes et al. 2022; Schiffrin et al. 2013) and 'Fulfillment.' The lowest rated category in both samples was 'Essentialism,' and, as the survey measures 'prescriptive norms, or what participants think mothers (or fathers or parents) should be doing, rather than what they already are doing' (Schiffrin et al. 2013, 5), the results pose a question. The respondents of this survey seemingly

Table 5. Parenting attitudes of mothers from both samples (Mann-Whitney U test).

Parenting Attitude	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	p-value
Essentialism	General public	173	519	89751	28755	−8.91	0.00
	'Twitter' users	598	348	207856			
Stimulation	General public	173	412	71257	47249	−1.74	0.08
	'Twitter' users	598	379	226350			
Challenging	General public	173	367	63518	48467	−1.27	0.21
	'Twitter' users	598	391	234088			
Child-centered	General public	173	415	71764	46742	−1.94	0.05
	'Twitter' users	598	378	225843			
Fulfillment	General public	173	483	83604	34902	−6.54	0.00
	'Twitter' users	598	358	214003			

reject the notion that mothers are inherently better than fathers regarding child-rearing and housework; however, a discrepancy arises as, according to previous research, taking care of children in Latvia is still regarded as mainly 'a woman's territory' (Trapezņikova et al. 2019, 65). According to the EIGE Gender Equality Index 2023, the highest gender equality rating in Latvia is noted in the 'Work' domain (EIGE 2023), meaning that women actively participate in the paid labor market; however, the 'Time' domain shows an unequal distribution of household chores and care responsibilities. Hence, even though respondents note that mothers and fathers in theory may take care of children equally well, this stance is not exercised in real life. In 2022, 84.1% of parents taking paid parental leave (for 1.5–2 years) were mothers (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia 2023b, 15), and discussions regarding the implementation of a two-month period of nontransferable parental leave (Directive (EU) 2019/1158) raised questions about fathers' capabilities and applicability as caregivers (Lāma 2022b). Moreover, even though the responses show that equal responsibility for taking care of a child is recognized, other research demonstrates that when a child is ill, usually it is the mother who takes sick leave and stays home to ensure their care (Trapezņikova et al. 2019, 47). These findings indicate that perhaps, to some extent, respondents were providing 'culturally correct answers.' Housman and Joy (2014, 98), for instance, have also witnessed in their research where 'participants talked about their ideas rather than their practices of mothering.'

The high scores in the 'Fulfillment' category, especially for the general public sample, emphasize the value of the child and the positive role that being a parent should have in a person's life. This notion matches results from other surveys in Latvia, suggesting the significant importance of one's love for one's child (Prisko, Sebre, and Upmane 2022, 34–46). As Vissing (2014, 117) has noted in her research, intensive mothering has resulted in the overall demonization of ambivalence toward parenthood, solidifying 'the idea that children are inherently fulfilling for parents.' The importance of fulfillment from the parenting role, even if a culturally appropriate answer given by the respondents, clashes with the high number of solo mothers' families in Latvia, who raise their child or children without active participation from the father.

The highly scored category 'Stimulation' (with minimal differences between the two samples) also indicates that respondents place an important emphasis on parents spending time with their child doing qualitative, stimulating, and meaningful activities, encouraging the child's cognitive development, and, thus, strongly supporting intensive mothering norms that stress the following: mothers, and parents in general, 'are seen to be responsible not only for their children's physical, cognitive, and intellectual development, but also for their social and emotional wellbeing and for their overall success in life' (Mainland, Shaw, and Prier 2017, 1). Milkie and Warner (2014, 66–80) speak of 'status safeguarding' – 'the mothers' vigilant labor to prepare a child's pathway to the highest status achievable,' which comes at 'a high cost to mothers' careers, physical and emotional health, and guilt.' Respondents of this study have also identified the need to ensure the best possible outcome for a child's development and later success in life through 'concerted cultivation,' by ensuring a 'myriad of enrichment opportunities' from the very first steps in life (Brown 2014, 35). Similarly to Faircloth's (2021, 30) research, these data also indicate the need for parents act as 'pseudo-teachers, optimizing their children's intelligence through a range of extracurricular activities.'

Statistically significant differences between the two samples are visible in the 'Child-centered,' 'Fulfillment,' and 'Essentialism' categories, with respondents from the Twitter sample edging away from the intensive mothering end of the scale as opposed to the general public sample. In these categories, the general public places significantly stronger emphasis on the family's priorities being arranged around the child's needs. The strong support for the 'Fulfillment' category among the general public respondents in contrast to Twitter users also suggests that the latter may be more aware of the hidden burden of gaining (and displaying) satisfaction from one's role as a parent; for them, fulfillment is derived from multiple sources, with fulfillment from having a child not as crucial. The taboo against feeling other emotions is present within the intensive mothering discourse, even though 'showing the ugly side of motherhood has the potential to be liberating and beneficial for all women,' as 'not all women enjoy being mothers or know what to do once they become one' (Lopez 2009, 743–744). As Cronin-Fisher and Parcell (2019, 167) note, the 'pervasiveness of intensive mothering discourses is likely keeping many women from sharing their experiences of dissatisfaction with the transition to motherhood,' and it also might prevent women from seeking help when they need it as they try to maintain a good 'mother face.'

While the majority of Twitter sample respondents were women, comparison between the two samples indicates that Twitter users are less prone to endorsing intensive mothering parenting attitudes. Women and men without children, as well as men with children, rate four of five parenting attitude categories lower than Twitter mothers with children, coinciding with other research that implies that 'mothers, in many cases, endorse attitudes in line with intensive mothering' as 'mothers feel stress and pressure to assume the role of the good mother and attempt to reach motherhood ideals aligning with Hays's (1996) definition of intensive mothering' (Forbes, Donovan, and Lamar 2020, 69). For the whole Twitter sample, 'Challenging' was the second highest scoring category, especially regarding Twitter mothers, who find mothering and parenting even more challenging than other respondents, which coincides with Schiffrin and colleagues' conclusion that the 'cycle of high parental standards (i.e. intensive parenting attitudes) and gatekeeping behaviors, which results in mothers doing the majority of the childcare, may account for why women also rate parenting as being more challenging than men do' (Schiffrin et al. 2013, 6).

When comparing results between mothers and other groups within the general public sample, no statistically significant differences were present, though it should be borne in mind that the general public sample had fewer responses from mothers and featured less urban, more regionally dispersed respondents. Trapezņikova et al. (2019), 28, 49) note that although women do the majority of housework and childcare, they are, in general, fairly satisfied with the sharing of household duties but have also contemplated divorce more often than men. Putniņa et al. (2015, 16–17) also stress that when the mother returns to paid labor, the relationship experiences strain due to the uneven distribution of childcare and other household responsibilities, even though this same distribution was previously satisfactory. Even though the survey does not reveal the education level of the Twitter sample respondents, most of them live in urban areas; thus, one may speculate that Twitter mothers seem to be more aware of motherhood's challenges and unequally distributed household and childrearing tasks between partners than others within the Twitter sample and mothers from the general sample. Furthermore, other research indicates that safeguarding is 'particularly important for those who might enjoy relatively high education levels or incomes but do not have

wealth to pass along to children;' this 'exhausting labour' begins in early childhood and continues for years, depleting mothers' energy to exhaustion (Milkie and Warner 2014, 72–78), which may partly explain the background for characterizing mothering as challenging among respondents of this sample.

In general, mothers' responses from both samples showed quite similar results, consistent with Forbes, Donovan, and Lamar (2020, 66), who concluded that 'no significant differences were found for attitudes of "Essentialism" or "Stimulation" on any demographic characteristics of the mother.' Additionally, demographic qualities such as race, ethnicity, social class, upbringing, relationship status, years in the relationship, number of children, or the mother's job status play a seemingly small part in differences in parenting opinions according to other research. Statistically significant differences are noted in the 'Essentialism' and 'Fulfillment' categories, where Twitter mothers significantly edge away from the intensive-mothering end of the scale.

This study has several limitations but also offers opportunities for further research. First, as the study concentrates on parenting attitudes, the results consist of evaluations of values and probabilities and give neither insight into how actual parenting is managed in real life nor further explanations of motives. Obtaining further qualitative data would be helpful to assess the discrepancies between how things should be and how things are, especially regarding fathers' involvement in caretaking and housework.

Second, the results indicate that views collected through Twitter lean toward less conservative or 'traditional' and toward more liberal and egalitarian views regarding parenting, though the differences were not extreme. It must be taken in account, however, that the majority of the Twitter sample were women, most of whom live in the Latvian capital. Therefore, it would be beneficial to explore the use of Twitter as a tool to measure public opinion in Latvia; even though it is not the country's most popular social network, it provides opportunities to reach a broad audience. Further research to determine whether Twitter users hold less conservative attitudes not only regarding parenting, but also other subjects would be useful.

Lastly, previous research in other countries indicates that intensive parenting beliefs are deeply rooted in gender role norms and are, therefore, seemingly resistant to change, even during a global pandemic (Forbes et al. 2022, 478). As this was the first IPAQ survey conducted in Latvia, it would be beneficial to repeat the study and monitor possible changes that may arise in parenting attitudes with the implementation of the nontransferable parental leave directive (Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU 2019).

Conclusion

This study has given empirical evidence of the presence of the intensive mothering discourse among Latvia's general population and Latvian-speaking Twitter users and, to some extent, its dominance. The overall results indicate that the notion of exercising concerted cultivation and ensuring the stimulation of a child's cognitive development with meaningful activities has very strong support in Latvia. The safeguarding of a child's and, hence, the family's status is of high importance from an early age.

Several differences have been noted between the samples. Twitter users, especially childless men and women as well as fathers, are less supportive of intensive mothering parenting attitudes, thus also indicating the internalization of this discourse among mothers. The views of the general public of Latvia reflect a stronger inclination toward a child being a source of fulfillment for a parent and the necessity to prioritize a child's needs more strongly compared to, for instance, parents' needs. Conversely, Twitter users recognize the challenges that motherhood and parenthood hold more distinctly and hold less conservative views. In contrast to other research and statistical data, both samples reject essentialism and the view that mothers are inherently better than fathers regarding child-rearing and housework, thus opening the floor to further discussion about initiatives and policies, encouraging fathers to engage more in family life, and addressing the pressing problems of the 'second shift' as well as other challenges that mothers in Latvia face.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Elza Lāma is a PhD candidate in Communication Science at the University of Latvia and a Research Assistant at the Advanced Social and Political Research Institute, University of Latvia. Her research interests include communication, mediatization, motherhood, digital cultures, and emotion work. The theme of her doctoral thesis is "The Discourses and Mediatization of Motherhood."

Gatis Lāma holds a PhD in Social Sciences and is a Research Assistant and Lecturer at the University of Latvia. His research interests include transversal and life skills.

ORCID

Elza Lāma http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9271-3862
Gatis Lāma http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7815-856X

References

Archer, C. 2019. "Social Media Influencers, Post-Feminism and Neoliberalism: How Mum Bloggers' 'Playbour' is Reshaping Public Relations." *Public Relations Inquiry* 8 (2): 149–166. https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X19846530.

Archer, C., and K. T. Kao. 2018. "Mother, Baby and Facebook Makes Three: Does Social Media Provide Social Support for New Mothers?" *Media International Australia* 168 (1): 122–139. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X18783016.

Auðardóttir, A. M. 2022. "From Progressiveness to Perfection: Mothers' Descriptions of Their Children in Print Media, 1970–1979 versus 2010–2019." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 26 (2): 212–229. https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494221112445.

Brown, S. 2014. "Intensive Mothering as an Adaptive Response to Our Cultural Environment." In *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, edited by L. R. Ennis, 27–46. Bradford, Canada: Demeter Press.

Buzzanell, P. M., R. V. Remke, R. Meisenbach, and M. Liu. 2017. "Standpoints of Maternity Leave: Discourses of Temporality and Ability." *Women's Studies in Communication* 40 (1): 67–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2015.1113451.

Canetto, S. S., C. D. Trott, E. M. Winterrowd, D. Haruyama, and A. Johnson. 2017. "Challenges to the Choice Discourse: Women's Views of Their Family and Academic-Science Career Options and

Constraints." *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* 29 (1–2): 4–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/08952833.2016.1273174.

Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. 2023a. "Demography 2023, in Latvian." *Official Statistics of Latvia Portal Website*. https://stat.gov.lv/en/statistics-themes/population/population/publications-and-infographics/15178-demography-2023-latvian?themeCode=IM.

Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. 2023b. "Gender Equality 2023, in Latvian." https://stat.gov.lv/en/statistics-themes/indicators-well-being-and-equality/gender-equality/publications-and-5?themeCode=GE.Official statistics of Latvia.

Chib, A., S. Malik, R. G. Aricat, and S. Z. Kadir. 2013. "Migrant Mothering and Mobile Phones: Negotiations of Transnational Identity." *Mobile Media & Communication* 2 (1): 73–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157913506007.

Christopher, K. 2012. "Extensive Mothering: Employed Mothers' Constructions of the Good Mother." *Gender & Society* 26 (1): 73–96. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243211427700.

Cronin-Fisher, V., and E. S. Parcell. 2019. "Making Sense of Dissatisfaction During the Transition to Motherhood Through Relational Dialectics Theory." *The Journal of Family Communication* 19 (2): 157–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2019.1590364.

Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center. 2020. *National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027*. Cabinet of Ministers, Republic of Latvia website. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027__ENG.pdf.

Cummins, M. W., and G. E. Brannon. 2022. "Mothering in a Pandemic: Navigating Care Work, Intensive Motherhood, and COVID-19." *Gender Issues* 39 (2): 123–141. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-022-09295-w.

Das, R. 2019. "The Mediation of Childbirth: 'Joyful' Birthing and Strategies of Silencing on a Facebook Discussion Group." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 22 (5–6): 495–510. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417722094.

Douglas, S. J., and M. W. Michaels. 2004. *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How it Has Undermined Women*. New York: Free Press.

EIGE. 2023. *Gender Equality Index 2023: Towards a Green Transition in Transport and Energy*. Brussels: Publications Office of the European Union. https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-equality-index-2023-towards-green-transition-transport-and-energy?language_content_entity=en.

Elliott, S., J. Brenton, and R. Powell. 2017. "Brothermothering: Gender, Power, and the Parenting Strategies of Low-Income Black Single Mothers of Teenagers." *Social Problems* 65 (4): 439–455. https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spx021.

Ennis, L. R. 2014a. "Balancing Separation-Connection in Mothering." In *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, edited by L. R. Ennis, 332–337. Bradford: Demeter Press.

Ennis, L. R. 2014b. "Intensive Mothering: Revisiting the Issue Today." In *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, edited by L. R. Ennis, 1–24. Bradford: Demeter Press.

European Parliament. 2019. "Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers and Repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU." EUR-Lex. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj .

European Parliament. 2023. *Media & News Survey 2023*, European Union. https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3153.

Eurostat. 2020. *How Many Single-Parent Households are There in the EU?* Eurostat. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20210601-2.

Eurostat. 2021. Divorce indicators (dataset). Eurostat. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/product/page/demo_ndivind.

Faircloth, C. 2021. *Couples' Transitions to Parenthood: Gender, Intimacy and Equality*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature.

Forbes, L. K., C. Donovan, and M. R. Lamar. 2020. "Differences in Intensive Parenting Attitudes and Gender Norms Among U.S. Mothers." *The Family Journal* 28 (1): 63–71. https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480719893964.

Forbes, L. K., M. R. Lamar, M. Speciale, and C. Donovan. 2022. "Mothers' and Fathers' Parenting Attitudes During COVID-19." *Current Psychology* 41 (1): 470–479. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01605-x.

Friedan, B. 1963. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Gross, C. L., B. Turgeon, T. Taylor, and K. Lansberry. 2014. "State Intervention in Intensive Mothering." In *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, edited by L. R. Ennis, 163–179. Bradford: Demeter Press.

Gruzd, A., B. Wellman, and Y. Takhteyey. 2011. "Imagining Twitter as an Imagined Community." *The American Behavioral Scientist* 55 (10): 1294–1318. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211409378.

Hays, S. 1996. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Hochschild, A. R., and A. Machung. 1989. *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*. New York: Viking.

Housman, K., and E. Joy. 2014. "The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood Revisited." In *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, edited by L. R. Ennis, 86–103. Bradford: Demeter Press.

Jansone-Ratinīka, N. 2013. *Tēva pedagoģiskā kompetence mūsdienu ģimenē*. PhD diss., University of Latvia.

Jurciņa, A. 1975. *Sieviete - Personība*. Riga: Liesma.

Jurciņa, A. 1986. *Sieviete un sociālistiskais dzīvesveids*. Riga: Avots.

Kestere, I., I. Stonkuviene, and Z. Rubene. 2020. "The New Soviet Man with a Female Body: Mother, Teacher, Tractor Driver . . .." *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia* 45:97–109. https://doi.org/10.15388/ActPaed.45.6.

Klímová Chaloupková, J., and K. Pospíšilová. 2023. "Towards a Conceptualisation of Intensive Parenting Norms: Testing Exact and Approximate Measurement Invariance Across Social and Country Contexts." *Journal of Family Research* 35:515–534. https://doi.org/10.20377/jfr-926.

Lāma, E. 2022. "'Intensive Mothering' Discourse in Narratives Pro and Against 'Daddy Quota' in Latvia." *Media and Society, 2022: Proceedings of Scientific Papers*, edited by V. Zelče, 61–69. Riga. University of Latvia. https://doi.org/10.22364/ms22.07.

Lāma, E. 2022. "Unspoken Truths in Narratives of Contemporary Mothers Towards Their Mothers in Latvia." *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education, 2022: Proceedings of Scientific Papers*, edited by L. Daniela, 121–137. Riga. University of Latvia. https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2022.

Lāma, E. 2023. "Challenging and Reproducing the Discourse of 'Intensive Mothering' in Family Magazine "Mans Mazais" (2018–2022)." *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education, 2023*, edited by L. Daniela, 67–83. Riga. University of Latvia. https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2023.

Lāma, E., and G. Lāma. 2023. "Mothers on Twitter (X): Exchanging Support and Narrating Motherhood." *Culture Crossroads* 23:257–271. https://doi.org/10.55877/cc.vol23.372.

Lāma, E., and V. Zelče. 2024. "'Am I Grateful Enough?': Emotions and Communication in the 'Deep Story' of New Mothers in Latvia." *Gender a výzkum / Gender & Research* 24 (2): 231–254. https://doi.org/10.13060/gav.2023.013.

Lazard, L., R. Capdevila, C. Dann, A. Locke, and S. Roper. 2019. "Sharenting: Pride, Affect and the Day-To-Day Politics of Digital Mothering." *Social and Personal Psychology Compass* 13 (4): 4. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12443.

Lee, J. Y., A. C. Grogan-Kaylor, S. J. Lee, T. Ammari, A. Lu, and P. Davis-Kean. 2020. "A Qualitative Analysis of Stay-At-Home Parents' Spanking Tweets." *Journal of Child & Family Studies* 29 (3): 817–830. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-019-01691-3.

Liss, M., H. H. Schiffrin, V. H. Mackintosh, H. Miles-McLean, and M. J. Erchull. 2013. "Development and Validation of a Quantitative Measure of Intensive Parenting Attitudes." *Journal of Child & Family Studies* 22 (5): 621–636. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-012-9616-y.

Long, H., A. Prikhidko, A. C. Bendeck, and S. Yumusak. 2021. "Measurement Invariance of the Intensive Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire Across Gender and Race." *Journal of Family Psychology* 35 (7): 1027–1032. https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000889.

Lopez, L. K. 2009. "The Radical Act of 'Mommy Blogging': Redefining Motherhood Through the Blogosphere." *New Media & Society* 11 (5): 729–747. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809105349.

Loyal, D., A.-L. Sutter Dallay, and N. Rascle. 2017. "Intensive Mothering Ideology in France: A Pilot Study." *Encephale* 43 (6): 564–569. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.encep.2017.08.002.

Mainland, M., S. M. Shaw, and A. Prier. 2017. "Parenting in an Era of Risk: Responding to the Obesity Crisis." *Journal of Family Studies* 23 (1): 86–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2015.1090328.

Malatzky, C. 2016. "Abnormal Mothers: Breastfeeding, Governmentality and Emotion Amongst Regional Australian Women." *Gender Issues* 34 (4): 355–370. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-016-9179-0.

Meng, B. 2020. "When Anxious Mothers Meet Social Media: Wechat, Motherhood and the Imaginary of the Good Life." *Javnost - The Public* 27 (2): 171–185. https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2020.1727276.

Micalizzi, A. 2021. "Exploring Gender and Sexuality Through a Twitter Lens: The Digital Framing Effect of the #fertilityday Campaign by Female Users." *Information Communication & Society* 24 (8): 1157–1174. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1808044.

Milkie, M. A., and C. H. Warner. 2014. "Status Safeguarding: Mothers' Work to Secure Children's Place in the Social Hierarchy." In *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, edited by L. R. Ennis, 66–85. Bradford: Demeter Press.

Miller, T. 2005. *Making Sense of Motherhood: A Narrative Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Moore, J., and J. S. Abetz. 2019. "What Do Parents Regret About Having Children? Communicating Regrets Online." *Journal of Family Issues* 40 (3): 390–412. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X18811388.

Moukarzel, S., A. Caduff, M. Rehm, M. Del Fresno, R. Perez-Escamilla, and A. J. Daly. 2021. "Breastfeeding Communication Strategies, Challenges and Opportunities in the Twitter-Verse: Perspectives of Influencers and Social Network Analysis." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18 (12): 6181. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126181.

Prisko, L., S. Sebre, and A. Upmane. 2022. *Laulību, dzimstības un pozitīvu bērnu - vecāku attiecību veicinošo faktoru izpēte: 2022. gada un 2004. gada pētījumu rezultātu salīdzinājums*. Riga: Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center.

Putniņa, A., M. Pinka, I. Mileiko, J. Kalēja, I. Jakunova, and M. Muižniece. 2015. *Reģistrētas un nereģistrētas kopdzīves faktoru salīdzinoša analīze*. Riga: Publiskās antropoloģijas centrs.

Rizzo, K. M., H. H. Schiffrin, and M. Liss. 2013. "Insight into the Parenthood Paradox: Mental Health Outcomes of Intensive Mothering." *Journal of Child & Family Studies* 22 (5): 614–620. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-012-9615-z.

Saar, M., and K. Aavik. 2022. "Negotiating Neoliberalism in the Private Sphere: Narratives of Estonian Single Mothers." *Journal of Baltic Studies* 53 (1): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2021.1980071.

Saxonberg, S., and D. Szelewa. 2007. "The Continuing Legacy of the Communist Legacy? The Development of Family Policies in Poland and the Czech Republic." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society* 14 (3): 351–379. https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxm014.

Scarborough, W. J. 2018. "Feminist Twitter and Gender Attitudes: Opportunities and Limitations to Using Twitter in the Study of Public Opinion." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 4:4. https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023118780760.

Schiffrin, H. H., M. Liss, K. Geary, H. Miles-McLean, T. Hagerman, C. Tashner, and K. Rizzo. 2013. "Mother, Father, or Parent? College Students' Intensive Parenting Attitudes Differ by Referent." *Journal of Child & Family Studies* 23 (6): 1073–1080. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-013-9764-8.

Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., J. E. Yavorsky, M. K. Bartholomew, J. M. Sullivan, M. A. Lee, C. M. Kamp Dush, and M. Glassman. 2017. "Doing Gender Online: New Mothers' Psychological Characteristics, Facebook Use, and Depressive Symptoms." *Sex Roles* 76 (5–6): 276–289. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0640-z .

Schuster, A. 1971. "Women's Role in the Soviet Union: Ideology and Reality." *The Russian Review* 30 (3): 260–267. https://doi.org/10.2307/128134.

Steiner, L., and C. Bronstein. 2017. "Leave a Comment: Mommyblogs and the Everyday Struggle to Reclaim Parenthood." *Feminist Media Studies* 17 (1): 59–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2017.1261840.

Sullivan, C. 2014. "'Bad Mum Guilt': The Representation of 'Work-Life Balance' in UK Women's Magazines." *Community, Work & Family* 18 (3): 284–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2014.970128.

Taber, K. S. 2018. "The Use of Cronbach's Alpha When Developing and Reporting Research Instruments in Science Education." *Research in Science Education* 48 (6): 1273–1296. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-016-9602-2.

Tiidenberg, K., and N. K. Baym. 2017. "Learn It, Buy It, Work It: Intensive Pregnancy on Instagram." *Social Media + Society* 3 (1): 205630511668510. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116685108.

Trapezņikova, I., M. Goldmanis, I. Koroleva, and A. Aleksandrovs. 2019. *Latvijas ģimenes paaudzēs 2018: Analītisks ziņojums*. Riga: LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts.

Valiquette-Tessier, S., J. Gosselin, M. Young, and K. Thomassin. 2018. "A Literature Review of Cultural Stereotypes Associated with Motherhood and Fatherhood." *Marriage & Family Review* 55 (4): 299–329. https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2018.1469567.

Valtchanov, B. V., D. C. Parry, T. D. Glover, and C. M. Mulcahy. 2016. "'A Whole New World': Mothers' Technologically Mediated Leisure." *Leisure Sciences* 38 (1): 50–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2015.1043414.

Vissing, H. 2014. "The Ideal Mother Fantasy and Its Protective Function." In *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, edited by L. R. Ennis, 104–119. Bradford: Demeter Press.

Walker, M. 2014. "Intensive Mothering, Elimination, and the Call to Eden." In *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, edited by L. R. Ennis, 233–246. Bradford, ON: Demeter Press.

Zukula, B., S. Purona-Sida, R. Beinare, and V. Bunte. 2022. *Latvijas 2021. gada tautas un mājokļu skaitīšanas galvenie rezultāti*. Riga: Centrālās statistikas pārvalde.

Appendices

Appendix A. The statements of the questionnaire

Statements	Category
1. Both mothers and fathers can take care of children equally well	Essentialism (r)
2. Parents should ensure contact with the child even before birth – during pregnancy by talking with her, reading books out loud, playing music, etc.	Stimulation
3. Being a parent means having almost no time for oneself	Challenging
4. The child's daily routine and needs are more important than the parents' needs	Child-centered
5. Even though fathers are important, the child needs her mother more	Essentialism
6. The child can be a burden for their parents	Fulfillment (r)
7. Mothers never rest from their responsibilities, even when they are not physically with the child	Challenging
8. The parent's role brings true fulfillment and happiness	Fulfillment
9. Being a parent is exhausting	Challenging
10. Generally, the mother is responsible for how the child eventually grows up	Essentialism
11. The parents overdo it regarding activities for children that stimulate their development	Stimulation (r)
12. Even though fathers try, they generally cannot take care of the child as well as mothers do	Essentialism
13. The parent's role cannot provide the satisfaction and fulfillment one can experience in a lifetime	Fulfillment (r)
14. Fathers are as good at doing housework as mothers	Essentialism (r)
15. Parenting is the most demanding and important job in the world	Challenging
16. Women aren't undoubtedly better at parenting than men	Essentialism (r)
17. Being a parent is the highest fulfillment in a person's life	Fulfillment
18. Children are our future – it should be a priority	Child-centered
19. Men are unable to take care of a child themselves unless specific instructions are given	Essentialism
20. It is very important to find the best possible educational institution for your child – beginning from kindergarten	Stimulation
21. Being a good parent is harder than working in a high-level managerial position	Challenging
22. Men have no natural intuition – a mother's instinct guides her regarding how to take care of a child	Essentialism
23. A good parent doesn't need a specific range of knowledge and skills	Challenging (r)
24. Children's needs are no more important than those of their parents	Child-centered (r)
25. It is important to spend quality time with one's child frequently, playing games of interest to him/her, talking, etc.	Stimulation

Appendix B. Score of individual statements between both samples

	Twitter (X) users					General public				
Statement No.	Mean	Median	St Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	Median	St Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	1.69	1	1.03	1.71	2.73	2.15	2	1.28	1.12	0.74
2	4.25	4	1.55	−0.38	−1.04	4.73	5	1.28	−0.82	−0.02
3	3.49	4	1.39	−0.01	−0.81	3.53	4	1.40	−0.17	−0.68
4	3.40	3	1.30	0.02	−0.63	3.95	4	1.30	−0.37	−0.34
5	2.77	3	1.49	0.47	−0.81	3.87	4	1.50	−0.39	−0.72
6	3.65	4	1.67	−0.11	−1.19	4.49	5	1.56	−0.75	−0.54
7	3.26	3	1.60	0.18	−1.16	3.64	4	1.47	−0.04	−0.83
8	4.19	4	1.52	−0.48	−0.77	4.78	5	1.28	−0.98	0.50
9	3.95	4	1.54	−0.23	−1.02	3.12	3	1.48	0.24	−0.85
10	2.01	2	1.23	1.24	1.06	2.75	3	1.52	0.45	−0.86
11	3.34	3	1.48	0.12	−0.90	3.19	3	1.27	0.16	−0.36
12	1.87	1	1.20	1.52	1.71	2.96	3	1.50	0.23	−0.99
13	3.61	4	1.66	−0.13	−1.16	3.97	4	1.44	−0.23	−0.80
14	1.85	1	1.35	1.65	1.76	2.28	2	1.27	0.84	0.02
15	4.06	4	1.52	−0.37	−0.89	4.69	5	1.25	−0.94	0.48
16	2.08	2	1.35	1.16	0.40	2.69	3	1.34	0.54	−0.36
17	2.85	3	1.54	0.46	−0.81	4.19	4	1.46	−0.55	−0.48
18	4.03	4	1.49	−0.31	−0.87	4.74	5	1.27	−0.99	0.49
19	1.89	1	1.19	1.51	1.92	2.65	2	1.39	0.45	−0.75
20	3.99	4	1.44	−0.21	−0.86	4.12	4	1.29	−0.36	−0.30
21	3.77	4	1.66	−0.14	−1.18	4.13	4	1.40	−0.43	−0.54
22	2.19	2	1.36	1.06	0.30	3.18	3	1.42	0.06	−0.81
23	4.52	5	1.35	−0.86	0.04	3.80	4	1.42	−0.19	−0.77
24	3.38	3	1.38	−0.04	−0.74	3.38	3	1.34	0.11	−0.51
25	5.44	6	0.87	−1.69	3.01	5.15	5	0.97	−1.39	2.63

7.2. Publication II. 'Am I Grateful Enough?': Emotions and Communication in the 'Deep Story' of New Mothers in Latvia

Lāma, E., Zelče, V. (2024). 'Am I Grateful Enough?': Emotions and Communication in the 'Deep Story' of New Mothers in Latvia. *Gender a výzkum / Gender and Research 24*(2), 231–254.
https://doi.org/10.13060/gav.2023.013

GENDER A VÝZKUM
GENDER AND RESEARCH

‘Am I Grateful Enough?’: Emotions and Communication in the ‘Deep Story’ of New Mothers in Latvia[1]

Elza Lāma [a], **Vita Zelče** [a]

[a]) University of Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences

Abstract: The ever-watchful eyes of society have created burdensome challenges for mothers in the 21st century, who are constantly trying to manage their emotions and daily life in accordance with the dominant discourse of what a ‘good mother’ should be like. The aim of the paper is to explore the ‘deep story’ of new mothers in Latvia, employing the theoretical framework of sociologist Arlie Hochschild and her concept of ‘emotion work’. Data were gathered from ten phenomenological interviews with women with a child under the age of two. The results of the narrative analysis show that new mothers systematically apply the principles of ‘emotion work’ and communicate negative experiences only to selected confidants out of a fear of being condemned for not complying with the dominant narrative of motherhood. Although the ‘deep story’ of mothers is rather bleak, the key is open communication without judgement or patronising remarks.

Keywords: motherhood, emotion work, deep story, communication, narrative analysis, phenomenological interviews

Lāma, Elza, Zelče, Vita. 2023. ‘Am I Grateful Enough?’: Emotions and Communication in the ‘Deep Story’ of New Mothers in Latvia. *Gender a výzkum / Gender and Research* 24 (2): 231–254, https://doi.org/10.13060/gav.2023.013.

Time flies when you have an infant on your hands, and the period when all thoughts and efforts are devoted exclusively to the infant is relatively short. However, young parents, especially mothers, characterise this time as intense, tiring, and all--consuming, no matter how joyful. Unforeseen challenges, unclear guidelines for doing unprecedented tasks that a person cannot prepare for in advance, unrealistic

[1] This research is funded by the Latvian Council of Science, project ‘Jeopardizing Democracy through Disinformation and Conspiracies: Reconsidering Experience of Latvia’, project no. lzp-2019/1-0278.

expectations, and, in some cases, a lack of support and information result in various strong emotions, not all of which are positive or coincide with society's views on what constitutes a good mother. Exiled into motherhood, some women begin to question not only their capability but also their experience, often trying to hide their mistakes, doubts, or failures from those who might judge them.

In recent years, motherhood, the experiences of mothers, and the communication of those experiences have been explored by various researchers (Hays 1996, Miller 2005, Schoppe-Sullivan et al. 2017, Archer, Kao 2018, Moore, Abetz 2019); but, there has been little coverage of taboo topics or of mothers navigate between conflicting dominant narratives on motherhood and their own attitudes. Thus, the aim of this paper is to explore the 'deep story' of new mothers in Latvia, i.e. mothers whose youngest child is less than two years old, by employing the theoretical framework of sociologist Arlie Hochschild and her approach of 'emotion work'. Accordingly, the research questions are as follows:

1. Is it possible to observe emotion management and 'feeling rules' in the narratives of new mothers in Latvia?
2. What are the core themes visible in the 'deep story' of new mothers in Latvia?

Motherhood in the 21st century: uncertainty and loneliness

Although motherhood is not considered a 'gender fate' in the 21st century, one of the central ways in which a woman is defined is still on the basis of her becoming (or not becoming) a mother (Miller 2005: 48). The 'mommy myth' also implies that women are incomplete without children and are the best caregivers (Prikhidko, Swank 2018: 279), even though it is several decades now since Friedan wrote of the 'problem with no name' (1963: 15–32) and Chodorow (1978: 207–209) published the ground-breaking *Reproductions of Motherhood*, arguing that a mother's role is not biologically determined but is in fact a product of the mother-daughter relationship dynamic. Thus, the persistent judgement of women on the grounds of how capable they are of providing childcare that is consistent with the prevailing authoritative knowledge (Miller 2005: 28), the still isolated nature of the motherhood experience, despite changes in society and gender roles, and the ideologies that still dictate the 'correct' forms of mother all mean the experience of motherhood is still a relevant topic (Feasey 2017: 6–7).

In contrast to previous generations, the dominant discourse in the 21st century supports 'intensive mothering', a term coined by Hays (1996) to refer to certain guidelines on how a mother should behave and what emotions she should feel (Hallstein 2006: 97-100). 'Correct' mothering involves lasting and loving affection for a child, whereby a mother's struggles with the tasks of motherhood and other emotions, including sadness, fear, or anger, are automatically classified as

inappropriate, and new mothers are then left feeling stress, guilt, and even shame (Murray, Finn 2012: 56). As Feasey argues, the mother is 'entirely responsible for the social, psychological and cognitive well-being of her children' (2017: 6).

The master narrative of motherhood dictates that mothers should feel an overwhelming, instantaneous, and absolutely positive bond with their new-born (Kerrick, Henry 2017: 9), and the whole mothering experience should create an unrelenting and rewarding sense of gratitude (Murray, Finn 2012: 44). In her recent study, Lehto (2020: 658–659) emphasises that mothers are aware of what society expects from them and this may lead to self-observation and the performance of 'proper' motherhood with intent, which at the same time may be in conflict with a mother's reality and actual emotional and pragmatic experiences.

Not being able to comply with the unrealistic ideal of a mother as an omnipotent, patient, content, and saintlike caregiver, new mothers often suffer from a sense of guilt (Prikhidko, Swank 2018: 278). Thus, while it is not uncommon to feel isolated, angry, or depressed in the postpartum period, new mothers may choose to hide these feelings when they conflict with the dominant discourse (Dubus 2014: 43). Negative emotions and experiences, such as not feeling an immediate bond with the infant and needing time to grow accustomed to the new role as a mother, may also come as a surprise (Kerrick, Henry 2017: 13).

Miller (2005: 56) argues that the dominant discourse combined with the prevailing ideologies of biological essentialists mean that women have a set of 'natural' knowledge about mothering that provides them with guidelines on how to care for a child and how to feel and behave. However, there is often a gap between reality and ideals – for instance, the existence of negative emotions towards motherhood that women feel forced to deny (Lee et al. 2019: 1335). Women feel pressured to appear grateful and fulfilled in their role as a caregiver. Social pressure and a lack of experience have a great impact especially on primipara mothers (Prikhidko, Swank 2018: 278). According to Forbes, Donovan, and Lamar (2020: 69), stress from intensive mothering and eagerness to conform to its standards is also common.

Other cultures, non-Western in particular, recognise the need for helping hands when raising a baby and to understand this sensitive period, as well as the need to devote special care and 'to mother the mother', to recognise her value, and to protect the woman's ability to mother her own child in the future (Dennis 2007: 497–498). By contrast, in Western Europe motherhood is often accompanied by physical and social isolation, thus, motherhood becomes a kind of 'exile', and a young mother's only companion 24/7 may be her infant, (Dubus 2014: 44). Moreover, 9% to 19% of women face major and/or minor postpartum depression in the year following childbirth (Rode 2016: 429).

While previous generations often shared a close bond with female relatives,

mothers in the 21st century generally live separately from their own mothers and in their 'exile' may lack simple, open communication and 'permission to be authentic'. New mothers recurrently experience confusion, self-doubt, guilt, and anger, which may be resolved by having an empathic conversation with an experienced mother without judgement or condemnation, who shows care and support and allows the woman to accept herself as a mother and shed unrealistic expectations or an idealised image of motherhood (Dubus 2014: 50). Most new mothers also need social support in the form of help with menial tasks around the house to escape the still existent 'second shift' (Hochschild, Machung 1989).

Nowadays the physical 'second shift' is often accompanied by unseen but time-consuming and emotionally draining 'mental labour'. As emphasised by Robertson et al. (2019: 184–185), cognitive tasks such as worrying, information processing, and the division of labour that are the most essential for running a household fall on the mother, contributing to her exhaustion. Social and physical isolation combined with an uneven distribution of household tasks and a lack of time for oneself also create a sense of loneliness. Up to 28% of first-time mothers feel lonely, according to a recent study by Lee, Vasileiou and Barnett (2019: 1334). Left without social support, a new mother may focus on self-analysis and may come up with a negative self-assessment if her experience as a mother does not coincide with her expectations of motherhood. Moreover, lonely individuals tend to mask their feelings and avoid discussing them with others, thus, failing to discover that other women may share similar problems.

To sum up, even though mothers' expectations from reproduction and the mothering experience are not universally the same and the context is socially constructed, depending on historical influences and culture and on the authoritative knowledge created and maintained in interaction with society (Miller 2005: 28), the dominant discourse of motherhood in Western modernity is consistent with the principles of 'intensive mothering'. Although historically this ideology has been 'a highly raced and classed discourse, driven strongly by white, middle-class values', its influence is evident in other classes and lower income groups (Das 2019: 499–507). It is held as the standard and the norm at the institutional level even in other cultures; a distinct branch of 'intensive mothering', called 'extensive mothering', has been adopted by working-class or working mothers (Meng 2020: 180). 'Extensive mothering' constructs the good, employed mother as a 'delegator' of caregiving tasks, while retaining the ultimate responsibility for her children and reinforcing the traditional belief that 'women – not men – are the best caregivers of children' (Christopher 2012: 91–94). It gives women power to 'enact responsibility and care while not always there' (Lazard, Capdevila, Dann et al. 2019: 4).

Motherhood in Latvia

Social surveys indicate that the people of Latvia view families as the foundation of society and accept the nuclear family as the norm (Jansone-Ratinika 2013: 7). Despite a progressive social transformation, a balance is still being pursued between traditional and transformative models, as the structure of the family and gender roles are in the midst of change. As Jansone-Ratinika and other researchers suggest, systemic transformation calls for the integration of equality principles into family life; however, the discourse portraying the man as the breadwinner and delegating the woman with childcare and household tasks remains strong (Jansone-Ratinika 2013: 8).

The importance of values that are commonly referred to as 'traditional' is diminishing, especially among the younger population, who share more liberal views, including the notion that children do not play a strong role in self-fulfilment (Trapezņikova et al. 2019: 26). Although the situation has improved, the inequality of women and the 'second shift' they face at home were recognised even in Soviet Latvia, according to a survey done in 1975, where it was concluded that men have 2–3 times less of a workload at home than their spouses (Jurciņa 1975: 101). Still, in 2018, 68% of respondents in an extensive survey revealed that women are more suitable for childcare duties than men; the majority of childcare chores at home are the woman's responsibility (Trapezņikova et al. 2019: 47–69). Yet, when it comes to education and employment and representation in the public sphere, the dominant viewpoint is that equality should exist, and that both women and men share the same rights and opportunities (Trapezņikova et al. 2019: 27).

During the last 50 years in Latvia the number of children in families has decreased, while the number of childless couples has grown; in 2019 at the time of first birth the average woman was 28 years old, had a partner, higher education, and moderately high income, and lived in the capital, Riga (Trapezņikova et al. 2019: 32–46). The mean age of mothers at childbirth in 2019 was 30.7 years and the total fertility rate was 1.61, which is slightly above the EU average of 1.51 (CSB 2020: 62). The total number of live births in 2019 was 18,786 (whereas in 1990 it was 37,918) (CSB 2020: 66).

Lastly, researchers have concluded that the family and demographic policy in Latvia has been pronatalistic and is aimed at increasing the number of children, but that it has been unsuccessful and has failed to provide equal opportunities for both parents (Āboliņa 2016: 23-90). In 2021, according to the Latvia Ministry of Welfare, 89% of parents chose to take a 1–1.5-year-long parental leave, but the majority of these parents were women (LSM 2021, VSAA 2020). Thus, mostly mothers stay at home with small children (for 1–1.5 years), and even after they return to active paid employment the majority of childcare and household chores are stacked on their shoulders. The EU directive (Directive (EU) 2019/1158) regulating that a part of paid leave is non-transferable to a partner, and thus both parents must take some leave

(passed in 2019) was introduced in Latvia with delay in 2023 and was accompanied by a discussion packed with arguments grounded in the 'intensive mothering' discourse (Lāma 2022a: 68), doubting the ability of a father to care for his child, expressing outrage at the mother being deprived of her 'vacation', and ignoring the long-term benefits of this particular policy.

Emotion work: 'surface acting' and 'deep acting'

Emotions are not just a private experience, detached from social processes, but are also a significant part of social activity and organisation (Barbalet 2006: 53). One of the pioneers of the sociology of emotions, Arlie Hochschild, coins the concept of 'feeling rules' and 'emotion work', exploring the relationship between culture, politics, and emotion, and researching the 'emotion management' that people who work in service jobs have to engage in (Hochschild 1983: 10).

Hochschild suggests that emotion is the most important biological sense, that, similar to other senses like hearing, touch, or smell, it helps us understand our connection to the world; emotion concerns both action and cognition (Hochschild 1983: 229). 'Emotional labour' requires a person to 'induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others'; this kind of labour 'calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honour as deep and integral to our individuality' (Hochschild 1983: 7). Hochschild uses the terms 'emotion work' and 'emotion management' when speaking about the private sphere of life, leaving 'emotional labour' to characterise manipulations of emotions in professional settings. 'Emotion work' concentrates on the act of creating, summoning, or repressing a feeling, but it does not guarantee a successful result (Watt 2017: 2).

The basis of emotion management is a social model – namely, the 'feeling rules' that guide our emotions, expression, and even how we are paid and make payments with emotions. They act as unwritten moral codes that are acquired during socialisation in specific cultural contexts (Hochschild 1983: 18; Wang 2020: 5). 'Feeling rules' dictate the appropriate emotion, level of expression, and precise timeframe in accordance with what society expects; thus, the need for 'emotion work' may manifest itself not only in public but also in the family circle or even when a person is alone.

When experiencing the presence of a 'feeling rule' Hochschild distinguishes two main methods of emotion work Hochschild distinguishes two main methods of emotion work that people engage in when they are confronted with a 'feeling rule': 'surface acting' and 'deep acting'. The first, less invasive technique uses facial expressions and controlled body language, such as an acquired a forced smile or a 'controlled sigh', while the second method involves the manipulation of feelings and imagination (Hochschild 1983: 35–36). 'Surface acting' is a superficial display

of emotion, whereas 'deep acting' requires mental labour to conjure the actual feeling (Wang 2020: 5). These techniques may be used separately and together – for instance, Curran and McCoyd (2019: 9) found that women with a high-risk pregnancy may engage in 'surface' and 'deep acting' to create the illusion of being calm for the benefit of others (medical staff, family) and, for their own benefit, to reassure themselves of a positive outcome and to control actual negative emotions and stress.

The 'feeling rules' that guide a woman's journey into motherhood are partly rooted in the hegemonic discourse in society – namely, 'intensive mothering', which is anchored in neoliberalism and demands that mothers 'adopt the right kinds of feelings, such as positivity, confidence, resilience and aspiration', at all times (Auðardóttir 2022: 237–238). To communicate personal failures and emotions outside the positive spectrum, such as ambivalence or regret, means 'to disavow what is often considered a person's most natural and sacred role' (Moore, Abetz 2019: 391), and 'feelings of anger, insecurity and frustration […] are to be replaced with happiness, humour and positivity' (Auðardóttir 2022: 238). Therefore, mothers are left to navigate their 'surface' and 'deep acting' in private, while in public they must try to fulfil the unattainable ideal of a mother as portrayed, for instance, in the media (Chae 2022: 551); the disparity between reality and the ideal is then an added burden on the shoulders of mothers (Forber 2020: 64).

As Goffman has concluded, social interaction is a 'game', where the individual is aware of the possibility of failing and of the need to correct mistakes (Goffman 1956: 156); thus, 'emotion work' is closely related to gratitude. People may experience satisfaction when conforming to 'feeling rules'; however, as Schrodt (2019: 5) points out, emotion management is associated with 'negative psychosocial effects', such as 'stress and self-alienation', 'depression and cynicism', and a sense of 'powerlessness'. 'Feeling rules' are responsible for the sense of glee felt when the rules are successfully followed and the guilt experienced in the case of failure.

'Deep story': a 'feels-as-if' web of narratives

Hochschild's 'deep story' concentrates on feelings by speaking through symbols; it involves no judgement or facts as it speaks of pure emotions (Hochschild 2016: 135). A 'deep story' is a web of narratives that helps to capture the conflicting powers in a particular social context (Palmer 2019: 339–340), escaping rationality [leaving aside reason] and concentrating on how injustices are felt and maintained (Kantola 2020: 914–915). According to Palmer, a 'deep story' 'feels true to people, and helps them make sense of contending forces in their world. […] A deep story may not be rational or verifiable, but it resonates with peoples' identities and worldviews, and can shape their choices and actions' (Palmer 2019: 338). It expresses the underlying feeling felt towards a particular phenomenon, however irrational it may seem.

Hochschild designed the concept of a 'deep story' to understand and explain the behaviour of supporters of the Louisiana Tea Party, who voted (supposedly against their own interests) for Donald Trump in the presidential elections of 2016. Following diligent research, it was concluded that supporters of the Tea Party had voted 'emotionally', as they felt the future promised by Trump would correct the wrongdoing inflicted upon them by Barack Obama, who had created privileges for minorities (women, immigrants, etc.) and, thereby, had supressed the freedoms and stolen the rights of the majority – older white men – and made them 'strangers in their own land' (Hochschild 2016: 135). She uses various metaphors and other stylistic devices to illustrate the elements of a 'deep story', which starts with 'empathy walls', 'the great paradox', 'the keyhole issue', and 'the rememberers', leading to the 'deep story', which unfolds in scenes – from 'waiting in line' and 'line cutters' to 'betrayal' (Hochschild 2016). At the end, after diving in detail into the emotions and motivations behind the 'deep story', she also concludes that she 'had discovered that virtually everyone […] embraced the same "feels-as-if" deep story' (Hochschild 2016: 221). In recent years, the concept of a 'deep story' has also been employed in various kinds of research –for instance, to study the role of journalism in the United States (Palmer 2019) or the status of wealthy people in Finland (Kantola 2020). The 'deep story' is a powerful tool for exploring the source of emotional tension and otherwise hidden resentment.

Methods and research design

As there is a lack of a clear distinction in academic and socioeconomic circles as to how exactly to define a 'new mother', within the scope of this research a woman is considered to be a 'new mother' if she has a child under two years of age. This definition is drawn from Piaget's theory of cognitive development stages, specifically the first or sensorimotor stage (Piaget 1952; Babakr et al. 2019), and from Erikson's stages of psychosocial development (Erikson 1950; Sacco 2013), as well as from Labour Law in Latvia that ensures financial aid in the form of childcare support for the first two years of an infant's life (VSAA 2020).

Interviewees for the research were approached through an open call, distributed by the author on the social media platform Instagram. The post invited women whose youngest child was less than two years old to share their motherhood story in terms of their everyday life, emotions, challenges, and victories, which they could do anonymously in an approximately hour-long interview. The open call did not specify the number of children a woman had to have to qualify for the study, as the main focus of the research is on the emotions and experiences of mothers who are at home with their child on parental leave; however, the nuances and possible differences in

narratives were recorded and taken in account. Thirteen women responded to the open call and were included in the study in sequence; three later declined. All ten respondents who were part of the study agreed to share their story voluntarily and proactively.

As a 'deep story' needs to capture 'in metaphorical form the hopes, fears, pride, shame, resentment, and anxiety in the lives" of new mothers' (Hochschild 2016: 135), a phenomenological approach to the interviews is most suitable. Therefore, to gather data for the creation of a 'deep story', use was made of a 'phenomenological interview' or 'semi-structured, ethnographically inspired interviews' (Cope 2005: 176; Høffding et al. 2022: 34). Phenomenology truly captures the essence of an experience and its hidden meaning (Prikhidko, Swank 2018: 164). In order to stay true to the phenomenological approach and grasp the theme without subjective, superficial stereotypes, researchers must try to avoid bias and have to distance themselves from their own personal experiences and they must try to understand the phenomenon from 'within' (Cope 2005: 166), as the true form of a phenomenon will only reveal itself if researchers leave their expectations and assumptions behind (Champlin 2020: 375–396). Phenomenological inquiry also concentrates on the context of the theme in question, as the matter is of a subjective nature. This method is specifically qualitative and holistic, aiming to join different experiences into an interconnected model in the context of the 'lived-world' (Cope 2005: 171). While conducting a phenomenological inquiry, the researcher must take a neutral position and try to describe the phenomenon only through the eyes of the interviewee, while bearing in mind the phenomenological question that should pervade all the stages of the research (Champlin 2020: 375–396); the interviewer also needs to assume a 'second-person perspective' and an 'empathic position whereby that experience and understanding of interviewer and interviewee resonate' (Høffding, Martiny 2015: 541).

The interviews were done over a period of five weeks (in March and April 2020) in person or by telephone. At the beginning of the interview the interviewer introduced the project and the topics of interest (the daily life, challenges, and emotions of new mothers) and urged the women to speak freely, at their own pace, and without interruption. The women were asked about their communication with close relatives, friends, and support groups and their use of social media. The data gathering stage was concluded when ten interviews had been completed. All the women were then given assumed names to ensure their anonymity. All ten new mothers (*Table 1*) who participated in the study were Latvian, lived in Riga or an adjoining region, and had higher education.

Table 1: Interviews with new mothers: general information

No	Given alias	Age	Education	Nationality	Residence	Number of children (age)
1.	Inga	30	Higher	Latvian	Riga	1 (5 months)
2.	Kate	31	Higher	Latvian	Riga	1 (1 year 3 months)
3.	Līna	31	Higher	Latvian	Riga	1 (1 year 3 months)
4.	Elīna	38	Higher	Latvian	Ķekava (17 km from Riga)	2 (1 year 9 months, 4 months)
5.	Linda	32	Higher	Latvian	Riga	2 (3 years, 1 year)
6.	Elza	32	Higher	Latvian	Riga	1 (1 year 6 months)
7.	Magda	37	Higher	Latvian	Riga	2 (2 years 8 months, 1 year)
8.	Rita	34	Higher	Latvian	Riga	1 (1 year 6 months)
9.	Anete	27	Higher	Latvian	Riga	1 (1 year 6 months) and is pregnant
10.	Lita	33	Higher	Latvian	Riga	2 (8 years, 8 months)

Source: Authors.

Six of the respondents had only one child, while the others had two and thus had an older child as well (the oldest being 8 years old). All the new mothers were married, one of them remarried; they all lived in an apartment without grandparents or other relatives, thus representing typical educated urban mothers. Two of the new mothers had recently returned to work (working part time), others were at home on parental leave. The interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes.

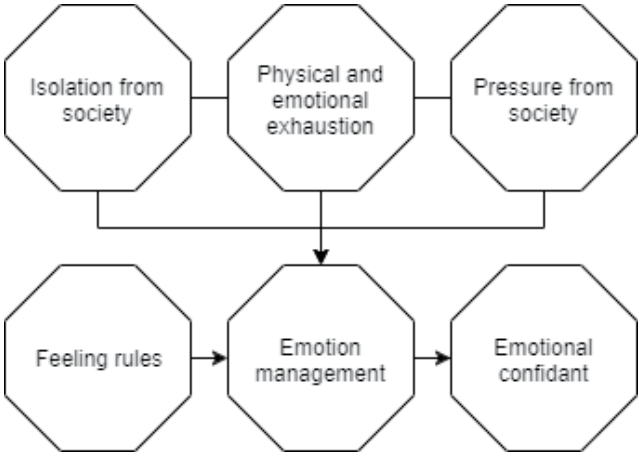
As the creation of a 'deep story' requires that the essence of the individual narratives become be tied together, narrative analysis was chosen as the method for data analysis. The phenomenological approach bears similarities to narrative research, but the latter focuses on how 'respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives' (Cope 2005: 172), which is crucial to this research in order to provide a holistic portrayal of the phenomena. The stories we tell help us grasp social life and praxis: as human beings are not simply 'actors' but also the 'authors' of their lives (Miller 2005: 8–11). Narrative analysis concentrates on revealing the experience of an individual through stories; thus, conducting a narrative analysis, one searches for similar themes and their relationships in order to create

a general narrative, based on empirical evidence, that embodies unique aspects of each individual story (Kim 2016: 189–195). The narrative analysis was conducted in stages. First, the transcribed text was read and reread, to distil the essence of lived experience (Champlin 2020: 375–396). Then, major themes and reoccurrences were identified and compared between narratives, to classify and sort the information. Lastly, a 'deep story', uniting elements of separate narratives, was created, revealing the phenomenon as a whole. The 'deep story' of new mothers intertwines the major themes identified in the narrative analysis (isolation from society, exhaustion, pressure from society), and illustrates the emotional world of mothers through an allegory, traces of which echoed in the narratives of the interviewees. According to Hochschild's approach, the 'deep story' tries to uncover the 'feels-as-if' side of motherhood, connecting the elements from 'behind the scenes' and other factors.

Analysis

There are several major themes that surface to various degrees in all the young mothers' narratives (*Figure 1*): isolation from society, physical and emotional exhaustion, and pressure from society regarding their behaviour and society's opinions about motherhood. All the research participants practise emotion management as well, employing 'surface' and 'deep acting' according to 'feeling rules' that guide them on the path to being a 'good' mother. Only a select sample of close confidants who share the mothers' trust are welcome to share the mothers' true challenges and emotions, which is otherwise taboo in broader social circles.

Figure 1: The main themes in the narratives of new mothers



Source: Authors.

Isolation from society

All the narratives reveal the mothers' self-inflicted or forced isolation from society to some extent, which is consistent with the findings of other studies (Lee et al. 2019: 1334–1335). Magda feels as if she 'has forgotten how to talk to grown-ups' and is alone even when her husband comes back from work, because he lacks the energy to converse. First-time mother Līna confesses that she had been expecting to 'participate in everything that is happening', but in reality she would like to 'build a wall around herself' because of the competition she feels; she would feel safe in public if she could grow 'thicker skin' to protect her feelings from judgement by strangers.

Other research participants practise self-isolation with the baby in order to avoid illnesses or feeling ashamed of their infants' behaviour in public. Social pressure to provide the absolute best for the child also guides this behaviour, which, Hallstein concluded (2006: 97), is consistent with the intensive mothering framework. Some narratives reflect the mothers' desire to avoid judgemental and unwanted scrutiny or comments assessing their ability to be a 'good mother', which leads the mothers to retreat from public spaces, even cafés and into their 'comfort zone' at home. Another issue is the lack of accessibility to various buildings that cannot be entered with strollers.

Only Anete characterises herself as an introvert and does not mind 'sitting at home', although the phrase itself is misleading as 'no mother just sits at home' and, as she points out, childcare is labour. Linda, on the other hand, had even decided to go on a trip abroad by herself with both her children to prove to herself she could manage it, though typically she spent her day 'within four walls'. Small escapes from routine, such as going to the swimming pool and having a 'date' with the husband, are mentioned in the other narratives as well, but all the mothers characterised these escapes as short and irregular.

Physical and emotional exhaustion

Isolation from society and the need to adhere to a strict schedule for the benefit of the baby lead to a predictable or even dreary everyday life for new mothers. All the narratives reflect some level of emotional and physical exhaustion from being 'stuck on a treadmill'.

Līna feels that being at home means 'work': 'I am still searching for a place for relaxation. Because it's not at home anymore.' Elīna confesses that all the days appear the same to such an extent that they blend together. Nevertheless, she sacrifices 'everything you have, from your body to your time, priorities, your ego, for your child'. These comments are consistent with the 'rules' of intensive mothering that call for mothers to provide the best-quality environment for the development of their child (Murray, Finn 2012: 44) and urge a woman to sacrifice herself.

Magda stresses that physical exhaustion is not as unbearable as emotional:

I miss that old friends never come visit and talk. Not about how I am now, but about the same things as always – you know, to chat, to gossip, to gab, to talk about a movie or the dumbest influencer.

Magda would love a break from speaking about motherhood and concentrate on 'grownup stuff', while Rita says that she cannot catch a break to feel like herself anymore.

Although prioritising infants' needs before their own seems natural to the research participants, some of them regret that no one tends to their wellbeing and they miss 'being mothered', something that has been highlighted also in other research (Dennis 2007: 497–498). Elza says:

While you're pregnant, everything's great […], but when the child is born, you drift into the background. […] I had an illusion that, as stupid it sounds, I would be cuddled, receive a pat on the head… Not like now, when the child appears, and I, as a human being, as a mother, disappear in a way…

The need to be 'mothered' is expressed also by Linda and Magda, who rather harshly said: '[When pregnancy is over], the child is king and you're a slave by his side, dirty, reeking, and hungry.'

Pressure from society

Most of the narratives reveal what the women described as 'pressure from society' that tells them to behave, think, and even feel in a certain way about motherhood in private and in public. Motherhood in Western European culture possesses an aura of sacredness (Miller 2005: 57), as mothers still face obstacles to revealing the true challenges and physical and social limitations of raising children. This 'pressure' does not seem to have clear boundaries or particular situations in which it manifests itself, but it is described as an overarching feeling like a 'feeling rule reminder'. For instance, Kate feels like she is being judged by some 'abstract person X', who is condemning her failures as a mother from afar: 'I am afraid to be convicted for not being a good enough mother, but I truly am doing the best I can.'

Anete feels pressure to hide her negative emotions, as 'staying at home with the kids is [supposed to be] relaxing'. Elīna, who gave birth just a few months ago and, in her own words, has not lost all the 'baby weight', feels pressured to look a certain way:

The thing I feel very uncomfortable with is my looks. I feel pressure from society. I try not to let it bother me and be rational, but I still want to look good. […] And it is exhausting emotionally, because others can find the time to work out, but I cannot.

When speaking, Elīna does not mention certain situations, but acknowledges a certain 'pressure' to present herself in a particular way and also feels forced to manage her life with two small children without any outside help, because 'others find a way somehow'. Līna speaks of the 'mom-sweats' she experiences in public spaces, when her child, for instance, is loud or is disruptive:

I guess I fear being condemned for not being a good enough parent. […] Or that I have not done everything in my power not to bother others. Like I and my child are bothering others – messing up their day.

These 'mom-sweats', she says, appear only in public situations when she feels the gaze of passers-by, because she feels that her child is expected to behave perfectly to be accepted in the public space. Lita considers society to be 'very disapproving' and she is scared of failing, and she feels she is being scrutinised for all the choices she makes regarding childcare and motherhood. Magda feels that she was being pushed to act in accordance with certain 'correct' norms and rules throughout her pregnancy and that she still is in motherhood. Kate perceives a certain attitude towards new mothers:

It's not hate, no. […] You are [supposed to be] hysterical, you have hormonal storms, you have 'milk in your brain', you are a psycho, just because you are [a new mother].

The research participants feel 'pressure from society' to behave a certain way, and that they have to defend their decisions and prove their validity, acknowledging the 'feeling rules' that are guided by and based in the 'intensive mothering' discourse. The mothers feel that there is no tolerance for mistakes and that any diversions from what is deemed 'normal' are not welcome and should therefore be hidden away. The research participants also feel that it is taboo to feel negative about one's experiences as a mother and to 'whine' about it, as previous generations 'had it harder'; other research has also brought to light that some 'contemporary mothers feel that a large part of society considers them "whining" and "fussing over nothing"' (Lāma 2022b: 133). The form of social pressure experienced varies between research participants, but all of them acknowledge experiencing it. Thus, some new mothers

isolate themselves, while others challenge the rules of society. Most of the narratives underscore how the mothers feel the need to escape their 'four walls' and the routine of sacrificing themselves and their grown-up life for the good of the child.

Emotion work – to behave in accordance with 'feeling rules'

All the research participants speak of managing their emotions so as to behave in accordance with 'feeling rules', when alone and/or with company. Their narratives bring to light that 'surface acting' techniques are employed mostly when dealing with remote family members, acquaintances, or strangers.

Anete holds back her annoyance at receiving unwanted tips on parenting, treating them as a 'gift' and just accepting them with a polite smile. Līna admits that she employs 'surface acting' to diffuse potential conflicts as it is easier to feign interest than to quarrel; she also tries to change the subject. Lita tries to take a neutral position: 'I also try never to give any advice if it is not asked for. […] I am easily offended; so, I do not participate in conversations that could hurt me.' Childcare as a whole, in her mind, is a sensitive subject.

The research participants use a combination of 'surface acting' and 'deep acting' in the privacy of their homes when trying to deal with anger towards their children or with fear. Rita remembers her husband advising her to be 'calmer and more patient' around the house. When experiencing frustration or even rage towards her infant, Anete tries to argue with herself: 'I try to tell myself – He's tiny, he doesn't understand. […] You have to take a breath and calm down.' Lita admits that she tries to hide her anger but has failed several times and 'exploded' in front of her child. Elīna says, she 'tries to put emotions aside' and be rational. Inga, who spent time with her new-born in the hospital recovering from whooping cough, explains:

> *I usually am very emotional […], but then it wasn't hard – I just tried to take a step aside. […] I tried to comfort him, I was beside him even during his episodes, gave him oxygen. But I forbade myself to panic.*

Although the home should serve as a safe oasis of authenticity, 'feeling rules', according to Hochschild, find their way in (1983: 69). Shielding children from strong emotions and family conflicts is common with other mothers besides Elīna as well; however, sadness is the one emotion none of the mothers try to 'surface act' over or hide. In public, the research participants feel the need to behave in a composed and calm manner.

Another emotion that occasionally needs to be dealt with is gratitude, as the dominant discourse of 'intensive mothering' dictates that mothers should find the work of childrearing continually satisfying and rewarding (Murray, Finn 2012: 44).

Inga remembers how feeling sad made her feel guilty: 'It felt wrong. […] We were so looking forward to having a baby.' Thus, she systematically employed 'deep acting' methods, trying to feel grateful for being a mother. Elīna and Kate have acted similarly. Kate has tried to summon gratitude by exposing herself to tweets on *Twitter* from women trying to get pregnant: 'I constantly try to force myself to be thankful [for my motherhood].' She admits even going to a play about the struggles of infertility to put herself through the necessary emotions. Elīna, who experienced problematic pregnancies, struggles with feeling exhausted:

> *Both of my children are gifts from God. And I am very, very, very grateful. The first two pregnancies were non-uterine […] I am very thankful, but being emotionally exhausted… It affects me more and more.*

Lastly, all the narratives encapsulate the guilt and 'self-shaming' new mothers experience both inside themselves and in public, and their eagerness to 'be better', which is consistent with the findings of other research (Dubus 2014: 50–52). Linda had felt stress in public places when her first child was born: 'When the baby cried, they would think that I am not parenting correctly.' With her second child she feels more confident and does not feel guilty when her children misbehave in public. Lita and Inga experience a sense of guilt for not 'trying enough' to provide the best possible platform for child's development. Elīna feels guilty when she needs to ask for assistance and cannot manage everything by herself: 'I try to remind myself that it's not so bad. […] It could be worse, others have it harder.' Lita reveals that occasionally she likes to read about difficulties others are facing: 'If someone else's life is harder, then you feel kind of lighter [*laughs*].'

According to Hochschild, guilt serves as a 'rule reminder' that a feeling is out of place, not in accordance with how one ought to behave (1983: 57–58). Mothers feel guilty when not complying with the dominant discourse of motherhood, when not behaving in private or in public as a good mother would – when facing struggles with childcare or household, or when feeling strong emotions, for instance, annoyance, anger, rage, emotional exhaustion.

Emotional confidants

All the research participants share the belief that negative experiences are not supposed to be discussed in public, which coincides with other research (Lee et al. 2019: 1334–1335). Inga says: 'Everyone's just talking about how happy they are, how happy and smiling the baby is.' Kate reveals that others share their struggles only when they have already been solved: 'Everyone is talking about it *post factum*.' She feels that the 'distorted representation' of the infant-mother bond has damaged her mental

wellbeing greatly. Līna thinks that negative experiences are a taboo topic. Magda feels that women are advised not to share their challenges so as not to 'frighten off' future mothers. Rita would like to 'go on a reality show' and reveal her inglorious everyday life, because she believes that the media is lying about the true face of motherhood.

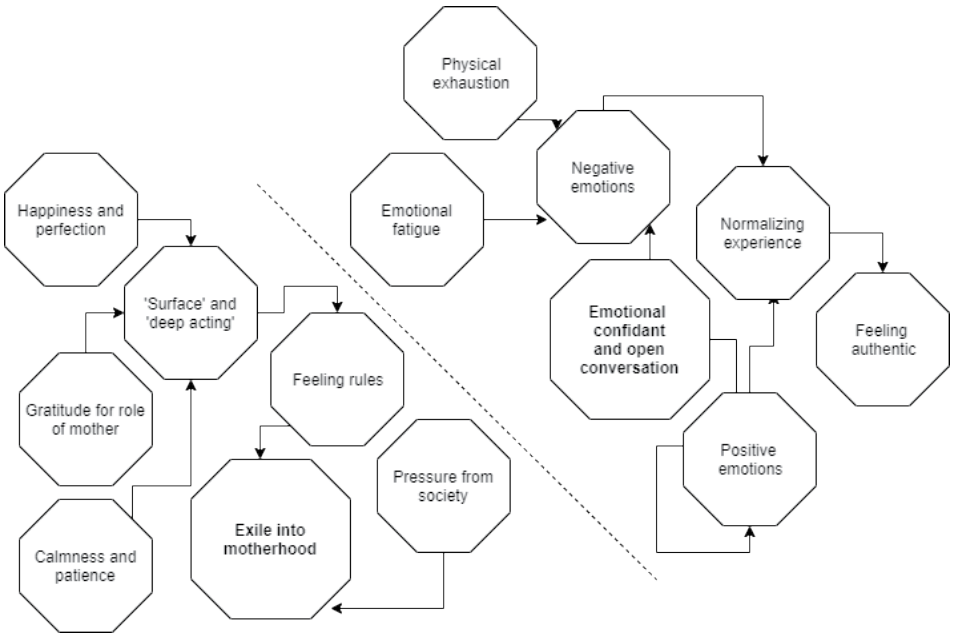
Every narrative includes at least one 'emotional confidant' to whom the research participant tries to reveal her true feelings and everyday challenges in order to feel 'normal' and gain justification of her experience. Most of them chose their husband for this role, because, as Lita puts it, 'It is so much harder to hold all the negative inside a family if you doesn't have a person to rely on.' Elīna says: 'It's such a wonderful feeling – I am not alone, my closest shares my experience.' Līna considers her husband to be a 'shield' against negative comments from others. Magda says her husband has given her the confidence to mother. Inga could not imagine 'acting' in front of her partner because she trusts him. Lita says: 'He is really the only person I reveal to how I feel during the day and how emotionally hard for me is to cope.'

Other women share their emotions and engage in heartfelt conversations with sisters, mothers, or best friends; however, Magda points out that she does not want to be a 'bother' and that it's useless to talk to people who do not have small children, as they won't understand. Linda, Kate, and Rita have also tried support groups and professional help in therapy. Although all the women learned about this study through social media and research indicates that social media may provide social support as well (Haslam et al. 2017: 2033–2035), none of the research participants use it for this purpose because of the distorted and 'way too perfect' image of motherhood it depicts and their inability to achieve it; other reasons include a desire to avoid 'judgement from strangers' and the 'competitive atmosphere', and the need to protect their family privacy.

A 'deep story' of new mothers in Latvia

The experience of motherhood is deeply subjective; however, the range of emotions and everyday challenges it brings resonate in the narrative of each new mother. Being a new mother may be compared to labour in a factory – it is an endless, extremely routinised, and emotionally draining shift, with brief epiphanies brought on by a sense of accomplishment, and with even shorter coffee breaks. Although the tasks seem easy, or even trivial, no mistakes are tolerated, and every failure is scrutinised by the mother or others. It is a lonely business, where mothers are urged to keep their struggles to themselves, occasionally forcing out a smile or nod, while concealing frustration, anger, stress, and mistakes from those who would not understand or might even condemn. The new mothers' workplace is solitary, conducive to their dedicating themselves to a single goal: sacrificing their mental and physical resources to raise a child as best as possible.

Figure 2: The 'deep story' of new mothers in Latvia



Source: Authors.

The 'deep story' of new mothers in Latvia (*See Figure 2*) shares two conflicting sides: exile into motherhood, forced there by pressure from society and by the feeling rules derived from the 'intensive mothering' discourse; and their desire of normalising the experience of motherhood and feeling authentic by revealing both the struggles and the joys of being a mother. Fearing failure as a 'good mother', the women hide their emotional fatigue and physical exhaustion from the eyes of society, masquerading behind surface and deep acting, displaying happiness, patience, and gratitude, and saving the full range of emotions they feel for only a selected few.

The key is open, considerate, present, and understanding communication, free from judgement or unwelcome generic comments. The seal of silence around taboo topics only drives women towards paralysing self-doubt or self-recrimination, while an opportunity to tell one's story to sympathetic ears provides comfort, ease, and a sense of 'normalisation'. New mothers want the chance to share the negative as well as the positive sides of their experience and to be 'mothered' by someone else, a husband, sister, mother, friend, or professional, and to justify and understand their own experience.

Conclusion

Motherhood as an experience is subjective; however, similar themes echo throughout these narratives of new mothers in the 21st century. The 'deep story' of new mothers in Latvia (defined here as a mother whose child is less than 2 years old) reveals the following picture: a self-imposed or 'forced' isolation from society, or even 'exile'; physical and emotional exhaustion, caused by a lack of sufficient time to compose themselves and recuperate from mundane, routinised everyday life; and pressure from society, directing women to 'sacrifice' their mental and physical resources for the good of the child and to manage emotions so as to conceal challenges and negative emotions. The destructive influence of the dominant narrative of 'intensive mothering' is evident, as women try to manage their journey into motherhood. The 'feeling rules' of new mothers are rather strict; constant self-observation and control over one's emotions is necessary.

New mothers, on one hand, search for emotional support and opportunities to normalise their experience and to feel authentic; they seek conversation without employing 'surface' or 'deep acting' techniques and a safe place to share their true experience. On the other hand, women fear being condemned for not complying with the dominant discourse and characteristics of a 'good mother'; they fear judgement – whether from other mothers or from an abstract entity (manifesting as 'pressure from society') – to a level that sometimes forces them to isolate themselves from the outside world. Thus, only selected individuals, emotional confidants, are entrusted with hearing about the sometimes inglorious details of everyday life, about the women's occasional lack of gratitude for their role as a mother, and about their real struggles – with self-doubt, stress, negative emotions, exhaustion, etc., – or, in other words, the topics that are taboo in broader social cycles, as they are incompatible with the ideology of 'perfect' motherhood.

The 'deep story', the intertwined narratives of all the new mothers, is about the endless and even selfless labour of love, and about trying not to fail as a mother. Therefore, this web of narratives expresses a significant conflict in how the world perceives motherhood, especially within the 'intensive mothering' ideology, and how motherhood actually unfolds – a reality unacknowledged the hegemonic discourse. This 'deep story' challenges the disinformation that exists in popular culture and is reproduced in the media. It is about the true struggles of motherhood in the 21st century, especially in the context of diminishing birth rates in Western societies. Although being a mother is not a 'gender fate' anymore, the rules, dictated by the hegemonic discourse, surrounding this phenomenon are rigid, and mothers feel their actions are under scrutiny. This 'deep story' provides a glimpse behind the curtain, revealing women's feelings of being unable to measure up to 'intensive mothering'

values, experiencing pressure, self-doubt, and other negative feelings, while the dominant discourse still promotes traditional gender roles and the 'ideal family' with the father as the main breadwinner and the mother as the primary caregiver, devoting all her resources to the wellbeing of the child and often neglecting her own needs and desires. Beyond the scope of this research, however, the grim notes in the women's narratives also raise a question about the true balance of equal opportunities for partners when a child is born.

This study is qualitative and, even though the demographics of the selected group of participants in the study coincides with the demographic profile of the average new mother in Latvia, the study reflects the 'deep story' of a specific group: educated, urban new mothers in a relationship and living in contemporary Western society. Future research should involve broadening the sample and including narratives from rural regions and mothers speaking Russian, who form a large minority in Latvia, as well as concentrating on the contrast between first-time new mothers and mothers with older children. A longitudinal approach and further research could possible changes in the 'deep story', as the children grow and the mothers become more accustomed to their role and re-enter the labour market, and could examine how the EU directive of non-transferable parental leave (designed to encourage partners to also take at least two months of parental leave) is affecting the core themes of women's narratives.

Ethics approval: Approval for this research (No. 71-46/64) has been by the Committee on Ethics for the Humanities and Social Sciences of University of Latvia (*LU Humanitāro un sociālo zinātņu pētījumu ētikas komiteja*).

References

Auðardóttir, A. M., A. G. Rúdólfsdóttir. 2022. First an Obstacle, Then Every Woman's Dream: Discourses of Motherhood in Print Media, 1970–1979 Versus 2010–2019. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 30 (4): 236–248, https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2022.2139753.

Āboliņa, L. 2016. *Family and Development of Its Support Policy in Latvia (1990-2015): Doctoral Dissertation.* Rīga: University of Latvia, Faculty of Business, Management and Economics Retrieved 9/2/2023 (https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/31863).

Archer, C., K. T. Kao. 2018. Mother, Baby and Facebook Makes Three: Does Social Media Provide Social Support for New Mothers? *Media International Australia* 168 (1): 122–139, https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X18783016.

Babakr, Z., P. Mohamedamin, K, Kakamad. 2019. Piaget's Cognitive Developmental Theory: Critical Review. *Education Quarterly Reviews* 2 (3): 517–524, https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1993.02.03.84.

Barbalet, J. 2006. Emotion. *Contexts* 5 (2): 51–53, https://doi.org/10.1525/ctx.2006.5.2.51.
Chae, J. 2022. Comparison, Competition, and Consumption: The 3Cs of Contemporary Motherhood in the Context of Children's Education. *Sex Roles* 87: 550–564, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-022-01334-w.
Champlin, B. E. 2020. The Informal Caregiver's Lived Experience of Being Present with a Patient Who Receives a Diagnosis of Dementia: A Phenomenological Inquiry. *Dementia* 19 (2): 375–396, https://doi.org/10.1177/1471301218776780.
Chodorow, N. 1978. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
Christopher, K. 2012. Extensive Mothering: Employed Mothers' Constructions of the Good Mother. *Gender & Society* 26 (1): 73–96, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243211427700.
Cope, J. 2005. Researching Entrepreneurship through Phenomenological Inquiry: Philosophical and Methodological Issues. *International Small Business Journal* 23 (2): 163–189, https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242605050511.
CSB. 2020. Demography 2020. Riga: Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia. Retrieved 20/11/2023 (https://www.csb.gov.lv/lv/statistika/statistikas-temas/iedzivotaji/iedzivotaju-skaits/meklet-tema/417-demografija-2020).
Curran, N., J. L. McCoyd. 2019. They Say, 'If You Don't Relax… You're Going to Make Something Bad Happen': Women's Emotion Management during Medically High-Risk Pregnancy. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 44 (1): 117–129, https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684319883199.
Das, R. 2019. The Mediation of Childbirth: 'Joyful' Birthing and Strategies of Silencing on a Facebook Discussion Group. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 22 (5–6): 495–510, https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417722094.
Dennis, C. L. F. 2007. Traditional Postpartum Practices and Rituals: A Qualitative Systematic Review. *Woman's Health* 3 (4): 487–502, https://doi.org/10.2217/17455057.3.4.487.
Dubus, N. 2014. Permission to Be Authentic: An Intervention for Postpartum Women. *Affilia* 29 (1): 43–55, https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109913509539.
Erikson, E. H. 1950. *Childhood and Society.* New York: Norton.
European Parliament. 2019. Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU. *Official Journal of the European Union* L188/79. Retrieved 21/11/2023 (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj).
Feasey, R. 2017. Good, Bad or Just Good Enough: Representations of Motherhood and the Maternal Role on the Small Screen. *Studies in the Maternal* 9 (1): 1–31, https://doi.org/10.16995/sim.234.
Forbes, L. K., C. Donovan, M. R. Lamar. 2020. Differences in Intensive Parenting Attitudes and Gender Norms among US Mothers. *The Family Journal* 28 (1): 63–71, https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480719893964.
Friedan, B. 1963. *The Feminine Mystique.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
Goffman, E. 1956. *The Presentation of Self in Every-Day Life.* Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.
Hallstein, D. L. 2006. Conceiving Intensive Mothering. *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative*

for Research and Community Involvement 8 (1, 2): 96–108, https://jarm.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/jarm/article/view/5016.
Haslam, D. M., A. Tee, S. Baker. 2017. The Use of Social Media as a Mechanism of Social Support in Parents. *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 26 (7): 2026–2037, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0716-6.
Hays, S. 1996. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press.
Hochschild, A. R. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
Hochschild, A. R. 2016. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press.
Hochschild, A. R., A. Machung. 1989. *The Second Shift: Working Parents and The Revolution at Home*. New York: Viking.
Høffding, S., K. Martiny, A. Roepstorff. 2022. Can We Trust the Phenomenological Interview? Metaphysical, Epistemological, and Methodological Objections. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 21: 33–51, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-021-09744-z.
Høffding, S., K. Martiny. 2016. Framing a Phenomenological Interview: What, Why and How. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 15: 539–564, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-015-9433-z.
Jansone-Ratinika, N. 2013. Father's Pedagogical Competence in Family Nowadays: Promotional Work. Rīga: University of Latvia, Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Arts Retrieved 9/2/2023 (https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/4836).
Jurciņa, A. 1975. *Sieviete - personība*. (Woman – Personality) Rīga: Liesma.
Kantola, A. 2020. Gloomy at the Top: How the Wealthiest 0.1% Feel about the Rest. *Sociology* 54 (5): 904–919, https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520910344.
Kerrick, M. R., R. L. Henry. 2017. Totally in Love: Evidence of a Master Narrative for How New Mothers Should Feel about Their Babies. *Sex Roles* 76: 1–16, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0666-2.
Kim, J. 2016. Narrative Data Analysis and Interpretation: 'Flirting with Data'. Pp. 184–225 in J. Kim. *Understanding Narrative Inquiry: The Crafting and Analysis of Stories as Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.
Lāma, E. 2022a. 'Intensive Mothering' Discourse in Narratives Pro and Against 'Daddy Quota' in Latvia. Pp. 61–69 in *Media and Society 2022*, *Proceedings of Scientific Papers*. Riga: University of Latvia, https://doi.org/10.22364/ms22.07.
Lāma, E. 2022b. Unspoken Truths in Narratives of Contemporary Mothers towards Their Mothers in Latvia. Pp. 121–137 in *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education, 2022, Proceedings of Scientific Papers*. Riga: University of Latvia, https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2022.
Lazard, L., R. Capdevila, C. Dann, A. Locke, S. Roper. 2019. Sharenting: Pride, Affect and the Day-To-Day Politics of Digital Mothering. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 13 (4): 12443, https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12443.

Lee, K., K. Vasileiou, J. Barnett. 2019. 'Lonely within the Mother': An Exploratory Study of First-Time Mothers' Experiences of Loneliness. *Journal of Health and Psychology* 24 (10): 1334–1344, https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105317723451.

Lehto, M. 2020. Bad Is the New Good: Negotiating Bad Motherhood in Finnish Mommy Blogs. *Feminist Media Studies* 20 (5): 657–671, https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2019.1642224.

LSM. 2020. Bērna kopšanas atvaļinājumu, iespējams, dalīs starp vecākiem. (Parental Leave Might Be Shared between Parents) Retrieved 9/2/2022 (https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/berna-kopsanas-atvalinajumu-iespejams-dalis-starp-vecakiem.a430902/).

Meng, B. 2020. When Anxious Mothers Meet Social Media: Wechat, Motherhood and the Imaginary of the Good Life. *Javnost – The Public* 27 (2): 171–185, https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2020.1727276.

Miller, T. 2005. *Making Sense of Motherhood: A Narrative Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Moore, J., J. S. Abetz. 2019. What Do Parents Regret about Having Children? Communicating Regrets Online. *Journal of Family Issues* 40 (3): 390–412, https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X18811388.

Murray, L., M. Finn. 2012. Good Mothers, Bad Thoughts: New Mothers' Thoughts of Intentionally Harming Their Newborns. *Feminism & Psychology* 22 (1): 41–59, https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353511414015.

Palmer, R. A. 2019. A 'Deep Story' about American Journalism. *Journalism Studies* 20 (3): 327–344, https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1375390.

Piaget, J. 1952. *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*. New York: International Universities Press, Inc.

Prikhidko, A., J. M. Swank. 2018. Motherhood Experiences and Expectations: A Qualitative Exploration of Mothers of Toddlers. *The Family Journal* 26 (3): 278–284, https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480718795116.

Robertson, L. G., T. L. Anderson, M. E. Hall, C. L. Kim. 2019. Mothers and Mental Labor: A Phenomenological Focus Group Study of Family-Related Thinking Work. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 43 (2):184–200, https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684319825581.

Rode, J. L. 2016. The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Predicting Postpartum Depression. *Western Journal of Nursing Research* 38 (4): 427–440, https://doi.org/10.1177/0193945915590690.

Sacco, R. G. 2013. Re-envisaging the Eight Developmental Stages of Erik Erikson: The Fibonacci Life-Chart Method (FLCM). *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology* 3 (1), https://doi.org/10.5539/jedp.v3n1p140.

Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., J. E. Yavorsky, M. K. Bartholomew, J. M. Sullivan, M. A. Lee, C. M. Kamp Dush, M. Glassman. 2017. Doing Gender Online: New Mothers' Psychological Characteristics, Facebook Use, and Depressive Symptoms. *Sex Roles* 76: 276–289, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0640-z.

Schrodt, P. 2019. Emotion Labor with Parents as a Mediator of Family Communication Patterns and Young Adult Children's Mental Well-Being. *Journal of Family Communication* 1 (16): 66–81, https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2019.1661250.

Trapezņikova, I., M. Goldmanis, I. Koroļeva, A. Aleksandrovs. 2019. *Latvijas ģimenes paaudzēs, 2018 (Version 1.0.0)* (Latvia's Families through Generations) Riga: LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2587219.
van Belle, J. 2016. Paternity and Parental Leave Policies across the European Union. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, https://doi.org/10.7249/RR1666.
VSAA. 2020. Valsts sociālās apdrošināšanas aģentūra. Retrieved 21/11/2023 (https://www.vsaa.gov.lv/pakalpojumi/vecakiem/berna-kopsanas-pabalsts/).
Wang, Y. 2020. Parent-Child Role Reversal in ICT Domestication: Media Brokering Activities and Emotional Labours of Chinese 'Study Mothers' in Singapore. *Journal of Children and Media*, https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2020.1725900.
Watt, L. 2017. 'Her Life Rests on Your Shoulders': Doing Worry as Emotion Work in the Care of Children with Diabetes. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research* 4, https://doi.org/10.1177/2333393617743638.

Elza Lāma is a doctoral student of communication science at the University of Latvia (Latvia) and a research assistant at the Advanced Social and Political Research Institute in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Latvia. Her research interests include communication, mediatisation, motherhood, digital cultures, and emotion work.
ORCID: 0000-0002-9271-3862. Contact email: elza.lama@lu.lv. Corresponding author: Elza Lāma, University of Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences, Riga, Latvia.

Vita Zelče holds a PhD in history. She is a professor in the Department of Communication Studies and a senior researcher at the Advanced Social and Political Research Institute in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Latvia. Her research interests include women and gender history, history of media, cultural memory, ritual communication, social history, media representations, and national identity. She is the author and/or editor of several monographs and collections of papers. ORCID: 0000-0002-5169-8862.

7.3. Publication III. Mothers on Twitter (X): Exchanging Support and Narrating Motherhood

Lāma, E., Lāma, G. (2023). Mothers on Twitter (X): Exchanging Support and Narrating Motherhood. *Culture Crossroads*. *23*, 257–271.
https://doi.org/10.55877/cc.vol23.372

MOTHERS ON TWITTER (X): EXCHANGING SUPPORT AND NARRATING MOTHERHOOD

Mg. sc. comm. **Elza Lāma**
University of Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences
Mg. math. **Gatis Lāma**
University of Latvia, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art

Abstract

As almost all aspects of our lives, motherhood in the 21st century also is influenced and transformed by new media. Parents, especially mothers, use the *Facebook*, *Instagram* and even *Twitter (X)* as digital diaries, as stages for performing an ideal mother's role, or even "safe spaces" to gain support and the feeling of empowerment. Recent research of motherhood discourses and mothering practices in social media has mainly focused on the evidence of mediation and mediatization. However, limited attention has been brought to examining *Twitter* in context of mothering. Therefore, this paper focuses on the narratives of a particular cluster of Latvian-speaking mothers on *Twitter* who use *Twitter* as a platform for exchanging informational, emotional and physical support, forming a "portable" community. The case study consists of a narrative analysis of 11 in-depth semi-structured interviews with mothers and a thematic analysis of 1111 tweets, gathered from 9 other public *Twitter* accounts (covering a period of 2 weeks), that have been identified by interviewees as part of this particular *Twitter*-bubble. The paper provides an insight into the narratives of women, voicing their motherhood struggles and victories in the "safe space" of *Twitter*'s "bubble" of new Latvian mothers, illuminating also a unique and unlikely use for an asymmetric and decentralized social media platform.

***Keywords**: motherhood, mediatization, Twitter, X, portable community.*

Culture Crossroads
Volume 23, 2023, *https://doi.org/10.55877/cc.vol23.372*

ISSN: 2500-9974

Introduction

Although modern technology may assist with daily chores and eases the physical toll of mothering, contemporary motherhood still comes with a set of challenges new mothers face, needing all forms of support – even remote via social media. Motivation for using *Facebook*, *Instagram* and various other platforms among new parents has been examined in many studies. According to Eurostat, in 2021 an average of 95% young people (ages 16–29) and 80% of adults use Internet regularly [Eurostat 2021]. Some mothers are eager to normalise their experience [Locatelli 2017], others feel the need to actualise and empower themselves [Lee & Chen 2018], to strengthen their identity [Archer & Kao 2018; Yam 2019; Schoppe-Sullivan et al. 2017], and to create their own narrative or even autobiography [Zappavigna & Zhao 2017; Micalizzi 2020; Locatelli 2017]. While to some mothers the opportunity to present themselves, "perform motherhood" [Schoppe-Sullivan et al. 2017] is important, there is a distinguished part of mothers who seek social support [Archer & Kao 2018; Locatelli 2017], a "safe space" [Archer & Kao 2018], and a digital community [Mourkarzel et al. 2021].

Researchers have mainly focused their gaze on *Facebook* and *Instagram*, and there is a significant gap in exploring, how parents use the social media platform *Twitter* (www.*Twitter*.com). Although on 23 July 2023, Elon Musk, owner and CTO of X, announced on his *Twitter* profile the graduate change of name and brand of the social networking site to *X* [Musk 2023], as the study was conducted previous to these changes, the authors continue to use the original name. *Twitter* is a public forum, where one can broadcast thoughts to a wider network of followers than on, for instance, *Facebook* [Lee et al. 2020: 818–819]. According to *Eurobarometer*, although *Facebook* and *WhatsApp* are the most popular social networks in Latvia, 13% or respondents had used *Twitter* in the last 7 days [European Parliament 2022] and is frequently among the Top 20 most visited Internet pages in Latvia [Gemius 2022]. Unlike other more popular social media, *Twitter* is asymmetric and decentralized: anyone can follow the feed of anyone else (although there is an option to restrict tweets and give permissions to selected individuals, as well as to block any user [Gruzd et al. 2011: 1296–1303]. Another feature is optional anonymity [Lee et al. 2020: 818]. Some researchers have explored "hashtag activism" on *Twitter* [Ahmed 2018; Grant 2016; Scarborough 2018], even *Twitter* as a community, concluding that *Twitter* does not satisfy all of the "third place" [Oldenburg 1999], characteristics, but "can be used to facilitate community creation and bonding" [McArthur & White 2016: 8]; although "*Twitter* was not originally designed as a tool to support the development of online communities", they exist as both "real" and "imagined" [Gruzd et al. 2011: 1297–1313].

In the context of mediatization – a "process of change" through which "core elements of a social society or cultural activity (like work, leisure, play etc.)

assume media form" [Hepp & Krotz 2014: 21], Hepp stresses that "support is also about individual personality development, a point that has rarely been addressed empirically nor from a normative point of view in mediatization research" [2020: 198]. Therefore, even though *Twitter* is not necessarily designed to stimulate formation of "portable communities" [Chayko 2007: 375–377], the main aim of this case study is to explore how *Twitter* is used by mothers to socialize, exchange support and narrate their mothering experience within their own "*Twitter*-bubble". The proposed research questions are:

- Why and how do mothers use *Twitter* in their everyday lives and journey into motherhood?
- Do these motives appear in the tweets of mothers that are part of this *Twitter*-mom community and how?

The case study consists of a narrative analysis of 11 in-depth semi-structured interviews with mothers and a thematic analysis of 1111 tweets, gathered from 9 other public *Twitter* accounts (covering a period of 2 weeks, from 26.10.2022–06.11.2022), that have been identified by interviewees as part of this particular "*Twitter*-bubble".

Theoretical background

Motherhood in the 21st century

Contemporary motherhood is packed with a variety of cultural, scientific, professional narratives [Sevón 2012: 61], and this experience in Western modernity comes with a seal of "intensive mothering" [Hays 1996] ideology, which is "both drawn upon and resisted" [Miller 2005: 85]. "Intensive mothering" expects mothers to invest seemingly unlimited resources of time, emotional labour, and energy in the wellbeing of the child, occasionally undertaking enormous risk and strain [Hays 1996; Das 2019]; it reproduces traditional gender roles, even idealizing them [Schoppe-Sullivan et al. 2017: 277]. According to "intensive mothering" discourse, a "good" mother cherishes her motherhood experience as worthwhile and fulfilling; regretting motherhood is taboo [Matley 2020; Orton-Johnson 2017]. Women expect and are expected to have overwhelming feelings and connection with their babies [Kerrick & Henry 2017: 15].

The mediation and mediatization of motherhood in social media points to a juxtaposition of two discourses – "the emancipatory, feminist revival of women asserting themselves" and "the neo-liberal, self-regulating, self-managing, highly individualized discourse of ideal births", as Das [2019: 498–499] puts it. Challenging the "intensive mothering" discourse, while simultaneously accepting its terms and interacting with it, is a fragmented scene of several counter-narratives [Micalizzi 2020;

Orton-Johnson 2017; Littler 2020; Tiidenberg & Baym 2017]. A separate group of "alternative" mothering discourses also exists, trying to define motherhood outside the values of neo-liberal, patriarchal society, seeking the voice of actual mothers more aggressively. "Alternative" discourses hold the narratives of "solo-mothers", mothers with mental health issues [Tiidenberg & Baym 2017], sexual minorities [Kazyak et al. 2016], as well as mothers who are younger or older than the "average" mother [Hyde 2000; Morris & Munt 2019], etc. "Alternative" discourses also lift the taboo from maternal ambivalence, regret, anger, shame, guilt, and other emotions mothers are not supposed to feel [Moore & Abetz 2019: 392].

Motherhood is a subjective experience and contemporary mothers cannot be viewed as a homogeneous group [Lazard et al. 2019: 4]. "Intensive mothering" sets strict and unrealistic norms to which mothers cannot comply, all the while punishing women who cannot meet the standards of ideal motherhood. It is through "challenging" and "alternative" discourses that women narrate their struggles and redefine, what is "normal" or "beautiful" [Yam 2019: 93].

Social media: a bountiful source of remote support?

Even though some research recognises fathers using social media to share their parenting experience, mothers engage in social media to visually document their mothering journey more frequently [Holiday et al. 2020: 238–239; Lazard et al. 2019]. Traditional media often construct news through a masculine prism, ignoring or rendering themes of interest to women un-newsworthy [North 2016: 328], thus, social media add a new dimension to the discourse of motherhood and create a "performative space" [Archer 2019: 47–56], where women may articulate their views and experience. Women turn to social media to raise questions, gain information and advice [Lee et al. 2020: 826], "vent" and share frustrating episodes [Archer & Kao 2018: 123]. Social media help combat the isolation of motherhood and gain empowerment [Archer & Kao 2018: 126], as well as validation of "maternal identity" [Schoppe-Sullivan et al. 2017: 279] or realisation of one's role as a parent [Lee & Chen 2018: 390–406]. However, the digital, extended space also embodies unresolvable conflicts and duality, as some research suggests the link between social media and postpartum depression [Chalklen & Anderson 2017], and other mental health issues or competitiveness between mothers [Chae 2015: 519].

Regarding mothering on *Twitter*, Talbot, Charron and Konkle [2021] have used *Twitter* to gain insight into the reality of pregnant women and mothers, living through the Covid-19 pandemic. *Twitter* as a community has previously been explored by Stewart [2020], Lee, Grogan-Kaylor and Lee [2020], and Mourkazel, Rehnm, del Fresno and Daly, illustrating the "unique sub-communities" of breastfeeding [2020], exploring advocacy and community engagement [2021], etc.

Method and research design

The research employs a netnographic approach [Talbot et al. 2021; Kozinets 2010]. First, in January 2022 an open-call on the author's personal *Twitter* profile was posted, asking to participate in a study of motivation to use *Twitter*: the call specified that only women who use *Twitter* daily and identify themselves as "*Twitter*-mothers" or feel part of their "*Twitter*-community" are eligible for participation. 17 women approached the researchers, agreeing to participate in the study. Second, remote, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 11 interviewees were conducted from July to September 2022.

The study considered all ethical research standards in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Approval for conducting interviews was given by the Committee on Ethics. The interviews were recorded without mentioning any names or sensitive data; the transcripts were anonymized, giving each woman a random alias (Table 1).

Table 1. Interviewees' profiles

Given alias	Age	Education	Number (age) of children	Profession
Anna	45	Higher	2 (3 and 5 years old)	Brand manager
Emma	38	Higher	2 (1 and 1.5 years old)	System analysist
Ilze	37	Higher	2 (6 and 9 years old)	Student
Amanda	35	Higher	2 (4 and 7 years old)	Marketing manager
Elīza	35	Higher	2 (6 and 9 years old)	Tourism manager/ specialist
Alma	36	Higher	2 (2 and 6 years old)	Researcher
Silva	42	Higher	3 (3, 6 and 11 years old)	Lower-level specialist/office worker
Mare	43	Higher	4 (13, 11, 7 and 3 years old)	Lower-level specialist, doula, breastfeeding consultant
Līva	34	Higher	2 (6 years old, 2 months old)	Educator
Mētra	32	Higher	2 (4 and 2 years old)	Human resources manager
Melisa	33	Higher	1 (1 year old)	Dentist

Next, the data were analysed via narrative analysis, identifying core themes. Then all interviewees were contacted once again and asked to list 5–10 other *Twitter* profiles they recognized as part of their "*Twitter*-community". Following the method of Ewing and Vu [2020] *Twitter* Application Programming Interface (API) [*Twitter* 2022] was used to extract tweets from the mentioned public profiles dating from 26.10.2022–06.11.2022, resulting in 1111 tweets. The tweets were analysed through sentiment analysis and an interpretative thematic analysis [Grant 2016: 142–143]. Lastly, the tweets were categorized in accordance to uses of *Twitter*, identified in the interviews.

Results

Interviews with women identifying themselves as "Twitter-mothers"

All 11 women, who characterize themselves as "*Twitter*-mothers" and feel a part of a specific "*Twitter*-community", reveal that they have been on *Twitter* for several years. Seven of them confess that they have been on *Twitter* since "the beginning", for 10–13 years, thus, "growing" together with their peers. Some of them, Elīza, Emma, Alma, Melisa, had taken "a pause" from the social network, just to join again (half of them under a pseudonym), when they became pregnant or birthed a child. Women's narratives bring to light several key themes in how *Twitter* may be used into the journey of motherhood and beyond.

First, *Twitter* is a version of a **digital diary**. Anna emphasizes: "I socialize, and sometimes use *Twitter* as – not exactly – but like a diary to write down, for instance, children's jokes etc." For Līva it is a "yell into vacuum": "a place to talk through an issue before you really deal with it." Sarma and Ilze stress that *Twitter* is a safe place, where to complain and to "declare everything has gone wrong." This revelation also resonates with conclusions by Valtchanov, Parry, Glover and Mulcahy, that these internet spaces among a safe online community enable ""rewriting" of motherhood to include more honest, diverse, and supportive experiences" [2015: 63].

Second, *Twitter* is a **window to the world** to peer into lives of people that live "outside" their real-life social circle and a general **source of information**. Amanda concludes: "*Twitter* is like and encyclopaedia illustrating the diversity of motherhood." To her mind, *Twitter* helps one to "extend horizons". Līva also points out "other experiences and other perspectives", whereas Elīza emphasises "different lifestyles" and the existence of a "dad-bubble" as well. For Mare *Twitter* helps to be empathic, as "there is no other place to get to know so many views". Melisa emphasises the authenticity of these experiences one gets to discover, that cannot be accessed "outside *Twitter*". Women's narratives reveal how these different opinions help normalize various mothering styles, stigmatized or even taboo feelings, emotions and behaviour – it gives "a bigger picture" as Mare puts it. Anna focuses on the diversity of

available information from specialists, medical professionals etc. Emma emphasizes not only the speedy receiving of information, but also sharing it and finding other mothers who have experienced similar problems and can give advice. Melisa puts it simply: "You get an essence in *Twitter* (..) in a whirlpool of conversation", whereas Mare appreciates the variety of themes of conversation and opportunity to learn something about other topicalities beside parenting, happening in the world.

Next, *Twitter*, according to mothers' narratives, is a **place of protest**. Ilze, Elīza and Līva describe a particular case where *Twitter* played a major role in informing the wider public about the obligation for women in labour to pay for epidural analgesia (although it was supposedly paid by the state) and the difficulties in acquiring it in Latvian hospitals due to bureaucratic technicalities and even unprofessional behaviour from medical staff. Līva comments:

"*Twitter* is a weird social network in Latvia. It's fast – you get information about topical events several hours if not days before it is broadcasted on TV. (..) It's an influential platform. *Twitterists* complain (..) and then the problem needs to be dealt with. (..) The speed by which this problem [with epidural analgesia] was dealt with was amazing."

"You can poke politicians and bureaucrats, and ask for change," says Ilze. Anna also recognises the influence of *Twitter* on the media agenda or views of politicians and other important public figures, whereas Mare and Ilze recognize the force behind the community of *Twitter*-mothers, who chime in when needed and provide additional evidence, experience or simply a strong word of support. "If someone comes and starts to shame a new mother, others rush to help," says Mare.

Then, *Twitter*, as per mothers' records, is a source of support – a feature recognized by all interviewees unanimously, and also present in other research, as, the Internet, in this case *Twitter*, has "the capacity to support and empower women from a range of backgrounds, by offering spaces in which they can be themselves and express their views honestly" as well as to find support in a safe environment [Mackenzie 2018: 119]. Amanda comments: "There are a lot of problems and sometimes you need (..) this sense of having a village." The feeling of "not being alone" also is expressed by Melisa and Mare, while Sarma says: "What really helps me is [to see] a lot of people with similar problems as me."

Līva emphasizes support and revealing of honest, pure emotions about oneself, about motherhood; she stresses: "The darkest thoughts are easier to express on social media. (..) You can get a more realistic picture [about motherhood] on *Twitter* [through anonymous accounts], as people are more likely to share their dark thoughts compared to *Instagram*". Ilze also feels that revealing true, depressive thoughts to loved ones would hurt them, thus, she confesses:

"[In the early months after becoming a mother] *Twitter* was my whole life, my link to the outside world. (..) My parents lived in another city, other relatives –

in a different district. Everyone has his own stuff, thus, only during the pandemic everyone else felt what it's like to stay at home completely alone [although you're not completely alone)."

Anna acknowledges her need to "talk down the anxiety", and that on *Twitter* one can find a "a shoulder, a person that says – "it's going to be ok'". Melisa also concludes that on *Twitter* there is "permission to make mistakes". Mare and other mothers mention "venting emotions": "You can go ahead and whine [on *Twitter*] and there will be 5 other moms that will say *YES! I feel the same way!*". Alma concludes: "Anonymous *Twitter*-mothers can reveal their emotions completely – if they don't have [an another] confidant." Honesty and authenticity of narrated experience, emotional support from other mothers and (partial) healing of a sense of loneliness, that had emerged from staying at home with a baby, resonates in all mothers' accounts. Amanda puts it in a different perspective:

"*Twitter* has substituted the almost non-existent post-partum assistance in Latvia. (..) *Twitter* has definitely saved many a new mothers lives by giving a sense she's not alone. (..) Let's face it – does any family physician call and ask how the new mother is doing? (..) *Twitter* values new mothers."

Amanda and other mothers mention not only emotional, but also physical and financial support, and even offline friendships forged through *Twitter*. Therefore, *Twitter*, as revealed in women's narratives, serves as a platform for interacting with their mom-community. Melisa, who has compared *Twitter* to enjoying a reality show, says: "We all want to belong. (..) I feel I belong to the *Twitter*-bubble, to all anonymous mothers." Whereas, one mother describes *Twitter* similarly to what Chayko has coined a "portable community" – a network of linked individuals, "who share social interests and norms, social interaction and a common identity, and provide sociability, support, information and a sense of belonging for one another", bringing their "communities and community members with them wherever they go" [2007: 375–377]. Amanda comments:

"If you don't have any support – and it happens in many cases – as motherhood is a lonely place especially in the first years, (..) the mother is alone, facing her demons. (..) So you go on *Twitter* which comes with you wherever you go – it's an extended room where all your friends (or not friends) are sitting, your support team. They may not come to you, and you may not receive physical support, but you get the feeling and it helps you to keep on going."

Emma says that "*Twitter* can help during the period of forced isolation", that occurs frequently when children are little. For Mētra *Twitter* is like a café; for Sarma *Twitter* is "like being in a party and watching how other people socialize and not participating: you can sit in the corner and say nothing, but you can reply to

someone or say something, if you want." Whereas Amanda compares *Twitter* also to a "Mexican soap-opera where you know Donna Beige".

Analysis of tweets from the Twitter-bubble

Tweets from most frequently mentioned accounts form the interviewees' *Twitter*-bubble were also studied. Of the 11 mothers and 1 father, mentioned by all interviewees at least 3 times, three had restricted access and were not included in the sample. In the period of 2 weeks 1111 tweets in total (from 9 *Twitter* profiles) were harvested via *Twitter* API (see Table 2).

Table 2. Most frequently mentioned *Twitter*-profiles by interviewees

Label	Mentions	Number of tweets (24.10.-06.11.2022)
Mom_1 (restricted)	10	–
Mom_2	7	114
Mom_3 (restricted)	7	–
Mom_4	6	99
Mom_5	6	130
Mom_6	6	57
Dad_1	4	148
Mom_7 (restricted)	4	–
Mom_8	4	191
Mom_9	3	230
Mom_10	3	110
Mom_11	3	32
		Total: 1111

Most of these *Twitter* profiles produced at least 110 tweets in 14 days; the majority of these tweets were replies to others, indicating a lively interaction between each other. A manual sentiment analysis on the 1111 tweets reveals that most of them (514 tweets) were positive – displaying either humour, encouragement, happiness, support, or care, containing emoji of love, smiles, laughter etc. 391 tweets were neutral, showing no emotion but rather stating a fact, giving a casual reply, asking a question. 206 tweets were negative, containing anger, outrage, dark sarcasm, sadness. By using the text analysis software *Sketchengine* (https://www.sketchengine.eu/), a corpus of 20 822 words from collected tweets was analysed, indicating that the most frequently used noun was *bērns* ("child"), while, clearing the corpus of stop-words, the most frequently used word was *es* ("I").

In total 143 tweets were not directed towards a specific person (the tweets beginning with "@"). A manual thematic analysis of these statement-tweets reveals several themes that had appeared in the interviews with mothers. Most of these tweets (80) were diary-like entries, recording events of everyday life, thoughts, experiences, including children's jokes etc. 42 tweets shared valuable information to others, for instance, about shopping deals, trustworthy businesses and specialists, "life-hacks", etc. 15 tweets provoked conversation or opened a window to the world, sharing a (self-proclaimed) "unpopular" opinion about various topics including parenting. Lastly, 6 tweets contained open questions, asking for information or advice about parenting. Therefore, the sample of tweets from the interviewees' "*Twitter*-bubble" 1) indicates active conversation with each other, 2) shows sharing of informational as emotional support, as well as – in several tweets – encouragement to show physical or even financial support to particular *Twitter* profiles.

Conclusion

The case-study of a Latvian-speaking community of mothers on *Twitter* provides valuable insight into the 21st century motherhood and the mediatization of mothering. Mothers' narratives reveal that *Twitter*, an asymmetric and decentralized social media network, may serve as fruitful soil for creation of a "portable" community for parents, especially mothers. For some *Twitter* is a diary to capture every-day moments of a mother's life, but it also is a source of valuable, individually tailored information and a window to the world, shedding light onto different lifestyles and styles of mothering, nurturing empathy, and challenging the discourse of "intensive mothering". Mothers' tweets provide a unique journey into "real motherhood" that respects all emotions, complications and victories as opposed to "intensive mothering" that acknowledges only heteronormative, middle-class "happy" couples, fully content with their role as a parent and oblivious to problems of any kind. In the "safe space" of their *Twitter*-bubble, occasionally behind a veil of anonymity, mothers narrate truthful stories and validate personal feelings in order to normalize their authentic experience and feel supported in the journey into motherhood. *Twitter* provides socialization at time and place of convenience, ensuring a "virtual village" that travels alongside the mother, empowering, encouraging, as well as providing emotional, and even physical and financial support, if needed, during periods of isolation from society or other hardships. The case study has its limitations due to a very particular sample of data and specific focus; however, its findings may be recognized by a spectrum of professionals (from media researchers to healthcare specialists) and researched even further to challenge the disinformation of "real motherhood" and the dominant discourse of "intensive mothering", as well as find new pathways to provide support to families with children, especially mothers.

Ethics approval

Approval for this research (No. 71-46/63) has been by the Committee on Ethics for the Humanities and Social Sciences of University of Latvia (LU Humanitāro un sociālo zinātņu pētījumu ētikas komiteja).

Sources

Ahmed, W. (2018). Public Health Implications of #ShoutYourAbortion. *Public Health*, 163, pp. 35–41.

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised. London: Verso.

Archer, C. (2019). How Influencer 'Mumpreneur' Bloggers and 'Everyday' Mums Frame Presenting Their Children Online. *Media International Australia*, pp. 47–56.

Archer, C., & Kao, K. (2018). Mother, Baby and *Facebook* Makes Three: Does Social Media Provide Social Support for New Mothers? *Media International Australia*, 168(1), pp. 122–139.

Chae, J. (2015). "Am I a Better Mother Than You?": Media and 21st-Century Motherhood in the Context of the Social Comparison Theory. *Communication Research*, 42(4), pp. 503–525.

Chalklen, C., & Anderson, H. (2017). Mothering on *Facebook*: Exploring the Privacy/Openness Paradox. *Social Media + Society*, 3(2).

Chayko, M. (2007). The Portable Community: Envisioning and Examining Mobile Social Connectedness. *International Journal of Web Based Communities*, 3(4), pp. 373–385.

Christopher, K. (2012). Extensive Mothering: Employed Mothers' Constructions of the Good Mother. *Gender & Society*, 26(1), pp. 73–96.

Das, R. (2019). The Mediation of Childbirth: 'Joyful' Birthing and Strategies of Silencing on a *Facebook* Discussion Group. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22(5–6), pp. 495–510.

European Parliament, B (2022). *Flash Eurobarometer 2832 (News & Media Survey 2022)*. Cologne: GESIS. Available: doi:10.4232/1.14012

Eurostat (2021). *Individuals – Frequency of Internet Use*. Available: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ISOC_CI_IFP_FU__custom_2314659/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=94c12e74-1b7c-46fb-9bc3-189fec098307 (viewed 05.01.2023.)

Ewing, L., & Vu, H. (2020). Navigating 'Home Schooling' during Covid-19: Australian Public Response on *Twitter*. *Media International Australia*, 178(1), pp. 77–86.

Fox, A., & Hoy, M. (2019). Smart Devices, Smart Decisions? Implications of Parents' Sharenting for Children's Online Privacy: An Investigation of Mothers. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 38(4), pp. 414–432.

Gemius (12 September 2022). *Gemius*. Available: https://www.gemius.lv/agenturas-zinas/augusta-apmekletako-vietnu-top-20.html (viewed 05.01.2023.)

Grant, A. (2016). "#discrimination": The Online Response to a Case of a Breastfeeding Mother Being Ejected from a UK Retail Premises. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 32(1), pp. 141–151.

Gruzd, A., Wellman, B., & Takhteyey, Y. (2011). Imagining *Twitter* as an Imagined Community. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55(10), pp. 1294–1318.

Hays, S. (1996). *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hepp, A. (2020). *Deep Mediatization*. London: Routledge.

Hepp, A., & Krotz, F. (2014). *Mediatized worlds: Culture and Society in a Media Age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Holiday, S., Densley, R., & Norman, M. (2020). Influencer Marketing Between Mothers: The Impact of Disclosure and Visual Brand Promotion. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 42(3), pp. 236–257.

Hyde, A. (2000). Age and Partnership as Public Symbols: Stigma and Non-Marital Motherhood in an Irish Context. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 7(1), pp. 71–89.

Jones, Q. (1997). Virtual Communities, Virtual Settlements and Cyber-Archaeology. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 3(3), n. p.

Kazyak, E., Park, N., McQuillan, J., & Greil, A. (2016). Attitudes Toward Motherhood Among Sexual Minority Women in the United States. *Journal of Family Issues*, 37(13), pp. 1771–1796.

Kerrick, M., & Henry, R. (2017). "Totally in Love": Evidence of a Master Narrative for How New Mothers Should Feel About Their Babies. *Sex Roles*, 76, pp. 1–16.

Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*. London: Sage Publications.

Lazard, L., Capdevila, R., Dann, C., Roper, S., & Locke, A. (2019). Sharenting: Pride, Affect and the Day-to-Day Politics of Digital Mothering. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 13(4).

Lee, Y.-J., & Chen, H. (2018). Empowerment or Alienation: Chinese and Korean Immigrant Mothers' Perception of Mobile Media in Constructing their Social Role and Facilitating Parenting Practices in the US. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 6(3), pp. 390–406.

Lee, J. Y., Grogan-Kaylor, A. C., & Lee, S. J. (2020). A Qualitative Analysis of Stay-At-Home Parents' Spanking Tweets. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 29, pp. 817–830.

Lehto, M. (2019). Bare Flesh and Sticky Milk: An Affective Conflict Over Public Breastfeeding. *Social Media + Society*, pp. 1–10.

Littler, J. (2020). Mothers Behaving Badly: Chaotic Hedonism and the Crisis of Neoliberal Social Reproduction. *Cultural Studies*, 34(4), pp. 499–520.

Locatelli, E. (2017). Images of Breastfeeding on *Instagram*: Self-Representation, Publicness, and Privacy Management. *Social Media + Society*, 3(2).

Lopez, L. K. (2009). The Radical Act of "Mommy Blogging": Redefining Motherhood through the Blogosphere. *New Media & Society*, 11(5), pp. 729–747.

Mackenzie, J. (2018). 'Good Mums Don't, Apparently, Wear Make-Up': Negotiating Discourses of Gendered Parenthood in Mumsnet Talk. *Gender and Language*, 12(1), pp. 114–135.

Matley, D. (2020). "I Miss My Old Life": Regretting Motherhood on Mumsnet. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 37, pp. 100417–100424.

McArthur, J., & White, A. (2016). *Twitter* Chats as Third Places: Conceptualizing a Digital Gathering Site. *Social Media + Society*. 2(3)

McLuhan, M., & Fiore, Q. (2006 [1967]). *The Medium is the Massage. An Inventory of Effects*. Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press.

Meng, B. (2020). When Anxious Mothers Meet Social Media: Wechat, Motherhood and the Imaginary of the Good Life. *Javnost – The Public*, 27(2), pp. 171–185.

Micalizzi, A. (2020). Exploring Gender and Sexuality Through a *Twitter* Lens: The Digital Framing Effect of the #Fertilityday Campaign by Female Users. Information, Communication & Society. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24(8), pp. 1157–1174.

Miller, T. (2005). *Making Sense of Motherhood: A Narrative Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moore, J., & Abetz, J. (2019). What Do Parents Regret About Having Children? Communicating Regrets Online. *Journal of Family Issues*, 40(3), pp. 390–412.

Morris, C., & Munt, S. (2019). Classed Formations of Shame in White, British Single Mothers. *Feminism & Psychology*, 29(2), pp. 231–249.

Mourkarzel, S., Caduff, A., Rehm, M., del Fresno, M., Perez-Escamilla, R., & Daly, A. (2021). Breastfeeding Communication Strategies, Challenges and Opportunities in the *Twitter*-Verse: Perspectives of Influencers and Social Network Analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(12), p. 6181.

Mourkazel, S., Rehm, M., & Daly, A. (2020). Breastfeeding promotion on *Twitter*: A social network and content analysis approach. *Maternal and Child Nutrition*, 16(4), pp. 1–8.

Mourkazel, S., Rehm, M., del Fresno, M., & Daly, A. (2020). Diffusing Science through Social Networks: The Case of Breastfeeding Communication on *Twitter*. 15(8*). International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(12).

Musk, E. (2023). *And soon we shall bid adieu…* Twitter post, 23 July, Viewed 20 November: https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1682964919325724673

North, L. (2016). Still a 'Blokes Club': The Motherhood Dilemma in Journalism. *Journalism*, 17(3), pp. 215–330.

Oldenburg, R. (1999). *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*. New York, NY: Marlowe & Company.

Orton-Johnson, K. (2017). Mummy Blogs and Representations of Motherhood: "Bad Mummies" and Their Readers. *Social Media + Society*, 3(2), pp. 1–10.

Scarborough, W. J. (2018). Feminist *Twitter* and Gender Attitudes: Opportunities and Limitations to Using *Twitter* in the Study of Public Opinion. *Socius*, 4.

Schoppe-Sullivan, S., Yavorsky, J., & Bartholomew, M. (2017). Doing Gender Online: New Mothers' Psychological Characteristics, *Facebook* Use, and Depressive Symptoms. *Sex Roles*, 76, pp. 276–289.

Sevón, E. (2012). 'My Life has Changed, but His Life hasn't': Making Sense of the Gendering of Parenthood During the Transition to Motherhood. *Feminism & Psychology*, 22(1), pp. 60–80.

Stewart, M. (2020). Live Tweeting, Reality TV and the Nation. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 23(3), pp. 352–367.

Sullivan, C. (2014). 'Bad Mum Guilt': the Representation of 'Work-Life Balance' in UK Women's Magazines. *Community, Work & Family*, pp. 284–298.

Talbot, J., Charron, V., & Konkle, A. (2021). Feeling the Void: Lack of Support for Isolation and Sleep Difficulties in Pregnant Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic Revealed by *Twitter* Data Analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(2: 393).

Tiidenberg, K., & Baym, N. (2017). Learn It, Buy It, Work It: Intensive Pregnancy on *Instagram*. *Social Media + Society*, 3(1).

Twitter (1 December 2022). developer.twitter.com. .Twitter.com: https://developer.*Twitter*.com/en/docs (viewed 05.01.2023.)

Twitter (30 August 2022). *Twitter* Inc. Retrieved from blog.*Twitter*.com: https://

blog.*Twitter*.com/en_us/topics/product/2022/introducing-*Twitter*-circle-new-way-tweet-smaller-crowd#:~:text=Tweets%20sent%20to%20your%20circle,cannot%20be%20Retweeted%20or%20shared (viewed 05.01.2023.)

Valtchanov, B., Parry, D., Glover, T., & Mulcahy, C. (2015). 'A Whole New World': Mothers' Technologically Mediated Leisure. *Leisure Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 38(1), pp. 50–67.

Yam, S. (2019). Birth Images on *Instagram*: The Disruptive Visuality of Birthing Bodies. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 42(1), pp. 80–100.

Zappavigna, M., & Zhao, S. (2017). Selfies in 'Mommyblogging': An Emerging Visual Genre. Discourse, Context & Media, 20, pp. 239–247.

Zhang, Y., Jatowt, A., & Kawai, Y. (2019). Finding Baby Mothers on *Twitter*. ICW: *Web Engineering*. 11496, pp. 211–219.

7.4. Publication IV. Challenging and Reproducing the Discourse of "Intensive Mothering" in Family Magazine "Mans Mazais" (2018–2022)

Lāma, E. (2023). Challenging and Reproducing the Discourse of "Intensive Mothering" in Family Magazine "Mans Mazais" (2018–2022). In: Daniela, L. (ed.). *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education, 2023. Proceedings of Scientific Papers*. Riga, University of Latvia. P. 67–83.
https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2023.05

HUMAN, TECHNOLOGIES AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION, 2023
https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2023.05

CHALLENGING AND REPRODUCING THE DISCOURSE OF "INTENSIVE MOTHERING" IN FAMILY MAGAZINE "MANS MAZAIS" (2018–2022)

Elza Lāma

University of Latvia, Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences

ABSTRACT

The dominant discourse of motherhood in Western civilization is of "intensive mothering", coined by Hays in 1996, which views the mother as the primary caregiver with absolute responsibility over the child's physical and psychological needs, promoting unrealistic standards, pressure on the mother, not to mention discrediting the benefits of a more present, engaged father, who is constructed mainly as a "bread winner" and assistant-parent. As recommended by Jansone-Ratinika (2013), the media should focus on egalitarian forms of family, thus, in doing so, gradually transforming hegemonic stereotypes in society. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore the various discourses of motherhood in the 21st century over a period of 5 years (2022–2018) in the family magazine "Mans Mazais" (*My Little One*). A critical discourse analysis has been conducted, illustrating the reproduction and challenge to the dominant discourse. The study provides insight into a variety of motherhood discourses (re)produced in the 36 issues of the family magazine "Mans Mazais" from 2018 to 2022, providing a spectrum of experiences and motherhood ideologies from "intensive mothering" to alternatives. However, the dominance of "intensive mothering" discourse is overbearing, displaying a portrait of an ideal family – a married Latvian heterosexual couple with happy children, who are cared after by the parents without any constraint in financial, emotional, physical resources, treating any challenge as a passing inconvenience.

Keywords: *motherhood, intensive mothering, intensive parenting, Mans Mazais, critical discourse analysis*

Introduction

Even though the dominant discourse of motherhood in Western civilization has been of "intensive mothering" (Hays, 1996), due to ongoing transformation of society towards more liberal and egalitarian values, the balance of different motherhood discourses is also undergoing change. The hegemonic discourse of "intensive mothering" focuses on traditional gender roles and views the mother as the primary caregiver with absolute responsibility over the child's physical, psychological, and other needs, whereas the father

is seen as mainly a "bread winner" and assistant-parent (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2017; Feasey, 2017). "Correct" mothering within the dominant discourse implies satisfaction with the role as a mother (Orton-Johnson, 2017), positive attitude and loving affections towards the child, and classifying struggles with motherhood and such emotions as sadness, fear or anger, as inappropriate (Murray & Finn, 2012, p. 56). It also implies a "pro-natalist" position and medicalisation of motherhood experience (Tiidenberg & Baym, 2017).

As the "intensive mothering" discourse does not capture the subjectivity and diversity of parenthood and motherhood, numerous scholars have critiqued it as promoting unrealistic standards, pressure on the mother, not to mention discrediting the benefits of a more present, engaged father or, in the context of gender equality, endangering women's mental health (Das, 2019; van Belle, 2016; Auðardóttir, 2022) due to the weight of childcare responsibilities. Social norms are conveyed through media and social media images and rhetoric; thus, the communication of an "ideal family" or "ideal mother", the "visible and easily accessible nature of media" provides a platform for mothers to compare themselves against (Forbes et al., 2020, p. 64.). As recommended by Jansone-Ratinika in her dissertation on the father's pedagogical competences (2013), media should focus on egalitarian forms of family, and, in doing so, gradually transform the hegemonic stereotypes in society. However, even though the representation of parenthood and motherhood in media plays an important role in the formation of public opinion and discourses, the media do not always represent the full spectrum of different motherhood discourses. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore the various discourses of motherhood in the 21st century, their prevalence and inter-balance over a period of 5 years (2018–2022) in the family magazine "Mans Mazais" (*My Little One*). The research questions are:

1. Which motherhood discourses are represented in the family magazine "Mans Mazais" (2018–2022)?
2. Through which main discursive themes is the dominant discourse of "intensive mothering" challenged in in the family magazine "Mans Mazais" (2018–2022)?

Discourses of motherhood

To begin with, it is essential to distinguish between terms "intensive parenting" and "intensive mothering". Some researchers consider them to be equal, although Hays (1996) speaks of "intensive mothering", while Rizzo, Schiffrin and Liss define "three tenets of this parenting ideology, which are the belief that mothers are inherently better parents (essentialism), the belief that mothering should be child centered, and that children should be considered sacred, delightful, and fulfilling to parents", also stressing that "the intensity required to parent well, parenting can be quite challenging and require wide-ranging skills and expertise" (2013, p. 615). Some aspects of "intensive parenting" – "stimulation", "fulfilment" from childcare and "child-centered" attitudes – are in regard to both parents, while "intensive mothering" refers strictly to mothers (Rizzo et al., 2013). Therefore, as, for instance, Forbes calls for further research to differentiate between parenting and mothering attitudes (Forbes et al., 2020, p. 70), in this paper, the term "intensive mothering" is used, as the research mainly focuses on the mother's role.

In contemporary society "normative good mothering" is considered to be following the guidelines of "intensive mothering" ideology (Chae, 2022; Hays, 1996). It implies parents to be responsible "not only for their children's physical, cognitive, and intellectual development, but also for their social and emotional wellbeing and for their overall success in life" (Mainland et al., 2016, p. 86), "investing vast amounts of emotional labour and energy into raising their children [..] above and beyond the perhaps obvious strength of emotions" (Das, 2019, p. 499), often neglecting their own needs and desires. This ideology urges parents to nurture their children for future gain, as well as taking upon risks, thus, parents become "risk-managers" (Mainland et al., 2016). "Intensive mothering" also supports traditional gender roles – an idealized heteronormative married couple with the mother devoting her time to childcare and father overseeing the family's financial stability (Das, 2019, Schoppe-Sullivan, et al., 2017). Lastly, as "intensive mothering" is anchored in the context of neoliberalism, it also maintains that a "right" choice needs to be made and "individuals are to encompass feelings such as positivity, joy and resilience at all times" (Auðardóttir, 2022, p. 2), causing anxiety, stress, and even threats to mental well-being (Forbes et al., 2020, pp. 65–70) especially to those mothers, who face challenges with their journey into motherhood.

As the "real face" of motherhood and the average family profile differs from the "intensive mothering" rigid norms, several mothering discourses are distinguished in other research, which are illustrated by the author with in Figure 1 (Discourses of motherhood). These either "companion" or "conflicting" discourses (Sunderland, 2000, p. 249) challenge or suggest an alternative to the hegemonic discourse of "intensive mothering", regarding 1) mother's identity and social roles, 2) behaviour and actions, and 3) emotions. "Challenging" and "alternative" motherhood discourses lift the veil from otherwise shrouded other forms of normality, permitting the woman to have her own voice and agency.

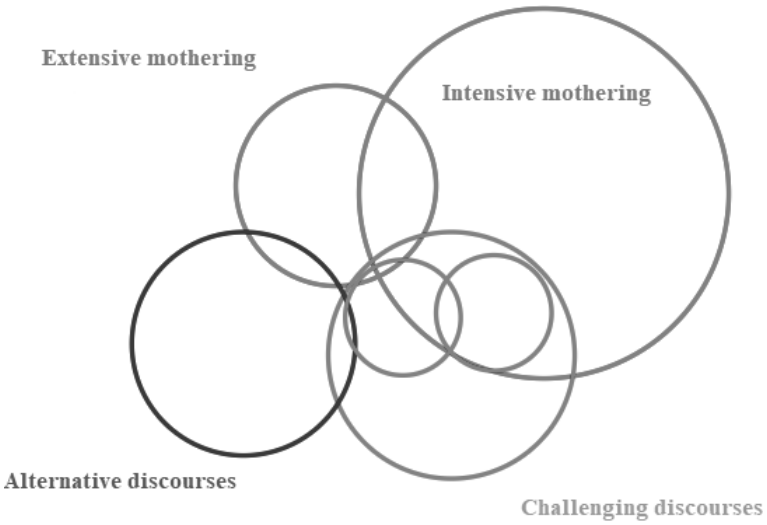


Figure 1 Discourses of motherhood

As illustrated in Figure 1, the dominant discourse of "intensive mothering" has a prominent position with "extensive mothering" as a complimentary discourse by its side, differing only in the fact that "extensive mothering" allows the mother to be employed and, thus, to become a "manager" of the household, delegating different tasks of child-care to others, while maintaining the strict "intensive mothering" guidelines, absolute responsibility and sacrifice of mother's needs over the interests of the child (Orton-Johnson, 2017; Meng, 2020). Within the "intensive" and "extensive" mothering discourses, mothers adjust their expectations, depending on work status: stay-at-home mothers emphasize "accessibility"; part-time working mothers emphasize "quality interactions", and full-time working mothers emphasize "empowering children and providing financial resources to support their children's activities" as central to their ideal mothering, justifying their status as beneficial to children (Liss et al., 2013, p. 623)

While "challenging" discourses accept the prevailing norms of "intensive" and "extensive" mothering discourses, they try to cause a disruption. The scene of these "counter-narratives" is fragmented, as they contrast and interact with one another and the hegemonic discourse as well (Micalizzi, 2020). Tiidenberg and Baum (2017), and Malatzky (2017) speak of "yummy mummies" who challenge "intensive mothering" by accenting their sexuality and femininity in contrast to the "saint-like" predisposition of a mother in the dominant discourse, whereas Orton-Johnson (2017) reveals a "slummy mummy" discourse that rejects superficial beauty and endless beauty-routines and focus on the "average" woman and need for rest, alone-time and casual appearance (illustrated by two smaller circles as part of the "challenging" discourses). However, the disruption of "intensive mothering" discourse is relative, as "challenging" discourses acknowledge the dominance of the hegemonic discourse.

Lastly, "alternative" mothering discourses include discursive themes otherwise invisible to the "dominant" discourse, trying to detach from norms and values of the neoliberal, patriarchal society, and more aggressively pursuing the individual voice and agency of the mother. "Alternative" discourses include mothers with different social roles, identities or choices, for instance, younger or older than average mothers (Sniekers & Rommes, 2020; Shea et al. 2016; Ylänne, 2016), mothers with physical or psychological challenges (Cummins & Brannon 2022), as well as mothers from marginalized communities due to ethnicity or sexuality (Tiidenberg & Baum, 2017; Ray, 2017), as well as relationship status (single or solo-mothers, divorced mothers, or stepmothers, etc.), income and social status (Mackenzie & Zhao, 2021; Elliott et al., 2017; Roper & Capdevila, 2020; Jovanovski & Cook, 2019; Lazard, 2022), etc. For instance, solo-mothers are often perceived as a "risk" as they do not provide a "traditional" family model and opportunity to explore one's genetic origin, thus, earing the title of being "selfish" (Graham, 2017). As "intensive mothering" discourse also regulates normative and "correct" behaviour as well as feelings and emotions, "alternative" discourses open up space for discussion about otherwise "taboo" topics – domestic violence, reproductive challenges, death of child, maternal ambivalence and regret (Moore & Abetz, 2019), etc. Mothers, represented in "alternative" discourses often face and acknowledge stigmatization as they supposedly pose a "risk" to

the child's wellbeing and development, according to prevailing social norms, even though not complying to social norms is not always an individual choice.

Methodology

This research employs critical discourse analysis (CDA), focusing on the main interviews with mothers and the overall thematic structure of each issue, illustrating the reproduction and challenge to the "intensive mothering" discourse. Discourse in this paper is defined as

> "a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, explained); it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form that also possesses a history." (Foucault, 1972, p. 117)

Discourses do not only reflect the world, the social entities and relations, they "construct" them (Fairclough, 1992, p. 3.), therefore, the grammatical and lexical choices that have been made, as well as what has and has not been mentioned, may show what is "assumed" about the world (Sunderland, 2000, pp. 254–256.). Sunderland also stresses, that texts can be seen as "specifically shaping practices surrounding fatherhood and motherhood, and accordingly constituting both gender identities and gender relations" (2000, pp. 253–254).

According to Jørgensen and Phillips, CDA engages in concrete, linguistic textual analysis of language use in social interaction, focusing on the linguistic features of the text, discursive practice and social practice (2002, p. 61.). CDA deals with micro-analysis of linguistic forms that participate in macro-level discursive constructs (Coffey-Glover, 2020, p. 10046). The analysis, following the steps of Auðardóttir (2022), focuses on publicly displayed discourses of mothers, mediated through journalists, as "more so than in blogs or on social media, written words in print media are curated to fit a wide audience and rely on common understanding and assumptions so that the reader can understand and relate to the topic at hand" (p. 3.).

At first (*Figure 2. Research design*), a pilot study was conducted, focusing on 6 issues of the magazine "Mans Mazais", to distinguish linguistic items from different semantic fields that tend to repeat and patterns of how the interviews had been structured, as well as to recognize discursive themes and to form categories which to measure quantitatively.

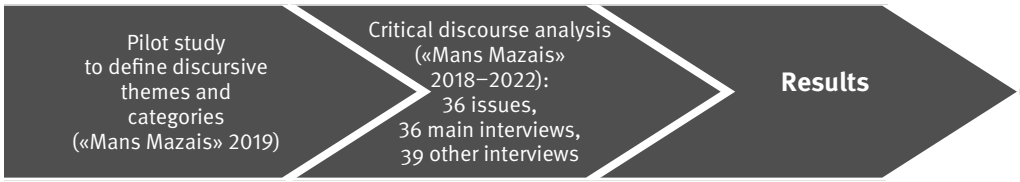


Figure 2 Research design

Next, a total of 30 categories were defined for the quantitative part of the analysis of the main interviews, concentrating on discursive themes of family status, pregnancy, birth, emotions, gender roles, and intellectual stimulation (education), to determine the compliance of each main interview with three of the types of overarching motherhood discourses ("intensive", "challenging" or "alternative"). A separate category for main theme of the issue was also created, along with descriptive information about the particular issue. Then, a separate table was created to describe the "other" (not main) interviews with mothers and families. As other interviews were significantly shorter, a more basic approach was used, focusing on only the main theme of the particular interview.

The magazine "Mans Mazais", which is the only printed commercial magazine in Latvia dedicated to parental themes from pregnancy to early childhood, according to the media agency "Inspired", has been steadily losing its popularity, as in 2018 the print was 9200 issues, whereas in 2023 it is only 4360 issues (Ingūna Folberga, February 22nd, 2023). The magazine has also shrunk in size as in 2018 it has had 84 pages, whereas from the third issue in 2020 it has 68 pages. Lastly, the number of issues per year has also decreased from 12 issues in 2018 to 6 issues from 2019 to 2022.

Each issue has a similar structure – a main theme with several pages dedicated to it and articles and opinion pieces formed in a certain pattern. The main themes during the period from 2018 to 2022 have mainly been connected with the child's wellbeing (care, upbringing, nourishment, etc.) – 22 of 36 issues are dedicated to this theme; for 7 issues the main focus was the woman (wellbeing, physical and mental health, career etc.), for 5 issues the main theme was couple relationships. Only 1 issue was dedicated to the father's role and 1 – to relationship with grand-parents. Each issue has a main interview with a celebrity family in the front of the magazine, at least one interview with a family at the back. All of the issues from 2018 to 2022 have had a "father's diary" and a "pregnancy diary" – on average 2 pages long, as well as interviews with experts about various themes regarding child rearing, birth, pregnancy etc. The CDA was conducted on a sample of 36 issues, covering 5 years of the magazine "Mans Mazais", analysing 36 main interviews and 39 other interviews with mothers and families. The sample did not include interviews with experts, interviews shorter that 1 page, or diaries by mothers or fathers.

Results

Main interviews

From 2018 to 2022, from 36 main interviews, published in "Mans Mazais", 21 interviews were conducted with both the mother and father, while 15 interviews were with only the mother's side of the story. All of the main interviews featured a Latvian celebrity family. Of these 36 different couples, the absolute majority – 33 couples – were married and 1 was in a civil partnership; in 2 interviews the relationship status was not clarified. The majority of couples had only 1 child (16 couples); however, the proportion of families with more than 3 children was high (*Figure 3*).

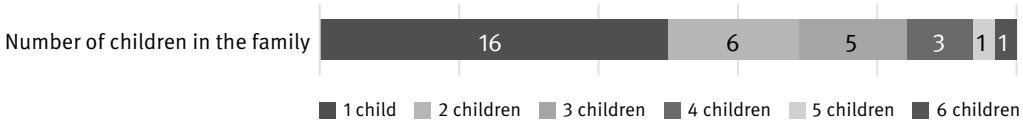


Figure 3 Number of children in the family

When speaking about the **pregnancy**, the main discursive theme, that comes across strongly, is trying to enjoy or enjoying the special experience with either no or only minor complications (25 of 36 interviews). Elīna Šimkus reveals: "The pregnancy went by in harmony, labour experience was wonderful, perhaps that is why Bernard is such a calm and cheerful baby." (Klapere, 2018b, p. 15). Even when problems arise, they are rarely grave. For instance, Aivis Ceriņš, on the difficulties on getting pregnant, reveals that the doctor urges to "clear one's mind" first, even though father acknowledges, it is an urgent matter to many couples (Bērziņa, 2020e, p. 12).

Labour also is a harmonic, "natural" and transformative experience, according to the majority of interviews. Of these 36 couples, 23 experienced physiological birth – and in 7 cases the woman gave birth at home; in 6 interviews there is mention of epidural analgesia and in 8 cases there was a caesarean section (in 5 cases the form of birth was not specified). The descriptions regarding birth spread out into a spectrum from more esoteric views, for instance, Jānis Šipkvēvics characterising it as the moment when "the mother's instinct blossoms and then shines on as the sun every day" (Meiere, 2019b, p. 20), to a more pragmatic approach. Views on father's participation in birth also differ, as some see birth as a "intimate woman's thing", where the presence of man is unnecessary (Bērziņa, 2018b, p. 14), but more than half of the couples see it as a "team effort".

Mention of **medical procedures** and the caesarean operation comes through guilt or a self-defensive attitude, focusing on the benefits and wonders of modern medicine in saving the lives of women and children. For instance, Dināra mentions: "I felt very guilty about having a caesarean section, for not birthing myself" (Andersone, 2019, p. 18), but goes on how the doctor had debunked her notions on the operation. Whereas, in another interview, where the mother reveals she has had a planned operation, the journalist asks: "Don't you regret not trying to give birth by yourself?" (Strūberga, 2019a). The dominant discursive theme of giving birth "naturally" and without medical assistance, is strong and acknowledged. "The emotions you come with [to give birth] are the emotions you receive", says Dana, regarding the experience of birth in a hospital (Bērziņa, 2022d, p 11.). Furthermore, in almost 1/3 of the interviews, there is mention of "**mother's instinct**", guiding the woman through pregnancy, birth and childrearing; there is no mention of father's instinct.

While the dominance of physiological, "as natural as possible" birth is evident, the struggles with **breastfeeding** come across more freely. In 14 of 36 interviews there is no mention of complaints or complications with breastfeeding, but in 9 interviews the couple share their problems. Some women feel the struggles are their fault. For instance, Kārlis mentions that his wife Anna blames problems with baby's sleep or

appetite on herself (Bērziņa, 2021b, p. 13). Other challenges, strong, negative **emotions** and even postpartum depression also is mentioned in 15 interviews, but in most cases – in passing, as the main discursive theme is contentment with the parent's role. A more frequent discursive theme is **weariness** (mentioned in 23 of 36 interviews). For instance, Ieva says: "Knowing how hard it is, I doubt I would plan such a small gap of years in between babies again" (Bērziņa, 2018e, p. 18), although the title of the interview is "All struggles will be forgotten". Struggles and problems are acknowledged but presented as "worth it" and even through laughter. Māra Upmane-Holšteine cites her husband "I hope this nightmare ends! (*Laughs*). So that the time when children are small, ends faster!" (Bērziņa, 2020a, p. 14).

Most of the interviews mention the woman's **career** (27 of 36), but the narratives mostly focus on the child and how the career is managed around the family or put on pause. Almost half of the interviews speak of the **mother's guilt**, but none speak of father's guilt. Mothers speak of feeling guilty when leaving the baby to return to work or associate it with choices that do not comply with the dominant narrative. For instance, Marta Selecka speaks of pausing breastfeeding during a working trip, and, even though everything, to her mind, was "ok", she acknowledges that "from the way others reacted, I should have felt guilty" (Strūberga, 2019a, p. 14). Despite that, the majority of interviews (23 of 36) acknowledge the need and urge others to seek **support** from the extended family, relatives or a nanny to find time for the couple or individuals. Support and sense of preparedness comes also from books and parenting **courses** as 2/3 of interviews mention attending parenting classes during pregnancy, reading books etc.

When speaking about **fathers**, the major discursive theme is **support** for the mother, as in 32 of 36 interviews mothers speak of how their husband helps with the children. Some women express gratitude, for instance, Iveta says "I am thankful to Armands for finding time to watch the kids so I can do something for myself" (Bērziņa, 2018c, pp. 17–18), whereas Inese, mother of four, says that she has "a lot of energy" and that her husband "simply doesn't allow to spoil myself with weakness" and does not allow her to "emotionally be other than my best self" (Bērziņa, 2019a, p. 19). However, in more than half of the interviews it is mentioned that the father works a lot to support the family and, thus, is away from home. Evelīna Strazdiņa says "He is frequently and for long periods of time away abroad, therefore, our meetings are pure festivities and fireworks" (Meiere, 2018a, p. 16), while Egons Reiters acknowledges that his wife would like him to spend more time at home, but "it is what it is" (Bērziņa, 2022e, p. 11). The fathers more or less acknowledge the importance of participating in household tasks, for instance, Raimonds Celms even mentions that he supports fathers taking parental leave (Bērziņa, 2022a, p. 12) but the leading role of managing the house falls onto the woman's shoulders.

Lastly, as these interviews are mediated through a journalist, the interviewer's presence in the stories is visible, and often even obvious, provoking or steering the conversation in a particular way. As Auðardóttir stresses, the "media's portrayal of the ideal motherhood thus becomes a tool for social class reproduction in society" (2022, p. 3). The journalist has the power to place emphasis on specific themes or choose not disclose others, and,

in doing so, reproducing a particular discourse. For instance, Meiere asks the mother "Are the children born at home different, than the ones that are born in hospital?" (2018a, p. 14), while Meluškāne comments "I actually know women who have said that they do not want children and later have regretted their choice" (2018b, p. 13). Bērziņa wonders "Are you still sure that one child is enough?" (2021b, p. 17), while in another interview she asks: "Doesn't having a child motivate you to get married?" (Bērziņa, 2021b, p. 17). The loaded questions are frequent, but subtle, often regarding reading up on pregnancy or attending parental courses, pain regarding medicalized labour (stimulation or caesarean section), jealousy of siblings or women finding time for attending the marital relationship.

To conclude, the main interviews are with Latvian celebrity families, who are well situated, heterosexual, mostly married couples with small children that have mainly experienced "natural" childbirth and have or are breastfeeding. Figure 4 illustrates the discourses that each interview would be classified among, according to their characteristics, and the overall scene.

Although "challenging" discourses are visible, the dominance of "intensive mothering" is still prominent and only one interview could be classified as belonging to the "alternative" motherhood discourses – the interview with Liene Sebre which mainly focused on her career as a children's TV-series star, but also faintly spoke about having a child at an early age in life and raising the child on one's own while completing education. "Challenging" discourses still acknowledge the value system of "intensive mothering" while simultaneously shedding light on the woman's careers, wants, needs, as well as a more egalitarian distribution of housework and childcare. However, the dominance of "intensive mothering", advertising essentialism (traditional gender roles), child-centred attitudes (need for stimulation, preparation with aid of experts), and positioning childcare as a very demanding, but ultimately rewarding task, is visible – prominently positioned at the beginning of each issue, 5 to 7 pages long.

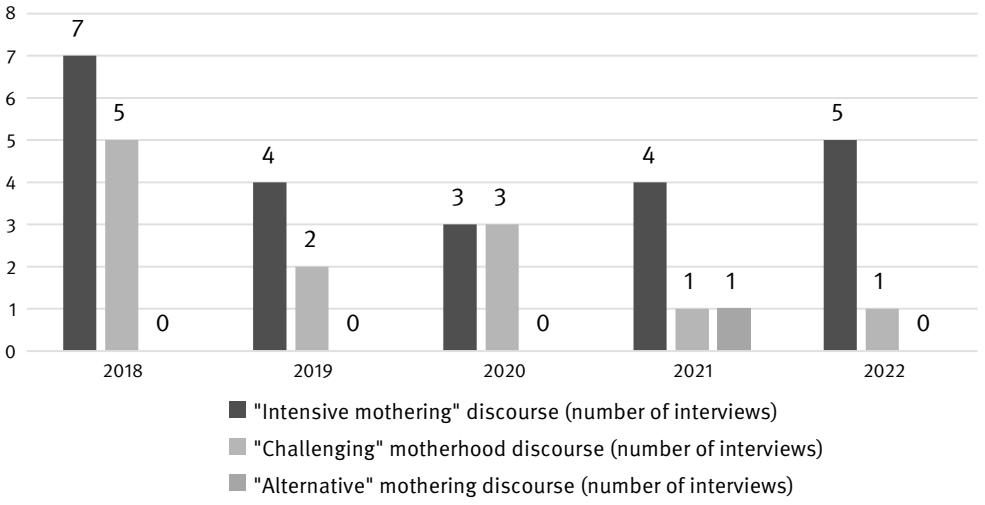


Figure 4 Motherhood discourses in main interviews

Other interviews

There are 39 other interviews, published in "Mans Mazais" from 2018 to 2022, that were included in the sample. Most of these interviews were situated at the back of the magazine in such columns as "Family", "Waiting for the baby", "For a happy mum" and were only 2 to 3 pages long. Almost all of these interviews did not include the journalist's questions but rather followed a monologue or paraphrased a narrative with few citations.

Of these 39 interviews, 12 could be classified as belonging to the "intensive mothering" discourse (see Figure 5. Motherhood discourses in other interviews). 6 interviews featured joyful and positive stories about Latvian heterosexual, well situated families with 3 and more children, others focused either on travel experiences, etc. The interviewed families complied to the "intensive mothering" discourse in confirming that the child's interests are the centre of parent's attention, conforming to traditional gender roles and displaying idealistic domestic life. Only 3 interviews could be classified as complying to the "challenging" motherhood discourse – 1 interview stressed that although the family adheres to a more egalitarian model, the mother works from home (and coincidentally invests more time into menial household and childcare tasks), while in another interview a mother of 3 spoke about her career as a pilot and guilt for choosing to pursue her career over a "normal" desk-job. The third interview features a family, whose father comes from Africa and has a darker skin colour; thus, the interview displays how the couple is "typical" in almost every aspect, except cultural background.

Most interviews (24 of 39) could be classified as outside the "intensive mothering" discourse and more in compliance to "alternative" motherhood discourses. 7 of 24 interviews speak of a "traditional" family overcoming an obstacle – an illness or complication in life, for example, the loss of a child, premature birth, complications due to genetics, as well as complications during birth. All these stories, however tragic, focus on resilience and perseverance despite challenges. 5 stories share different "alternative" birthing experiences (hypno-birth, homebirth, unassisted homebirth), resisting the medicalisation of labour and stressing the empowerment of woman. 3 interviews share different

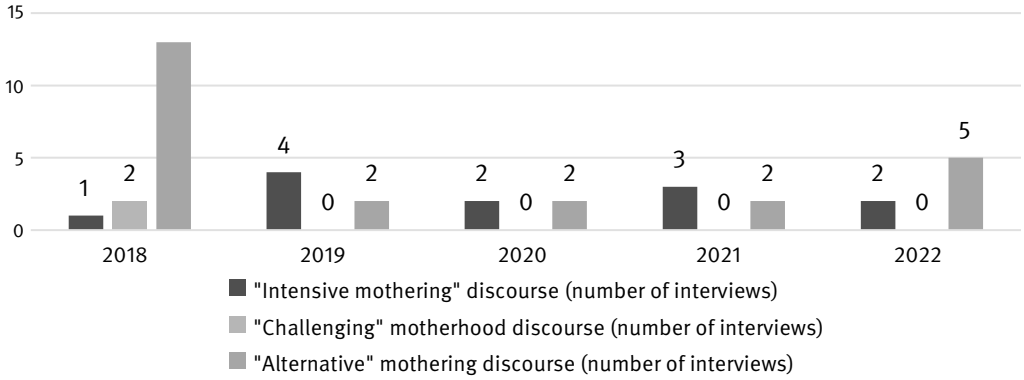


Figure 5 Motherhood discourses in other interviews

lifestyle approaches, for instance, travelling for a long period of time with small children or leaving home to work abroad and taking the child with them. Therefore, while these interviews could be classified primarily belonging to "alternative" mothering discourse, they also in a sense overlap with the "intensive mothering" discourse in essentialism and child-centred views by parents. These interviewees have either faced or chosen a different path than mainstream families and, thus, provide an "alternative".

Only 4 of these 24 interviews share insights of an alternative family model. Two of the stories (one of which – anonymous) shared the experience of a member of the LGBT community, one anonymous interview is with a mother, raising a child from a married man, alone, and one account is from a father who has lost his wife to cancer and is raising children on his own. 3 interviews shared an adoption story, and only 2 interviews explicitly shared the mother's point of view when choosing to fulfil her dream: one interview with was the former minister of health Anda Čakša, who's narrative stressed the importance of woman's career and also shared experience of woman in power and pregnant after 40; the other interview shared a story of a woman going on the journey of Santiago, while her children stayed behind.

To conclude, although the other interviews in a sense balance the dominance of the "intensive mothering" discourse in main interviews and colorize the spectrum of motherhood discourses, the narratives are 1) at the back of the magazine, 2) much shorter than the main interviews, 3) more focused on outer factors leading to this "alternative" path and less on the individual choices. Therefore, for almost half of these interviews their presence in the "alternative" space of motherhood is rather a serendipity than a mindful action to follow a different path.

Discussion

Although the magazine "Mans Mazais" provides different narratives and a variety of motherhood discourses, the dominance of the "intensive mothering" discourse in interviews from 2018 to 2022, is overwhelming, thus, the magazine is presenting mainly the glamourous side of parenting and motherhood, displaying mostly traditional family patterns and stressing the importance of child-centred attitudes.

According to the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB), 36.6% of children in Latvia are born outside of marriage (2022), while almost all main interviews were with married, heterosexual and well-situated Latvian families. The most common type of family in Latvia in 2021 was a single parent with underage child or children (CSB 2021), and this type of family is represented by a single main interview and 3 smaller other interviews in the sample. Moreover, according to the Health Statistic Database of Latvia, in 2021 from 17 206 total births only 242 were planned, assisted births at home (or 1.4%); whereas epidural analgesia to ease the pain was applied to 21.9% (of total births) (The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023), while the magazine stresses the importance of "natural" birth, resisting medicalization. "Intensive mothering" also stresses the responsibility of parents, especially mothers, over their children. Chae associates the "3Cs of

contemporary motherhood" with "comparison, competition, and consumption" and in a neoliberal educational context links the "responsibilization" of mothers with being more engaged in children's education, investing in education as a "means to reproduce social status or to achieve upward mobility, and thus it is like "purchasing hope"" (Chae, 2022, pp. 550–561), and this aspect is also visible in the main interviews as the need to educate and prepare oneself via courses and literature is mentioned in the majority of interviews. Furthermore, the issue of weariness from childcare and household tasks does appear in main interviews, however, it is mainly presented as an inconvenience or through jokes, although according to Trapezņikova, women in Latvia are burdened with the majority of unpaid housework (Trapezņikova et al., 2019, pp. 47–51, p. 68).

Although the dominance of "intensive mothering" is confronted with "challenging" and "alternative" discourses, the hegemonic ideology still prevails as counter-narratives are presented less frequently, through laughter and focusing on perseverance despite outer challenges. As Auðardóttir notes, "boundary setting between appropriate and inappropriate motherhood has taken place through the medium where the ideal middle-class motherhood is publicly portrayed and the inappropriate motherhood of the racialised or classed other is removed from the readers' gaze", and, thus, the "perceived perfect, middle-class values of motherhood and childrearing become the benchmarks for others" (2022, p. 3). Consequently, if this ideal, represented in the media, is not achieved, the comparison takes a toll on the mother (Forbes et al., 2020, p. 64). Such darker and more grim themes as violence in the family, divorce settlements, the spouse refusing to pay childcare etc. are completely absent from main interviews and only vaguely appear in other interviews.

The study has limitations as it covers only a period of 5 years and concentrates on the main themes of issues and interviews with parents. The sample could be broadened by including analysis of interviews and features of experts, as well as individual diaries by mothers and fathers. For instance, from 2018 to 2019, several issues were published with excerpts from a book by child psychologist Vita Kalniņa which, in one interview was characterized by mother Māra as "fantastic", but too idealistic for real life – "everything written in the book should be divided by two" (Bērziņa, 2020a, p. 17), whereas for 6 issues in 2021 the diary of a parent was written by a single mother with twins. Lastly, the time period could also be extended, thus, analysing the patterns of themes and changes over the years.

Conclusion

There is a variety of motherhood discourses (re)produced in the 36 issues of the family magazine "Mans Mazais" from 2018 to 2022, providing a spectrum of experiences and motherhood ideologies from "intensive mothering" to alternatives. However, the dominance of "intensive mothering" discourse is overbearing, displaying a portrait of an ideal family – a married Latvian heterosexual couple with happy children, who are cared after by the parents without any constraint in financial, emotional, physical resources,

treating any challenge as a passing inconvenience. The main characteristics of "intensive mothering" – essentialism, child-centred attitudes, and view of childcare as a demanding, but ultimately rewarding task – is prevalent in most interviews. There is evidence of challenging discourses, which acknowledge the value system of "intensive mothering" but try to challenge its dominance through suggesting more egalitarian family models, providing counter narratives of respecting, for instance, woman's career path and desires, as well as stressing a more equal division of household tasks. There is also evidence of "alternative" motherhood discourses which share mainly narratives of everyday people with "different" family models (single parents, divorced parents, members of LGBT, adoption) or different lifestyle choices (travelling, working abroad) or individual choices (unassisted homebirth etc.). However, examples of "alternative" discourses appear mainly in interviews at the back of the magazine and a large share of them express stories of unforeseen and unfortunate circumstances (loss of a child, genetic illness, premature birth, loosing of a spouse), and, thus, these stories mostly concentrate of the perseverance of the human spirit and fighting against all odds, not illustrating a contrasting and mindful approach to motherhood or parenthood. Therefore, in light of Jansone-Ratinika's recommendations in her dissertation on the father's pedagogical competences (2013), there are noticeable strides to illustrate the subjectivity and diversity of motherhood, however, there is room for improvement to stimulate the gradual transformation of hegemonic stereotypes regarding motherhood in society.

SOURCES

Meiere, A. (2018a). Pilnīgi cita sieviete [*A Completely Different Woman*]. *Mans Mazais, 1,* 12–17.

Meluškāne, S. (2018a). Ministre stāvoklī [*Pregnant Minister*]. *Mans Mazais, 1,* 24–27.

Liepa, L. (2018a). Tas ir mūsu bērns! [*It's Our Child!*] *Mans Mazais*, 1, 66–69.

Meirere, A. (2018b). Atbilde ir mīlestība. [*The Answer is Love*] *Mans Mazais, 2,* 14–21.

Strūberga, Z. (2018a). Viņa dzemdēja, viņš dziedāja. [*She Gave Birth, He Sang*] *Mans Mazais*, 2, 26–27.

Meiere, A. (2018c). Mīlestība piecās paaudzēs. [*Love in Five Generations*]. *Mans Mazais, 2,* 54–57.

Medene, E. (2018). Kā pārdzīvot bērniņa zaudēšanu. [*How to Survive the Loss of a Child*] *Mans Mazais*, *2.* 62–65.

Liepa, L. (2018b). Nevaram būt aizspriedumaini. [*We Cannot be Judgmental*] *Mans Mazais, 3.* 12–18.

Klapere, I. (2018a). Un Dievs radīja ģimeni. [*And God Created Family*] *Mans Mazais, 3*. 68–71.

Meluškāne, S. (2018b). Piedzīvots ir viss – no debesīm līdz ellītei. [*Experience from Heven to Hell*] *Mans Mazais, 4.* 12–19.

Sidoroviča, T. (2018). Divas dzemdības pēc diviem ķeizargriezieniem. [*To Births After Two Caesarean Sections*] *Mans Mazais, 4.* 24–27.

Struberga, Z. (2018b). Bērni, kuri varēja nepiedzimt. [*Children Who Could Have Not Been Born*] *Mans Mazais, 4.* 56–59.

Klapere, I. (2018b). Viegli vieglītiņām, klusi klusītiņām… [*Soft and Quiet*] *Mans Mazais, 5.* 14–20.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2018a). Gaidu bērniņu viena. [*Pregnant and Alone*] *Mans Mazais, 5.* 26–29.

Meluškāne, S. (2018c). Meitas baletskolas dēļ no Valkas pārcēlās uz Rīgu. [*Moved to Riga for Daughter's Ballet School*] *Mans Mazais, 5.* 49–53.

Kondrāte, E. (2018). Sports ir mūsu hobijs. [*Sport is Our Hobby*] *Mans Mazais, 5.* 62–64.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2018b). Absolūts pozitīvisma lādiņš. [*Absolute Positivity*] *Mans Mazais, 6.* 12–18.

Asare, D. (2018). Karstākā ziema mūsu mūžā. [*The Hottest Winter in Our Lives*]*Mans Mazais*, *6*. 62–65.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2018c). Simsonu karaliste. [*Simson Kingdom*] *Mans Mazais, 7*. 12–19.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2018d). Dzīve ir krāsaina. [*Life is Colourful*] *Mans Mazais,* 7. 66–69.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2018e). Viss grūtais aizmirsīsies. [*All Worries Will Fade Away*] *Mans Mazais*, *8.* 12–19.
Zaļuma, E. (2018). Mamma dodas Satnjago ceļā. [*Mom Goes on Santiago Journey*] Mans *Mazais, 8.* 58–61.
Meluškāne, S. (2018d). Meitene, kas vienmēr smaida. [*Girl Who Always Smiles*] *Mans Mazais*, *8.* 62–65.
Meluškāne, S. (2018e). Priecājos, ka mani bērni nebūs vieni. [*Glad That My Children Will Never Be Alone*] *Mans Mazais, 9.* 12–18.
Meiere, A. (2018d). Bez mammas kā pieci pirksti dūrītē. [*Like Five Fingers in A Fist Without Mother*] *Mans Mazais, 9.* 48–51.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2018f). Dzīvot pa īstam. [*Live Fully*] *Mans Mazais, 10.* 14–20.
Ozoliņa, M. (2018). Ceļot kopā – tas ir dzīvesveids. [*Travel Together – A Lifestyle*] *Mans Mazais, 10.* 68–71.
Strūberga, Z. (2018c). Ja vien tu zinātu, kas man ir mājās. [*If You Only Knew What I Have At Home*] *Mans Mazais, 11.* 16–22.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2018g). Bērni mainīja visu mūsu dzīvi. [*Children Changed Our Life*] *Mans Mazais, 11*. 66–69.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2018h). Mīlestības trijstūris. [*Love Triangle*] *Mans Mazais, 12.* 18–24.
Strūberga, Z. (2019a). Viena puiku komandā. [*Alone in a Team of Boys*] *Mans Mazais, 1.* 12–18.
Bertholde, A. (2019a). Mācīties slēpot kopā ar bērniem. [*Learn to Ski With Children*] *Mans Mazais*, *1*. 68–70.
Meiere, A. (2019a). Kad stārķi pievilināja diēta. [*Diet Lured the Stork*] *Mans Mazais*, *2*. 16–21.
Meluškāne, S. (2019). Ceļojums uz saulaino salu Kipru. [*Journey to Sunny Cyprus*] *Mans Mazais*, *2*. 69–71.
Andersone, I. (2019). Lūk, tas ir brīnums! [*Now That's A Miracle!*] *Mans Mazais, 3*. 16–21.
Bertholde, A. (2019b). Pusgads ar bērnu Spānijā. [*Half a Year with a Child in Spain*] *Mans Mazais, 3*. 68–71.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2019a). Reizēm ar mani vienu ir par maz. [*Sometimes I Alone Am Not Enough*] *Mans Mazais*, *4*. 16–22.
Bertholde, A. (2019c). Dzīve busiņā ar mazuli. [*Life in a Van with a Child] Mans Mazais*, *4*. 68–70.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2019b). Gribu būt priecīga mamma. [*I Want to Be a Happy Mom*] *Mans Mazais, 5*. 16–21.
Bertholde, A. (2019d). Vasara ar bērnu Amerikā. [*Summer with Child in America*] *Mans Mazais, 5.* 69–71.
Meiere, A. (2019b). Trauslā čaumaliņa kļūst arvien stiprāka. [*Fragile Shell Becomes Harder*] *Mans Mazais*, *6.* 18–23.
Kondrāte, E. (2019). Dēls deva spēku dzīvot tālāk. [*Son Gave Will to Live*] *Mans Mazais, 6*. 64–67.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2020a). Mūsu pasaule ir mainījusies. [*Our World Has Changed*] *Mans Mazais, 1*. 12–18.
Gauja, G. (2020a). Latvijā jūtamies laimīgi. [*We Feel Happy in Latvia*] *Mans Mazais, 1*. 64–67.
Gauja, G. (2020b). Tā es kļuvu par tēvu. [*This Is How I Became a Father*] *Mans Mazais, 2*. 12–18.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2020b). Dēls piedzima pandēmijas laikā. [*Son Was Born During the Pandemic*] *Mans Mazais, 3.* 16–21.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2020c). Augam kopā ar bērniem. [*Grow Along With Children*] *Mans Mazais*, *4.* 16–21.
Stāvause, V. (2020). Sapņi piepildās. Triju bērnu mamma – pilote. [*Dreams Come True. Mother of Three – a Pilot*] *Mans Mazais*, *4*. 60–63.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2020d). Bez rozā brillēm. [*Without Pink Glasses*] *Mans Mazais, 5.* 10–14.
Rudzīte, D. (2020). Pavisam citāda dzīve. [*Different Life*] *Mans Mazais*, *5.* 56–59.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2020e). Laime pilnīga. [*Absolute bliss*] *Mans Mazais, 6.* 10–15.
Strode-Kļaviņa, A. (2020). Stāsts ar laimīgām beigām. [*Story With Happy Ending*] *Mans Mazais, 6.* 60–63.
Bērziņa, Ē. (2021a). Trīs dēli – tas ir forši! [*Three Sons – It's Cool!*] *Mans Mazais*, *1.* 10–15.

Rozenbaha, L. (2021). Meitas piedzima oranžā vannā Ķīnā, dēls – Amerikā. [*Daughters Were Born in an Orange Bath in Chine, Son – in America*] *Mans Mazais, 1*. 60–63.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2021b). Pacietības mēram jābūt gana trenētam. [*Patience is Key*] *Mans Mazais, 2*. 12–17.

Lieģe-Doležko, A. (2021). Mans mājdzemdību stāsts. [*My Homebirth Story*] *Mans Mazais, 2.* 20–23.

Eniņa, Z. (2021). Gribi puisīti? Dāvanā arī meitenīte! [*Want a Son? Daughter Comes Also As a Gift*] *Mans Mazais, 2*. 62–64.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2021c). Dažkārt mums iet ļoti skaļi. [*Sometimes Everything's Loud*] *Mans Mazais, 3*. 12–16.

Štāla, L. (2021). Gribēja vienu, sanāca trīs! [*Wanted One, Created Three*] *Mans Mazais, 3*. 61–63.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2021d). Dēls ir mūsu dzīves gaisma. [*Son is the Light of Our Life*] *Mans Mazais, 4*. 12–17.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2021e). Bērns nav eksāmens, tā ir dzīve. [*Child is Not a Test, It's Life*] *Mans Mazais, 5*. 10–15.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2021f). Es neesmu tikai Tuta! [*I Am Not Only Tuta!*] *Mans Mazais, 6.* 10–14.

Bērziņa Ē. (2022a). Mēs esam viena komanda! [*We Are a Team*] *Mans Mazais, 1*. 10–15.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2022b). Divas mammas, divas meitas. [*Two Mothers, Two Daughters*] *Mans Mazais, 1*. 54–56.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2022c). Mācos dzīvot no jauna. [*Learning to Live Again*] *Mans Mazais, 2.* 8–12.

Štāla, L. (2022a). Saprast cilvēku no citas planētas. [*To Understand a Person From Another Planet*] *Mans Mazais*, *2*. 60–63.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2022d). Mans kuģis ir mainījis virzienu. [*My Ship Has Changed Its Course*] *Mans Mazais*, *3.* 8–13.

Lieģe-Doležko. (2022a). Vairs nedzīvoju kopā ar saviem bērniem. [*I Do Not Live With My Children*] *Mans Mazais, 3.* 62–63.

Smilga, I. (2022). Dzīves virpulī starp dažādām valstīm. [*In A Life's Whirlpool Between Different Countries*] *Mans Mazais, 4.* 8–13.

Štāla, L. (2022b). Cilmes šūnu terapija – tā varam meitai palīdzēt. [*Stem Cell Treatment – A Way to Help Our Daughter*] 4. 52–55.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2022e). Uz viena viļņa! [*On the Same Wave*] *Mans Mazais*, 5. 8–13.

Jaudzema, L. (2022). Pārcelties uz dzīvi laukos. [*Move To the Countryside*] *Mans Mazais, 5.* 60–63.

Ozoliņa, M. (2022). Ar katru bērnu mīlestība kļūst lielāka. [*Love Grows Larger with Each Child*] *Mans Mazais, 6.* 8–12.

Stāvause, V. (2022). Berlīnes piezīmes. [*Notes From Berlin*] *Mans Mazais, 6.* 48–50.

Lieģe-Doležko, A. (2022b). Mēs ejam savu ceļu. [*We Take Our Own Path*] *Mans Mazais*, *6.* 56–57.

REFERENCES

Auðardóttir, A. M. (2022). From Progressiveness to Perfection: Mothers' Descriptions of Their Children in Print Media, 1970–1979 Versus 2010–2019. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494221112445

Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2022). *Demography 2022*. Rīga: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. Retrieved from: https://stat.gov.lv/lv/statistikas-temas/iedzivotaji/iedzivotaju-skaits/publikacijas-un-infografikas/10937-demografija

Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. (2021). *Demography 2021*. Riga: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. Retrieved from https://admin.stat.gov.lv/system/files/publication/2021-10/Nr_05_Demografija_2021_%2821_00%29_LV_EN.pdf

Chae, J. (2022). Comparison, Competition, and Consumption: The 3Cs of Contemporary Motherhood in the Context of Children's Education. *Sex Roles, 87,* 550–564. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-022-01334-w

Coffey-Glover. (2020). The Boob Diaries: Discourses of Breastfeeding in "Exclusive Pumping" Blogs. *Discourse, Context & Media, 38,* 100446. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2020.100446

Cummins, M.W., Brannon, G.E. (2022). Mothering in a Pandemic: Navigating Care Work, Intensive Motherhood, and COVID-19. *Gend. Issues, 39*, 123–141, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-022-09295-w

Das, R. (2019). The Mediation of Childbirth: 'Joyful' Birthing and Strategies of Silencing on a Facebook Discussion Group. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *22*(5–6), 495–510.

Elliott, S., Brenton, J., & Powell, R. (2017). Brothermothering: Gender, Power, and the Parenting Strategies of Low-Income Black Single Mothers of Teenagers. *Social Problems. 65*(4), 439–455, https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spx021

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Polity Press.

Feasey, R. (2017) "Good, Bad or Just Good Enough: Representations of Motherhood and the Maternal Role on the Small Screen". *Studies in the Maternal*, *9*(1), 5. https://doi.org/10.16995/sim.234

Forbes, L. K., Donovan, C., & Lamar, M. R. (2020). Differences in Intensive Parenting Attitudes and Gender Norms Among U.S. Mothers. *The Family Journal*, *28*(1), 63–71. https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480719893964

Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Pantheon Books, New York.

Graham, S. (2017). Being a 'Good' Parent: Single Women Reflecting upon 'Selfishness' and 'Risk' When Pursuing Motherhood Through Sperm Donation. *Anthropology & Medicine*, https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2017.1326757

Hays, S. (1996). *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Jansone-Ratinika, N. (2013). *Father's Pedagogical Competence in Family Nowadays*. [Tēva pedagoģiskā kompetence mūsdienu ģimenē] (Doctoral thesis). University of Latvia, Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Arts.

Jørgensen, M., Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: Sage Publications.

Jovanovski, N., & Cook, K. (2019). The Vulnerable-Empowered Mother of Academic Food Discourses: A Qualitative Meta-Synthesis of Studies of Low-Income Mothers and Food Provisioning. *Health Sociology Review*, 107–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/14461242.2019.1578984

Lazard, L. (2022). Digital Mothering: Sharenting, Family Selfies and Online Affective-Discursive Practices. *Feminism & Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1177/09593535221083840

Liss, M., Schiffrin, H. H., Mackintosh, V.H. et al. (2013). Development and Validation of a Quantitative Measure of Intensive Parenting Attitudes. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 22, 621–636. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-012-9616-y

Mackenzie, J., & Zhao, S. (2021). Motherhood Online: Issues and Opportunities for Discourse Analysis. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 40, 100472. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2021.100472

Mainland, M., Shaw, S. M., Prier, A. (2016). Parenting in an Era of Risk: Responding to the Obesity Crisis, *Journal of Family Studies*, *23*(1), 86–97, https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2015.1090328

Malatzky, C. A. R. (2017). Australian Women's Complex Engagement with the Yummy Mummy Discourse and the Bodily Ideals of Good Motherhood. *Women's Studies International Forum, 62*, 25–33. https://doi.org./10.1016/j.wsif.2017.02.006

Meng, B. (2020) When Anxious Mothers Meet Social Media: Wechat, Motherhood and the Imaginary of the Good Life, *Javnost – The Public*, *27*(2), 171–185, https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2020.1727276

Micalizzi, A. (2020) Exploring Gender and Sexuality Through a Twitter Lens: The Digital Framing Effect of the #Fertilityday Campaign by Female Users, *Information, Communication & Society*, http://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1808044

Moore, J., & Abetz, J. S. (2019). What Do Parents Regret About Having Children? Communicating Regrets Online. *Journal of Family Issues, 40*(3), 390–412. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X18811388

Murray, L., & Finn, M. (2012). Good Mothers, Bad Thoughts: New Mothers' Thoughts of Intentionally Harming Their Newborns. *Feminism & Psychology*, *22*(1), 41–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353511414015

Orton-Johnson, K. (2017). Mummy Blogs and Representations of Motherhood: "Bad Mummies" and Their Readers. Social Media + Society, 3(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117707186

Ray, R. (2017). Identity of Distance: How Economically Marginalized Black and Latina Women Navigate Risk Discourse and Employ Feminist Ideals. *Social Problems*. *65*(1), http://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spx025

Rizzo, K. M., Schiffrin, H.H. & Liss, M. (2013). Insight into the Parenthood Paradox: Mental Health Outcomes of Intensive Mothering. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 22*, 614–620. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-012-9615-z

Roper, S., & Capdevila, R. (2020). Hapless, Helpless, Hopeless: An Analysis of Stepmothers' Talk about Their (Male) Partners. *Feminism & Psychology*, *30*(2), 248–266. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353519900212

Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2017). Doing Gender Online: New Mothers' Psychological Characteristics, Facebook Use, and Depressive Symptoms. *Sex Roles, 76*, 276–289.

Shea, R., Bryant, L., & Wendt, S. (2016). 'Nappy Bags Instead of Handbags': Young Motherhood and Self-Identity. *Journal of Sociology, 52*(4), 840–855. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783315599594

Sniekers, M., & Rommes, E. (2020). Acting Their Age? An Intersectional Approach on Young Motherhood From Young Mothers' Perspectives. *Affilia, 35*(4), 466–484. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109920906783

Sunderland, J. (2000). Baby Entertainer, Bumbling Assistant and Line Manager: Discourses of Fatherhood in Parentcraft Texts. *Discourse & Society*, *11*(2), 249–274. https://doi-org.datubazes.lanet.lv/10.1177/0957926500011002006

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (2023). Health Statistics Database. Retrieved from: https://statistika.spkc.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/Health/

Tiidenberg, K., & Baym, N. K. (2017). Learn It, Buy It, Work It: Intensive Pregnancy on Instagram. *Social Media + Society*, 3(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116685108

van Belle, J. (2016). *Paternity and Parental Leave Policies Across the European Union*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. https://doi.org/10.7249/RR1666

Trapezņikova, I., Goldmanis, M., Koroļeva, I., Aleksandrovs, A. (2019). *Latvia's Families in Generations* [Latvijas ģimenes paaudzēs, 2018 (1.0.0).] LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2587219

Ylänne, V. (2016). Too Old to Parent? Discursive Representations of Late Parenting in the British Press. *Discourse & Communication*, *10*(2), 176–197. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481315611242

7.5. Publication V. "Wake up and think of the children!": The ambivalent relationship between motherhood, femininity and anti-vaccination

Zitmane, M., Lāma, E. (2023). "Wake up and think of the children!": The ambivalent relationship between motherhood, femininity and anti-vaccination. In: Winiarska-Brodowska, M. (ed.). *The New Communication Revolution*. Uniwersytet Jagiellonski – Instytut Dziennikarstwa, Mediow i Komunikacji Spolecznej. P. 245–271.
https://media.uj.edu.pl/documents/1384650/134373778/The+New+Communication+Revolution

Marita Zitmane
ORCID ID 0000-0002-1672-9520
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA

Elza Lāma
ORCID ID 0000-0002-9271-3862
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA

"WAKE UP AND THINK OF THE CHILDREN!": THE AMBIVALENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTHERHOOD, FEMININITY, AND ANTI-VACCINATION

ABSTRACT

Anti-vaccination sentiments have grown strong in public discourse in recent decades, as online environment has proved to be fertile setting for spreading conspiracy theories and false news. The study sheds light onto a pressing problem of tackling false news on social media, providing valuable insights into the arguments, fears, emotions, and views of people, especially mothers, struggling to link seemingly conflicting concepts of "good mothering", anti-vaccination and properly "doing gender" online. Research employing discourse analysis and netnography approach to Facebook threads that are discussing arguments concerning vaccination of children reveals a strong anti-vaccination discourse on social media targeting mothers using notions of traditional femininity, idealized motherhood, and visions of 'natural' immunity to paint vaccination as a poor choice for a responsible mother.

Keywords: Anti-vaccination, Motherhood, Social Media, Femininity, Disinformation

INTRODUCTION[1]

Anti-vaccination sentiments have grown strong in public discourse in recent decades and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the online environment has proved to be a fertile setting for spreading conspiracy theories and false news. Anti-vaccine groups are using social networks to spread dubious health information, creating their own content without any evidence to confuse users who access their pages (Ortiz-Sánchez, Velando-Soriano et.al, 2020, p. 1). There is evident gender-based differences when it comes to decisions regarding vaccination. Recent surveys found men were more likely to take the COVID-19 vaccine, compared to women, whilst existing studies show that the "vast majority" of people commenting, sharing, and liking anti-vaccination information on Facebook are women (Madhawi, 2020). Another significant aspect, which is important to this research is the fact that women are over-represented within alternative medicine, both as consumers and as service providers (Shahvisi, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to comprehend, how notions about femininity and motherhood relate to decisions about vaccination.

The dominant discourse of contemporary motherhood supports "intensive mothering", coined by Sharon Hays (1996), which implies reinforcing traditional gender roles and providing undivided attention to the child, in order to ensure the best possible environment for his/her development (Schoppe-Sullivan, S.J., Yavorsky, J.E., Bartholomew, M.K. et al., 2017). "Intensive mothering" and Western culture has also gradually transformed childbearing and rearing from a natural phenomenon into a strictly medicalized process, valuing the physical wellbeing of the child and mother above all else, and stressing the superiority of medical knowledge over any alternatives, including a woman's own knowledge of her body and instincts (Miller, 2005).

1 This research is funded by the Latvian Council of Science, project "Jeopardizing Democracy through Disinformation and Conspiracies: Reconsidering Experience of Latvia", project No. lzp-2019/1–0278.

At the same time alternative medicine and esoteric well-being is often assumed to be attractive to women because it is coherent with normative femininity (being caring and gentle, having strong communication skills, taking emotions seriously, and seeking to care for rather than cure) as well as it legitimizes the relationality that women are socialized to embody in care-giving in their feminine gender role (Sointu and Woodhead 2008). It is important to stress that recommending against vaccination is common amongst esoteric well-being practitioners (Ernst, 2001).

Therefore, although the dominant discourse of motherhood both stresses the importance of "Western medicine" and places the weight of health and other decisions on the shoulders of the mother, various alternative discourses have also emerged. "Hypnobirth" movements, "free range parenting", "yummy/slummy mommies" etc., challenge the principles of "intensive mothering" (Das, 2019). However, many of them continue to acknowledge the framework of the dominant discourse instead of creating a new one. Thus, this study explores the ambivalent relationship between the dominant discourse of "intensive mothering", femininity and the "anti-vaccination" movement: the connection between gender roles, imposed by a patriarchal society, and the "anti-vaxx" movement supporters.

The study raises the following research questions:

1. How is the dominant discourse of intensive mothering reproduced or challenged in the posts and comments of the opposers of child vaccination?
2. What are the core arguments employed by "anti-vaxx" supporters?
3. How does the notion of traditional femininity play out within the "anti-vaxx" discourse?
4. How does the patriarchal concept of motherhood influence decisions about vaccination?

This research employs a discourse analysis and netnography approach to Facebook threads that are discussing arguments concerning the vaccination of children. Analysis of two Facebook groups "Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums" [Sympathetic Mothers' forum] and

"Vakcīnrealitāte" [Vaccine reality] is carried out for a period of eight months (October 2020 – May 2021), when the discourse of vaccination grew in strength due to the vaccination of adults against COVID-19.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT EMPIRICAL STUDIES

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE, ANTI-VACCINATION, AND FEMININITY

Vaccination decision is not simply a matter of two opposing viewpoints – to vaccinate or not to vaccinate, it includes a spectrum of attitudes from complete refusal to confident acceptance. Parental vaccination decision making involves cognitive, psychosocial, and political factors influenced by current scientific, cultural, and media environments (McNeil et. al, 2019). Studies show that vaccination decision making was influenced by personal, family or others' experiences, i.e., generally a recall of reactions to vaccination or others' perspectives on vaccinating, and external sources, such as health professionals or institutions (McNeil et. al, 2019). And judgements, particularly in situations of uncertainty, are more likely influenced by information that is familiar, salient, and recent. Social networks are seen as sources of influence in decision making perceptions as well. However, the use of the internet for "research" to support decision making is concerning as non-medical websites include inaccuracies, rumors, and myths that contribute to fear and hesitancy (Tickner, Leman & Woodcock, 2009).

All studies agree that the mechanisms to spread the anti-vaccine messages are the use of personal stories, talking about the risks of vaccines and their components, the business of the pharmaceutical industry and conspiracy theories, sometimes supported with links to websites based on no evidence. Anti-vaccine users seem to grow more cohesively on Facebook than pro-vaccine groups (Schmidt,

Zoll & Scala, 2018). Anti-vaccine groups are using social networks to spread health information, creating their own content without any evidence to confuse users who access their pages. To do this, most of the time they use alleged stories about children who have suffered side effects that end up moving the readers; a fact that impacts more than the scientific data provided by health agencies (Ortiz-Sánchez et. al, 2020, p. 10). With the ascendance of a post-factual culture, arguments relying on evidence, reproducibility, and consistency are liable to have ever less traction.

When it comes to the vaccination of children, anti-vaccine groups raise doubts about the administration of multiple vaccines at such early ages and the lack of individualization of these drugs. Their fear lies in the possible adverse effects and the constant change in the vaccination schedule, as well as in the differences between autonomous communities. This is linked to the belief that because the disease has very low incidence it is not necessary to vaccinate children (which is, in fact, due to the vaccine) or because they believe in natural remedies or alternative medicine, so people in the anti-vaccine group end up looking for information that confirms their beliefs (Ortiz-Sánchez et. al, 2020, p. 2).

Recommending against vaccination is common amongst alternative medicine practitioners especially within chiropractic, homoeopathy, and naturopathy. There are several reasons why women are more inclined to alternative medicine. First, medicine is often inadequate in meeting the differential needs of female bodies and women patients. Women's health testimony is deemed to be less credible, knowledge about both women's health issues and the specificities of disease in females are inadequate, and women receive inadequate treatment for a range of health problems, leading to higher morbidity and mortality, this may be partly due to the sluggish pace of change of patriarchal values within medicine (Shahvisi 2019, p. 101). Second, women's interest in alternative medicine can be contextualized within a broader trend of women's greater interest in spirituality and the holistic milieu. Alternative medicine care is often assumed to offer attributes that are commonly identified with normative femininity,

that is, being caring, being gentle, having strong communication skills, taking emotions seriously, and seeking to care for rather than cure (Shuval & Gross, 2008, p. 51). It is theorized to be attractive to women because it is coherent with, and legitimizes, the relationality that women are socialized to embody in their caregiving but at the same time validates notions of self-care which subvert the stereotypical care role and recognize the importance of a woman thinking about her own well-being rather than that of her dependents (Sointu & Woodhead, 2008).

"INTENSIVE MOTHERING"

The mediation of motherhood on social media points to a juxtaposition of two discourses – "the emancipatory, feminist revival of women asserting themselves against the white-coated, often male, medical community" and the "neo-liberal, self-regulating, self-managing, highly individualized discourse of ideal births and ideal birthing modes which sit within the intensive motherhood discourse" (Das, 2019, p. 498). Das proposes to treat these different discourses as 'two sides of one coin', whereas other researchers go even further and compare motherhood discourses to a spectrum or a dynamic organism. A 'spectrum' of motherhood discourses, according to Steiner and Bronstein (2017, p. 69) includes "free range" parenting on one side, where parents feel that children should be self-reliant and independent, and are given more freedom, and "helicopter parenting" supporters on the other side, focusing on the risks and responsibilities of parents (especially, mothers), representing "intensive mothering" ideology in its most extreme forms.

The dominant discourse of motherhood both in traditional and new media is of 'intensive mothering', coined by Hays (1996) in *"The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood"*. Hays explores, how society has constructed a 'right' kind of mothering which urges mothers to sacrifice "unselfishly [..] their time, money and love on behalf of sacred children", while simultaneously valorizing "a set of ideas that runs directly counter to it, one emphasizing impersonal relations between

isolated individuals efficiently pursuing their personal profit" (Hays, 1996, p. 97). Even though the 'intensive mothering' discourse is based on the values of 'white', middle-class families in a neoliberal society, its influence is felt in other groups and even cultures (Das, 2019, p. 495). 'Intensive mothering' pressures the mother to invest enormous physical and emotional resources into the wellbeing of the child, leaving other interests or priorities unattended, even under-taking risks.

"Intensive mothering" echoes pro-natalism and favours medicalization of the whole pregnancy and labour experience, striping the woman of her decision rights and holding the medical experts' views above all else; the pregnant woman and woman in labor is deemed a 'broken machine' that needs constant monitoring and tinkering with, paying insufficient notice to her own knowledge of her body (Tiidenberg, & Baym, 2017, p. 2; Yam, 2019, pp. 81–82.). The main role and goal of a woman is to ensure a healthy child and then devote her life to raising him. According to Tiidenberg and Baym, "intensive mothering" also stresses the importance of surveillance, constantly observing one's own actions and comparing them to others, to ensure the 'up-to-code' mothering according to society's standards (2017, p. 2). As a result, new mothers' access social media to gain support, as well as to 'perform' their mothering as a successful venture (Schoppe-Sullivan et. al., 2017, p. 277), practicing 'sharenting' and showing-off their children as a token of success (Lazard, 2019, pp. 1–2).

Hays and other researchers point to the inability of "intensive mothering" to deal with problems of modernity, as the ideology is based on the assumption that 'all the troubles of the world can be solved by the individual efforts of superhuman women" (1996, p. 177). Parents, and especially mothers, regardless of subjective options or opportunities, bear the weight of the responsibilities of not only their own wellbeing and health, but also the weight of making the 'correct' decisions for their children, in order to succeed in an invisible, never-ending competition (Meng, 2020, p. 173).

As mentioned earlier, social media provides a fertile platform for various discourses, challenging some particular aspects of the dominant discourse, or even creating alternatives outside the borders

of what is presumed 'normal' or appropriate (Yam, 2019, p. 93). Micalizzi argues that the scene of counter-narratives of motherhood is rather fragmented, as they tend to contrast and interact with each other and the dominant discourse as well (Micalizzi, 2020, p. 7). They might be described as fluid and ever changing. Tiidenberg et. al. speaks of "yummy mummy" discourse that brings forward aesthetic values, women's sexuality, and desire parallel to being a good mother, discarding discomfort and physical changes of the body as part of motherhood (2017, p. 8). While this discourse is maintained mostly by "influencers", its norms are acknowledged and taken into account by average social media users as well (Williams et. al., 2017, p. 10.). A rather sharp contrast is the "slummy mummy" discourse that refuses "shallow" beauty standards and allows the woman "be normal" without excessive worrying of losing the "baby weight" etc.; however, both these discourses, while trying to challenge, accept the value system of the dominant "intensive mothering" (Orton-Johnson, 2017, pp. 2–3).

"Alternative" discourses of motherhood include the narratives and practices that, for instance, denounce Western medicine and focus on the 'natural' aspects of mothering, starting from the 'hypnobirthing' movement to aromatherapy, naturopathy, and homeopathy, etc., focusing on the empowerment of women's 'natural' powers (Das, 2019, p. 501). Social media offers a playground to both show support to different choices, as well as to challenge the norms of 'intensive mothering' and 'neoliberal individualism' (Steiner, Bronstein, 2017, p. 73), allowing women to battle their uncertainties and find comfort in advice or experience others have gone through.

MOTHERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Researchers, studying motherhood in the 21st century, do not view mothers as a "homogeneous group", instead they focus on the subjectivity, exploring, how women experience individual mothering, varying in forms and rich in complexity (Lazard, et. al., 2019, p. 4). The everyday life of contemporary mothers is closely bound to social

media, which in recent years have become platforms for digital diaries, "safe spaces" (Archer, Kao, 2018, p. 124) for social support, and even forums for those unanswered questions that usually are directed towards medical specialists.

Even though some research suggests, that both men and women choose to share their parenting experience and create visual narratives regarding their children on social media, Holiday, Densley & Norman (2020) argue that it is women who do it more frequently. According to Fox and Hoy (2019) even up to 90% of women spend around 7 hours per week on their smartphones to gain advice, to share pictures or to converse with 'baby brands'. Women access social media to 'vent' and share frustrating anecdotes from everyday life (Archer, Kao, 2018, p. 123). *Facebook* may be a platform for strengthening 'feminine identity' or gaining a sense of affirmation and empowerment; however, it may also serve as a structure for solidifying 'cultural norms through replicated gendered interactions' (Schoppe-Sullivan, et. al. 2017, p. 287). Stories in traditional media have been often constructed through a 'masculine' prism, ignoring or even claiming the topics of interest for women not news-worthy (North, 2016, p. 328). Social media expand the space for practicing motherhood, adding another dimension, while still being concerned with the offline world's problems.

The digital, extended place, intertwining mothers on the internet or 'mamasphere' (Orton-Johnson, 2017, p. 2) may incorporate a sense of dualism and contrasts. It is a 'performative space' (Archer, 2019, pp. 52–53) for actualizing the motherhood experience, but also may be a platform for displaying 'correct' ways of 'doing gender' and 'doing motherhood' (Schoppe-Sullivan et. al., 2017, p. 278), as well as participating in social rituals. Social media may serve also as 'place of resistance', where to create one's own narrative and identity outside the mass media, dominated by patriarchal discourse that stigmatizes, sexualizes and pathologizes labour and the woman's body, according to Shui-yin Sharon Yam (2019, p. 97). However, these 'transformative spaces' may easily become yet another platform designed for echoing long-standing normative ideas about the nature of motherhood and the role and identity of the mother: it's a double-edged sword, simultaneously

protecting and inspiring, and, on the other hand, functioning as a weapon of destruction by creating unrealistic social standards and stimulating mothers' rivalry (Orton-Johnson, 2017, p. 8; Chae, 2015, p. 519).

With the rise in popularity of social media, researchers have also brought up the question of the level of digital competency among new mothers. Lupton has concluded that women, sharing sensitive information about their family have only just begun to understand the seriousness of the situation (Lupton, 2017, p. 2). Mothers, especially new mothers, are vulnerable on the internet, facing potential risks regarding sensitive information ending up in the wrong hands (Fox & Hoy, 2019, p. 425; Chalken, Anderson, 2017, p. 2) and other dangers. However, potential gains, for instance, the joy, knowledge, and bargain deals from sharing social and health information, seem to outweigh the dangers in the short run.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The research is carried out by the means of network analysis. Network analysis is a multi-disciplinary method that features structural intuition, systematic empirical data, graphical imagery, and the use of mathematical or computational models. Network analysis enables researchers to map out the interrelationships among objects and attributes both in the media agenda and the public agenda The advantage of the network analysis approach is that it moves beyond mere hierarchical rankings, allowing for analyses of social processes in the network (Guo, 2012). The other method employed in this study is discourse analysis. Discourse analysis offers a way of seeing how society experiences the world. Discourse analysis provides the opportunity of exploring a virtually infinite range of spoken and written text types, including texts on social media. Critical discourse analysis serves as tool in looking at what discursive choices have been made in representing the world in a certain way. Discursive choices can show what is assumed about the world, what practices

are possible, what practices are not (Sunderland, 299). In this study, discourse analysis will be used to analyse how vaccination choices are related to motherhood and what role the patriarchal concept of motherhood plays in this process.

A thorough analysis of two major *Facebook* groups – "Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums" (AMF) (*Forum for Responsive Mothers*) and "*Vakcīnrealitāte Latvijā*" (VRL) (*Vaccine Reality Latvia*) – was carried out. AMF, created in 2014, is a private, but visible *Facebook* forum with over 27,000 members dedicated for discussing the topical experience of parenting and other social matters in a 'positive' manner. This forum is notorious for questionable advice and provocations on childrearing, discipline, and medical procedures. Its members are not only mothers as the name of the forum suggests, but also fathers and adults without children. Often comments and posts in AMF are related to the content produced by VRL. VRL positions itself as a "local business" with the sole aim of informing society about the reality of vaccination and to provide support for young parents to make an "informed decision" regarding their child's vaccination. The *Facebook* page, followed by more than 10,000 profiles, is run by Kristīne Duņeca, an ex-journalist opposed to vaccination. The page was closed and banned in late November 2021. The usual posts contain detailed personal accounts by anonymous (or semi-anonymous) people that have or had faced tragic vaccination side effects, advice to deal with vaccination-caused illnesses, including home-remedies and "natural" substances, information based on pseudo-scientific resources on the risks of vaccination, as well as "research" on the components of vaccines etc. Some of the information is accessible only by donation; pleas for contributions for the author are regular.

The analysis was done in several steps. First, all posts were filtered by keywords, containing words "vaccine" and "to vaccinate" ("*vakcīna,* "*vakcinēt",* etc.), their derivatives ("*vakcinēšana*" etc.) and synonyms ("*pote", "potēt"* etc.). All the keywords were applied individually. Second, posts were filtered by their date, concentrating on the period of October, 2020, to May, 2021. Third, all posts were read through, and only the posts, focusing on the vaccination of children, were included in the

sample. The final sample consists of 11 posts from AMF and 33 posts from VRL. A more detailed analysis of 33 posts on VRL reveals that there are too few comments from followers that are relevant to the study. Most comments echo other posts and replicate disinformation, appeal to the 'corrupt' pharmaceutical companies, government officials and medical professionals, without further discussion. Thus, posts and comments from VRL are not further researched here.

Of the 11 posts in AMF, 4 posts were related to "obligatory" vaccination (tuberculosis, whooping cough etc.) decisions, others – with vaccination against encephalitis or seasonal influenza etc. The rate of comments to these posts ranges from 45 to 615; "Likes" to posts are far less – from 1 to 15. Members of the group are eager to post their views and advice; "sharing" posts is banned. After careful deliberation and study of each of these 11 posts, detailed attention was brought to three posts: one of which exploring a situation, where the father and husband prohibits a mother to vaccinate their children, the second contemplating the pros and cons of vaccination according to the official calendar, set by medical professionals and institutions, and the final one asking women opposed to vaccinating to explain their choices regarding vaccination against COVID-19.

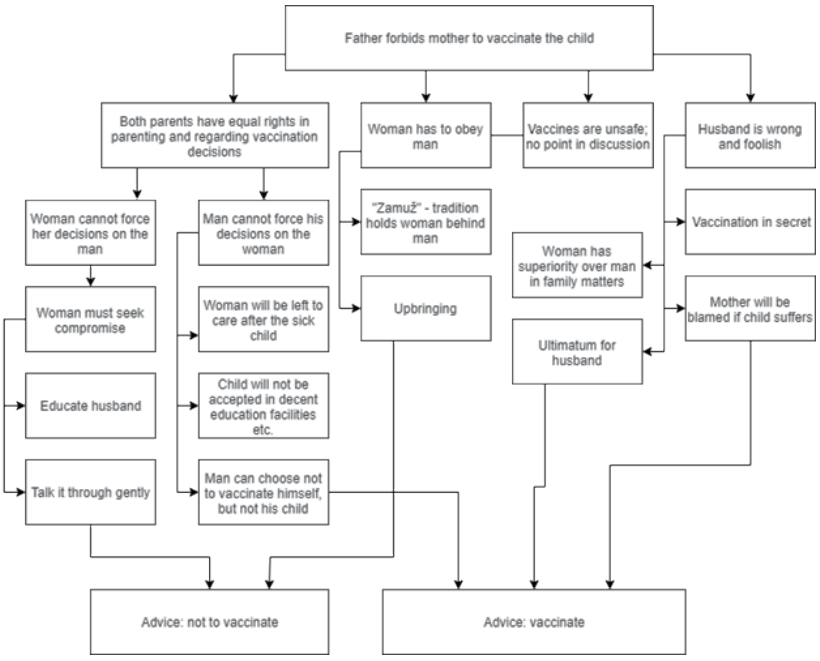
FINDINGS

Analysis of results proceeds with exploration of the three separate posts and comments on AMF. The first post is by a mother of two children, expecting a third, whose husband "suddenly", "after reading articles on Google", during the pandemic of "COVID-19", has become opposed to vaccines. She adds that she is also opposed to vaccination against all the "modern" illnesses; however, she expresses her concern and asks advice from members of AMF on how to approach this manner, when the views regarding vaccination are drastically different between a husband and wife. The post has 147 comments and 2 "Likes".

The most engaging or "Top" comments advise to seek compromise, "to talk things through" with the husband and to educate him about the risks of falling ill with these serious diseases to which vaccines have been available for a long time. Then, there follow comments urging the mother to vaccinate children "on the hush", without the husband knowing it, as the responsibility of children's health falls on the mother and "the mother will be blamed" if the child catches tuberculosis, diphtheria, etc. Other women add that "it's my child, I have given birth, I have the right to decide" and that the woman must take charge without having to explain or hide the vaccination fact. This sentiment is shared in other "Top" comments as well.

A thematic analysis of comments (Figure 31) shows four major threads of the types of advice, provided by members of AMF.

Figure 31. Visualisation of Themes of Comments Regarding Father Forbidding Vaccination of Children.



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

As mentioned before, the most popular comments urge either the mother to take charge and vaccinate the children without hesitation, ignoring the husband's concerns, or to seek compromise, as both parents share the responsibilities of children equally. A major part of comments considers the husband to be "wrong and foolish", urging the woman to vaccinate in secret or to give an ultimatum (for instance, withhold physical intimacy etc.) or exercise a mother's authority over the father in children's health issues. The arguments include society blaming the mother if the child should get sick, as well as reminding them that the mother usually takes care of sick members of the family and takes care of medical appointments, thus, has the right to overrule the father's decisions.

Other women argue that both parents are equally responsible and share equal rights regarding vaccination decisions. The major part of comments supporting this notion argue that the man cannot force his decisions on a woman, and they must come to a compromise together. Other comments reveal that, again, the woman will be left to care after the ill child; moreover, some education facilities will frown upon unvaccinated children or even deny acceptance. Finally, some argue that the man may choose not to vaccinate himself, but he is not entitled to risk his child's wellbeing.

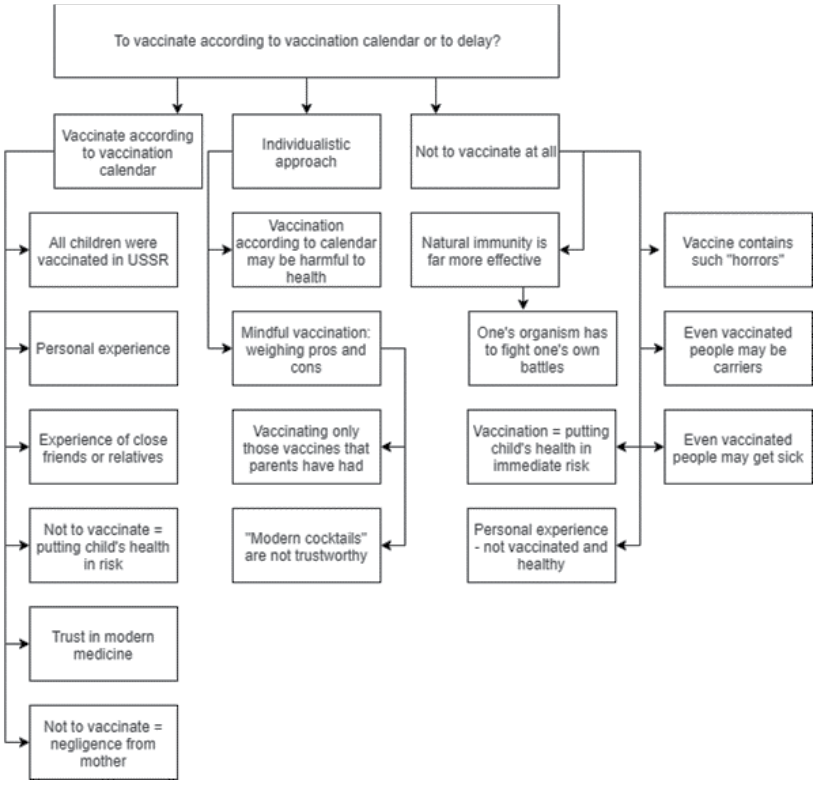
Lastly, anti-vaccination sentiments are shared by a minority of commenters and are supported by several arguments. By reminding that both parents are responsible for their children, some women argue that the woman cannot force her decisions on a man and should talk it through "gently", educate him (and herself), but, if a mutually acceptable solution cannot be found, the woman should accept the man's rights and not vaccinate children. A more drastic approach is shared by even less women, arguing that the woman has to obey the man, as the woman is "behind" the man in all matters and that is the way certain woman have been brought up. Finally, several comments just express frustration with vaccination and are thankful for the man's "common sense".

The second post in the sample has been created by an anonymous user "Sim Sim" with a picture of a couple in its profile, seeking advice, whether to vaccinate a 2,5-month-old baby with all the "obligatory" shots according to the vaccination calendar. She is concerned that this is a very "early age" for a child to be administered such a number of shots, and even though "someone may call her old-fashioned" she ponders delaying vaccination. The post has 615 comments (and 15 likes). Although "Top" or "most engaging" comments to this post include doubts regarding vaccination, advice to consult VRL or accounts of serious reactions to the shots, most comments urge to vaccinate or express personal experience of vaccination according to the vaccination calendar. The argumentation employed by commentators is illustrated in Figure 32.

Members of AMF, who urge the mother to vaccinate according to the calendar follow several patterns, some of which are rational, some – purely emotional. Comments include a lot of accounts of personal experience or experience of close relatives that either have not been vaccinated and experienced severe illness or have been vaccinated and felt that they had escaped from harm. Then there are reassuring comments that these vaccines had been administered during their childhood, while Latvia was part of USSR, and they have not experienced any complications, thus, vaccines are safe. Also urging to vaccinate are members of AMF, who, in contrast, appeal to the benefits of modern medicine and advise to trust doctors and western medicine. Finally, there are emotional accounts stressing that choosing to delay or not vaccinate at all can be described as negligence towards the child and willfully putting the child's health at risk.

Another segment of comments urges the mother to delay vaccination as it could be "harmful" to the child's health during the first months of the life. Other commentators advise towards "mindful" vaccination and encourage weighing the pros and cons of each individual vaccine. Some of these comments include advice to choose only those shots that they themselves have received during childhood and to "stay away from modern cocktails" as they are harmful and not trustworthy.

Figure 32. Visualisation of Themes of Comments Regarding Vaccination According to the Vaccination Calendar.

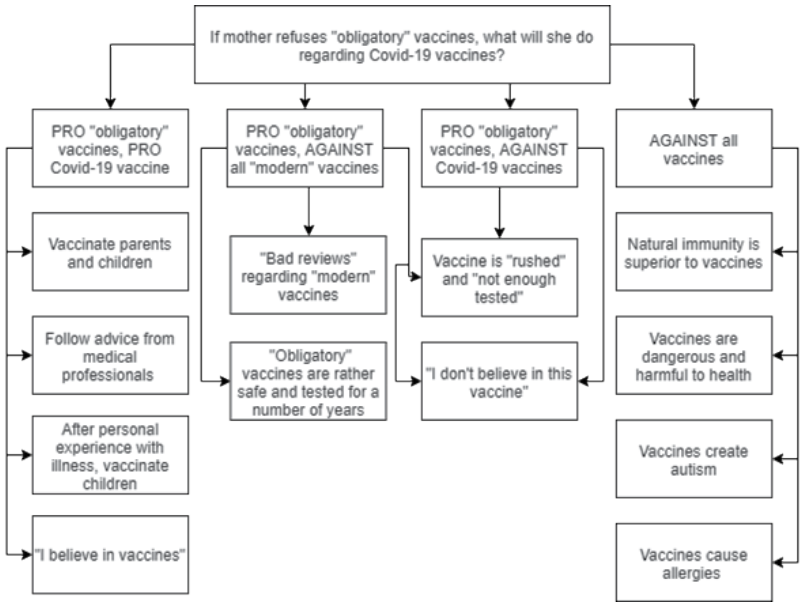


Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Finally, part of the comments include encouragement not to vaccinate at all, as "natural immunity is far more effective" and one's organism has to "fight one's own battles". Other arguments by members of AMF stress that a closer study of the "contents" of the vaccine reveals "horrors" hidden within, as well as the claim that even the vaccinated people may be carriers or get sick. Some commentators express their view that vaccination means "putting the child's health in immediate risk", as the possibility of catching these diseases (tuberculosis, diphtheria, hepatitis, etc.) is very low, but the possible complications from vaccination are almost inevitable, and will last for life. Lastly, the personal experience argument also is mentioned in this context, stressing that the person has not received any vaccines herself and is "perfectly healthy".

The third post of the sample is by an "experienced parent", asking those mothers, who choose not to vaccinate their children with "obligatory" vaccines, what they are planning to do regarding vaccines against COVID-19. The post has 13 "Likes" and 299 comments, most of which differ from the previously analysed posts, as the question is directed towards "anti-vaxx" parents. The comments that follow may be categorized in four groups (Figure 3).

Figure 33. Visualisation of Themes of Comments Regarding "Obligatory" Vaccines.



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

First, although a minority view in this discussion, there are members of AMF who stress that they "believe" in vaccines, that they have been vaccinated and have done the same for their children, emphasizing the role of medical professionals and the weight of advice from doctors, as well as sharing personal experience with serious illness. Second, there are two groups of comments that appear quite similar but do have slight differences: commentators who support "obligatory" vaccines, but are against all "modern" vaccines; and commentators,

which support "obligatory" vaccines, but are particularly against the COVID-19 shot. Comments explain that "modern" vaccines, e.g., against influenza, against cervical cancer etc., "have bad reviews", that there have been health complaints after receiving the vaccine. Moreover, "obligatory" vaccines "are around for a longer period of time", and, thus, have been proven safe, whereas "modern vaccine cocktails" may prove harmful or even fatal after a number of years, and the mothers "wouldn't want to risk it" with their child's health. Similar concerns regarding the speed of which a vaccine has been developed, the "rush", have been also expressed by commentators expressly rejecting the vaccine against COVID-19. Comments including claims that authors do not 'believe in" this vaccine and they "wouldn't want their child to be a lab rat" are common. Lastly, a significant number of comments include encouragement not to vaccinate children at all. These commentators echo views expressed also in other posts: "natural immunity" is superior to "synthetic", vaccines are harmful and dangerous to the health. Moreover, the commonly found misinformation stressing the "link" between vaccines and autism, or vaccines and allergies, is also mentioned.

In the discussion threads selected for the analysis, a number of discourses constructing the traditional female gender role can be singled out, which are constructed based on the denial of science and the praising of self-listening ("it is better to follow the body's wants") (Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums, 2020).

The experience of individuals (even if it is not their own experience) is valued more than a scientific opinion or a scientific study. In principle, there is a contrast between experience (valuable, to be listened to) and scientific research (not worth listening to). Here one can see connections with the thesis described in the theory, that conventional medicine can often seem alienated, derogatory from people's individual experience. In the analysed Facebook discussions, personal experience, even if not self-experienced, is assessed as more reliable than scientific research, which does not provide an opportunity to identify and to connect emotionally.

The belief that, parents who are skeptical of the vaccine are better as parents, more thorough, more sensitive, and smarter, is discursively created and maintained. Vaccines are positioned as an absolute evil, the worst thing a parent can do to their children: "I have not poisoned my children with vaccines and will not do so" (Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums, 2020). Discourse on faith in the vaccine as a sign of a limitation of the mind is repeated in the discussions. It is discursively stated that mothers who believe in vaccines are less educated, while vaccine skeptics have 'made my own research', so they go deeper, search for information, and 'educate' themselves. Such statements are often associated not only with intellectual superiority, but also with moral superiority: "I think with my own head and not someone's else. And yes, I do not belong to a crowd, because I am a Human who has a conscience, self-respect, and intelligence" (Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums, 2020).

Opponents of vaccination use a discursive technique opposing specialists of alternative medicine to specialists of conventional medicine. The former is described as better and smarter. This discourse positions alternative medicine as corresponding to traditional femininity. Alternative medicine care is gentle, taking emotions seriously, and seeking to care rather than cure and thus is more feminine. This cognition is also discursively reinforced by constructing the opposition of artificial (scientific) and natural (intuitive): "Natural immunity is countless times better than artificial". (Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums, 2021 Jan.). This reproduces the binary opposition between reason (masculinity) and intuition (femininity). The intuition of women, especially mothers, is contrasted with the advice of doctors and is given superiority: "Don't believe that doctors are smart, and you have to listen to them if MOTHER's intuition tells the opposite!" (Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums, 2021 Jan.). In this way, not only is the esoteric discourse about a woman as an intuitive being maintained, but it is also pointed out that it is 'natural' for mothers to know better than doctors, to intuitively feel the needs of their child. Thus, the role of the patriarchal female gender role is confirmed, in which women are socialized to embody caregiving and putting the well-being of others over her own well-being.

DISCUSSION

Regarding research questions, first of all, evidence of the reproduction of the "intensive mothering" discourse in the posts and comments on AMF, studied in this text, is visible. The weight of the sole responsibility over the child's health and well-being, as well as the pressure to make the correct choices in the child's best interests, is felt on "both sides", i. e., both among the "pro-vaccination" and "anti-vaxx" parents. Mothers express the need to "do what is best for the child", they speak of the pressure of society and fear of judgement, even blame, for their choices. Mothers, who argue for vaccination, express similar sentiments – some declare that not vaccinating a child is "negligence" and feel that they would be "frowned upon" if choosing to risk the health and lives of their children. They also advise others to seek information and educate themselves; however, they stress the importance of trust in modern medicine and professionals.

Mothers, who oppose vaccination, disclose resentment towards medical professionals and voice their mistrust for several reasons, the main arguments being previous personal negative experience (e.g., faulty diagnosis, miscalculated treatments), previous personal positive experience (not falling ill despite not being vaccinated), tradition and a "natural" way of life ("natural" immunity vs. "synthetic" drugs) or conspiracy theories ("Big Pharma" and greed of pharmaceutical companies or the government). Nevertheless, these mothers also feel the need to "educate" themselves on the pros and cons of vaccination, to seek the truth and make an "informed" decision, however – without help from certified specialists. A visible group of doubtful mothers (parents) exists that do not oppose vaccination altogether but express concerns, speak of "filtering" information and delaying vaccination in order to "be completely sure" and practice "mindful vaccination". These mothers speak of either "modern cocktails" that have not been fully tested and advise to "select" and vaccinate only "verified" vaccines that have stood the test of time or delaying vaccination according to the official calendar to wait while the immune system of the child is "strong enough" to take the shot.

As regards to traditional femininity and "anti-vaxx" discourse, the patriarchal concept of motherhood is used to influence decisions in favour against the vaccination. The discourse exploits the binary opposition between nature and science, rationality and emotionality, mind, and intuition. The mother's intuition is being opposed to conventional medicine and at the same time positioned as more valuable and important than the medical, science-based opinion. There is a strong discourse about 'mother knows best' femininity, for which alternative rather than conventional medicine is more appropriate. Thus, also influencing the choice in favour of not vaccinating.

In recent years, opponents of anti-vaccination have become increasingly active, significantly influencing the attainment of vaccination coverage against various infectious diseases. Doctors point out that every year in Latvia, about a hundred new mothers refuse to vaccinate their babies (Ozola-Balode, 2021). Various studies have indicated that social networks are used by the anti-vaccine groups to disseminate their information. The anti-vaccination groups base their arguments on people's lack of confidence in the information provided by health professionals and official sources about vaccines. Research shows that people who refuse vaccines are more likely to obtain information from social networks, not from health professionals or verified healthcare websites (Danielson, Marcus & Boyle, 2019). Our study reveals a strong anti-vaccination discourse on social media targeting mothers using notions of traditional femininity, idealized motherhood, and visions of 'natural' immunity to paint vaccination as a poor choice for a responsible mother.

REFERENCES

Archer, C. (2019). How influencer 'mumpreneur' bloggers and 'everyday' mums frame presenting their children online. Media International Australia, 170(1), 47–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X19828365

Archer, C., & Kao, K.-T. (2018). Mother, baby and Facebook makes three: does social media provide social support for new mothers? Media International Australia, 168(1), 122–139. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X18783016

Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums. (2020, November 26). Man radās jautājums!! Tām mammam, kuras nepote savus bērnus ar obligātajām potēm, kā tad rīkosieties tagat ar kovid potēm? Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/groups/884647598211922/permalink/3889678261042159

Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums. (2021, January 26). Māmiņas, nu ir mana kārta lūgt Jūsu padomu. Manai meitiņai 2,5 mēnesi, mums priekšā vesela virkne ar potēm. Tuvākas trīs. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/groups/884647598211922/permalink/4051666391510011

Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums. (2021, March 7). Ar vīru gaidām 3.bērniņu un jau pie otrā bērna viņš pēkšņi no zila gaisa izdomāja, ka bērnus neviens vairs nevakcinēs. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/groups/884647598211922/permalink/4163178620358787

Chae, J. (2015). "Am I a Better Mother Than You?": Media and 21st-Century Motherhood in the Context of the Social Comparison Theory. Communication Research, 42(4), 503–525. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650214534969

Chalklen, C., & Anderson, H. (2017). Mothering on Facebook: Exploring the Privacy/Openness Paradox. Social Media + Society, 3(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117707187

Danielson, L., Marcus, B., Boyle, L. (2019). Special Feature: Countering Vaccine Misinformation. American Journal of Nursing, 119(10), 50–55. https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NAJ.0000586176.77841.86

Das, R. (2019). The mediation of childbirth: 'Joyful' birthing and strategies of silencing on a Facebook discussion group. European Journal of Cultural Studies, 22(5–6), 495–510. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417722094

Fox, A. K., & Hoy, M. G. (2019). Smart Devices, Smart Decisions? Implications of Parents' Sharenting for Children's Online Privacy: An Investigation of Mothers. Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, 38(4), 414–432. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743915619858290

Guo, L. (2012). The Application of Social Network Analysis in Agenda Setting Research: A Methodological Exploration. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 56(4), 616–631. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.732148

Hays, S. (1996). The cultural contradictions of motherhood. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Holiday, S., Densley, R. D. & Norman, M. S. (2020). Influencer Marketing Between Mothers: The Impact of Disclosure and Visual Brand Promotion, Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising, 42(3), 236–257. https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2020.1782790

Lazard, L., Capdevila, R., Dann, C., Locke, A. & Roper, S. (2019). Sharenting: Pride, affect and the day- to- day politics of digital mothering. Soc Personal Psychol Compass, 13(4) https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12443

Lupton, D. (2017). 'It Just Gives Me a Bit of Peace of Mind': Australian Women's Use of Digital Media for Pregnancy and Early Motherhood. Societies. 7(3):25. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc7030025

Madhawi, A. (2020, December 19). If women are hesitant about the vaccine, it's because the health industry hasn't earned their trust. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/dec/19/if-women-are-hesitant-about-the-vaccine-its-because-the-health-industry-hasnt-earned-their-trust

McNeil, D., Mueller, M., MacDonald, S., McDonald, S., Saini, V., Kellner, J. & Tough, S. (2019). Maternal perceptions of childhood vaccination: explanations of reasons for and against vaccination. BMC Public Health, 19(49), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889–018–6338–0

Meng, B. (2020) When Anxious Mothers Meet Social Media: WeChat, Motherhood and the Imaginary of the Good Life, Javnost – The Public, 27(2), 171–185. https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2020.1727276

Micalizzi, A. (2020) Exploring gender and sexuality through a Twitter lens: the digital framing effect of the #fertilityday campaign by female users, Information, Communication & Society, 24(8), 1157–1174. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1808044

North, L. (2016). Still a 'blokes club': The motherhood dilemma in journalism. Journalism, 17(3), 315–330. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884914560306

Ortiz-Sánchez, E., Velando-Soriano, A., Pradas-Hernández, L., Vargas-Román, K. , Gómez-Urquiza, J., Cañadas-De la Fuente, G. & Albendín-García, L. (2020). Analysis of the Anti-Vaccine Movement in Social Networks: A Systematic Review. Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(5394), 1–11. https://doi:10.3390/ijerph17155394

Orton-Johnson, K. (2017). Mummy Blogs and Representations of Motherhood: "Bad Mummies" and Their Readers. Social Media + Society, 3(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117707186

Ozola-Balode, Z. (2021, October 2). Ārste: Dezinformācija par medikamentiem un vakcīnām reāli apdraud jaundzimušo dzīvības. Panorāma. https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/arste-dezinformacija-par-medikamentiem-un-vakcinam-reali-apdraud-jaundzimuso-dzivibas.a423957/

Schmidt, A.L., Zollo, F., Scala, A., Betsch, C. & Quattrociocchi, W. (2018). Polarization of the vaccination debate on Facebook. Vaccine, 36, 3606–3612. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2018.05.040

Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., Yavorsky, J. E., Bartholomew, M. K. et al. (2017). Doing Gender Online: New Mothers' Psychological Characteristics, Facebook Use, and Depressive Symptoms. Sex Roles 76, 276–289. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199–016–0640-z

Shahvisi, A. (2019). Medicine is Patriarchal, But Alternative Medicine is Not the Answer. Bioethical Inquiry, 16, 99–112. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673–018–9890–5

Shuval, J. T., Gross, S. E., (2008). Midwives practice CAM: Feminism in the delivery room. Complementary Health Practice Review, 13(1), 46–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/1533210107311471

Sointu, E., Woodhead, L. (2008). Spirituality, gender, and expressive selfhood. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 47(2), 259–276.

Steiner, L., Bronstein, C. (2017). Leave a comment: mommyblogs and the everyday struggle to reclaim parenthood, Feminist Media Studies, 17(1), 59–76, https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2017.1261840 https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365–2214.2009.01020.x.

Sunderland, J. (2002). Baby entertainer, bumbling assistant and line manager. Discourses of paternal identity in parentcraft texts. In: Litosseliti, L. & Sunderland, J. (Eds). Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis (pp. 293–320). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Tiidenberg, K., & Baym, N. K. (2017). Learn It, Buy It, Work It: Intensive Pregnancy on Instagram. Social Media + Society, 3(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116685108

Tickner, S., Leman P. J., Woodcock, A. (2009). Parents' views about pre-school immunization: an interview study in southern England. Child Care, Health and Development. 36(2), 190–197.

Williams, B. M., Christopher, K., & Sinski, J. (2017). "Who Doesn't Want to Be This Hot Mom?": Celebrity Mom Profiles and Mothers' Accounts of Their Postpartum Bodies. SAGE Open. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017720562

Yam, S. S. (2019) Birth Images on Instagram: The Disruptive Visuality of Birthing Bodies, Women's Studies in Communication, 42(1), 80–100. https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2018.1561564`

7.6. Publication VI. 'Intensive Mothering' Discourse in Narratives Pro and Against 'Daddy Quota' in Latvia

Lāma, E. (2023). 'Intensive Mothering' Discourse in Narratives Pro and Against 'Daddy Quota' in Latvia. In: Zelče, V. (ed.). *Media and Society, 2022. Proceedings of Scientific Papers* Riga, University of Latvia. P. 61–69.
https://doi.org/10.22364/ms22.07

https://doi.org/10.22364/ms22.07

‘Intensive Mothering’ Discourse in Narratives Pro and Against ‘Daddy Quota’ in Latvia

Elza Lāma

University of Latvia
E-mail: elza.lama@lu.lv
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9271-3862

Abstract. Motherhood in Western civilization bows to the dominant discourse of ‘intensive mothering’, coined by Hays. The burden (and privilege) of childcare and domestic duties, prominently placed in its ‘natural’ position – on the woman’s shoulders – is slowly shifting towards a more liberal and equal division between partners, also engaging the father in taking care of the household and children. However, despite benefits for the child and woman from the father/partner participating in childrearing and menial household tasks, there is still resistance and a strong position towards ‘traditional’ gender roles in the family – upheld both by men and women. Therefore, in light of the new EU directive (Directive (EU) 2019/1158) otherwise known as the ‘daddy quota’, the aim of this research is to explore the evidence and influence of the ‘intensive mothering’ discourse on the argumentation in favour and against fathers/partners taking the non-transferrable parental leave to stay at home with their children for 2 months. A thematic analysis of comments in the most popular *Facebook* group for parents in Latvia regarding parental leave for the partner shows both support and resentment towards the directive, appealing to loss of income for the family, loss of a ‘special-bond’ between mother and child, woman’s decision rights and fear of increased ‘double shift’ for the mother. The article provides an insight into the ways how the main arguments against the shift towards a more liberal and gender equality-oriented division of household tasks and childcare are rooted in the ‘intensive mothering’ discourse.

Keywords: daddy quota, *Facebook*, intensive mothering, motherhood, social media

Introduction

The burden (and privilege) of childcare and domestic duties in Western civilization, including Latvia, is still prominently placed in its ‘natural’ position – on the woman’s shoulders. Even though society is slowly shifting towards a more liberal and equal division between partners, also engaging the father in taking

care of the household and children, the dominant discourse of motherhood is still anchored in 'intensive mothering' (Hays 1996; Hallstein 2006). The ideology insists that parents, especially mothers, invest "more than usual amounts of physical and emotional energy into specific activities and practices with children", as well as put their own needs and interests last, or undertake "enormous risks" while maximizing their potential for success (Das 2019, 499; Steiner, Bronstein 2017, 3). The mother is "entirely responsible for the social, psychological and cognitive well-being of her children" (Feasey 2017; Budds, Hogg *et al.* 2017). 'Intensive mothering' also reinforces traditional gender norms, where the father is seen as the 'bread winner' and sole earner of family's income, while the mother concentrates on household tasks and childrearing (Schoppe-Sullivan *et al.* 2017, 277), it also supports the 'pro-natalist' position and medicalization or motherhood experience (Tiidenber, Baym 2017, 2). Moreover, the joy of giving birth and raising children is seen as the woman's ultimate fulfilment and any sharing of experiences of dissatisfaction with the transition to motherhood is considered taboo, as it is essential to maintain a good mother's image of oneself (Cronin-Fisher, Sahlstein 2019).

Even though the perfect image of a 'traditional family' portrayed in the discourse of 'intensive mothering' is based on a very narrow group of society, it has created a benchmark against whom all mothers and families are being measured (Cronin-Fisher, Sahlstein 2019, 158). The reality in many European countries, including Latvia, differs from this idealized norm and it echoes in diminishing birth rates, small number of children in a family, high divorce rates, etc. The number of childless couples has increased and the number of families with 3 children has decreased over the period of last 50 years (Trapezņikova 2019, 26–33). Ties between generations are weaking as, for instance, only 14% of respondents with children under 14 have received regular support in childcare from relatives, friends or people living outside their household. during a 12-month period (Trapezņikova 2019, 50). The most typical form of family in Latvia in 2021, out of 503.1 thousand families, is a solo parent with one or more underage children (24%), followed by couples without children (22.4%), whereas only 8.1% were married couples with children; moreover, Latvia has the leading position in divorce rates in EU (CSB 2021, 2–15; Trapezņikova *et al.* 2019, 65–68). Furthermore, even though in Latvia there are signs of improvement in gender equality, 68% of respondents in Latvia feel that women can take care of children better than men (Trapezņikova *et al.* 2019, 47). The distribution of household chores also is also uneven as on average (in EU) the women who work full time, devote additional 19 hours per week, taking care of the common home, compared to men who usually spare 10 hours a week; thus, the 'second-shift' at home, followed by burnout and exhaustion, is a still topical problem of the modern-day mother (Belle 2016, 11; Hoschild, Machung 1989). Lastly,

in Latvia on average every third woman has suffered from abuse and violence at home, and the number had even increased during the pandemic (CSB 2022). The discourse of 'intensive mothering' does not deal with these or other 'abnormalities' and deviations from the idealized version of a family.

To sum up, despite benefits for the child and woman from the father or life-partner participating in childrearing and menial household tasks (Bergman, Hobson 2002; Dunatchik *et al.* 2021), there is still resistance and a strong position towards 'traditional' gender roles in the family – perpetuated both by men and women. Therefore, in light of the new EU directive (European Parliament 2019) otherwise known as the 'daddy quota', the aim of this research is to explore the evidence and influence of the 'intensive mothering' discourse on the argumentation in favour and against fathers/partners taking the non-transferable parental leave to stay at home with their children for 2 months. There are two research questions:

1. What are the main arguments against or reservations about the new directive and individual entitlement towards parental leave in comments in *Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums* ("Responsive Mums' Club" from September 2021 to June 2022)?
2. In what forms does the 'intensive mothering' discourse emerge in the arguments in these comments against the 'daddy quota'?

Research design

A thematic analysis of comments to posts in the most popular *Facebook* group for parents in Latvia (*Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums*) regarding the parental leave for fathers was carried out, concentrating on the posts from September 2021 to June 2022. In the period of 9 months (bearing in mind that the deadline for incorporating the EU directive was already established) there were 77 posts in total that appeared in search using keyword 'parental leave' and 197 posts appeared with the keyword 'father', most of which dealt with problems the mothers faced with parental leave or relationships with their partners. After removing duplicates from both these searches, only 5 addressed the question of non-transferable parental leave, of which 4 had comments. These 4 posts were included in the sample. Then, a quantitative content analysis was carried out to articles in the most popular news portal in Latvia – *Delfi.lv*, and one of the leading portals dedicated to the family theme – *Mammamuntetiem.lv*, focusing on the same period of 9 months. The articles were found by carrying out a search by keyword in both portals, filtering out the precise date and then going through all articles one by one. The results of both these samples were analysed and compared.

Results

1. Thematic analysis of comments

As illustrated in Figure 1, the sentiment, expressed in the sample of *Facebook* comments regarding the non-transferrable parental leave, ranges from positive to negative, and, except the comments below *Post 2*, approximately a half of the expressed views are neutral or pose a question, as technical details about changes in the parental leave had not been fully disclosed to the society at the time. It is, however, obvious that regarding views in favour or against the non-transferrable parental leave for fathers, the respondents are leaning towards negative views. An important aspect is that the absolute majority of the users which are commenting in the posts bear female names.

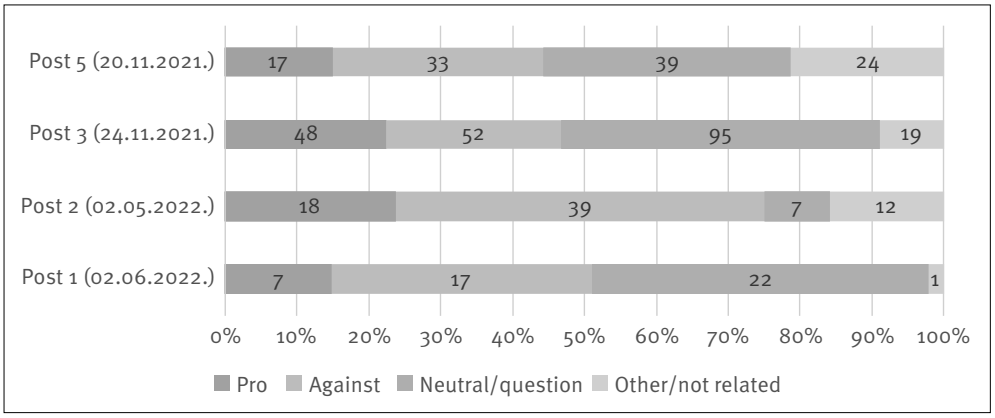


Figure 1. Sentiment expressed in *Facebook* comments regarding non-transferrable leave

Analysing the comments in detail, several themes emerge concerning opportunities or problems for 1) the mother, 2) the father, 3) the child, 4) the employer and government. First of all, regarding the changes brought by the proposed directive to mothers, there are several threads of thought. There is a lot of anxiety regarding the position of single mothers and how the changes will affect their livelihood, expressing fear that the mother will simply lose 2 months of paid leave. However, the main arguments form around the dominant position of mother as a 'natural' caregiver in contrast to fathers, complying with the ideology of 'intensive mothering'. As illustrated in Figure 2, there are three main arguments: 1) breastfeeding and how the new directive will deprive the mother of the chance to breastfeed the baby, 2) mother's instinct and bond with the child (as opposed to the lack of that instinct in the father), 3) the choice of mother to do as she wishes with her child (superiority of mother and 'natural' position at home).

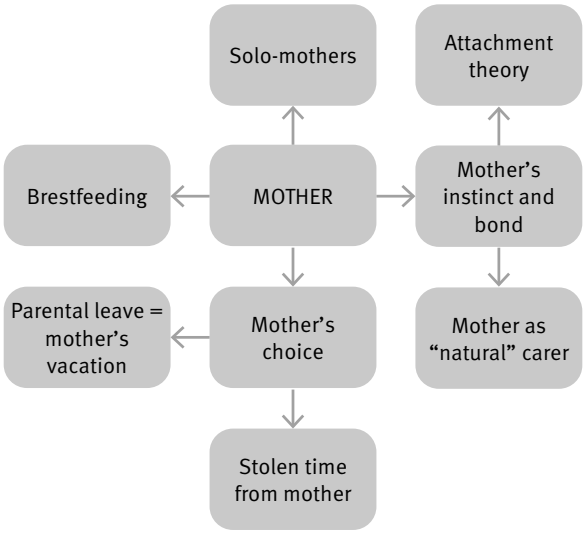


Figure 2. Thematic analysis of *Facebook* comments: arguments regarding the position of mother

Comments feature detailed descriptions of 'attachment theory', – how mother has 'figured out' the child and how the 'clueless' father would simply be overwhelmed by the new and unfamiliar responsibilities that are not suited to his abilities. The parental leave is also referred to as 'mother's vacation'; some responses even show outrage at the thought that the mother would have to return to work, or at the fact that this new regulation would 'steal' from the mother the time with her child, which is rightfully hers. Thus, the ideology of 'intensive mothering' can be observed especially in arguments against the new regulation, showing support of the woman being the primary caregiver. The limited number of comments supporting the directive speak mainly of mothers' careers and workload at home that could be eased with the help of father, thereby differing from the ideology of 'intensive mothering'.

Similar arguments have been presented in comments, expressing concern about the new changes to the role of father, illustrated in Figure 3.

Some comments simply state that the already existing paternal leave is sufficient, and no changes are necessary. Then, there is fear of fathers' incompetence and untrustworthiness, portraying fathers as violent, prone to alcoholism or simply lacking any parenting or nurturing skills. There are also comments supporting the view that fathers are simply 'not interested' in childcare or unavailable because of responsibilities at work. The 'intensive mothering' discourse also emerges in these comments, especially in arguments against the new directive, as the father is seen as the 'breadwinner' of the family and two months at home would cause immense damage to the family's financial stability. Some comments

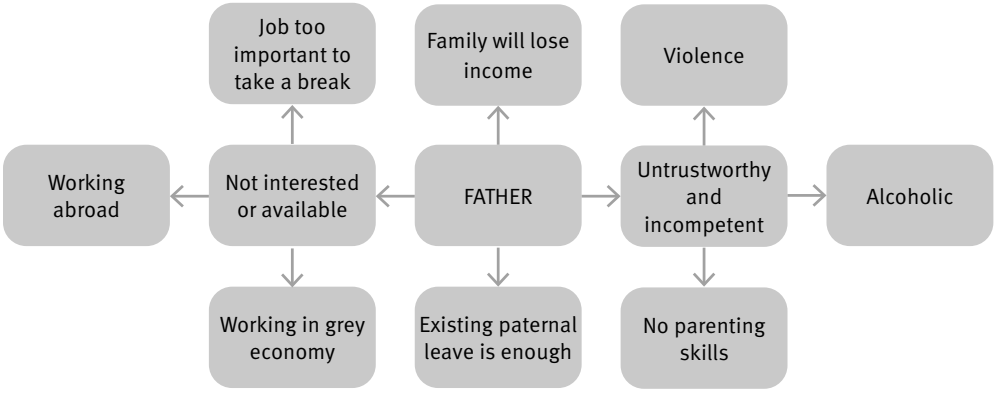


Figure 3. Thematic analysis of *Facebook* comments: arguments regarding the position of father

also feature doubt whether the father would be able to devote time to parental leave because of employment abroad. Arguments that support the directive accentuate the positive features of fathers staying at home with the child, a growing bond and strengthening of relationship; however, they are in minority.

Next, there are comments concentrating on the needs of the child and proposing arguments about 1) depriving the child of the mother's love; and 2) being left in unsuitable (father's) care, thus, experiencing stress. Then there are some comments expressing fear that the child would experience double stress because of a 'new' caretaker (father) and adaptation to kindergarten which could coincide with the leave the father would take.

Lastly, there is a relatively smaller string of comments, expressing preoccupation with the problems for employers that the new directive will cause. There is a concern regarding the nuisance caused by change in regulation and how the substitution of an employee for up to 2 months is 'unmanageable'. However, some comments express fear of fathers losing their job or the employers making excuses not to grant the leave, mentioning fathers working in grey economy or abroad. Some commentators also express distrust in government, hinting that these new regulations may be part of some conspiracy or simply a demonstration of incompetence. Therefore, the 'intensive mothering' discourse is also imminent in all comments expressing doubt or distrust towards the new regulation, accentuating the prospective negative effects of changes upon the child's wellbeing (father as an unsuitable caretaker, mother – deprived of her 'rightful' position at home etc.), the family's overall financial situation (losing money due to father taking paid leave etc.), as well as overall uneasiness with change to the system that would encourage the father spend time with his child at home, while the mother could return to the workforce. Arguments that rather uphold a positive view of the directive lean towards a more liberal and less traditional

view regarding mothering and division of household tasks, thereby differing from the 'intensive mothering' discourse.

2. Content analysis of articles

In addition to thematic analysis of comments on *Facebook* posts in the group *Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums*, a quantitative assessment aiming to establish whether the theme of changes in regulation regarding parental leave and, particularly, the non-transferable two months had appeared in mass media was carried out through content analysis. The analysis focused on articles from the same period (from September 2021 to June 2022) on two media outlets: *Delfi*, one of the most popular portals in Latvia (Gemius 2022), and *Mammāmuntētiem.lv*, also among Top20 of the most popular portals in Latvia, which mainly deals with family-related topics (Gemius 2022).

In the period of 9 months, the keyword 'father' (*tēvs*) appears in 25 articles, which focus on a variety of themes from single parenthood to the role of father in the family, as well as child custody debates and abuse; only 2 articles mention paternity leave. Meanwhile, in *Delfi* during this period the search by keyword 'father' yielded 26 articles, none of which were solely dedicated to the changes in parental leave, but instead mainly discussed the issues with child custody, alcoholism or tabloid scandals. The keyword 'parental leave' (*bērna kopšanas atvaļinājums*) appears in 51 items in *Mammāmuntētiem.lv* and 35 items in *Delfi* in total, of which 9 in *Mammāmuntētiem.lv* and 5 in *Delfi* mention the changes in regulation regarding the non-transferable parental leave months.

To sum up, during this period, there were more articles in total focusing on parental leave than on fathers, however, most of these articles were dedicated to the troubles faced by mothers. Although the number or articles regarding changes in the regulation is relatively small, all the articles are either neutral or concentrate on the benefits of non-transferrable leave and extra time for the father to spend bonding with the child and engaging in family life. Thus, even though the majority of articles containing the keyword 'father' focus on various problems from impertinence to abuse, and while articles regarding 'parental leave' predominantly view the problems encountered by mothers, the articles informing about parental leave tend to focus on either technical details and uncertainties, or on the fact that change will bring positive results for the family.

Discussion and conclusions

After conducting a thematic analysis of comments in the most popular *Facebook* group among parents in Latvia (*Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums*) regarding the changes in parental leave from September 2021 to June 2022, it is evident that approximately half of the comments expressed a neutral opinion or posed a lot of

questions regarding the 'daddy quota'. Even though the EU directive regulating a non-transferrable part of paid leave for both parents was passed in 2019 and was supposed to be set into action by August 2022, parents were not informed about the technical details and the effects on their livelihood; this also coincides with the results from the quantitative content analysis that shows a limited number of articles explaining the benefits of the directive in one of the most popular news sites in Latvia *Delfi* and *Mammāmuntētiem.lv*. Negative comments in *Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums* outweigh the positive ones, complying to the dominant discourse of 'intensive mothering' – positioning the mother as the 'natural' carer for the child, and the father – as the 'bread winner' of the family, unable or unwilling to tear himself away from work, or being unsuitable as a primary caregiver due to lack of 'mother's instinct', absence of nurturing capabilities or character flaws. The benefits to the child, more positive work-life balance for both parents, equality and other issues were recognized only in a handful of comments. Negative comments display confusion, fear, distrust and anger, some even spread disinformation and conspiracy theories about the Latvian government. Therefore, in light of the existing dominance of the 'intensive mothering' discourse, it would have been beneficial for the institutions in charge of introducing the changes in parental leave to have invested more time and resources in starting the dialogue with the society and proactively addressing the questions from parents, stressing the benefits to be brought by the changes. Further research is needed, exploring whether the tone of conversation in *Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums* shifts as more information is disclosed about the changes yielded by the new directive, as well as the differences observed in other, less popular forums or social media platforms. The research would also benefit from a more extensive and longitudinal quantitative content analysis of media articles, as the deadline for passing of the directive approaches, exploring the reactions of media and society when the directive will finally be implemented, and whether the dominance of 'intensive mothering' discourse will be challenged by a more liberal narrative, as the society gets accustomed to the changes.

Author's note. This research is funded by the Latvian Council of Science in the framework of the project "Jeopardizing Democracy through Disinformation and Conspiracies: Reconsidering Experience of Latvia", No. lzp-2019/1-0278.

REFERENCES

Bergman, H., Hobson, B. (2002). Compulsory Fatherhood: the coding of fatherhood in the Swedish welfare state. In: Hobson, B. (ed.) *Making Men into Fathers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 92–124.

Budds, K., Hogg, M. K., Banister, E. N., Dixon, M. (2017). Parenting Agendas: An Empirical Study of Intensive Mothering and Infant Cognitive Development. *The Sociological Review*, 65(2), 336–352. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026116672812

CSB [Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia] (2021). *Demography 2021*. Riga: Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia. Retrieved from: https://admin.stat.gov.lv/system/files/publication/2021-10/Nr_05_Demografija_2021_%2821_00%29_LV_EN.pdf

CSB [Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia] (CSB) (2022). *Dzimumu līdztiesība: likumpārkāpumi un vardarbība* [Gender equality and crime]. Retrieved from: https://stat.gov.lv/lv/statistikas-temas/labklajibas-un-vienlidzibas-raditaji/dzimumlidztiesiba/6297-dzimumu-lidztiesiba?themeCode=GE

Cronin-Fisher, V. Sahlstein Parcell, E. (2019). Making Sense of Dissatisfaction During the Transition to Motherhood through Relational Dialectics Theory, *Journal of Family Communication*, 19(2), 157–170, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2019.1590364

Das, R. (2019). The Mediation of Childbirth: 'Joyful' Birthing and Strategies of Silencing on a Facebook Discussion Group. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22(5-6), 495–510. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417722094

European Parliament (2019). *Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU*. Retrieved from: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj

Dunatchik, A., Gerson, K., Glass, J., Jacobs, J. A., Stritzel, H. (2021). Gender, Parenting, and the Rise of Remote Work During the Pandemic: Implications for Domestic Inequality in the United States. *Gender & Society*, 35(2), 194–205. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432211001301

Feasey, R. (2017). Good, Bad or Just Good Enough: Representations of Motherhood and the Maternal Role on the Small Screen. *Studies in the Maternal*, 9(1), 1–31. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16995/sim.234

Gemius (2022). *Februārī apmeklētāko vietņu Top 20* [Most-visited sites in February]. Retrieved from: https://www.gemius.lv/interneta-mediji-zinas/februari-apmekletako-vietnu-top-20.html

Hallstein, D. L. (2006). Conceiving Intensive Mothering. *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, 8(1-2), 96–108.

Hays, S. (1996). *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., Yavorsky, J. E., Bartholomew, M. K. *et al*. (2017). Doing Gender Online: New Mothers' Psychological Characteristics, Facebook Use, and Depressive Symptoms. *Sex Roles*, 76, 276–289. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0640-z

Steiner, L., Bronstein, C. (2017). Leave a Comment: Mommyblogs and the Everyday Struggle to Reclaim Parenthood. *Feminist Media Studies*, 17(1), 59–76, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2017.1261840

Tiidenberg, K., Baym, N. K. (2017). Learn It, Buy It, Work It: Intensive Pregnancy on Instagram. *Social Media + Society*, 3(1). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116685108

Trapezņikova, I., Goldmanis, M., Koroļeva, I. Aleksandrovs, A. (2019). *Latvijas ģimenes paaudzēs. 2018. Analītisks ziņojums* [Latvia's Families in Generations, 2018]. Rīga: LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2587219

Van Belle, J. (2016). *Paternity and Parental Leave Policies Across the European Union*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7249/RR1666

7.7. Publication VII. Unspoken Truths in Narratives of Contemporary Mothers Towards Their Mothers in Latvia

Lāma, E. (2022). Unspoken Truths in Narratives of Contemporary Mothers Towards Their Mothers in Latvia. In: Daniela, L. (ed.). *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education, 2022. Proceedings of Scientific Papers*. Riga, University of Latvia. P. 121–137. https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2022.09

https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2022.09

UNSPOKEN TRUTHS IN NARRATIVES OF CONTEMPORARY MOTHERS TOWARDS THEIR MOTHERS IN LATVIA

Elza Lāma
University of Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences, Latvia

ABSTRACT

Soviet propaganda promised liberation of women from household shackles, glorifying them as 'heroines', who embody love for family, work and communist ideals. Behind ideology, the 'second shift' burdened mothers with tedious housework, childrearing, and professional workload. Nowadays their daughters, who were born in the turmoil of collapse of USSR, experience motherhood differently, with the aid of information and technologies, that seemingly ease childcare and everyday life in democratic Latvia. Although mothering is a subjective experience and each next generation questions decisions of the previous one, contemporary motherhood favours different childrearing methods, rooted in evidence-based sources, Western medicine practitioners, and democratized family models in contrast to Dr. Spock's advice, home remedies or physical punishment. 'Intensive mothering' ideology adds to the pressures of modern motherhood, deeming the mother entirely responsible for social, psychological and cognitive well-being of her children. By employing the theoretical framework of Arlie Hochschild, this article explores the unspoken truths, doubts, and grievances of 21st century mothers towards their 'mothers-heroines' of USSR. The 'deep story' has been constructed, intertwining narratives, gained from eight phenomenological semi-structured interviews with new mothers. The 'deep story' has been supplemented by a case study of a viral post (*Facebook*, March 2021) by a contemporary mother, reflecting on advantages of modern motherhood in comparison to mothering in 1985, sparking a heated debate. The 'deep story' of contemporary mothers unfolds the layers of unarticulated feelings – from resentment to gratefulness, from anger to love. Inner conflict between respecting parents, and following an individual path is also present.

Keywords: *motherhood, intensive mothering, communication, deep story, narrative, phenomenological interviews, case study*

Introduction

Even though the primary goal of parenting – happiness of one's child – has not altered, mothering and child-rearing has changed and continues to change with each new generation. Differences in socioeconomical

background and in pedagogical approaches, as well as overall prosperity, new opportunities and technologies contribute to differences between mothers, raising children in Soviet Union, and contemporary mothers now, raising children in democratic Latvia.

The significance of traditional values in Latvia is steadily diminishing, especially among younger people, who are developing more liberal views as opposed to previous generations. For instance, during the last 50 years, the number of childless couples has increased and the number of families with 3 children – decreased (Trapezņikova et al., 2019). The close bond between generations is also dwindling, as new couples build their lives separate from their parents and only 14% of respondents with children under 14 have received regular support in childcare from relatives, friends or people living outside their household (during a 12-month period) (Trapezņikova et al., 2019). Young couples tend to find their own path and build their family's nest without help and support of previous generations.

With the regaining of sovereignty and independence of Latvia in 1991, the rapid transformation of motherhood and family models as well as other factors, several conflicting discourses have formed in Latvian society: the 'spoilt generation' of new, contemporary parents versus 'survivors of Soviet occupation', who have had to provide childcare without help in form of baby formulas, disposable diapers or washing machines; as well as the 'emotionally available' new parents who value respectful parenting techniques, rooted in emotional intelligence, versus the 'broken generation' of parents, who place value on strict discipline and more authoritarian parenting methods.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore the 'deep story' of emotions of new, contemporary mothers[1], living in Latvia, in respect to parenting techniques and child-rearing methods of previous generations, e. i., their mothers and other women, who brought up children in Soviet Latvia[2]. The research questions of this paper are:

1. What are the feelings of contemporary mothers *towards* their mothers – 'mothers-heroines'[3] who have had to raise children on the brink of collapse of the Soviet Union?

[1] The author speaks of 'contemporary mothers' or '21st century mothers' when referring to women, who are born in 1980s and currently have small children in pre-school age.

[2] The author speaks of 'Soviet mothers' or 'mothers of previous generations' when referring to women, who have given birth in Soviet Latvia or the first half of 1990s.

[3] "Mother-heroine" – an honour bestowed to those women who had more than 5 children (Āboliņa, 2016).

2. How do contemporary new mothers see motherhood *nowadays* in comparison to motherhood in Soviet Latvia (which they themselves have experienced only as children)?

Mothering in Soviet Latvia

During the Soviet occupation of Latvia, propaganda created a 'new type of family'. An illusion, constructed through real or fictional family stories, took the form of an 'ideal family' that was materially and morally well-off and did not resemble a family *per se*, but more a 'friendly collective, with love and support of all members at its core' (Jansone-Ratinīka, 2013). In this 'family' or collective, 'liberation of mother' (Kestere et al., 2020) was key, as it was crucial in Soviet Union that everybody was equally engaged in the construction of communism and victory over capitalism. "Metaphorically speaking, the perfect New Soviet Man was endowed with the body of a woman and the mind of a man," concludes Kestere, Stonkuviene and Rubene (2020). The woman would be portrayed employed, riding a tractor, fusing metal, teaching children etc., except that, in fact, the New Soviet (Wo)man would still be burdened with household-chores.

Solidarity and egalitarian family models, equal rights in public and at home regulated by Soviet rules were present only in theory; in reality such regulations were used for control and manipulation (Jansone-Ratinīka, 2013). The dominant discourse of Soviet propaganda supported dualism and the falsification of reality; despite the ideological promises of gender equality and equal distribution of household chores, Soviet gender system implied patriarchal traditions. Even though the woman is equally employed, household tasks and child-care were completely her responsibility due to 'natural talent'; role of father in the family – miniature (Jansone-Ratinīka, 2013). In most Soviet states "regimes took measures to induce women to work"; however, they did not tolerate discussions about such issues as patriarchy or the lack of gender equality within the family' (Saxonberg & Szelewa, 2007).

According to a survey done in 1975, men had had a 2–3 times smaller workload at home than their spouse (Jurciņa, 1975), causing women exhaustion, stress and premature ageing. Furthermore, in a 1986 survey it was concluded that girls had spent 2.1 times more time doing chores at home than boys, which later was 'transferred' into adulthood (Jurciņa, 1986). As Schuster concluded in 1971, dispersing the myth of equality for women in USSR: "The majority of women in the Soviet Union are still engaged in back-breaking physical labour" (Schuster, 1971). In 1980s 'glasnost revealed the terrible weight of the double burden imposed on women' (Kay, 1997). The problem of 'masculinisation of Russian women

and emasculation of Russian men' was brought to attention in the late 70s (Kay, 1997; Zitmane, 2016)

Mothering in democratic Latvia

Fast forward to 30 years later with the benefits of democracy and opportunities of the free world, the dominant discourse in 21st century in Western European societies is of 'intensive mothering', that still holds the woman accountable for everything to do with the household. 'New-momism' as coined by Douglas and Michaels (2004) or 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996) provides guidelines for preferable actions, as well as emotions that a mother should express (Hays, 1996; Hallstein, 2006; Murray & Finn, 2012). This 'correct' mothering implies forever loving affections towards the child, automatically classifying their struggles with tasks of motherhood and other emotions, including sadness, fear or anger, as inappropriate (Murray & Finn, 2012); it also implies for the woman to have total satisfaction with the mother's role (Orton-Johnson, 2017). Motherhood is idolized, and even if being a mother is not assumed as a woman's primary goal anymore, it is still perceived as immensely important.

'Intensive mothering' insists that the mother is "entirely responsible for the social, psychological and cognitive well-being of her children" (Feasey, 2017). Moreover, parents, especially mothers, are urged to invest "more than usual amounts of physical and emotional energy into specific activities and practices with children", as well as put their own needs and interests last or take upon 'enormous risks' (Das, 2019, p. 499). The child has become an asset that needs to be nurtured for future gain; thus, for instance, Steiner and Bronstein (2017) speak of 'investment parenting' as a new trend in neoliberal societies.

Lastly, 'intensive mothering' also reinforces traditional gender norms, even idealizes them (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2017); moreover, it supports the pro-natalist position and medicalisation or motherhood experience (Tiidenberg, Baym, 2017). Hence, traditional gender norms, enforced by the pressures of 'intensive mothering', ensure the presence of a 'second-shift' (Hochschild & Machung, 1989) for mothers, despite of transformations in society and improvement of women's rights after the collapse of USSR. According to a survey done by the Ministry of Welfare of Latvia, the mother is the main caregiver in 1/3 of families with children under 18; both parents participate in raising children with the mother investing more of her time in 46% of cases, while only 13% of respondents had confirmed that both parents participate equally (Snapshots, 2020). Another in-depth survey reveals that 68% of respondents feel that women can take care of children better than men (Trapezņikova, et al., 2019). Therefore, despite of improvement of socioeconomical background and overall prosperity, new

opportunities and technologies available to 21st century mothers, 'stalled revolution' (Hochschild & Machung, 1989) at home and the unequal burden of household chores is still a pressing issue of motherhood in the contemporary world.

Methodology

First of all, a call for volunteers to participate in a study about the feelings, everyday life and views on motherhood was posted in the author's personal social media profile on *Instagram*. The post (*Instagram* Story) contained information about the core theme of the study (motherhood and comparison regarding childrearing methods in Soviet Latvia and contemporary Latvia) (Figure 1). The call was adressed to mothers, not specifying the age or number of children. Eight mothers replied and showed initiative to participate in the study and all were included in the sample.

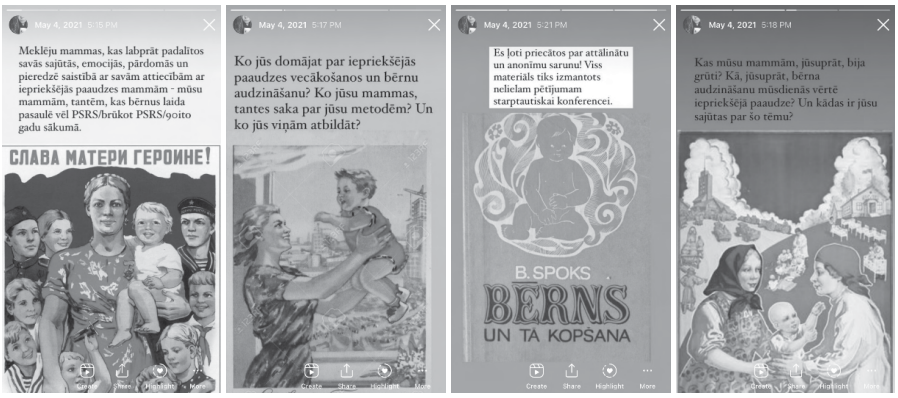


Figure 1. Open call for volunteers on Instagram.

Second, a phenomenological approach to unstructured interviews (Cope, 2005) was employed to data gathering, as phenomenology truly captures the essence of experience and the hidden meaning (Prikhidko & Swank, 2018). While conducting a phenomenological inquiry, the researcher must take a neutral position and try to describe the phenomena only through the eyes of the interviewee, bearing in mind the phenomenological question that should pervade all the stages of the research (Champlin, 2020).

Third, interviews with the eight contemporary mothers, reflecting on the relationship with their mothers regarding raising children, were analysed through narrative analysis. Narratives aid individuals understand and explain themselves to others. The stories we tell help us apprehend the social life and praxis: as human beings are not simply 'actors', but also 'authors' of their lives (Miller, 2005). Narrative analysis concentrates

on revealing the experience of an individual through stories; conducting narrative analysis, one searches for similar themes and their relationships in order to create a general narrative, based in empirical evidence, that embodies unique aspects of each individual story (Kim, 2016).

Forth, after narrative analysis a 'deep story' was created – a 'deep story' is a web of narratives that helps to apprehend conflicting powers in a particular social context (Palmer, 2019), escaping rationality and concentrating on how injustices are felt and maintained (Kantola, 2020). Hochschild's 'deep story' concentrates on feelings by speaking through symbols; it bears no judgment or facts as it speaks of pure emotions (Hochschild, 2016).

Lastly, to supplement the data, a thematic analysis of comments on *Facebook*, LA.lv and Cālis.lv was conducted, following the discussion of a viral *Facebook* post, supposedly comparing the benefits and problems of contemporary motherhood and motherhood in 1985.

The study considered all ethical research standards in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); participation of authors of interviews completely voluntary and transcriptions of interviews were anonymized.

Mothers' profiles and data

In Latvia, the mean age of woman at childbirth is accounted for 30.7 years, while the age of mother at her first childbirth is 28.1 years; 49% of new mothers have higher education and live close to the capital, Riga (Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia, 2020). The mean age of mothers of first-born children is still one of the lowest in EU, though steadily increasing (Trapezņikova, et. al., 2019).

Table 1. Mothers' profile

Respondent's name (alias)	Age	Age of children	Education	Age of mother	Residence
Elīza	38	4y, 2y, 3m	Higher	60	Salacgrīva
Uma	31	6m	Higher	53	Rīga
Laima	34	10y, 8y, 6y, 4y	Higher	60	Sigulda
Māra	29	4y, 1y	Higher	51	Rīga
Arta	32	3y, 1y	Higher	63	Rīga
Emma	39	3y, 1y	Higher	65	Rīga region
Aina	28	1y	Higher	66	Rīga
Sarmīte	28	7m	Higher	52	Rīga

Therefore, the sample of woman participating in the study (see Table 1. *Mothers' profile*) roughly coincides with the average characteristics of a new mother in Latvia, as almost half of new mothers have higher education (49% in 2020) or general secondary or secondary professional education (34%) according to the Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia.

Results

Women share their thoughts, regarding parenting in Soviet Latvia, that is, their views on how they themselves were raised, their current relationships with their mothers, as well as how they feel they and their mothering techniques are perceived by women of previous generations in general. After narrative analysis, a thematic analysis of comments on a viral *Facebook* post regarding parenting nowadays and in 1985 has also been carried out.

Women's narratives and 'deep story'

According to the sample of contemporary mothers, parenting during Soviet times – to their mind – was undoubtedly **physically difficult**, more difficult than nowadays. Women had to deal with tremulous times, poverty, lack of appliances and modern technologies, lack of trustworthy information sources, etc. Almost all contemporary mothers agree that "It was definitely harder for [mothers]". Māra says: "How they toiled with nappies… My mother didn't even have hot water in her flat. [..] So they brought us up like they brought us up – everything took so much time.". Laima stresses that they "had to work harder", thus, there was less time to spend with children.

Sarmīte acknowledges the **power of Dr. Spock**: "There was only Spock, [..] relatives, grandmothers and doctors", insisting that there was hard work and almost no scientific, evidence-based information on child-rearing, except for Dr. Spock's book. As Chernyaeva (2013) writes, this was a 'revolutionary' book for the time that "provoked the intense and diverse public reaction of various social actors". This 'raising by the [Dr. Spock's] book' gained popularity, despite being produced outside the Soviet tradition of child-care advice (Chernyaeva, 2013). This book is mentioned also by Aina and Emma, expressing doubt on the 'quality' of this kind of information. Aina stresses the **discipline** and **fear of spoiling children**, inspired by the book and norms in society, her mother faced raising her. Laima says that "You couldn't express your **emotions**." While Elīza shares:

> "If the child misbehaved, he was spoiled [..], no one searched for a deeper reason. [..] My mother advised me to look into Spock's book – 'you won't like it, but read it, perhaps something useful. [..] She was proud she had used that book while raising me."

As contemporary mothers put it, parents, raising children in Soviet Latvia, loved their children, but had **no time** or lacked motivation to spend qualitative time with them, were **strict** and perhaps even cold. Sarmīte says that her mother loved her, but "had to distance herself" from her; Laima says that she "did not like the way I was raised".

According to 21st century mothers, in Soviet Union, **the child was "not a person"** with views or wants. As Arta puts it: "It was more important, how the child seemed from afar – 'what will people think, if the child starts yelling in the street?". Sarmīte says that the child was more like a 'thing', and the aim of child-rearing was to "create good, hardworking people that conform with the system". Aina says, that there was "was **no emotional upbringing**" and the child was supposed to express only 'convenient emotions' and all other were 'shushed'. Uma expresses that the children were 'raised as small machines', which coincides with Emma's thoughts that "it wasn't important how you felt, you had to be obedient, to comply with a standard". All mothers share that, during Soviet times physical punishment was key and **complete obedience** had to be established.

However, according to 21st century mothers, even though parenting in Soviet times demanded more from the mother physically, parenting nowadays is sill a handful, although not everyone recognizes it. Aina recalls a row with her mother:

> "[My mother has said to me] In my time I could manage it all. How come you can't? [And I replied] But were you happy, managing it all? [..] Did you spank me because you were happy with yourself and with your life?'

Emma thinks that in Soviet times "people 'stuck it out'", but nowadays she is "not game to suffer, we stand tall". Uma stresses that her mother thinks she is **not grateful enough**:

> "We are not valuing everything we've got and with our whining we do not appreciate what they've gone through. [..] It could be received as ungratefulness; that we're not saying 'thank you' every day for living in the 21st century."

Thus, Laima says that the challenge of modern-day mothering is "the **emotional pressure to be a great mother**, give love, education, activities, balance the rhythm of the day, balance the diet, etc.". Democratic Latvia provides both means and possibilities to treat the child as a human being when he/she is even still in mother's womb. **Respect for the child** nowadays is key, bearing in mind his/her desires and needs and searching for a considerate compromise. Therefore, 21st century mothers do not hold their mothers or women of previous generations as unquestionable role models. As Sarmīte puts it: "[In Soviet times] older women became elders, from whom younger women gain knowledge. Now it's completely

different". This sentiment echoes in almost every narrative. Arta says "I think they're [grandmothers] a little annoyed about young mothers and that they think they know everything better", while Elīza says "My grandmother had a saying – you have to swallow that toad. That's how they lived – swallowing toads and resentments, and pain, and suffering." 21st century mothers do not wish to live this way.

Contemporary mothers feel that some Soviet mothers want **recognition from their daughters**, **gratitude**, while some feel **envy**. Emma shares:

> "I don't have to do *copy+paste* like she did, she's not my idol, [..] and that is hard for her, because we don't put her on a pedestal. [..] She wants to hear that she has been a mother-heroine, as she has raised five children, but I cannot lie, [..] I don't feel that way about her."

Māra says "I suffered, my mother suffered, so you should suffer' [..] We have to suffer, otherwise it's not fair in their minds". An inner conflict in the hearts and minds of 21st century mothers may be felt; as Uma puts it "On one hand, I do feel grateful, that our parents raised us in such hard trumulous times. [..] On the other hand, I feel 'not completely loved'."

Some contemporary mothers would like an **apology** from their mothers for their parenting style. Aina says that she harbours some **resentment** towards her mother for the way she was raised, but she **tries not to blame** her. Sarmīte feels that her mother did the best she could; Emma says "I don't blame her for anything". However, Māra would like and apology from her mother for some of her actions as a mother that she still remembers vividly.

21st century mothers reserve the right to choose their own path in mothering; however, they experience a **sense of guilt or need for defence and explanation**. Laima says that "At the moment [grandparents] are a great help, but we have gone through a long period of quarrelling." Sarmīte says that she doesn't have open conflicts about parenting styles but she feels the pressure, as does Uma: "We want to give our children everything we did not receive – [..] time qualitatively spent together."

Therefore, despite the fact that 21st century mothers recognize the physical toll and difficulties raising children their mothers and mothers of previous generations faced, there is a **strain on relationships and hierarchical disbalance in their relationships**. The level of this strain differs – it is a spectrum, but it is visible in all narratives. Aina says: "[Previous generation] thinks that we fuss and whine over nothing", while Emma expresses her courage to voice her thoughts to her mother: "Only now I feel I can stand up to my mother, to speak up about things I don't like [..] and I feel a resistance – 'how can you come across me, I'm your mother'." Māra feels that there is no respect for her from her mother, while Laima regrets that her mother thinks that "that emotional hardships don't

count; robots, washing machines and everything – [we have] nothing to complain about, we conjure problems and solve them, because we don't have a real life and real problems". The theme of '**spoiling children**' and **lack of discipline**, as well as facing 'fake problems' or having 'a fuss over nothing' as main complaints from previous generations echo in some level in all narratives of 21st century mothers. Uma concludes: "Grandparents criticize those young parents for spoiling their children. [..] And we are spoilt because we whine about everything."

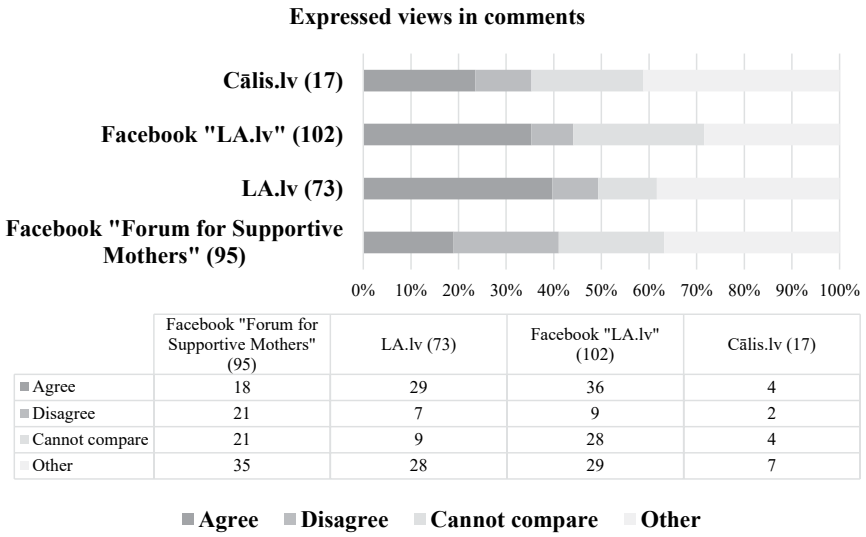
Therefore, the '**deep story**' of the relationships of 21st century mothers with their mothers and women of previous generations is filled with inner conflicts between gratefulness and remorse, between love and guilt. Contemporary century mothers feel that their mothers have overcome enormous physical difficulties and challenges caused by socio-economical instability and overall poverty at the brink of collapse of the USSR. However, in Soviet Latvia children were not raised but rather 'attuned' like small machines or miniature soldiers – without proper respect and a lack of affection due to pressing times, the dominant ideology and teachings of Dr. Spock, with presence of strict discipline enforced by physical punishment. Contemporary mothers feel that their mothers are eager for appreciation for raising children during hard times, whereas 21st century mothers would like acknowledgment for their efforts despite the differences in socioeconomical background, and even perhaps an apology for past pains. However, the challenges of 21st century mothers seem miniscule and unworthy in the eyes of (some) women of previous generations. Lastly, contemporary mothers do not hold Soviet mothers as untouchable idols, therefore, upsetting the traditional hierarchal family models. They want to raise children 'with respect' and 'as equals', triggering some worries for 'spoiling children' and 'fussing over nothing' from mothers from previous generations.

Thematic analysis of a viral *Facebook* post

In addition to qualitative analysis, a quantitative element was added to the study as well, following the life of a viral *Facebook* post (Facebook, March 2021). This post was originally posted on a private profile of a mother (Santa, no last name), and quickly gained popularity, spreading through social media groups and forums, reaching traditional media as well (Figure 2) – LA.lv (LA.lv, 2021) and Cālis.lv (Cālis.lv, 2021).

Thematic analysis was done on comments under four different sources, where this particular post had gained popularity: news portal "Cālis.lv", news portal "LA.lv", *Facebook* post on the page of "LA.lv" and under the shared post on Supportive Mothers' Forum (*Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums*) on *Facebook*. The post was shared on numerous other *Facebook* profiles

and groups, but due to privacy restrictions the comments on these posts were not analysed. The post (Facebook, March 2021) speculated on the advantages of modern motherhood seemingly comparing to mothering in 1985. However, the view expressed on the post concentrates on the benefits of technologies and wealth that eases mothers' burden, skipping other aspects, as well as indirectly pointing to the 'whining' of modern, 'spoilt' mothers.



	Facebook "Forum for Supportive Mothers" (95)	LA.lv (73)	Facebook "LA.lv" (102)	Cālis.lv (17)
Agree	18	29	36	4
Disagree	21	7	9	2
Cannot compare	21	9	28	4
Other	35	28	29	7

Figure 2. Expressed views in comments

Figure 2 illustrates the expressed views on the comments on the various sites. On the more conservative media portal "LA.lv" more comments tend to agree that contemporary mothers 'whine' and 'fuss over nothing', and do not appreciate, how motherhood has been eased by various new technologies, household appliances etc., stressing that modern mothers 'spoil' their children. Whereas on social media, the views distribute more evenly, saying that these experiences simply cannot be compared, or even that the pressures of 'intensive mothering' make it harder for contemporary mothers to raise children. A large portion of comments marked as 'Other' addressed other themes, not relevant to the study, as these online discussions tend to drift off course.

The comments also illustrate parallel and conflicting discourses, as well as the clash between the 'spoilt generation' of contemporary mothers, who 'do not appreciate the efforts of previous generations' and 'survivors' of Soviet occupation, as well as the contemporary parents, who value emotional intelligence and respectful parenting techniques versus the

'broken' generation, who are afraid to show emotion or weakness, for instance, prohibit boys from crying etc. Lastly, the results from this sample of comments also coincide with results from a 2021 SKDS survey of 1001 parents, concluding that 46% of contemporary parents with children under 17 feel that it is more difficult to raise children nowadays than when they themselves were children (Latvijas Radio, 2021).

Concluding, the author interviewed the leading expert, Vice Dean of Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art, University of Latvia, Head of the Doctoral Study program "Education Sciences", prof. Zanda Rubene to gain deeper insight into the research theme. She argues:

> "[In the Soviet Union] the purpose of parenting was obedience. Obedience is achieved by the acclaimed Benjamin Spock theory of childcare that was aimed at upbringing with discipline. Its basic thought is that you should not "spoil" the child. If you take him in your hands and respond to the child's needs, you "spoil" him. It is a tradition that comes from a society where human needs are not taken into account."

The sentiment of Soviet parenting is echoed in the narratives and 'deep story' of contemporary mothers in the sample of this study. Moreover, prof. Rubene highlights the dilemma of contemporary motherhood: "At the moment we live in a child-centred society where the child's needs are taken into account. […] The child has needs, but the adult also has needs that have to be respected." New mothers, on one hand, fearing to repeat negative experiences from their own childhood, try to be empathetic and listen to the child's needs, and, on the other hand, occasionally fail to set boundaries for the child and forget to take care of her own needs. Regarding relationships with previous generations prof. Rubene comments:

> "[Nowadays] the age hierarchy in society is collapsing in the digital era – younger is smarter. Parenting has always occurred with a view to the past – *How did you, Mom, do it?* This is not the case today in digital culture."

As a result, the strain on relationships between mothers and their mothers is inevitable; new mothers have the opportunity to quickly educate themselves, gain evidence-based information on child-rearing that may not always coincide with traditional techniques, passed down for generations.

Discussion

The 'deep story' of new, contemporary mothers, living in Latvia, in respect to parenting techniques and child-rearing methods of previous generations, e. i., their mothers and other women, who brought up children in Soviet Latvia, is of inner conflict – a struggle between gratitude and

resentment, guilt for not following the footsteps of one's mother and spite for doing things one's own way. Contemporary mothers do not hold women of previous generations as 'idols' for parenting styles, and want to pursue a more gentle, respectful and child-centred approach to child-rearing. While in general they value the toil of their mothers and acknowledge the physical difficulties they had to face, they do not consider contemporary motherhood to be any easier – even with technological advances of 30 years, motherhood still is hard. However, contemporary mothers feel that a large part of society considers them 'whining' and 'fussing over nothing'. Motherhood in the 21st century faces new problems ('intensive mothering', societal norms and pressure from society etc.) while having to deal with many obstacles that are familiar also to women, who raised children in Soviet Latvia ('double shift', etc.).

The feelings and emotions of contemporary mothers – their fears and resentments, as well as gratitude and respect for mothers of Soviet Latvia – echo in the thematic analysis of comments of a viral *Facebook* post, expressing a subjective view on 'spoilt' contemporary mothers in comparison to the back-breaking hardships of a mother in 1985. Conflicting discourses emerge, as some feel that contemporary women 'have it easy' and 'do not know what real problems are', some insist that these experiences simply cannot be compared, and some express the stress and pressure of modern motherhood that exceeds the physical difficulties in Soviet Latvia.

The study gives qualitative insight into the emotional world of new mothers in the 21st century in Latvia in respect to relationships with previous generations of parents. Bearing in mind (1) the low, even diminishing birth rates (CSB, 2020), (2) high percentage of divorce rates (CSB, 2020), which, especially regarding families with children, are more often initiated by women (Trapezņikova, et al., 2019), (3) still pressing load of household and childcare chores, (4) lack of support to young families from close relatives (only 13% of new families with children not living together with close relatives receive regular support in form of childcare (Trapezņikova, et al., 2019), and other factors, motherhood is still a hard challenge for women. As the struggles of contemporary mothers are not always acknowledged by society, all the while the pressures of 'intensive motherhood' are accumulating and traditional family roles are still cause for argument at home (Putniņa et al 2015), women are left to deal with burdens of motherhood often alone, in silence – so not to 'whine', offend or sound 'ungrateful', thus, slowly 'burning out'.

The study has limitations as the sample of women participating in the study could be broadened, including women from more rural regions, with secondary education etc. The thematic analysis could also be extended to more *Facebook* posts, to enrich the results and elaborate on the motivation

behind agreeing or disagreeing with the premise that 'contemporary motherhood is easy in regard to motherhood of previous generations'. The study also may be transformed into longitudinal research, measuring the 'temperature' and possible changes in regard to pressure from society in a few years' time. Lastly, it would be fruitful to extend the sample and include views of women, who have mothering experience in Soviet Latvia, to understand their feelings towards motherhood then and now.

Conclusions

The unspoken truths of contemporary mothers towards their mothers unfold in a 'deep story', filled with conflicting emotions and subjective pondering. In the hearts of (some) contemporary mothers, the hardships mothers of previous generations had had to bear were physically more difficult, but the challenges of 21st century motherhood are not dismissable as well. The pressure of 'intensive mothering' – devoting all of mother's free time, energy and resources to the wellbeing of the child, while leaving one's own needs often unattended –, practising respectful parenting, based on trust and emotional intelligence, as well as the burden of 'second shift' at home, leaves 21st century mothers as exhausted as women 30 years ago. Contemporary mothers want to raise their children differently that their mothers had raised them; some feel resentment towards their own mothers, some would even like an apology for past wrong-doings, but some are convinced that their mothers did the best they could with tools at their disposal. Still, 21st century mothers feel that part of society and even their own mothers judge them as failing to employ discipline, 'whining' about nothing, and not appreciating the 'good life' they have. However, many feel that these mothering experiences cannot be compared by different generations. Motherhood is a hard, but gratifying journey, and mothers need emotional and physical support no matter what.

Funding: This research is funded by the Latvian Council of Science, project "Jeopardizing Democracy through Disinformation and Conspiracies: Reconsidering Experience of Latvia," project No. lzp-2019/1-0278.

References

Āboliņa, L. (2016). *Ģimene un tās atbalsta politikas attīstība Latvijā (1990–2015)* [*Family and development of its support policy in Latvia (1990–2015)*] (Doctoral thesis). University of Latvia, Faculty of Business, Management and Economics. https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/31863

Champlin, B. E. (2020). The informal caregiver's lived experience of being present with a patient who receives a diagnosis of dementia: A phenomenological inquiry. *Dementia*, 375–396.

Chernyaeva, N. (2013). "Upbringing à la Dr. Spock:" Child-Care manuals and constructing normative motherhood in the Soviet Union, 1954–1970. *Ab Imperio*, (2), 223–251. doi:10.1353/imp.2013.0048.

Cope, J. (2005). Researching entrepreneurship through phenomenological inquiy: Philosophical and methodological issues. *International Small Business Journal, 23*(2), 163–189. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242605050511

CSB. (2020). Demography 2020. Riga: Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia. https://www.csb.gov.lv/lv/statistika/statistikas-temas/iedzivotaji/iedzivotaju-skaits/meklet-tema/417-demografija-2020

Das, R. (2019). The mediation of childbirth: 'Joyful' birthing and strategies of silencing on a Facebook discussion group. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 22*(5–6), 495–510. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417722094

Cālis (2021). *Ieraksts, kas raisījis diskusijas: 2021. un 1985. gada mammas* [*Post, that has created discussions: Mothers of 2021 and 1985*]. https://www.delfi.lv/calis/enciklopedija/ieraksts-kas-raisijis-diskusijas-2021-un-1985-gada-mammas.d?id = 53035789&com = 1&reg = 1&no = 0&s = 1

Douglas, S. J., & Michaels, M. W. (2004). *The mommy myth: The idealization of motherhood and how it has undermined women*. New York: Free Press.

Facebook. (2021). "*Un es, sēžot ērtā dīvānā, malkojot bezkofeīna kafiju ar Oddly good barista pienu…* [*And I, sitting in a comfortable sofa, drinking decaf coffee with Oddly good barista milk…*]. https://www.facebook.com/la.lvportals/posts/3973621526028548 [12.05.2022.]

Facebook. (2021). *Cik patiesi* [*How true*]. https://www.facebook.com/groups/884647598211922/posts/4196179800392002/ [12.05.2022.]

Feasey, R. (2017). Good, bad or just good enough: Representations of motherhood and the maternal role on the small screen. *Studies in the Maternal, 9*(1), 1–31. doi:10.16995/sim.234

Hallstein, D. L. (2006). Conceiving intensive mothering. *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement, 8*(1, 2), 96–108.

Hays, S. (1996). *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hochschild, A. R. (2016). *Strangers in their own land: anger and mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press.

Hochschild, A. R., & Machung, A. (1989). *The second-shift: Working parents and the revolution at home*. New York, N. Y.: Viking.

Jansone-Ratinika, N. (2013). *Tēva pedagoģiskā kompetence mūsdienu ģimenē* [*Father's pedagogical competence in family nowadays*] (Doctoral thesis). University of Latvia, Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Arts. https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/483

Jurciņa, A. (1975). *Sieviete – Personība* [Woman – Personality]. Rīga: Liesma.

Jurciņa, A. (1986). *Sieviete un sociālistiskais dzīvesveids* [Woman and the socialistic way of life]. Rīga: Avots.

Kantola, A. (2020). Gloomy at the top: How the wealthiest 0,1% feel about the rest. *Sociology, 54*(5), 904–919. doi:10.1177/0038038520910344

Kay, R. (1997). Images of an ideal woman: Perceptions of Russian womanhood through the media, education and women's own eyes. In M. Buckley (Ed.), *Post-Soviet Women: From the Baltic to Central Asia* (pp. 75–98). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511585197.007

Kestere, I., Stonkuviene, I. and Rubene, Z. (2020). "The New Soviet Man with a Female Body: Mother, Teacher, Tractor Driver…", *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia*, 450, 97–109. doi: 10.15388/ActPaed.45.6.

Kim, J. (2016). Narrative data analysis and interpretation. In J. Kim, *Understanding narrative inquiry* (pp. 184–225). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

La.lv. (2021). *Vētra soctīklos: "Izjūtu dziļu kaunu, ka mammai sūdzējos par savu "grūto ikdienu"! Vai audzināt bērnu šodien ir vieglāk, nekā 1985. gadā?* [*A storm in social media: "I feel deep shame for whining to my mother about my "hard life". Is bringing up children today easier than in 1985?*] https://www.la.lv/vetra-soctiklos-izjutu-dzilu-kaunu-ka-mammai-sudzejos-par-savu-gruto-ikdienu-vai-audzinat-bernu-sodien-ir-vieglak-neka-1985-gada/komentari

Latvijas Radio 1 (2021). *Vecāku pieredze nesniedz zināšanas, kā bērniem pārvarēt digitālās vides izaicinājumus* [*Parents' experience does not provide knowledge of how to overcome challenges in the digital environment*]. https://lr1.lsm.lv/lv/raksts/gimenes-studija/vecaku-pieredze-nesniedz-zinasanas-ka-berniem-parvaret-digitalas.a148382/

Miller, T. (2005). *Making sense of motherhood: a narrative approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Murray, L., & Finn, M. (2012). Good mothers, bad thoughts: New mothers' thoughts of intentionally harming their newborns. *Feminism & Psychology, 22*(1), 41–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353511414015

Orton-Johnson, K. (2017). Mummy Blogs and Representations of Motherhood: "Bad Mummies" and Their Readers. *Social Media + Society, 3*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117707186

Palmer, R. (2019). A "Deep Story" About American Journalism, *Journalism Studies*, *20*(3), 327–344, DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2017.1375390

Prikhidko, A., & Swank, J. M. (2018). Motherhood Experiences and Expectations: A Qualitative Exploration of Mothers of Toddlers. *The Family Journal, 26*(3), 278–284. https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480718795116

Putniņa, A., Pinka, M., Mileiko, I., Kalēja, J., Jakunova, I., Muižniece, M., Silāre, A., Peipiņa, A., Puisīte, B., Jaunzeme, M., Zeiļa, R., Ridūze, E., Lasmane, E., Kulagins, M., Apse, A. (2015). *Reģistrētas un nereģistrētas kopdzīves faktoru salīdzinoša analīze [Comparative analysis of registered and not-registered cohabitation]*. Latvijas Universitāte, Publiskās antropoloģijas centrs. http://www.antropologija.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/lu_portal/projekti/antropologija/zinas/Petijums_kopdzive-2015.pdf

Saxonberg, S., Szelewa, D. (2007). The continuing legacy of the communist legacy? The development of family policies in Poland and the Czech Republic. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society, 14*(3), 351–379. https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxm014

Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., Yavorsky, J. E., Bartholomew, M. K. et al. (2017). Doing gender online: New mothers' psychological characteristics, Facebook use, and depressive symptoms. *Sex Roles, 76*, 276–289. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0640-z

Schuster, A. (1971). Women's role in the Soviet Union: Ideology and reality. *The Russian Review, 30*(3), 260–267. doi:10.2307/128134

Snapshots (2020). Tēvu loma ģimenē [A father's role in the family]. https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/media/6460/download

Steiner, L., Bronstein, C. (2017). Leave a comment: mommyblogs and the everyday struggle to reclaim parenthood, *Feminist Media Studies, 17*(1), 59–76, DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2017.1261840 P. 63-64.

Tiidenberg, K., & Baym, N. K. (2017). Learn It, Buy It, Work It: Intensive Pregnancy on Instagram. *Social Media + Society, 3*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116685108 P. 2.

Trapezņikova, I., Goldmanis, M., Koroļeva, I., Aleksandrovs, A. (2019). *Latvijas ģimenes paaudzēs, 2018* (1.0.0). [*Latvia's families through generations, 2018*] Rīga: LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2587219I

Zitmane, M. (2016). *Patērētāja (at)veidojums Latvijas žurnālu reklāmās perestroikas un pēcpadomju periodā: dzimtes identitātes diskurss (1985–2004)* [(*Re)presentation of consumer in Latvian advertisements during perestroika and post Soviet period: discourse of gender identity (1985–2004)*]. (Doctoral thesis). University of Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences. https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/31866

REFERENCES

Āboliņa, L. (2016). *Family and Development of Its Support Policy in Latvia (1990–2015): Doctoral Dissertation*. Rīga: University of Latvia, Faculty of Business, Management and Economics Retrieved 9/2/2023 (https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/31863).

Ahmed, W. (2018). Public Health Implications of #ShoutYourAbortion. *Public Health*, *163*, 35–41. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2018.06.010

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. Revised.* London: Verso.

Archer, C. (2019). How Influencer 'Mumpreneur' Bloggers and 'Everyday' Mums Frame Presenting Their Children Online. *Media International Australia*, *170*(1), 47–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X19828365

Archer, C. (2019). Social Media Influencers, Post-Feminism and Neoliberalism: How Mum Bloggers' 'Playbour' is Reshaping Public Relations. *Public Relations Inquiry, 8*(2), 149–166. https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X19846530

Archer, C., Kao, K. (2018). Mother, Baby and Facebook Makes Three: Does Social Media Provide Social Support for New Mothers? *Media International Australia*, *168*(1), 122–139. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X187830

Auðardóttir, A. M. (2022). From Progressiveness to Perfection: Mothers' Descriptions of Their Children in Print Media, 1970–1979 versus 2010–2019. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 26*(2), 212–229 https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494221112445

Babakr, Z., P. Mohamedamin, K, Kakamad. (2019). Piaget's Cognitive Developmental Theory: Critical Review. Education, *Quarterly Reviews, 2*(3), 517–524, https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1993.02.03.84

Barbalet, J. (2006). Emotion. *Contexts, 5*(2), 51–53, https://doi.org/10.1525/ctx.2006.5.2.51 Bergman, H., Hobson, B. (2002). Compulsory Fatherhood: the Coding of Fatherhood in the Swedish Welfare State. In: Hobson, B. (ed.) *Making Men into Fathers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 92–124.

Budds, K., Hogg, M. K., Banister, E. N., Dixon, M. (2017). Parenting Agendas: An Empirical Study of Intensive Mothering and Infant Cognitive Development. *The Sociological Review, 65*(2), 336–352. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026116672812

Brown, S. (2014). Intensive Mothering as an Adaptive Response to Our Cultural Environment. In: Ennis, L. R. (ed.) *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, 27–46. Bradford: Demeter Press

Buzzanell, P. M., Remke, R. V., Meisenbach, R., Liu, M. (2017). Standpoints of Maternity Leave: Discourses of Temporality and Ability. *Women's Studies in Communication, 40*(1), 67–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2015.1113451

Canetto, S. S. , Trott, C. D., Winterrowd, E. M., Haruyama,, D., Johnson, A. (2017). Challenges to the Choice Discourse: Women's Views of Their Family and Academic-Science Career Options and Constraints. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 29*(1–2), 4–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/08952833.2016.1273174

Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2022). Demography 2022. Rīga: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. Retrieved from: https://stat.gov.lv/lv/statistikas-temas/iedzivotaji/iedzivotaju- skaits/publikacijas-un-infografikas/10937-demografija

Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. (2021). Demography 2021. Riga: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. Retrieved from https://admin.stat.gov.lv/system/files/publication/2021-10/Nr_05_Demografija_2021_%2821_00%29_LV_EN.pdf

Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. (2023). "Demography 2023, in Latvian." Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. https://stat.gov.lv/en/statistics-themes/population/population/publications-and-infographics/15178-demography-2023-latvian?themeCode=IM

Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. (2023). "Gender Equality 2023, in Latvian." Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. https://stat.gov.lv/en/statistics-themes/indicators-well-being-and- equality/gender-equality/publications-and-5?themeCode=GE

Chae, J. (2015). "Am I a Better Mother Than You?": Media and 21st-Century Motherhood in the Context of the Social Comparison Theory. *Communication Research*, *42*(4), 503–525. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650214534969

Chalklen, C., Anderson, H. (2017). Mothering on Facebook: Exploring the Privacy/ Openness Paradox. *Social Media + Society*, *3*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117707187

Chambers, D. (2023). Mediatisation's Tensions and Tendencies. The Context of Homes, Householders, and Emerging Screen Interactions. In Kopecka-Piech, K., & Bolin, G. (Eds.). *Contemporary Challenges in Mediatization Research*. (pp. 131–147). Routledge. doi.org/ https://10.4324/9781003324591-12

Champlin, B. E. (2020). The Informal Caregiver's Lived Experience of Being Present with a Patient Who Receives a Diagnosis of Dementia: A Phenomenological Inquiry. *Dementia, 19*(2), 375– 396, https://doi.org/10.1177/1471301218776780

Chayko, M. (2007). The Portable Community: Envisioning and Examining Mobile Social Connectedness. *International Journal of Web Based Communities, 3*(4), 373–385. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJWBC.2007.015864

Chernyaeva, N. (2013). "Upbringing à la Dr. Spock:" Child-Care manuals and Constructing Normative Motherhood in the Soviet Union, 1954–1970. *Ab Imperio*, (2), 223–251. https://doi.org/10.1353/imp.2013.0048

Chib, A., Malik, S., Aricat, R. G., Kadir, S. Z. (2013). Migrant Mothering and Mobile Phones: Negotiations of Transnational Identity. *Mobile Media & Communication, 2*(1), 73–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157913506007

Chodorow, N. (1978). The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Christopher, K. (2012). Extensive Mothering: Employed Mothers' Constructions of the Good Mother. *Gender & Society, 26*(1), 73–96. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243211427700

Christopher, K. (2012). Extensive Mothering: Employed Mothers' Constructions of the Good Mother. *Gender & Society*, *26*(1), 73–96, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243211427700

Coffey-Glover. (2020). The Boob Diaries: Discourses of Breastfeeding in "Exclusive Pumping" Blogs. *Discourse, Context & Media, 38*, 100446. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2020.100446

Cope, J. (2005). Researching Entrepreneurship through Phenomenological Inquiry: Philosophical and Methodological Issues. *International Small Business Journal, 23*(2), 163–189, https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242605050511

Couldry, N. (2008). Mediatization or Mediation? Alternative Understandings of the Emergent Space of Digital Storytelling. *New Media & Society*, *10*(3), 373–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444808089414

Cronin-Fisher, V., Parcell, E. S. (2019.) Making Sense of Dissatisfaction During the Transition to Motherhood Through Relational Dialectics Theory. *Journal of Family Communication, 19*(2), 157–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2019.1590364

Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center. (2020). "National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027." Crossectional Coordination Center, Rīga. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline- files/NAP2027 ENG.pdf

Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center. (2020). "National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027." Crossectional Coordination Center, Rīga. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline- files/NAP2027 ENG.pdf

Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center. (2020). *National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027. Crossectional Coordination Center,* Rīga. https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline- files/NAP2027 ENG.pdf

Cummins, M.W., Brannon, G.E. (2022). Mothering in a Pandemic: Navigating Care Work, Intensive Motherhood, and COVID-19. *Gender Issues, 39*, 123–14. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-022-09295-w

Curran, N., McCoyd, J. L. (2019). They Say, 'If You Don't Relax… You're Going to Make Something Bad Happen': Women's Emotion Management during Medically High-Risk Pregnancy. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 44*(1), 117–129, https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684319883199

Danielson, L., Marcus, B., Boyle, L. (2019). Special Feature: Countering Vaccine Misinformation. *American Journal of Nursing*, 119(10), 50–55. https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NAJ.0000586176.77841.86

Das, R. (2019). The Mediation of Childbirth: 'Joyful' Birthing and Strategies of Silencing on a Facebook Discussion Group. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 22*(5–6), 495–510. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417722

Dennis, C. L. F. (2007). Traditional Postpartum Practices and Rituals: A Qualitative Systematic Review. *Woman's Health, 3*(4), 487–502, https://doi.org/10.2217/17455057.3.4.487

Douglas, S. J., Michaels, M. W. (2004). *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women.* New York: Free Press.

Dubus, N. (2014). Permission to Be Authentic: An Intervention for Postpartum Women. *Affilia, 29*(1): 43–55, https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109913509539

Dunatchik, A., Gerson, K., Glass, J., Jacobs, J. A., Stritzel, H. (2021). Gender, Parenting, and the Rise of Remote Work During the Pandemic: Implications for Domestic Inequality in the United States. *Gender & Society, 35*(2), 194–205. https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432211001301

EIGE. (2023). Gender Equality Index 2023: Towards a Green Transition in Transport and Energy. Brussels: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from: https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-equality-index-2023- towards-green-transition-transport-and-energy?language_content_entity=en

Elliott, S., Brenton, J., Powell, R. (2017). Brothermothering: Gender, Power, and the Parenting Strategies of Low-Income Black Single Mothers of Teenagers. *Social Problems, 65*(4), 439– 455, https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spx021

Ennis, L. R. (2014). Balancing Separation-Connection in Mothering. In *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, edited by L. R. Ennis, 332–337. Bradford: Demeter Press.

Ennis, L. R. (2014). Intensive Mothering: Revisiting the Issue Today". In: Ennis, L. R. (ed.): *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, 1–24. Bradford: Demeter Press.

Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and Society*. New York: Norton.

European Parliament, B (2022). Flash Eurobarometer 2832 (News & Media Survey 2022). Cologne: GESIS. Available: doi:10.4232/1.14012

European Parliament. (2023). "Media & News Survey 2023." Eurobarometer. Retrieved from: https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3153

European Union (2006). *Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)*. European Union. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32006L0054

European Union. (2019). *Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU. European Union*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal- content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32019L1158#PP1Contents

Eurostat (2021). *Individuals – Frequency of Internet Use*. Available: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ISOC_CI_IFP_FU custom_2314659/bookm ark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=94c12e74-1b7c-46fb-9bc3-189fec098307 (viewed 05.01.2023.)

Eurostat. (2020). *How Many Single-parent Households Are There in the EU?* Eurostat. Retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20210601-2

Eurostat. (2021). *Divorce indicators* [*Data set*]. Eurostat. Retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/product/page/demo_ndivind;

Ewing, L., & Vu, H. (2020). Navigating 'Home Schooling' during Covid-19: Australian Public Response on Twitter. *Media International Australia, 178*(1), pp. 77–86.

Faircloth, C. (2021). *Couples' Transitions to Parenthood: Gender, Intimacy and Equality*. Springer Nature.

Feasey, R. (2017). Good, Bad or Just Good Enough: Representations of Motherhood and the Maternal Role on the Small Screen. *Studies in the Maternal, 9*(1), 1–31, https://doi.org/10.16995/sim.234

Forbes, L. K., Donovan, C., Lamar, M. R. (2020). Differences in Intensive Parenting Attitudes and Gender Norms Among U.S. Mothers. *The Family Journal, 28*(1), 63–71. https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480719893964

Forbes, L. K., M. R. Lamar, M. Speciale, and C. Donovan. (2022). Mothers' and Fathers' Parenting Attitudes During COVID-19. *Current Psychology, 41*(1): 470–479. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01605-x

Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Pantheon Books, New York.

Fox, A., & Hoy, M. (2019). Smart Devices, Smart Decisions? Implications of Parents' Sharenting for Children's Online Privacy: An Investigation of Mothers. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, 38*(4), pp. 414–432.

Friedan, Betty. (1963). *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Norton.

Gemius (12 September 2022). Gemius. Available: https://www.gemius.lv/agenturas-zinas/augusta-apmekletako-vietnu-top-20.html (viewed 05.01.2023.)

Goffman, E. (1956). *The Presentation of Self in Every-Day Life*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh. Graham, S. (2017). Being a 'Good' Parent: Single Women Reflecting Upon 'Selfishness' and 'Risk' When Pursuing Motherhood Through Sperm Donation. *Anthropology & Medicine, 25*(3), 249–264. https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2017.1326757

Grant, A. (2016). "#discrimination": The Online Response to a Case of a Breastfeeding Mother Being Ejected from a UK Retail Premises. *Journal of Human Lactation, 32*(1), 141–151. https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334415592403

Gross, C. L., B. Turgeon, T. Taylor, and K. Lansberry. (2014). State Intervention in Intensive Mothering. In: Ennis, L. R. (ed.) *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, 163–179. Bradford: Demeter Press.

Gruzd, A., Wellman, B., Takhteyey, Y. (2011). Imagining Twitter as an Imagined Community. *American Behavioral Scientist, 55*(10), 1294–1318. https://doi.org/10.1177/000276421140937 Guo, L. (2012). The Application of Social Network Analysis in Agenda Setting Research: A Methodological Exploration. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56(4), 616–631. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.732148

Hallstein, D. L. (2006). Conceiving Intensive Mothering. *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement, 8*(1, 2), 96–108, https://jarm.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/jarm/article/view/5016

Haslam, D. M., A. Tee, S. Baker. (2017). The Use of Social Media as a Mechanism of Social Support in Parents. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 26*(7), 2026–2037, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0716-6

Hays, S. (1996). *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Hepp, A. (2013) *Cultures of Mediatization*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hepp, A. (2020). *Deep Mediatization*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351064903

Hepp, A., Hjarvard, S., Lundby, K. (2015). Mediatization: Theorizing the Interplay Between Media, Culture and Society. *Media, Culture & Society, 37*(2), 314–324. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443715573835

Hepp, A., Krotz, F. (eds) (2014). *Mediatized Worlds: Culture and Society in a Media Age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hjarvard, S. (2004). From Bricks to Bytes: The Mediatization of a Global Toy Industry, in I. Bondebjerg & P. Golding (eds.) *European Culture and the Media*. Bristol: Intellect. (pp. 43.– 63).

Hochschild, A. R. (2016). *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press.

Hochschild, A. R., Machung, A. (1989). *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home.* New York: Viking.

Høffding, S., K. Martiny. (2016). Framing a Phenomenological Interview: What, Why and How. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences, 15*, 539–564, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-015-9433-z

Holiday, S., Densley, R., Norman, M. (2020). Influencer Marketing Between Mothers: The Impact of Disclosure and Visual Brand Promotion. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising, 42*(3), 236–257. https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2020.1782790

Housman, K., Joy, E. (2014). The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood Revisited. In *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, edited by L. R. Ennis, 86–103. Bradford: Demeter Press.

Hyde, A. (2000). Age and Partnership as Public Symbols: Stigma and Non-Marital Motherhood in an Irish Context. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 7*(1), pp. 71–89.

Jansone-Ratinika, N. (2013). *Father's Pedagogical Competence in Family Nowadays*. [*Tēva pedagoģiskā kompetence mūsdienu ģimenē*] (Doctoral thesis). University of Latvia, Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Arts.

Jones, Q. (1997). Virtual Communities, Virtual Settlements and Cyber-Archaeology. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, *3*(3), n. p.

Jørgensen, M., Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: Sage Publications.

Jovanovski, N., & Cook, K. (2019). The Vulnerable-Empowered Mother of Academic Food Discourses: A Qualitative Meta-Synthesis of Studies of Low-Income Mothers and Food Provisioning. *Health Sociology Review*, 107–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/14461242.2019.1578984

Jovanovski, N., Cook, K. (2019). The Vulnerable-Empowered Mother of Academic Food Discourses: A Qualitative Meta-Synthesis of Studies of Low-Income Mothers and Food Provisioning. *Health Sociology Review*, *28*(2),107–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/14461242.2019.1578984 Jurciņa, A. (1975). *Sieviete – Personība* [*Woman – Personality*]. Rīga: Liesma.

Jurciņa, A. (1986). *Sieviete un sociālistiskais dzīvesveids* [*Woman and the Socialist Lifestyle*]. Rīga: Avots.

Kantola, A. (2020). Gloomy at the Top: How the Wealthiest 0.1% Feel about the Rest. *Sociology, 54*(5), 904–919, https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520910344

Kārkla, Z. (2022). *Iemiesošanās. Sievišķās subjektivitātes ģenealoģija latviešu rakstnieču prozā*. [*Genealogy of Female Subjectivity in Latvian Writers' Prose*]. Rīga: Latvijas Universitātes Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūts.

Kaun, A. (2023). The End of Media? From Mediatisation to Datafication. In Kopecka-Piech, K., & Bolin, G. (Eds.). *Contemporary Challenges in Mediatization Research*. (pp. 161–174). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003324591-14

Kazyak, E., Park, N., McQuillan, J., & Greil, A. (2016). Attitudes Toward Motherhood Among Sexual Minority Women in the United States. *Journal of Family Issues, 37*(13), pp. 1771–1796.

Kerrick, M. R., R. L. Henry. (2017). Totally in Love: Evidence of a Master Narrative for How New Mothers Should Feel about Their Babies. *Sex Roles, 76*,1–16, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0666-2

Kestere, Stonkuviene, I. I., Rubene, Z. (2020). The New Soviet Man with a Female Body: Mother, Teacher, Tractor Driver… *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia, 45*, 97–109. https://doi.org/10.15388/ActPaed.45.6

Kim, J. (2016). Narrative Data Analysis and Interpretation: 'Flirting with Data'. Pp. 184–225 in J. Kim. *Understanding Narrative Inquiry: The Crafting and Analysis of Stories as Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

Klímová Chaloupková, J., Pospíšilová, K. (2023). Towards a Conceptualisation of Intensive Parenting Norms: Testing Exact and Approximate Measurement Invariance Across Social and Country Contexts. *Journal of Family Research 35*, 515–534. https://doi.org/10.20377/jfr-926

Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*. London: Sage Publications.

Kukaine, J. (2016). *Daiļās mātes*. [*Beautiful Mothers*]. Rīga: Neputns.

Kukaine, J. (2022). *Feminist Art in Postsocialism: A Perspective of Visceral Aesthetics*. Doctoral Thesis. Latvian Academy of Art. https://lanet.lv/10.1177/0957926500011002006

Latvijas Republikas Ministru kabinets (2016). *Par Latvijas mediju politikas pamatnostādnēm 2016.– 2020. gadam [On the Guidelines for Media Policy of Latvia 2016–2020]*. LR Ministru kabinets. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/286455-par-latvijas-mediju-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2016-2020-gadam

Latvijas Republikas Ministru kabinets (2021). *Par Sociālās aizsardzības un darba tirgus politikas pamatnostādnēm 2021.–2027. gadam*. [*On Social Protection and Labour Market Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027*]. LR Ministru kabinets. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/325828-par-socialas- aizsardzibas-un-darba-tirgus-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2021-2027-gadam

Latvijas Republikas Ministru kabinets (2022). *Par Bērnu, jaunatnes un ģimenes attīstības pamatnostādnēm 2022.–2027. gadam.* Latvijas Vēstnesis. https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2022/252.1

Latvijas Republikas Valsts kanceleja (2024). *Latvijas mediju politikas pamatnostādnes 2024.–2027. gadam. Pamatnostādņu projekts*. [*Guidelines for Media Policy of Latvia 2024–2027. Draft guidelines*.] LR Valsts kanceleja. https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/db4e5704-a451-4ab0-b8b1-96a71a36d19d

Lazard, L. (2022). Digital Mothering: Sharenting, Family Selfies and Online Affective-Discursive Practices. *Feminism & Psychology*, *32*(4), 540–558. https://doi.org/10.1177/09593535221083840

Lazard, L., R. Capdevila, C. Dann, A. Locke, and S. Roper. (2019). Sharenting: Pride, Affect and the Day-to-Day Politics of Digital Mothering. *Social and Personal Psychology Compass*, *13*(4). https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12443

Lee, J. Y., Grogan-Kaylor, A. C., Lee, S. J. (2020). A Qualitative Analysis of Stay-At-Home Parents' Spanking Tweets. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *29*, 817–830. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-019-01691-3

Lee, Y.–J., Chen, H. (2018). Empowerment or Alienation: Chinese and Korean Immigrant Mothers' Perception of Mobile Media in Constructing their Social Role and Facilitating Parenting Practices in the US. *Mobile Media & Communication*, *6*(3), 390–406. https://doi.org/10.1177/205015791876398

Lehto, M. (2020). Bad Is the New Good: Negotiating Bad Motherhood in Finnish Mommy Blogs. *Feminist Media Studies, 20*(5), 657–671, https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2019.1642224 Liss, M., Schiffrin, H. H., Mackintosh, V. H., Miles-McLean, H., Erchull, M. J. (2013). Development and Validation of a Quantitative Measure of Intensive Parenting Attitudes. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 22*, 621–636. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-012-9616-y

Littler, J. (2020). Mothers Behaving Badly: Chaotic Hedonism and the Crisis of Neoliberal Social Reproduction. *Cultural Studies, 34*(4), pp. 499–520.

Locatelli, E. (2017). Images of Breastfeeding on Instagram: Self-Representation, Publicness, and Privacy Management. *Social Media + Society, 3*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117707190

Long, H., Prikhidko, A., Bendeck, A. C., Yumusak, S. (2021). Measurement Invariance of the Intensive Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire Across Gender and Race. *Journal of Family Psychology, 35*(7), 1027–1032. https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000889 .

Lopez, L. K. (2009). The Radical Act of 'Mommy Blogging': Redefining Motherhood Through the Blogosphere. *New Media & Society, 11*(5), 729–747 https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809105349

Loyal, D., Sutter Dallay, A.–L., Rascle, N. (2017). Intensive Mothering Ideology in France: A Pilot Study. *Encephale, 43*(6), 564–569. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.encep.2017.08.002 .

Lupton, D. (2017). 'It Just Gives Me a Bit of Peace of Mind': Australian Women's Use of Digital Media for Pregnancy and Early Motherhood. *Societies, 7*(3):25. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc7030025

Mackenzie, J., Zhao, S. (2021). Motherhood Online: Issues and Opportunities for Discourse Analysis. Discourse, *Context & Media, 40*, 100472. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2021.100472

Mainland, M., Shaw, S. M., Prier, A. (2016). Parenting in an Era of Risk: Responding to the Obesity Crisis, *Journal of Family Studies, 23*(1), 86–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2015.1090328

Malatzky, C. (2016). Abnormal Mothers: Breastfeeding, Governmentality and Emotion Amongst Regional Australian Women. *Gender Issues, 34*(4), 355–370. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-016-9179-0

Matley, D. (2020). "I Miss My Old Life": Regretting Motherhood on Mumsnet. *Discourse, Context & Media, 37*, pp. 100417–100424

McArthur, J., White, A. (2016). Twitter Chats as Third Places: Conceptualizing a Digital Gathering Site. *Social Media + Society*. *2*(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116665857

McLuhan, M. (2006 [1967]). *The Medium is the Massage. An Inventory of Effects*. Corte Madera: Gingko Press Inc.

McNeil, D., Mueller, M., MacDonald, S., McDonald, S., Saini, V., Kellner, J. & Tough, S. (2019). Maternal Perceptions of Childhood Vaccination: Explanations of Reasons For and Against Vaccination. *BMC Public Health, 19*(49), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-6338-0

Meng, B. (2020) When Anxious Mothers Meet Social Media: Wechat, Motherhood and the Imaginary of the Good Life, *Javnost – The Public, 27*(2), 171–185, https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2020.1727276

Mertens, D. M. (2009). *Transformative Research and Evaluation*. New York: The Guilford Press. Micalizzi, A. (2020). Exploring Gender and Sexuality through a Twitter Lens: the Digital Framing Effect of the #fertilityday Campaign by Female Users. *Information, Communication & Society, 24*(8), 1157–1174. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1808044

Milkie M. A., Warner, C. H. (2014). Status Safeguarding: Mothers' Work to Secure Children's Place in the Social Hierarchy. In: Ennis, L. R. (ed.) *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, 66–85. Bradford: Demeter Press.

Miller, T. (2005). *Making Sense of Motherhood: A Narrative Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Moore, J., Abetz, J. S. (2019). What Do Parents Regret About Having Children? Communicating Regrets Online. *Journal of Family Issues, 40*(3), 390–412. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X18811388

Morris, C., & Munt, S. (2019). Classed Formations of Shame in White, British Single Mothers. *Feminism & Psychology, 29*(2), pp. 231–249.

Mothernet (2021). *About*. Mothernet. https://www.mothernet.eu/about/

Mourkarzel, S., Caduff, A., Rehm, M., del Fresno, M., Perez-Escamilla, R., Daly, A. (2021). Breastfeeding Communication Strategies, Challenges and Opportunities in the Twitter-Verse: Perspectives of Influencers and Social Network Analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(12). https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126181

Mourkazel, S., Rehm, M., & Daly, A. (2020). Breastfeeding promotion on Twitter: A social network and content analysis approach. *Maternal and Child Nutrition, 16*(4), pp. 1–8.

Mourkazel, S., Rehm, M., del Fresno, M., & Daly, A. (2020). Diffusing Science through Social Networks: The Case of Breastfeeding Communication on Twitter. 15(8). *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(12).

Murray, L., M. Finn. (2012). Good Mothers, Bad Thoughts: New Mothers' Thoughts of Intentionally Harming Their Newborns. *Feminism & Psychology, 22*(1): 41–59, https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353511414015

North, L. (2016). Still a 'Blokes Club': The Motherhood Dilemma in Journalism. Journalism, 17(3), 315–330. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884914560306

Ortiz-Sánchez, E., Velando-Soriano, A., Pradas-Hernández, L., Vargas-Román, K. , Gómez-Urquiza, J., Cañadas-De la Fuente, G. & Albendín-García, L. (2020). Analysis of the Anti-Vaccine Movement in Social Networks: A Systematic Review. *Environmental Research and Public Health, 17*(5394), 1–11. https://doi:10.3390/ijerph17155394

Orton-Johnson, K. (2017). Mummy Blogs and Representations of Motherhood: "Bad Mummies" and Their Readers. *Social Media + Society, 3*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117707186

Palmer, R. A. (2019). A 'Deep Story' about American Journalism. *Journalism Studies, 20*(3), 327– 344, https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1375390

Petersen, L. N. (2023). Challenges in Research on the Mediatisation of Culture. In Kopecka-Piech, K., & Bolin, G. (Eds.). *Contemporary Challenges in Mediatization Research*. (pp. 13–26). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003324591-3

Piaget, J. (1952). *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*. New York: International Universities Press, Inc.

Prikhidko, A., J. M. Swank. (2018). Motherhood Experiences and Expectations: A Qualitative Exploration of Mothers of Toddlers. *The Family Journal, 26* (3), 278–284, https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480718795116

Prisko, L., Sebre, S., Upmane, A. (2022). *Laulību, dzimstības un pozitīvu bērnu – vecāku attiecību veicinošo faktoru izpēte: 2022. gada un 2004. gada pētījumu rezultātu salīdzinājums* [*Study of factors contributing to marriage, birth and positive childhood-parent relationships: a comparison of the results of studies from 2022 and 2004*]. Riga: Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center.

Putniņa, A., Pinka, M., Mileiko, I., Kalēja, J., Jakunova, I., Muižniece, M. (2015). *Reģistrētas un nereģistrētas kopdzīves faktoru salīdzinoša analīze* [*Comparative Analysis of Factors of Registered and Unregistered Cohabitation*]. Rīga: Publiskās antropoloģijas centrs.

Ray, R. (2017). Identity of Distance: How Economically Marginalized Black and Latina Women Navigate Risk Discourse and Employ Feminist Ideals. *Social Problems, 65*(1), 456–472, https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spx025

Rizzo, K. M., Schiffrin, H.H. Liss, M. (2013). Insight into the Parenthood Paradox: Mental Health Outcomes of Intensive Mothering. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 22*, 614–620. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-012-9615-z

Robertson, L. G., T. L. Anderson, M. E. Hall, C. L. Kim. (2019). Mothers and Mental Labor: A Phenomenological Focus Group Study of Family-Related Thinking Work. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 43*(2),184–200, https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684319825581

Rode, J. L. (2016). The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Predicting Postpartum Depression. *Western Journal of Nursing Research, 38*(4), 427–440, https://doi.org/10.1177/0193945915590690

Roper, S., Capdevila, R. (2020). Hapless, Helpless, Hopeless: An Analysis of Stepmothers' Talk about Their (Male) Partners. *Feminism & Psychology, 30*(2), 248–266. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353519900212

Saar, M., Aavik, K. (2022). Negotiating Neoliberalism in the Private Sphere: Narratives of Estonian Single Mothers. *Journal of Baltic Studies, 53*(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2021.1980071

Sacco, R. G. (2013). Re-envisaging the Eight Developmental Stages of Erik Erikson: The Fibonacci Life-Chart Method (FLCM). *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology, 3*(1), https://doi.org/10.5539/jedp.v3n1p140.

Saxonberg, S., Szelewa, D. (2007). The Continuing Legacy of the Communist Legacy? The Development of Family Policies in Poland and the Czech Republic. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, *14*(3), 351–379. https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxm014

Scarborough, W. J. (2018.) Feminist Twitter and Gender Attitudes: Opportunities and Limitations to Using Twitter in the Study of Public Opinion. Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World, 4(4). https:// doi.org/10.1177/2378023118780760

Schiffrin, H. H., Liss, M., Geary, K., Miles-McLean, H., Hagerman, C., Tashner, Rizzo, K. (2013). Mother, Father, or Parent? College Students' Intensive Parenting Attitudes Differ by Referent. Journal of Child & Family Studies, 23(6), 1073–1080. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-013-9764-8

Schmidt, A.L., Zollo, F., Scala, A., Betsch, C. & Quattrociocchi, W. (2018). Polarization of the Vaccination Debate on Facebook. *Vaccine, 36*, 3606–3612. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2018.05.040

Schoppe-Sullivan, S., Yavorsky, J., Bartholomew, M. (2017). Doing Gender Online: New Mothers' Psychological Characteristics, Facebook Use, and Depressive Symptoms. *Sex Roles, 76*, 276–289. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0640-z

Schrodt, P. (2019). Emotion Labor with Parents as a Mediator of Family Communication Patterns and Young Adult Children's Mental Well-Being. *Journal of Family Communication, 1*(16), 66–81, https://doi.org /10.1080/15267431.2019.1661250

Schuster, A. (1971). Women's Role in the Soviet Union: Ideology and Reality. *The Russian Review, 30*(3), 260–267.

Sevón, E. (2012). 'My Life has Changed, but His Life hasn't': Making Sense of the Gendering of Parenthood During the Transition to Motherhood. *Feminism & Psychology, 22*(1), pp. 60–80.

Shahvisi, A. (2019). Medicine is Patriarchal, But Alternative Medicine is Not the Answer. Bioethical Inquiry, 16, 99–112. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673–018–9890–5

Shea, R., Bryant, L., Wendt, S. (2016). 'Nappy Bags Instead of Handbags': Young Motherhood and Self-Identity. *Journal of Sociology, 52*(4), 840–855. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783315599594

Shuval, J. T., Gross, S. E., (2008). Midwives practice CAM: Feminism in the delivery room. *Complementary Health Practice Review, 13*(1), 46–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/1533210107311471

Sniekers, M., Rommes, E. (2020). Acting Their Age? An Intersectional Approach on Young Motherhood From Young Mothers' Perspectives. *Affilia, 35*(4), 466–484. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109920906783

Sointu, E., Woodhead, L. (2008). Spirituality, Gender, and Expressive Selfhood. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *47*(2), 259–276.

Steiner, L., Bronstein, C. (2017). Leave a Comment: Mommyblogs and the Everyday Struggle to Reclaim Parenthood. *Feminist Media Studies, 17*(1), 59–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2017.1261840

Stewart, M. (2020). Live Tweeting, Reality TV and the Nation. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 23*(3), pp. 352–367.

Sullivan, C. (2014). 'Bad Mum Guilt': The Representation of 'Work-Life Balance' in UK Women's Magazines. *Community, Work & Family, 18*(3), 284–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2014.970128

Sunderland, J. (2000). Baby Entertainer, Bumbling Assistant and Line Manager: Discourses of Fatherhood in Parentcraft Texts. *Discourse & Society, 11*(2), 249–274.

Taber, K. S. (2018). The Use of Cronbach's Alpha When Developing and Reporting Research Instruments in Science Education. *Research in Science Education, 48*(6), 1273–1296. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-016-9602-2

Talbot, J., Charron, V., Konkle, A. (2021). Feeling the Void: Lack of Support for Isolation and Sleep Difficulties in Pregnant Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic Revealed by Twitter Data Analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(2:393).

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (2023). Health Statistics Database. Retrieved from: https://statistika.spkc.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/Health/

Tickner, S., Leman P. J., Woodcock, A. (2009). Parents' Views about Pre-school Immunization: an Interview Study in Southern England. *Child Care, Health and Development. 36*(2), 190–197.

Tiidenberg, K., Baym, N. K. (2017). Learn It, Buy It, Work It: Intensive Pregnancy on Instagram. *Social Media + Society*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116685108

Trapezņikova, I., Goldmanis, M., Koroleva, I., Aleksandrovs, A. (2019). *Latvijas ģimenes paaudzēs. 2018. Analītisks ziņojums* [*Latvia's Families in Generations, 2018*]. Rīga: LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts.

Twitter (1 December 2022). developer.twitter.com. .Twitter.com: https://developer.Twitter.com/en/docs (viewed 05.01.2023.)

Twitter (30 August 2022). Twitter Inc. Retrieved from blog.Twitter.com: https://blog.Twitter.com/en_us/topics/product/2022/introducing-Twitter-circle-new-way-tweet-smaller-crowd#:~:text=Tweets%20sent%20to%20your%20circle,cannot%20be%20Retweeted%20or%20shared (viewed 05.01.2023.)

United Nations (2015). *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations.* https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

Valiquette-Tessier, S., Gosselin, J., Young, M., Thomassin, K. (2018). A Literature Review of Cultural Stereotypes Associated with Motherhood and Fatherhood. *Marriage & Family Review, 55*(4): 299–329. https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2018.1469567

Valtchanov, B. V., Parry, D. C., Glover, T. D., Mulcahy, C. M. (2016). 'A Whole New World': Mothers' Technologically Mediated Leisure. *Leisure Sciences, 38*(1), 50–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400

Valtchanov, B., Parry, D., Glover, T., & Mulcahy, C. (2015). 'A Whole New World': Mothers' Technologically Mediated Leisure. Leisure Sciences: *An Interdisciplinary Journal, 38*(1), pp. 50–67.

van Belle, J. (2016). *Paternity and Parental Leave Policies across the European Union*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, https://doi.org/10.7249/RR1666

Vissing, H. (2014). The Ideal Mother Fantasy and Its Protective Function. In *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, edited by L. R. Ennis, 104–119. Bradford: Demeter Press.

VSAA. (2020). Valsts sociālās apdrošināšanas aģentūra [State Social Insurance Agency]. Retrieved 21/11/2023 (https://www.vsaa.gov.lv/pakalpojumi/vecakiem/berna-kopsanas-pabalsts/).

Walker, M. (2014). Intensive Mothering, Elimination, and the Call to Eden. In: Ennis, L. R. (ed.) *Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood*, 233–246. Bradford, ON: Demeter Press.

Wang, Y. (2020). Parent-Child Role Reversal in ICT Domestication: Media Brokering Activities and Emotional Labours of Chinese 'Study Mothers' in Singapore. *Journal of Children and Media*, https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2020.1725900

Watt, L. (2017). 'Her Life Rests on Your Shoulders': Doing Worry as Emotion Work in the Care of Children with Diabetes. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research, 4,* https://doi.org/10.1177/2333393617743638

Williams, B. M., Christopher, K., & Sinski, J. (2017). "Who Doesn't Want to Be This Hot Mom?": Celebrity Mom Profiles and Mothers' Accounts of Their Postpartum Bodies. SAGE Open. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017720562

Yam, S. (2019). Birth Images on Instagram: The Disruptive Visuality of Birthing Bodies. Women's Studies in Communication, 42(1), pp. 80–100.

Yam, S. (2019). Birth Images on Instagram: The Disruptive Visuality of Birthing Bodies. *Women's Studies in Communication, 42*(1), 80–100. https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2018.1561564

Ylänne, V. (2016). Too Old to Parent? Discursive Representations of Late Parenting in the British Press. *Discourse & Communication, 10*(2), 176–197. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481315611242

Zappavigna, M., Zhao, S. (2017). Selfies in 'Mommyblogging': An Emerging Visual Genre. *Discourse, Context & Media, 20*, 239–247. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2017.05.005 Zhang, Y., Jatowt, A., & Kawai, Y. (2019). Finding Baby Mothers on Twitter. *ICW: Web Engineering. 11496*, pp. 211–219.

Zitmane, M. (2016). Patērētāja (at)veidojums Latvijas žurnālu reklāmās perestroikas un pēcpadomju periodā: dzimtes identitātes diskurss (1985–2004) [(Re)presentation of Consumer in Latvian Advertisements During Perestroika and Post Soviet Period: Discourse of Gender Identity (1985–2004)]. (Doctoral thesis). University of Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences. https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/31866

Zukula, B., Purona-Sida, P., Beinare, R., Bunte, V. (2022). *Latvijas 2021. gada tautas un mājokļu skaitīšanas galvenie rezultāti* [*Population and Housing Census of Latvia 2021*]. Rīga: Centrālās statistikas pārvalde.

Sources

Andersone, I. (2019). Lūk, tas ir brīnums! [*Now That's A Miracle!*] *Mans Mazais*, 3. 16–21.

Asare, D. (2018). Karstākā ziema mūsu mūžā. [*The Hottest Winter in Our Lives*] *Mans Mazais*, 6. 62–65.

Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums. (2020, November 26). Man radās jautājums!! Tām mammam, kuras nepote savus bērnus ar obligātajām potēm, kā tad rīkosieties tagat ar kovid potēm? Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/groups/884647598211922/permalink/3889678261042159

Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums. (2021, January 26). Māmiņas, nu ir mana kārta lūgt Jūsu padomu. Manai meitiņai 2,5 mēnesi, mums priekšā vesela virkne ar potēm. Tuvākas trīs. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/groups/884647598211922/permalink/4051666391510011

Atsaucīgo māmiņu forums. (2021, March 7). Ar vīru gaidām 3.bērniņu un jau pie otrā bērna viņš pēkšņi no zila gaisa izdomāja, ka bērnus neviens vairs nevakcinēs. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/groups/884647598211922/permalink/4163178620358787

Bertholde, A. (2019a). Mācīties slēpot kopā ar bērniem. [*Learn to Ski With Children*] *Mans Mazais*, 1. 68–70.

Bertholde, A. (2019b). Pusgads ar bērnu Spānijā. [*Half a Year with a Child in Spain*] *Mans Mazais*, 3. 68–71.

Bertholde, A. (2019c). Dzīve busiņā ar mazuli. [*Life in a Van with a Child*] *Mans Mazais*, 4. 68–70. Bertholde, A. (2019d). Vasara ar bērnu Amerikā. [*Summer with Child in America*] *Mans Mazais*, 5. 69–71.

Bērziņa Ē. (2022a). Mēs esam viena komanda! [*We Are a Team*] *Mans Mazais*, 1. 10–15. Bērziņa, Ē. (2018a). Gaidu bērniņu viena. [*Pregnant and Alone*] *Mans Mazais*, 5. 26–29. Bērziņa, Ē. (2018b). Absolūts pozitīvisma lādiņš. [*Absolute Positivity*] *Mans Mazais*, 6. 12–18. Bērziņa, Ē. (2018c). Simsonu karaliste. [*Simson Kingdom*] *Mans Mazais*, 7. 12–19.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2018d). Dzīve ir krāsaina. [*Life is Colourful*] *Mans Mazais*, 7. 66–69.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2018e). Viss grūtais aizmirsīsies. [*All Worries Will Fade Away*] *Mans Mazais*, 8. 12–19. Bērziņa, Ē. (2018f). Dzīvot pa īstam. [*Live Fully*] *Mans Mazais*, 10. 14–20.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2018g). Bērni mainīja visu mūsu dzīvi. [*Children Changed Our Life*] *Mans Mazais*, 11. 66–69.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2018h). Mīlestības trijstūris. [*Love Triangle*] *Mans Mazais*, 12. 18–24.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2019a). Reizēm ar mani vienu ir par maz. [*Sometimes I Alone Am Not Enough*] *Mans Mazais*, 4. 16–22.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2019b). Gribu būt priecīga mamma. [*I Want to Be a Happy Mom*] *Mans Mazais*, 5. 16–21.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2020a). Mūsu pasaule ir mainījusies. [*Our World Has Changed*] *Mans Mazais*, 1. 12–18.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2020b). Dēls piedzima pandēmijas laikā. [*Son Was Born During the Pandemic*] *Mans Mazais*, 3. 16–21.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2020c). Augam kopā ar bērniem. [*Grow Along With Children*] *Mans Mazais*, 4. 16–21.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2020d). Bez rozā brillēm. [*Without Pink Glasses*] *Mans Mazais*, 5. 10–14.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2020e). Laime pilnīga. [*Absolute bliss*] *Mans Mazais*, 6. 10–15.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2021a). Trīs dēli – tas ir forši! [*Three Sons – It's Cool!*] *Mans Mazais*, 1. 10–15.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2021b). Pacietības mēram jābūt gana trenētam. [*Patience is Key*] *Mans Mazais*, 2. 12–17.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2021c). Dažkārt mums iet ļoti skaļi. [*Sometimes Everything's Loud*] *Mans Mazais*, 3. 12–16.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2021d). Dēls ir mūsu dzīves gaisma. [*Son is the Light of Our Life*] *Mans Mazais*, 4. 12–17.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2021e). Bērns nav eksāmens, tā ir dzīve. [*Child is Not a Test, It's Life*] *Mans Mazais*, 5. 10–15.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2021f). Es neesmu tikai Tuta! [*I Am Not Only Tuta!*] *Mans Mazais*, 6. 10–14.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2022b). Divas mammas, divas meitas. [*Two Mothers, Two Daughters*] *Mans Mazais*, 1. 54–56.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2022c). Mācos dzīvot no jauna. [*Learning to Live Again*] *Mans Mazais*, 2. 8–12. Bērziņa, Ē. (2022d). Mans kuģis ir mainījis virzienu. [*My Ship Has Changed Its Course*] *Mans Mazais,* 3. 8–13.

Bērziņa, Ē. (2022e). Uz viena viļņa! [*On the Same Wave*] *Mans Mazais*, 5. 8–13.

Cālis (2021). Ieraksts, kas raisījis diskusijas: 2021. un 1985. gada mammas [*Post, that has created discussions: Mothers of 2021 and 1985*]. https://www.delfi.lv/calis/enciklopedija/ieraksts-kas- raisijis-diskusijas-2021-un-1985-gada-mammas.d?id=53035789&com=1&reg=1&no=0&s=1

Eniņa, Z. (2021). Gribi puisīti? Dāvanā arī meitenīte! [*Want a Son? Daughter Comes Also As a Gift*] *Mans Mazais*, 2. 62–64.

Facebook. (2021). "Un es, sēžot ērtā dīvānā, malkojot bezkofeīna kafiju ar Oddly good barista pienu… [And I, sitting in a comfortable sofa, drinking decaf coffee with Oddly good barista milk…]. https://www.facebook.com/la.lvportals/posts/3973621526028548 [12.05.2022.]

Facebook. (2021). Cik patiesi [How true]. https://www.facebook.com/groups/884647598211922/posts/4196179800392002/ [12.05.2022.]

Gauja, G. (2020a). Latvijā jūtamies laimīgi. [*We Feel Happy in Latvia*] *Mans Mazais*, 1. 64–67.

Gauja, G. (2020b). Tā es kļuvu par tēvu. [*This Is How I Became a Father*] *Mans Mazais*, 2. 12–18.

Jaudzema, L. (2022). Pārcelties uz dzīvi laukos. [*Move To the Countryside*] *Mans Mazais*, 5. 60–63.

Klapere, I. (2018a). Un Dievs radīja ģimeni. [*And God Created Family*] *Mans Mazais*, 3. 68–71.

Klapere, I. (2018b). Viegli vieglītiņām, klusi klusītiņām… [*Soft and Quiet*] *Mans Mazais*, 5. 14–20. Kondrāte, E. (2018). Sports ir mūsu hobijs. [*Sport is Our Hobby*] *Mans Mazais*, 5. 62–64.

Kondrāte, E. (2019). Dēls deva spēku dzīvot tālāk. [*Son Gave Will to Live*] *Mans Mazais*, 6. 64–67.

La.lv. (2021). Vētra soctīklos: "Izjūtu dziļu kaunu, ka mammai sūdzējos par savu "grūto ikdienu"! Vai audzināt bērnu šodien ir vieglāk, nekā 1985. gadā? [A storm in social media: "I feel deep shame for whining to my mother about my "hard life". Is bringing up children today easier than in 1985?] https://www.la.lv/vetra-soctiklos-izjutu-dzilu-kaunu-ka-mammai-sudzejos-par-savu-gruto-ikdienu-vai-audzinat-bernu-sodien-ir-vieglak-neka-1985-gada/komentari

Latvijas Radio 1 (2021). Vecāku pieredze nesniedz zināšanas, kā bērniem pārvarēt digitālās vides izaicinājumus [Parents' experience does not provide knowledge of how to overcome challenges in the digital environment]. https://lr1.lsm.lv/lv/raksts/gimenes-studija/vecaku- pieredze-nesniedz-zinasanas-ka-berniem-parvaret-digitalas.a148382/

Lieģe-Doležko, A. (2021). Mans mājdzemdību stāsts. [*My Homebirth Story*] *Mans Mazais*, 2. 20–23.

Lieģe-Doležko, A. (2022b). Mēs ejam savu ceļu. [*We Take Our Own Path*] *Mans Mazais,* 6. 56–57.

Lieģe-Doležko. (2022a). Vairs nedzīvoju kopā ar saviem bērniem. [*I Do Not Live With My Children*] *Mans Mazais*, 3. 62–63.

Liepa, L. (2018a). Tas ir mūsu bērns! [*It's Our Child!*] *Mans Mazais*, 1, 66–69.

Liepa, L. (2018b). Nevaram būt aizspriedumaini. [*We Cannot be Judgmental*] *Mans Mazais*, 3. 12–18. Medene, E. (2018). Kā pārdzīvot bērniņa zaudēšanu. [*How to Survive the Loss of a Child*] *Mans Mazais*, 2. 62–65.

Meiere, A. (2018a). Pilnīgi cita sieviete [*A Completely Different Woman*]. *Mans Mazais*, 1, 12–17. Meiere, A. (2018c). Mīlestība piecās paaudzēs. [*Love in Five Generations*]. *Mans Mazais*, 2, 54–57. Meiere, A. (2018d). Bez mammas kā pieci pirksti dūrītē. [*Like Five Fingers in A Fist Without Mother*] *Mans Mazais*, 9. 48–51.

Meiere, A. (2019a). Kad stārķi pievilināja diēta. [*Diet Lured the Stork*] *Mans Mazais*, 2. 16–21. Meiere, A. (2019b). Trauslā čaumaliņa kļūst arvien stiprāka. [*Fragile Shell Becomes Harder*] *Mans Mazais,* 6. 18–23.

Meirere, A. (2018b). Atbilde ir mīlestība. [*The Answer is Love*] *Mans Mazais*, 2, 14–21. Meluškāne, S. (2018a). Ministre stāvoklī [*Pregnant Minister*]. *Mans Mazais*, 1, 24–27.

Meluškāne, S. (2018b). Piedzīvots ir viss – no debesīm līdz ellītei. [*Experience from Heven to Hell*] *Mans Mazais*, 4. 12–19.

Meluškāne, S. (2018c). Meitas baletskolas dēļ no Valkas pārcēlās uz Rīgu. [*Moved to Riga for Daughter's Ballet School*] *Mans Mazais*, 5. 49–53.

Meluškāne, S. (2018d). Meitene, kas vienmēr smaida. [*Girl Who Always Smiles*] *Mans Mazais*, 8. 62– 65.

Meluškāne, S. (2018e). Priecājos, ka mani bērni nebūs vieni. [*Glad That My Children Will Never Be Alone*] *Mans Mazais*, 9. 12–18.

Meluškāne, S. (2019). Ceļojums uz saulaino salu Kipru. [*Journey to Sunny Cyprus*] *Mans Mazais*, 2. 69–71.

Ozoliņa, M. (2018). Ceļot kopā – tas ir dzīvesveids. [*Travel Together – A Lifestyle*] *Mans Mazais*, 10. 68–71.

Ozoliņa, M. (2022). Ar katru bērnu mīlestība kļūst lielāka. [*Love Grows Larger with Each Child*] *Mans Mazais*, 6. 8–12.

Rozenbaha, L. (2021). Meitas piedzima oranžā vannā Ķīnā, dēls – Amerikā. [*Daughters Were Born in an Orange Bath in Chine, Son – in America*] *Mans Mazais,* 1. 60–63.

Rudzīte, D. (2020). Pavisam citāda dzīve. [*Different Life*] *Mans Mazais*, 5. 56–59. Sidoroviča, T. (2018). Divas dzemdības pēc diviem ķeizargriezieniem. [*To Births After Two Caesarean Sections*] *Mans Mazais*, 4. 24–27.

Smilga, I. (2022). Dzīves virpulī starp dažādām valstīm. [*In A Life's Whirlpool Between Different Countries] Mans Mazais*, 4. 8–13.

Snapshots (2020). Tēvu loma ģimenē [A father's role in the family]. https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/media/6460/download

Štāla, L. (2021). Gribēja vienu, sanāca trīs! [*Wanted One, Created Three*] *Mans Mazais*, 3. 61–63. Štāla, L. (2022a). Saprast cilvēku no citas planētas. [*To Understand a Person From Another Planet*] *Mans Mazais*, 2. 60–63.

Štāla, L. (2022b). Cilmes šūnu terapija – tā varam meitai palīdzēt. [*Stem Cell Treatment – A Way to Help Our Daughter*] *Mans Mazais,* 4. 52–55.

Stāvause, V. (2020). Sapņi piepildās. Triju bērnu mamma – pilote. [*Dreams Come True. Mother of Three – a Pilot*] *Mans Mazais*, 4. 60–63.

Stāvause, V. (2022). Berlīnes piezīmes. [*Notes From Berlin*] *Mans Mazais*, 6. 48–50.

Strode-Kļaviņa, A. (2020). Stāsts ar laimīgām beigām. [*Story With Happy Ending*] *Mans Mazais*, 6. 60–63.

Strūberga, Z. (2018a). Viņa dzemdēja, viņš dziedāja. [*She Gave Birth, He Sang*] *Mans Mazais*, 2, 26– 27.

Struberga, Z. (2018b). Bērni, kuri varēja nepiedzimt. [*Children Who Could Have Not Been Born*] *Mans Mazais*, 4. 56–59.

Strūberga, Z. (2018c). Ja vien tu zinātu, kas man ir mājās. [*If You Only Knew What I Have At Home*] *Mans Mazais*, 11. 16–22.

Strūberga, Z. (2019a). Viena puiku komandā. [*Alone in a Team of Boys*] *Mans Mazais*, 1. 12–18. Zaļuma, E. (2018). Mamma dodas Satnjago ceļā. [*Mom Goes on Santiago Journey*] *Mans Mazais*, 8. 58–61.