

OBSCURED LEISURE: CRAFTING AS LEISURE
FOR STAY-AT-HOME MOTHERS

by

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Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIOLOGY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

AUGUST 2018

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Acknowledgements

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Beth Anne Shelton. Her continuous support of my master's study and research alongside her patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and depth of knowledge is unmatched. Her guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing this thesis. I could not have imagined having a better advisor or mentor during completion of my master's degree.

In addition to my advisor, I would like to thank the rest of my thesis committee: Dr. Heather Jacobson and Dr. Kelly Bergstrand. Without their encouragement, insightful comments, and difficult questions, this thesis would not have reached this point.

I thank my fellow classmate and friend, Erin L. Taylor, for whom this thesis and my master's degree would not be possible without. Her continued support and guidance have enabled me to write this thesis and also allowed me to graduate. Thank you for the stimulating discussions, the sleepless nights we were working on deadlines, and for all the fun we've had the last four years.

Finally, I would like to thank my family: first, so many thanks go to my partner, Carson Sanders, who put up with me these past years while I was in graduate school. Without his patience and understanding, I would not be here today. I would also like to thank my many friends and family who supported me through this journey. I am beyond thankful to all of you.

July 12, 2018

Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to myself in honor of everything I have conquered to get to this point, as well as Dr. Ben Agger, who relentlessly reminded me of my potential. Without his support, encouragement, and push to enter graduate school, I would not be where I am today nor, would I look at the world in the same way.

Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to explore the meaning handcrafting has for stay-at-home mothers, the reasons some mothers engage in handcrafting, and how the practice of handcrafting influences motherhood. Qualitative data on handcrafting were gathered from in-depth, in person interviews with nine stay-at-home mothers. The data highlights the struggles stay-at-home mothers face in their everyday lives and how handcrafting serves to help mothers manage motherhood expectations. Handcrafting is a form of obscured leisure because it provides the mothers in this study some escape from the pressures of mothering while also allowing the mothers to perform intensive motherhood to their peers, social groups, and on social media. This is possible because handcrafting is enjoyable but also provides goods for the family. Handcrafting allows mothers to focus on the well-being of their children, spouses, and home while also escaping the pressures of motherhood.

Keywords: Intensive Motherhood, Obscured Leisure, Crafting, Domesticity

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Chapter 1 – The Resurgence of Domesticity

Women's work handcrafting inside the home is not a new phenomenon. Handcrafting historically includes quilt circles, home gardens for family food production, food prepping such as canning and jarring, and making family meals from scratch. These domestic activities can take up a significant amount of time for mothers, but they also bring handcrafted and homemade goods into the home and promote the values that come with making something with one's own hands. As early as the Civil War, scholars studied the practice of women in the arts and crafts movement, that began with women after the Civil War forming quilting circles to survive without the aid of men (Rotman 2006). Modern mothers are again taking up the practice of arts and crafts as stay-at-home mothers (SAHMs) reintroduce domestic arts from the past by having home gardens, canning, preparing meals from scratch, quilting, and sewing, among other practices.

This study investigates the resurgence of domesticity for SAHMs in order to understand more fully the reasoning behind the practice of arts and crafts inside the home. I also investigate the extent to which this new domesticity may reflect the ideology of intensive mothering, a concept introduced by Sharon Hays in 1996. This study introduces the term 'obscured leisure' to describe the practice of mothers finding leisure away from their children and families through hand crafting. This research will allow researchers to better understand how crafting and this new domesticity have transformed intensive mothering. Intensive mothering ideology holds that mothers should give their children all the time and energy required to allow their children to thrive and succeed in life (Hays 1996), and we shall see that the mothers in this study try to live up to the intensive mothering ideology. What is different for these mothers is that they have found an avenue to conform to the ideology of intensive mothering while simultaneously having leisure time for themselves. The literature on intensive mothering shows that intensive mothering practices can be detrimental to mothers' mental health, but the practice of obscured leisure allows mothers freedom to not only care for their children but for themselves as well. Literature is reviewed on

domestic arts and crafts (Burk and Atkinson 2011; Dawkins 2011; Johnson and Wilson 2005; Matchar 2013; Mason 2005; Myzelev 2009; Pollanen and Voutilainen 2017; and Rotman 2006) to understand the historical importance of crafting and to understand how modern women utilize crafting in their lives. I use literature on intensive motherhood, (Gunderson and Barrett; Hays 1996; Henderson, Harmon and Newman 2015; Kuperberg and Stone 2008; and Walls, Helms, and Grzywacz 2016) to explore the development of the ideology guiding these mothers' work. To understand the difficulties the mothers face when they accept the ideology of intensive mothering, I review research on mothers' mental well-being (Henderson, Harmon, and Newman 2016; Williams, Kurz, Summers, and Crabb 2012). I also review research on the impact of social media on mothers' ideas about motherhood and the challenges they face in light of ubiquitous representations of intensive mothering (Chae 2014; Gunderson and Barrett 2015; Henderson, Harmon, and Newman 2016; Johnston and Swanson 2003; Therriault 2014; Vaillancourt 2015). Finally, I review the research on leisure (Henderson 1991; James 2009; Scott 2010; Shaw 2001; Veblen 1899), which allows me to understand how women's leisure has changed, especially mothers' leisure, and how mothering impacts women's experience of leisure.

The results will show that handcrafting is encouraged by other mothers on social media. The depiction of good mothering on social media creates pressures on mothers to engage in a set of time consuming and undervalued activities, but for the mothers who enjoy crafting, the addition of handcrafting to the expectations of motherhood also provides an opportunity for leisure. Through crafting, these mothers have time away from their children and, more importantly, time that is just for themselves. I argue that handcrafting is a form of obscured leisure for SAHMs that also allows them to portray themselves as good mothers to their peers through social media representations.

Domesticity and Motherhood

There is large literature on mothers and motherhood, including research focused specifically on stay-at-home mothers, working mothers, and the ideology of intensive mothering. Although there is some research on the growing popularity of homemade items, research examining the ways that the popularity of handcrafting impacts motherhood is new and still emerging.

Rotman (2006) wrote about the Deerfield, Massachusetts women in the post-Civil War United States who founded the arts and crafts movement. The Deerfield women were the foundation of the arts and crafts movement in America. They found themselves, post-war, without men and without income, but they did own their own homes (Rotman 2006). What started out as women's circles making quilts, baskets, and jewelry became a movement around the country where the women made money by selling their wares at markets and fairs (Rotman 2006). Today we see women embracing these lost arts. On websites like Pinterest and Etsy, where people post information on crafting, upcycling, recipes, health and other topics (Pinterest) or post items for sale (Etsy), we see the modern incarnation of the arts and crafts movement

Recently, scholars have begun investigating the new arts and crafts movement in which SAHMs participate. This movement is different than earlier arts and crafts movements in that, most importantly, it is not about survival or economic gain. Instead, the modern arts and crafts movement in which SAHMs engage is about a desire to create something with one's own hands and have knowledge about where and how products are made (Matchar 2013). Dawkins (2011), in her study of the recent handcrafting movement in Detroit, argues that women dominate the industry. She characterizes the crafting movement as reflecting the importance attached to consumer choice and autonomy for women (Dawkins 2011). Similarly, Matchar (2013) argues that handcrafting reflects the valorization of consumer choice and a general distrust of the government. Together, valuing choice, supporting women's autonomy and distrusting the government helped create a movement of women making their own goods for other women who also handcraft. Women now talk of lost crafts and the need to reclaim those lost crafts. They value handmade items, anything made "from scratch," the rustic, and the personal. In an

increasingly technology-oriented society, they are yearning for hands-on work and hand-produced products (Matchar 2013).

Other research also shows that women gain emotional benefits and rewards from working on handcrafted items. Joyce Starr Johnson and Laurel R. Wilson (2005) investigate the motivational factors of contemporary female crafters and find that women who participate in handicrafts do so because it gives them an identity outside of being a mother or wife. The products these women make bring meaning to their lives while also providing emotional benefits. Similarly, Pollanen and Voutilainen (2017) find that crafting allows stay-at-home mothers an escape from their daily lives and reflects their concern for the well-being of themselves and their families. Having the ability to escape some aspects of their lives can also be beneficial to mothers. Alla Myzelev (2009) studied knitting and the relationship between domestic arts and feminism and argues that women who knit recognize the historical importance of their craft, but also aim to take domestic activities that were once done in isolation into the public sphere. We see this now with women knitting in coffee shops and libraries. Burt and Atkinson (2011) find that quilters found crafting to be a productive use of their time and an accessible means of engaging in creativity. Having a creative outlet allows women to not only be more mentally fulfilled but it also allows them to show their children the rewards gained from crafting. Socializing associated with crafting offers women social and emotional benefits while also helping the women to pass down their values and family traditions (Mason 2005).

Intensive mothering is the foundation of this new domesticity being enacted by SAHMs. Understanding the fundamentals of intensive mothering and its effects will help us understand how handcrafting has changed intensive mothering techniques. Hays (1996) argued that the ideology of intensive mothering is a model that encourages mothers to spend as much time as possible on their children. The ideology of intensive mothering characterizes children as innately good and supports mothers giving their children everything they need to succeed (Hays 1996). Giving a child everything he or she needs to succeed involves more than providing material goods; it is also giving children a mother

figure that society both expects and values. Walls, Helms, and Grzywacz (2016) build on Hays' theory of intensive mothering and argue that mothers are able to pick and choose the aspects of intensive motherhood they want to follow, but they also argue that in intensive motherhood "children's needs and desires should be mothers' first priority, and it is assumed that this can only be accomplished when mothers deprioritize their own needs and personal goals and are readily available to meet children's physical and emotional needs" (2016:247).

Kuperberg and Stone (2008) studied images of mothers in the media and found that the depictions rarely change. They argued that technology changed but the roles women play inside the home did not change and, more importantly, the value placed on motherhood did not change either. I believe we will see that with new technologies, namely social media, this ideal mother image will be reinforced over and over again one Facebook post at a time.

Intensive mothering ideology includes the idea that mothers derive emotional satisfaction and reward from intensive mothering (Gunderson and Barrett 2015). Research on intensive motherhood, though, sheds light on how mothers who subscribe to intensive mothering experience guilt and stress related to their role as a mother. Mothers feel pressure to be perfect and experience guilt for not meeting societal expectations while having lower self-efficacy and also experiencing higher levels of stress and anxiety (Henderson et al. 2016). Culture defines motherhood techniques and in turn defines how a mother should feel. When mothers do not conform to society's expectations of how they should mother, guilt and anxiety result, especially when the ideology of intensive motherhood states that your children's well-being comes first, and your well-being comes second.

Investigating social media and the internet can help us understand other aspects of motherhood that also impact mothers' well-being. Chae (2015) investigates the relationship between media exposure and motherhood, using the hypothesis that the exposure to these social channels reinforces the modern ideology of motherhood expectations, namely, intensive mothering. Chae (2015) found that exposure to celebrity mothers is positively related to intensive mothering beliefs. Similarly, Johnston and Swanson

(2003) found that magazines typically portray mothers as non-working, crafting with their children, and playing with their children.

Advances in technology, especially social media, provide a platform for mothers to critique the assumptions related to motherhood (Therriault 2014). The internet, specifically social media, also provides a place where mothers can perform to their peers that they are the perfect mother through controlled performances to validate their motherhood identity (Therriault 2014). Mothers can be aware of how social media is a performative platform for mothers to only show a one-sided view of their role as a mother, but they can also fall into the trap of believing the representations of motherhood presented there in this way, the internet, specifically social media, reinforces the ideology of Hays' (1999) intensive motherhood (Vaillancourt 2015). At the same time, Vaillancourt (2015) argues that social media allows mothers the opportunity to control how they are perceived, only showcasing the aspects of their mothering they want the rest of the world to see. This creates contradictions in other mothers' perceptions of motherhood; Facebook has given mothers a new source of guilt, as other mothers portray only the part of their mothering that meets social expectations for intensive mothers (Vaillancourt 2015). Social media has given mothers a platform to connect and find validity but also a platform for judgment.

Sociologists and economists have studied leisure for over a hundred years. Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, argued that leisure was a form of social status, coining the terms conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption. Conspicuous leisure was, and some argue still is, a form of leisure specifically performed to showcase one's social class. Members of the working- and lower-classes aspire to upper-class forms of leisure, rather than despising the upper-class for not having to work. The basic component of conspicuous leisure is the non-productive consumption of time. Some scholars today argue that Veblen's work can still be used to understand American society and the differences between the extremely wealthy and the working class. James (2009) argues that Veblen's work is relevant because, in American culture, only wealth and property that are displayed are of any worth. Scott (2010) also maintains that Veblen remains relevant as people maintain their reputations

through the cars they drive, the art they own, the size of their houses and the vacations they take. He also contends that women continue to display wealth by the clothes they wear and how they present themselves to the outside world (Scott, 2010).

Feminist scholars have also studied leisure extensively. Henderson (1991) argues that a feminist theory framework could help researchers understand the constraints women face when performing leisure activities saying, “for women the lack of time may be intensely experienced due to ascribed roles such as wife, mother, and/or daughter. Because women are generally expected to make their family duties first priority, they may not choose to use their time for personal leisure” (1991: 367). Because of the constraints placed on women, specifically the constraints of the mother role, women’s leisure can become resistance. Shaw (2001) says, “leisure as resistance implies that leisure behaviors, settings, and interactions can challenge the way in which power is exercised, making leisure a form of political practice” (192). Shaw further suggests that leisure can also be seen as resistance to dominant ideologies related to class, gender, sex, and family. This perspective, women’s leisure as resistance to dominant ideologies, differs vastly from Veblen’s view of leisure since Veblen saw leisure as a way to perform social class rather than as a way to resist it, as Shaw (2001) argues.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

Grounded theory and feminist theory were used in this study to better understand the authentic lived experiences of these SAHMs. Grounded theory holds that the theory is actually grounded in the data collected, in this case through in-depth interviews (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Feminist theory also informs this study in that through this work I seek to make women's lives more visible (see Henderson, 1991). Together, grounded theory and feminist theory allow me to obtain data using the stories of the women interviewed. Using these theoretical frameworks, I am able to better understand a new area of study using stories these women tell me about their lives. The authentic retelling from these women is best understood by using their own words to understand this cultural phenomenon. Grounded theory and feminist theory both allow the researcher to begin theorizing after data collection is complete, after the interviews were transcribed, to allow a new theoretical framework to emerge. This is important since the research on SAHMs and handcrafting is a budding area of research.

In-depth interviews were used in this study in order to obtain authentic responses from the SAHMs in my study. Using interviews allowed me to also develop grounded theory as the study progressed. Interviews also allowed the women to use their own experiences and voice to discuss with me their experiences as a mother and as a crafter.

This study was conducted in a midsize city in the U.S. Southwest. As of 2016, the city had a population of roughly 800,000. I interviewed a total of 9 mothers who actively were raising children inside the home who also handcrafted items for use in the home. These interviews were conducted from late 2016 to early 2018. All but one of the respondents was white; one of the mothers was of Mexican descent. The range of incomes for these households was \$60,000 to over \$200,000. I utilized Annette Lareau's (2011) definition of middle-class from her book *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. I felt that despite this study investigating only mothers, how the mothers' crafting activities lent itself to the family unit was vital and esteemed by the mothers in this study. Lareau veered away from the

Marxist definition of class structures because of her sample size was small and also because of the makeup of the towns in which her study was located. Seeing that my sample size was much smaller than Lareau's and that my families also were similar in the family makeup, I felt that using criteria such as two-parents inside the home, one working parent, and after school activities could also be used in this study to define my sample as middle-class.

I developed an interview guide focused on motherhood, crafting, and social media. The interview guide allowed me to have open-ended questions to which mothers could respond, using their own words. Through this there were able to tell me about their experiences of motherhood and crafting. Examples of the questions included: Why is crafting important to you? What do you want your children to learn from your crafting? How many hours a week do you spend crafting? What type of crafts do you do inside the home? How would you describe your parenting style? Has social media influenced how you mother? The full interview guide is in Appendix 2.

Following the interviews, I utilized an assistant to transcribe the interviews. Using grounded theory, coding began during the interviews, making notes of the surroundings in which the interviews occurred, especially if taken place inside the interviewees' homes. During the interviews I made notes for transcriptions to begin to identify codes as more interviews took place. After transcription, I fully coded and found parallels in the data, and I limited my coding eventually to focus only on themes of intensive mothering, time and satisfaction, mom shaming, guilt, social media, and obscured leisure. Using these themes, I was able to focus on the main finding, that mothers use crafting as socially acceptable leisure, what I am calling obscured leisure. During coding I also made notes on the interviews, what the mother discussed the most, the items they crafted, and notes on how their viewed crafting and motherhood. I also implemented a face sheet at the end of the interviews to collect data about income, race, and age. I eliminated any mothers who worked part-time outside of the home, including students, or mothers who did not have children living in the home, in order to focus only on stay-at-home mothers who are actively

raising their children. Eliminations of mothers were made after contacting them on the phone, in all I eliminated only four mothers who had worked part-time.

I located SAHMs by posting about my research to online crafting groups throughout the city. I chose an online method because many of the crafting women are online and it is the most efficient way to identify respondents. Data were also collected through snowball sampling, beginning with posts online and then asking respondents to identify other crafters for inclusion in the sample.

Results

The results from my study were not what were expected. In fact, the themes I found led me in a completely different direction than I originally had imagined going. When I first decided to study mothers who crafted, I thought I would find mothers who sold items for extra money, in fact, only two of the mothers I interviewed sold any items, and that was rare for them to do. Instead, the leisure provided by handcrafting was more important to these mothers than making money, or even saving money. I focused on four themes when writing this paper- intensive mothering, time and satisfaction, mom shaming, guilt, and social media, and leisure- to formulate my main argument: stay-at-home mothers are using crafting as a tool to find socially acceptable alone time that still fits into the intensive mothering ideology. Intensive mothering was a common theme throughout the interviews; mothers talked about crafts as if these handmade goods were directly related to the well-being of their children. Time spent handcrafting was a theme I investigated because these mothers put so much time into handcrafting yet downplayed the amount of time that went into these goods. And finally, guilt and social media were investigated because of the frequency with which these mothers brought up this topic in relation to motherhood. When looked at completely, crafting is a tool used by SAHMs to find time away from their children and their husbands; it has given mothers a socially acceptable escape from motherhood.

Intensive Mothering for the Modern Mom

I think I started channeling all of my energy into how I did motherhood. I was a high achieving student and a musician and had a certain path I thought I would do and then it changed, and [I] channeled it instead into how I did motherhood. I think for better and for worse, I wanted to be a Supermom. Kristen, 37

Kristen was a 37-year-old white woman with three young children. I interviewed her in her home in a highly desirable neighborhood about one mile from the downtown area. The house was newly built but resembled the historic bungalows that were scattered in this neighborhood. It was a spacious home and we sat at a handcrafted dining room table to talk about her experience handcrafting inside the home. She was making coffee when I first sat down, blending percolated coffee with coconut oil in a Vitamix blender, a blender she told me in the interview cost \$700. We finally sat down together and got to the business of handcrafting and motherhood. For Kristen, motherhood was her fulltime job. She put all of her energy into being a mother, and into being the type of mother she expected herself to be. She was a mom who was engaged with her children, cared about the health of her family, spent long hours handcrafting goods for her home, and grew most all the vegetables they ate in a garden. Kristen stated in her interview that she felt that handcrafting physically expresses how much she cares for her children and that going ‘the extra step’ to do things the ‘hard way’ is better for her children and her family. Kristen was the epitome of this new modern mom, a mom who not only practiced intensive mothering beliefs but a mom who also added to her workload with meals made from scratch, knitting, sewing, and gardening.

Hays’ (1996) intensive mothering ideology is being enacted by Kristen and other SAHMs. The mothers in my study are equating crafting to life lessons and values for their children. In this way, these mothers state they are giving their children everything they need to succeed, a key component of the intensive mothering ideology (Hays, 1996). Prioritizing children’s needs and desires was always emphasized by the mothers in my study. Instilling lessons and values through handcrafting goods were

something these mothers brought up during their interviews. Being an intensive mother is not just about giving their children physical objects for their well-being, performing the image of the ideal mother is also a very important aspect Hays (1996) discusses in her book. Beyond that, giving children emotional support and imparting values is equally important for those who subscribe to the ideology of intensive mothering. For the mothers in my study, this includes showing children, through crafting, that hard-work and crafting are valuable. My respondents felt that the items they craft also contribute to the family unit, therefore, crafting is seen as a contribution they make to their families that improves the lives of their children and husbands.

Erin, a 32-year-old mother of two boys, discussed how crafting contributed to her household and also to her children's well-being saying, "Being a stay-at-home mom, my life revolves around the kids. No matter what, ... it's pretty much your kids' lives. And I try to get them involved in things." Erin also lived in a highly desirable neighborhood that surrounded the downtown area. Her neighborhood boasted some of the best schools in the city; it was a walkable and friendly neighborhood with local vegetarian restaurants, bars, playgrounds, a local community library, and the streets were littered with art and murals. I met Erin at the local community library for her interview. She had a funky short haircut and she smiled easily. Before Erin left the workforce, she got a master's degree in landscape architecture, so gardening was something she was passionate about. She would grow food in their urban backyard and take the fruits and can them into jams and spreads. Erin talked about she also wanted her kids to be involved and learn from her gardening and crafting, she wanted them to learn self-sufficiency and the value of hard work because of what she does. This idea of self-sufficiency was common among the mothers in this study.

Andy was the youngest mother in my study; she was 28 and had one young son. In her interview, she talked extensively about values, emphasizing that she hoped to continue the family tradition of passing down skills. When I asked her what she thinks her son will learn from her crafting, she responded, "It's just like teaching values. Like teaching to be... a good steward of what you have, of ...what you own, ... making smart choices." Ingrid, a 35-year-old mother of three children talked about

how her work with crafting inside the home directly affected her family and her children's lives. Her handcrafted items included making skin care products for her children because of skin allergies. Ingrid responded to the question "why is handcrafting important to you" by saying it was important for her family that she do these things. She says, "I believe that I put my energy and my love into it and I'm feeding my family." She also expressed joy that her young daughter took part in cooking with her and how much her daughter enjoyed helping her make dinners to contribute to the family. Because of her daughter's interest in baking and cooking, Ingrid also felt that it created authentic lessons for her child, lessons that Ingrid did not have to plan and execute, it was just natural that her children learn from hands on crafting, in this instance baking.

Megan, a 36-year-old stay-at-home mother had similar sentiments about contributing to the family. Much like Ingrid, Megan felt that her crafting showed her children that she cared enough to take "really good care of them" by making things from scratch and by handcrafting inside the home. She felt it contributed to feelings of happiness that she was doing something good for her family. Another mother, Olivia, also viewed her handcrafting as showing her two young boys that hard work is valued and an honorable pursuit.

Crafting was an important aspect of mothering for my respondents. They wanted their children to learn from their own hard work. Despite the weight placed on lessons, most of the mothers claimed they did not spend a significant amount of time on handcrafting, which as we will see, is not accurate.

Time Spent Hand-Crafting

I found time spent crafting to be a significant theme in my interviews with these mothers. Most, but not all, claimed that the work they put into handcrafting items in the home was minimal. But when I added the hours up, for some of these moms, their time spent crafting was the equivalent of a full-time job. It seemed like these mothers tried to deemphasize the fact that their crafting was, in fact, work. In

order to gauge how much time they spent handcrafting inside the home, I first asked the mothers what type of handcrafted goods they made. The mothers would begin listing items from baby food to kefir to kombucha to gardening. But as we continued talking they would continue to add items that they had forgotten. This happened with almost every woman I interviewed. One woman even came prepared with a list of items but added to that list when I asked her about it. At this point it seemed as if a significant amount of work was going on inside the home by these mothers, and this did not include the everyday workload of most SAHMs. I also asked how many hours a week they spent crafting items. I asked Olivia, a 33-year-old mother of two young boys about her time spent handcrafting:

On average, like the special stuff, like kefir and other stuff like that, umm, I've been keeping it down pretty low, maybe like an hour a week. If you add in dinner and umm, that would be like an hour a day on average. And then, so seven hours a week and then, depending on the season with gardening, I mean, I would say at the peak of season for gardening- I would say about three hours a week. Olivia, 33

This type of answer would occur in almost every interview. Olivia initially claimed she only spent 11 hours total a week working on her handcrafted items, but as I probed her about the specific activities she did, the amount of time spent a week went up. Other mothers also had similar responses after we discussed specific tasks they completed daily. Susan, the mother of triplets, also had a similar response saying, "I'd say like maybe ten-ish, I mean if we're talking dinners and everything." She then went on and said, "I'd say maybe ... twelve-ish hours... more if I've got a sewing project going on or something like that. ... I made their little Halloween outfits last year, they were pumpkins." Erin also had a similar response by first giving me a small number and then asking if it included gardening work, and after adding the time spent gardening, reported a larger number.

I had some mothers who said crafting inside the home was like a full-time job, but they were among the few who seemed to be aware of how much time they actually spent handcrafting goods. Rachel admitted to working on handcrafted goods for 21 hours a week. Catherine and I added up her

time crafting, and we eventually landed at 31 hours a week. Even those who admitted spending long hours handcrafting goods saw these crafts as making a contribution to the home. Moreover, they viewed the time spent contributing to the family unit as extremely valuable to their families.

Mom-Shaming, Guilt, and Social Media

There are a lot of labels and it's new to me. Like, I don't know, I got really blindsided being a parent. I'd never heard of the term 'attachment parenting' before my son was maybe three or four months, even. And how strongly people felt about the other labels.

They really blindsided me and caught me by surprise. Olivia, 33

Olivia was a young mother of two boys who lived in the same neighborhood as Erin. She talked a lot about the labels and pressures put on mothers through her peer group and also through social media. She explained that after her first child she felt that other mothers put labels on her mothering style, before she was even aware that these labels existed or meant anything. Olivia felt that Facebook was a place for mothers to impose their own mothering styles on other mothers. In her quote above, she mentions attachment parenting which she explained to me was used constantly by other mothers who felt she should also utilize attachment parenting with her child. Other mothers would also discuss the benefits of baby wearing, cloth diapers, and co-sleeping in online discussions in which Olivia participated. She felt overwhelmed by the opinions of other mothers on Facebook.

Social media was an aspect of motherhood about which most of these mothers felt pressure and guilt. The guilt associated with social media and motherhood is similar to Henderson et al.'s (2016) argument that mothers feel extreme pressure to be the perfect mother and when they fail to meet this expectation, experience guilt and stress. Most of the mothers in my study expressed feelings of guilt and stress, usually because they failed to live up to the standards depicted on social media. Meghan, a 36-year-old mother, discussed social media in her interview and its influence, but she was aware of the harm

associated with evaluating oneself using social media depictions as a gauge. Meghan felt that since she was an older mother who had worked in the blogging world she was less susceptible to the negative effects of social media.

I've known people who were professional bloggers and I'd go to their house and it's just trashed. Messy, super messy because they [sic] got all these kids, but on Instagram and in the blog, they would literally clear just one corner and take these like, amazing pictures. And they're just putting this online and other women are like 'why isn't my house that clean? Why can't I look like that?'

Meghan was adamant that she was not susceptible to the mom-shaming that took place on social media. I attribute this to the fact that she was a professional blogger and social media user in her previous job, so she felt she was aware of the gap between what actually goes on inside mothers' homes and how they depict themselves on social media.

Facebook is reinforcing the ideal mother image, just as magazine depictions did in the past (Johnson and Swanson 2003). Mothers are rewarded when they depict the perfect mother image but are being sanctioned by their peers when they do not fit into that image. Appropriate motherhood practices and socially determined and, to an extent, also define how a mother should feel. When mothers do not conform to society's expectations of how they should be as a mother, guilt and anxiety result. This is especially the case when the ideology of intensive motherhood emphasizes that your children's well-being comes first, and your well-being comes second.

The mothers I interviewed felt the anxiety and guilt about social media depictions of motherhood, particularly Facebook. When discussing social media, the mothers in my study brought up mom-shaming posts, unwanted advice they receive from other mothers, and feeling guilty because the online lives of their friends who are mothers are drastically dissimilar to their own lives. Rachel, a 33-year-old mother of two children discussed the harm of social media for mothers stating:

I think so many people compare, and, umm, what is that saying? 'Don't compare yourself to others [social media] highlights' because you can get depressed. 'Oh my gosh, they have the perfect [life], they're always smiling. Or always doing fun things. Their house is always perfect.

Comparing themselves to other mothers on social media was something most mothers mentioned. Using Chae's (2015) comparison theory, we see that in this study, these mothers are comparing and also judging other mothers' posts on Facebook. The mothers in this study also talked about of the need to be aware of what they were seeing on social media in order to safeguard their own mental health. They all realized that the motherhood depicted on social media was one-sided and they all tended to remind themselves of that. Andy, the 28-year-old mother of one child, discussed how social media only depicts the sunny side of motherhood and expressed feelings of guilt saying, "This is hard! It can contribute to a feeling of like, 'wow, this is so easy for everyone else but me.'" Catherine, a 42-year-old mother of seven children, talked about how overwhelming social media can be for mothers because everyone has an opinion about your mothering style.

I said something, like 'It's amazing to me how strong of an opinion that people have about piercing the ears of a girl.' And is there a particular...I was just curious...was there a particular age that you were allowed to pierce your ears? ... and there are people who think it's- I guess you're a hooker or something if you get your ears pierced when you're a little girl and it's like, what? ...and I swear to god, I had 200 people respond. Catherine,

42

In the interview's mothers talk openly about judging other mothers and being judged, especially when it comes to crafting or caring for children. Some mothers felt that as SAHMs their job was to create and craft with their children and to teach valuable lessons through crafting. When mothers saw other SAHMs who were not doing these things, they expressed disapproval. This aligns with Vaillancourt's (2015) argument that social media are reinforcing Hays' ideology of intensive mothering. Facebook and other

social media platforms give mothers a platform to be the best mothers they can be or face criticism from other mothers. Susan, a 34-year-old mother of four children felt that if you are a SAHM you should be contributing to your family with handcrafted items. In her interview Susan mentioned a SAHM that she knows who posts online about how she expects her husband to cook and do the dishes. Susan was open with her own shaming of this friend by saying,

Her house is always a wreck and she does not cook dinner. And she does not do the dishes. Like, those are her jobs, right? ... I think that being a SAHM means [doing] that sort of thing.

Social media has given these mothers a platform to critique other mothers, but also a platform that creates feelings of guilt when they fail to meet the image of the perfect mother. The mothers in my study felt the pressures based on their exposure to social media depictions of motherhood, but that also did not stop them from judging other moms who did not live up to their own expectations of motherhood.

Satisfaction and Obscured Leisure

It's what my mom did, and my mom's mom did. Just like family. Especially the smocking, I wanted to learn how to do this because I love the idea of just passing down skills...it's fun to be able to do something my mom did, and I grew up around her doing. Andy, 28

The handicrafts in this study held important meaning for the mothers, value was placed on crafts that could be passed down or crafts that female ancestors once took part in. Alla Myzelev (2009) argues that "knitting affords a link between the past (perceived as calm, anachronistic, simple, and worry-free) and the present post-modern condition (a constant move forward and the lack of luxurious leisure time) that can be seen as a positive and empowering phenomenon" (152). Other mothers in this study also felt empowered by carrying on traditions of female ancestors. Catherine felt a connection to her family because of her choice to carry on crocheting, an art she had

learned from older women in her family. Her decision to continue this craft was even more special because she was the only woman in her generation to carry on this practice. Johnson and Wilson (2005) discuss the history of handicrafts and found that the process of handcrafting goods is related to the personal histories of the makers and are symbolic to the maker and their relationship with other people.

Historically, women found leisure time through handicrafts with other women by participating in quilting circles, knitting groups, canning and gardening together (Johnson and Wilson 2005). For modern mothers, it is difficult to coordinate time for female friendships because of busy schedules. In her interview, Erin lamented about how difficult it is to find time to make plans with other mothers saying, "It's actually very hard, because everybody can connect online, but it's hard to coordinate stay-at-home mom's schedules and kid's schedules. It's still a little difficult." Rachel also opened up about how lonely being a SAHM can be, emphasizing the once a year quilting getaway she plans with her quilting mothers, which is the only chance she has to spend quality, uninterrupted time with her female friends.

The mothers in this study revealed that they felt lonely in their role as a SAHM, how social media made some mothers feel judged and isolated because of other mothers online, and how their role as a SAHM is difficult. But when the mothers discussed why they crafted in the home and how crafting affected their lives, they expressed feelings of satisfaction. Some of the mothers, as mentioned above, felt tied to their ancestors because of the work they did, while others felt tied to their home life because of their handicrafts. But all the mothers felt satisfied while crafting. Crafting has given these mothers something their lives were lacking. In this post-modern consumer world, they feel connected to the idea of handmade items, of slow processes, of watching things grow, of seeing things come to fruition and completion. In her interview, Catherine discussed the satisfaction she got from her handicrafts, she said, "part of it is self-care... for me to be crocheting. It makes me sit down, makes me calm, gives me more patience." Megan had similar views and said that it was cathartic for her to craft, "it takes your mind off

stress and everything else you've got going on. It's just good to sit down and make something." Burt and Atkinson (2011) found that quilting had similar effects for crafters arguing, "mastering new techniques and overcoming challenges led to feelings of satisfaction and boosted self-esteem" (56). Olivia also talked about the satisfaction and pride she gets from handcrafting goods at home. She said that creating things from scratch is rewarding and preserving the foods you grow is a way to enjoy your labor for an extended period of time. Ingrid enjoyed the sense of accomplishment that crafting gave her. She said, "I like being able to show off, be like 'I did this from scratch!'" She also expressed that the quality was also important to her and being able to make something to her own liking was a big aspect of handcrafting for her.

During Andy's interview, she attributed the satisfaction she gets from crafting to the contributions it makes to her family. Other mothers reported satisfaction that what they handcraft is adding to the household, and this was extremely important to them as SAHMs. The contributions these mothers made to the household because of their handicrafts was important to the mothers because they felt that it was part of their role as a SAHM. Susan mentioned in her interview that she felt that crafting was for her family, first and foremost. Participants in Pollanen and Voutilainen's study also emphasized how crafting added to the family unit, that crafting was a "pleasant, satisfying activity that had the added benefit of helping them create concrete, economical items for the home and for their family members" (2017:6). Johnson and Wilson (2005) also found that women enjoyed adding items to the home through crafting. In her interview, Ingrid felt like crafting allowed her to incorporate organic lessons for her children to learn. She also said that crafting should hold function for the family unit. Kristen felt that crafting was a full-time job for her, that is was specifically her contribution as a SAHM: "part of it is that I want to bring value to our home, to our family, to our relationship, to our marriage." This idea that crafting contributed to the family unit was felt by all the mothers in this study.

I spent a lot of time thinking about these mothers, wondering why they downplayed the time spent handcrafting and why they put so much emphasis on the lessons their children learn from these things when to me, it seemed like handcrafting was all about themselves and their

happiness. These mothers craft and make items for their children and for their homes. And as I stated earlier, intensive mothering is the fundamental belief that everything mothers do should be for their children. But I kept thinking about the time involvement and the guilt associated with social media and it hit me, these women use crafting as an escape. Myzelev (2009) focuses on the leisure aspect crafting offers to women, arguing that handicrafts, like knitting, offer women the opportunity to experience leisure. The mothers in this study reinforce that argument. They never specifically mention the concept of leisure, but they brought up escapism, alone time, and sanity.

Rachel, a thirty-three-year-old SAHM of two who quilts says, "Well, I love the artistic creativity aspect of it. And I really, really... need to sew every day just to, like, keep my sanity." Erin also had similar sentiments saying that spending time in her garden gave her time away from the kids and time to reflect on her own. Early in my interviews, this idea of escape became apparent while I was talking with these women. Andy compared her crafts as a form of stress relief. Kristen said in her interview that crafting and gardening gave her independence. Leisure literature shows us that mothers often have little leisure because of the expectations and pressures they face being moms and running their homes (Henderson 1991). But the mothers I interviewed have an escape. By crafting in new and inventive ways they create time for themselves and engage in self-care. Olivia said she liked to handcraft and garden because it was rewarding to her. Meghan claimed that crafting for her was cathartic and a way to take her mind off of stress and everything she has going on. Previous literature on leisure and women show leisure as resistance (Shaw 2001). The mothers have found a way to fight the pressures of motherhood through crafting, so in their own ways, they are performing leisure as resistance. The mothers in this study would not say that their choice to craft is a conscious choice to resist, but they are in fact breaking off from the expectations placed on them as they perform the role of mothers, and the role of SAHMs, who feel the pressures of intensive mothering more acutely (Hays 1996). Each of these women had found a way to keep their status as a SAHM but also find breaks from the routines of their extremely hectic lives. These mothers want to be SAHMs and they want to give their children everything they need.

Crafting and handmade goods are ways for these mothers to not only contribute to the household as a SAHM but to also do something they enjoy.

These mothers found an acceptable form of alone time while still performing tasks that helped them be seen as perfect SAHMs. This escapism, this obscured leisure, is masked creatively within the logic of intensive motherhood. The ways in which these mothers have found alone time is shrouded in the myth that this is for their children and also for their households. These mothers are stressed and guilt ridden from not only motherhood and running a house but also because of the pressures they face on social media. Crafting has given SAHMs an outlet and a way to forget about the daily struggles of motherhood while also actively performing motherhood in socially acceptable ways.

Chapter 3 - Discussion

This study has limitations that should be noted. First, the sample size is small and not diverse, so generalizing is difficult. It should be noted though that as my interviews progressed I could anticipate the answers the mothers would give before they even responded, indicating these mothers all felt similarly about motherhood and crafting. Second, this study took place in one city, which could potentially have affected the outcomes of the study because of regional effects. Utilizing grounded theory and feminist theory allowed me to focus on the data that was collected through the interviews with the mothers in this study. I was able to use the data collected to formulate new ideas while also adding to previous literature that looked at motherhood, crafting, and leisure. Feminist theory and grounded theory enabled me to analyze the interviews from the perspectives of the mothers in this study which allowed me to formulate the concept of obscured leisure.

The lessons these mothers taught through crafting and the contributions these crafts offer to the family unit align with Hays' (1996) intensive mothering ideology. As a result, the leisure found through crafting is socially acceptable, even hidden. These mothers gain emotional satisfaction from their handmade items, they genuinely enjoyed the work they put into their handmade goods and it gave them a sense of purpose while also allowing them to contribute something to their households. This research looked at SAHMs who quilted, canned, gardened, sewed, made baby food, and made every meal from scratch, just to name a few things. From scratch meals may seem an odd or unrelated practice to include in this research, but I included from scratch meals for several reasons. First, making meals from scratch is a time-consuming process and differs greatly from preparing boxed meals or eating out. Second, from scratch meals also reflect the same values that other domestic activities hold. The mothers in this research talked a lot about the care that goes into making food from scratch and how preparing meals from scratch teaches their children the value of hard work.

Social media and the guilt associated with failing to meet standards displayed on social media weighed heavily on these mothers. The mothers were all cognizant of the hazards of comparing oneself to depictions on social media and the impact these comparisons can have on their emotional well-being, but that did not stop them from judging other mothers who did not fit into the perfect mother image. When the mothers discussed social media, they discussed it in a deflated way. It wore heavily on them, but they also felt that it was a necessary evil. Depicting themselves on social media as the perfect mother was important to them, and the best way to achieve the perfect mother image is to depict themselves as crafting mothers who baked, gardened, made every meal from scratch, and spent a significant amount of time doing these things. And even though social media perpetuated this perfect crafting mother image, shaming mothers who do not craft, participating in social media also contributed to the leisure found through crafting. Obscuring their leisure through crafting allows these mothers to keep the perfect mother image, while also enjoying an escape from motherhood and the trials of everyday life.

Chapter 4 - Conclusion

Intensive mothering techniques now include crafting, cooking from scratch, gardening, and other new chores for mothers in order for SAHMs to portray themselves as perfect mothers. SAHMs are incorporating not just the traditional aspects of intensive mothering but they are also living a new domesticity. It would be easy to argue that these new expectations create more work for SAHMs, and we can see that they do, but they also have an unexpected effect of allowing these mothers to have an identity away from their children. This new domesticity is allowing SAHMs time alone to be creative, while simultaneously contributing to their families and teaching their children about hard work and working with their hand.

Appendix 1 – Respondent Demographics and Crafted Items Table

Name	Age	Education Level	Children	Items Crafted	Weekly Hours Spent Crafting
Erin	32	Master's Degree	2	Gardening, canning, jams, 'from scratch' meals, crafts with children	12
Rachel	33	High School	2	Sewing, 'from scratch' meals, crafts with children, quilting	21
Olivia	33	Bachelor's Degree	2	Gardening, kefir juice, jarring, 'from scratch' meals, deodorant, soap, laundry detergent, sewing, kombucha	10
Catherine	42	Associate Degree	7	Gardening, 'from scratch' meals, crocheting, kombucha, bread making	31
Kristen	37	Bachelor's Degree	3	Bread making, looming, gardening, cloth diapers, 'from scratch' meals, candles, composting, baby food	40
Susan	34	Bachelor's Degree	4	Sewing, 'from scratch' meals, baby food, crafts with children	12
Ingrid	35	Bachelor's Degree	2	Pickling, sauerkraut, salsa, sugar scrubs, salves, gardening, sewing, lotions, essential oils, 'from scratch' meals	28
Andy	28	Bachelor's Degree	1	Knitting, sewing hand embroidering, smocking, 'from scratch' meals	6
Meghan	36	PhD	3	'from scratch' meals, laundry detergent, sewing, crafts with kids, kefir juice	15

Appendix 2 – Interview Schedule

Subject Number:
Date of Interview:
Location of Interview:

Let's talk about crafted items and homemade goods.

1. What type of items do you craft or hand make?
2. Why did you start handcrafting items?
3. What do you like best about crafting handmade goods?
4. So, do you sell your crafts?
 - a. {If yes}
 - i. Why did you begin selling them?
 - ii. Is that income important to your household?
 - iii. To whom are you selling your crafts?
 - iv. How are you selling your crafts? (craft fairs, word of mouth, internet, children's school)
 - b. {If no}
 - i. Have you ever thought about selling your items?
 - ii. Is there a reason you don't sell them?
5. How many hours a week did you spend on hand crafting your items last week?
6. Can you tell me a little bit about why handcrafting is important to you?
7. Do you think that handcrafting as a lifestyle has contributed to your parenting style? (hard work, values)
8. If yes,
 - a. What are the lessons your children are learning from your crafting?
9. Now let's talk about other women you may know who hand craft items.
10. Do you know other women who hand craft items?
 - a. {If yes}
 - i. How do you know them?
 - ii. How important are these relationships to you?
 - iii. What do they hand craft?
 - iv. Do you know why they started handcrafting?
 - v. Do they sell their items?
 - vi. Do these women have children?
 - vii. If yes
 1. Are their children involved with making items?
11. Do you see any difference in women who craft who have children and women who craft who don't have children?
 - a. If yes,
 - b. What are some of those differences?
12. I want to briefly talk about political motivations and handcrafted items.
13. Do you believe that handcrafting can be related to political movements? (grassroots movements)
 - a. How so?
14. Have you heard of the term craftivism? (people who craft to make the world a better place)
 - a. If yes, how do you feel about craftivism?

- b. Did it influence you to begin crafting?
 - c. How effective do you feel craftivism is?
15. Do you hand craft items to save money?
16. If yes,
- a. What are some of those motivations to save money?
 - b. Can you give me an example of something you make and the reason behind it?
- Now I want to discuss motherhood.
17. Do your children handcraft items with you?
- a. What exactly do they do?
 - b. Is it important for them to understand why you handcraft items?
18. If you have school-aged children, do your children do any after school activities? If so, what activities?
- a. If not, how do your children spend their time after school?
19. What are your opinions on the expectations of being a good mother?
- a. How does handcrafting contribute to your opinion of motherhood?
 - b. Is that important to you?
 - c. If so, why is this important to you?
 - d. If not, why not?
20. How would you describe your parenting style?
21. What do you feel is the most important job about being a mother?
22. Why did you leave the workforce?
- a. How did you feel about leaving the workforce?
 - b. Do you plan on ever going back to the workforce?
 - c. Is there anything in your life that resembles the workforce?
23. What are your thoughts on a natural or organic lifestyle?
- i. How would you describe a natural or organic lifestyle?
 - ii. What does that entail?
 - iii. Does your family follow this type of lifestyle?
 - iv. If so, how important is it to you?

Now I want to discuss social media.

24. Do you use social media platforms?
- a. {If yes, move forward with questions below}
 - b. {If no, end interview}
 - i. Is there anything else you want to add or anything you thought I missed?
- {Continue if said yes to social media usage}
25. What social media platforms do you use?
26. Which one would you say you use the most often?
- a. What do you like about that platform?
27. Do you subscribe to or read 'mommy blogs'?
- a. {If yes}
 - i. What type of blogs do you read most often?
 - ii. Why?
28. Do you write your own blogs about motherhood?
- a. {If yes}
 - i. Why do you blog?
 - ii. What do you normally blog about?

- b. {If no}
 - i. Have you ever considered starting a blog about your experiences as a mother?
- 29. When it comes to social media, do you think that it has influenced how you raise your children?
 - a. {If yes}
 - i. Can you explain why?
 - b. {If no}
 - i. Why not?
- 30. Do you feel social media impacts your mothering style?
 - a. How so? (negative aspects, positive aspects)
- 31. How do you feel social media impacts perceptions of motherhood?
- 32. Do you feel like social media influenced your decision to handcrafting?
 - a. If yes, can you give me some examples.
- 33. Is there anything else you want to add or anything you felt I didn't cover?

Demographic Fact Sheet

Subject Number:	
Date of Interview:	
Location of Interview:	

Demographic Survey

1. What is your age? _____
2. What is your highest level of education? _____
3. What is the combined annual income for your family? _____
4. What is your race? _____
5. How many children do you have? _____
6. What are the age, gender, and names of your children? _____
7. Does your spouse work outside the home for pay? _____
8. What does your spouse do for employment? _____
9. How many hours a week does your spouse work? _____
10. Before you left the workforce, what type of work did you do?
 - a. How many hours per week did you work?

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