

**Status Safeguarding: Mothers' Work to Secure
Children's Place in the Social Hierarchy**

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In this chapter, we push the boundaries of the concept of intensive mothering ideology to discuss a new idea called “status safeguarding,” showing how it both extends and, to some degree, complicates Hays’ (1996) argument about cultural contradictions of mothering. We define status safeguarding as mothers’ vigilant labor to prepare a child’s pathway to the highest status achievable (Milkie, Warner and Ray forthcoming; Warner 2010). This idea focuses our attention on how mothers enact intensive mothering ideology: doing everything possible to ensure that a child’s future social and economic status in a competitive marketplace is sustained or improved---in essence, weaving an individualized safety net. Status safeguarding reorients our thinking about intensive mothering as an ideology to focus attention on maternal labor, highlighting how this work perpetuates gendered inequalities (Collins 1993; Cristin 2012) and reinforces individualism (Hays 1996).

Intensive mothering is a deeply felt cultural ideology that indicates children come first, and mothers should lovingly make sacrifices in their own lives in raising children (Hays 1996). Attempting to live up to the cultural ideal of motherhood takes bountiful amounts of time and energy (Hays 1996; Blair-Loy 2003), creating acute conflicts with paid work. Indeed, as Hays argues in her insightful and now classic work, the logic of intensive mothering, and mothers’ heavy investment in children, directly contradicts the logic of capitalism, in which self-interested actors pursue individual ends in the competitive marketplace. As she briefly mentions, and we argue has become increasingly central, intensive mothering can be in the service of promoting children’s success. Ironically, this “status safeguarding” work intimately ties mothers to the marketplace in a critical and complex way: rather than advancing in their own career and compensation, increasingly mothers’ efforts take the form of work to insert children successfully into the competitive labor market system.

In the sections below, we first outline status safeguarding as the core work of intensive mothering today, arguing that it is a present-day oppressive force for mothers. We distinguish status safeguarding from concerted cultivation, a concept developed by Lareau (2003, p. 31) to describe how middle-class parents “actively foster and assess children’s talents, opinions and skills.” Next, we discuss the context of parenting today, with increased uncertainty of a child’s ultimate success in economic times fraught with relatively fewer good jobs and minimal state supports for raising and providing higher education for children. We help reorient Hays’ (1996) argument about how intensive mothering fully contradicts “self-interest” in getting ahead in a rationalized labor market, given that mothers exert great safeguarding effort in order for offspring to succeed in this very system. Next, we highlight several potential variations in status safeguarding work across social location, employment and geography, and lay out three types of status safeguarding, including academic, talent, and emotional safeguarding. Finally, we delineate the consequences of safeguarding for children and mothers.

Status Safeguarding and Intensive Mothering

Hays (1996) was right about how demanding intensive mothering is (Fox 2009). In her focus on young children, it was clear that strong beliefs about a child’s central place in mothers’ lives could necessitate a huge investment of time, energy and emotion. Across social class and life circumstances, the mothers Hays interviewed consistently described fervent beliefs that mothers are uniquely suited to be children’s caregivers, mothers should intimately know children’s needs and desires at all times, spending their own time, energy and resources fostering offspring development, and mothers should protect sacred children from the competitive “dog-

eat-dog world” (Hays 1996: 124). To accomplish and celebrate caring, Hays argues, mothering requires a “moral condemnation of impersonal, competitive market relations” (Hays 1996, p. 65).

What is status safeguarding exactly? It is extensive maternal labor in the service of creating a thriving child who is distinguished as unique and, more fundamentally, over the many long years to adulthood, set to achieve a similar or better place in the social hierarchy compared with his parents. It involves mothers in constant work of anticipating potential problems and trying to forge a clear path for each child in the short and long term. It can be understood from the very basics of planning each day, to setting up of weekly care arrangements that maximize a child’s achievement and happiness, to negotiating the myriad of seasonal or yearly transitions that keep them on the road to success. Often, it takes the form of serious intervention if a child is falling off that path, whether not getting above average grades, not receiving appropriate attention from teachers, or not seeming happy with friends. It entails vigorously pursuing what is believed to be best for an individual child at every key juncture through anticipating and solving “status” problems. Elemental is the planning work of carefully considering the options available within structural constraints and mapping out optimal school, leisure, and emotional pathways as an attempt to guarantee that a child will have improved life chances.

The labor invested in status safeguarding can be framed within Bourdieu’s (2002) conceptualization of social status distinction. Through status safeguarding, mothers aim to instill various types of cultural capital in children across several different social fields. Given that these social hierarchies are relational (Bourdieu 2002), mothers’ efforts to impart the “correct” cultural practices in children reproduce current power structures. Bourdieu (1990, 2002: 165) describes a “reproductive struggle” to accumulate capital that is structured by group beliefs in distinct sets of cultural practices; this system continually creates new layers of work for mothers as they seek to

facilitate (but can never be assured of) children's social mobility. Other research situates parenting efforts within class-based analyses focused on how parents engage in specific cultural practices (e.g., Gillies 2006; Lareau 2003; Walkerdine and Lucey 1989), but does not illustrate the ways in which mothers work to reproduce or improve class status within the theoretical framework of intensive mothering.

Status safeguarding work is a decades-long project. Long-term outcomes weigh heavily upon mothers, because their children's eventual success can be tightly tied to attending a "good" university, which is particularly challenging in the highly stratified system of higher education in the U.S (Dwyer, McCloud, and Hodson 2012; Freidman, 2013; Ramey and Ramey 2010). Thus, safeguarding requires thinking about the big picture of a child's post-secondary education, even as he is very young. Attending to everyday details, such as matching leisure activities to a particular child's vagaries, checking homework to ensure the child is being challenged appropriately, or even surpassing his classmates, and knowing which new friends are positive influences for the child's achievement or moral values simultaneously carries the heavy weight of being viewed as imperative for long-term success. Mothers must also customize in such a way so that each individual child in the family is emotionally engaged in constructive activities that will enable him to independently and happily take the reins toward his own high status future. Despite mothers' huge investments over many years in attempting to create "measurable virtues," (Stevens 2009), there is always the potential for problems, and adolescence can loom large even when children are very young.

Fathers may play a number of roles in status safeguarding: a resource to aid mothers with the huge workload of safeguarding a child's status, an advocate for pushing children's climb up the social hierarchy, a check on the intensity of status safeguarding, or perhaps no role at all.

While modern fatherhood and diverse family structures point to a welcome rise in co-parenting children's daily activities (Cabrera et al. 2000; Bianchi, Sayer, Milkie and Robinson 2012), the labor that mothers perform for children, particularly organizing their lives and planning their next steps to protect their future remains fundamentally mothers' work (Craig and Mullan 2011; Griffith and Smith 2005; Palladino 2014). As mothers perform status safeguarding, they likely act with a father's blessing, but often with minimal input, underscoring the gendered inequalities not only in mothers' shift away from their own career investments, but in this often onerous, obscured, and emotionally exhausting labor on behalf of children's futures.

The concept of safeguarding builds from Lareau (2003)'s insightful ethnography of families of third graders, and complements Fox's research on couples with babies (2009), and Nelson's (2010) on parents of teenagers. According to Lareau, a large part of what middle-class parents do is structure their children's lives and intervene in institutions in order to customize their children's worlds. Lareau (2003) argues that this "concerted cultivation" is deliberate in the developing of children's resumes, unlike the cultural milieu of the working-class, in which parents allow children an "accomplishment of natural growth." Surprisingly, Lareau links her ideas explicitly to intensive mothering only once in the text and in some endnotes, noting like Hays (1996), that there is a new (intense) standard of childrearing, but that this standard is impossible for parents to achieve. Lareau's goal was to lay out class differences in the practices and logics of childrearing, which she saw as distinct from ideology (Lareau, personal communication).

Status safeguarding differs in emphasis from concerted cultivation in that the work 1) as discussed above, is gendered, highlighting how mothers, not parents, are overwhelmingly responsible for performing safeguarding work; 2) occurs across social classes in the precarious

economic times characterized by a competitive global economy that has intensified in the years since Lareau and Hays collected data in the early 1990s; and 3) underscores labor that is as emotionally taxing as it is intensive, perhaps taking on even more urgency as children older than the preschoolers Hays focused on and the third graders Lareau studied enter the seemingly precarious and uncertain worlds of adolescence and young adulthood.

Mothers' Safeguarding Work as Safety Net in an Era of Economic Uncertainty

Why does intensive mothering ideology, perhaps more dominant than ever, increasingly play out as status safeguarding work? In the past two decades, fears about children's futures have become more abundant, as the perceived competition for good jobs has become fierce in a global economy (Hollister 2011; Kalleberg 2009; Newman 2012), and even a college degree does not seem to translate easily into "the good life." Moreover, even middle class families are in a precarious position, with fragile safety nets and rising inequalities (Sullivan, Warren and Westbrook 2000) making the future setting for their offspring's adulthood uncertain (Brownstein 2013). The fact that there are no guarantees for the intergenerational transfer of status underscores the often frantic nature of safeguarding. Being born into the middle class does not allow one to assume a middle class status for the child (Beller and Hout 2006), nor does intensive mothering on the margins of poverty guarantee that a child will be able to pull out of dire economic straits. Given that the success of status safeguarding is unpredictable, and competition for good jobs is perceived to be fiercer than ever, the emotional strain associated with this form of maternal labor is very high today. Notably, women are harsh critics of mothers and being a mother is seen to be very difficult today compared with the past (Pew 2007).

Status safeguarding complicates our understanding of the logic of intensive mothering as fully contradictory to capitalism and mothers' drive to pursue their own careers in the modern era. Of course, motherhood creates conflict and can derail careers or additional education for women. Yet, in another sense, when a key aspect of mothering is status safeguarding work, mothers are investing in their offspring's future success through inserting children into the competitive marketplace. Mothers work to maintain the family's status into the future and to protect themselves from societal repercussions of a "failed" or less than successful child. As cultural expectations about mothers frame children as an extension of women, then working to secure a child's best interest by preparing him for market competition is, in some limited way, self-interest for mothers. Ironically, though Hays argued that mothers want to protect children, who they view as untainted, moral, and precious, from the competitive "dog-eat-dog" world, status safeguarding work pushes children squarely into this competition."

Viewing safeguarding as pursuing self-interest, even in a limited way, is complicated though, because mothers may feel like they have little choice in the matter. The combination of cultural expectations, distinct social hierarchies, and increasing economic insecurity leaves mothers with little option as to whether they will pursue the heavy labor of status safeguarding. And, as noted later, the breadth of potential status safeguarding work across social contexts (academic, talents, and emotional) necessitates attention even from mothers that may wish to avoid or reduce such investments.

In sum, we argue that today, the core work stemming from intensive mothering ideologies is status safeguarding. Safeguarding is mothers' urgent, sacrificial, protective work in the goal of reproducing or improving class status. For mothers, safeguarding seems necessary,

but even when seemingly doing it well, it carries anxiety inherent in its ultimate insufficiency to guarantee success.

Variations in the Intensity of Safeguarding

How mothers engage in status safeguarding varies by key characteristics, such as social class and ethnicity, mothers' employment, and cultural and geographical context. Those most likely to enact intensive mothering through safeguarding are middle-class mothers. This is particularly important for those who might enjoy relatively high education levels or incomes but do not have wealth to pass along to children (Lareau 2003). These mothers also have more resources to facilitate the constant planning and supervision that go into status safeguarding, and they too worry a great deal about children's futures (Nelson 2010). Working-class mothers' safeguarding also is oriented to moving children into a position higher than their own, through education and significant emotional investments (Gillies 2006; Hays 1996). In a study of working-class mothers in England and Scotland, Gillies (2006) finds that when problems arise in a school setting, these mothers engage in extensive emotional labor and work outside the school to reassure children despite the negative messages they may receive within the educational system. Low-income parents internalize intensive mothering ideology and sacrifice to give their children advantages they lacked (Elliott, Powell, and Brenton 2013), holding high expectations for children's futures even if financial problems limit the activities or support parents can provide (Chin and Phillips 2004). Chin and Phillips (2004) argue that regardless of class status, parents hold common values for the ways children will occupy their summer hours; however, limited financial resources can place severe constraints on exactly how these values will be enacted. For some low-income or working class mothers, safeguarding work may take the form of attempts to keep children from falling off track in schooling and in difficult neighborhoods

(McCormack 2005). Mothers of different classes are differently regulated by mothering ideologies (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989) and thus alternately affected by status safeguarding.

Race and ethnicity may shape the ways in which mothers approach status safeguarding. Mothers of middle-class white boys in the U.S. may feel a special urgency that their sons are on the path to success to take on their privileged place in society, even though they may not be fully aware of pressures that encourage them to foremost protect sons' status (Singh 2004). For mothers of racial/ethnic minority children, living in a society where discrimination is a threat, there are other nuances to consider as they attempt to secure a child's future, taking into account racial identity, cultural expectations, and extended family ties (Lacy 2007; Warner 2010). These mothers may find that children's contexts require additional considered planning as children embark on their academic careers. For example, mothers carefully consider the racial composition of a given school, daycare, playgroup, or team as well as preview how a school is responsive to parental concerns, and how teachers interact with minority students. Often, mothers of African-American children face concerns about their families' proximity to struggling neighborhoods, the role of peer influences, and how to foster positive racial identities (Patillo 1999; Lacy and Harris 2008). Such concerns about safety and peer influences on racial/ethnic identity are likely an issue for mothers of minority group children in general. Furthermore, the kind of racial identity work that parents may pursue to ensure their children's success varies significantly by class status, location in the city or suburbs, as well as residential location (Lacy 2007, p. 50).

Mothers' employment status also affects the level of safeguarding. While Hays (1996) highlights the pervasive culture of intensive mothering regardless of employment status, recent research suggests that employed mothers more willingly embrace the personal fulfillment they

gain from working (Christopher 2012). Despite their straying from the idealized selflessness of intensive mothering, these mothers emphasize the organization, planning, and overall responsibility they hold for their child's well-being (Christopher 2012). Although status safeguarding may involve delegation, it is work mothers perform regardless of employment status. Still, stay-at-home mothers may be the most intensive in safeguarding practices, because daily and longer term goals and labor are focused more exclusively on their children.

Finally, national, cultural and geographic contexts of mothering matter. National context is important; for example, safety nets are especially thin in the U.S. and more labor may be called for as parents cannot count on a secure future for children that will include health care, a decent income and so on (Sullivan, Warren and Westbrook 2000). Mothers in the U.S. spend more time with children than similarly situated Canadians (Ramey and Ramey 2010), perhaps monitoring their time and activities more intensely due to the increased competition of a stratified higher education system that has infiltrated downward into the lives of secondary and even primary students (Ramey and Ramey 2010). Caputo (2007) finds that mothers in Canada also are confined by the boundaries of an intensive mothering ideology and prescribed definitions of "good mothering," but they have greater social supports compared to mothers in the United States. The level of the wage penalty may also matter in redirecting mothers' economic efforts toward social reproduction in the family: cross-nationally, mothers in over 60 percent of developed countries, especially Canada, the United States, the UK, Ireland, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg earn at least 30 percent less than childless women, experiencing a significant motherhood wage penalty (Budig, Misra, and Boeckmann 2012). Within country cultural context matters as well. For example, within the U.S., those on the East coast or in urbanized areas may be in a culture which emphasizes the urgency of high status

more than in other areas. Finally, mothers in urban environments may pursue different goals for their children compared with those in rural areas, given wide differences in social comparisons, proximity to events or activities, and the availability of school choice.

Types of Status Safeguarding

By its nature, status safeguarding occurs across multiple realms as children regularly intersect with new social institutions as they grow. We outline three milieu in which mothers foster children's advancement – the academic, the talent, and the emotional. Mothers' work in each of these areas is likely to overlap, as individual talents shape academic life and children's happiness and emotional well-being shape attainments in school and other social institutions.

One fundamental aspect of status safeguarding is academic safeguarding. The process of academic safeguarding begins early, as mothers struggle with school choice and residential decisions, often noting that they are the primary decision-makers for the school a child attends (Billingham and Kimelberg 2013). In issues such as school choice, neoliberalism shifts authority to parents, whether they seek that responsibility or not (Patillo et al. 2014). Parents must make sense of their options, sometimes simply registering at the neighborhood school and sometimes actively selecting a school by energetically consulting social networks (Lareau 2014; Patillo, Delale-O'Connor and Butts 2014). Once children are attending primary school, the work continues. Middle class mothers, often in urban districts, are highly involved in school "improvement" efforts, not just organizing auctions or events, but also writing grants and conducting strategic planning (Billingham and Kimelberg 2013; Cucchiara and Horvat 2009; Lareau and Munoz 2012). Lareau (2003) discusses how mothers intervene when necessary for children having problems, though class status may dictate the extent to which mothers find

success through these interventions. Safeguarding involves an overwhelming amount of work for mothers as they customize, distinguish and build the child's intellectual experiences at each developmental juncture and plan for the future. Academic safeguarding is not simply reactive, but largely proactive and involves a great deal of thought, active mapping out of options, and research with friends, neighbors and family members. It then involves consistently analyzing whether a child has the right teacher, an appropriately challenging curriculum, acceptable homework material, and able and appropriate peers, and adjusting where needed and to the extent possible.

A second aspect of safeguarding is talent safeguarding. Here, it is imperative for mothers to make certain that each child has unique talents and experiences, perhaps literally something to write about on a college application that distinguishes the child's life outside school. These talents and experiences may be developed through extracurricular activities, work in the community or with religious organizations, or with the family through traveling to new places. Doing so is very intensive, and requires testing out many different proclivities of a child to see which ones become passions or talents. At one extreme, there is the "Tiger Mom," made famous by the author Amy Chua, who forced her children to practice piano for hours each day in order to make them prodigies, likely in the service of college admissions (Zhou and Lee 2014). On the other hand, some mothers may actively resist the competitive nature of safeguarding and some working-class mothers with fewer options for children to choose from, may try to emphasize one sport at which the child excels. Friedman (2013) outlines the increasingly competitive nature of American society, particularly given rising levels of education, increased income inequality, and an ever growing emphasis on credentials. In order to secure children's futures, parents enroll children in competitive sports and activities, thus securing "competitive kid capital" where

children learn to perform under pressure (Friedman 2013). As these talents are pursued, mothers work through multiple decisions on a regular basis about when one talent is developed enough, or should be abandoned. This occurs in conjunction with assessing how the intensity of an activity that requires a long drive or several practices each week weighs against the “talent” that the child demonstrates now and potentially can convert to future status.

A third form of safeguarding, which is linked intimately to academic and talent safeguarding, is emotional safeguarding (Warner 2010). Mothers make extensive efforts to protect children’s happiness and self-esteem, while also reducing any anxieties a child might experience. Emotional safeguarding work is also tied to the emotional resources mothers have at their disposal and the extent to which mothers are able to successfully navigate institutional interactions (Gillies 2006). Mothers actively seek positive environments and encounters for their children, such as a warm music teacher or academic work that is challenging, but not too challenging. In some cases, emotional safeguarding may be considered more important than academic or talent safeguarding. If a child experiences racism at school, mothers may work to move a child from an academically prestigious institution to one more likely to secure a positive racial identity. In the end, the goal of emotional safeguarding is to instill a sense of enjoyment in daily life, particularly school, that will translate to long term success and economic mobility (Warner 2010). However, this too is fraught with dilemmas, given that happiness is an extremely elusive goal (Greenfeld 2013).

Status Safeguarding’s Effect on Children

Safeguarding, no doubt, helps individual children stand out and succeed in ways that are emotionally comfortable to them. However, it may exhaust them and have many psychological

consequences. Safeguarding may eliminate children's ability to enjoy what they are doing in the moment as they become "in it to win it" during certain sports or activities (Friedman 2013). For example, children may start out enjoying participating in Girl Scouts, but over time may be pressured into continuing the activity as labor in the service of achievement to put onto a college application. Or, as children advance through schools, which can structure curricula narrowly, mothers may become preoccupied with high stakes reading and math grades and test scores, causing children to lose enjoyment in broader interests in literature, art or science. Safeguarding can also translate mothers' anxiety about a child's competitive strengths, especially when a child is just doing "average," into anxiety for the child. Tensions between mothers and children can run high (Lee and Zhou 2014). Among the middle class, as mothers have time and financial resources to vehemently pursue multiple competitive options for children in order to distinguish them from peers, children can be depleted. Among those with fewer resources, mothers' efforts may lead to high pressure on children as the perceived need for success at any one activity may be great.

In addition, status safeguarding over the long term means middle-class children may feel entitled, not only to intervene in institutions as Lareau (2003) describes, but to be happy and never bored. As mothers advocate for their child's success, happiness and engagement at school, on teams, or with peers, children become accustomed to maternal intervention and positive outcomes as a result. The pursuit of happiness fits with the ideology of individualism and free choice, but carries high risk for depression in young adulthood when seemingly endless choices keep them frozen and thinking there are better, more happiness-inducing opportunities elsewhere (Greenfeld 2013). In other cases, children may come to rely too much on mothers' status safeguarding efforts, finding that they have few resources of their own to cope with challenges,

disappointments, and rejections. Finally, safeguarding may enhance privileged children's insensitivity to oppression. As mothers facilitate children's ability to achieve distinction in a competitive society, these children may be unaware that the hard labor and resources of others helped create their success. As a result of believing that they have worked to climb the ladder to success rather than reaping the rewards of a wealthy birthright (Khan 2011) and the labor of their mothers, privileged adolescents feel at ease when they navigate middle-class social contexts. Thus, as mothers make their lives a little bit easier to slide into success with every transition, more privileged adolescents may come of age with a lack of awareness of the deep inequalities in society and the hardships that others face.

Status safeguarding's effects on mothers

While status safeguarding may in some ways benefit children, as it prevents them from falling behind, or helps to make them distinct in a way that will get them to a well-regarded university or fulfilling career, it is problematic for mothers. Specifically, not only are mothers' work lives often sacrificed, but mothers' energy can be depleted to exhaustion over long periods of time as they become an individualized safety net because social supports providing for a secure future are so thin. Some mothers may be unwilling participants in status safeguarding, but do so because there seem to be few other pathways to protecting a child's future. Because of the relational nature of class hierarchies, the more mothers labor to build children's portfolios, the harder it becomes for any one child to stand out, pushing the cultural bar for what counts as unique achievements even higher (Bourdieu 2002). The exhausting labor begins early and continues for years. Fox (2009) describes the negative effects on mothers of young children as they spend their limited energies in doing what is perceived as the culturally correct investment

in the care of babies. In the elementary years, mothers' great energies are invested as the child's talents become more urgently needing to be revealed (Friedman 2013; Lareau 2003). In the high school years, mothers struggle to manage an adolescent's safety (Elliott and Aseltine 2012) and resume, and face the additional labor of strategizing about, applying for and visiting universities (Nelson 2010). Even into adulthood as children prolong their stays in parents' homes (Newman 2012), safeguarding can be emotionally and physically exhausting work.

While some safeguarding is a necessary part of mothering or parenting work, status safeguarding is often excessive, as cultural expectations of mothers set few boundaries on what mothers should sacrifice for children, state supports for childrearing and post-secondary education are minimal, and the uncertainty of children's success in a global competition collude to oppressively demand mothers' extreme efforts. Fear of failure and guilt from a child's problems is another big cost for mothers. Elliott and colleagues (2013) suggest that intensive mothering, and the safeguarding work that accompanies the ideology, come at a great cost to low-income mothers' mental and physical health as they may experience the failure of efforts to safeguard a child's future even as they sacrifice their own scarce resources for their children in attempting to create a safety net based in future status. Status safeguarding has no guarantees and is not complete for many years when a child takes on adult roles. Because the weight of societal judgments for a child's current and future success falls extremely heavily upon mothers, particularly when there are behavioral or academic problems (Singh 2004) or addiction and incarceration (Elliott et al. 2013), mothers' feelings of guilt and responsibility for being the one individual who could have made the child's life "right," and her status secure, can be overwhelming. The fact that safeguarding a child's happiness in an era where people are increasingly intolerant of even minor life difficulties is a near impossible feat is worthy of

mention. The common cultural mantra in which mothers' suggest that they "just" want their child to be happy may actually reinforce both intensive mothering and an oppressive focus on happiness. The difficult thing about "just" wanting a child to be happy is that it pushes mothers to be hyper vigilant in the form of safeguarding and yet it is vague and an always elusive goal.

Some mothers resist status safeguarding and protect themselves and their children from a life that is too pressured or competitive. As Christopher (2012) notes, employed mothers of varying social statuses increasingly defend the benefits of time away from a child, while continuing to value their role as mothers. Perhaps if consumed with their paid work, they are simply unable to be extreme in their approach (Christopher 2012). Other mothers resist as they find that participating in many aspects of status safeguarding is a near impossible task and urge a greater simplicity in their approach to childrearing (Nelson 2010).

In sum, the endless vigilant labor to safeguard the child's future that is the work of intensive mothering ideology today comes at a high cost to mothers' careers, physical and emotional health, and guilt. The fact that restructuring so that the state, workplaces, and fathers become more responsible for the future livelihoods of all children is largely absent from political and cultural discourse helps maintain views that individual mothers should continue their exhaustive investments.

CONCLUSION

Status safeguarding represents extensive labor on the part of mothers intending to protect their child's present and future. Mothers work extremely hard in attempting to safeguard children academically, in developing special skills in a distinct way to showcase talents, and emotionally, in creating an easier and more comfortable climb to a secured future. It is clear that mothers feel

compelled to guard their child's status in a proactive, vigilant way, not only for their child's perceived future, but for their success as mothers. This aspect of intensive mothering complicates how mothers negotiate ideologies as they push the "self-interest" of children in trying to secure daughters' and sons' positions in a competitive marketplace. Although mothers are not always working toward their own career and income, they are working intensely to secure the future status of their children, who are culturally an important extension of themselves.

As economic conditions become more difficult and secure employment in a changing global landscape more uncertain, status safeguarding may take on a new urgency, with detrimental effects on mothers' time, and emotional and physical exhaustion. This is particularly true in the U.S. where dramatic wealth inequalities and a shrinking middle class heighten mothers' concerns for status and intensify safeguarding practices. As a neoliberal ideology emphasizing a free market, personal choice, and less government regulation deepens, mothers may find themselves increasingly burdened with the responsibility to manage their child's future alone. The lack of government support providing a safety net to citizens oppresses mothers as they individually labor on behalf of their children. Indeed, it should be the responsibility of the state, not just individual mothers, to safeguard all young children as they grow toward stable, secure and successful adulthoods.

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