

Intensive mothering in the time of coronavirus

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Abstract

We investigated experiences of mothers of school-age children in Central New York during a time of remote education due to COVID-19. We extend the concept of intensive mothering, characterized by the expectation that mothers are constantly available to meet their children's needs, and examine mothers' intersectional identities related to their experience of remote education. Mothers working from home often went back and forth between work and school in what we refer to as a *simultaneous shift*. Essential workers were engaged in a *sequential shift*, engaging with children's schoolwork after work and trading off with partners. Mothers took on multiple roles during the pandemic which led to role strain. In extreme cases, multiple roles could be impossible to fill, leading to a situation of role conflict where the demands of one role made it impossible to meet the needs of another role. Mothers of children of color experienced more negative interactions with schools than White mothers. Mothers of children with disabilities spent extended time on remote schooling. A limitation of our study is that we only interviewed people in Central New York and cannot generalize the results of our research to a larger population. Another limitation to our approach was that we have little information on how fathers experienced work and overseeing children's schoolwork. Future research should examine how mothering may have changed after children returned to school.

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools in Central New York were closed in 2020 and many workers began working from home. In the second week of March 2020, Onondaga County Executive Ryan McMahon ordered all county schools to be closed due to the coronavirus outbreak until the second week of April (Weaver, 2020). Teachers had less than a week to design an at-home curriculum for their students, and parents also had less than a week to prepare for overseeing schoolwork at home. Soon after, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that all non-essential employees in New York State were ordered to stay home (Borner, 2020). Later, the governor announced that schools would be closed for the remainder of the 2020 school year. This sequence of events created unique stressors for parents who were struggling to oversee their children's education while doing their normal jobs from home or working as essential workers. Most of these parents had no previous experience with overseeing children's virtual learning at home, and many were supervising their children to complete online schooling content. Also, many parents had limited experience working from home. In this new context, parents were both working and overseeing their children's online education at the same time.

In this article, we examine the experiences of parents, mostly mothers, from different demographic characteristics, working and caring for children during the coronavirus outbreak. The article is based on 64 interviews of parents in the Syracuse, NY area in Spring 2020 while remote schooling was in session. How did working mothers juggle working, supervising virtual learning at home, and protecting their children's emotional and physical health? Patricia Hill Collins (1990) argues that gender, class and race are "interlocking systems of oppression" (p. 222). The concept of intersectionality can help us to understand the ways that gender, race and class are linked to power inequality in terms of child-rearing during the pandemic (Collins, 2015). Intersectionality is a way of thinking about social inequality that allows us to examine "multiple forms of inequality" with "a greater level of complexity" (Collins, 2015, p. 5) to better understand the ways in which race *and* gender *and* class shape the experiences of individuals and groups. Intersectionality allows us to examine "intersecting patterns of racism and sexism" as well as classism that have occurred during the pandemic (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 358). In this article, we look at the role of gender, race, essential worker status, and being a caregiver of a disabled child and how these relate to the experiences of teaching children at home during the pandemic. Understanding the experiences of mothers during the coronavirus outbreak is important in terms of understanding the social consequences of COVID-19. According to Pew Research, 72% of mothers of children 18 and under are employed (Horowitz, 2019). Although most mothers work, Sharon Hays (1996) characterizes contemporary American child rearing as being defined by what she calls intensive mothering. Intensive mothering is characterized by the expectation that mothers are constantly available to meet their children's needs whether they are working outside the home or not (Hays, 1996). Mothers in diverse social status and racial backgrounds are practicing intensive mothering while following it as the standard childrearing practice in America (Eliot et al., 2015). This article seeks to understand how we can extend the concept of intensive mothering during the pandemic when mothers added the role of overseeing virtual learning to their mothering. How did intensive mothering operate in a situation when work and family lines have become blurry? Before the pandemic, women could work while their children were at school. How did adding the role of overseeing virtual education redefine intensive mothering during remote education?

While contributing to the household economy, working mothers simultaneously feel guilt about the time and attention they have missed with their children. They strive for work/life

balance while working and taking care of children. Arlie Hochschild (1989, 2012) has argued that after their first shift at work, many working mothers do a second shift at home, taking care of the children and the household. We argue that during the coronavirus outbreak, when work moved home for many working parents, women working from home began doing *simultaneous shifts* of work and childcare while those working as essential workers were doing *sequential shifts* of work and overseeing virtual learning, or a combination of *simultaneous* and *sequential shifts* (Harrington et al., 2020). In so doing, many mothers struggled to maintain balance between work and childcare, which then included new roles such as supervising virtual learning for children at home. The pandemic meant that the institution of school, which allowed mothers to be away from their children and work during the day, essentially disappeared leaving mothers in the role of overseeing their children's education. This new role could create *role strain* for mothers, leading to burnout (Lois, 2013). In extreme cases where there was no job flexibility, a mother could have experienced *role conflict*, a situation in which the demands of one role prevent the fulfillment of another role (Hecht, 2001; Lois, 2013; Meeuwissen et al., 2019).

As of yet, few studies examine the effect of COVID-19 on the experiences of working mothers in the United States. As the COVID-19 pandemic led both children and parents to work and study from home, researchers have studied the possibility of change in intensive mothering and parenting practices. We know that prior to the pandemic women were already taking an oversized role in childcare even while working (Bianchi, 2011). Calarco et al. (2020) find that mothers, even working mothers, spent more time on childcare during the pandemic with implications for stress and anxiety. Indeed Coyle et al. (2022) have found greater levels of work-family conflict during the pandemic than before with mothers particularly concerned that child-care would interfere with work. Lee et al. (2022) find that employers had gendered expectations that mothers would experience family conflicts with work. This research investigates how overseeing children's schoolwork varies across different axes of inequality.

The work of Collins et al. (2020) suggests that the demands for childcare among mothers during the pandemic led to a reduction in mothers' work hours not seen among fathers. They furthermore stress the long-term consequences of COVID-19 on women's career advancement. The unequal distribution of housework and caregiving which was exacerbated during the pandemic negatively influenced their opportunities for promotion and labor participation. Women with younger children were more likely to be impacted as they needed to contribute more time and energy on overseeing virtual schooling. Similarly, Landivar et al. (2020, p. 1) find that mothers "scaled back their work hours to a far greater extent than fathers" presumably to spend more time caring for children. Carlson et al. (2020) find that while fathers increased the time they spent on domestic work during the pandemic, mothers' household work also increased. Craig and Churchill (2020) find that while in Australia men in dual-income families increased the time they spent on childcare, mothers' work at home increased more.

Mothers of children of color also faced negative interactions with teachers during remote schooling. Prior to COVID-19, Dow (2016) found that Black mothers used parenting strategies to shield their children from racism. Particularly, Black mothers took steps to prevent their boys from being viewed as "thugs" in the wider society. Likewise, Ferguson's (2000) work illustrates why this is necessary in that she found that African American boys in the school where she did her research were predominant in the "Punishing Room" (p. 8). Lareau and Horvat (1999) argued that "[m]any Black parents, given the historical legacy of racial discrimination in schools, cannot presume or trust that their children will be treated fairly in school" (p. 42). They found that some parents in their study felt that Black children were faced with discrimination and that their critiques of educators were not valued by school officials. Stewart (2020) found that among Black

mothers who homeschool their children, most decided to do so because they felt that their children were being “pushed” out of public schools by racial discrimination. Mazama and Lundy (2012, p. 726) found that Black parents who homeschool their children engage in “racial protectionism,” an effort to shield them from “school-related racism,” which includes prejudice on the part of teachers, increased referral of Black students to special education programs and disciplinary actions. Virtual schooling during COVID-19 may have made racism more visible to parents who are in the room during their children’s Zoom meetings, thus enabling parents to engage in what Hassrick and Schneider (2009) call “teacher surveillance,” which may allow racial inequities stemming from the classroom to come to light for parents who previously did not have access to the classroom.

Naples et al. (2019) suggested that “disability remains consistently missing from most contemporary intersectional studies in sociology” (p. 10: See also Frederick & Shifrer, 2019). Mothers of children with disabilities faced increased difficulties during the lockdown compared to other families (Neece et al., 2020). Neece et al.’s (2020) study of parents of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities found that most parents reported a reduction in services offered to their child. Without these services, caregivers of children with disabilities needs may have felt “overwhelmed,” especially if they were also working while overseeing their child’s education (Eshraghi et al., 2020). Caregivers also faced additional burdens to provide these interventions at home. However, due to the cost of therapy, some children with disabilities were in a void of specialized support system that used to be accessible at their school or hospital (Fontanesi et al., 2020). Tele-rehabilitation therapy can be an efficient medium if it is to be delivered at home, and when caregivers learn and are aware of these methods. Dhiman et al. (2020) found homecare therapy to be beneficial to both caregivers and children with disabilities. However, several caveats regarding the smooth implementation of services exist, such as confidentiality and accessibility of these services (Dhiman et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2015).

Dhiman et al. (2020) also found that caregivers of children with disabilities experienced greater depression during COVID-19 lockdowns. Parents of children with disabilities are at higher risk of parenting-related exhaustion (Marchetti et al., 2020, p. 1119). They may also have faced greater difficulties balancing their work and overseeing their children’s education as they may have needed to spend more time than other parents working closely with their child to do schoolwork. Parents from seven European countries reported negative experiences in remote schooling and this is particularly the case for those who have children with mental health conditions (Thorell et al., 2021). Thorell et al. (2021) found that a large number of students were unable to fully participate in remote schooling and are left at risk of falling behind academically. Parents also reported anxiety, stress, and difficulties with helping their children to adjust to remote schooling.

Data and methods

To better understand the experiences of parenting during the coronavirus outbreak, we employed qualitative phone interviews to collect qualitative data from a sample 65 parents of school-age children, primarily working mothers, in Spring 2020 when at-home education started in the Syracuse, NY area. The first author, who did all of the interviews, is a professor of sociology who has experience in qualitative research and a mother of two school-aged children in Onondaga County. She embarked on this study having experienced remote education there with her own children.¹ We

¹ This analysis follows SRQR guidelines and the research has been IRB approved.

advertised our study on various Facebook groups and LISTSERVS including parenting, babysitting, school PTA, health-care industry, and church groups as well as contacted personal contacts. While we initially set out to interview “parents,” including both mothers and fathers, overwhelmingly those who responded to our ads were mothers. Of those we interviewed 59 were mothers, 3 were grandmothers, 1 was a father, and 1 couple was interviewed together. No participants dropped out of the study. Although we did not achieve gender diversity in our sample, we set out to have a diverse sample in terms of race/ethnicity, educational background, and essential worker status. In terms of race/ethnicity, 67% respondents identified as White, 20% Black, 4.5% Asian, 1.5% Middle Eastern, 3% Latina, and 3% identified as both Black and Latina. In terms of education 57% respondents had at least a bachelor’s degree while 43% of respondents had less than a bachelor’s degree. The vast majority of those we interviewed were working; only 7 (11%) were not. In 51% of the families either the respondent or their spouse/partner was an essential worker, meaning that they were legally working outside of the home during the coronavirus outbreak in Spring 2020. For essential workers, working outside the home meant trading off between two parents, using a babysitter or older children, or in one case, bringing a child to work. Using a semi-structured interview guide, interviews were done by the first author by phone during April–June 2020 while schools were operating remotely in the Syracuse area. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist.

It was important to us to do the interviews while school was still in session; therefore when the school year ended, we ended our interviewing. However, having done interviews with 65 parents, we felt that by the final interview we had reached saturation, which is described by Small (2009) as, “If a study is conducted properly, the very last case examined will provide very little new or surprising information. The objective is saturation” (p. 25). By the time we had finished the last interview we had found little new information that had not been uncovered by previous interviews.

We used a “flexible” coding technique described by Deterding and Waters (2021). We first read through all of the transcripts to “identify the main ‘stories’ in the data” (Deterding & Waters, 2021, pp. 725–726). We did this independently of each other and then discussed the themes we saw emanating from the data and agreed on the coding schema to be used for the paper. Then the three authors engaged in line-by-line coding using the qualitative software *Dedoose*. In doing so we engaged in naming and then categorizing the codes from the interviews (Straus & Corbin, 1998). We coded themes in two ways, both coding themes that originated in our interview guide as well as themes that emanate from the collected interviews themselves. We then uncovered the “relationships among the categories” (Straus & Corbin, 1998, p.127). Finally, we wrote memos to understand the ways the themes in the interviews overlapped and diverged. In these memos we wrote about emerging themes organized around short quotes from the interviews (Straus & Corbin, 1998). The memos emanated from themes in the interviews and the ways in which they intersected with themes in the literature.

As researchers we situate our positionality as constructivist based on our belief that multiple and subjective realities exist (Harris, 2002; Lingard & Kennedy, 2010; O’Brien et al., 2014). We believe knowledge and experiences are subjective thus the aim of this paper is to describe subjective experiences of mothers “with no attempt to merge or reconcile these realities” (O’Brien et al., 2014, p. 13). The purpose of this study is not generalization but to have an in-depth understanding of few or unique cases relate to mothers’ experiences in balance between work and care during the COVID-19. Below we provide elaboration of our qualitative findings.

Balancing work and kids

In most households, mothers were doing the bulk of overseeing their children's education even while working simultaneously. Virtual learning meant that most mothers took on a new role overseeing children's remote education. The pressures of intensive mothering meant that all mothers, including those working at home and essential workers felt the pressure to be constantly available to their children with the added role of overseeing children's education, while also seeking to balance work and child care responsibilities. In our study, 45 out of 64 families were ones in which mothers were primarily overseeing children's remote schooling. Therefore overseeing children's education at home was a gendered phenomenon (Hays, 2022). However, the gendered division of labor did not operate uniformly, but varied by worker status, having a child of color, and having a disabled child.

Balancing work and kids meant something different for essential workers and those working from home. For some parents who were working from home during the pandemic, being able to work and take care of kids at home meant constantly going back and forth between roles as a worker and a caregiver (Collins, 2019). Rather than doing work during the day and coming home to take care of children after work, many mothers were doing a *simultaneous shift, working and overseeing children's education simultaneously* (Harrington Meyer & Abdul-Malak, 2020; Hochschild, 1989, 2012). Rebecca, a kindergarten teacher, explained:

I'm going back and forth constantly. So even if I'm in the middle of a Zoom meeting with my 5 year olds at 9:00, I'm putting out fires in the background with my own kids. I'm trying to make sure my 5 year old's not getting into something she shouldn't be getting into. She's very mischievous. My 9 year old might come over with his Chromebook and say, "What's this word mean?"

Rebecca found that her work at home was constantly interrupted by her children and noted:

So even in the middle of faculty meetings, I have to just get up and leave. No one else on my team has multiple kids. Some of them don't have any kids, so I'm the only [one] at home by myself on my team trying to juggle all this stuff. ... So I'm constantly interrupted with work. When I'm on the phone with a parent, my 5 year old's asking me to do this or do that, and it's just a lot of interruptions, and I'm trying to help my kids and my phones rings, or I'm trying to help one kid and the other one asks for help. I feel like I'm constantly being tugged on by someone.

Mothers found that because they were doing caregiving duties while working, they did not have the luxury of long stretches of uninterrupted time to do work. Gabriela indicated, "It's a little piecemeal. It's like 4 hours here, a couple hours here, a few hours a night when he's sleeping." For some parents, this means doing less work than they would usually do. Janel, a university administrator with two small children stated:

I'm supposed to do more work after 9:00 [pm], but more often than not I fall asleep because I'm just so tired. It's exhausting to try to ... So I can really only get half a day's worth of work done, on a good day. On a good day I can have 12:00-5:00ish, 6:00. Uninterrupted time is 12:00-2:30.

Janel felt that she had to get a family routine into place before she could get a work routine settled. She said:

I prioritize my family right now, over my work. I really do. Especially the first couple weeks I was like, “I have to figure out this home situation first, before I can get to make a routine for work. Because if I don’t make a routine for home, I’ll never be able to do the work.” If that makes sense. . . . So it was triage. The most important thing to do was to create a family routine, a home routine, and find the resources. And then once I get that under my belt, I feel like I’ve been able to do more work now, a month in, than I did the first two weeks. I didn’t even try. I would make the meetings and I would have my earbuds on and have it on mute and not have my face show. I would be on audio calls, because I was still actively doing things with them. But now I can sit down and be there on Zoom and have a virtual background. But I prioritized a family and a family routine the first two or three weeks.

June had a different experience. For her and her husband, work had to come first, before meeting their children’s needs. June pointed out:

Honestly, I would say my work comes first. It’s imbalanced at best. I think I put a lot of pressure. My oldest daughter, the one that’s in third grade is a pretty independent learner. She has, she excels at high expectations and so if she knows something’s expected of her she’ll try to do it by herself and unfortunately we’ve leaned on that and so we’ve told her to try to do things on Seesaw. Try to figure it out and if you really need help come back to us. But really, the balance in the day comes down to my husband and I’s work and we try to support her where we can but it’s probably not as much as we should. Yeah.

Mothers prioritized work and overseeing children’s remote education differently depending on the flexibility of their workplace. Collins (2019) notes that for working mothers, flexible schedules, like those happening during the pandemic, “could make life easier for women,” but “they could also enable this culture of constant work for mothers” (p. 212). Julie, a social worker, explained how her work has expanded to fill the whole day. She said:

I was telling my manager the other day, “Now it feels like there’s no beginning or end to our work day” “I mean, I might take a call from a teacher at 7:30 in the morning, and I might do a parent education session with a parent at 8:30 because that parent needs to have some tools to manage her kids at home, and I can’t give those to her when she’s home with five kids trying to work and homeschool five kids. So, I will schedule with parents, like, “Do you want to have this conversation maybe when your kids have gone to bed so that you can actually do this work with me?” Now, it just feels like I have to be available all the time.

For Julie, flexibility did not make her work routine easier, but rather made her feel as if she had to work all of the time. Many mothers working from home felt that they were working a *simultaneous shift*, working and overseeing their children’s schoolwork at the same time.

Essential workers had a different experience, and their experiences were more varied and challenging (Jayaram & Maconi, 2022). Bernhardt et al. (2022) found that essential work was also

associated with greater work-family conflict. Some parents, like Maria, who works as a therapist at a nursing home and whose husband is a construction worker, did what we call a *sequential shift* rather than a *simultaneous shift* like those working from home (Harrington Meyer & Abdul-Malak, 2020). When asked who was overseeing her children's education, Maria replied:

A combination of the people watching them and us. So it's started before we go to work each day and then continues with sitters, and then continues at night.

Maria elaborated on their process:

Yeah, we have kids with IEPs (Individualized Education Program) and 504s, so I try and do all of that directed work with us. And then they do their Zoom calls and things during the day. They do things that I know they can self-direct with minimal help and then stuff that needs more intense help, my husband and I tackled it in the evening.

While some essential workers worked outside of the home most days, many did a combination of at-home work and work outside of the home. These essential workers did a combination of the two types of home learning shifts. They also traded off overseeing their children's education with partners who in some cases were also essential workers. This was usually not a choice, but something dictated by the demands of their job. Miranda is a registered financial associate and her husband is a truck driver. Both were essential workers. Miranda worked at home about 3 days a week, though, and her husband sometimes had days when he was not working. She had trouble working and overseeing her children's work on the days she worked from home and explained:

I feel guilty because I'm home. So, I feel like, "Well, I should be helping them," but I still have to work. I still have stuff that I have to do. You're caught between your kids and your job. That's why on the day that [husband] is home, I'm not here. I'm going to the office. You can stay home and you can do the kids today. And I don't know how much time on Thursday... This is the first Thursday that he did that. So, I don't know exactly how much time he spent with them, probably not much.

Ultimately, mothers working from home and those working as essential workers had different ways of organizing their children's learning time as simultaneous or sequential shifts, or sometimes a combination of the two. In both cases, the teaching role led to a further intensification of mothering.

Parents filling multiple roles

Working and overseeing virtual education at home meant that parents took on multiple roles, including the role of overseeing children's education, which was a new role for many of them. Although distance learning from home is very different than true homeschooling, some lessons can be learned from mothers who homeschool. Lois (2013) has found that mothers who homeschool their children are particularly susceptible to "role strain," which Goode (1960) defined as "the felt difficulty in fulfilling role obligations" (p. 483). According to Lois (2013) this puts homeschooling mothers at risk of burnout. Hazel, a special education teacher, talked about the difficulty of taking on the role of overseeing her child's education at home. She pointed out:

You can't recreate a classroom. It's just no matter what you do, you can't, the learning that happens from peers and from peer modeling and just the security that kids find in a classroom and just too the fact that I'm not my daughter's teacher. I'm her parent. Those are two really different roles.

Hazel felt that the teacher role and the parent role were very different and felt it was impossible to recreate a school context at home.

Parvati had a fourth-grader and a child in pre-K. Parvati worked at home during the coronavirus outbreak, while her husband was an essential worker. She explained multiple responsibilities she was holding during remote schooling:

There are a lot, right. From feeding them, to keeping the house clean, making sure they do their work, keep cooking for dinner, laundry, everything... With all this energy, just in the four walls of the house, it's very difficult to contain that as well as make sure that they're well fed, well educated. It's very difficult.

Parvati felt that it was difficult to fulfill her multiple roles during the COVID outbreak.

Despite the rigors of intensive mothering, it generally has not included educating children, a role usually undertaken by schools. Taking on the role of overseeing education added a new dimension to intensive mothering; it was not simply one more burden on mothers, but involved a new way of engaging with children that was different from the traditional mother role. This expansion of roles in addition to the previous roles of mother/caregiver and worker could lead mothers to role strain.

Some mothers felt that taking on this new role could change the relationship between parent and child. Debbie, for example, said, "I am expected to be her teacher, which it almost goes against the nature of our relations." Gabriela said her role overseeing her children's education at home "takes away from us time." She felt that not only did virtual schooling take up their family time but changed her role as a mom. She said, "It makes me, I don't know. It's not part of... it doesn't make me mom."

Akira and her husband are immigrants from Iraq. Akira struggles to speak English. She has four children. About her experience with her kids at home she said she was "learning with my kids." She was overseeing their education as her husband was out of the house working every day doing deliveries. However, she said, "I am mom, not teacher." She described the teachers speaking to her kids 2–3 times per week, but she wanted the teacher to speak with her kids every day.

Karla also struggled with multiple roles. Working in a creative field, she struggled to keep on task with work while also fulfilling her roles as wife and mother. She suggested:

I can't focus on it. You know, I'll start working on something and the creative process... If you get interrupted sometimes in the middle of it, you forgot where you were. It's a process of I don't have that time. It's always like, "Mom, I need this" and then this one, "Mom, I don't understand this." I'm running into three different places. You know? Then my husband calls me downstairs, "I need the checking account information." You know? I don't have that time anymore and so I feel like I'm just... I'm frustrated because I don't have that time to do this job that I'm supposed to be doing but then I'm being pulled to be a mom and I want to be a good mom.

For Karla, multiple roles pulled her in different directions creating a tension between her work role and her desire to be a “good mom.”

For those with less flexible work, multiple roles could be overwhelming and impossible to fill, leading to a situation of role conflict (Lois, 2013; Meeuwissen et al., 2019). Hecht (2001) noted that “[r]ole conflict occurs when demands associated with one role interfere directly with one’s ability to satisfy the demands of another role” (p. 112). For example, Diana is a nurse and her husband is a corrections officer and they worked alternating shifts during the pandemic. Their kids stayed with Diana’s mother while they were at work. Diana and her husband have one school-age daughter and a baby and were not following the school curriculum for her daughter since school went remote. Diana said, “I’m not meant to be my child’s teacher and I’m not meant to be a wife, a mom, a teacher, and an essential worker all at the same time” She found her multiple roles to be “physically and emotionally draining.” Diana had trust in school teachers as trained educators and believed that there is a delineation between roles of being a mother and a teacher:

I’m her mother and there are things that I teach her, but I’m not meant to be her sole educator. I teach her valuable life lessons, and in social skills, and being a good person, and things like that, but I’m not meant to be her English teacher, her math teacher, her science teacher, her social studies teacher, her art teacher, her music teacher, you know.

Diana’s role as an essential worker doing a *sequential shift* during the coronavirus outbreak was all consuming and prevented her from taking on the role of overseeing education for her daughter. Diana shared that shortly before we spoke a friend had agreed to take her daughter and do the school curriculum with her while Diana was at work.

At-home schooling during the coronavirus outbreak meant that mothers had to take on multiple roles, something that can be difficult for mothers to take on leading to both role strain, and in the extreme, role conflict for those with non-flexible work conditions. Overseeing children’s academic work was a struggle for some parents that could change the nature of their relationship with their children. The experience of the overseer role was impacted by the interaction between gender and whether they were an essential or remote worker. The women we interviewed were more likely to report that they took on the overseer role than their male partners, thus intensifying motherhood and putting them more at risk of role strain and role conflict than the men in their families.

Race and remote learning

Another area of inequality during remote education was race. How did mothers of children of color differently experience virtual learning during COVID? Mothers of White children generally reported positive interactions with their children’s teacher during remote education and reported being in frequent contact with their children’s teachers. For example, when asked what the experience of being in contact with her child’s teacher had been like during remote education, Debbie, a mom who is a White school psychologist responded:

I think it’s been wonderful. She’ll get right back to us, she’s very understanding and she’s quick with her reply.

She noted that she had been in contact with her daughter's teacher at least once a day. Jennifer, a White mom who is an attorney, says that her children's teachers have been "very responsive." Asked about her contact with her child's teachers she said:

I have been in contact with some of them, particularly for the middle schooler, just to say, "We don't understand this and can you give us some light?" Today I actually wrote to say, "Look, your times for the Google chat, I have these webinars I have to do and I'm tech support here. Can he sneak into this other one that's full now? Because I don't have anything at that time." And so she was responsive. She was responsive to that. And then I've had to email and say the high schooler couldn't get in to take a quiz. It just was not recognizing his password or him. And so some of that tech stuff.

An exception to the generally positive experiences of parents of White children is that of Miranda, who felt that her son's teacher was calling her too much about her son's missing assignment when she felt he should have been contacting her son.²

Timothy was late with an assignment. So, I emailed the teacher and I said, "You and Timothy need to connect." This was, I think, the first week or the second week of this whole thing when they were home, but I was still going to work every day. I was still working in the office. And the teacher kept calling my cell phone. He was calling my cell phone. And finally, after his last phone call, I texted him and I'm like, "Please don't contact me. Please contact my son. Here is his cell phone number. Here is his email address. You two need to figure this out the two of you, because I cannot be stuck in the middle of this. You two need to figure this out." ... And instead of emailing Timothy back, he kept calling me. And I'm like, "I'm at work, dude. I'm at work." I would try to loop Timothy in. I would ignore his phone call and then 10 minutes later, I would do a group text, "This is Timothy's number. Please contact him. Please work this out. I am at work. I cannot talk to you right now." And then, he just kept calling my cell phone, and I'm like, "You are a nut." Then I sent him a really nasty text message. I was like, "You need to stop talking to me. If you need to communicate with me, you need to communicate with me via email. You have my email address. Please stop contacting me."

Miranda is in the minority of parents of White children who had negative interactions with her child's teacher.

Caregivers of children of color more often reported problematic interactions with teachers during remote learning, some of it stemming from the time when their children were still attending in person. Tamara, a White mother with a biracial child who identifies as Black said:

Well, my daughter's class is 15 students, three of them are Black, including my daughter, and one Black student has been missing since the beginning and her absence has never been even noted. So for us as a family, that's difficult because it tells us that the value that's placed on a person. I know there's concerns about privacy and things

² We include Miranda's case here although it is not representative of those of other White mothers to introduce a negative case. A negative case is used in qualitative research to illustrate the experience of someone's experience who falls outside of the trend illustrated by other cases. Her case generally falls outside the norm for white mothers in our sample.

and so if they do know something about the child, that's not our business to know, frankly. But also, just this kind of, at this particular school, there's kind of a pattern of Black students being pushed out or dismissed.

She went on to explain:

... The Black students who we hear of incidents and things being said that probably shouldn't be, it was kind of like written in class that he's the one that doesn't do his homework, he's the one who doesn't do this, he's the one that needs to be quiet, so asking him in front of all his colleagues on Zoom, he hasn't signed into the math application and is his mother having problems with it. And then, she asks the student with the Muslim name the same question and then tells the class that they're the only ones who haven't signed into the math. So I don't know that, that's intentional, that she had set out to do that that morning, but it's clearly, the impact is felt disproportionately.

Tamara describes a pattern of students of color facing racism in the virtual classroom.

Gretchen, a mental health consultant, is a White mother of two Black sons and two White children who are grown. She decided not to have her sons participate in her sons' classroom Zoom sessions because of microaggressions aimed toward her son. Of that decision she said:

My fifth grader's first experience live was riddled with... it was hard for me to sit in the same room, and watch and hear what was happening. It started with a whole lot of microaggressions about my son's hair. He is Black, his hair looks gorgeous and is fine right now. But his teacher has always made a big fuss about my son's hair and made it a topic of conversation. We've talked to him about it and we've said, "Shawn doesn't really like that. It's not an avenue to connect..." All those microaggressions hit as soon as he turned on his webcam. It was, "Shawn, are you worried about getting your hair cut while you're in quarantine? I'm worried about my haircut. I'm worried about it looking like yours, ending up looking like yours." It was awful. He thinks he's being funny.

Of her decision to keep her sons out of live online classroom experiences, Gretchen said:

I wouldn't invite people like that into my home. Our home is an anti-racist home, a sensitive environment. We don't invite family members into our home that aren't going to be safe for our kids. Why would I let these people virtually come into my home if I wouldn't let them step foot in the door? ... We just sort of were like, "I don't want these voices in my home. I don't want this influence in my home." We are no longer participating in live experiences.

Although her son did not participate in the live sessions, the teacher recorded the class and gave Gretchen access to the recordings. She was appalled to hear that the teacher was still talking about her son during the Zoom sessions even though he was not present:

He is recording. I'm grateful that he's recording, but one day last week, I listened to the recording. He talked about my son while my son wasn't present and said, "Oh,



has anyone heard from Shawn? I'm really worried about Shawn. I'm going to have to call his parents. Has anyone heard from him?" He's heard from us. Every other day he hears from us, and all of Shawn's assignments are turned in up to date. He knows he's not missing, but he sort of singled him out as missing.

Despite her decision not to have her son participate in virtual schooling, Gretchen found that racism directed at her son continued in the virtual classroom.

Lucia also experienced the targeting of her son for disciplinary action. Lucia is a Latina stay-at-home mom with several children. She said that some other students were logging on to her high school son's Zoom account and saying profanities as well as cheating on assignments. This prompted a call from her son's teacher and the dean of students. She pointed out that:

My son, some of the other students that was in his classroom or in the school, they'd be getting on Zoom and they'd be saying that they're my son. They be signing in with my son's name and then start screaming profanities, copying each other's work. And then I get a call that my son doing this and my son doing that. And I told the teacher and I told the dean of students, "How's my son doing all this and the Chromebooks are by me downstairs? The phone is downstairs and my son is asleep. And my son don't talk like that. He don't use profanities and he would not disrespect no adults like that."

After speaking with the dean of students and the teacher, she got another call. She said:

And then she called me again, the English teacher, and I'm like, "You're calling me about this stuff that my son is not even doing, that other students are doing, but you don't call me back when I'm asking you that my son is confused, he don't what he is supposed to do so he need help?"

Lucia was upset because her son was struggling with his work and she would have liked the teacher to address that, but instead was calling her about disciplinary issues that she knew her son was not involved with because she kept his computer downstairs with her:

So you don't call me to help my son, but you call to tell me that my son was on Zoom when my son was asleep the whole time. And he didn't have a computer or a phone and he was asleep and I had both of those. And then about copying somebody else's work, gone and find out, my son didn't even do that lesson yet. He was still asleep. He was going to do it when he wake up. So that's the biggest problem I have, with that one school.

Lucia felt that her son was being unfairly targeted for disciplinary issues by his teacher and said that her children were not doing Zoom lessons at the time of the interview.

In another case, a Black grandmother was contemplating homeschooling her granddaughter even after remote schooling ended based on her interactions with her teacher before and during remote learning. Like other Black mothers, Felicia experienced conflict with a teacher during and before the pandemic. Benson (2018), Dill (2015), and Mazama and Lundy (2014) reported that African-American parents are increasingly choosing to homeschool out of a belief that the education system is not properly educating African-American children. Felicia has been taking

care of her granddaughter, Sadie, who is now in the third grade, since she was 1-month old. She is retired from her job working at a social service agency after she got hurt on the job, leaving her disabled. Sadie's experience in school before COVID-19 has been rocky. Her teacher felt that Sadie should receive failing grades. Felicia felt that Sadie's teacher was at fault for her educational problems. She claimed that Sadie's teacher is "too old" and fails to redirect her when she gets distracted from her work at school:

Her teacher, the problem, it's almost like a blessing that she came home because her teacher was basically too old to deal with Sadie. Sadie needs redirecting and this teacher has no patience with her. She basically was failing. Sadie was tested and they didn't find anything wrong with Sadie and I had told them, I said, "Well, I felt like her teacher was too old." The woman who tested her said, "Ditto." So everybody was in agreement that this lady was too old to be teaching these kids but I'm paying for Sadie to go to a private school and the teacher was not up to standards. It was almost like a blessing that she came home because she's getting D's across the board and it's not Sadie. That's not fair.

Felicia's experience with Sadie's teacher combined with her experience of overseeing Sadie's education at home during the pandemic has made her think that maybe homeschooling is a long-term solution for Sadie. As a retired grandmother, Felicia experienced neither role strain nor role conflict, making the teaching role a pleasant one to take on without burnout. Felicia talked about what has made the experience she has had while overseeing Sadie's education at home a positive one. She said:

The fact that she wants to do it. I think that's the biggest. She was always, "Ugh." And now she's, "No, I got this." I was like, "Wow." I think that was an eye opener for me because she really does ... She wants to show me she got this and I think that was ... The greatest thing for me is, like I said, even if she didn't do it, the fact that she tries. If she couldn't get it, the fact that she's trying. You know what I'm saying? I'm seeing for myself, "Okay, that's good." Like I said, we read together and she's really ... Like, this book is a little advanced but she's got it. She's breaking the words down. And then she'll ask after she breaks it down, I don't say anything and she'll go, "But what did that mean?" I go, "Oh, okay." You know what I'm saying? It's things like that. She's asking more questions. Like I said, I'm very, very happy because I need her to do that.

When asked if Sadie will have a different teacher in the fall when she goes back, Felicia responded, "I don't think I'm sending her back."

Hazel is an African American mom who was working from home as a family care planner. She said she wishes that remote schooling "could go on forever," although she has had problems with the school during the pandemic. She explained:

I've had issues with the school. I put it out there. I've had issues where I felt like ... Well, it ain't a feeling, it's facts ... that she did not get the credit that she deserved for some of her assignments or I've done the assignments with her. I know good and well she did it. I know she handed it in and then she was forced to redo it or didn't get the credit for it. So I'm right here. I send screenshots. I follow up with the email. I'm the



type that'll say, "Did you get it?" And I need for you to text me back or email me back and say, "Yes, I got it." So what's her grade now? And this is what it is. This is what I've been having to do. But this works for me, because I'm not playing anymore.

Hazel was in regular communication with her daughter's teachers, and her teachers were more responsive since remote schooling started. What Hazel liked about remote schooling is what she calls "documentation." During remote schooling, when she engaged with teachers, they returned her emails. She indicated:

So now it's expected. Now, that's just what it is and needs to happen and it makes it easier. But before, I'm sending emails, I'm sending... I'm making calls and when you don't get follow-up, you start to feel some type of way as a parent. I'm that parent that's front and center. And when there was no follow-up or if I talk to you and everything is good and then when you get a report card, she failed. Like really? You never told me she was even behind in anything. Or it took for me to call you to ask about an incident or a jacket that I just bought and where is it? Oh, she hasn't been doing work in three weeks. Really? It took for me to call about a jacket for you to tell me she ain't did work in three weeks? That don't make sense.

Before the pandemic Hazel found that teachers were not responsive to her as a parent. According to Hazel, "documentation" during COVID allowed her to keep better tabs on how her daughter was doing in school and to provide better assistance to her daughter.

Many times, different strands of identity, such as race, class, and gender, come together to produce a unique experience that is not about either race, class, or gender, but rather is about all three identities. Taraji is a working-class black mother who was also an essential worker during the pandemic, working at a deli counter for 3 hours a day on weekdays. She previously worked 8 hours a day on weekdays, but her hours were cut short due to COVID-19. Because Taraji was working, her 6th grade daughter did her work independently. Because of her work schedule as an essential worker, and the related role conflict, she was not closely monitoring her daughter's school work. As Bruhn and Oliviera (2022) note "for low-income women... balancing hourly, often inflexible work and caretaking responsibilities for their children... involves difficult trade-offs leaving them struggling to be the mothers they want to be – and the mothers society expects them to be." Then, she received a letter from her daughter's teacher saying that her daughter was not doing her work. This required Taraji to get more involved in her daughter's schoolwork. At the time of the interview Taraji was making sure that her daughter did the work. At least one teacher called her every day to make sure her daughter has completed the work. About this Taraji said:

She was missing some work in the beginning and she's catching up on a lot more now. Cause we, like I said, now we're reporting to, she has to report to me and I'm reporting to her teachers.

Taraji's experience as an essential worker of having her hours cut during the pandemic led her to emphasize the importance of schooling for her daughter more as Taraji's lived experience during the pandemic revealed a lack of opportunities for people without higher education. For Taraji, her experience during COVID of working and educating her daughter remotely was linked to her identities around race, class, and gender.

Not all parents of children of color reported problematic communication with their children's teachers. Evelyn, a Black mom who is unemployed and on disability, was in contact with her child's teacher 2 to 3 times a week during remote schooling. When asked what the experience was like for she stated:

They're great teachers. They're really, really great, very supportive, and they love Faith, they love my little girl. And I wouldn't trade them in for no other teachers, they're great. And they're still, in spite of this pandemic, they're still putting their self out there beyond the job, to reach out to the students, and do what a good person would do, as a person or a parent. Because a lot of those teachers, I'm quite sure they're parents, and stuff like that, and they just go beyond the job, and I really respect that wholeheartedly.

Despite some positive experiences among parents of children of color, they were more likely to report problematic interactions with teachers. The experiences of these parents bring forth the idea that racial inequities that their children experienced in the classroom may persist in remote education. While mothers of children of color intensified their motherhood during the pandemic, they experienced racism in the process, not experienced by mothers of White children.

Experiences of caregivers of children with disabilities in remote education

Mothers of children with disabilities reported that their children also had a particularly difficult time adapting to remote education. Some were unable to get equivalent school-based services during remote education as in the time before COVID. Thus, they had to work closely with children in a way that was often incompatible with a simultaneous shift and created role conflict. Lauren's 5th grade daughter, Melissa, has ADHD and was receiving services through school and noted:

So, Melissa has an IEP (Individualized Education Program). She has ADHD, and she has a very tough time focusing. And having her now move her education to the home and have me be the teacher is the worst possible situation she could be in for her learning disability. She just wants to quickly rush through and get it done, just pick any answer so she can move on and go outside, play, hang out, whatever. It was very difficult in the beginning because I was getting frustrated.

Lauren found that she could not work while her daughter was doing her schoolwork:

I would not have her do school work when I was working because she always needs me. I tried. I said, "Go up in your room. Go take your computer to your desk and try it on your own." "I can't. I can't do it. I need you." So I gave up on that and I said, "Fine. Just go do whatever you want for an hour. This is your break." And then I would be able to get back to it. But she would take the laptop and keep coming in the office. "What about this? What about this? What about ..." It was just constant, constant, constant.

Lauren, as a way to manage her role conflict and the extra work that teaching her daughter entailed, decided that she would dedicate every day from noon until 2 p.m. working closely with her daughter and spend the rest of the day on her own work. This worked out well and over time her daughter started becoming more independent:

And as it's gone on, even with this week, she's gotten way more independent and doing much better, and actually doing her math on her own where I don't even have to go in there. Not that she's getting it right, but she's trying. To the point where she got an email from her resource teacher and her school teacher commending her, saying, "This is an amazing ..." She wrote a paragraph all on her own. I wasn't even aware of it. Submitted it and, "This is amazing. You're doing so great. You're one of the best distance learners. And you're trying so hard, and we're so proud of you." So, that was really nice to see that we're making progress. I was stressing out over it all day long because it was a lot of work for her.

Other mothers also reported working closely with children with disabilities. Gretchen, mentioned earlier, a White Mom who is a mental health consultant and who has four children, including two black school-age sons who have ADHD, faced racism from her children's teacher during Zoom meetings, but also put in extra work one-on-one with her two disabled sons. She described her situation:

I have two boys who both have ADHD diagnoses. They're also kids who have been through a lot in their life and have trauma. They're adopted, both of them, from foster care, and have had a lot of hard things happen in their lives. This is a trauma trigger for them. This experience is a trauma trigger for them. What it means to support their schooling is that both of them require completely focused, one-on-one attention to get them through every single thing that they have to do. They're not self-directed learners. They're not able to navigate the online experience, all of their instruction.

Gretchen found that she needed to work closely with her sons to get the work done and to avoid overstimulation. Gretchen was struggling with this situation, especially when she needed to balance her work with her children's education:

I cry a lot. They're the most important thing. I'm going to cry now, sorry. It's just a struggle because they're the most important thing, so my work is very... takes a back seat. I have a very family friendly employer, but that does not change my workload at all.

Gretchen did not feel like the work that the school was providing was enriching for her sons. She wanted to forget about the school's curriculum and implement her own curriculum for her sons, one that freed them from racism experienced at school and allowed a richer experience that took into account their disabilities. She said:

I feel like I really wanted to be... I actually wanted to be able to get myself to a place of being like, "Screw this online schooling thing. I'm not doing it well. It's not really educational for my kids at all." What we are doing on our own is so much richer and meaningful and more engaging. I would so much rather do that than the garbage

they're making us do. I really wanted to be that mom that was like, "Screw school. We're not going to do any of it. We're going to do our own thing." But I feel that pressure.

Although Gretchen wanted to forget about the school's curriculum and institute her own curriculum, she feared for her sons' grades and that they would slip behind in school. She explained:

I feel that sort of fear of them slipping behind, and then the fear of their grades. I feel all of that fear, so I do feel that pressure to sort of keep them up to speed and on track, and even at the beginning of this. I sort of told all their teachers that they're not going to get their stuff done until the weekend because their dad and I are both working full-time, and they need help. We won't do it until the weekend. Maybe in the evenings, but we hardly ever do it mostly on the weekends. But it makes me nervous. I get anxious when I see all of the emails and all of the videos of my screen come in about all the assignments. I start to panic. I can't...wait until the weekend, it's too much.

Gretchen said, "My kids can't learn while I'm working." Because of the amount of time her sons' education required, Gretchen felt it necessary to take time off work to help them. Because the time she worked with her sons did not allow for her to work a simultaneous shift, she experienced role conflict because of the dual demands of helping her sons and her own work. She said:

I took time off my work to keep them up to speed, because they're more important than me being professional. I have to take it and work later in the evenings, and do all the things that I'm sure a lot of people are doing to keep the balance. I definitely have kids who require a whole lot more support. I have friends who have middle school aged kids who are like, "Yeah, I tell them to go their schoolwork and they do it." I'm like, "No, that's not my life at all."

Gretchen felt that a lot of parents and children with disabilities were particularly struggling during the pandemic. She stated:

For some of the parents who have kids who are much more independent learners, who have no learning disabilities or other challenges, they are not really feeling a whole lot of pain. Because their kids are more independent and can sort of do it. But then a lot of my friends who have kids who are like my kids are really struggling. Some have just given up and are like, "Screw it."

In some cases, multiple family members were involved in overseeing education of a child with a disability. Melanie is a White mom, who is a research analyst, with two children, one of whom is a 12-year-old boy with dyslexia with a third-grade reading level who "has difficulty reading for long periods of time." Her son, Ryan, required that he be read to in order to do each assignment. The family split up this work among Melanie, her husband, and her mother, who lives in Florida and reads to Ryan over WebEx. Such an arrangement eased Melanie's role conflict somewhat. In this case, Melanie's mother is engaged in "moderately intensive grandparenting" which increased



due to remote learning (Harrington Meyer & Abdul-Malak, 2020, p. 85). About the arrangement with her mother, Melanie said:

My mother's been helping my son because of his disability for years now. She offered him a tutor years ago and I said, "No." I said, "If you're going to help my son, you're going to get on this WebEx with them and you're going to read with him." So she's been doing that for multiple years now. I think it's going on three years that they've been doing that. They just upped the schedule. They're doing it daily now instead of once a week.

Melanie's husband had to shut down his business due to COVID-19, so he was also helping their son with his work during the pandemic. Despite her mother's and husband's help, Melanie still spent a lot of time helping her son with his assignments. She estimated that she spent at least 3 hours a day working with him on his schoolwork, in addition to working full time as a research analyst. She noted:

My son takes a really long time to do his work. So I can give him an assignment, read to him what he needs to do and then he can sit on the computer trying to read it for literally hours.

In addition, Ryan sometimes got tired of doing his work and started to play video games, so Melanie had to keep checking to make sure he was doing his work, which interrupted the flow of her own work. She explained:

I have to keep going back very frequently and interrupting my day, whereas I could get more done in my day if I didn't have those interruptions.

Furthermore, Melanie's interactions with Ryan's teachers were somewhat fraught. She said:

The stressful part of overseeing that is finding out what the teachers are doing and sometimes the attitudes of the teachers come through. That's not a fun part. If a teacher emails me and says, "I haven't seen anything from your son in three weeks," it's very accusing. Like, why are you not doing it? And I had to write back and say, "He's done every assignment. We've put it here. We've put it there." They just really have to find it. So that and trying to get the communication with the teachers in a way that was conducive to working together, I think was the hardest part.

Melanie said that she feels that her son has benefitted from all the one-on-one attention he received from family members during remote education, but that she "wouldn't want to do it forever." She said, "I'm glad that my kids are home and they're safe, but it is stressful."

Mothers of children with disabilities found that the role of overseeing their children's education further intensified their mothering often leading to a situation of role conflict. They put in extra time and effort to meet their children's educational needs during the pandemic. In many cases the primary caregiver took on that responsibility, but in other cases, such as Melanie's, multiple family members shared the work of educating children.

CONCLUSION

The coronavirus outbreak led to virtual learning in the Syracuse, NY area starting in March of 2020. From April to June of 2020, we interviewed 65 parents, mostly mothers, about their experiences overseeing their children's education at home during the coronavirus outbreak. In this article we sought to expand the theory of intensive mothering to remote education during the pandemic. Mothers' experiences of working and overseeing children's education at home are in line with Sharon Hayes' description of intensive mothering. The intensive mothering ideology is child-centered in nature which deems mothers to be the essential and better caretakers than fathers. However, these practices are labor-intensive and emotionally absorbing to mothers who are having dual demands of paid work and child care in contemporary era (Hays, 1996, p. 115). Like the general public, most of the parents in our study were working and overseeing their children's education at home simultaneously or working as essential workers while their children were also learning from home. In most households, mothers were doing the bulk of overseeing their children's education even while working simultaneously.

We found that gender, race, essential worker status and whether a child has a disability were key to understanding the experiences of mothers during the COVID-19 lockdown in Central New York. Sometimes the combination of these identities come together to create a unique experience. Understanding mothers' experiences is important, even as workplaces open up and children have gone back to school. As shown in this study, mothers' work and home lives have been shaped by the experience of working and teaching their children during COVID in ways that may impact their current and future experiences.

Intensive mothering was redefined during remote education with the additional role of overseeing education added to mothers' responsibilities. We found that mothers working remotely were engaged in what we call *simultaneous shifts* of going back and forth between working and teaching their children throughout the day. Some mothers had flexibility in their jobs during the pandemic, but for some this led to a situation where they were engaged in constant work. Mothers took on multiple roles during the coronavirus outbreak, a situation that led to *role strain* putting them at greater risk of burnout (Lois, 2013). For those with less flexibility such as essential workers and mothers of children with disabilities, multiple roles were sometimes impossible to fill, leading to a situation of *role conflict* where the demands of one role make it impossible to meet the needs of another role (Hecht, 2001; Lois, 2013).

Additionally, we found that racial inequities that occur at school can persist in remote education. Mothers of children of color reported more negative interactions with teachers during remote learning than White mothers. Our findings indicate that remote education was not immune to expressions of racism that may have already been happening in the school building, but which may be less noticed when these expressions were not coming into the homes as they did during remote learning. In virtual learning mothers could hear the activities taking place in the class.

Caregivers of children with disabilities also felt additional burdens to oversee their children's education in ways that often required additional supervision and effort. Sometimes this effort fell to one primary caregiver and in other homes multiple caregivers provided extra assistance for a child with a disability.

Now that more mothers are back to work in person, employers need to think more about family friendly policies, such as flexible work hours and paid maternity leave. Child care is particularly important as mothers need childcare to get back to work. Collins (2019) has noted that the United States has a "weak public safety net" (p. 218) and some family friendly policies require state

intervention such as guaranteed parental leave, universal childcare, school schedules to match the workday, and healthcare. The state is thus also a needed player in this regard.

Women's mental health needs additional attention. Our study revealed that working mothers experienced diverse forms of stress, including the burnout and anxiety, while juggling between demands of paid labor, childcare, and child education. The implementation of more accessible and sustainable mental health services is required. In particular, remote counseling services could be made affordable for working mothers who work from home. Also, mothers' concerns are diverse ranging from a lack of personal time, parenting skills, to the change of children's attitude or their mental health. Thus, mental health intervention should also include experts in child psychology, family therapy, and social work.

The well-known sociologist, Jessica Calarco, famously said during an interview about intensive mothering during the coronavirus outbreak, "Other countries have social safety nets. The U.S. has women" (Petersen, 2020). Providing social supports for mothers during and after the coronavirus pandemic would help mothers who have left the workforce during the COVID-19 outbreak to get back into the labor market, would ease the burdens of women's second shift and would help to de-intensify motherhood in the United States. These policies would also help mothers who have remained in the workforce to experience a de-intensification of motherhood and greater sense of wellbeing.

What can COVID-19 teach us about teaching children remotely? One lesson for educators that they can take into an in-person environment is "being there"; teachers can "be there" for children and their parents through "telephone, e-mail or video-based connections" and can be "a source of significant reassurance" (Kaya & Sahin, 2021, p. 1025).³ Although discussed with children with disabilities in mind, keeping in contact with parents and students in this way is not just beneficial for children with disabilities, but could be helpful for parents with different work statuses who may be able to sneak in a Zoom meeting or quick call with a teacher during the work day more easily than meeting with a teacher in person.

There are some limitations to our approach to the research. We only interviewed people in Central New York and cannot generalize the results of our research to a larger population. Indeed, because our sample is purposive rather than representative, we cannot even generalize the results to Central New York, but only to our research sample, although we think it is likely that other localities experienced similar situations. Another limitation to our approach was that we have very few male caregivers in our sample, so we have little information on how fathers experienced work and overseeing children's schoolwork. In our study, most families were ones in which mothers were primarily overseeing children's education; however, 12 out of 64 families were ones in which couples split overseeing children's education relatively evenly. For those families we only had the mother's experience of overseeing her children's education, but it would be beneficial to hear from fathers in terms of how they manage work and overseeing their children's education. Future research should investigate fathers' experiences of the pandemic.

In conclusion, the pandemic exacerbated the intensity of mothering already taking place pre-COVID-19 as mothers struggled to balance work and overseeing their children's virtual schooling. The ensuing role strain and role conflict may have led to burnout among some mothers and an inability to balance all roles among others. Mothers of children of color experienced racism in virtual classrooms during the pandemic, while mothers of disabled children spent more time on remote schooling than other mothers.

³ Kaya and Sahin (2021) refer to "providers" rather than teachers specifically, but the same idea can apply to teachers.

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