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Mothering children who have disabilities: a Bourdieusian interpretation of maternal practices

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Abstract

In the last three decades, mothers of children who have chronic illnesses or disabilities have been studied extensively. With some notable exceptions, most research has overlooked the socio-political context of disability and has interpreted maternal behaviours and feelings in negative or psychopathological terms. In this paper we report the results of using Pierre Bourdieu's central concepts to reanalyse three independent qualitative studies focused on mothers' accounts of raising children with severe disabling conditions. We illustrate the logic of mothers' practices and conclude that they represent strategic manipulations of accessible bodily, cultural and symbolic capital consistent with the 'rules of the game' across multiple fields. Mothers struggled to establish and maintain the personhood and value of their children, and to obtain resources within a broader context of body normativeness, exclusion and inequity. This

Bourdieuian rendering of the logic of maternal practices has important implications for research and paediatric practices.



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Keywords

Bourdieu; Disability; Chronic illness; Motherhood; Parentâ€™ professional relationships

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