

# The social construction of a mother's identity amidst the confluence of motherhood discourses

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## **Abstract**

Motherhood is understood as a site of conflicting socially constructed discourses. Mothers find themselves subjected to a multitude of discourses which, when deconstructed, reveal the cultural norms and expectations of mothers, underpinned by the moral orders and values of society. This dissertation focuses specifically on the discourses about mothers whose children are considered different and in difficulty. I draw on my own experience as a mother of a child considered different and how I negotiated and narrated my identity within various culturally available discourses, a practice which allows me to be seen as populated by a multitude of selves.

In addition, the world of mothers with children considered different is opened up to our critical gaze. I discuss the way the dominant medical discourse about mothers has permeated the professions linked to children, and the possible effects this discourse has upon mothers. I describe various formulations of the medical discourse, such as lack of support and criticism, and its effects, through stories of mothers whose children have been diagnosed with the disputed learning disability Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in the French speaking region of Switzerland. Mothers negotiate and narrate their identity through positive re-storying and acts of resistance.