

CULTURE, SHAME,
AND MOTHERHOOD



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INTRODUCTION

- Please select 5 to 10 images from the images presented that you feel best represents what it is to be a good mother.



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- Why did you chose these images?
- What do these images mean to you?

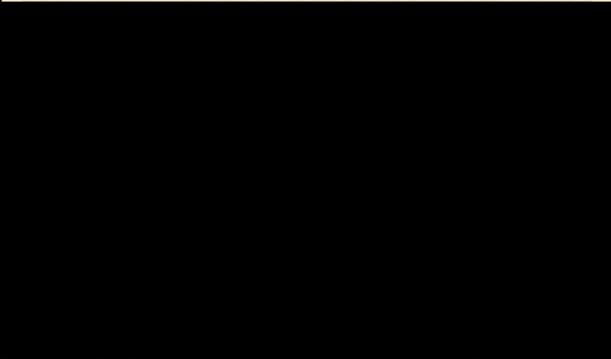


VIDEO

As you watch this video notice who it affects you. This can be repulsion, excitement, sadness, longing, boring.... Simply track how you are being affected.



VIDEO



VIDEO - JOURNAL

- In what ways do you feel like you *are not* living up to these images?



MOTHERHOOD IDENTITY

How a mother builds her identity

- Pregnancy - a period of time when they imagine who they are going to be as a mother
- Acquaintance - learning and physical restoration (2 to 6 weeks)
- Moving to a new normal (2 to 4 months)
- Achievement of the identity (around 4 months)



MOTHERHOOD - DEFINED

- In the achievement of maternal identity, the mother has established intimate knowledge of her infant such that she feels **competent** and **confident** in her mothering activities and feels love for her infant; she has settled in. A new normal has been reached in her relationships and her family. The woman experiences a transformation of self in becoming a mother, as her self expands to incorporate a new identity and assumes responsibility for her infant and her infant's future.



MATERNAL COMPETENCE

- The Mother can perform the activity regardless if she believes that she can or that she is performing the activity good enough.



MATERNAL COMPETENCE

- Confidence means that the mother believes that she can perform the function/task
- The belief is subjective
- This subjectivity is fluid - it can come and go



MATERNAL IDENTITY

- Subsequent research has shown that some women do continue to work building their identity until the child is 16 years old



SOCIAL INFLUENCES

- During pregnancy magazines and media start to inform mothers of their roles and responsibilities
- During the acquaintance stage, it has been shown that mothers seek models and closely adhere to these models until they find their own way.



SOCIAL INFLUENCES

- During the beginning phases of the development of the maternal identity, it has been shown that mothers are most susceptible to social influences



SHAME AND MOTHERHOOD

- Culture has a long history of shaming mothers for not doing the "right thing."
- Currently there are a lot of ideologies that make strong claims about how mothers should be with their child.
- Attachment Parenting, Simplicity Parenting, Free-Range Parenting, Natural Parenting, Baby-Wise Parenting, Unparenting Parenting...



SHAME AND MOTHERHOOD

- Shame can come from an external evaluation of how one is doing as a parent
- Shame can come from an internal evaluation of how one is "stacking up" to the prescribed way of performing a task



RESEARCH METHODS USED

- Imaginal Inquiry
- Qualitative approach
- Believes in evoking experiences as a way to solicit a person's authentic perspective
- Begins with evoking, expressing, interpreting, and then integrating
- Data was analyzed using the condensation and narrative analysis



PARTICIPANT SCREEN

- 45-minute interview using a modified Maternal Confidence Questionnaire
- Mothers were selected because they:
 - Indicated low confidence in 2 or more areas of task performance
 - Received their parenting information from books, tv, or internet...



METHOD

- Showed them the video we watched and had them collage
- Then showed them video clips from current professionals
- After each video clip mothers were given the opportunity to express how they were affected



INTEGRATION

- Co-researchers discussed how they were affected
- Transcribed the recording and looked for themes
- Presented the themes to the participants and solicited their feedback



FINDING ONE:

Loss of the Maternal Line

- Mothers stated that they craved knowledge about how to care for their child[ren].



FINDING ONE

Loss of the Maternal Line

- “I think that so much has changed over the generations. We can’t maintain this maternal line that you are talking about. I can’t ask my mom, ‘Hey Mom, when did you give me my first cell phone?’ There are so many things like that. You really can’t. Information has changed...things are toxic now that weren’t toxic before. I think that really kills the maternal line.”



LOSS OF THE MATERNAL LINE

“My mom [n]either, but she was having all these experts telling her to leave my brother and I to cry or we are manipulating her...Just like watching all these experts back to back, I have heard all of these things, and they have impacted me as a parent. It makes me feel kind of sad that I need all these experts that I don't even know. I don't know their motivations, [but] they are the ones who have shaped my parenthood. It is not my family, my own mother, - it is not a loving circle guiding me and showing me - I don't even know...I wonder what role they are breaking up the generations.”



FINDING TWO

Are You My Mother?

With the loss of the maternal line, media, books, blogs, and a barrage of professional advice can become many mothers' surrogate Mother.

“I am really grateful to have all these resources...I get my information from books about attachment parenting, nutrition, and the culture at large informs me.”

“I connect with a lot of it...because that [the images in the video] is the mom I want to be.”

After the attachment video, a mother responded that she had spent so much time in reading that stupid, f...ing book, I stayed up worrying about how the process was going to work. You [the book] told me to try this thing, and I did, and when it didn't work



FINDING THREE

I am not the Martha Stewart of Motherhood

As Mothers interact with external sources of information, instead of gaining confidence in their abilities to care for their children, they may paradoxically experience a fundamental decrease in their confidence.



FINDING THREE

Not the Martha Stewart of Motherhood

- I am not living up to the image of a loving relationship with my own family, or the image of Maggie Gyllenhall, who portrays an image of a mother who is very confident and self-secure which seems to spill over onto her children..
- This work was really more about self-esteem and growing self-esteem. From the first time we met, a lot of my self-esteem was based on this unobtainable image of self-esteem. I kept feeling horrible, like a failure that I couldn't do the thing in those images...



FINDING THREE

- I know with a lot of these videos, I just feel bad. This is what works and when you try it, and it doesn't work, then I ask myself, 'What is wrong with me?'
- I do feel like I have ended up in a place where I am not successful
- I just want the feeling that I am doing a good job. I just hearing the experts and what they are doing to make me so f...cking hard on myself.



FINDING FOUR

When the Bough Breaks

- When Mothers do experience a decrease in their confidence to meaningfully care for their children, they adapt their behaviors in ways that can lead to potentially negative outcomes
- They found themselves at a loss as to how to creatively improvise solutions to problems and to how to parent as they would naturally.
- They attempted to try harder, which lead to a paucity of self-care.
- On an emotional level, mothers experienced fatigue and emotional distress. They feel confined to just being a mother, and feel such a level of ambivalence towards their children that they have the fleeting sensation of not wanting to be a mother any more.