

The Gender Dialectic in Mothers and Daughters' Relationships

Authors : Ronit Even Zahav

Abstract : Objectives: Mother-daughter relationships are often portrayed as one of the most constitutive ties that shape women's identities throughout their lives. Yet, to the best of author's knowledge, only few studies examine mother-daughter relationships in adulthood in the context of cross-cultural transition. Most of them focus on the mother-daughter relationship among one origin group. Hence, the existing knowledge about these relationships in adulthood, in the context of intercultural transition and encounters between different cultures, remain limited. Based on a critical feminist approach critical and cultural perspectives the current study focuses on a cross-cultural comparison of adult mother-daughter relationships among three groups of origin: Ethiopia, Russia, and Israel. The study aimed to: Explore the voices of women participating in a mother-daughter discourse in the context of gender and ethnicity; examine the differences in the mother-daughter relationship through number of factors (e.g. expectations of similarity and difference, perceptions of gender roles, gender identity, emotional closeness, sharing and stress) and finally, to develop a gender informed tool for understanding the gender dialectic in mother-daughter relationship in the context of cross cultural transitions. Method: 37 dyads of mothers and adult daughters participated in a qualitative study. A semi-structured interview was conducted that included questions about socio-demographic characteristics, language proficiency, social distance, closeness, emotional stress, and expectations of similarity and difference in mother-daughter relationships. Results: Analysis of the findings yielded three relationship patterns of gender dialectic and expectations of similarity and difference that characterize the groups of origin. Ethiopian mothers reported more sharing their daughters, fewer expectations of similarity, and felt more stress in the relationship compared to women from the two other origin groups. Conclusions: The study highlighted the impact of intercultural transition and social exclusion on mother-daughter relationships in adulthood in the context of the gender dialectic and women's status in society. The presentation will explore the findings that were brought up by participants. The discussion will focus on the practices related to gender dialectic and intersecting inequalities regarding diverse groups and discuss gender development reducing inequalities and promoting empowerment to transform oppressive conditions.

Keywords : gender informed perspectives, gender dialectic, mother-daughter relationships, multiculturalism

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