

The Mask of Motherhood a Changing Identity During the Transition to Motherhood

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Abstract : Childbirth is a life-changing event, a psychological transition for the mother that must be viewed in a social context. Much has been written and documented regarding the preparation for birth and the immediate postnatal period, but the full psychological impact on the mother is not clear. One aspect of the transition process is Identity. Depending on a person's worldview, the concept of identity is viewed differently; the nature of reality and how they construct knowledge influence these perspectives. Becoming a mother is not just an event but a process that time and experience will help to shape the understanding of the woman. To explore the emotional and psychological aspects of first-time mother's experience during the transition to new motherhood. To identify factors affecting women's identities in the period of 36 weeks gestation to 12 weeks postpartum. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used. It explores how these women make sense of and give meaning to their experiences. IPA is underpinned by 3 key principles: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiographics. A purposeful sample of 10 women was recruited for this longitudinal study, to enable data to be collected during the transition to motherhood. Individual identity was interpreted and viewed as developing in response to changing contexts, such as the birth event becoming a parent, enabling one to construct one's own sense of a meaningful life. Women effectively differentiated themselves from their personal and social identities and took responsibility for their actions. Identity is culturally and socially shaped and experienced, though not experienced similarly by all women. The individualized perspective on identity recognizes that (a) social influences are seen as external to the individual and (b) the view that social influences are, in fact, internalized by the individual.

Keywords : motherhood, transition, identity, IPA

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