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Pictorial Phenomena Expressing Maternal Representations of First-Time Expectant Mothers Demonstrating Signs of Depression

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The assumption that an artistic expression enables the connection between an individual's internal and external worlds and hence opens a window to the world of the artist's internal representations, lies at the heart of an emerging research field that deals with art-based assessments. The present study forms part of this important field. By using drawings of mother-infant relationship and follow-up interviews, it examines the general effect of divorce on the experience of parenthood, specifically on maternal representations in first-time expecting mothers who have divorced parents. Fifteen women, all of whom have divorced parents and were in their third trimester of their first pregnancy, participated in this study. An analysis of the interviews was conducted according to the principles of Grounded Theory and the drawings were analyzed according to the principles of the phenomenological approach. The findings are grouped into three main themes: (1) The mother's experience of her childhood under the shadow of the difficulties in her parents' relationship and during their divorce. (2) The woman who raises her inner child as well as her fetus. (3) Aspects of holding and protection while looking back at a childhood overshadowed by divorce, and looking forward towards future parenthood.

Keywords: Parenting, Maternal representations, Mother-infant relationship drawings, Divorce.

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