

## The Relationship Between Selected Daydreaming Patterns of Primigravidae Women During Pregnancy and Women's Perceptions of their Babies Within One Month Postpartum

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**Abstract:** None available.

**Full Text:** During the process of becoming a mother, a woman experiences rapid and profound changes in the totality of her perception and definition of self in relation to others. Historically, the time immediately preceding and subsequent to birth has been viewed as a phase of reorganization of patterns for facilitating interaction between mother and child (Escalona, 1949, 1968; Josselyn, 1948; Sontag, 1941). Motherhood refers to a holistic relationship of mother and child which begins with conception. As the mother's bodily changes become more pronounced and there is continued validation of the baby's presence, the mother becomes more introspective; focusing more on herself and her role as mother (Rubin, 1970). Since pregnancy is a critical period during which a pregnant woman's first relationship with her unborn baby occurs through fantasy, an investigation was warranted to determine if prenatal fantasies are related to the mother's subsequent perception of the infant. Further, it would be important to health professionals if fantasies bear any relationship to developmental processes. Purpose The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between three daydream patterns of women during the third trimester of pregnancy and women's perceptions of their babies within one month post partum. REVIEW OF LITERATURE Klaus and Kennell (1976) reported that after quickening, a woman will usually begin to have fantasies about what the baby will be like, attributing personality characteristics to the baby, and developing feelings of attachment. A major goal of most women is the delivery of a normal child. Yet, most pregnant women have fears that the infant may be abnormal or reveal some of their own inner weaknesses. Pregnancy is a critical period in the maturation and personality integration of the woman. It is a period where residual unsettled conflicts from previous developmental phases emerge to the surface and an upheaval of psychological processes occur (Bibring, 1959; Bibring, Dwyer, Huntington and Valenstein, 1961; Rose, 1961). Although emphasis has been placed on the obvious physical changes occurring during pregnancy, recent studies suggest that dreams and fantasies reflect evidence of dramatic changes occurring in the inner experience of the pregnant woman (Colman & Colman, 1973). A longitudinal study of mothers' perceptions of their neonates, begun by Broussard in 1963 (Broussard, 1964), indicates that a mother's perception of her child at one month of age is related to the child's subsequent development. The mother's negative perception of her child at one month of age was predictive of the probability of mental disorders at ages 4-12 (Broussard & Hartner, 1979, 1971), disorders which persisted to ages 10 and 11 years among first-born children (Broussard, 1976). The study further suggests that a mother's earliest perceptions of her infant are based on fantasy (Broussard & Hartner, 1971). The relationship between the mother and her unborn baby is an intense interaction that is developing in the absence of explicit knowledge about it. Developing a picture of what the infant will be like is a fundamental need of pregnant women which in part is met through daydreaming (Rubin, 1970). Brazelton and his associates (1974) suggested that in a 'good' interaction, mother and baby synchronize with each other from the outset and that pathways must be set up in intrauterine life, ready to be developed by the mother immediately after birth. Studies have revealed that daydreams are manifestations of current concerns (Klinger, 1971). The patterns have been identified as productive, nonproductive and dysphoric. Daydreaming is defined as a shift of attention away from an ongoing mental task or from some perceptual response to external stimuli to some internal stimuli. Nonproductive daydream patterns are characterized by mindwandering feelings of boredom and distractibility. Dysphoric daydreaming patterns are characterized by guilt, fear of failure and hostile wishes. Visual imagery and a

preference for ideational kinds of activities or work are characteristics of the productive daydreaming pattern (Giambra, 1974, 1977-78, 1978; Singer and Antrobus, 1963, 1972; Starker, 1974). In this study, maternal daydream patterns during pregnancy were viewed as representative of the discord-harmony pattern of a woman's perception of her baby. It was postulated that a maternal characteristic related to the child's behavior is the mother's prenatal expectations of what the baby will be like. These expectations, manifested through daydreaming, may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. A mother's expectations about the mother-infant interaction can produce maternal and infant behavior that will fulfill her expectations. These expectations may include both positive (harmonious) and negative (discordant) themes. These themes are manifested through the daydream which is a form of fantasy production. To date, few studies have been conducted that examine the nature of fantasies of pregnant women and none have studied the relationship that these fantasies may have to the mother's perception of her child. This study was designed to investigate the relationship between the three daydream patterns of women during the third trimester of pregnancy and women's perceptions of their babies. In a later study done by Giuliani (May 1985) on the relationship between prenatal ego identity in primiparous women and the perception of the neonate at one month of age, she found that subject's prenatal ego identity scores correlated significantly ( $r > .05$ ) with their scores on the Your Baby Component of the tool used in this study to measure mother's perceptions. Her study also utilized the prenatal and postnatal biographic data forms of the present study. Based on the theorem of this study, that maternal daydreams during the third trimester of pregnancy are predictive of the discord-harmony patterns of a woman's perception of her newborn baby, the following was postulated: Pregnant women with productive patterns will develop behaviors essential to maintain the complex interactional process with the infant. Their prenatal expectations will have harmonious themes and be manifested in the form of productive daydreams. They will continuously revise their expectations based on input from their infants and this will lead to more realistic or harmonious perception of the infants. If daydreams are productive, these women will perceive their babies' behavior as better than the average baby's. Pregnant women with nonproductive or dysphoric daydream patterns will develop behavior that will impede the interactional process with the neonate. Their prenatal expectations will have discordant themes and be manifested in the form of nonproductive or dysphoric daydreams. Their expectations will be revised in view of the input of information from the environment, e.g., the infant, and this will lead to discordant, distorted perceptions or irrational interpretation of their babies' behavior. If daydreams are nonproductive or dysphoric these women will not perceive their babies' behavior as better than the average baby's.

**METHOD** The sample included 68 mother-infant couples from the Long Island area of New York State. Selected daydreaming patterns of primigravidae women were measured by a 72 item questionnaire developed from subscales of Singer's (1972) Imaginal Processes Inventory (IPI) administered during the third trimester of pregnancy. Women's perceptions of their babies were measured by Broussard's Neonatal Perceptual Inventory (NPI) administered to the subjects within one month post partum. The NPI instructs the mother to "compare your idea of the 'average' with 'your baby' on items of crying, feeding, elimination, sleeping and predictability."

**RESULTS** The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was computed to determine the correlation between daydream patterns and the women's perceptions of their infants. It was found that the nonproductive and dysphoric daydream patterns correlated significantly,  $p < .05$ , with a negative maternal perception of the infant by one month of age. For example, women whose responses indicated they were highly distractible or irritable scored as having nonproductive daydreams. Dysphoric daydreams were expressed in themes of guilt, hostility, or disaster, such as "I'm always afraid of being caught doing something wrong." These are in contrast to productive daydreams illustrated by the response, "A happy daydream helps me snap out of a spell of unhappiness." The productive daydream pattern showed no significant correlation with the women's perceptions of their infants by one month of age. A significant correlation,  $p < .05$  was found between the dysphoric daydream pattern and a high score on the Your Baby form of the NPI which reflects the mother's perception of the magnitude of problems with her baby. Through analysis of the data from two questions on a self-report form using the Pearson Product Moment

Correlation, it was found that the dysphoric daydream pattern correlated significantly, ( $p < .05$ ) with postpartum blues and depression. Further analysis revealed that postpartum blues and depression correlated significantly, ( $p < .05$ ), with negative maternal perceptions of the infant by one month of age. DISCUSSION Data analysis did not support the postulation that women with productive daydreams would express a sense of harmony with their unborn infant. In fact, there was no correlation with either a positive or a negative perception of the baby. It is possible that the IPI tool is more sensitive to the negative characteristics in the discordant daydream pattern. Also, as a possible artifact of the tool the subscales selected to represent the productive daydreaming pattern may not have measured the full extent of behavior indicating a feeling of harmony during pregnancy. Yet another possibility of why productive daydreams did not correlate with mothers' perceptions of their infants is because productive daydream patterns during pregnancy may facilitate conditions for women to perceive their babies as they will be realistically in the postpartum period-not better or worse than the average baby. According to Mahrer (1978) and Galinsky (1980), parents develop and rehearse images to help them prepare for childbearing. During pregnancy they are "brilliant craftsmen," they fashion very precise conditions that encompass the physical infant so that when born their babies have the "right" behaviors. Parents feel success only when reality becomes congruent with the image; either the images are modified to be consistent with reality, or behavior is modified to reach toward an image. Parents who are unable to modify either their image of behavior or the behavior of their infant, may develop anger, depression and/or other problems. Pregnant women with productive daydreams problem solve in anticipation of dealing with early developmental characteristics and needs of their newborn infants. When the child is born, these mothers continuously revise their expectations according to the input from the infant and their other interactions in their family and broader environments. This process leads to more realistic or predictable expectations of the infant, although these perceptions are not necessarily synonymous with perceptions of being in harmony with their infants and the environment. Since these mothers have a fluid rather than a static image of the "average baby" to form their perceptions of their infants prenatally, the presence of a productive daydreaming pattern is not predictive of their perceptions of their infants as measured by the NPI. Productive daydreams may aid in the adaptation to anxiety-provoking stimuli by enabling the primigravida to process current problems, and to assimilate and master the novel experience of pregnancy by integrating complex mechanisms of becoming a new mother. The pregnant woman is able to cope with anticipated expectation of the stress of impending motherhood by mastering her fears and anxieties through productive daydream patterns. The findings in this study indicated that nonproductive and dysphoric daydream patterns were related to the mother's negative perception of her baby by one month of age. Negative maternal perception is related to the development of behaviors that adversely affect a child's mental health. These findings suggest that detection of this ominous process could be identified as early as the third trimester of pregnancy, thus identifying a population of women whose infants may be at high risk for developmental problems.

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