

Call for Chapters



Demeter Press is seeking submissions
for an edited collection tentatively entitled:

Mother Becoming: An exploration of matrescence

Editor: Jessie Harrold, BSc, MA

Please submit 400-500 word abstracts by: April 12, 2024

Background

Matrescence is the developmental process of *becoming a mother*. It's a seismic transformation that is biological, psychological, sociocultural, economic and spiritual in nature.

The term *matrescence* was first coined by social anthropologist Dana Raphael in 1975, who wrote "childbirth brings about a series of very dramatic changes in the new mother's physical being, in her emotional life, in her status within the group, even in her own... identity." She goes on: "the critical transition period which has been missed is *matrescence*: the time of mother-becoming. Giving birth does not automatically make a mother out of a woman. The amount of time it takes to become a mother needs study" (Raphael, 1975).

Raphael's call for the study of matrescence went relatively unheeded until reproductive psychologist Dr. Aurélie Athan unearthed the term and initiated deeper study in 2011. Since that time, matrescence – which Athan reminds us sounds like "adolescence" for good reason – has become the subject of increasing academic study and emerging popular media discourse.

Despite this, we are only just beginning to understand mothers' experience of matrescence, particularly within the modern, Western context, which often lacks cultural recognition of and social support for the significance of this transformative time. Many scholars posit, however, that deeper exploration of matrescence may lead to better support for mothers and, potentially, positive postpartum mental health outcomes as a result (Cheadle, 2018; Davis, 2023).

Mother Becoming: An exploration of matrescence invites mothers, mothercare professionals of all backgrounds, academics, artists, writers and others to contribute to the scholarship, art and storytelling shaping the emerging discourse around matrescence.

Topics of interest may include but are not limited to:

-The history of matrescence, including cross-cultural understandings of matrescence and the way the discourse around matrescence has grown in the last 5-10 years.

-Mapping matrescence. The transition to motherhood impacts every area of a mother's life, including personal identity, career, intimate partnerships, values, body image, friendships, family of origin relationships, physiology and brain chemistry and more. Rich scholarship and

narratives discussing the intricate ways matrescence shapes mothers' lives is necessary in order to more fully understand and support this transformative experience.

-The impact of pregnancy, birth and early postpartum support on matrescence. Prenatal education and support, medicalized birth, birth trauma and PTSD, postpartum support and social policy impacting new mothers all shape their experience of the coming two to three years of matrescence. What are the longer-term impacts of mothers' antenatal experience on their transition to motherhood?

-Gender and matrescence. The word matrescence implies a gendered experience. What are the nuances of gender as it relates to matrescence, and how does our current thinking about matrescence apply – or not apply – to queer and gender-fluid parents? How can “queering motherhood” support mothers of all genders to define matrescence on their own terms (Gibson, 2014)?

-A feminist exploration of matrescence, motherhood and mothering. How does the institution of motherhood shape matrescence and how does matrescence offer us the opportunity, as posited by Adrienne Rich in *Of Woman Born*, “mother against motherhood”? (1976). This exploration may be wide-reaching, covering topics from social media, “momfluencers” and the perfect mother myth to the division of household labour to the lack of mother-centred social policy, and beyond.

-Race and matrescence. Popular media discourse on matrescence has been, thus far, dominated by the voices and stories of white, Western women. How is the experience of matrescence influenced by racialized oppression? How do cultural values around, for example, work and community support (“othermothering”) impact the transition to motherhood for mothers of the global majority? (hooks, 2021; Hill-Collins, 2021)

-The intersection of matrescence and postpartum mood disorders. Which experiences of matrescence are normative and developmental, and which require clinical support? Where is the overlap between the two? Can a framework for understanding matrescence be used to treat or even be protective against postpartum mood disorders?

-Matrescence as a rite of passage. This topic may include historical and/or cross-cultural explorations of matrescence as a rite of passage as well as how a modern-day conceptualization of this rite of passage allows for experiences of grief and liminality to be normative aspects of the transition to motherhood.

-Matrescence and spiritual growth. Research by Dr. Aurélie Athan, corroborated by scholarship in positive psychology and post-traumatic growth, posits that matrescence can be a time of spiritual growth and awakening (Athan, 2005; Taubman-Ben-Ari, 2009). How do we nurture the power and potential of matrescence?

-Matrescence and ecological awakening. Preliminary research suggests that matrescence may also impact mothers' awareness of their location within and responsibility toward the animate world (Davis, 2023). How can this be supported and what impact does it have on the wider world?

-Revolutionary matrescence. If matrescence is filled with the potential for spiritual growth, ecological awakening, the questioning of social norms and other positive transformations, how, then, can more fully understanding and supporting matrescence impact the wider world?

-Practical matrescence support. How can practitioners, families, communities, organizations and institutions better support mothers during matrescence?

Submissions may include academic essays, personal essays, creative works of fiction and poetry, art, photography and hybrid genres.

About the Editor

Jessie is a coach and doula who has been supporting women to navigate rites of passage and other radical life transformations for over fifteen years. She is the founder of the internationally acclaimed matrescence support program *MotherSHIFT*, as well as *The Village*, its sister program for postpartum support professionals. Jessie also works one-on-one with women and mothers in her practice and facilitates workshops, rituals, retreats and wilderness quests. She has a Masters of Health Promotion and a B.Sc. in Neuroscience, and her research on women's experiences navigating health and well-being has won multiple awards and been published in peer-reviewed journals internationally. Jessie's writing and work on matrescence and rites of passage has also been featured in *International Doula Magazine*, *Spirituality & Health*, *Today's Parent*, *Green Parent*, *Mother.ly*, *Expectful*, *She Explores* and more. She is the author of *Mothershift: Reclaiming Motherhood as a Rite of Passage*, *Project Body Love: My quest to love my body and the surprising truth I found instead*, and the host of the *Becoming Podcast*.

Submission Guidelines:

Abstract (400-500 words) with a 75-word bio (single document) by April 12, 2024. Acceptance will be made by May 31, 2024. Completed works (up to 6,500 words double-spaced pages, 12-point font, in MLA reference format for citation are due January 10, 2025. Please note that acceptance will depend on the strength and fit of the final piece. Also please note that papers will be received and reviewed in English. Prospective authors who may have limited experience with publishing in English are strongly encouraged to seek the assistance of a technical editor before submitting proposals and papers, as language difficulties may be raised as a concern during the external review process.

Please send inquiries and abstracts to jessie@jessieharrold.com.