Singing Motherhood: First time mothers’ experiences singing to their infant  
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Abstract

Mothers have sung to their children for centuries. Because singing provides an opportunity for self-expression and connection with others, understanding how first time mothers experience this age old practice might help us understand how singing facilitates a woman’s developing relationship with herself as a mother and with her new infant. To date, little research exists on this particular function and experience of first time maternal singing. In this qualitative phenomenological study, 16 first time mothers with infants one year and under were interviewed about their experiences singing to their babies and were also asked to write a one-time diary entry following their interviews. This process was two fold: it provided an opportunity to understand how mothers experienced singing as part of their developing relationship with themselves as new mothers. It also provided an opportunity to learn how mothers experienced singing as part of their task of bonding with and caring for their babies. It was found that infant-directed singing carried out 5 tasks for new mothers in relation to their infants and themselves. These were: tasks of connection, engagement, affect regulation for mother and baby, education pertaining to culture and language enhancement, and an opportunity to reflect upon different periods of a new mother’s life, from adulthood to childhood. The conclusion of the study hypothesizes that the consolidation of these 5 tasks of singing, contributes to helping a woman arrive at her own unique mothering identity.