

# APPLICATION OF MERCER'S, 'BECOMING A MOTHER' (BAM) THEORY IN POSTNATAL NURSING CARE

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Ramona Mercer's maternal role attainment (MRA) theory is a midrange theory that can be used in postnatal care from the first day to one year. This theory has been replaced by becoming a mother (BAM) theory, by the theorist later on. While applying this theory in caring for postnatal mothers, nurses can help normal, adoptive or fostering postnatal mothers to develop attachment to the infant. Mothers can enhance mother-infant relationship (Bonding) and competency in caring tasks for the infant. A woman develops maternal role identity as she becomes a mother by fostering the process of becoming a mother.

Basic Concepts and relationships presented by the theory:

**Human Being:** Mercer describes human being as seeing oneself as an individual and separates itself from other roles. Having self confidence and self-esteem are factors that play into motherhood.

**Environment:** Mercer describes environment as it has an impact on the maternal role. There are issues outside the family that will impact how the maternal role is played. There will be settings and changes that happen to put stress on the maternal role and there has to be a balancing act.

**Health:** Mercer defines health as a background of the mother's and father's health history then as it relates to the future children they might have. When it comes to bringing a child into the world there are a lot of factors that need to be addressed. What happens during childbearing can affect the child's health.

**Nursing:** Mercer describes nurses as a very important part of the maternity cycle. Nurses have a duty to promote

growth and well-being in others while educating families on what should be done before, during, and after the maternal cycle.

## Stages of Maternal Role Attainment- Becoming a Mother

**1. Anticipatory:** First is the "commitment, attachment, and preparation" stage during pregnancy when the mother makes psychological adjusts and prepares for the expectations of her new role.

**2. Formal:** Second is the "acquaintance, learning, and physical restoration" stage which begins with the infant's birth when the role of mother is assumed and learned in the contexts of her social system.

**3. Informal:** Third is the "moving toward a new normal" stage in the first few months of the infant's life where the mother makes her new role fit in to her lifestyle in a personal way instead of in context with a social system.

**4. Personal:** Lastly the "achievement of maternal identity" stage when the mother internalizes her role and experiences a sense of harmony, competence and confidence which usually occurs about 4 months after birth.

The theory is tested based on "Self concept and Attachment" to an individual in relation to Human, Environment, Health & Nursing very well described in nested circles development in context or human ecology theory given by Bronfenbrenner explaining the Macrosystem, Mesosystems and Microsystem influencing an individual. ([wikipedia.org/Social\\_ecological\\_model](http://wikipedia.org/Social_ecological_model))

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