The Maturity of Mothers Raising Children with Down Syndrome in Northwest China.

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This study aimed to narrate the story of two mothers raising children with Down syndrome in the northwestern part of China. The study examines the process of growing and personalizing as a mother, which cannot be captured by focusing only on the acceptance of the disability by analyzing them from the perspective of maturity (Plath 1980).

A was born in a rural area of China in 1975, is now unemployed, and her son (2009–) is an elementary school student. B was born in 1965, has since graduated from a four-year university, and is working as an elementary schoolteacher. Her son (1998–) is an adult. The author studied how these two individuals in different social hierarchies with sons of different ages positioned themselves as mothers of children with disabilities in their own lives and how they formed their self-images in relation to others. A formed her self-image by internalizing the words and values of doctors and supporters. This study revealed that she has grown into being a mother through mutual interactions with her husband, son, son's kindergarten staff, and other mothers of children with disabilities while accepting the reality that she is a mother of a disabled child. In contrast, B formed a self-image that brought to the fore her role as a teacher by detaching herself from her role as the mother of a disabled child and achieving her career with the understanding and cooperation of her husband and mother-in-law.

This study revealed that the two individuals' objectives were not just becoming mothers of children with disabilities; rather, they sought careers as women and aimed for lives as ordinary mothers. The maturity theory that was advocated by Plath shows the importance of interacting culturally with others who are close and spending ample time interacting with them (= "consociates"; "convoys"). In contrast, maturity for the two mothers meant being released from the "mother of a child with a disability" label through interaction with multilayered others: "close others," "unclose/transient others," "others with local cultural values," and "others with global vision and knowledge."