

Mother and Daughter In-Law Relationships





Icebreaker

Let's think about our moms :)





This is my Mom!

On a sheet of paper, jot down some words
to describe your mom.

We will share out as a group after a few
minutes.



Now.... think of your
mom if she was the
mother-in-law to your
significant other.

Write down some terms that you think would
describe your mom in this role.

We will share as a group after a few minutes

Introduction to Mothers In-Law & Daughters In-Law



We all have heard the stereotype about in-laws; relationships are strained, rocky, and overall hold a certain amount of tension. This might come to mind specifically when thinking about the relationship between mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws. We are often times more familiar with the stories of problematic relationships between daughter and their mother-in-laws, but is this always accurate? What are some key determining factors of having a pleasant and happy relationship between these two women?

-What are some stereotypes about this relationship that come to mind?-

The relationship between daughter and their mother-in-laws is actually quite important to the health of the whole family, particularly as it relates to the proximity of the in-laws and the health and happiness of the relationship with them. When it comes to family owned businesses that the wife marries into, the overall satisfaction of the relationship between the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law is critical to the success of the daughter-in-law's marriage, as well as the success of the business.

Summary of Article

Let's start with the basics.



Mother-in Laws and Daughter-in-Laws: The Effects of Proximity on Conflict and Stress

Purpose:

- The purpose of this study was to examine sources of conflict between daughter and mother-in-laws among farm/ranch family businesses, and how mother/daughter-in-laws can cope with the stress of conflict.
- The study was conducted in 1985 and published in 1987 by Ramona Marotz-Baden and Deane Cowan
- Another significant factor of the purpose of this article was to identify the role proximity played in the level of conflict and stress between mother/daughter-in-laws.
- According to previous, limited research on in-law relationships, female in-laws tend to have more difficulty than male in-laws
- Most of the previous research there had been on these relationships concluded that there were many feelings of domination, interference, and meddlesome tendencies correlated. Additionally, the husbands' kin has been found to be the source of conflict more frequently than the wives' kin.
- A wife with children living near mother-in-law has been perceived to lead to more conflict.

Mothers-in Law and Daughters-in-Law: The Effects of Proximity on Conflict and Stress

Methods:

- Sample obtained from Montana Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service of Montana Farms and Ranches that were over 200 acres that were owned and operated by more than one household. Letters sent to the household weeded out participants that the study would not apply to (unmarried offspring, siblings, ect)
- A total of 55 daughter-in-laws, and 44 mother-in-laws responded to partake in the study
- Mean age of mothers was 60 years of age, and for daughters it was 31 years.
- To measure the level of conflict and conflict resolution between the two women, they were asked “When we have problems getting along together, it is usually because... What strategies have you used that were effective when you were having problems getting along?”
- Most participants identified 2 or 3 problems and strategies

Mothers-in Law and Daughters-in-Law: The Effects of Proximity on Conflict and Stress

Findings and Implications:

- The proximity of the daughter and mother-in-laws was measured by forced questions about how the daughter-in-law perceived the level of bossiness, resentment, jealousy, interference, etc. from her mother in-law, and could answer questions with “never, sometimes, often, or most of the time”
- Stress was measured in two different ways:
 - 1) how many stressful situations occurred on the farm/ranch in the last two years and how much each situation disrupted the relationship.
 - 2) A 14 item stress scale was also used to measure the degree of stress levels in the relationship. These stressors were categorized by feelings of inequity in the family, financial concerns, independence/dependance, and extended family conflict.
- Lastly, a scale to measure marital satisfaction was used between the daughter-in-law and her husband.

Conclusion of Study:



- Conflict was most commonly caused by differences in **opinions, values, and a lack of communication**. The next two leading reasons were outside stressors and negligence to the family business.
- For daughters specifically, the most common reasons for conflict were differences in opinions and values and lack of family time. Outside stressors and criticism from their mother-in-laws were the least common reasons for conflict.
- Many women, especially mother-in-laws, reported little to no conflict and that they got along just fine.
- As far as strategies, mothers reported communication to be their top solution for conflict, and daughters reported just ignoring the problem was most effective.
- Overall, important factors that aided in finding solutions for conflict were exercising respect, turning to their husbands for advise, and receiving support from their husbands
- The proximity of the home in which the mother/daughter-in-laws resided, differences in child rearing practices, and the level of interference in both home and business were other factors that contributed to significant findings

☆ ☆ Big Takeaway:

The relationships between the mother/daughter-in-laws living on a two-generational family farm/ranch was not as problematic as first expected; **in fact, the majority of the mother and daughter-in-laws included in the study reported getting along well.** However, there was still 1/3 of the participants in the study that reported conflict and issues.

Differences in values was among the top recorded stressors and reasons for conflict. Overall, this study is important to the field of psychology and mental health. When there is tension in a family, it tends to lead to broader unhappiness, which can lead to separation, and ultimately divorce can cause these family businesses to go bankrupt.



Discussion Questions

So what? What can we learn from this study?

A large white number 2 is centered over a square image. The image shows several dried, golden-brown reeds or grasses against a muted, greyish-brown background. The reeds are thin and have feathery, seed-like heads. The overall aesthetic is minimalist and naturalistic.

Let's take
some time
to discuss!



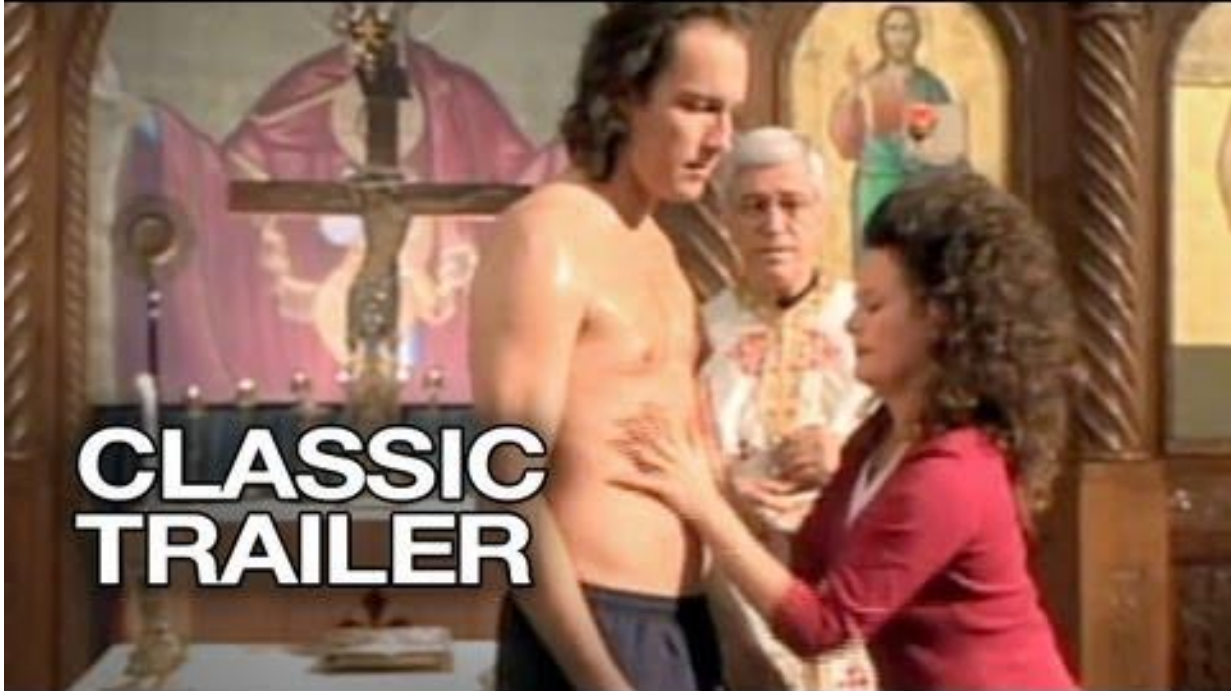
- What sort of things should we keep in mind with the age of this study? Is it still relevant?
- Why might conflict in MIL/DIL relationships have such dire effects on the family?
- In what ways have you observed things like what was seen in the study in your own families?
- How do you think the master narrative of negative MIL/DIL relationships relates to the findings of this study?

▫

Interactive Activity

Monster-in-Laws and Mother-in-Laws....

A large white number 3 is centered over a square image. The image shows several dried, feathery reeds or grasses against a muted, brownish-grey background. The reeds are light tan and have a soft, textured appearance. The overall aesthetic is minimalist and natural.

A scene from a classic film, likely "The Exorcist", showing a man in a church. The man is shirtless, and a priest in white vestments is examining his chest. A woman in a red dress is also present, looking on. In the background, there is a large crucifix and religious paintings. The text "CLASSIC TRAILER" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**CLASSIC
TRAILER**

Discussion:

- How would you describe the in-law family in this movie trailer?
- Were there any dominant characters?
- How would you feel in this situation?





Discussion:

- How would you describe the mother-in-law in this movie trailer?
- What actions do you think should have been taken differently?
- How would you feel in this situation?



Let's take
some time
to discuss!



- How has this activity helped you better understand MIL/DIL relationships?
- Can you relate anything from this activity to MIL/DIL relationships you've encountered in your own life?
- What are some major takeaways?
- How do you think this relates to the idea of the master narrative surrounding MIL/DIL relationships?