

Heisler and Ellis Reflection

In Heisler and Ellis' piece, I find a strong relation to what we have discussed in class regarding the change of interaction and living situation with extended family. As Heisler and Ellis show, there has been an increase in moving households with nuclear family, and oftentimes across state borders. This means that the extended family, in this case those who can help new mothers with the children and give advice, is now distanced from the nuclear family and therefore not nearly as available as they were in the past. When you think about being a new mother it seems like as it would be such a new and different experience, it might be incredibly overwhelming. As I would imagine, new mothers must be interested in gaining advice and wisdom from their family members before them who have already had children of their own and know a bit more about how to take care of them. So given the trend of moving away from extended family, it seems like this would absolutely create more difficulty for the new parents who may not be extremely confident in making every choice with no prior experience.

According to Heisler and Ellis, it may be difficult based on our societal norms, for a new mother to seek advice when it is not easily come by, as it may be within a family. And as western societies such as our own tend to be individualistic, it can be seen as a weakness and culturally wrong to reach out for assistance from someone outside of the family. As we learned in class, our society has moved from one where the community was all part of everyone's lives, to that which maintains private families. It seems that if we were now living in that of a public family system, these new mothers, who for whatever reason were seeking help or advice from others, would find it quite simple and painless to ask a neighbor what to do when the baby is sick or what the best way to get them to sleep through the night is. But as our society today focuses on being open, yet private, there is a stigma placed on any parent who seeks outside advice because we treat people generally as if they should be able to do everything by themselves.

Heisler and Ellis talk of the Face Negotiation Theory which explains how people use the rules of their society or environment to maintain a certain appearance in the public eye. They desire to be accepted by this society at all costs, which can be extremely difficult when you must at all times not only play by its rules but push aside your natural instinct of openness to avoid being seen negatively. And when you think about how fragile a new mother may be, taking on such a difficult new task and seeking simple assistance, it can be extremely damaging to their psyche to be treated negatively for seeking out this help when they know it may have poor effects on their acceptance into that society.

There is an ironic feature of becoming a mother in a society such as ours. While we are a private family society, we encourage mothers to take constant advice from the public. If the mother seeks out advice when it is not deemed correct to do so, she is seen negatively by the community. However, as Heisler and Ellis point out, the second a woman announces her pregnancy in our culture, she is given so much unwarranted advice that it is never-ending. It seems like people take a sort of responsibility in other's children. When we hear someone is pregnant and we are offering them advice, there is absolutely a sense of wrong on the mother's part if she does not take this advice. If her doctor wants her to give birth at the hospital, but she has always wanted a home birth, that is not longer an acceptable decision for her to make because it does not agree with

our societies general norms. While it may be safe, as far as our society has come they do not want women having babies at home, generally speaking. And although this may be in part do to the money that they must pay to give birth at a hospital, it can have a huge impact on the mother of the child to be seen as a negative influence before the child is even born. So while we want mother's to be perfect and handle things privately, our ironic society deems it inappropriate and wrong if what the society says is right is not taken in the same way by the mother.