Taking the Village Online: Mothers, Motherhood, and Social Media

Lorin B. Arnold and Bettyann Martin © 2016 Demeter Press, 180 pages, paperback, \$24.95

Available from: <https://www.amazon.com/Taking-Village-Online-Mothers-Motherhood/dp/1772580821/>

Taking the Village Online: Mothers, Motherhood, and Social Media is a gem of a book, illuminating facets of the role social media plays in informing and supporting mothers as well as the lenses it provides into shifting cultural ideologies of motherhood.

Most of today's new parents have grown up in the digital age. Pew Research Center (2017) data indicates that 86% of U.S. adults aged 18–29 years, and 80% of those aged 30–49 years, participate in at least one social media site. When a new mother joins a social media group, there's rarely a moment when a peer isn't online; she can reach out for support during those middle-of-the-night moments of loneliness and doubt and connect with a supportive peer.

Taking the Village Online provides insight on motherhood in social media from several researchers, writers, and thinkers. Amy Barron Smolinski's excellent chapter, "Boobs, Babes, and Boots: Breastfeeding Support, Facebook, and Military Mothers," describes the establishment of a closed social media breastfeeding-support network, relating how this local initiative grew into the Mom2Mom Global community. Created to address the needs military mothers learning to breastfeed and to parent far from their families and friends, the network addresses the dual need for supportive peer contact along with appropriate breastfeeding information and support.

Although Barron Smolinski's chapter is the only one that directly addresses breastfeeding, the entire book offers powerful and diverse insights. Other chapters deconstruct cultural values around motherhood (Orton-Johnson; Arnold) and dialogue narratives around stepmothers and step-mothering (Cole and Renegar).

Several chapters explore sites focused on supporting those parenting far from their community of origin (Barron Smolinsky; Veazey) and those experiencing difficult perinatal transitions (Stamm, Yu, and Kennedy) and providing parenting education through online media (Cross).

The book concludes by examining the use of social media environment both to reinforce and to foment resistance to ideologies such as intensive mothering (Valtchanov, Parry, and Glover; Goriss-Hunter; Loe, Cumpstone, and Miller).

Marc Prensky (2001) coined the terms *digital native*, to identify those individuals born and raised during computer age, and *digital immigrants*, for those who have learned the culture and language of technology as a second language. Writing for educators, Prensky points out the difficulties digital immigrant instructors encounter in teaching a digital native population.

Similarly, most of today's new mothers are digital natives, and many of those who provide lactation care are digital immigrants. This book shares the promise of social media to address the isolation of parenting and to provide lactation and parenting support to today's families, as well as some of the challenges inherent in the medium, insights of value to both digital natives and digital immigrants.

References

- Pew Research Center. (2017). *Social media fact sheet*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/>
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants part 1. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1–6. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10748120110424816>

Cynthia Turner-Maffei, MA, ALC, IBCLC, RLC, is a lead faculty member of the Healthy Children Project, Inc., where she develops and conducts training programs and research projects. She served as national coordinator of Baby-Friendly USA for 14 years, overseeing the assessment and designation of more than 100 U.S. Baby-Friendly maternity facilities. Cindy has worked as a nutritionist and breastfeeding educator in WIC and other maternal child health programs, in clinical and private practice settings as a nutritionist and lactation consultant, and as a professor at Union Institute and University. A member of breastfeeding coalitions on the regional and national level, including the US Breastfeeding Committee, she is also the author of several articles, monographs, and books, including *Continuity of Care: Best Practices in the Maternity Setting*.

National Prevention Strategy Report From HHS/Office of the Surgeon General

The Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative and Public Health has released its final report on the National Prevention Strategy, entitled *Fulfilling the Legacy*. The report is divided into the following sections:

- Key Messages: Highlights and lessons learned from the past six years.
- Overview: Assessment of the impact and reach of the Strategy and the case for an updated Strategy that reflects the experience of the last six years as well as new and reemerging public health challenges that merit a multi-sector approach.
- Recommendations for Updating the Strategy: A Call to Action identifying specific initiatives to empower communities across the nation to adopt a collaborative approach to health promotion.
- Past Actions of the Advisory Group: A review of the Advisory Group's previous recommendations, emphasizing those still relevant for use by the incoming Administration.

<https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/priorities/prevention/advisorygrp/2016-12-20-fulfilling-the-legacy-report.pdf>

Source: USBC