

Why Do Older Women Criticize Young Mothers?

Intergenerational feuding seems to be inherent to human nature. Older people complain about “kids these days.” Younger people, in turn, believe their elders don’t grasp the realities of modern life.

A recent [study](#) traced the earliest recorded complaint about the younger generation’s supposed laziness and lack of respect to the year 624 BC.

The contemporary iteration of the conflict between young and old has gotten a lot of attention recently thanks to the [viral meme “OK, Boomer.”](#) Millennials and Generation Z are using it to put down Baby Boomers for their supposed inaction on climate change, hoarding of wealth, and patronizing attitude towards the young.

But one aspect of intergenerational conflict that deserves more attention than it gets is the criticism that young mothers face from older women. This has become a regular part of my life since I gave birth to my first child in 2014.

For example, I recently attended a community event for women. We listened to a speaker and then we enjoyed some coffee. My son, who recently turned three, played peacefully by my side while I chatted with a friend. It would have been an ideal, relaxing morning were it not for the presence of a female Baby Boomer who devoted herself to nitpicking my little boy’s behavior. First, she was upset that his pants were sagging. Next, she got upset that he was scratching a fork on a cheap, foldable plastic chair. Then she pointed out that he had moved around a few cinnamon rolls on the snack table – even though that had occurred some time prior and I had intervened to stop him.

I should note that this woman was a complete stranger to me. And she never bothered to introduce herself, even though she spoke to me repeatedly.

My response was to ignore her. I am getting used to these kinds of interactions.

But sometimes I do stop and wonder why older women feel so free to criticize young mothers? By contrast, I almost never receive direct criticism from mothers my own age.

Our culture loves the term “Mommy Wars” which denotes intragenerational feuding. There is this idea that mothers with different parenting philosophies are constantly at each other’s throats. In my experience, that is not true at all.

Mothers definitely have opinions about other mothers. But most moms today take the view that modern parenting is hard. Fellow moms love their kids and are doing the best job they can to raise them right.

The issues behind the “Ok, Boomer” meme – climate change, wealth hoarding, etc. – are complex. There are arguments on both sides. But I believe that any reasonable person – of every generation currently living – can agree that raising children in America today is harder than it was in the 1970s and 1980s, when the Baby Boomers were parenting.

My mother sent my brothers and me to play outside unsupervised all day long. That’s not possible for me – or for the vast majority of millennial mothers. Society today expects kids to be supervised 24/7. There’s plenty of [examples](#) of mothers getting in trouble with Child Protective Services for leaving their kids alone for just a few minutes.

Mothers today have to shield their children from the inappropriate, disturbing content that is available via the internet. They also have to deal with society’s changing views on sexuality that are wreaking havoc on childhood. Those are

just some of the unique challenges facing millennial parents.

Last year, America's fertility rate hit an all-time [low](#). While there are many reasons for that low, it's likely in part a reflection of how hard parenting has become.

History suggests that every older generation complains about "the kids these days." But maybe today's older women could take a step back and seriously ponder the abnormal pressures faced by young mothers like me. We need support, not criticism. Let's exclude parenting from the intergenerational battlefield.

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[Image Credit: Pixabay]