



Susan McEachern - Clip 8

The Family in the Context of Childrearing

I think doing *The Family in the Context of Childrearing* was something that...that really was...was instigated because I had a desire to become a parent. I did want children in my life. I did want a family. I didn't want that experience to pass me by entirely.

... So doing the project, and looking at the history of the family, recognizing just how recent our notion of the modern family is, that this idea of family in this precise and specific mom, dad, you know, boy, girl, cat, dog, is something that is a very, very recent creation, and doesn't exist that extensively outside of western culture.

There's a multitude of ways of... of getting to a family, and unfortunately our culture seems to privilege a certain kind of way of having a family and that is I think a really negative influence.

I looked at practices of childrearing which helped me, the history of that, to help me to see that, you know, people have somehow survived a lot of ridiculous and, you know, some of them I'm sure very good, ideas about how children should be reared... and then looking at my own history... everyone in my, you know, the last generation all seem, you know, for whatever ... you know to be heterosexual, very few of them divorced, they all had a fairly, you know,

average number of children, I mean they fit the norm... and then the next generation, that all falls apart.

I guess the other factor in this work was of course the feminist analysis, the undermining of this idea that the family is always a haven...a haven in a heartless world.

I think all of that gave me a certain kind of courage, that made me feel I don't have to fit a mould quite so precisely, that there are many ways people have invented of living very full, adventurous, wonderful lives with great kids, and partners, and that's...that was a very important step for me to take.

