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Literary Analysis of Diversity in Families



There has always existed the issue of relationships within the family and their influence on a person particularly and on the society in general. The changes taking places in all the spheres of modern life concern family concepts as well, being in the constant correlation with it. The book examines the tendency of variations happening and covers the main features of the diversity of family types. The authors applied the methods of scientific analysis and comparison and proved the importance of observing the tendencies in contemporary couples by presenting evidences and time retrospective. The approach used here enables a reader to watch the common picture of changes along with particular postulates related to various kinds of families.

Chapter 1

The notion of family is recognized in the book as a very specific kind of institution. The description of it as “the most private” one is not surprising, though the differentiation between family ideals and family realities makes a reader keep a watchful eye on the further information. Obviously, each person has his or her own image of how should everything be organized in the family and creates his or her ideal picture of it. The chapter suggests that many people do not recognize the real state of affairs in their families; they often live according to their image and do not have the objectivity. They say one thing about the relationship in their families but act in the other way. So, due to this, there exist three kinds of family images: the family as haven, the family as fulfillment and the family as encumbrance (Zinn, Eitzen, & Wells, 2010).

The chapter also contains the information about how people’s behavior can vary depending on whether they are at home or in public. For many people, the family is the place where they can display their authentic



nature, which they hide or just do not show in other social institutions. Except the wrong images considered by family members about their current situations in families, they discover a number of mythical facts about the ideal family, which existed some time ago within the nation. These facts are: the family is a nuclear institution; the labor is divided due to the gender, and there is obviously the mother, the father and their children. It is very harmful globalization. There has always been violence of the spouses against their children, single-parent families and families lacking love. The number of divorces was smaller, though the number of people suffering from lack of love was not less.

The notion of a household and the difference between it and a family is discussed with the evidence in the chapter. The representation of patriarchy and its features gives more understanding about the roles, which both genders play in this state of affairs in the society. The range of interactions within the family demonstrates a huge variety of emotions that people express, beginning with brutality, abuse and violence and ending with love, support and care. In addition, the chapter includes the data about preferable family structure and family values. As a conclusion, the two main sociological principals are described as the basic ones for this whole book. They are the interconnection between the family and other social institutions surrounding them and the critical examination of myths, general principles and dogmas.

--- Chapter 2

The title of the chapter is “Preindustrial Families and the Emergence of a Modern Family Form”, so it is essential that the authors represent the difference between the myths and realities about the traditional family structure and ideal family that existed in the past in the U.S. The demographic characteristics, labor division, organizational structure,



emotional states and conceptions are significantly changing along with the development of the modern world, and the authors stress that it is impossible to state that the family in the past were the same as they are nowadays. The family history is shown as a separate branch of a social science, and the chapter includes the data about the changes and development of family structure and organization in the retrospective of time beginning from the early seventeenth century. The shift from the agricultural to industrial economy is considered as a critical moment that caused considerable changes in the nineteenth century. In this chapter, the readers can learn about the methods of researches that were used in the field of family investigations. The diversity of families has always existed, and the Native Americans' families serve as the evidence for this. The researches of the eighteenth century considered the existence of more than six hundred societies; correspondingly, each of them had their own marital rules. The evidence used in this chapter shows the spread of the American Indians and their customs throughout the country.

The notion of family-based economy is well-introduced in the chapter and a family is denoted here as “a unit of production and exchange” (Zinn, Eitzen, & Wells, 2010). The family settings are demonstrated as the point of connection with a social life in the past. In some cases, family and society had some sort of argument. Charivari against the newlyweds serves as the evidence for this. The chapter covers this phenomenon and provides clear description of its functions and forms. The features of extended families and the difference between number of children in preindustrial period and now were established in the chapter as well. In addition, there is the data about demographic household, the marriage tendencies in colonial period and the results of such marriages. As a separate part of information, there are facts about the status



of children and the way they had to be raised as represented by religion. The religion had a serious impact on a family at that time, and the evidence of it is provided.

Thus, the chapter contains the material about the time retrospective of family changes that occurred under the circumstances of society development. It serves as the evidence for the fact that the changes in society always cause the wave of changes in the institution called family.

--- Chapter 3

This particular chapter tells about the features of historical changes in family diversity. The authors represent a structural diversity approach, and, on the basis of it, they prove that all the diverse families appeared as a result of interaction between the society and diversity. The times of Great Depression serve as the evidence that shows how immigration and further incorporation of various ethnic groups influenced the trend of industrialization and appearance of diverse families due to the class and ethnic belonging. The period of capitalism is investigated as well, and the women are represented in this kind of society as oppressed because the women production was one of the main ones in industries.

The facts about childhood displayed in the chapter prove that there were the most diverse childhoods that ever existed. The nineteenth century is characterized as the highest point of children abandonment. This fact gives the understanding of the direct connection between the society and families. The low living conditions of workers did not allow them to keep children; that is why the families could not be nuclear. The chapter represents one more portion of differences between households and families in general. In addition, there is the data about



the increase in households division within the family, and it helps to grasp better the reason for it. The flourishing of the matriarchal family is covered in this chapter, and the reasons for its existence are presented too. The misconceptions about minority families are depicted. Also, the authors discuss a number of myths about the structure of the families of color. African American families are under accurate observation in this chapter. The impact of slavery on the life of an African American family displays the changes that took place in the family structures and the functions of the spouses. The phenomenon of Chicano families and its appearance is studied by the authors as well.

Thus, the chapter reveals the influence of historical events on the family structure. At the same time, the role of class, gender and race is covered fully and serves as evidence.

--- Chapter 4

The title of the forth chapter is “Macro Forces Affecting Families: The Economy, Immigration and Aging”. Consequently, the changes in these spheres are considered. The society always influences each particular person and a family in general. The phenomena taking place throughout the country, like capital flight, caused the migration, which further divided into offshoring and outsourcing. These events caused the appearance of the mixed families and separated the existing ones, contributing to the diversity of families.

The situation of labor crisis is under discussion in this chapter too. The authors state that the layoffs stress any family ties and can cause further dissatisfaction of spouses with each other. Learning about the notion of personal bankruptcies gives the understanding of divorce reasons and



explains why people often quarrel within the family, being not given what they expect. Because of the hard economic situation in many families, people are afraid to become parents, and recession takes place. The consequences of it are enlightened in the chapter, and such terms as “fertility”, “disengagement” and “exogamy” along with their dangers are covered. The statistics presented show the tendency for increase in the number of racial minorities, pensioners and binational families.

—— Chapter 5

This chapter considers the cases of dependence of family structure on class, gender and race and the myths about such dependence. Social stratification, public and private patriarchy, matrix of domination and household augmentation are the notions covered in this chapter. In addition, there is a description of gender roles approach and life privileges. The data in this chapter is connected with that of the previous one and stresses once more the differences between wealthy family and families with low income. The authors debunk the most widespread myths that in rich families, everything is perfect, and in the families with low income, it is vice versa.

—— Chapter 6

The chapter is called “Meshing the Worlds of Work and Family”. It presents the main points due to which the situation of labor division is changing. The interdependence of work and family is possible because of the changes in the women’s work and women’s attitude towards it. The desire for liberation caused the desire to work, and it caused the decrease of time women began to spend at home dedicating their time to households.



The chapter presents the results of the investigations done to explore the dependence of white collar or office work on the family. The authors present the results of “time diary data” approach to show the difference between how the spouses are engaged in the households. The chapter covers the challenges modern parents meet while juggling work with family life and describes the consequences of such coexistence of main spheres in people’s lives.

