

Common Family Myths and Their Impact on Modern Society

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Family as a Social Institution and Cultural Ideal

Family is considered as the main building block of society. Its significance has taken on superior importance in the last few years. Some assumptions about families are that the best time for a family is in the olden days. Other people would like to see a traditional family where mothers stay at home along with their children, and fathers only get back home at the end of the working day. This kind of press is due to the bad press that the families have experienced in the last few years. This is rapidly increasing the rate of family breakups, isolation, single-parent families, and violence in many different forms. Repeatedly, we hear about the conservative groups who seek to return to traditional American norms and values. There are the following types of families that are considered pure traditional:

- In a family in which two parents live together, the husband provides financial support to the family, while on the other hand, the wife has to manage the duties of home and the rearing of children's activities. In this kind of family, gender roles are absolute.
- Another kind of family is one in which all the family members visit the church together at least once a week or on a monthly basis.
- A family in which children are respectful, responsible and bright.
- Another kind is one in which families live together in a small town for at least one generation. Every member of the family knows their neighbour.
- Another kind of family in which divorce is unheard of and is considered to be a shameful activity.
- The type of family in which child abuse, homosexuality, abortion and drug abuse do not exist.
- The family in which there are no unmarried members, either men or women.

The traditional family is a myth; no family has ever reached the level of being purely traditional. This traditional model has no direct relationship in the US history; this traditional family system only existed for a small period of time; roughly, we can say that this traditional family system was during the first two or three decades of the World War II era when a soldier who returns from the battle married and raised their families. No such traditional model or two-parent model can be found in the early times of the U.S. After some time, this traditional model was found in some families where there were mainly two-parent households. Those families just casually resembled traditional families. (Anderson, 2014; Ferreira, 1965)

The Traditional Family Model in Popular Culture

After a tough examination, it was found that the closest sample of a traditional family model existed in the conservative groups in 1950s TV shows. Those TV shows idealized the concept of nuclear family, they strongly presented it as a strongly bonded group. Some presented this as a myth of the happy, in which large families live together in relative coordination. This is the most exact demonstration of the decade. (Fineman, 2004)

The Idealized Family of the 1950s

1950's are usually considered as the era when everyone was working together to achieve the main common goal, everything was stable, societies were constant and were moving in a positive direction. At that time, women were happy in their full-time homemaker duties and in the upbringing of children. During that time, it was believed that separation, premarital sex, abortion, homosexuality and illegal birth did not even exist, or these were the issues that existed in minor quantity in the families at that time, known as bad families. Topics like this were not discussed in an open forum and were considered unethical.

Cold War Conditions and Family Orientation

If we talk about American family life, this decade was a typical one. A fear was created by the Cold War, which gave rise to family orientation. This was also a very unusual period, which saw millions of servicemen returning from their duties, suddenly raising families during a massive, constant economic boom. For the first time in more than one hundred years, in the 1950s, the age of marriage and becoming a mother was reduced, fertility increased enormously, the rate of divorce was reduced to almost zero, and the women's education rate decreased instantly.

Marriage Patterns and Economic Expectations

During that duration it was noticed that the age for marriage was significantly increased, it was very uncommon for the lovers to get married at young age. Men would asked to make their fortune first and then get married. The couple would only marry once the man was financially secure. It was concluded that some couples did not actually marry until their age of thirties or even more.

Women's Roles and Postwar Employment

The women's role with respect to the 1950's was also very different. Women experienced freedom and responsibilities regarding economic development. World War II allowed numerous women to work

in different departments and different jobs that otherwise would have been the only responsibility of men for a much longer period of time. At the same time, the Depression's hardships required parents, both male and female, to seek jobs and employment wherever available. Even in the period before depression, women experienced a great deal of freedom regarding social and economic status. Jobs were easily available at those times and were in excessive quantity, though the scope of jobs was limited to roles like clerk, telephone operator and secretary.

Social Institutions and Cultural Stability

Social institutions are generally considered the basic focus of social culture, which is similar to all cultures and societies. They deal with the universal problem of social life. There are three factors that are focused on by institutions. First of all, behavioural patterns are operated with the help of institutions. Secondly, the parameter of the behaviour of the person in society is in institutions according to some specific patterns. Lastly, involvement of normative ordering and regulations in these patterns.

Family Education and Socialization

There is a range of families which emphasise the principles of biotic relationships between individuals in a culture. The range of education extends from family relations and deals with socializing at an early age to teenagers and adults.

Geographic Mobility and the Extended Family Myth

Apparently, the idea of most families living together in one location is a myth. Young generations are trying to move further in the west to take advantage of the newly opened lands where they may have a better chance of owning large pieces of land and making their own property. While on the other hand, some stayed in the same place for generations, the record also shows many families in England living in the same location for a long duration of time. There are some cases in which some family shifted from England to the Mid-Atlantic States for a generation or two and then shifted to Kansas or the Dakotas, then winding up the west of the country, like the west coast, by the early 20th century.

Reasons for the Persistence of Traditional Ideals

Keeping in mind all the above evidence, why do people still want to live in the traditional family? No single answer is suitable. (Bertaux, 1993)

Conclusion on Family Myths and Social Change

Now, to conclude this discussion, there are a number of factors that make families still want to live in a traditional system. In the past, cultures and societies often saw the best ages, in which people were stronger, wiser and more religious than now. They were long-lived; they were way better than the people in the present. People can easily remember the same vision of their own young age or childhood, and people idealize their personal past in the same manner. The old evidence shows that the past generations idealised the traditions of the first generation of humans as they were close to it. Societies like this claim that the new generations have fallen from grace and are very weak physically. It is easy to determine how people who created idealized visions of their adulthood life as children could trap themselves in the same life later.

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