BELIEFS ABOUT MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND CHILDREN

Introduction

It is not a secret that personal and family relationships play a crucial role for the development of every individual, because family teaches us about our heritage, values, and what right or wrong is. Today many beliefs and ideas concerning marriage and family have dramatically changed, taking into consideration feminist and homosexual movements and their way of life. Nevertheless, there are many people who have quite conservative beliefs about family, marriage, and raising children. For the paper, I interviewed a woman of a grandparent age (65 years) and explored her beliefs concerning family, marriage, and children.

Marriage

Marriage is one of the most important steps in a person's life. Ideas about marriage vary in different religions, nations, and social groups. Even nowadays, in relation to quite liberal beliefs, there are still those women who dream about their wedding day and happy life. Though today people may not refer to unmarried women as "old maids," there is still hidden pressure and stigma attached to such women in many ethnic groups. In fact, although there are some general ideas about marriage and family, each individual has his/her own opinion concerning personal

and family relationship (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2009).

Let us analyze the information gathered during the interview with a woman of a grandparent age. This woman has quite conservative views concerning marriage and personal relationships. She believes in the institution of marriage. Generally, she planned to marry in her 20s, though she managed to do this in her 30s. She never felt any social or other kind of pressure about not being married. There were other women, who remained single mainly because of their difficult disposition and unwillingness to make a compromise.

There were those people who cohabited or divorced because of unfavorable living conditions (such as drug or alcohol addiction of their partners, etc). In fact, our interviewee did not appreciate such a way of life as cohabitation. The woman admitted that she could not raise the family and work at the same time, and she realized that she had to give more attention to her work because of difficult living conditions. At that time, it was a commonplace phenomenon that both mothers and fathers were employed outside their home. The interviewee acknowledged that it was not fair and many things were missed because of her work. She realized that it was not worth it, though she liked her work very much.

As a matter of fact, it was extremely difficult for her to combine the roles of a career woman, a mother and a spouse, but she did her best to make things right. Though she tried to make everything done, there was not enough time for her children. She recalled that there were many situations when she did not manage to be with her children (e.g., during school performances or visits to the doctor). The interviewee never talked with her husband about how to balance family and career, she always felt that she was the only person who should think about their family and

childcare.

Frankly speaking, it is extremely hard to judge other person about her actions and lifestyle. As for me, I have also quite conservative views on marriage and family. I believe that a woman may have a good job and a breathtaking career, but when she has children, she should prefer raising them to different conferences and business trips, because, in a due course, she will realize that she has missed something, which cannot be replaced by promotion or a business trip. Today we live in time of liberal views concerning family and marriage, and many women still manage to combine their family life with their careers (for example, when they have flexible working hours, etc).

Family

We can define the notion of family in the following way: family is a group of people, who live together and have blood/family ties. In the majority of communities, family is the first institution for the children's socialization. In the global context, one of the functions of family is biological and social reproduction. Each of family members has its own role and responsibilities, though nowadays these roles may be fulfilled by one partner and responsibilities may even be confused. For example, there are two fathers or two mothers in homosexual families, or in a single-parent family one person has to be a parent and a breadwinner at the same time. The interviewee defined family as a group of people, who are closely connected to each other, live together and take care of each other (Kertzer & Barbagli, 2001).

To my mind, family is the most important thing in our lives, because it consists of the dearest and closest people in the whole world, who will always understand and support you. Family is the basis of any society, because it gives a new life. If the institution of family is strong and stable, this nation will prosper. In this context, it is essential to know about your roots, because a person who finds his/her roots obtains precious legacy and a sense of being a part of their family history.

We should also mention that today many experts believe that our life is determined by our gender. Though gender is an integral part of all spheres of our life, some specialists believe that it is socially constructed. For example, there are different expectations for fathers and mothers, different kinds of work for men and women and, as a result, different kinds of rights and responsibilities. Individuals learn how they should act and what is supposed to be right from their childhood. As a result, gender is built into the family and our everyday activities so deeply interrelated with it that we even do not notice this "doing gender" process (Lorber, 1991).

Children

In fact, raising children is the most difficult work in the world, but it is worth it. Sooner or later every person starts thinking about family hearth and children. Our interviewee also answered several questions concerning family and children. When she got married, in a few years she certainly planned to have at least two children. Unfortunately, she could not conceive a child until she was 40. She did not discuss any specific discipline techniques with her husband, they just raised their children in the way they thought it was right. They even did not talk about how they were

going to raise children in general (e.g., their duties, important values, etc). The woman admitted that it was she who thought about the child's upbringing. She wanted her child to have good education and, therefore, to be a respected person in the future.

To my mind, it is wrong when only one parent is involved in a child's upbringing. The child needs both parents in order to become an adequate member of society. There are many examples when children who have only one parent involved in their upbringing have some psychological issues such as personality disorders. In other words, it is crucial for parents to find a golden mean between their work and family not to neglect their children. There are many ways to balance home and work such as flexible working hours, part-time, and remote work, etc.

No doubt that financial aspect is very important too, but if a child is provided only with material stuff such as clothes, food, mobile phones and computers, he/she will grow without any other values in life. Parents should also communicate with their children and teach them how to be kind, honest, and merciful. Parents should be interested in their children's hobbies and support them. Parents should educate their children and teach them how to live in society.

During the last decades, we have witnessed a revolution in family relations. Despite some challenges, the family has grown stronger, but today every family experiences some communicational difficulties. Parents have a lot of things to do; they have a lot of responsibilities and children sometimes experience situations that parents cannot control everything. Nowadays, some experts suggest so-called "agile programming" techniques in order to solve family issues. Some of them are as follows: adapt all the time, empower your children and tell your

story. In fact, these strategies may be quite effective because when parents use them, they encourage their children to be independent and make their own decisions, as well as plan goals, evaluate their work, and control their lives (Feiler, 2013). To my mind, parents should always be role models and have power over their children; they should also try to raise their child as an independent and self-conscious person who has his/her own outlook and views on life.

The interviewee also answered the questions about what was the best part and what was the toughest part of being a parent. The woman admitted that her child was the best thing that had ever happened to her. I agree with her, because it is so natural to be a parent and experience all the "sweets of maternity." Children give us a new sense of life; they may achieve those goals, which we have never achieved before. For our interviewee, the toughest part of being a parent was inability to provide the child with all necessary attention, understanding, and support. She had to work hard in order to keep her family and, as a result, she missed some important events in her child's upbringing.

Conclusion

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act declares that "marriage is a foundation of a successful society." Furthermore, family is the centerpiece of any society so that it is very important to pay much attention to issues connected with family communication, children's upbringing, and family ties. Our life has dramatically changed over a few past decades: our views have become more liberal concerning the institutions of marriage and family.

Nevertheless, personal and family relationships have remained crucial, which makes many experts pay so much attention to them (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2009).

To sum up, I would like to say that the institutions of marriage and family are still as important as they have been before. Consequently, much attention should be paid to such issues as family communication, family developmental stresses, children's upbringing and relationships between spouses. Marriage as well as children's upbringing requires hard and persistent work from both parents. Moreover, it is also essential to establish trust-based relations within a family. Spouses should communicate with each other, try to understand and support ideas of their partners, plan their future and think about raising their children together. At the same time, being parents, they should find a golden mean between work and home, pay more attention to interests and needs of their family members, and, of course, communicate with their children. In this way, their family will become stronger and they will be able to overcome any difficulties on their life path.