

The color of family ties essay example

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The Color of Family Ties: Race, Class, Gender and Extended Family

Involvement by Naomi Gerstel and Natalia Sarkisian, attempts to correct the misconception in the family ties among minorities in the United States of America. The general tone is to the extent that racial differences are not necessarily the course of the family ties. Rather, the authors argue that differences in family ties are a direct consequence of class. Ideally, it needs to be noted that class has no bearing on the race. According to the America US Census data, all the races belong to the different classes with whites equally falling in the impoverished classes but in lesser numbers. The authors argue thus that the race should not be considered as the determinant of the family ties. In that breadth, the authors seek for an extended application of social policy to include the extended family ties dimension which is common among the minority group. The paper shall discuss the article in detail. It would be split in two parts. The first part would be a summary of the article while the second part of the paper shall be a critical thought together with the overall conclusion about the article.

Within that comparison, the authors draw the attention of the audience to the social class rather than the ethnic composition. The argument according to their narrative is that social class would determine both the disposal income and the time for one another. In that context, the authors raise the issue of financial abilities of the communities. Incidentally, the white communities have access to higher education and consequently are good in emotional and financial support. This characteristic, the authors conclude, emerge due to their acquisition of higher education which leads them to better jobs and hence more financial capacity. Similarly, it is that education

that exposes their women into sharing their problems and offering advice. Unfortunately, such higher education misses in the minority communities. Indeed, data from US Census data indicate that minority communities lag behind in terms of access to education especially higher education. This has a negative bearing on their financial abilities and emotional capacities. However, the authors rightly observe that for the minorities who have access to education and able financially, no difference suffices in terms of emotional and financial support. The case is equally similar for the impoverished whites who display rather same mannerisms as their minority counterparts. What suffices, therefore, is that social class is the determinant rather than the racial groups.

However, within the same context, the authors lead evidence to prove that minority groups are actually in a better standing in terms of family ties as compared to their white counterparts. For this statistics to come out clearly, one must consider the extended family and not merely the nuclear family. As the authors point out, there are a number of barriers and conditions that prevent the minority groups from marrying. In that context, it is too simplistic to sum up that since the marriage levels in the white community is larger as compared to the statistics in the minority communities, family ties are lower.

It is essential to appreciate the authors' position that practical, emotional and financial challenges actually lead to and improve the family solidarity. If this is the case then the family ties among the minorities would be higher as the family challenges are often higher among them as compared to the challenges that confront the white community. In addition, the authors

observe that while the levels of financial and emotional support is higher in white communities as compared to the minority groups, the latter were more likely to help each other with household duties and child care. This suggests that the minority are equally with strong family ties only that their financial and emotional capacities are low hence present a limiting factor. This position is further ascertained by the fact that minority communities were more likely to be living with extended family members. In addition, in cases where they were not living with one another, they were equally more likely to be supporting one another.

However, the authors are keen to appreciate the challenges that are ever present in marriage which may hinder extended family ties. In fact, the authors observe that extended families form networks of help. These networks may even unconsciously hinder marriages that they deem would affect their family orbits. In that strain, the authors observe that women have opted to rely on the extended family network for help rather than marry. In many cases marriage has proved unreliable and the woman has had to fall back to her extended family network. In that context, the authors argue that it would be simplistic to conclude that the family tie is weak on the basis of poor nuclear family ties. The extended family ties are actually intact and stronger.

Now to the second part of this paper I concur with their arguments by the author. Foremost, it is important for studies to be as representative as possible. It is too simplistic to consider only the nuclear family and omit the extended family in arriving at conclusions on family ties. Ideally, the extended family for minority communities forms an essential component of

the family. This is because of the minority family stratification. Minority families have had an isolated and oppressed life due to different reasons that often stick them together. In fact, as noted by the authors, some of the ties have been explained negatively like in the African case of the slavery legacy. However, in the current context, the minority family ties can be seen in contemporary challenges. For instance, minorities occasionally suffer from cases of discrimination based on race and at times gender. These special situations join them together making them bond together as one. This has been brought clearly out by the authors who argue that minorities often assist one another in the best ways possible. In addition, illegal immigration, terrorism, economic difficulties, among other factors continue to bond the extended families of minorities. It must be appreciated that the marriage institution has not worked well for most of the minority communities. For that reason, they tend to shy away from marriage and retain their extended family networks. It is for that reason that extended family members may end up opposing potential marriages if indications are that it would disturb the family network.

In the same strain, I do believe the authors' argument on the social class rather than the racial standing as the determinant of the family ties. Ideally, we need to appreciate that the more financial resources one has, the more help he is able to give. In that vein, it is too simple to conclude that whites had better family ties simply because they gave and received financial aid from one another in larger amounts. Rather, what needs to be considered as wholesome factors such as living together. Again, reverting to the authors' observation the minority groups tended to live with their extended families in

larger numbers as compared to their white counterparts. The family ties should also be seen on a case by case basis. Some families are naturally brought up together hence closer ties while others due to physical barriers, financial barriers, among others were scattered all over the nation hence did not have sufficient time to bond. For the latter group, it would be the case that family ties would be on the low.

In conclusion, it must be appreciated that family ties among the races are not as different as is assumed from previous studies. Actually the ties among the minority communities are stronger if looked at from the extended family spectrum. In that respect, it is essential for social policy to be all encompassing and take into consideration the extended families. In that respect, it should be the norm rather than the exception that extended families find themselves in the category of beneficiaries in services such as the ones under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Work Cited

Gerstel, Naomi and Sarkisian Natalia. " The Color of Family Ties: Race, Class, Gender and Extended Family Involvement." Cootnz , Stephanie, Maya Parson and Gabrielle Raylay. In its American Family: A Multicultural Reader. New York: Routledge, 2008.