

This paper needs
have 3 fully
developed
paragraphs. will
upload more details

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Emily Ashiq ' Divorce and our National Values' In his essay ' Divorce and our National Values' by Peter D. Kramer, the writer argues how divorce is not really a social aberration but is rather, a direct fallout of the kind of values that American society espouses. It is his belief that the emphasis on individuality in the American value system, more often than not, results in separation of couples. Kramer's argument charts historical, economic and other broad cultural influences on American society to substantiate his claim. Kramer begins with what he calls ' American literature's one great self-help book', Walden, where the author urges the readers to assert their individuality, even if it meant turning down their family's hopes or expectations of them.

He then proceeds to take examples from America's economic philosophy as well as his personal experiences as a psychiatrist to point out how the goal of self-sufficiency and individual enterprise appears to be very deeply entrenched in the American psyche. He points out how a new piece of legislation (passed around the time of publication of the essay in 1997) in Louisiana that allowed for something called a ' covenant marriage' wherein getting divorce would be a more difficult proposition than usual, was not really reflective of traditional American values but the opposite. The fact that the whole school of psychotherapy, as prominently practiced and advanced by personalities like Erik Erikson, Murray Bowen or Carl Rogers, emphasizes ' enhanced autonomy', is taken by Kramer to indicate how American society at large valued individual autonomy over what he terms ' mutuality.'

Kramer's concludes: ' Though we profess abhorrence of divorce, I suspect that the divorce rate reflects our national values with great exactness.'

To counter this increased dependence on autonomous existence Kramer suggests resetting 'mutuality' as a goal worth aspiring for. He cites another school of psychiatry as exemplified by the work of Jean Baker Miller which suggests that finding one's self does not necessarily have to be an exaggeratedly lonely process. Finding oneself through relating to others was just as satisfying and genuine a process of self-development. Kramer also argues that women have traditionally been considered the more tactful ones and therefore the onus of being the one to compromise in a situation of conflict often falls on them, rather unfairly. This too needs to be changed and expanded to each gender so that the relationship is one of true equality. Kramer makes a strong argument, backed by solid examples from history, contemporary events, literature and sociological studies, which make the article a thought-provoking one. It is also interesting as he upturns the usual assumptions about divorce and increasing rates of divorce. There are often unusual circumstances that can cause divorce like abuse or abandonment; but barring these incidents, for which there are legal options for protection, the very high rates of divorce in the United States do point out to the kind of larger, more sociological concerns that Kramer points to. So far as the article brings up an interesting and novel approach to the social crisis of increasing numbers of broken homes in America, it is not to be ignored. But just as it is easy to get carried away with the idea of the ego and self-expression, it is just as important to remember that giving in all the time is also not a healthy substitute. A relationship, especially one as long-term and committed as a marriage, must be balanced equally between all parties involved. This requires a balance between healthy self-expression and the much-needed

art of compromise.

Work Cited:

Kramer, Peter D. ' Divorce and our National Values.' NYTimes. com. 29 Aug. 1997. Web. 15 Nov. 2012.