Interaction of Gender and Family: Gender Understanding of Family Formation and Dissolution

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Divorce can be investigated from different aspects and one of them is the interaction between family institution, structure of gender and social actors. Family is the place of reproduction of gender (Goffman, 1977) and structure of gender is one of the main sources of maintaining family in its traditional form. Due to subjective and objective developments of social actors' life, gender suffers from deep meaning evolution and family as well. Social actors have shown different responds to these changes because of different gender socialization path they've come through. Women and men have different attitudes towards gender, gender roles and family life which in some would result divorce (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Black, Eastwood, Sprenkle & Smith, 2015). This article seeks to investigate the reasons for the formation and disintegration of family life with regard to the participation of the family institution, gender structure and different reactions of women and men to them. In this way, the social event of divorce will be examined in the trinity of the family institution, its desired gender emphases and its inconsistency with the mental image of social actors about marriage and family life.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The intersection of the family institution and the gender structure form the regulation and relations of a kind of family life which in traditional age has led to the adaptation of gender to gender roles, and in the modern era to the choice between gender and multiple identities. Family is the most important institution for gender reproduction (Bourdieu, 2010) and there is no difference in this task between modern and traditional family (Chaftez, 2006). Nowadays gender is experiencing conceptual fluidity that activates the possibility of crossing the boards. These changes affect family (Beck & Beck-Grensheim, 2002) and weakens the identification process in it. Family has shown resistance facing these changes and remained hierarchical, gender-centered and one-gender centered (male).

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Family is thus a point of contention between men and women. These concepts are being redefined by women, as late actors in the public arena, while men, in their slow understanding of this process, are still inclined to the traditional family (Giddens & Pierson, 1998; Rosenfeld, 2009). This event has made crashes between actors, family and gender and will result in dissolution of family.

These changes have been studied by Jamshidiha, Sadeghi Fasaei and Lolavar (2013) in comparison of traditional and modern families from a gender perspective. In this regard it can be said that male respondents have a dual and somehow contradictory view of the modern family and its characteristics. They concluded that it seems that staying in the conditions of tradition and choosing among modern features from the point of view of men provides more stable and desirable conditions for continuation of family life. In their view, the new situation has led to the instability of men in the family and has challenged their established identities. Bastani, Golzari and Roshani's (2010) research on the changed criteria of women's selection husbands list pointed out that women's perceptions of desirable husband characteristics are at odds with masculine cultural patterns. While the intimacy component is a priority for women today, male cultural patterns do not seem to have changed significantly from the past. Hewitt, Western, and Baxter (2006) point out the differences in the separation process. Women and men differ in their experience and understanding of marriage and divorce, with men more likely to be the surprise side of the story and women to initiate it. Since men and women enter different sources to the marriage, they obviously experience different issues regarding divorce as well.

3. Method

This study has been conducted by using a qualitative approach due to meaning finding of men and women about marriage and divorce. The method of gathering and analyzing data was G.T (systematic branch of Strauss and Corbin). The field of study was all men and women with at least one experience of marriage and divorce, who are resident in Tehran. Data gathering was through un-structured interview to semi-structured one. Sampling was according to theoretical one which is based on concepts instead of individuals. The number of participants, according to what has been explained before, were 22.

4. Results and Discussion

Gender in the context of its ongoing changes and in the collision with the less altered structure of the family institution, led to the formation of a core category that has the potential to give meaning to the process of family formation and disintegration: The clash of gender and family institution. This collision, which is unprecedented and recent in the history of family developments studies, indicates

the lack of cooperation or conflict between these two areas that affect the married life and lived experience of actors in this field. The record history of gender and the institution of the family have been in balance, which means that men and women as actors in this field were socialized in their main family for family roles, while in the current situation, family roles are "one" of the areas of identity and are experiencing changes in coordinates and meaning. Gender is also influential in this process in the way that women are experiencing these changes at a dissimilar and inconsistent pace with men. This is due to the fact that the institution of the family is in the same direction of one-sex orientation in the public sphere (Lloyd, 2008) and male-centered in itself, is the main factor in formation of this collision, its continuation in the institution of the family and the cause of occurrence the divorce.

5. Conclusion

Examining the triple effect of gendered social actors, family institution and gender structure, has taken away the issue of divorce from individual status and personal failure and has considered it as a result of three aforementioned components. As a result of this finding, in order to manage the family situation in Iranian society, it is vital to consider the necessary changes and expediency in the family situation and review the gender structure, based on the current developments. What needs to be considered most is the fit between the evolving will of the actors, especially women, and the necessary changes in the institution of the family and the structure of gender in such a way that the interests of society will be also served. Social actors need to fulfill their social membership duties but not feel that they are victims of institutional and structural goals. This situation occurs in the situation of negotiation between role and structure and the releasing of the dominance of structure over the individual. The manner of this negotiation and the transformation of the command structure into a negotiation one is by changing the view of social actors from the individual requires guidance to an agent who has the ability to reason, dialogue and take individual-social responsibility. This situation requires reflection, coordination and planning to arrange this negotiation, which can be the subject of the further and next research.

Keywords: Marriage, Divorce, Gender, Structure, Institution, Grounded Theory

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