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Family Narrative Research Essay

**Guide Sheet**

My father had no freedom, no money, no personal house, and no land, but he had a family; I had full liberty, much money, and a grand house, but sometimes I feel that I might have no family. What is the use of this all when I cannot ask my son to sit by my side for chit-chat? These were the words of John McCain, my grandfather, who was too anxious when I started his interview. My name is Luther McCain son of David McCain. I have an elder brother Joseph McCain. We are the Black Americans. Our family migrated from Alabama State to New York when my grandfather was an adolescent. It was soon after Negros won civil rights. Currently we are 8 members in the family. Four members have been mentioned above; the other four are Jane McCain, my grandmother, Mary, my mother, Elizabeth, my elder sister, and Kate, my younger sister. Currently, we live in Water Street, New York City. I have selected my grandfather, father, and brother to interview.

I would ask them all about their birthplace, education, life circumstances, and their sentiments about the family structure. My elder brother looks stressed when he is in family gathering and my father also looks uncomfortable when my grandpa insists him to sit beside him although he does not reject any request of my grandpa. It appears that my father feels burdened by the job pressure and he does not want to lose any moment of leisure he can have. It is apparent that he went through many tough tasks when he managed to feed the family and work for its prosperity even in hard times like financial crisis. He was educated well but he had to face some kind of racial discrimination in start. He managed to handle his financial issues and we shifted from the suburbs of New York City to the Water Street under his supervision. He is kind to my grandfather, but he cannot offer him his time that saddens my grandpa. That is all I know about the relationship of my father and grandpa. My brother is also recessive in his life that he shows least interest into the family business and the matters of our dad. My dad has almost the same kinds of complains regarding my brother that my grandpa has about my father. I will use this background knowledge to deal with my family members. My family eats breakfast together, but my father and brother miss it usually. My mother is more kind to my grandparents who is perhaps the only reason that my family is living together. Women of my family have less stress in life than the male members. I will use the technique of Psychotherapy to learn about their depression and to treat them. Systemic therapy or Psychotherapy was based on Minuchin’s Structural Therapy model (1968) followed by Bateson’s cybernetic model (1972) the first order cybernetic model considered that problems within a family system should be focused on by strategically solving problems, meeting family goals and helps change a person's dysfunctional behavior. D. Shazer (1985). These concepts in Systemic therapy were known as the major paradigms and were taught by therapists such as Minuchin in Milan until the information-processing systems were introduced. I will use the following questions to interview my grandfather, father, and my brother.

* How do you define yourself and how will you write your biography if you were asked to do it?
* Do you believe that your life was difficult being a Black American?
* Do you think that Negros should work together with the Whites and other communities to make America greater?
* What is your view about a joint family structure?

Following is the detail of answers by all the family members, every paragraph under every heading address one question. The sequence of the answers is according to the sequence of the questions.

**Significance of the Questions in Sociology**

Society is a complex system that consists of individuals. Feeling of association is important for the functions of society. Traditionally, family is an important segment of the society because it produces individuals. It is important to integrate the individuals for normal functioning of society. Family system in America has changed dramatically and it has become important to define what should be called a family, and it also should be considered to normalize the relationships among the individuals if we want our social system to escape any chaos. Black Americans are a major part of the country, and they had a typical joint family structure traditionally. Whereas now family structure of the Black families is also changing that causes depression among the older members of family. My research study would attempt to study those differences and to fix the issues that cause hindrance in the integration of family structure. Thus, these questions have major sociological significance.

**Narrative of John McCain, my Grandfather**

I am a Negro who was brought to New York by my father Edward McCain in the hope of a better life. I remember how my father was struggling in Alabama to make our migration possible. Who am I my child? A poor old man, ah! I am sad, I am sad that you pushed me to remember my beautiful past. I am sad because the life in Alabama was much painful. Look, I have a big house of my son David, but my father had not even a hut to keep us there in Alabama. He was a poor slave, son of a slave. He had no place to keep us except a small room granted by our Master. We were five in one room where two siblings of mine died because they were too weak, hahaha! Yes, they were weaker than me. I survived miraculously although my death was expected by my parents. I am too old to remember all those days with full detail my child. You asked about my education, let me tell you that I did not about such a thing until we arrived here in New York, obviously out of the city. My father was a poor Negro slave, but the way he fought for our better life, he made me his fan (Besa, David. P.p. 309-325). I was happier in the small room of my father than in this large house of my son because we had time for each other. I am sad because I cannot go back to those days.

Difficult life? Negros did not have life my child; life belonged to the White Masters. We had no rights, no liberty, and no desires. We were subjects of the Whites and the purpose of our lives was to serve the, until our last breath. We were living in a land which did not belong to us. We were Africans, we are Africans, and perhaps it is our biggest sin that it took too long for the Whites to acknowledge us as human beings. Remember, we were living under dire circumstances, but we had time to share with our family.

Yes, there is no bad thing in working together to make America greater, but what is the use of work when we break our family bonds like the Whites. What is greater America? I am an old man and I wait for my children to arrange some time for me. Whites are our brethren but it is a thing that should be known by them more than us. They should acknowledge that we are as possessors of this land as they are. We respect their European values, but they do not respect our African values. Your father wanted to marry a White girl, but he was not allowed to do so because the girl was *White*. I requested her family to allow her the marriage, but they showed their political influence to marginalize us. Is it America for all?

We have a joint family tradition of centuries, but the new generations have least interest in living together. Our relationships have fallen apart, look your dad has no time for his dad. I had plenty of time when he was a child, but now he has no time for me. It also is the influence of European values. They have broken their family structure and now our family structure is at stake.

**Narrative of David McCain, My Father**

 My name is David McCain you know, the unfortunate child of a sentimental dad. I was educated in an ordinary school and then I had to do part time job besides my studies in high school. I served as a waiter in a small restaurant and then started my practical life before I could graduate from high school. I had to face discriminatory attitude of Whites when I was a young boy, but later on I realized that all the Whites were not biased. I worked on multiple low status jobs and finally I became a manager at a hotel. I don’t know what my parents did throughout their lives I only know that I had a family of 10 members when I was working in the Cherokee Restaurant to look after because my father was expecting me to help him. We were living outside the city and it was too difficult for me to travel alone from the county to the city for study and work.

Life for a Negro was difficult because we were not educated enough compete the Whites. They trained their children in schools and helped them to earn good government posts, but my father forced me to work while I was a young student. We were not trained enough to compete the Whites in society that was called the Blacks’ discrimination eventually (May, Joanne C. P.p. 221-237). Look, you and your *brother* are the respectable members of society because you are getting educations although your brother has chosen a strange and odd way of life.

America is our home and the home of our ancestors. Whites are our brethren in this homeland. Let us forget that they have European background and we have African. Let us respect the both cultural backgrounds, but our focus should be on the future of America. Only education and hard work are the keys to a prosper America. *American Dream* is a golden motivation for those who are lagging behind to rise for progress (Dallos, Rudi. P.p. 40-65). The Blacks should understand that blaming the Whites would not help us to rise to prosperity and it is only practical approach to life which can help us to be instrumental part of the society.

 Joint family system is a beautiful tradition among our people, but everything suits to a particular time. Social scenarios of the past were suitable for us to have a joint family for us, but it is getting outdated now. I think joint family system would not and should not long more than the contemporary era.

**Narrative of Joseph McCain, My Brother**

 Well, I was named Joseph McCain, and I am a student of New York University. I don’t need to write a biography of mine, I don’t have time to do so in fact. I was born on August 20th, 1990. I am a gay and I have a boyfriend Paul. My life is simple as I always have been a bright student since my kindergarten studies. I study on scholarship (Dallos, Rudi. P.p. 40-65). Life goes smooth if Paul and I are happy and feeling good. I care no one else other than him; you know I don’t care how father thinks about me, hahaha!

 What is this Black and White binary? Why should we think in terms of race? They are White and we are Black, that’s all, don’t make fuss of it. Life is difficult for everyone here who expects something for free. Negros might have existed in the past, but in the present century there are only Americans.

 We definitely should work together. Not only Blacks and Whites but all the communities should work together to keep our country progressing. America is home to many communities who have gathered here to live peacefully (Dallos, Rudi. P.p. 40-65). Hate mongers should not be allowed to create any rift between the peoples and all the communities should live together, and work together for the sake of our own goodwill.

 Joint family is a burden; I can’t live peacefully in such a family structure. Paul is my actual family. Heterosexual dichotomy of relationships has also becoming outdated trend. Therefore, people should be allowed to live according to their wishes. And if they decide to live as joint groups, there should be no objection and no obligation or binding for the partners.

**Critical Analysis**

 I interviewed three male members of my family and wrote down their narratives. Their speeches show three narratives that represent three generations. Grandpa’s narrative reveals that his grave concern is that his children do not give him time. Moreover, he regrets coming to New York because he has lost his strong family bond (Barry, David. P.p. 30-46). Disintegration of his family is visible to his old eyes, and he curses the Whites for influencing the Blacks wrongly (Barry, David. P.p. 30-46). His memory reminds him the bad experiences that he had with the Whites in his early age and he could not forget the marginalization he faced. My father has a practical approach to life and he is satisfied that he has earned much money to arrange a better life for his family. On the other side he might have some internal dissatisfaction that keep him away from both his son and father. He considers his father a sentimental old man because he always talks about sitting together. David McCain does not think like John McCain and Joseph McCain has totally a different approach to life than his parents and grandparents. It is apparent from their narratives that their differences are of serious kind because Joseph’s approach to sexuality is shocking for his educated father also. John is interested in having life ornamented with relationships, David is interested in pursuing American Dream, and Joseph is contended with Paul.

Psychotherapy believes that differences in family are not a strange matter, and these differences appear more highlighted when they exist in such a dynamic society like the USA (Schwartz, Richard C. P.p. 263). Psychotherapy does not believe in treating individuals isolate rather it believes that people should be treated with reference to their relationships (Schwartz, Richard C. P.p. 263). More ways of cooperation and coordination should be explored to minimize the differences among the members. I discussed the results of my research with my family members and they were shocked with my analysis that such small angles of thinking spread such strong effects. My grandpa and father appreciated my research and allowed Joseph to live with Paul in a flat near our home. They were not against keeping Paul in home but my grandpa suggested that they should learn to live in the society. He acknowledged that taking some progressive measures in the family are crucial for progress. My father also managed time for my grandpa and we started living a happier life than the past.

**Works Cited**

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