Abstract

This study deals with creating a contextual understanding of how modern Icelandic families cope with their social reality, from a historical and psychosocial viewpoint.

Basic concepts such as coping, leisure, work, love, children and emotional interaction are analyzed in terms of the crucial question as to what characterizes well functioning families. The study is based on material collected within the Nordic project Family life in the Nordic Countries (Samliv i Norden). The final sample consists of 123 intact couples at the age of 25-44 having at least two children 0-16 years old.

The theoretical framework consists of the systemic approach along with psychoanalytic conceptions relating to generational and ecological thinking. Methodologically the study is of the hermeneutic kind linking to multidisciplinary thinking and clinical practice. Thus, the methods cover the ground from structural to contextual understanding. The empirical part is quadruple: Historical material building the background; a social and demographic profile of the modern Icelandic family from public statistics; a quantitative part from a survey answered by 113 families, and a qualitative part based on long interviews with ten couples.

A picture of well functioning marriages is based upon the statistical analysis and the long interviews. A thorough analysis of the survey responses and of the long interviews reveals that the adaptation patterns in the well functioning families are closely related to the ingrained cultural heritage and the historical roots of Icelandic culture and strongly connected to other contextual and macrosocial factors. The myth of the “strong Icelandic woman”, the women’s rationality of responsibility and the men’s rationality of work are important themes.

In relation to a concluding discussion about the new demands and expectations of the new family in modern Icelandic society, the concept of family paradigm is discussed theoretically in connection with the concepts of lifestyle and system of negotiations. This in turn is related to the need for more research on relationships and cultural factors. It should serve to enhance people’s understanding of their own situation and bring forth knowledge that might lead to a more efficient family policy in the interest of the families and children of the future.
DEN KAPABLA FAMILJEN
I DET ISLÄNDSKA SAMHÄLLET

En studie om lojalitet, äktenskapsdynamik och psykosocial anpassning

av

SIGRÚN JÚLÍUSDÓTTIR

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