THE NEED FOR HARMONY BETWEEN ONE’S CAREER AND FAMILY REFLECTED IN AVERY CORMAN THE OLD NEIGHBORHOOD NOVEL (1980):
A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

PUBLICATION ARTICLES

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SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA
2013
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Abstract

This Study is about Need for Harmony Between one’s Career and Family. The problem of this study is how to keep the harmony between career and family in The Old Neighborhood novel. The object of the study is The Old Neighborhood novel by Avery Corman. It uses sociological perspective. This study belongs to qualitative research. In this method, there are two types of data sources, namely primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source is the novel and the secondary data is other material related to the study. Both data are collected through library research and analyzed by descriptive analysis. The result of the study shows the following conclusions based on the analysis it is clear that there is a close relation between this novel and the social reality in America in the late twentieth century. Corman wants to criticize the cases of need harmony between career and family in America in the late twentieth century through The Old Neighborhood novel.

Keyword: Harmony, The Old Neighborhood, Sociological Perspective
A. INTRODUCTION

The primary theme of *The Old Neighborhood* is people need to keep the harmony between their career and family. Avery Corman is an author who pays attention to the problem of it. He was born on November 28, 1935 in Bronx New York. He is author of the novel *Kramer vs Kramer* (1977) which created a sea of change in attitudes toward child custody with the public and in the courts in the United States and internationally. He is also the author of articles and essays in a large number of publications, including *The New York Times* for which he has written for various section of the newspaper. He was married for thirty seven years to Judy Corman.

Avery Corman thinks that people need to keep harmony between their career and family, so she wrote *The Old Neighborhood* novel. It was published in 1980 by Bantam Books. It was success in 80’s and got an Academy Award Winning motion picture. This novel has nineteen chapters and 212 pages.

*The Old Neighborhood* is a novel that has many public responses. The responses come from reader, critics, market and book industry. This novel has been reviewed by some book reviewer in some mass media. Erica Jong wrote her review in *New York Times*, January, 27th, 1981. She said that the novel has many conflicts and delightfully. The review also delivered by Pamela S Clark in *Guardian* website, January, 28th, 1981. She said that “I’ve also re-read this book over and over, always enjoying the brisk dialogue and dry humor”. She was very enjoying read this novel, because the story is good, so she read over and over.

There are pros and contras about the novel. The pros, said that *The Old Neighborhood* is a good novel because it tells the real story in social life. Bob in his essay in *Los Angeles Times*, February, 02nd 1981, states that “This book has been around something. It is great insight into growing up and struggle of a man to find himself, and enjoyable something”. Other the contras responses delivered by Lars Christensen in October, 30th 1980, said that, “The novel is not to be categorized as a masterpiece”. Also critical was delivered by Stefan
Kanfer. He said that the author should have a literary gift for dialogue and
predicament.

There are five reasons why the writer is interested in studying this novel. First, the characters in the novel has strong characteristic. There is no central character in the novel. Steve Robbin, he is an interesting character because he was optimist person to be a success man, educated, ambitious, love his family. Eventually he feels unhappy. He still contributes conflict to other characters. Beverly Hilman is a wife’s steve. She is an interesting character because she is an American modern woman, educated, ambitious, successful career. It is interesting case to be researched.

Second, the novel is set in a Kingsbridge Road- Grand Bronx. Bronx is a place in the war effort, to collect scrap paper for the scrap paper drive and has many social problems. The interesting of the setting in the novel is that the setting of the novel is a real life. Because of that, it can be imagined and described easily by the readers.

Third, the novel has interesting plot. Corman use traditional plot to tell the story in the novel, which contain beginnings, middles and ends. So, the conflict can be caught and easily to understand.

Fourth, the language of the novel can be understood easily. Corman uses pop-language in delivering her story although in some part he uses literary language. The description of characterization of the characters can be shown in their conversation and narration that delivered by the author.

The last points, the novel has crucial theme to be discussed. The theme of the story in the novel is Harmony between career and family in society is an action to be happier. Everything with harmonic is better and more appropriate. Moreover, the harmony in life will make someone be more tranquil in running their life because he or she will concern toward worldly enjoyment and divine transcendence in the same proportion. Krishnananda states that, “Harmony implies an adjustment of oneself with an environment that is external to oneself”. When there is no proper adjustment of one thing with another thing, we call it disharmony. When there a proper adjustment, a
smooth working of one principle, one fact, one object, one person with another, we regard it as harmony” (2003:3). Its means that there are two aspects in seeking harmony where is the two aspects must be balanced in giving treatment such as career and family. Therefore, the writer wants to study the novel by using sociological perspective (Swingewood and Laurenson, 1972: 11).

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study belongs to qualitative method (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3). In this method, there are two types of data sources, namely primary and secondary data source. The primary data source is the novel itself, meanwhile the secondary data sources are other materials related to the study. Both data are collects through library research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3).

In collecting data, the writer will takes some steps as follow: Read the novel repeatedly, taking notes of important parts both primary and secondary data, arranging the data into several groups based on its theoretical category, selecting particular parts considered important and relevant for analysis, and drawing conclusion and formulate its pedagogical suggestion.

In analyzing the data, the writer applies a descriptive approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 11). The writer analyzes the data based on sociological perspective. Focus will be paid on the meaning of need for harmony between one’s career and family reflected in The Old Neighborhood novel and in American society in late twentieth century.

C. RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The social reality in the late twentieth century in America is reflected by The Old Neighborhood novel through some aspects. The aspects are social, economy, politic, science and technology, culture, and religion.
1. FINDINGS

a) Social Aspect

In the twentieth century, a class model of Americans consists of working, middle and upper classes. This category based on American’s job status, income capital, and sometimes births (Wright in Marshall, 2005:34).

The social structure in the twentieth century can be seen from the social class of Americans. In his novel, Avery Corman creates the characters based on American social class. It consists of working, middle and upper classes. This category based on American’s job status. There are working class families such as Jerry’s family. They are poor. Jerry’s father is Rosen’s Dry Cleaning. The middle class is represented by Steve’s family. They are not rich but they are comfortable enough with their lives. Steve’s father is an assistant manager of Department Store. And Steve’s mother in law is a doctor. They are professional workers. The upper class is represented by character Arthur’s family. He is owner of electric baseball. His father works in Manhattan for a printing company. Arthur’s family has great wealth and great power in economy, and also has high income.

“Jerry lived in Bronx. his father was Rosen’s Dry Cleaning on Kingsbridge Road. Arthur was the rich one among us, his father worked in Manhattan for a printing company, and Arthur owned electric baseball”. (p.3)

“My parents had moved to this neighborhood when the year I was born. My father had been hired as a n assistant manager of a men’s haberdashery store on Fordham Road. He was retained in his job by a succession of store managers he never replaced”. (p.4)

Another important points of social aspects is social relation contributes the setting of place in this novel. Steve and Beverly lives in New York, known as elite town. In there they are becomes success in career. New York is describes as work city that high
incomes and the people are rich. Beverly and Steve are successful in career. But in Bronx a wife can’t works. So, when Steve persuades his family to stays in Bronx, his wife rejects. She more choose develops her career in New York.

b) Economic Aspect

Economics aspect contributes the economic conditions of characters. *The Old Neighborhood* novel reflects American economic conditions in late 20th century. It is represents in New York people. The New York is identical with rich people. They are from upper or middle class, so there is no problem with their economic condition. Most of them belong to royal family, advertising company, lawyer, doctor, baseball owner.

“The Colby Agency handled the advertising for retail stores, car dealership, real estate developers and few California-based household products. By New York standards we were understaffed by about twenty people and, as a result, all of us worked on everything”(p.33)

Economic aspects contribute the plot. *The Old Neighborhood* also shows the status of minority ethnic. They are like people in middle class to upper class. It depends on their education and environment background. It is shows by Beverly Hillman, who becomes a successful woman as a nursery playgroup and an owner boutique. Her intelligences can be compares with Steve Robin, her husband. In the other side, Steve robin from middle class, but his ambitions to be success man, so he wants high educations. Finally he became success in career as owner advertising company. It can be an example that education and good influences can improve someone’s life.

c) Politic Aspects

In twentieth century U.S. political history “presents not only works that represent the best of traditional political history but also those that integrate insight and methodologies of social and cultural history,
challenge conventional periodic stations and situate the American political experience in a comparative framework” (Christopher P.Loss, 2011).

Political aspect contributes the setting. *The Old Neighborhood* tells about family life in Neighborhood, Bronx New York. Most of Neighborhood people are participations of being part of nations at war in politic. It is represented by Steve Robin. When he was seven, war is began and eleven when it ended. Politic is breath their life. When the president Roosevelt death, a man who leads the nations out of the depression, the Commander-in-Chief. School is free one day for funeral, stores closed and sharing the sense of loss.

“On April 12, 1945, Franklin Delano Roosevelt died, the man who had led the nation out of the Depression, the Commander-in-Chief. People drifted into the streets and gathered on street corners to console each other. School was canceled on the day of the funeral, stores closed and sharing the sense of loss.”(p.8)

d) Science and Technology Aspects

In the late twentieth century, many people in America have high technology in their life. As a modern country during the century, the development of technology in America has been increasing. Mass media technologies such as radio, television, film, allows the communication political messages and entertainment with unprecedented impact.

The contribution of science and technology aspects to the characters and characterizations are reflects in the characters of the novel. Steve Robin is a top advertising man copywriter.

“In 1964 I was thirty years old, top advertising man. By 1969, I was earning $25,000 a year, considered a top salary for an advertising copywriter in Los Angeles.”(p.54)

Science and technology aspects contribute the property uses by the characters. In some parts, the characters uses telephone or mobile phones to communicates with their relations. Some of the characters
also uses car when they are going to some places. And have televisions to know everything. It shows the developments of science and technology in America in late twentieth century in communications and transportations.

“Within the week I received a phone call from someone at the Sloan Advertising.” (p.55)

“Do you ride horses? Cindy asked
“I go by taxi, Rose replied (p.52)

“A cable television station on Long Island presented a program called “lifestyle”, an interview show with people who were considered to have interesting occupation”. (p.87)

e) Cultural Aspects

American culture is rich and complex. It is caused by diversity of American population. *The Old Neighborhood* novel defines America as expressing itself through sports and arts.

Cultural aspects contribute the plot. Sports in American culture are complex. Some kinds of sports represent social status. It can be seen in Steve Robin lifestyles. He joins the basketball team when he is high school. He is a good player. He is always playing basketball with his friends. He is also plays football every Sunday. Sports can make relationship easier and closer.

“I was senior at De Witt Clinton High School, a starting forward on the basketball team”. (p.11)

“A Sunday morning touch football game at Harris field...”(p.184)

f) Religious Aspects

Religious aspect contributes the characters in *The Old Neighborhood* novel. Steve Robin is a Jews believer. He and his family often go to local churches and synagogues to pray. Other religious
aspect is reflected by Irish Catholics like Tommy McPheeley. They are dislikes Christ religion

“I was due my “Career Goals” interview with the school guidance. In the neighborhood to be Jewish and not to go college was to commit some unspeakable...” (p.15)

“Sunday we go to local churches and synagogues to pray for the safe return of Allied servicemen.” (p.7)

Religious aspect also contributes the setting of the story. Neighborhood, Bronx is beautiful city with the buildings of church. In this place divided between Jews and Irish Catholics.

“In the Neighborhood divided between Jews and Irish Catholics. Jews and Catholics were in the Big Fight together and on the killing of Christ.” (p.6)

2. DISCUSSION

Story is the reflection of what occurred in that time. The writer criticizes some aspects in the story such as social aspect, economic aspect, political aspect, science and technology aspect, cultural aspect and religious aspect. The social aspects contain social structure, social mobility and social relation. Avery Corman shows that there are still women more to choose her careers than family in American society.

The economic aspect in The Old Neighborhood shows the economic conditions in American in late twentieth century. It is describes from economic condition of the characters. Some of them belong to the rich and some of them belong to the poor. The property and health service also represents the economic aspect of the characters.

Political aspect contributes the setting. Bronx people like to join in politic. When one of the president Roosevelt dies, there are many people feeling lost.

Science and technology aspect contributes to the movie. It is shown by books, bus, car, television and telephone. Television and phone mobile take
big portion in the story. In the late twentieth century, many people of American have high technology in their life.

Avery Corman describes that sports and art are the parts of cultural aspect. In the novel, sports represent someone’s social status. Basketball and Football are the sports mentioned in the novel. Other cultural aspect is the habit of the characters and the setting of the story. Asking about the provenance of someone in Bronx is good thing, because it does not indicates the social class.

Religious plays important roles in American life. Most of Bronx people are Jewish. Other religion is describes in the novel is Irish Catholics. They are in the Big Fight together and on the killing of Christ.

Based on the sociological analysis of *The Old Neighborhood* novel above, the writer concludes that Avery Corman as the writer of this novel emphasizes the social conditions in American at the time. He shows the social reality in late twentieth century. There are still people that can not keep harmony between career and family in American society.

Avery Corman criticizes the social reality in American through the theme, story and characterizations in *The Old Neighborhood* novel. The theme of the story is “people need to keep the harmony between their career and family”. It is reflects in the major characters of the novel. Beverly Hillman is Steve wife’s, she is dislikes just stay at home. So, she is permits to Steve to create a works. He allows and she creates work for herself a playgroup in her basement. She becomes success in career and chance to spent time with her family is loss. Finally her family became bad and she decides to divorce and develops her career.

Avery Corman tells to reader through this novel that he is disagrees about social views in American society. Some of them think that woman career is good, but should be harmony between career and family.

Avery Corman gives the solutions for the problem in America through this novel. It is reflects in the plot. He tells that woman more choose to her career than family. It is reflects in the characters of Beverly Hillman. She is
a nursery playgroup. But she can be a successful woman as a teacher. She can be a successful woman because she always tries to get a better life. The contrary condition is reflects in Steve Robin. He wants that his wife like before, care with her family. The condition of her family is bad. But his wife is rejects and decided to divorce with him, because she wants to develops her career.

Finally, based on all aspects that are reflects in The Old Neighborhood, there is a firm relation between this novel and the American lifes in late twentieth century. Avery Corman shows that woman should be keep harmony between career and family in order to be happiness. Based on the analysis above, it is clear to the writers to state the social conditions which are suitable with the main idea of Avery Corman views by sociological perspective.

D. CONCLUSION

After analyzing The Old Neighborhood novel, the writer draws the following conclusions. It is apparent that there is a strong relation between this novel and the social reality in America in late twentieth century. This novel emphasizes the social aspect. The Old Neighborhood shows that gender in American. Corman wants to face the social problem in America through this novel. The novel shows some people needs to keep the harmony between their career and family. This theme of the novel is people needs to keep the harmony between their careers and family. Harmony is relates to balance. In this novel, there is unbalance between career and family. The practices of unbalances between careers and family is expresses in the plot of the story. When Beverly to be success womans in career, she does not cares with her family. The practices of unbalances is she more chooses to develops her careers than family. It’s give bad effects for social life. There is imbalances of supremacy in some aspects.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


