THE FAMILY-AND THEN SOME

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A child's concept of family is a little more general right before he formally enters school. And then, he starts reading preschool material that teaches him to read: My Family. This is Father, This is Mother, This is Ramon/Brother, This is Nena/Sister, This is Baby. And then, further on, he reads: This is Tagpi/Bantay. Bow-wow-wow. At this point, he starts getting a clearer and more specific concept. "Aha, these people (and dog) I share the same roof with has a collective name: FAMILY." The definition of family has gradually evolved, contingent on factors that we have little or no control over. Where the family unit in less contemporary times was composed of the nuclear elements--a father and a mother plus their offspring—sociology textbooks now give another type of family where the members of a nuclear family are supplemented by others—grandparents, uncles, aunts, in-laws, cousins, to name just a few extra members of a typical extended family. Indeed, the concept of "family" has reached a whole new meaning.

It is not unusual nowadays to have more unorthodox families: This is Mother, This is Sister, This is Brother, This is Baby, This is Skype/Yahoo Messenger (where we often see and talk to my Father who's working abroad). The extra component is common in almost every family that has a family member working abroad to support the brood. Yes, life has become challenging enough to necessitate that the family gets thrown apart by circumstance, not by choice. And then, there are the really unconventional unions: This is Father, This is Father, This is Baby. With all due respect to same-gender unions, the family has become not just the basic husband-wife- partnership-with-kids concept, but something more unique. Such unions do not deserve criticism, no matter what those holier-than-thou naysayers say to the contrary. If I may say so myself, for as long as the child that such a partnership decides to raise is brought up to be responsible, God-fearing and of good character, then far be it for other people to start hurling sticks and stones.

Having a single parent-family is a bold step to take for any individual--for after all, didn't Hillary Clinton say that it takes a village to raise a child? Well, not entirely, no. If a person undertakes to raise a child in the best way possible, imbuing the child with the proper values and responsibly providing everything that any two-parent family can also provide, then, who needs an entire village? Besides, this writer does not think Ms. Clinton had actually meant that an entire village of people is literally required to raise a kid—how'd that many people fit into a house? (Ha-ha!)

In conclusion, the family is an integral part of society. It is therefore dependent upon those trying to raise that very unit to take that sacred, preordained duty to heart—to create an environment where every member is able to grow, develop, thrive into their fullest potential and be productive members of society.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are the two types of families described in the second paragraph? To which type does your family belong?
2. What are the common reasons why some family members need to find employment abroad? How do you feel about this fact?
3. What are your thoughts about same-gender/same-sex unions? Are they acceptable/legal in your country?
4. In your opinion, is it better to raise a child alone, without a spouse? Why?
5. What are the common problems that families of today face? Can those problems ever be addressed? How?