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Film Analysis

The film Mrs. Doubtfire, directed by Chris Columbus, shows how the divorce rates increased drastically in the year of 1993 and shows the gender roles of parents in divorced families. It shows how the divorce rate increased, who usually gets custody of the children, and how children in divorced families are affected. The film won eight awards and had another six nominations. This comedy starring Robin Williams and Sally Field is about a man named Daniel Hilliard who recently finds himself divorced. He loses custody of his three children that he loves very dearly. He also loses his job as a voice provider for cartoons because he did not share the same values as his boss. In order to spend more time with his children, he applies for a job as their nanny. With help from his brother, who so happens to be a make-up artist, he dresses up as an older Scottish nanny and calls himself Mrs. Doubtfire. His ex-wife Miranda hires him oblivious to everything.

 Divorce rates increased dramatically in the 1990s. In the film Daniel and Miranda Hilliard were married for thirteen years. Finally, Miranda couldn’t take Daniel’s unpredictable and hectic ways any longer and she finally filed for a divorce. “We‘ve just grown apart. We’re different. I want a divorce,” (Mrs. Doubtfire) “Studies show that divorce rates were the highest from the years of 1990 to 1995. The annual number of divorces was seventeen percent higher in

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1993 than in 1975.” (Leveling of Divorce in the United States,409 ). Whereas divorce was once seen as a negative thing, this shows how it was now starting to be more accepted in American society. Couples were starting to now realize that they no longer had to put up with their spouses any longer. People are now no longer ashamed and embarrassed to admit that they are filing for a divorce. Divorce is now very common in American culture.

In the film both parents wanted custody of their three young children. Miranda had the steadier job whereas Daniel was in between jobs so she gained temporary custody. “Since at the present time Mr. Hillard has no place to live and no employment, it is the court’s ruling to award sole custody to Mrs. Hillard,” (Mrs. Doubtfire). Daniel was allowed to see his children every Saturday. This was not good enough for him because he had not spent a day without his children since the day that they were born. The court ruled that he had three months to get a stable living environment and a job with steady income and before they would review his case again.

 In most divorced families custody of young children is a very big problem. “Studies show that in divorce cases, mothers get sole custody eighty-two percent of the time. Cases usually do not go to court. Fifty-two percent of divorced families decide on their own who should get sole custody of the children,” (How is Child Custody Decided). There is also joint custody in most divorce cases. In the film sole custody went to the mother. “Mr. and Mrs. Hillard, although these custody proceedings tend to favor the mother, we also realize , perhaps now more than ever, that it is not in the child’s best interest to deprive him or her of an obviously loving father,” (Mrs. Doubtfire). This was what usually happened in the year of 1993 as the movie Mrs. Doubtfire exhibits.

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Divorce should not be taken lightly when there are children involved. Divorce is usually very hard on children. “In the movie, the Hillard’s had three children, twelve year old Chris, fourteen year old Lydia, and five year old Natalie,” (imdb). The children did not take the divorce too well. They were always complaining about how they missed their father and wished they could spend more time with him. They were upset at the fact that their mother was hiring a nanny when their father offered to watch them. Chris Hillard blamed himself for the divorce because his parents got divorced right after his father threw him a birthday party that his mother did not approve of. This is common in most divorced families. Children usually blame themselves for the divorce, when in reality it was not their fault. “Studies show that children in households of a divorce show lower levels of well-being than those who are in a may have problems committing to relationships in the future. Although there are some negative traditional home,” (The Impact of Divorce on Children,621). “Fatherless homes account for 63% of youth suicides, 90% of homeless/runaway children, 85% of children with behavior problems, 71% of high school dropouts, 85% of youths in prison, well over 50% of teen mothers.” (National Center of Health Statistics)Children also commonly think that it is their duty to somehow get their parents back together. “Statistics on separation and divorce proves that eighty-seven percent of separated couples proceed to obtain a divorce. The remaining thirteen percent reunite after separation,” (Statistics on Divorce Couples Getting Back Together). This is not how the divorce turned out in the film. It is also shown that as long as the divorce is civilized and is not a stressful divorce children will adjust fine. This film shows how some divorced families in the year 1993 were dealing with child custody and how children reacted to divorce.

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In the film Mrs. Doubtfire gender roles are also depicted. Whereas the male of the household is usually depicted as the sole financial provider, Miranda had this role in the film. In the movie, Daniel was always in between jobs and was always goofing off. Miranda owned her own interior decorating business and was doing quite well. She is always coming home late from her hectic day at work. This relates to the year of 1993 because at the time women were leaving their role as a stay at home mom and branching out into the workforce. “Studies show that sixty percent of women work outside the home. Studies also show that of working married women, forty-eight percent provide half or more of the household income and ninety-five percent of family financial decisions are made by women,” (Women in the Workforce). Women were now starting to work hard to pay the bills instead of sitting at home.

 The film Mrs. Doubfire, directed by Chris Columbus is a great film. It was released in 1993 and it showed how families were dealing with divorce at the time. It showed gender roles in divorced families, who usually got custody of the children and how children reacted to divorce. The comedy got great reviews and won many awards. This film would be highly recommended to watch.

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