

The postmodern
family is diverse,
meaning that roles



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In this essay I will firstly define what is diversity and I will then look at the Postmodernist's perspective and what makes them assume that postmodern family is diverse. I will also look at other perspectives some whom are interactionists and some who are functionalists. Some see it from micro level and some see it from macro level. I will discuss the arguments further which may be for or against the Postmodernists. I will be particularly looking at feminist's point of view in depth which will be against the Postmodernist's argument. At last I will have my conclusion, in that conclusion I will have the overall summary of all the arguments for or against the Postmodernists.

Postmodern family is diverse, which means that the roles and power are often shared within a family. This is where every member of the family including children are given several tasks to do and every member of the family has its own power within the family. Rising divorce rates, births outside marriage, falling marriage rates longer life spans, ethnic diversity, changes in women's position, the decline of religion , changes in law and other trends, are all contributing to greater family diversity.

Postmodernists, argue that this diversity means that we can no longer talk about the family. Postmodernism celebrates cultural diversity and sees individuals making choices about identity by joining a variety of social groups and through consumptions.

Burghes (1997) found that fathers were taking an increasingly active role in the emotional development of their children. He argued that fathers paid a great role in increasing children's confidence, self-esteem and self-concept.

He believed that fathers were the ones that always stood up for their children when their children felt upset, depressed or unhappy.

The above argument explains that fathers play a great role in their children's development especially in their emotional development and that fathers support their children and play a great role in their developments which seems a bit confusing because there are more single parent families and, in those single parent families, there are more women with children than men and if fathers cared so much about their children then why would they want to leave their children and marry someone else and have children with them. How can fathers play an emotional role in their children's lives when they don't even live them?

Postmodernists don't just reject the existence of mass culture but also argue that the class domination that produced it has also disappeared. In a postmodern society, individuals can choose and consume whatever cultural products they want to presumably only if they can afford: FM radio might be cheap, going to the cinema is not. In postmodern society new technologies have encouraged people to produce as well as consume cultural products e.g. football and music.

Beck (1992) who was also a postmodernist argues that, in the postmodern age, fathers can no longer rely on jobs to provide a sense of identity and fulfilment. He claimed that increasingly, fathers look to their children to give them a sense of identity and purpose.

Beck who is a postmodernist claims that fathers look to their children for support whereas Burghes who is also a postmodernist claims that fathers
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were taking an increasingly active role in the emotional development of their children and that the children look up to their fathers for support and sincerity which does not really support postmodernist's arguments because two people who are both postmodernists but they support completely opposite arguments to each others.

Feminists go against the postmodernists and argue that women is innocent and is being pushed down by men . They claim that woman plays an important part in her children's lives and she is the one that takes care of the children, gives them the maternal love and gives the security that child needs. Feminists believe that women were more likely to suffer domestic violence than men. Many women fail to report violence because they feel that they may not be taken seriously or because they are afraid of the repercussions. Sometimes women are also scared of their husbands or they are scared that if they leave their husbands then there would be no body to support them and their children. Feminists' evidence, indicates that wome are likely to have a dual burden- they are expected to be mainly responsible for the bulk of domestic tasks despite holding full-time jobs.

Dryden's (1999) who supports the feminist's argument, his qualitative study of 17 couples found that women still had major responsibility for housework and childcare. Similarly, studies of unemployed men indicate that, although they do more around the home, their wives, even when working fulltime, do the lion's share of housework and childcare. A quantifiable evidence, showed that women are still likely to have dual burden and they are expected to be responsible for the bulk of domestic tasks despite holding down fulltime jobs.

Dryden found that such inequality was a constant source of friction between
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couples and number of studies of marriage, notably by Hart (1976), have argued that this is a major cause of marital breakdown.

I disagree with the above research because I believe that doing research on only seventeen couples is not good enough because there might be millions of couples out there who may have the completely opposite view to Dryden and although it was a qualitative research it still has more to consider. It could be possible that Dryden might have looked at one distinct group for example the people he knows or people who live near by.

Feminists also argue that it is the woman that is responsible for the emotional, social and physical well-being of the children and the husband. They claim that father does not even know what is going on in the house, he expects the women to get every thing done ready before he actually gets home from work e. g. tea and dinner on the table including other household chores done.

Duncombe and Marsden (1995) who support the feminists argument, found that their male partners were lacking in terms of emotional participation, i. e. men found it difficult to express their feelings, to tell their partners how they felt about them and relate emotionally to their children. Duncombe and Marsden argue that this increases the burden on women because they feel they should attempt to compensate and please all parties in the home. They argue that women consequently spend a great deal of time soothing the emotions of partners and children. This leads to neglect of their own psychological well-being, and can have negative consequences for their mental and physical health.

The above argument talks about women being mentally oppressed by their husbands and children. Duncombe and Marsden (1995) also claim that women's most time is spent soothing their partner's emotions which creates problem for themselves and these problem affect the women's mental and physical health. If women are given all the house chores to do and are given all the other responsibility for example looking after the children and shopping, then obviously their mental and physical health will be affected.

Feminists also point out that society has, until fairly recently, condoned male violence in the home. Both the state and the criminal justice have failed to take the problem seriously. Whatever the explanation, feminists would argue that as long as men have the capacity to commit such violence, there can never be equality within a family.

Another feminists Bernard's found that the men in her study of (1982) were more satisfied with their marriage than wives, many of whom expressed emotional loneliness. Moreover, these men had no idea that their wives were unhappy.

Bernad argues that men were more happy and were satisfied than women. Well, if the men must have been satisfied and would have been happy because they were getting the love and the affection from their wives and must have spent time with their wives then, why did women expressed loneliness when the men were complwtly satisfied. Bernard's research does not really support his other argument or point.

Feminists also claim that soon as the women started the job, the roles changed and then became responsible for all the expenses for example bills and so on.

Gillian Leighton (1992) who also supported the feminists, discovered that the power to make decisions changed when male become unemployed. In her study of professional couples, working wives often took over responsibility for bills and initiated cutbacks in spending.

Well, if the men came unemployed then patently women has to bear all the expences simply because the men is not earning and women is and I don't know why women should not because she works for family not for any one ealse.

Feminists claim that women should stay at home and should not go to work. They believe that men should be the breadwinner and should go out to work because they believe that no one can do better parenting than mothers and the children also need the maternal love more than their father's love.

Warin (1999), in their study of 95 families in Rochdale, found that fathers, mothers and teenagers children overwhelmingly subscribed to the view that the male should be the breadwinner, despite changes in employment and family life, and that mothers were the expert in parenting. Fathers in this study felt considerable pressure to provide for their families and this was intensified by demands from teenager children for consumers goods and designer-label fashion items.

Doing a study on ninety five families in Rochdale might not prove to be useful because there are two reasons: one, doing a research on only 95 families might not be useful because it is the answer of the whole world and that they might have the same background, two; doing it in Rochdale is only looking at one distinct group and it might be the view of what the people who live in Rochdale think and not the people who live in other towns, cities and countries.

Feminists also have this argument that fathers do not spend quality time with their families, they believe that fathers are too busy working and do not have enough time to interact with their families.

Dex who was another feminist also noted that half of the fathers reported that 30 per cent (as well as 6% of the mothers) worked more than 48 hours a week on a regular basis. It is unlikely that fathers in this situation will be spending equality time interacting with their families.

On one hand a feminist Dex argues that fathers should spend more quality time with their families on the other hand Warin who is also supports feminist's argument, argues that fathers should be the breadwinners and should go out to work and mothers should stay at home to look after their children. As you can see, two people who are both feminists but support different arguments, which does not really suggest that feminists are finally right.

Feminists argue that women suffer from domestic violence nearly every day but they refuse to report it either because they are too scared of their partner or are scared that if they reported the violence then their partners might leave them and their children.

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Stanko (2000) found that one domestic is reported by women to the police every minute in the UK. Many women fail to report violence because they feel that they may not be taken seriously or because they are afraid of the repercussions. Sometimes women are too scared of their husbands or they are scared that if they leave their husbands then there would be no body to support hem and their children.

If women love they husbands and are also scared tht if they repoted the violence then their husbands might leave them then why complain about i and not just suffer?

New right claim that it is very vital that the child gets the mother's as well as father's love and the women should learn to cope with their husbands no matter what they do to them for their children's sake because they should only care about the affects it has on their children's life. They claim that children without both fathers and mothers are more likely to fail in every thing than the children with the fathers and the mothers. They believe that it extremely important that child has a great childhood and this can not happen with one parent in other words they claim that single parent families are bad and do not leave a good affects on their children. They argue that single parent families are bad role models front of their children.

Erdos (2000) who supports the New Right's argument, suggests that fatherless children are less likely to be socialized into the culture of discipline and compromise found in nuclear families and therefore are less likely to be successful parents themselves. It is suggested that such children lack an authority figure to turn to in times of crises and as a result peer group and

mass media have increased in influence. It is also argued that such influence is likely to lead to an increase in social problems, such as delinquency, sexual promiscuity, teenage pregnancy and drug use.

Erdo argues that fatherless children are less likely to be successful in their lives. He believes that children are also going to experience what their father or mother experienced which is to settle in a single parent family and therefore are less likely to be successful parents themselves.

On the other hand Functionalists see the sexual division of the labour in the home as biological inevitable.

Women are seen as naturally suited to the caring and emotional role, which parson (1955) terms the ' expressive role'. They also argue that the role of the family is to keep the society going gradually and smoothly.

Parson claims that the role of the family is to keep going smoothly and to support its family members.

Liberals argue that there are different roles within the family and it does not necessarily mean that every one has to have one role within the family.

Liberal feminists believe that women have made real progress within the family and particularly in education and economy. They generally believe that men are adapting to change and although, they culturally lag behind women in terms of attitudes and behaviour, the future is likely to bring further movement towards domestic and economic equality.

Marxist- Feminists claim that housewife role serves the needs of capitalism in that it maintains the present workforce and reproduce future-power.

Radical feminists believe that women does what the men tells her to do and she actually does it and they also believe that she does every thing in the interest of the men.

Radical feminists such as Delphy (1984) believe that ' the first operation is the oppression of women by men- women are an exploit class'. The housewife role , is therefore, a role created by patriarchy and geared to the service of men and their interests. Like functionalism both Marxists and radicals forms of feminism see women's exploitation and oppression as rooted in their biological role as mothers.

Marxists argue that poor ones are being pushed down by the capitalists. This includes the poor women who are being pushed down by the rich men and women and that they have no where to go or no body to look up to.

In 1973, Young and Wilmot claimed that the traditional segregated division of labour in the home- men as breadwinner and women as housewives/mothers -was breaking down. The relationship between husband and wife (the conjugal relationship) was becoming- at least in middle -class families - more joint or symmetrical. This trend towards egalitarian was cause by decline in the extended family, and its replacement in the late 20th century by the privatized nuclear family , as well as increasing opportunities in paid job for women.

Interactionists Catherine Hakim (1996) suggests that feminists underestimate women's ability to make rational choices. It is not patriarchy or men that are responsible for the position of the women in families. She argues that women choose to give more commitment to family and children, and consequently they have less commitment to work than men have.

Other Interactionists such as Muslim scholars claim that the women in Asian families are being pushed down by men. The main reason for this is that the women are being brought up like that in their primary socialization by her parents. She is told to stay with her husband for all her life no matter what her husband is like. The women should also stay with their husbands in his sad moments of the life and happy moment of the life.

Others argue that women are too scared to say something front of the husband or his family because they are forced to live in extended families where they are not even allowed to go outside the house or talk to any body other than the husband and his family. Some women are also scared of what is being shown on the television recently about the Asian men killing their wives because the man saw the woman talking to another man and had the wrong idea and thought that the woman had a personal relationship with other man or the woman was not bringing enough money in the house and has unable to fulfil men's needs such as drug and cigarettes.

On the whole Feminists, Radical feminists, Liberals, Marxists, Marxists-feminists and the New Right disagree with some of the postmodernist's claims. The main reason why they don't agree with the postmodernists is because they believe that they are being over simplistic. Feminists claim

that women are being pushed down by men and they are the ones that suffer the domestic violence by men and men don't even bother knowing where their wives and kids are and all they want is every thing done and ready before they get home from work .

For example Dryden's qualitative study of 17 couples found that women had major responsibilities for housework and children and indicates that women still did more house work than men despite holding fulltime jobs. Where as Burghes (1997) who was a postmodernist claimed that fathers were taking an increasingly active role in the emotional development of their children. He argued that fathers paid a great role in increasing children's confidence, self-esteem and self-concept. He believed that fathers were the ones that always stood up for their children when their children felt upset, depressed or unhappy.

On the other hand interactionists such as Catherine Hakim (1996) disagrees with feminists argument and claims that it is not men's fault and it is not the men or patriarchy that is responsible for the women's position in families. She claims that women choose to give more commitment to family and children, and consequently they have less commitment to work than men have.

New Right have a totally different view about the women, they claim that it is very important that women stays with her husband no matter what happens because the women should care about her children and their future. They claim that children without the father are very likely to unsuccessful in life than the children with the father. They argue that it is very vital that the

child gets the love from both parents and that single parent families are bad role models front of their children. For example Erdos (2000) suggests that fatherless children are less likely to be successfully socialized into the culture of discipline and compromise found in nuclear family and so are less likely to successful parents themselves.

Some interactionists such as muslim scholars agree with New Right's claim and believe that women is always better off with a first husband/man no matter how he is like because it involves children and children need both parents to succeed in life and if the women does remarry or leaves the husband than it is shame for the whole family and for the parent's of the women. In general there is no right or wrong answer to who has the control and power within a family. All the functionalists and interactionists, and have different ideas about control and power within a family.

So on the whole it is a point of view. If women specialises in home life she is being appressed? How much choice has she got ? If men and women have diffent, post modaninsts would argue it is not necessarily oppression. When there is no choice - does the mom have any choice. So I prefer to agree with the interactionists and say that the group dunamis of each family need to be booked at to see if power is being shared. When men start to work, they believe that they want the power over the family dynamics well they have got power over the money and expences what they don't have power over is their children, their hose and their children because they decide to go out and work and while the mother takes the power over the house nd children. They decide to loss that power well, why complain about it?