

# Postmodernism effect on family



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## CONTEMPORARY PARENTING ESSAY

*Contemporary Parenting?*

The post-modern society has been created out of a backdrop of pluralism, democracy, religious freedom, consumerism, mobility, and a plethora of technological advancements. Participants in this post-modern era are able to see that there are many structured and unstructured beliefs, multiple concepts of reality, and an a wide construct of world views; a society that has lost its faith in absolute truth, where it is cool to have doubt as a constant companion and in which people have the right and necessity to choose what to believe (O'Hare and Anderson 1991).

The decade of the 1970s, Shorter (1975) appears to have been the first to deconstruct the concept of family for a more liberal emerging post-modern family. Shorter to this end, cited three clearly conceptualised characteristics: adolescent indifference to the family's identity; instability in the lives of couples, accompanied by rapidly increasing divorce rates; and destruction of the "nest" notion of nuclear family life with the liberation of women. In that 70's era, Shorter cited limited reconstructions in patterns of child socialization. The liberating movement for women in the deconstruction of mothers caring for young children in the home to the use of state subsidized paid child care providers, with the mother entering once again into the world of paid employment.

' *The Children's plan: Building Better Futures*' offers clear and comprehensive explanations of ' why' such legislative procedures are necessary to engage parents in ensuring that children are, educated and

protected in a 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain. This groundbreaking report concentrates on several aspects of children's rights, in particular having listened to the needs of parents, in particular, the now common diversity of 'family' and 'parenting' that is no longer 'cereal packet', nuclear or indeed symmetrical in models, that was bespoken of previous generations (Abercrombie & Warde 2000). What is apparent, is that 'family and 'parenting' is not vastly different and extremely contemporary. Through the '*Every Child Matters*' pilot programme, it has been proven by substantive research that: "Families are substantively, the bedrock of society and the place for nurturing happy, capable and resilient children: "In our consultation, parents made it clear that they would like better and more flexible information and support that reflects the lives they lead" DfCSF (p. 5).

There are five core principles of these directives to engage and protect children's rights offers carefully planned concepts that will become the foundations for better children's services that are enshrined in law to be protective. The specific principle that supports parents is simply: '*Government does not bring up children - parents do - so*'. This fundamental tenet is of importance in the decoding and reconstruction of the notion of parenting in which the new concept in deconstruction of the notion of 'family', in particular the heterosexual family unit, for a more liberalised notion of family that embraced, single-parent, surrogate-motherhood, and gay and lesbian families, and other less popular variants of the post-modern family; in some quarters, these have been viewed as the negative results of the changed noted above, or more fundamentally, as the breakdown products, of a pluralist society. Other conceptual factors can be noted as

follows: Despondence with the societal norms of human progress that had embedded modern society, with the unifying benefits and regularity of the comforting moral fabric; affecting the notion of a lack of faith in the previously established order.

The study by Edwards & Gillies (2005), is mindful of core factors in parenting practices, albeit, lack of. ' Resources in Parenting: Access to Capitals' conducted to conceptualize an explicit policy focus for parenting, and the fundamental need for a meaningful gathering of cohesive norms and values about responsible parenting practice, as well as significant worries about the reality and creation of social capital. Moreover, they saw social change as the causal effect of weakened and broken support systems that, involved a greater failure in maintaining, parental/family and community reciprocal obligations, that saw a divergence of widespread uncertainty in new parents understanding their roles and responsibilities. But, the most stark consequences of poor parenting, amongst, younger single parents was a lack of professional instruction in learning/understanding the skills comprising good parenting practices.

The deconstruction of economic foundations underlying social conformity, for example, the need for women to marry well to stand against hardship financially and to stratify their class status to the next generation, or the need to become mothers in wedlock for them to be benefactors of family estate, that would be their core foundation of livelihood. The fundamental reconstruction of the electronic age, through access to computerised media, which both inspired and legitimise the post-modern new era family reconfiguring and in doing so the conceptualisation of modern parenting

which at best can be seen as contemporary; that may involve single adults, same sex parents or indeed older grandparents taking on parental role in later life, where younger parents, who formed 'comprised' contemporary parenting models' are less able to cope with parenting in which they were subjugating responsibilities close friends and even less able friends, which in effect, makes some clarity of Edwards & Gillies (2005) study, in which the closeness of the extended family was seen to be diluted and in many case study examples, notional or non-existent.

With the ability to bring the world closer together in a plethora of technological advancement, one might see the advent of contemporary support networks for parents, accessible, but, where it has reduced the separations effect that was imposed between people by physical distance, physical barriers, and social barriers, electronic communications and other media has created a 'global village' world that in the post-modern era, contrives to foster anonymous intimacy through internet talk, virtual advice columns, electronic mail, computer bulletin boards. In some part also providing provided advisory/counselling and other personal services available through a wealth of mediums, which are not necessitated through face-to-face contact or encounter.

The focused anonymous and instant intimacy has encroached into the world of contemporary parenting in which instant advice for parents in crisis can come from a wealth of 'do good ad-hoc advisors' where in-experienced parents, moreover, single parents, are engaged in anonymous social support, networking, and telecommunications, in which no names are mentioned, and anonymity is the key concept in this technological age.

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Thereby, creating a virtual world in which the poorly skilled parent grasps at 'ad hoc' advice that is often misleading, creating a systemic growth in poor practice and engagement of child protection systems, that in recent periods have been seen to be lacking. Moreover, we are seeing in some recent cases (Clemmie, Baby P etc), the professional engaged in 'child care support structure' are not parents, and often work to 'textbook' scenarios to aide real families, stringent target drivers and outcomes, which result in many cases of neglect, poor practices and care (Utting 2007). Therefore, with the demise of the 'cereal packet', nuclear and symmetrical family models, parenting in part is becoming another casualty of modern society, in which the state is engaging in providing incentives to stemming the tide of poor childcare practices through projects like: Every Child Matters, Sure Start and First Start, in the hope of engaging contemporary less able, less economically viable parents to be 'good parents' (Gillies 2005, Utting 2007 & DfCSF 2007).

Utting's study in 2007 for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) found many situations where contemporary parents were unable to cope or feel secure in asking for professional assistance, for fear of reprisals. Moreover, he found that those parents in most need were less likely to access support, for a plethora of reasons: trust, access, availability, venue, age of professional, prejudice and even poor recommendations. But, starkly, 'fear' of professionals taking over childcare was a predominant factor where single younger parents lived in significant levels of poverty.

Gergen (1991) once described the post-modern family form as "the saturated family," whose participants feel their lives scattering in intensified

busyness. In addition to taking in an explosion of exposure to a world of deconstructed values, attitudes, opinions, lifestyles, and personalities, family members have become embedded in a world that has enshrined the conceptualisation of multiplicity of relationships. The technologies that now embed our social saturation (e. g. the car, telephone, television, and jet plane) have created deconstructed, and in part, dysfunctional concept of what is family, in a soup of consistent turmoil and a sense of fragmentation, chaos, and discontinuity.

The concept of 'family' is no longer a 'cereal packet' picture of a cosy environment in which parenting is a gentle and professional time honoured art, with extended family involvement. We are now seeing the demise of the family as previously known, with more diversity in the parenting model, for a more fluid and protracted notion where children are raised in contemporary parenting models: singles, teenage, unmarried, same sex etc. Some such models are sound; in particular where the parents are engaged and proactive in ensuring strong values and child raising practices, this is seen in many aspects of single professional parent households. Gay/Lesbian adoptive parents are often slighted by fundamental groups as poor models, or indeed, dysfunctional models, but, on the contrary, many gay/lesbian parents are proving to be stricter and more disciplined raising children who are well rounded and more able to cope with a contemporary world (Gillies 2005 & Utting 2007). Nevertheless, in comparison in often teenage/less educated households, where poverty is a clear factor, remarkably it is not the 'poverty' that tends to be the rationale for poor parenting, it is the causal effects of: stress, depression, illness, low income and poor networks that

impact of disturbing and disrupting good practices (Utting 2007). Utting' found in his extensive study of academic case studies, that at best, most contemporary parenting models were sound, and where they were not, significant dysfunctional factors like alcohol and drug dependence by parents was a contributing factor, but, in the main, where parents were in diverse less affluent circumstances: poor housing, dysfunctional communities, health/care issues, nevertheless, desire the best for their children.

With the diversity in childcare provision, where it is shared between the contemporary family and day care, new problems have arisen. While some children thrive on dual socialisation, others fail, unable to grasp either the environment or to the demands of daily transition from one environment to the other. The young child may be unable to form the necessary communication link between the two environments. Responsibilities now blurred and are seen to be divided between home and care centre; as a result, neither may be providing some crucial aspects of child development. For example, neither the care centre nor working parents may perceive themselves in charge of helping the child to develop the capacity to exercise self-control nor of teaching the child basic social comportment, such as table manners, greeting rituals, narration of daily events, and interview skills required for social orientation. This interesting conceptualisation has led the state to provide clarity and support through its extensive children's legislation, regulation and project provision, in the hope that those parents who are able to retain employment are enabled to ensure safe and professional support for their children. Equally, those less enabled parents are encouraged through projects like 'sure start' to offer, guide and support



learning in parenting skills, whilst improving education and learning that potentially will empower the parent to seek new skills and employment/advancement.

The focus of parent education was development of the whole child. In contrast, parenting in the post-modern world is perceived as a learned technique with specific strategies for dealing with particular issues. The target has shifted from the whole child to developing the child's positive sense of self-esteem. In the modern era, parents made the effort to fit advice to the particular needs of the child; Elkind (1992) points out that the directive post-modern techniques may be easier for parents but the child may be deprived of customized treatment. Moreover, he strongly believes that the focus on the whole child should not be lost. Interestingly in this era of contemporary parenting, we are finding diversity at the core of parent development (Utting 2007).

The family home, is found to be no longer a refuge of harmony, serenity, and understanding, as a once cosy modern era projected, has become in many post-modern constructs the site of confrontation between people of different ages and genders, who have personal ideologies and social constructs that are as diversely suspended as misplaced objects in an untidy drawer. Many self-help organizations, cash in on this deconstructed and dysfunctional family to bring ground rules, re-focus and construction in the often tense overload by holding workshops, reality television counselling in which the participants learn to take on their personal past history, social dysfunctions and deconstructions, to try to rebuild the sense of value and purpose that was once so clearly focused in the once modern era. The sense of loss for a <https://assignbuster.com/postmodernism-effect-on-family/>

society that was constructed with family values, rules, and concepts, has become the loss and bereavement counsellor's (the professional child care worker) nightmare clients, a post-modern family in reality meltdown; a cast off society, has thrown away the foundational fabric for a less picturesque reality, that is here today and gone tomorrow.

In conclusion, it is clear that the nuclear family was not at all perfection. The revolution that led to post-modern life corrected old imbalances in society through de-differentiation of parental and gender roles. Yet these radical social changes may have created new imbalances by increasing demands on children and adolescents. In so doing the concept and notion of the contemporary family, with all its flaws is here to stay. The noisy debate of the 'back to basics' lobby with its moralistic overtones in both political and religious circles, remains hollow in its effect, for a return to the foundational and constructed past of cereal packet family values, societal constructs of right and wrong, balance and harmony; in part a re-construction of the modern era, with a plethora of the post-modern era with foundational ground rules, constructs and concepts that knit together the very fabric of society. In part, having all the joys of the post-modern era with the sense of restrictive citizenship and responsibility of the modern, in which diversity and inclusion is purely 'tokenism'.

Furthermore, in part the post-modern deconstruction clears the slate for the fundamental regrouping or reconstruction of reality into new underlying constructs and new paradigms that reveal a model of family life that is contemporary, viable and refreshing. However, the stark consequential tenets of which must be the state providing cohesive available sound

parenting skills for those that are struggling and support where necessary like safe child care provision for those who are not.

Nevertheless, the academic debate will continue, on the validity of the contemporary parenting models revealing themselves in society. But what is abundantly clear in academic literature, published enquiry report and news media; where some professionals remain practically unskilled as actual parents and 'textbook' models are proactively used, where in the formative, 'cereal packet' concept of family/parenting, the professional health visitor, social worker etc were mainly middle aged former nurses who as mothers themselves, could draw upon their own learning, balanced with textbook learning to support new parents. Sadly in an era where the 'back to basics lobby' cry for formative values to be reinstated, we are still finding professionals, reasoning and supporting a 'one textbook model fits all' to some parenting techniques that are significantly failing struggling/dysfunctional parents and children. Notwithstanding this, the lessons being currently learnt from recent child protection enquires (Clembie & Baby P etc), serve as stark examples of how professionals who support parents need to fully understand the workings of our now contemporary parenting and family unit with all their diversity. Only in doing so, will contemporary parenting become a safely embedded model for a modern contemporary British society.

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