Postmodernism

Postmodern society has two key characteristics

1. Diversity and fragmentation

Society is increasingly fragmented, with a broad diversity of subcultures rather than one shared culture. People create their identity from a wide range of choices, such as youth subcultures, sexual preferences and social movements such as environmentalism.

2. Rapid social change

New technology such as the internet, email and electronic communication have transformed our lives by dissolving barriers of time and space, transforming patterns of work and leisure and accelerated pace of change making life less predictable.

Postmodernist theorists

Giddens: In late modernity there has been a transformation of intimacy. Individuals no longer seek the kind of love associated with traditional marriage, based on the idea of lifelong commitment to a partner.

Beck: We live in a risk averse societyFor some, the risk of marriage is too uncertain... 'what if it doesn't last?' Cohabiting, staying single or living apart together are more attractive options.

Stacey: There is no dominant family type People change family types as they move through their life course

Bauman: liquid love (2003)Family bonds are becoming weaker and there is a lack of certainty about roles and responsibilities in the family

Postmodern view on the family

Postmodernists argue that we no longer live in the modern world with predictable orderly structures, such as the nuclear family. Instead society has entered a new, chaotic postmodern stage. In postmodern society, family structures are incredibly varied and individuals have much more freedom of choice in aspects of their lives which would have been relatively constrained in the past i.e. lifestyles, personal relationships ad family arrangements.

Criticisms of postmodernism

Lyotard's idea about the collapse of grand narratives can be criticised because it is itself a 'grand narrative'

thinkers on the left argue that p-m is a middle class, intellectual view point – a luxury of the chattering class – the new proletariat in the developing world may not see the relevance of post-modernism to their lives.

Social thought that focuses on how we construct our identities in a world of hyper-reality is uncritical. One might argue that it suffers from a 'myopia of the visible'. Just because the world appears more fragmented, and just because our media-mediated world is removed from reality doesn't mean there isn't a reality out there that needs to be understood – Lets face it once the oil runs out and three quarters of the planet is dying because of global warming 'actual reality' might once again begin to seem to be more real than hyper reality.

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