

## **Woozling Shared Parenting**

Feminism is an established hegemony. It's a power structure. The foundational concept which guides the policies which feminism backs is patriarchal power and control of women by men. In the domestic arena the feminist perception is that men have, historically, controlled women's financial independence and women's fertility. This perception led to the central objective of feminism being to make women independent of men and for women to have absolute control over fertility, the latter including contraception, abortion rights and control over children.

These combined objectives meant an imperative for women to be able to eject men from the family as and when they wished, whilst retaining the children and as much material advantage as possible. In other words, the central policy of feminism was always to give women the power to dissolve the nuclear family, should they be so inclined, with minimal detriment to themselves. Even now, when only 50% of children in the UK live with their fathers to age 16, the overwhelming majority of our society still does not believe that feminism has always had, as its objective, the destruction of the nuclear family.

Feminism, you see, is about equality. No, it isn't. Feminism is politics, and politics is the pursuit of power. Feminism is therefore the pursuit of power.

Well, the pursuit of power in the service of a morally, and factually, valid objective is one thing; but the pursuit of power for the benefit of the partisan interests of one sector of the population and based upon manipulation of facts is quite another – especially when children are excluded from those favoured.

But rather than continue in this vein of vague generalities, let me illustrate how the established feminist hegemony operates by way of an example. Let me introduce you to the ignoble art of woozling.

A woozle is a false or exaggerated claim which has gained credibility simply by repetition but which has no, or inadequate, basis in evidence or is contradicted by the balance of evidence. Woozling is the deployment of a woozle for the purposes of advocating an existing opinion, giving a partisan opinion or policy the semblance of empirical or scientific backing.

In the period 2010 to 2014 the initiative to promote shared parenting in the UK was successfully defeated by feminist woozling.

The feminist lobby never sleeps, it is watchful of emerging threats to its hegemonic control. The rising calls for a rebuttable presumption of shared parenting post separation were detected. The generic response of the feminist lobby in such circumstances is to co-opt the emerging initiative, to envelope it like a lymphocyte, taking control of the narrative and destroying the threat. Woozling is part of the process and it works as follows,

- Some research is identified which supports the desired objective, in this case a 2010 Australian study by Jennifer McIntosh and others which purported to show that shared parenting of pre-school age children leads to a range of emotional, behavioural and attachment problems;
- Next, ideologically sound academics in the field who are willing to overlook the shortcomings of the study are identified;

- These chosen academics are also willing to pretend to be unaware of the multiplicity of other studies which, most inconveniently, do not come to the same conclusion – but actually rather the opposite conclusion: shared care is beneficial to the child, even at such a young age. (Incidentally, by 2018 there are now some 60 studies on the outcomes of shared parenting for children, overwhelmingly indicating benefit rather than the opposite);
- To influence policy makers, the woozled research is then embedded in a report by some Government agency, the Ministry of Justice is ideal. The chosen ideologically aligned academics are called upon as experts in the area. These academics assert that the favoured study, or studies, are “the research”, thus misrepresenting the totality of research evidence to politicians, judiciary, etc., who rely on said experts to advise them correctly;
- Next ideologically aligned charities (in this case children’s charities) are also called upon to give authoritative advice and opinion based on their experience in the field. This is difficult for policy makers to ignore due to the moral cachet such charities command;
- Even if politicians are not themselves ideologically aligned (and they may be), they will be powerfully constrained by political correctness to acquiesce to the emerging narrative. To attempt to promote a policy which, they are told, is contrary to “the research”, and which also conflicts with the advice of authoritative charity workers in the field (thus, in this case, “putting children at risk”) would be to take a political gamble with little perceived personal benefit. Politicians follow the path of least resistance, a path which has been prepared for them by the woozling lobby.

So, in this example of applying the woozling technique to the manipulation of legislation on shared caring, we have first the Norgrove report. This was the long-awaited review of family justice which the Ministry of Justice published in 2011. There had been hope amongst fathers’ groups that this might pave the way for the adoption of a rebuttable assumption of shared parenting. But hopes were dashed when the final report was issued. Key extracts are,

*“We remain firm in our view that any legislation that might risk creating an impression of a parental ‘right’ to any particular amount of time with a child would undermine the central principle of the Children Act 1989 that the welfare of the child is paramount.”*

*“Drawing on international and other evidence we opposed legislation to encourage ‘shared parenting’.....The thorough and detailed evidence from Australia showed the damaging consequences for many children. So we recommended that: no legislation should be introduced that creates or risks creating the perception that there is a parental right to substantially shared or equal time for both parents.”*

The “thorough and detailed evidence from Australia” refers, of course, to the McIntosh study, which had been successfully woozled by the feminist lobby to represent “the research”.

At the time the Norgrove report was issued there were at least 28 studies on outcomes for children subject to shared parenting, comparing them with other children with separated parents. But the report cited only three of the 28 studies, and placed particular emphasis on McIntosh study. The Norgrove report even tells us how the woozle was created, proudly boasting that,

*“Our opposition to legislation that might give rise to a shared parenting presumption attracted a large response in consultation. Charities, legal and judicial organisations and*

*academics (including Professors Helen Rhoades, Liz Trinder, Rosemary Hunter and Judith Masson and the Network on Family Regulation) supported the panel's stance.”*

Professor Helen Rhoades contributed Annex G to the Norgrove report, in which she writes, “*this submission argues that there should not be any formal legislative recognition of the importance of children having a meaningful relationship with both parents post-separation*”. She justified the claim largely based on fathers’ potential danger to their children.

Professor Liz Trinder provided the following consultation response, quoted in Norgrove, “*I am encouraged that the Review has opted against a shared care presumption. That is entirely consistent with the research evidence on what works for children.*”

Except, of course, that it isn’t. The process has been successfully woozled.

The ground was now prepared for what eventually became the 2014 Children and Families Act. Contrary to what you may have thought, there are, and were, some MPs who are supportive of shared parenting. This fact showed in the initial drafting of the Children and Families Bill. Once again there was excitement that progress on shared parenting would at last be made. Specifically, this was to be addressed by Clause 11 of the Bill which originally read as follows,

*A court...is, as respects each parent, ....to presume, unless the contrary is shown, that involvement of that parent in the life of the child concerned will further the child's welfare.*

So what went wrong?

The feminist machine – detecting threat - whirred into action. The battle was taken up by the children’s charities, Coram and the NSPCC. Together they formed the Shared Parenting Consortium. Yes, you heard that right. Take note, because this is a common tactic: the chosen name deliberately misleads. These charities were determined to stop any legislation which opened the door to a presumption of shared parenting. The name Shared Parenting Consortium is designed to misdirect. It is a common feminist tactic. When responsible parties are challenged on whom they consulted, what better response than to be able to say, “we consulted the Shared Parenting Consortium”.

They lobbied hard with members of the coalition government, many of whom would be highly susceptible to advice from such respected children’s charities on a subject directly affecting children’s welfare. Their case was imbued with compelling credibility by the MOJ’s Norgrove report, based, you recall, on the successfully woozled research position.

Their lobbying particularly targeted Baroness Butler-Sloss. As a former President of the Family Division within the House of Lords, she was the perfect person to table a devastating amendment to the Bill. Which she did. And who was going to gainsay her, given her authority in the area, and given the compelling direction from the children’s charities, from the academics, and from the Ministry of Justice’s own Norgrove report?

You see how this edifice of distortion is erected? It’s called power. Do not confuse it with truth or justice.

The result was complete emasculation of Clause 11’s attempt to open the door to shared parenting. The final Clause 11 of the Children and Families Act 2014 included this addition,

*“involvement” means involvement of some kind, either direct or indirect, but not any particular division of a child’s time.”*

Indirect contact means the ability to send letters and emails and maybe ‘phone calls. And direct contact might mean supervised contact in a contact centre for an hour or two per fortnight. Hence ‘complete emasculation’ of the original intention of the Bill to support shared parenting.

Earl Howe summed up the amendment perfectly,

*“Contact disputes are about one thing and one thing only: the amount of time that each parent believes that he or she should have with the child. That simple truth has somehow got submerged during the drafting of this Bill. What we needed in the Bill — what everyone thought we were going to get when the Green Paper was published — was measures designed to facilitate contact; measures that would put right the deficiencies of court settlements under the current system, deficiencies which the Government acknowledged in their Green Paper. What we have in Clause 11 are not measures that will facilitate contact, but rather measures that will serve only to defer contact.....It completely misses the point.”*

But the missing of the point was an outcome deliberately engineered by the combined might of the feminist lobby, placed as it is in many centres of influence. And this whole edifice of deceit was built upon a woozle, a lie by another name.