

SUMMARY

The “Family” Discourse in Neo-Liberalism Australia:  
A Study of a Family Policy of the Howard Administration

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The word "family" is one of the most commonly used words. Many people use it naturally and without deeply thinking the meaning. However, who can accurately define this word? The meaning of words expressing family, such as "families", "the family", and "family", depends on the political, historical, social, and cultural background of them and the context in which they are used. The meaning also changes with the passage of the time. Therefore, there is well worth for the research method that pays attention to the "family" discourse, which is used in this paper.

This paper analyzes the process of formation of one of the recent national family policy of the Howard Administration, the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS) 2000-2004, since the latter half of the 1990s to the early 2000s by the text analysis.

It has been some time since the diversity of family has been recognized. From the 1970s through the late 1990s (or the early 2000s), a discourse of family is formulated by the studies of family history that was influenced by feminism and it has been affecting the family policies of the Australian Government. In recent years, the Howard Administration has also been using the word "families", the plural form, to imply diversity of family. At the same time, it is asking for families to be "self-reliant". These two concepts have been linked through the formation of the policy, SFCS 2000-2004, and "families of self-reliance" has been put into effect. On the other hand, it is also said that the Howard Administration is still supporting the modern family as the "ideal" family. Although its discourse of "family" seems to be contradicting, it actually has the consistency as a political strategy of the neo-liberalism which the Howard Administration has been promoting. Here, it is shown that the reasons for this kind of situation are not only the Prime Minister, Mr. Howard's conservative vision of family, but also the "family" discourse that the family history studies formulated and the political correctness that the word "families" obtained as an expression of family. The word "families" is becoming the "mean" of the neo-liberalism and in this context, it is becoming "meaningless".