

# chapter 1

## Family Matters

### CHAPTER EXPECTATIONS

While reading this chapter, you will:

- explain changing family forms and functions in various societies throughout history, and describe contemporary family forms
- analyze factors influencing the transition of the family from an economic unit to a psychological unit

#### KEY TERMS

affective  
nurturance  
arranged  
marriage  
blended family  
clan  
consanguinity  
consumer family  
dual-income  
family  
extended family  
function  
functional  
requisites  
horde  
household  
industrial nuclear  
family  
monogamy  
nuclear family  
patriarchy  
polygamy  
socialize  
transitional family

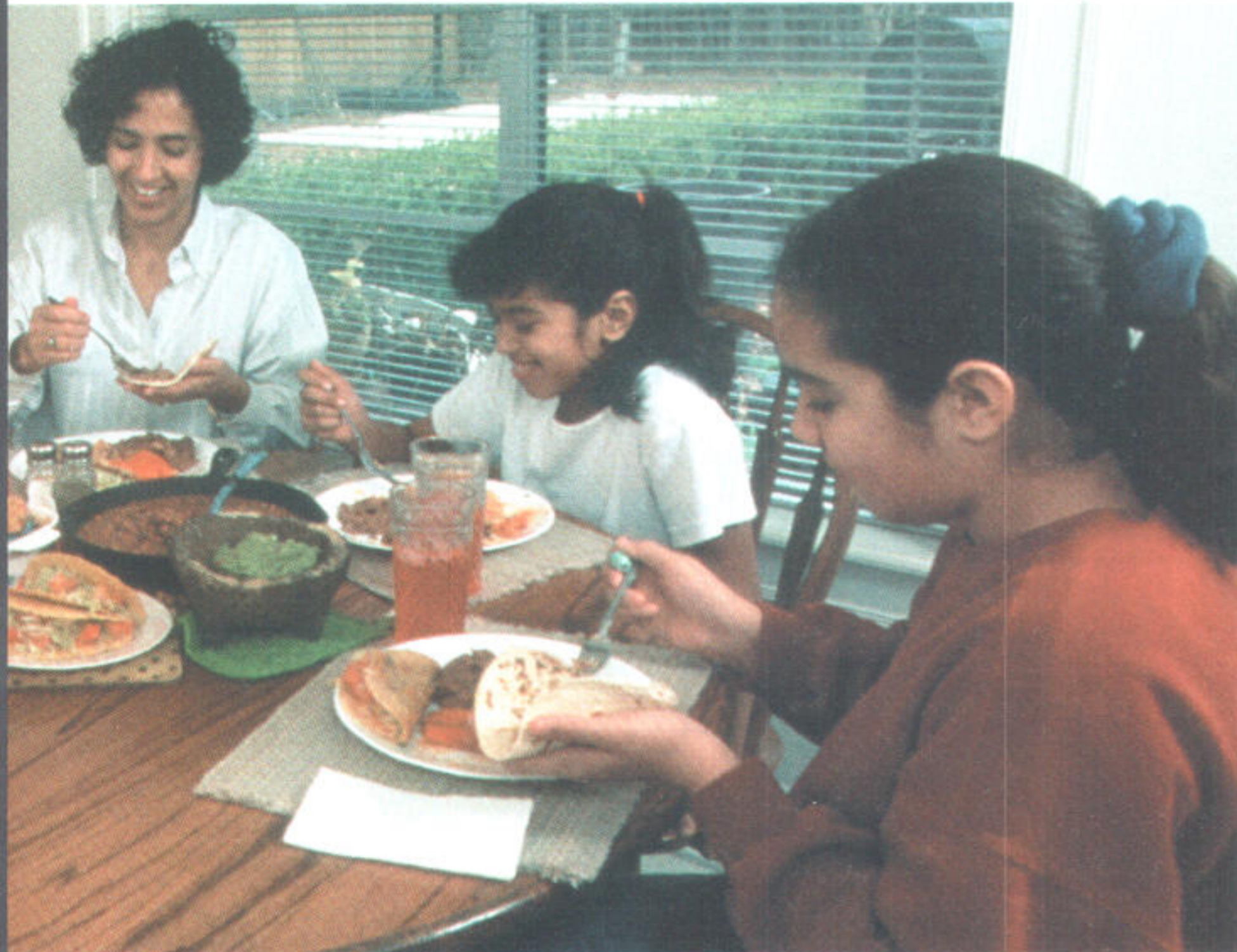


## RESEARCH SKILLS

- defining terminology
- using information technology

## CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the rationale for the study of individuals and families in Canada will be determined, by examining the interdependence of individuals, families, and society. What families are and why they exist will be explained, and the evolution of families throughout history will be summarized. A better understanding of the relationships among individuals, families, and societies, and the diversity of families, might enable individuals and families to make wiser choices and enable governments and organizations to make better decisions regarding the social policies in Canada.



Most young Canadians expect to have a family some day. However, with all the changes in family structure that they have observed, they may be unsure about what kind of family it will be.

# Connecting Individuals, Families, and Society

**I**n all societies, individuals live in families. You were likely born and raised in a family, as were your ancestors. When you reach maturity you will probably leave your family and may form a new family and raise children. This cycle of human life has continued for tens of thousands of years and likely will continue in the future. Societies expect the cycle of family life to continue, and in Canada the pattern still applies to most people. However, the choices you make, alone or in collaboration with others, will determine the course of your life. Therefore, to understand families in a diverse society such as Canada's, it is necessary also to understand individuals.

No society can survive unless certain basic functions are carried out. Social scientists call these basic functions **functional requisites** because they are required for a society to work. Individuals are motivated to carry out these functions due to their membership in a smaller group of people, such as a family or household, with whom they share a commitment to co-operate in order to survive. Because of this commitment, families supervise the behaviour of individuals in ways that other institutions cannot. In turn, societies support individuals by providing for the functions of families through such institutions as government, education, and health care. Half a century ago, American sociologist William Goode summarized the important role families play in linking individuals to their societies. His explanation is as valid now as it was then, and will probably be valid in the future.

*It is through the family that the society is able to elicit from the individual his necessary contribution. The family, in turn, can continue to exist only if it is supported by the larger society. If the society as a larger social system furnishes the family, as a smaller social system, the conditions necessary for its survival, these two types of systems must be interrelated in many important ways (Goode, 1964, p. 3).*

## Defining the Family

Sound research begins with a definition of terms, so *family* will be defined first. Definitions of family reflect both the *actual* nature of families that exist within the culture and the *desirable* nature of families as described in the social policies of that culture. However, should any single definition become

a prescription for what families should be or a standard for evaluating whether the families that people form are “real” families? Individuals define family on the basis of their own personal experience and expectations of what family means to them. For example, in the 1920s, Mrs. Donald Shaw, in a letter explaining why she wanted to adopt an orphan from the Halifax explosion, wrote that the primary role of families is to produce and raise children, that couples should have children, and that a couple without children is not a family (Morton, 1999). Mrs. Shaw obviously had a clear idea of what a family was, but others might not agree. Perhaps you have your own opinion about it.



The criteria used in any definition are arbitrary and reflect the purpose of the definition. Definitions of family are used in social policy to determine, for example, who qualifies for the benefits of families, such as who is eligible for orthodontic work under family dental benefits, or who should be responsible for the obligations of families, such as support of children. A definition of family is effective if you can use it to discriminate effectively between families and other groups in a way that suits your purpose for having a definition.

In the social sciences, definitions of family have evolved to reflect our understanding of human society. Anthropologists have provided extensive descriptions of many societies and the ways they have organized themselves to survive and thrive. They have also identified certain basic and universal **functions** as prerequisites for the survival of any society. Each society assigns these functions to individuals or groups to perform. The set of functions that families perform *could* be separated and assigned to various groups in society, but they never have been by any known society (Goode, 1964). Therefore, this set of functions is identified as the universal functions of the family, and anthropologists call the group of people who performs these functional requisites a family.

Sociologists define the family using a variety of criteria. Some definitions are based on who is related to whom. A broad definition was given in 1980 by

What definition could you use to determine whether this group of people is a family?

## web connection



[www.mcgrawhill.ca/links/families12](http://www.mcgrawhill.ca/links/families12)

To learn about research on the family and demographics on the Canadian family, go to the web site above for *Individuals and Families in a Diverse Society* to see where to go next.

Canadian sociologist Emily Nett, who suggested that a family is “any group of people considered to be related to each other by blood or marriage” (Baker, 1993, p. 4). In a narrower sense, Statistics Canada defines a family as a unit consisting of a married couple living with or without never-married children, or a single parent living with never-married children. This definition, based on residence, is useful for ensuring that each person is only counted once on Census Day in Canada. It reflects the common concept of family as a man-woman-child unit, but it does not include relatives who do not live together. Statistics Canada uses the term **household** for other groups of people who live together, whether or not they are related by birth, adoption, or marriage. None of these definitions consider the behaviour of family members, as anthropologists’ definitions do.

### A Working Definition of Family

Currently popular are definitions of family based on what they are rather than who comprises them. These definitions are more useful for those who are interested in what families do and how they do it. They reflect a desire to include groups that do not fit the traditional man-woman-child model and a return to the definition that has been used by anthropologists. They are most suited to the study of the interrelationships of individuals and families in this text. The Vanier Institute of the Family, a Canadian organization founded in 1965 to conduct research on the family, uses this broader definition to reflect the diversity of families in Canada:

Family is defined as any combination of two or more persons who are bound together over time by ties of mutual consent, birth, and/or adoption/placement and who, together, assume responsibilities for variant combinations of some of the following:

- physical maintenance and care of group members;
- addition of new members through procreation or adoption;
- socialization of children;
- social control of members;
- production, consumption, and distribution of goods and services;
- affective nurturance—love.

(The Vanier Institute of the Family, 1994, p. 10)

by Justice Marvin Zuker

**Family** The legal vision of the family today is one of an important personal and social resource and advantage, whose existence should be fostered and protected. It is a unit of emotional and financial dependency, whether it includes single parents with children, gay or lesbian partners, or unmarried couples. Any legal exclusion for this socially and legally sanctioned state violates human dignity.

The family has taken on a much more public dimension, as legal issues frequently relate to public matters, such as access to benefits, pension benefits, leave policies, and so on.

**Extended family** While the law has traditionally treated stepfathers as legal strangers and parenthood as an all-or-nothing concept, today courts recognize multiple parents and grandparents and the importance of the

children's interest in maintaining family relationships with those who have played significant roles in their lives.

**Nuclear family** For all practical purposes, the nuclear family and its traditions as people knew them no longer exist to the extent that they used to. Today individuals are dealing with the legal rights of stepparents, grandparents, "persons acting as parents," and so on. It may be that parenthood, rather than marriage, is the central legal issue in family law. However, marriages still remain a cultural symbol of commitment. To some, marriage is important primarily because it is the setting in which most children are raised.

**Technological family** New technologies make it possible to conceive a baby without having sex. However, evidence suggests that technology itself has played no substantial role in expanding the range of family forms. Families have changed over the past 50 years, but the changes are social, not technological. ■

## The Functions of the Family

When social scientists study individuals and families, they examine how persons are organized into families, the specific behaviours family members use to perform their roles within society, and how society motivates individuals and families to carry out these responsibilities. Based on a review of the anthropological research on functional requisites, Shirley Zimmerman, professor of Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota (1988), summarized these basic and universal functions of the family:

1. Families are responsible for the addition of new members through reproduction. A society must maintain a stable population to survive. Population growth provides a competitive advantage that usually enables a society to become wealthier.
2. Families provide physical care for their members, including the adults, their children, and the dependent elderly members. When families are unable to care for their members, hardship will result unless the society is organized to replace the family in this function.

3. Families **socialize** children by teaching them the skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes of their society. Children who learn these are able to work and relate to others within appropriate adult roles.
4. Families are responsible for controlling the behaviour of their members to maintain order within the family and within the society in which they live. Families monitor and evaluate the behaviour of individuals and provide feedback. This social control contributes to the socialization process and protects the reputation of all individuals identified with the family group within the society.
5. Families maintain morale and motivate individuals to participate in society. The commitment to the family may be based on a spiritual sense of duty, or economic necessity. Here in Canada, people assume that **affective nurturance**—that is, meeting the emotional needs of individuals—is the foundation of our commitment to each other. Participation in appropriate social roles contributes to the health of the society as well as providing the means with which families care for their members.

In the modern family, the socialization and discipline of children usually occurs within close, affectionate relationships between parents and children.



6. Finally, families perform the economic function of producing and consuming goods and services. At one time, each family produced all the goods and services it consumed, and used only what it could produce. Now, individuals sell their time and their skills by producing goods and services within a specialized economy, and earn an income with which to purchase goods and services for their families (In Schlesinger, 1998).

In summary, families serve six specific functions that enable societies to survive and to thrive. These six functions, which can be observed in families in all human societies, form a useful framework for comparing the behaviours of families. The formation and organization of family units, how families perform these functions, and how society motivates families have changed throughout history and still vary today. From time to time, attempts have been made to assign some of these functions to other institutions in society, or to create different groups, such as communes, to accept the responsibility. For example, in the early Israeli kibbutzim, children were raised communally in age groups. However, the experiments failed because parents preferred to raise their children in their own homes. As anthropologist Margaret Mead concluded, “No matter how many communes anybody invents, the family always creeps back.”

# The Family in History

From the time of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples' early ancestors, different cultural groups in Canada have organized their family structures in a variety of ways, influenced by such factors as religious belief, economic activity, geographic location, and relations with other ethnic and cultural groups. However, over time, the modern **nuclear family** form has emerged as more or less the norm in Canada and in most other parts of the world. In this form, the husband and wife live with their children and place more importance on the marital relationship than on relationships with their parents and relatives. Canadian sociologist John F. Conway (1997) suggests using this analogy for putting the change in perspective of time: if the history of the human species is divided into a 24-hour period, the emergence of the modern industrial family form occurred incredibly recently—in fact, only two minutes ago! So, what about the family in the other 23 hours and 58 minutes?

## The Origin of the Family

Where and how the human family emerged has been the subject of anthropological speculation and research for the past hundred years. It will never be known for certain where, when, why, and how the human family system originated, since it occurred long before the advent of written history. People can make speculations about the emergence of the human family by studying the fossil evidence that has been uncovered by archaeologists. People can learn from the research of physical anthropologists like Jane Goodall, who have provided us with detailed observations of the living arrangements and social behaviour of other primates. Most useful is the research of cultural anthropologists who have studied isolated human groups that have not been influenced by other human societies prior to those studies. As a result of this research, many theories have been developed to explain the origin of the human family unit and the development of human civilization.

The first grouping of humans into family units may have occurred because of a unique human characteristic—our large brains relative to our body size. It distinguishes us from other animal species and enables us to think, to problem-solve, to use language as a means of communication, to invent, and to feel emotions. So human infants, like other primates, are born with

### FYI

#### The Etymology of *Family*

Etymology is the history of the formation or derivation of a word. The use of the word *family* in the modern context is relatively new. In fact, prior to three hundred years ago, there was no word in any European language that meant a living arrangement based on parents and children living together. The English word *family* is derived from the Latin word *familia*, which was derived from a word that meant *house*. The word *familia* was used to indicate the people who lived in the same house or household, including the slaves and servants and those members of the family that are considered part of the family unit in Canada today. The wife and biological children were undifferentiated from the slaves and servants, perhaps because they also served the master! (Campbell, 1992)



## FYI

### Primate Versus Early Human Social Organization

There is little evidence from either primate researchers like Jane Goodall or from cultural anthropologists of the past hundred years to suggest that non-human primate social organization today is the same as that of the first family structures of our human ancestors. Similar to humans, infants of other primates are dependent on their mothers for a long period of time and live in what can be called troops, with a complex social organization. However, non-human primates do not regulate sexual activity nor do they, as a rule, co-operate in systematic food sharing. There is a vast difference between the social organization of the earliest human societies and that of primates today. Thus, understanding the social life of other primates can provide only a small part of our understanding of the social organization of our earliest human ancestors (Conway, 1997).

large heads to hold their large brains and are helpless and completely dependent on others for at least the first four or five years of life. Thus, it can be argued that humans would not have survived as a species unless some form of family grouping developed to provide the extensive care, protection, and socialization required for our young.

The first family groupings of humans may have been **hordes** or bands much like the troops of our present primate relatives (Conway, 1997). These hordes probably consisted of a loose grouping of males and females and their offspring. They may have had some characteristics in common with the social organization of the chimpanzee group at Gombe, Uganda, studied for more than 40 years by Jane Goodall. However, unlike our primate cousins, our ancestors developed taboos against certain kinds of aggression and sexual activity to ensure the relative peace and co-operation necessary for the survival of the horde. A system of social organization based on kinship had to replace a social hierarchy based on the size and strength of the dominant male. Thus, “the seeds of the human family were thereby sown: the suppression of sexuality within the group, controls on sexual gratification, the prescription to go outside the immediate group for sexual partners, and the subordination of the sexual and aggressive instincts to the tasks of survival and civilization” (Conway, 1997, p. 5).

It is quite likely that the earliest human family form was a kind of group marriage within the horde, in which informal pairing occurred for various lengths of time on the basis of convenience. A simple division of labour probably existed, loosely based on gender and age. Survival of the horde or band was dependent on successful hunting and gathering. The economic activities of the members were based on mutual co-operation. Men and women were likely dependent on one another and of similar status, as the food-gathering activities of the women and children were as essential to survival as the hunting activities of the men (Conway, 1997).

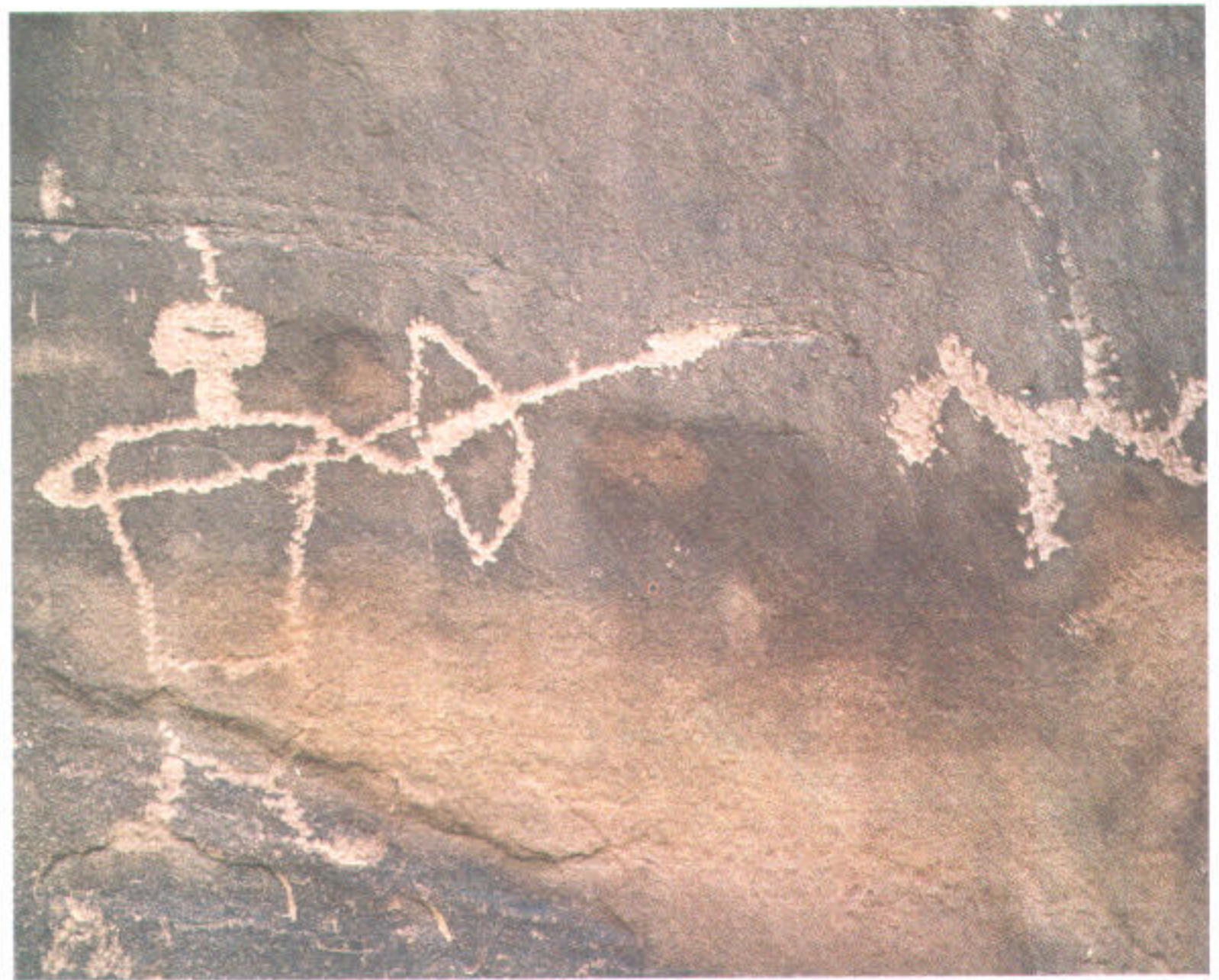
### The Hunter-Gatherers

The invention of the family was an innovation of our ancestors that distinguished us as a species from all other primates and ensured our ultimate

survival. “With the family came a division of labour, food-sharing, long-term relationships of reciprocity and obligation, the regulation of sexual activity, harmony and co-operation, elaborate kinship relationships binding disparate groups together, and the assurance (more or less) of survival for all members of the family group from birth to death” (Conway, 1997, p. 7).

The earliest human families were hunter-gatherers. It is estimated that for 99 percent of human history, hunting and gathering was the major means of subsistence for our ancestors. Driven by a daily quest for food, both men and women worked full time in search of it (Mandell, 1995). Women were responsible for gathering fruits, nuts, grains, herbs, and small prey. They were also responsible for nurturing young children. In addition, women learned how to use the plants they gathered for medicinal purposes. Men were the hunters and the toolmakers. They often had to leave the family for long periods of time to hunt. They had to pursue larger animals for days to tire the animal, for an easier capture and kill. After a successful hunt, hunter-gatherers ate meat only. In today’s hunter-gatherer societies, the women routinely supply two-thirds or more of the calories consumed by the group (Kelman, 1998). Because of this and because of their role as childbearers, women in these societies were essential to survival and therefore had relatively high status within the group.

Evidence of descent systems would suggest that an informal group marriage was most prevalent in these societies. Essentially the family consisted of a group of parents and their children (Engels, 1972). This continued as the dominant family system until the development of agriculture. Fifteen thousand years ago, a significant fraction of hunter-gatherer societies were stationary (Diamond, 1999). This probably developed as hunter-gatherer communities were able to stay in one location for long periods of time because of a sustainable and abundant food source nearby, such as a river where they could fish. There was a trend toward couples marrying in stable hunter-gatherer societies so that a man could help to support his own children until they became self-sufficient,



Today, people are able to speculate about the lives of prehistoric families based on the observations of present-day hunter-gatherer people.



The hunter-gatherer lifestyle of the Urueu-Wau-Wau was undisturbed until the development of the interior of Brazil.

The Urueu-Wau-Wau people live in the central highlands of Brazil and are one of several tribes in this region that still live as hunter-gatherers. Their contact with industrialized society occurred when a *National Geographic* researcher made contact with them in 1986. Subsequently, due to the new interest in them, a road was built across part of their land, and it threatened their traditional lifestyle. As a result of both national and international lobbying, the Brazilian government declared their territory off limits to outsiders in order to protect their traditional way of life. Occasionally, rubber tappers who venture into their territory are killed by the poison-tipped arrows of the Urueu-Wau-Wau hunters, who suffer no consequences under Brazilian law.

Members of the tribe do not wear clothes, but use haircuts, tattoos, and makeup to decorate their bodies and to indicate their individual status in the society. They live in small villages of large woven-straw huts surrounding a central meeting place. Among the

Urueu-Wau-Wau, the roles of the men, women, and children are clearly defined and are taught by the community elders, who are of the highest status. The men and women tend to form couples, although strict monogamy is not enforced. The entire community raises the children. As soon as the children are old enough, they perform traditional roles according to their gender. Adolescence as it is known in Canada does not exist in Urueu-Wau-Wau society.

The rainforest environment is essential to their way of life. Women forage and gather food in the surrounding forests, prepare the food, maintain the home, and care for the children of the village. Men make the bows and the poison-tipped arrows that they use for hunting. When they hunt, the men leave the community for days at a time. The entire village celebrates their return with ritual dancing and a large communal feast.

The Urueu-Wau-Wau community has become a living museum of the hunter-gatherer existence, as it has been protected by the Brazilian government from encroachment by outsiders such as international lumbering and drug companies who have an interest in the economic assets of the rainforest in which they live (McIntyre, 1988). ■

1. Should the few remaining hunter-gatherer societies in the world today be protected from modern society as the Urueu-Wau-Wau have been?

at about five years of age. Consequently, the men would have figured more in the lives of the children of the group as they started to spend time with individual females. Out of this grew a new social role for men: that of a father to specific children (Kelman, 1998). In effect, a new social role for the family developed: the couple.

The first Canadians, the Aboriginal Peoples, were hunter-gatherers when they came here to stay 13 000–14 000 years ago. Some of them remained hunter-gatherers even into modern times as they continued to forage for food instead of developing agricultural production (Diamond, 1999). Although they became very ethnically diverse as they adapted to quite different physical environments, these hunter-gatherers for the most part lived in small nomadic groups. These bands consisted typically of 5 to 80 people who were related by **consanguinity**, meaning by blood, or by informal relationships that today would be termed “marriage.” Bands had no defined hierarchy since they were socially stratified only by gender and age. They were equal in their decision making in that leadership was not inherited but was acquired through personal qualities, such as strength and intelligence. Conflict resolution tended to be informal, since bands lacked formal rules and laws.

## Agricultural Families

The earliest known occurrence of agriculture occurred about 11 000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent area of Southwest Asia. Farming developed independently in four other parts of the world: in China by about 7500 B.C.E., in Mesoamerica and South America by 3500 B.C.E., and in the eastern region of North America by 2500 B.C.E. (Diamond, 1999). The change from hunter-gatherer to agricultural societies and the spread of agriculture to other parts of the world changed the fundamental structure of families. Once our ancestors domesticated animals and grew plants for food, their daily quest for it was eliminated, and they were able to live in more permanent settlements. Thus, agricultural communities formed, resembling the agricultural societies that exist throughout the developing world today.

Agriculture ultimately enabled our ancestors to provide much more food, but it also required a great deal of manual labour. These two factors resulted in larger families, because more people were needed to work the land and

### FYI

## The Development of Fatherhood

It is not clear exactly when our male ancestors began to assume the roles of husband and father. Until relatively recent times, men did not recognize that specific children were theirs and that they had a specific role in conception. A significant amount of intellectual sophistication is required to make this connection. Anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski studied a hunter-gatherer community in the 1920s in the Trobriand Islands of the South Pacific. He observed that these people still had not figured out the role of men in the reproductive process. In fact, they rejected his scientific explanation of conception with a series of arguments. Perhaps the most startling of their arguments was that conception could not require sex because even the least attractive women of the community were mothers! (Kelman, 1998)

tend the animals. A family could also acquire more land and become wealthier as a result. Food surpluses also enabled the development of towns and cities and the emergence of new roles, both in the family and in society at large. Once the concept of private property developed, land had to be defended and food surpluses had to be controlled and distributed. Thus, men who chose not to be farmers became artisans, builders, merchants, soldiers, and politicians. Women's economic activity shifted away from the community and became more focused on the increasingly private family household. Women cared for the children and handled domestic work, along with toiling in the family fields.

Families were now highly organized. **Monogamy**, or having one marital partner, became the preferred marital arrangement for women in most parts of the world. Men established a **patriarchy**, in which men were the rulers and decision makers of the family, in an attempt to ensure their fatherhood and the orderly inheritance of their property (Conway, 1997). It was during this

period that the relationship between men and women changed, and women became chattels, the property of their husbands, with few legal rights. When agriculture became established, an individual farmer could afford to support several wives, so **polygamy** became more common.

**Arranged marriages** with young women ensured that the family would produce more children, who were now viewed as an economic asset because they could work on the land. Since a family needed land for agriculture, young adults continued to live in their parents' household after they married, forming **extended families** that in most areas of the world were patriarchal. As families expanded and acquired more land, or kept larger numbers of animals, they lived in **clans** of many related extended families.

### Pre-Industrial Families

Although the majority of people continued to live on family farms, the rapid population increase that an agricultural economy allowed resulted, over a thousand years, in the growth of villages and towns. Commerce, technology, and crafts developed. Merchants and artisans began to work in the family home where their wives and children could help with the work. Today, this economic activity is called

## FYI

### The Origin of the Married Couple

Many people think it is natural for humans to form into couples as they reach adulthood. Most societies, both today and in the past, look upon a marriage as a joyful celebration. Although individual weddings may involve a great deal of tension among family members as they make the arrangements, there are few societies that view weddings as anything but happy events. However, research suggests that early marriages were anything but happy for all the individuals involved. For example, the cynical historian Will Durant suggested that the formalization of marriage between two individuals originated with the desire of men to have cheap slaves to manage their households and to ensure that their property was not inherited by other men's children (Kelman, 1999). So much for the concept of romance and love as the historical basis for marriage!

*cottage industry*. Families, led by a father who was the head of the household, consisted of his wife and children plus any domestic servants and male apprentices—young men from other families who were learning a trade or craft. These kinds of family enterprises were less able than farms were to sustain a large number of people, so pre-industrial couples were usually monogamous and had fewer children than agricultural families. They continued the tradition of being predominantly patriarchal in their organization.

European settlers who came to Canada beginning in the seventeenth century brought this pre-industrial family system with them. Government officials, military personnel, merchants, and craftspeople tended to live in villages and towns, but the majority of settlers spread out across the countryside and lived in self-sufficient and sometimes isolated homesteads. Like their European counterparts, these new Canadians had monogamous marriages and most often lived with their extended family. Although not unheard of, romantic love was not usually the basis for marriage. It was an economic necessity for both men and women in the 1600s and 1700s because there was no work for single women and no housekeepers for single men. Life was hard, and there was endless work for everyone.

Children were an economic necessity during a time when less than 50 percent of them reached adulthood. Childhood as a period of innocence and play did not exist. By the age of seven or eight they began to assist in the economic activities of the family, generally in work dictated by their gender. Young adults often left home to live and work in other families. Boys would work on a farm or become an apprentice in a trade or craft. Girls would do household work or labour as domestic servants for other families. Young people married later since their isolated existence often made finding a suitable partner difficult.

Men and women usually worked side by side as they cleared the land and farmed or as they attempted to establish a business. Agricultural and commercial endeavours were family affairs. In the early years of European colonization in Canada, married women enjoyed a relatively high status both because of a shortage of marriageable women and because of their essential



Until recently, marriage was an economic necessity, not an expression of a couple's love for each other.

economic role. However, once the population grew and stabilized, their roles became more rigidly defined. Men were dominant in public community life, and women were expected to confine their activities to the family household. Because married women and their children were considered the property of their husbands, men could discipline them harshly. Family life could often be violent for women and children, who had little legal protection. Women who physically defended themselves against domestic assault were harshly punished by the legal system, through imprisonment (Mandell, 1995).



Early Canadians had larger families to ensure enough manual labour for clearing the land, planting, and harvesting.

## Urban Industrial Families

Like the agricultural revolution, the industrial revolution heralded unprecedented change in the human family system, particularly in the status and roles of women and children. As the economy shifted from one based on agriculture and commerce to one based on factory production in towns and cities, work became something done outside the family home to earn a wage to provide for the family's subsistence. The family unit retained its economic role as a consumer but lost its role as a producer (Conway, 1997). This caused changes in the family system and the development of a new industrial working class, as every family member, including children, began to work in a wage-based labour force in the new factories.

The flexibility of the family as a social institution is apparent in the way it adjusted once again to the new economic reality, and as a new version called the **industrial nuclear family** emerged. In this family, the notion of motherhood as the “sacred” and primary role of women became, if not the norm, then the ideal. Women were nurturers who worked at home and were supported financially by their husbands. Men were money-earners who worked to provide for their wives and children. The role of children changed as well. There was no longer a need for children to work in factories. Compulsory education was instituted in 1871 in Ontario for children under the age of 14 years and in 1905 in all provinces except Québec. Child labour laws were eventually passed in the mid-1880s. It was at this point in our history that the idealized notion of childhood as an “age of innocence” was born. The home was no longer the centre of economic activity, but a place of love and emotional contentment. However, working-class children often left school as soon as they could in order to find work to contribute money to their families. At this time, young people married early and moved away from their parents because they were able to support themselves (Conway, 1997).

For many Canadians in the nineteenth century, this vision of the family was their ideal, but not necessarily their reality. Working-class women and children often had to work in factories along with their husbands and fathers. By the late 1800s, however, the industrial nuclear family was the norm for most Canadians. By the beginning of the twentieth century, it was unusual for married Canadian women to work outside the home. About 5 percent of married Canadian women did so, usually because of economic necessity caused by desertion or widowhood. Women who worked for a wage were believed to threaten the role of men as the sole providers and therefore were demeaned by the general society. Consequently, women workers routinely received one-third less than the “family wage” earned by men for the same work (Mandell, 1995).

In the early twentieth century, the size of families became smaller as birth rates declined. Canadians delayed marriage until they could afford a separate household. More importantly, if there was a good chance that all children



After industrialization became established, childhood became an “age of innocence,” when children were allowed to play and learn, protected from the harsher reality of the adult world.



would survive, and if they could not work and had to be supported until they finished school, fewer children were wanted. Increasingly, the Canadian family became a **consumer family**. The husband was the exclusive provider, the head of the household, and the link between the family and society. The wife was the homemaker for whom new products were manufactured to assist her in creating a comfortable home for her husband and children.

The roles of men, women, and children changed to reflect the changing perceptions of their natures. A woman's role was to be wife, mother, and housekeeper for the family. Women were thought to be gentler, more patient, and more loving than men, and therefore more suited to the emotional nurturing of children. This mystique of motherhood implied that women reached their potential only if they had children. Men were perceived to possess characteristics like aggressiveness, perseverance, and toughness that made them more suited to the workplace than women were perceived to be. The father, as head of the household, was expected to fund the family, make its most important decisions, and sometimes discipline the children (Mandell, 1995). Children were expected to play under the supervision of their mothers, to attend school, and to remain protected from the hard work of the adult world. Adolescence became a distinct age group because of the extension of schooling into the teen years.



The new medium of television and shows such as *Father Knows Best*, pictured here, supported the ideal of the consumer family in the mid-twentieth century.

By the 1940s and 1950s, Canadians expected and wanted to live as industrial nuclear families. American television programs such as *Leave It to Beaver*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, and *Father Knows Best* depicted this family organization and were immensely popular in Canada (Conway, 1997). These television programs reflected what was happening in Canadian society during the “baby boom” years from 1946 to 1967. After World War II, the Canadian economy expanded rapidly, and Canadians knew that they could afford to have larger families. Statistics show that Canadian women in that time period averaged four children each (Foot, 1996).

## case study | Discovering Your Family History

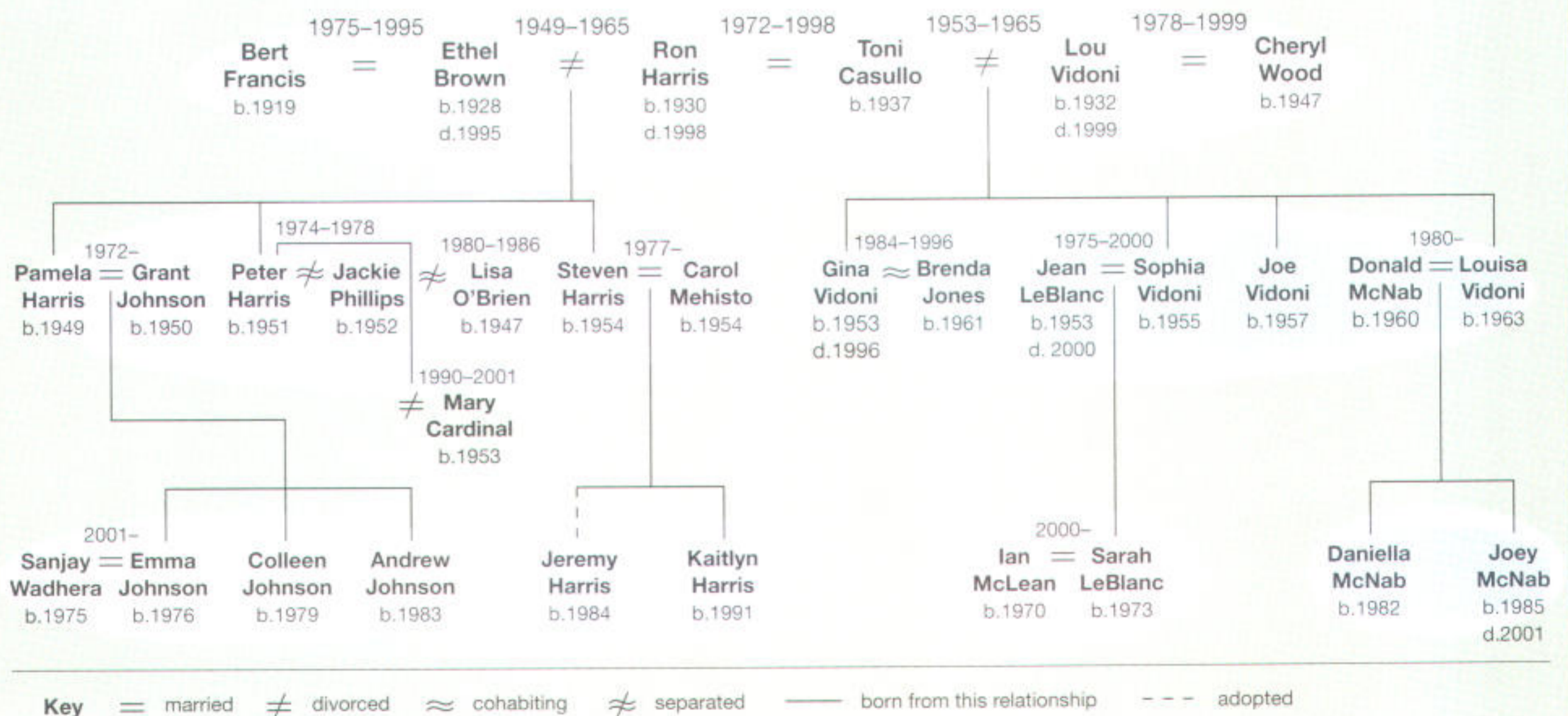
For thousands of years, humans have been fascinated by their personal family histories. In the past, these histories were passed on from one generation to the next through tribal or family storytellers who were, perhaps, the first historians. This interest in family history, or genealogy, has continued to the present day. Most people have some idea who their ancestors were at least two or three generations ago. Some can trace their heritage back even further. Like their ancient ancestors, people have listened to stories of older relatives to understand their roots. Recently, the use of the Internet has made it much easier to trace family lineage through many excellent web sites for genealogical research.

All known societies developed descent patterns, with about 64 percent giving preference to one side of the family or the other in tracing descent (Schaefer et al., 1996). In *patrilineal descent* systems, only relatives on the father's side are important for emotional ties and for the

transfer of property or wealth. Conversely, in a society that recognizes *matrilineal descent*, only the mother's family members are significant. Most Canadians follow a *bilateral descent* system, in which both sides of the family are regarded as equally important.

In Canada, *family* and *kinship* are not the same thing. Family implies a common residence and reciprocal relationships on a daily basis. A family's kin group consists of all the uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, in-laws, and other relatives, most of whom all family members know about but some of whom they have never met. Often, a family will go for long periods of time without seeing members of their kin group unless weddings, funerals, or family crises bring them together. Nonetheless, a family knows who they are, that they share obligations and responsibilities, and that family members are people who they can turn to for help in an emergency. ■

### The Harris—Vidoni Family



This is the family tree of the Harris-Vidoni family, a fictional Canadian family that will be used in examples throughout this book.

## The Contemporary Canadian Family

### web connection



[www.mcgrawhill.ca/links/families12](http://www.mcgrawhill.ca/links/families12)

To learn about tracing a person's family history, go to the web site above for *Individuals and Families in a Diverse Society* to see where to go next.

The past 50 years in Canada have seen significant changes in the family structure as people adapted to new political, economic, and social pressures of life. The ideal family life of the traditional nuclear family in the first half of the twentieth century was dependent on women accepting the role as wife and mother and on a husband's ability to earn enough money to support his family. After the affluence of the post-war decade ended, Canadian families found it increasingly difficult to pay for things that they felt were necessary, on only one wage. By the 1960s and 1970s, women began to work outside the home to supplement family incomes. The birth rate declined again, and the family

changed dramatically. For example, in 1966, 27 percent of married women in Canada were working. By 1976, their number increased to 44 percent, including 37 percent of those women with children under the age of six (Conway, 1997). By 1999, 69 percent of all women were employed (Statistics Canada).

Since access to money made women less dependent, the status of women in Canada began to change. A growing women's movement put pressure on the government to change the laws to reflect their new status. The 1968 Divorce Act established more lenient guidelines for divorce, the use and distribution of birth control became legal, and intercourse before marriage became a more acceptable practice. As society changed, new kinds of families emerged and became more common. The nuclear family continues to be the dominant form. However, with the employment of women, the **transitional family**, in which the mother temporarily leaves the work force to look after young children, and the **dual-income family**, in which both spouses work full time, have emerged. Childless couples are more numerous, not because fewer couples are having children, but because couples can have fewer children and live long enough to become "empty nesters" when their children have left



One new and growing category of family is couples that choose not to have children.

home. **Blended families** occur when divorced partners with children remarry. Families with same-sex parents have also become more prevalent (Conway, 1997).

Family formation during the last 25 years in Canada reflects the broader multicultural influences that result from the shift in immigration. In the past most immigrants came from European countries, such as Italy, Germany, and Holland. Now they come from many parts of the world, including the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. These immigrant families have brought their diverse family systems, such as arranged marriages and matriarchal families, with them. As they interact with other Canadian families, they will influence the family form, roles, and priorities of the next generation.

The history of the family entails many changes over the millennia, but there is a consistent pattern of men and women co-operating to raise children and to provide for themselves. History supplies valuable pictures of social organization in the past, but there is no way of knowing whether the family patterns described accurately reflect life for all people or whether wide variations existed. You can see, however, the diversity of individual and family lifestyles that exist today. Robert Glossop (2000) of the Vanier Institute of the Family suggests that, “For half a century, our society has valued individual autonomy, achievement, and choice, downplaying the traditional bonds to family, employer, community, and country.” On the other hand, American sociologist Valerie Wiener (1997, p. 9), who is currently studying the changing American family, is more optimistic about people’s bonds to family:

Some sociologists say that family life is thriving like never before. How we value our family enhances the lives of each family member. Individuals are no longer locked into traditional roles, including those of marriage and parenting. Of course, these revised roles will influence future generations. Our awareness should prompt us to discover new, improved ways to value our families.

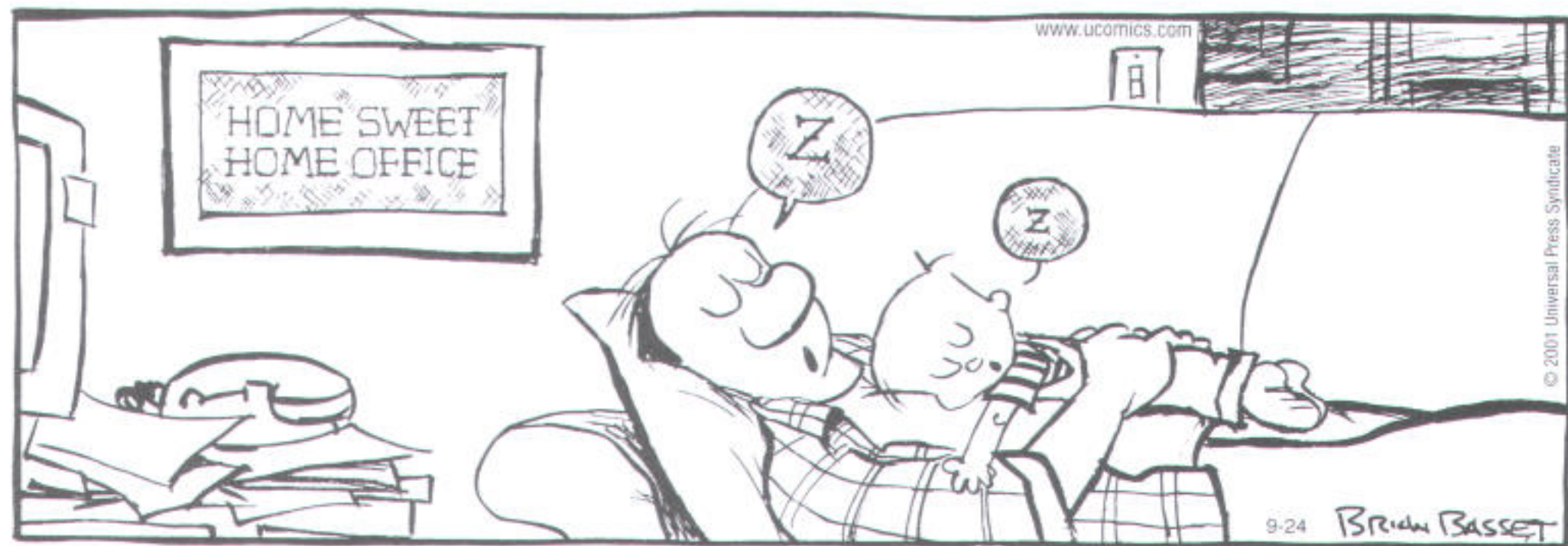
Reflecting on the history of human civilization, eighteenth-century French philosopher Jean Rousseau defined the family as “the oldest institution and the only natural one.” Back in the 1960s, William Goode (1964) concluded that, so far, “the family is a rather stable institution.” Although some cynics at the end of the twentieth century suggested that change means the family is disappearing (*The Economist*, 1995), the family institution endures because of its ability to change.

## Changes in Individual and Family Behaviour

Significant changes have occurred in the organization of individual and family behaviour over the history of human civilization. Although one can never be sure, most experts believe that the diversity of lifestyles is greater now than at any other time. It is no longer essential for a man or a woman to marry to obtain social standing, or for mutual economic support, or even to have intercourse and children. Families in which the relationship between husband and wife is based on love, and in which parents expect to love and be loved by their children, have become the new ideal and, according to many reports, the norm (Bibby, 2001). The family unit is no longer an economic necessity, but has become more of a psychological unit that people choose to form in order to meet their social and emotional needs (Conway, 1997).

You can choose whether to live alone or to cohabit or to marry. Similarly, you can make decisions about children, living arrangements, employment, child care—you have a lifetime of decisions related to your behaviour in your individual and family life. But governments, education systems, and businesses want to know what choices people are making, or how they are behaving, in order to develop social policy or plans for the future that affect individuals and families. Canadians want to know how to achieve their high expectations for the quality of their personal lives. Many people want to understand the meaning of their own existence. Individual and family studies are important branches of the social sciences that seek to understand and explain how people behave in their personal relationships within society, to suggest what they can expect in the future, and to provide some insight into how to manage their lives.

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# chapter 1 Review and Apply

## Knowledge/Understanding Thinking/Inquiry

1. Consider and write down how you would define *family*. Compare your definition with the definition used by the Vanier Institute of the Family (see page 6). How would you explain the significance of any differences?
2. Using Shirley Zimmerman's definitions of the functions of a family (see pages 7–8), analyze how the responsibility for performing the six functions is distributed in your family and explain how your family performs each of the functions.
  - a) How does each of the functions of a family, as summarized by Zimmerman, benefit Canadian society?
  - b) How does the family share these functions with other institutions in Canada, such as the institutions of government, religion, business, law, and education?
  - c) Rank the six functions in order of priority from the following points of view: social worker with community services, religious leader, retailer, family court judge, elementary school teacher. Justify your choice of priority for each.

## Knowledge/Understanding Thinking/Inquiry Communication Application

3. Identify five significant changes in the roles of men and women up to the twentieth century and explain the factors that caused them.
4. Suggest what family life might have been like in one of the historical periods summarized in this chapter. Write a critique of family life from the point of view of a young adult during that time and of the opposite gender from you.
5. Describe the Canadian family as you imagine it will be at the beginning of the twenty-second century. Explain the organization of families and society that will perform the functions of the family, and justify your predictions. In your description, use appropriate new terms from this chapter, and define any new terms you need to create.
6. Write a brief rationale for the study of the family at this stage in your life. Explain what you expect to learn and why this learning will be beneficial to you.