FAMILY STRUCTURES AND DIVERSITIES

The Decline of the Nuclear Family
What is Family?

- The debate between structural functionalism and Feminism continues into the new millennium.

1. What is Family?
2. How is it organized?
IS A FAMILY A COLLECTION OF INDIVIDUALS UNITED BY LOVE?

IS FAMILY AN INSTITUTION?

IS FAMILY A COLLECTIVE IDEAL OF DAYS GONE BY?
- **Functionalist**- nuclear family is the foundation of human society

- **Conflict/Feminist**- nuclear family is a capitalistic creation feeding industry through *invisible labour* inside the home.
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST—“Family is a unity of interacting personalities”

See Ernest Burgess of the Chicago School.
Historical Family Types

- The CLAN
- The Extended Family
- The Bi-lateral extended family
- Nuclear family
- Modified Extended Family
- Single Parent Family
- Same Sex Family
- Blended/Reconstituted or Step Family
The Traditional Nuclear Family and New Alternatives

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The Growing Diversity of Canadian Families, 1981-2006 (in percent)
20th century family changes

1. **Separation** of the workplace and the home.
2. Retreat of the **family into domesticity**
3. Identification of **stages in life** such as childhood and adolescence.
4. More clearly **defined life transitions** leaving home, marriage, separate household.
William Goode 1963

In his book *World Revolution and Family Patterns* Goode argues...

"There is a fit between industrialization and the nuclear family...the world direction is towards some kind of *conjugal/nuclear family* pattern-
The Decline in Household Size

- The average **household size is declining** in Canada and this is especially evident with the increase of people living alone.
Living Alone -

- **Living Alone** - In 2001, 35 percent of women and **16 percent** of men aged 65 and over lived alone.
- This was an increase of 10% since 1981.
Living Alone

The proportion of households comprising people living alone grew from about one fifth of all households in 1981 to about one quarter in 2001

(Statistics Canada 2002e)
Sandwich Generation

The 2001 Census shows that 41 percent of young adults aged 20 to 29 lived with their parents, a substantial increase from 27 percent in 1981.
Living at home

Living at home is more likely for young men than women aged 20 to 24 (64 vs. 52 percent) and aged 25 to 29 (29 vs. 19 percent).

This could be called the "adolescentizing" of young adults.
**Married with Children**

- Married with children **falls short of majority**
- Legally married with or without children ¾ of all families
- Canadian **families dispersed** along various dimensions
- Most Canadians **marry at least once**
- 60% of all between 25-29
Common Law Families

- **2001**, 7.5 percent of families were common-law couples,

- 6.3 percent of families were **common-law couples with children**,.
Common-law with children

1. There is a **declining percentage** of married couples with children.
2. There is **an increase** in common-law couples with children at home.
Same Sex Coupling

- A total of 34,200 couples, 0.5 percent of all couples, identified themselves as same-sex in this census.
- Macionis *Society* Updated Second Canadian Edition (p. 324)
Civil Marriage Act

On **July 20, 2005**, Canada became the fourth country in the world to legalize **same-sex marriage** nationwide with the approval of the **Civil Marriage Act**.
Court decision

Court decisions, starting in 2003, each already legalized same-sex marriage in eight out of ten provinces and one of three territories, whose residents comprised about 90% of Canada's population.
Summary

- THE UNIT OF THE FAMILY IS SMALLER AND MORE DIVERSE THAN EVER BEFORE.

- FUNCTIONALIST LAMENT THE DECLINE OF NUCLEAR FAMILY

- FEMINISTS-see diversity as a capitalist creation