

# The Development of Family and Parent-Child Relationships

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## Learning Goals

By the end of these lessons, students will be able to:

- Describe the functions of families in society.
  - Explain how different family forms meet family needs.
  - Compare theoretical perspectives on family and parent-child relationships.
  - Assess the impact of caregiving on family relationships.
  - Connect family theories and caregiving research to real-life examples in Canada.
  - Apply research and inquiry skills from Unit A.
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## Success Criteria

I can:

- ✓ identify the main functions of families
  - ✓ explain how diverse families meet similar needs in different ways
  - ✓ compare sociological and psychological theories about families
  - ✓ apply theories to real-life Canadian family situations
  - ✓ explain the emotional, social, and economic impact of caregiving
  - ✓ create research questions and communicate findings clearly
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# Functions of the Family

## What Is a Family?

A family is a group of people connected through:

- blood
- marriage
- adoption
- caregiving relationships
- emotional bonds

Families can look very different but still meet similar needs.

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## Main Functions of Families

### 1. Reproduction

Families help society continue by raising children.

#### Real-Life Example

A married couple decides to adopt a child and raise them in a supportive home.

#### Important Connection

Families do not need biological children to be considered families.

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### 2. Socialization of Children

Families teach children:

- values
- language
- traditions
- behaviour

- cultural expectations

### **Real-Life Example**

Parents teaching children:

- manners
- religious traditions
- respect for others
- how to behave at school

### **Canadian Connection**

Different cultures in Canada may socialize children differently.

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## **3. Physical Maintenance**

Families provide:

- food
- shelter
- clothing
- safety
- healthcare support

### **Real-Life Example**

A grandparent-led household provides meals, transportation, and medical care for children.

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## **4. Nurturance and Love**

Families provide emotional support, care, and belonging.

### **Real-Life Example**

A sibling supports their brother through anxiety or stress at school.

### **Important Idea**

Emotional support can come from many family structures.

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## 5. Social Control

Families teach acceptable behaviour and rules.

### Real-Life Example

Parents setting curfews or screen-time limits.

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## 6. Production of Goods and Services

Families contribute work and responsibilities.

### Examples

- cooking
- cleaning
- childcare
- financial support

### Real-Life Example

In some households, older children help care for younger siblings while parents work.

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# Diverse Family Forms

## Single-Parent Families

One parent raises children.

### Example

A mother works full-time while also helping children with homework and activities.

### Strengths

- strong independence
- close parent-child bond

## **Challenges**

- financial stress
  - limited time
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## **Two-Parent Families**

Can include heterosexual or same-sex parents.

### **Example**

Two fathers raising adopted children and sharing parenting responsibilities.

### **Important Idea**

Family success depends more on support and communication than family structure.

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## **Grandparent-Led Families**

Grandparents become primary caregivers.

### **Example**

Grandparents caring for grandchildren due to parental illness or financial hardship.

### **Possible Challenges**

- financial pressure
  - health concerns
  - generation gap
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## **Extended Families**

Relatives such as aunts, uncles, or cousins live together or help raise children.

## **Example**

New immigrant families often rely on extended family support.

## **Benefit**

Shared responsibilities and stronger support systems.

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## **Childless Families**

Families without children by choice or circumstance.

## **Important Idea**

Families do not need children to provide support, care, and emotional connection.

## **Example**

A couple focuses on careers, caregiving for elderly parents, or community involvement.

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## **Reflection Question**

How can different family structures meet the same family functions in different ways?

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# Theoretical Perspectives on Families

Theories help explain how families function and why family relationships develop the way they do.

## 1. Psychodynamic Theory

Early childhood experiences and emotional attachment shape personality and future relationships. Families may experience stress after a child is born because of emotional adjustments and changing roles.

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## 2. Symbolic Interactionist Theory

Families build relationships through communication and everyday interactions. After a baby is born, parents often negotiate new roles and responsibilities.

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## 3. Structural Functionalist Theory

Families help maintain stability in society by supporting and socializing children. Stress can occur when family members adjust to new responsibilities after childbirth.

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## 4. Conflict Theory

Family relationships can involve inequality, power struggles, and financial stress. After the birth of a child, unequal caregiving or income changes may create conflict.

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## 5. Social Exchange Theory

People evaluate relationships based on fairness, effort, and support. Parents may feel stressed if responsibilities and caregiving are not shared equally.

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# Comparing Theories

Theory	Main Focus	Simple Example
Psychodynamic	Emotional attachment	Parent-child bonding
Symbolic Interactionist	Communication and meaning	Family routines
Structural Functionalist	Stability and family roles	Teaching children values
Conflict Theory	Power and inequality	Unequal caregiving
Social Exchange Theory	Fairness and rewards	Sharing responsibilities

## Critical Thinking Question

Which theory best explains the experiences of families in Canada today? Why?

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## Caregiving and Family Relationships

### What Is Caregiving?

Caregiving means providing support for someone who needs help.

Caregivers may support:

- children
  - elderly parents
  - family members with disabilities
  - family members with illnesses
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# Caregiver Identity Theory

## Main Idea

People experience stress when transitioning into the caregiver role.

## Example

An adult child caring for an aging parent may struggle emotionally because their relationship changes from “child” to “caregiver.”

## Possible Feelings

- stress
  - guilt
  - exhaustion
  - responsibility
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# Attachment Theory

## Main Idea

Strong emotional bonds affect development and relationships.

## Secure Attachment

Children feel safe and supported.

## Insecure Attachment

Children may experience anxiety or difficulty trusting others.

## Real-Life Example

A responsive caregiver helps a child feel emotionally secure.

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# Adult Attachment Theory

## Main Idea

Early attachment patterns affect adult relationships.

## Example

Adults with strong childhood support may develop healthier romantic and family relationships.

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# Roy Adaptation Model of Caregiver Stress

## Main Idea

Caregivers must adapt to changing demands and stress.

## Stress Factors

- financial pressure
- emotional exhaustion
- time management
- lack of support

## Real-Life Example

A parent balancing work, childcare, and caregiving for elderly grandparents may experience burnout.

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# Caregiving in Canada

## Current Trends

Research shows that women often provide the majority of family caregiving in Canada.

## Possible Impacts

- reduced career opportunities
  - stress and burnout
  - financial strain
  - emotional pressure
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## Psychological Effects of Caregiving

Caregivers may experience:

- anxiety
- depression
- stress
- emotional exhaustion

## Example

A teenager helping care for younger siblings while parents work may feel overwhelmed.

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## Social Effects of Caregiving

Caregiving can affect:

- friendships
- social life
- family roles
- personal identity

## **Example**

A caregiver may have less time for hobbies or social activities.

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# **Economic Effects of Caregiving**

Caregivers may:

- reduce work hours
- miss career opportunities
- experience financial stress

## **Example**

A parent leaves work temporarily to care for a newborn or elderly parent.

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# **Case Study Example**

## **Scenario**

Sarah works full-time while caring for her two children and aging father.

## **Questions**

1. What family functions are being met?
  2. Which theoretical perspective best explains Sarah's stress?
  3. What caregiving challenges is she experiencing?
  4. How could support systems help her family?
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# Final Reflection

Families in Canada are diverse and constantly changing. Although families may look different, they continue to provide care, support, and social connection. Understanding family theories and caregiving research helps us better understand the experiences of people in Canadian society.