History of the Family

A brief look at the family over the years.
Early Families

- Early families worked for survival
  - Searching for food
  - Kill/capture animals
- This lead to the first divisions of labor
- Hard to hunt during pregnancy and child rearing so women did tasks like gathering pants and household management
- Men often did more physically demanding tasks such as building and hunting
Early Families

- Eventually, people learned to raise plants and animals for food
- In many cultures:
  - Women raised crops
  - Men tended herds
    - These provided food for the family
- Wealth came from trading animals for other goods
  - This gave males economic power – thus head of family
Early Families

- Up until the industrial revolution in the late 1700’s, families produced their own food and made their own clothing, furniture, and tools.
- Some families worked together to make products for market
- American pioneer families worked together on land
- Children were trained to do household tasks and assist with work as young as 6 years old
Early Families

• During the Industrial Revolution:
  • Rural families moved to cities seeking factory work
  • Everyone held jobs - Women, men, children, etc.

• Late 19th century, this changed
  • Industries that hired women and children gradually disappeared
  • Traditional family was formed - breadwinners vs. homemaker vs. child activities
Pre-20\textsuperscript{th} Century

- Family consisted of a husband, wife, biological children and extended family
  - People who could legally marry did
  - Stayed married until death
  - Divorce was rare
  - Cultural gender roles became “the norm”

- It was generally against the law to live together or have children outside of marriage.
  - By the 19th century these rigid legal boundaries were relaxed, with common-law marriage
Pre-20th Century

- Wives job was to assist their husbands within the home, both keeping house and raising children
- Wives had less legal identity under a condition called coverture, in which married women...
  - could not own property
  - could not enter into contracts
  - could not sue nor be sued in their own names
- Husbands were managers and providers in the family
  - controlled finances
  - had ultimate authority in the eyes of both society and the law.
- Husbands had a duty to provide his wife (and children) with the necessities of life
Pre-20th Century

- 1839: Married women given property rights through the Married Women’s Property Acts
- By the early 20th century, most states permitted married women to “own property, sue and be sued, enter into contracts and control the disposition of property upon her death.”
  - Woman’s role in the family was still defined by her husband.
- Family became an even more important source of happiness and satisfaction.
  - “companionate family was envisioned as a more isolated, and more important unit — the primary focus of emotional life.”
- New ideas about marriage emerged, based on choice, companionship and romantic love, which caused a surge in the divorce rate, which tripled between 1860 and 1910
20th Century

- Stability of families was tested by the **Great Depression**
  - Unemployment and lower wages forced Americans to delay marriage and having children
  - Divorce rate fell because it was expensive and few could afford it
  - By 1940 almost 2 million married couples lived apart.
- When the Depression ended and World War II began, families coped with new issues:
  - Shortage of housing
  - Lack of schools
  - Prolonged separation.
- During **WWII** many men left for the war
  - Women ran households and raised children alone (independence)
  - Some went to work in war industries (less financially dependent)
  - Thousands of young people became latchkey children and rates of juvenile delinquency, unwed pregnancy and truancy all rose
20\textsuperscript{th} Century

- Life after WWII:
  - The average age for women to marry was 20
  - Divorce rates stabilized
  - Birthrate doubled
- Images of family life that appeared on television don’t tell the whole story: “Only 60 percent of children spent their childhood in a male-breadwinner, female-homemaker household.”
- This “democratization of family ideals” reflected a singular society and economy, one that was driven by a reaction against Depression and war and compounded by rising incomes and low prices.
20th Century

- The economic boom that followed World War II led to significant economic growth, particularly in manufacturing and consumer goods
  - Around 13 million new homes were built in the 1950s
  - Families moved to the suburbs because they could afford to
  - This is where the concept of close-knit families as we know it originates. Domestic containment as a way of life was reinforced by American youth, who wanted to have long-lasting and stronger relationships than their parents had. Soldiers and servicemen who returned from war were looking to get married and raise children.
20th Century

- The standard structure of the family in postwar America consisted of:
  - Breadwinner male
  - His wife who did household chores and looked after the children
  - Children
- Families ate meals and went on outings together
- Parents paid close attention to disciplining their children
- Girls stayed in their parents’ home until marriage and did not commonly attend college
- Children became emotional rather than economic assets for the first time, close with their parents and the center of the family
- Childhood became a distinct period of life
Have dinner ready
Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal on time. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospects of a good meal are part of the warm welcome needed.

Prepare the children
Take a few minutes to wash the children’s hands and faces (if they are small), comb their hair, and if necessary, change their clothes. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part.

Minimise all noise
At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of washer, drier dishwashers or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet. Be happy to see him. Greet him with a warm smile and be glad to see him.

Some don’ts
Don’t greet him with problems or complaints. Don’t complain if he’s late for dinner. Count this as minor compared with what he might have gone through that day.

Make him comfortable
Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or suggest he lie down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him. Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, soft, soothing, and pleasant voice. Allow him to relax-unwind.

Listen to him
You may have a dozen things to tell him, but the memories of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first.

Make the evening his
Never complain if he does not take you out to dinner or to other places of entertainment. Instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure, his need to come home and relax.

The goal
Try to make your home a place of peace and order where your husband can renew himself in body and spirit.

Tips to look after your husband
(Extract from 1950 Home Economics Book)
20th Century

• All in all, family structure in the ’50s was based around one central necessity: a secure life.
• The economic instability of the early 20th century gave rise to the need for closely defined family units.
• This led to an ideology that lauded economic advancement and social order, the results of which were younger marriages that lasted longer, more children, fewer divorces and the nuclear family.
So... What About Modern Families?

• …coming soon!!
Key Terms to Know

- Patriarchal family – father is considered head of family
- Matriarchal family – mother is considered head of family
- Egalitarian family – equality of family members
  - Greater consideration to child opinions
  - Family roles more equal (men vs. women)
The Need for Families

- **Past:**
  - Needed to survive

- **Present:**
  - Procreation
  - Physical care
  - Socialization
  - Emotional support
Why Are Families So Important?

Article with Worksheet