Development of Families
Theoretical Perspectives

- Ecological Systems Theory
- Conflict Theory
- Feminist Theories
- Systems Theory
- Developmental Theories
- Social Exchange Theory
- Functionism
- Symbolic Interactionism

Which theoretical perspective is missing?
1. Systems Theory

- A sociological theory that looks at how groups of individuals interact as a system, or how different parts work together and influence one another in a relatively stable way over time.

Systems theory cont.

- Example: When Europeans colonized Canada, First Nations were forced to change their equitable, matriarchal, & matrilocal family systems to a patriarchy. The social fabric of First Nations changed forever...
2. Ecological Systems Theory

- A *psychological* theory that looks at individuals & families as members of interlocking systems within society that influence each other.

Ecological Systems example:

Reduced fertility rates impact the social system.
Fertility Trends in Canada

- **1st demographic trend:** fertility rates began decreasing in the 1870s due to family wage of industrial families, mandatory schooling, child labour laws, & improved healthcare.
- **Baby Boom:** economic prosperity with almost full employment, cheap housing, & the Family Allowance was introduced.

Fertility Trends cont.

Family Allowance was a federal monthly payment per child to all mothers. It’s a **pronatalist** policy that transfers money from taxpayers to mothers. Nowadays, we have the Canada child tax benefit (CCTB).

- **2nd demographic trend:** since 1967 the fertility rate declined again. Birth control was legalized in 1969.
3. Developmental Theory

- a.k.a. Family Life-Course Approach
- An *interdisciplinary* (biology, psychology, & sociology) theory that examines behaviours demonstrated by individuals or families at various *stages* in their lives.

Life-Course Approach cont.

- Parenthood is the last marker in the transition to adulthood.
- Developmental task is to accept new members into the family & adjust the family system to accommodate them.
4. Social Exchange Theory

- A *psychological* theory that looks at how individuals make choices within roles by weighing cost and benefits.

Social Exchange Theory cont.

- Example: During the 1900s, males were breadwinners & females were homemakers. It was considered a fair exchange.
- Nowadays, having children means weighing the social/emotional benefits against the financial & career goals of women. This can lead to *child-free* (childless) by choice.
Social Exchange Theory cont.

In Canada nowadays, children are valued for emotional and social reasons, not for economic reasons.

Costs: time, energy, & money. Benefits: emotional fulfillment & love.

5. Symbolic Interactionism

- A *psychological* theory that looks at how individuals behave based on their perceptions of themselves and others.
Symbolic Interactionism

- Example: Couples who delay parenting may be waiting until they perceive themselves ready to be a parent. However, subtle peer pressure may influence a couple’s decision about when to start a family.

6. Functionalism Theory

- A sociological theory that looks at how a society is organized to perform its required functions effectively.

What’s happening in this cartoon?
Functionalism cont.

- Assumes that families are institutions that serve specific functions in society, and family members are expected to fill prescribed roles within the institution for the good of society as a whole.
- Example: In the early 1900s, the family wage was the man’s responsibility & women were caregivers.

Functionalism cont.

- Example: the classical Chinese family accepted **female infanticide**. Female children did not contribute labour or children to their family of origin, thus were not valued as functional members of the family.
7. Feminist Theories

- The impact of sex and gender on behaviour from the specific point of view of women.

8. Conflict Theory

- An interdisciplinary sociological and political theory that looks at how societies are held together by power, not by individuals and groups needing and depending on each other.
Current Theories & CAREGIVING…

1) Caregiver Identity Theory
2) Child & Adult Attachment Theories
3) Roy Adaptation Model of Caregiver Stress

1. Caregiver Identity Theory

- Leads to 3 types of caregiver stress:

  **Relationship Stress**

  Tension or strain in your relationship

  - Feeling that your family members:
    - Expect too much from you
    - Is taking advantage of you
    - Does not appreciate your help
    - Is difficult to get along with
    - Criticizes what you do
    - Does not communicate with you
1. Caregiver Identity Theory

- Leads to 3 types of caregiver stress:

**Workload Stress**

Your caregiving is interfering with other parts of your life

You feel like you do not have the time or energy for...
- Your daily chores
- Other family members
- Your job
- Friends
- Yourself

**Emotional Stress**

When your caregiving responsibilities make you...

- anxious or nervous
- worry or fret
- emotionally upset
1. Caregiver Identity Theory

Take-away Points

- Caregiving involves an identity change process.
- Change often involves a lag time when there is a misfit between what a caregiver is doing and what the caregiver thinks she/he should be doing.
- That lag is called identity discrepancy and it causes distress.
- To support caregivers, we must identify the best strategy to bring their personal rules in line with their responsibilities and tasks.

Attachment Theories

Attachment is a deep & enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time & space

- Psychologists propose 2 attachment theories:
  1. Learning/behaviourist theory
  2. Evolutionary theory
2. Evolutionary Theory

- suggests that infants come into the world biologically “pre-programmed” to form attachments with others, because this will help them to survive.
- critical period for developing an attachment (~0-5 years). If not, the child will suffer from irreversible developmental consequences.
Harlow’s Monkeys & Attachment

Video footage of Harlow’s monkeys

The behavioral theory suggests that an infant forms an attachment with a carer that provides food.

The evolutionary theory suggests that infants have an innate (i.e. biological) need to touch and cling to something for emotional comfort.

3. Roy Adaptation Model

- Used in nursing to help patients improve their quality of life.
- Uses conscious awareness & choice to allow the individual to adapt to their new “environment.”