

The Functions of the Family

the Vanier Institute of the Family



- research on the basic functions required for a society to work and survive, includes looking at how society functions through the mechanism of the family
- they look at the roles family plays in supporting society and the roles individuals play in family organizations



physical maintenance & care of members

- it is expected that families will provide physical care for all members: adults, children, and otherwise dependent individuals
- this includes health care, appropriate nutrition, shelter, clothing
- if this does not happen then individuals could be at risk and suffer unless society steps in to replace this function



addition of new members through procreation or adoption

- to maintain a stable population a society needs to continue to generate members
- population growth provides a competitive edge to a society to become wealthier
- Western society is seeing a decline in the birth rate, the Canadian population is aging
- in past family has been viewed as the socially acceptable means of ensuring that sexual needs of adults are met



socialization of children

- almost all our behaviour is learned
- socialization is the process whereby children learn to become human & adopt appropriate behaviours, new skills, knowledge, values & attitudes of a society which enables them to succeed, relate well in society & have a better chance at successfully caring for themselves in life
- this process begins with the family
- the quality of the role models in the family will partially determine the degree of socialization the child receives
- formal education opportunities further the process of socialization



social control of members

- to maintain order in society it is expected that families will maintain order of their members
- it is expected that they will monitor and assess the behaviour of members and give them direction



production, consumption & distribution of goods & services

- the family is the basic economic unit in practically all societies
- adult members provide services to society and or produce goods for society and provide economic necessities for their young
- all members of a family tend to consume goods and services
- in agricultural areas children are often expected to provide labour as well as the adults



affective nurturance love

- families maintain members' morale, and encourage them to participate in society
- ideally, they provide affection & meet our emotional needs
- strong emotional grounding and family relationships help us to form relationships in later life and provide emotional support to our children and so on

