

# **Home Economics Project 1**

## **The historical evolution of family**

Family is the most basic institution of society. It is the basis for the physical and mental development of each person. During history the form of the family has changed many times. There are 4 distinct periods: primitive, agrarian, industrial and post-industrial.

In the primitive era (100.000-10.000 B.C.) people were hunters and gatherers and they lived in nomadic groups. These groups were formed by a few extended families, which didn't have many children because the food would be consumed fast and they would have to settle in another area sooner. In primitive families, both men and women made decisions on where to settle, they had similar roles and were equal. Men hunted large animals and women and children would collect shellfish, plants, and insects and would hunt smaller animals. At that time, marriage was less important than bonds of blood. Also, women were respected for the miracle of birth and some people worshipped the Mother Goddess.

In agrarian societies (10.000 B.C.-1700 A.D.) people invented the plough and they could settle down and cultivate the land. Since they settled in areas, they started to form societies. As parents became sure they had enough food for more members and help with work, population increased. This society was more organized and specialized than the primitive one. Most people became farmers but other professions began to appear as well. Farmers had a piece of land which belonged to them, they kept what their family needed and traded the rest. So, two very important concepts had come up: private ownership and wealth. Economic inequalities appeared because not all people could become rich. Some people who were unlucky ended up at the bottom of the class systems that were formed. People

developed steady relations and started to communicate and talk about things of common interest. So politics appeared, and rich people could influence decisions and make sure they had political power. During this time, families became more important, they worked as economic units and no member could survive alone. As men used the plough more effectively than women, gender inequality and patriarchy appeared. People wanted male children to inherit their property and carry on their family name. The education and socialization of the children was now a role not only of the family, but also one of the community, as settlements were organized.

In the industrial era (1700-1940 A.D.), people moved into cities to become workers. Many new products came in the market, such as textiles, medicine etc. Average income and population began to show an unprecedented growth. Also, the standards of living improved for the general population. Both men and women became workers. Women gradually acquired respect from state laws and were freed from male domination, although they were legally paid less than men. Marriage was no longer an economic necessity and new ideologies of marriage appeared, based on their free choice, romantic love and companionship. People could survive alone and family was no longer an economic unit.

In the post-industrial era (1940-today), societies became more equal. Women gained full rights and became legally equal to men. Black people gained civil rights after the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Societies were more equal in ethnic and gender terms. While in the late industrial era the middle class grew during the golden age of American capitalism and many families lived happily upholding traditional values, in the post-industrial era, the middle class decreased, some families lost money and questioned traditional values, which resulted in a diversification of society. Mothers have started to work more, there are more

types of families, more one-parent families and more interethnic couples. Marriage is less important, many families have co-habiting couples, without changing the role and the functions of the family. All these changes are socially accepted.

All of the above have shown the evolution of the family throughout the centuries. They have played a great role in the formation of our societies and the way we live today.