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## ***Program Support Notes***

**Junior – Middle Secondary**

**25 mins**

# **Beyond the Nuclear Family**

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# Beyond the Nuclear Family

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## For Teachers:

### **Introduction**

This program investigates the changing roles, structure and functions of the family throughout time. The influence of differing societal expectations, technological advancements and changes in cultural and sexual diversity on the family, and how these were the dominant agents that forced change in the evolving family is also explored. A range of possible social, emotional, environmental, economic and health considerations are presented as further reasons for family structures changing.

The program presents four different case studies of family forms and the interviews with these family members offers some ideas on how and why family roles have changed, and how this has impacted on the family. Professor David de Vaus, Dean of the Faculty of Social Science at LaTrobe University, and Dr Leslie Cannold, bioethicist, researcher and author of *What, No Baby?* Contribute factual information about how the family has changed over time and provide some interesting thoughts about the future directions for the family.

The program leaves you thinking about the role of the family in the future, particularly in this increasingly technical age of invitro-fertilisation, donor sperm and eggs, surrogacy, same-sex attracted couples, career-focused couples and societal acceptance of family diversity.

### **Program Timeline**

00:00:00	Introduction
00:01:13	Definitions of Family
00:03:39	Family Structures
00:08:37	Changing Roles
00:13:13	Key Reasons for Change
00:17:39	Families of the Future
00:22:16	Conclusion
00:23:50	Credits
00:25:00	End Program

### **Other Relevant Programs available from VEA**

- Diversity Rules OK? – The Changing Nature of Families

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### Student Worksheet:

#### **Before Viewing the Program**

1. Who are the members of your family?
  - List the people you regard as family.
  - Discuss your list with other members in your class.
  - Does your list differ to others, if so, how and why?
  - As a class, develop a definition of 'family'.
  
2. Explore your family.
  - Draw research your genealogy and draw your family tree.
  - You may need to interview parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles to complete your family tree.
  - Design a poster with your family tree, or use the 'Inspiration' Microsoft software program on the computer to design your family tree.
  
3. Explore the functions of the family. What does your family do for you?
  - Make a list of all the things your family provides and does for you.
  - Beside that list, note whether you are aware of any other resource that can provide the same service and support. What functions did you come up with that are solely provided by the family?
  - Share your comments and thoughts with the rest of the class in a discussion.
  
4. Write a short essay; 'What does 'family' mean to you?' Include in your response:
  - The importance of family.
  - The consequences of having no family or not belonging to a family might mean for you.
  - Is belonging to a family important to you, and why?

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### While Viewing the Program

1. What definition of 'family' is suggested in the program?

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2. Why is it difficult to provide a set definition for the 'family'?

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3. What was the stereotypical version of the family in the 1950s and 1960s?

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4. How did the feminist movement impact on family roles?

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5. What influence did birth control have on family structure and size?

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6. How has increased access to education and employment affected women's attitudes to 'family'?

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7. Reproductive technology such as IVF (invitro-fertilisation) has resulted in some ethical questions about 'family'. What are some of the issues raised?

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8. List some of the suggestions made in the program of what a family in the future may look like.

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9. What family forms have been traditionally stigmatised by society, but are now becoming increasingly accepted?

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10. What is meant by the comment that the “core meaning of the family hasn’t changed”?

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### After Viewing the Program

1. Use the internet to research families in different societies.
  - Investigate their structures, size and composition.
  - Identify the roles of different families in their communities. .
  - Compare and contrast a family in a developing country with a family in a developed country.
  - How do the roles of each family member differ?
  - What do they have in common?

Present your findings to the class.

2. Choose one of the key functions of the family, and research how this has changed over time. Write a written report on who traditionally carried out this function and compare it with a family in today's society.. You need to make mention of the role that the community plays in helping to assist the family with meeting this function traditionally, and what resources are available today.

Examples of functions include:

- (i) Food, Shelter and Clothing
  - (ii) Religion
  - (iii) Education
  - (iv) Socialisation
  - (v) Discipline
  - (vi) Moral and Ethical Values,
  - (vii) Customs and Beliefs
3. What will families be like in the future?
    - Choose a period of time: 10, 20, 50 or 100 years in the future
    - Outline your image of the family of the future. Present a description of what this family will look like, describe the family roles, and explain how the family might function.
    - Include the community resources you believe will be available to assist family members.
    - Provide reasons for why you believe the family will look and behave this way.
  4. What do you believe will be the main influence(s) on the family in the future?
    - economic
    - political
    - socio-cultural
    - medical/technological
    - environmental
    - other

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### Suggested Student Responses

1. The suggested definition for 'family' in the program is:
  - A social unit living together.
  - A group of people descending from the same ancestral background.
  - An association of people who share common beliefs.
  - Somewhere you feel safe and where someone will always be there to help and support you.
  
2. It is difficult to provide a set definition for the family because if you impose a set definition you risk excluding many of the other forms of family that exist. The ideas of the family change as ideas and social values change, and families will continue to be defined by choice and diversity.
  
3. The stereotypical version of the family in the 1950s and 1960s was:
  - Boy meets girl. Same-sex attracted couples, and mixed culture couples were unacceptable.
  - They got engaged and then married. They did not live together.
  - They bought a house and have children. Couple who did not have children were pitied, and a child outside of marriage was seen as a huge disgrace and was against the law.
  - Women were not stressed; they left paid employment, stayed home did the housework and were entirely responsible for child rearing.
  - Couples did not get divorced, but live happily ever after until one died. Divorce was totally unacceptable.
  
4. The feminist movement impacted on family roles in the following ways:
  - Women gained rights to remain in the workforce once they were married.
  - Women were also able to return to the workforce once they had children, which created new expectations on the father's role with child rearing and household chores.
  - Responsible for a decline in fertility rates because women were tired from the extra workloads combining housework and a career.
  
5. Birth control had an influence on family structure and size:
  - Previously motherhood was inevitable, and abortion was out of the question.
  - Women could control their fertility with the pill and this meant they could control their lives.
  - Women chose to delay having children because they were conscious of the importance of their contribution to the family income, which enabled them to be able to purchase material possessions such as a big house and a holiday. Couples saw children as an expense.
  
6. Increased access to education and employment affected women's attitudes to family in the following ways:
  - The reality of the 50s and 60s was that women were bored and isolated at home doing housework and raising children. They did not get a chance to use their education and skills, and took anti-depressants to cope with their lives.
  - Women were able to find service industry jobs that did not previously exist once the economy opened up.
  - Women became more aware that the workforce was rigid and didn't allow flexibility for career advancement if they took time off work
  - Women felt that they were on a par with men in the workforce, however if they had a child and left work, their career would be put on hold and they would not have the same career opportunities.
  - The lack of 'family friendly' workplaces meant that women put raising a family on hold until they were ready.

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7. Reproductive technology such as IVF (invitro-fertilisation) has resulted in some ethical questions about the family, some of the issues raised were:
  - They allowed a range of family forms to occur that wouldn't normally because of natural limits. This created the question of who should and shouldn't be allowed to start a family.
  - There was a clear separation between sex and reproduction, which allowed gay men and gay women and single women to be parents.
  - In some States of Australia, it is illegal for single women and same-sex couples to access reproductive technology like IVF and it remains a controversial topic.
  - It also raises the question as to who is a 'real parent' in donor situations. This continues to ignite substantial legal debate.
  - It has changed what it means to be a 'mother' and a 'father' as it is no longer simply a biological consideration.
  
8. Suggestions raised for what a 'family' in the future will look like include:
  - There will be continuing choice about how people construct their family.
  - There will be increasing diversity in families such as same-sex couples, single parents, mixed cultures, childless couples, and friends considered as family and playing a greater role in the family.
  - Relationships will not necessarily be life long, people will aspire to this but it will probably not work out this way.
  - Most people will continue to want to have children, however they will control the number of children they have and they will delay having children until they are ready.
  - Children will be conceived in ways we never previously thought possible through medical technology.
  
9. Family forms that have been traditionally stigmatised by society, but are now becoming increasingly accepted are:
  - Single-sex couples
  - Couples of different cultures or religious beliefs
  - Childless couples
  - Sole parents
  - Communes – groups of people, unrelated living together as a family.
  
10. The comment that the core meaning of the family hasn't changed means what being a part of a family means to the individual. The meaning does not change with family structure or social change or what is in style for the time. Some of the comments made were:
  - A family means taking care of each other and having company.
  - A family is about making a connection with someone else.
  - A family unit is something that is strong, built on love and respect.
  - Family is about diversity and accepting that each person is an individual.
  - Family gives you a greater sense of community and a belonging to something bigger than yourself.