

TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILIES

Functionalist Perspective

How do families help maintain the stability of a society?

- ◆ **George Murdock** (1897 – 1985): Studied families across cultures → _____ functions.



Sexual: _____ sexual relationships.



Reproduction: Generates offspring.



Educational: Education and socialization start within the family.



Economic: Status and _____ are passed down through generations.

Conflict Perspective

How do families reflect and/or reinforce inequality within a society?

- ◆ **Friedrich Engels** (1820 – 1895): Family structure was created to control _____.
 - Perpetuates social hierarchies.
- ◆ **Feminist perspective:** Family structure upholds gender inequality.
 - Individuals with more access to resources (_____) have more power in relationships.
 - _____ often perform more unpaid labor – compromises career advancement.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

How do we create the idea of family?

- ◆ “Family” is a _____ constructed concept.
 - Family _____ & expectations can vary across generations, or family to family.
 - Language usage varies from culture to culture (ex: “aunt” or “cousin”).
- ◆ How do we experience family life? → Showing affection, establishing authority, taking on roles.

TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILIES

EXAMPLE

Answer the following questions about how the theoretical perspectives view family.

1. According to Engels (a conflict theorist), what is the role of the family?

2. According to Murdock (a functionalist) families support society by controlling sexual desires, generating offspring, passing down wealth, and _____.

PRACTICE

Which of the following statements is most in line with the symbolic interactionist perspective on families?

- a) Individuals create the reality of family through their interactions.
- b) Families contribute to the inequality between the sexes.
- c) Individuals determining how wealth should be passed down shape the dynamics of the family.
- d) Families serve four main functions to society.

PRACTICE

According to the conflict perspective, which of the following are ways in which the structure of the family reinforces the patriarchy?

- I. Women's labor in the household is often unpaid.
 - II. Women in general earn less than men, which creates an unequal power balance.
 - III. Men have been contributing to childrearing more in recent decades.
-

- | | | | |
|------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|
| a) I & II. | b) I & III. | c) II & III. | d) I, II, & III. |
|------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|