

## 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.

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### **EXAMPLE**

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

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

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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?

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- 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.

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