

# A function of a family sociology essay



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Murdock claimed that the family is so functional to society that it is unavoidable and universal thus appearing everywhere. He argued that every nuclear family has this four functions Sexual, reproductive, economic and education. All these four functions are essential according to Murdock without sexual and reproductive no member of society would be there, life would stop if there was no economic function that is provision of meals. Without education no socialisation thus no culture. Murdock's view of the family is too positive to believe that nuclear family is harmonious institution .

Parsons (1955) studied the modern American family in the 50s. He argued that there are two basic and irreducible function of a family these are the primary socialisation of children which Parsons sees as a responsibility of a family to shape the child's personality to suite to the needs of society. The second function is the stabilisation of adult personalities the family gives adults the emotional support necessary to cope with the stresses of everyday life. (Taylor and Richardson etl 2002). Parsons's as with Murdock has been criticised of showing the picture of the family as attuned children and compassionate spouses caring for each other's need.

There is a natural division of labour within the nuclear family roles being segregated positively, for example the instrumental male whose role is to provide for the family thus the bread winner and expressive female whose role is to provide warmth, love and care for children at home. Based on Biology woman is a child bearer therefore has to look after the child, this role maintains social stability. Family patterns have changed with time such as cohabitation, rise of reconstituted families and increase in single or lone parent radical psychiatric looks this as way to the increase of divorce for

example changes in western family life the privatisation of the nuclear family thus no support when pressure hits leading to separation and divorce, to obtain divorce is easier due to changes in the law.

Functionalist theory has been criticised to have concentrated on the family being positive and gives little attention to its weaknesses. However in feminism nuclear family is oppressive to women for example gender distinctions. Functionalists argue that the family is of equal profit to everyone, however Marxists argue that society developed by the need of the capitalist economy. It is the bourgeoisie who benefits not the whole society. Functionalists focus too much on the significance that the family has for society and disregard the sense family life has for individual.

Feminists see the family as patriarchal male dominating thus Men gain more in a family than women. Feminists shows how men dominate social relationships thus symmetrical conjugal roles is seen as an allegory. Feminist argues that Men oppress women through domestic violence , the economic involvement to society made by women's domestic labour within the family.

Liberal feminist Wollstonecraft (1792). Wanted equality for women in terms of rights, liberties and vote by the change of law and policy. Radical feminists like Millett (1970) argue that the organisation of society enables men to dominate women, they believed that gender distinctions are politically and socially constructed therefore wanted radical reforms and social change she came with the term " The personal is political". Not just patriarchal men that benefit from family but all men. Socialist feminist look at gender as the basis, socialist Marxist combine gender with class they

argue that there is a dual oppression for women they have to go to work as well work at home. Marxist feminist believe that the destruction of the capitalist society brings equality to everything. Lesbian feminist they believe society forces them to be in heterosexuality so that men can oppress them, they challenged heterosexuality as a means of male supremacy. Humanist feminist argues that society only allows men to self-develop not women and that society distorts women's human potential.

Marxist feminist Bentson (1972) argues that family responsibilities make male workers less likely to withdraw from labour with wife and children to support. Ansley (1972) she sees the emotional support in family stabilises male workers thus make them less likely to take their frustration out of the system. Feeley (1972) She see the family as an dictatorial unit dominated by the husband and also the family values teaches obedience children learn to accept hierarchy and their position in it. Greer (2000) a radical feminist who believes that family life continues to disadvantage and oppress women. She points out Britain has very high divorce rate thus less stability in the families.

Marxist feminist like functionalist they tend to ignore the diversity of modern family life assuming everyone lives in heterosexual nuclear family. They paint a very negative picture of family life possibly exaggerated. Unlike functionalists who sees male and female roles being different but equal, Marxist feminists believe that men dominate family relationships. Feminist theory discards functionalist view that society as a whole is benefited by socialisation in the family but rather men benefits more. Women are portrayed as passive victims of exploitation, it does not take into account women who abuse men by fighting back. Functionalist believe that norms <https://assignbuster.com/a-function-of-a-family-sociology-essay/>

and values benefits society while for feminist they benefit men more for example obedience, women being obedient to men.

Marxists views of family sees socialisation process results in the transmission of a ruling class ideology, whereby individuals are deceived into accepting the capitalist system and the dominance of the capitalist class. Bourgeoisie benefits by creating a labour force and proletariat continue to be exploited. Engel s (1972) argued that bourgeois nuclear family as an institution which oppressed women. They were seen mainly as the bearers of children, economically dependent to their husbands and remain faithful to them. According to Engelsthe family is designed to control women and protect property thus men needed to know their children in order to pass on their property.

Marxists say the family serves capitalism in four ways. The family acts as a safety valves for the stress and frustration of working class men, the family as a unit of consumption buys the goods and services provided by capitalism. Women domestic work is unpaid which benefits capitalism and lastly the family socialises children thereby reproducing both labour power and acceptance of capitalism false consciousness. Zaretsky (1976) analysed that the family is one place where male workers can feel they have power and control. This helps them accept their oppression in wider society, furthermore Zaretsky sees the family as a main prop to the capitalist economy.

Marxists view of divorce in families is seen by increased economic pressure from unemployment this may place added strain and also family members living longer could increase pressure on relationships.

Marxists decline the functionalist view that society based on value consensus and thus benefits all. Instead they see the welfare of powerful groups influencing the way society is controlled. Marxist view ignores family diversity it sees the nuclear family as being simply determined by the economy. This theory reproduces conflict between classes bourgeoisie and proletariat while in functionalists family operates as united everything benefits society. Capitalist system is dominated both economically by rich at the expense of the poor but seen as a fair system by functionalists that works together in the interest of all members causing limited conflict in society. Anthropologists have suggested that the emergence of the nuclear family did not actually coincide with emergence of capitalism. Somerville (2000) argues that Zaretsky exaggerates the importance of the family as a protection from life in capitalist society. As with feminism functions of family benefits men in Marxist produces labour force.