

Knowledge organiser

AQA A Level Sociology 7192 • Families & Households • L007 • v1.0

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Why might society need families?

Concept	Meaning
Functionalism	An approach explaining how parts of a social system contribute to its continuity.
Structural approach	An explanation emphasising institutions and wider social patterns.
Consensus approach	An explanation emphasising shared values and cooperation in social order.
Institution	An established pattern of social organisation, such as family or education.
Function	A contribution that an activity or institution makes to a wider social system.
Social order	Patterns of regularity and stability in social relationships.
Value consensus	Broad agreement about important values within a society.
Socialisation	The process of learning norms, values, roles and ways of acting.

Functions and evaluation

Concept	Meaning
Nuclear family	A family consisting of a couple and their children under a specified definition.
Universal claim	A claim that something occurs in every relevant case or society.
Sexual function	In Murdock's account, socially approved regulation of sexual relationships.
Reproductive function	In Murdock's account, producing a succeeding generation.
Educational function	In Murdock's account, teaching a society's culture to children.
Economic function	In Murdock's account, cooperation in providing material needs.
Functional alternative	Another arrangement that can perform a similar contribution.
Dysfunction	A consequence that disrupts a social system or its operation.

Worked explanation

Teaching turn-taking can be interpreted as an educational function because it transmits an expected way of acting. The school also transmits knowledge. This overlap raises a further question: which contributions are shared across institutions rather than exclusive to families?

Avoid these confusions

Function does not mean every outcome is beneficial. Murdock's four functions are not Parsons' two functions. Educational includes socialisation beyond formal schooling. Economic includes cooperation and unpaid provision, not only wages. A function is not evidence that one form is uniquely necessary.

Retrieve later

Tomorrow: recall the four functions without notes. In one week: explain why a contribution does not establish that one family form is uniquely necessary.