

Why might society need families?

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

CONNECT & CHECK | SHARE | PRESENT | APPLY | RECALL & REVIEW

Connect & Check → Share → Present → Apply → Recall & Review. Explain functionalism as a structural consensus approach; distinguish Murdock's four functions; apply two functions to a fictional case; develop a challenge using alternatives or unequal effects. Use fictional examples; no personal family disclosure is required.

Recall and connect

Missed the preparation? An institution is an established pattern of social organisation. A functionalist asks what it contributes to a wider system. A claim about that contribution still needs evidence and consideration of alternatives.

Retrieve institutions, socialisation and the difference between a claim and supporting evidence.

R1

What is socialisation? Give a fictional example.

R2

What question might a functionalist ask about a social institution?

R3

Starting view: "If an institution is useful, society must need that exact arrangement." Explain.

Discover functionalist explanations

Functionalism is a structural consensus approach. It examines institutions as parts of a wider system and emphasises how shared values and cooperation may help sustain social order.

D1

Explain structural and consensus using a family example.

D2

Distinguish an activity from an explanation of its function.

Discover Murdock's four functions

In *Social Structure* (1949), Murdock compared accounts of 250 societies. He argued that the nuclear family was universal, either on its own or within larger family arrangements, and identified sexual, reproductive, educational and economic functions. These are theoretical claims to examine. Their strength depends on definitions, evidence and the cases included. A useful contribution does not prove that one family form is uniquely necessary or equally beneficial to all members.

D3

Name and explain the sexual, reproductive, educational and economic functions.

D4

Hinge: a school also socialises children. Does a family contribution prove that only families can socialise?

Discover questions for evaluation

Test universality, consider alternatives and ask who benefits. A contribution to a wider system can coexist with conflict or unequal burdens among members.

D5

How could a functional alternative challenge a claim about families?

D6

Why should a researcher ask who benefits and who bears costs?

Apply the Vale case

Fictional case for analysis, not a representative research finding. In the Vale household, two parents care for a child. They teach turn-taking and share income to meet food and housing costs. One parent performs most unpaid care and has less time for paid work. A relative living elsewhere helps regularly. A school teaches literacy and a publicly funded clinic provides healthcare. The case supplies no evidence about sexual relationships or reproduction. Do not invent those details.



Observe the visible activity and identify what further evidence is needed. This photograph also appears on slide 19.

A1

What is visible in the photograph, and why would calling it a family function require further evidence?

Apply the case evidence

Fictional case for analysis, not a representative research finding. In the Vale household, two parents care for a child. They teach turn-taking and share income to meet food and housing costs. One parent performs most unpaid care and has less time for paid work. A relative living elsewhere helps regularly. A school teaches literacy and a publicly funded clinic provides healthcare. The case supplies no evidence about sexual relationships or reproduction. Do not invent those details.

A2

Explain two functions using details from the Vale case.

A3

Use one case detail to challenge an assumption of uniqueness or equal benefit.

Optional scaffold: A functionalist would identify... The case detail shows... This may contribute to... However... This challenges the claim because...

Challenge the explanation

Separate an illustrative case from evidence for a claim about all societies.

C1

Does the Vale case establish all four functions in every family? What evidence would a stronger test need?

C2

Improve: “Families have functions, so every family is good for every member.”

Prove and improve

Complete retrieval, then explain two functions independently for eight minutes.

P1

Explain two functions of the family identified by Murdock. [6 marks]

P2

Check each paragraph for a named function, mechanism and example. Improve one missing link.

P3

Return to R3. State one contribution and one reason it does not prove unique necessity.

Prepare for Lesson 8

Read the passages on historical change and Parsons' next question.

Society and historical change

Industrialisation changes patterns of work, residence and mobility. A theory linking families to society should explain how those connections vary over time.

Parsons' next question

Parsons developed an account of how the family fits industrial society. L008 will examine his argument and his emphasis on primary socialisation and the stabilisation of adult personalities.

Keep evaluation open

If another institution performs an activity, ask whether the family's contribution has disappeared, changed or become shared. A claim of a fit between institutions needs historical and comparative evidence.

F1

Why might industrialisation be relevant to an explanation of family life?

F2

Which two functions will Parsons' account emphasise?

F3

What evidence could test a proposed fit between families and society? Retrieve the four Murdock functions tomorrow and next week.

Retrieval check for self study

Complete before the extended response. Cover the key while answering. One mark per correct answer; total 6. Correct insecure ideas and retry tomorrow. Extended writing needs teacher review.

Q1

What does a function mean in this approach?

A A contribution to a wider social system B Any activity everyone enjoys C A person's occupation

Q2

Which set gives Murdock's four functions?

A Status, power, conflict and identity B Income, leisure, housing and transport C Sexual, reproductive, educational and economic

Q3

Teaching turn-taking most directly illustrates which function?

A Reproductive B Educational C Sexual

Q4

What does pooling income most directly illustrate?

A Economic cooperation B A universal biological difference C The absence of unpaid work

Q5

What is a functional alternative?

A A reason that all families are identical B A judgement that a family is wrong C Another arrangement performing a similar contribution

Q6

Does identifying a function prove everyone benefits equally?

A Yes, by definition B No; effects and distributions need investigation C Only if the family has children

Self marking key

Q1: A. Q2: C. Q3: B. Q4: A. Q5: C. Q6: B.