Cheatography

functionalists view of the family Cheat Sheet

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introduction

-The functionalist theory of family suggests that the nuclear family has developed to suit the needs of society.

-This idea is known as the fit thesis.

-the Functionalist view of the family has been critised because it is seen as being too optimistic.

-Whilst it has supporting studies, it overlooks the darker sides of family life.

-Parsons is a key thinker for functionalism. He wrote extensively about the family functions in society.

conclusion

-To conclude the general idea of the functionalist views of family is that the family carriers out different functions in order to support society and allow it to function properly.

-they tend to see the nuclear family as the ideal family for industrial societies and argue thatit performs positive functions such as socialising children and providing emotional security for parents.

-see the importance of family to people and sees its importance in organising society.

-However there are many criticisms from a theoretical point of view especially from marxism and feminism which claim that the functionalist overlook the dark side of family life, the exploitation of women and the way that families are part of the ideology of capitalism.

criticisms

-overlooks effects of mjor social inequalities

-claims to be scientific but little research and evidence.

Parsons functional fit

Parsons has a historical perspective on the evolution of the nuclear family.

-His functional fit theory is that as society changes the type of family that fitssociety and the functions it performs.

-Futhermore, the functions that the family has to perform will effect it shape or sructure. Parsons distinguishes between two kinds of family structures, 1. The nuclear family: of just parents and their dependent children which fits industrial society. 2.The extended family: of three generations living under one roof which fits preindustrial society.

-Parsons view , when britian began to industrial from the late 18th century onwards, the extended family began to give way to the nuclear , this is because the NF met the needs of the industrial society.

criticisms: according to Willmott&Young the pre-industrial family was nuclear not extended as parsons claims with parents and children working together for examplesin cottage industries such as weaving

Traditional gender roles

Traditional gender roles (cont)

Criticisms: Parsons view of the instrumental& expressive roles of men&women is very old fashioned, it seems that both partners are more likely to take on both roles.

Two functions of the family

Murdock's 4 basic functions (cont)

3. Educational- Socialisation of the young teaching basics norms and values

4. Economic- Meeting its members ecominic needs, producing food and shelter for example.

Criticisms: Feminist sociologists argue that arguing the family is essential is ideologial because traditional family structures typically disadvantage women. It is feasible that other institutions could perform the functions above.

Organic Analogy

an importanct part of socialisation according to functionalists is 'gender roles socialisation'

-if primary socialisation is done correctly then boys will learn to adopt the 'instrumental roles that thier father presents (go out and earn money"

-Girls learn to adopt the 'expressive role' by doing all the caring, housework and bringing up the children.

-Parsons believe the nuclear family was the ideal enviroment for children to be socialised in, particularly for gender roles.

-in the NF children have a single father/male figure.

-roles are easier to identify in NF, due to traditional roles.

-Parsons believes that nuclear families are biologically natural and have developed through evolutions to fit the different roles of men and women.

according to Parsons, the NF is still the only institution that can perform the core functions in society.

1.Primary socialisation: The nuclear family is still responsible for teaching children the norms and values of society known as primary socialisation. Children are taught the rules for society from their parents, which is apart of social control. An important part of socialisation according to the functionalists is 'gender role socialisation.'

2. The stabilisation adult personalities: The establishment of NF refers to the emotional security which is achieved within a marital relationshipbetween two adults. According to Parsons working life in industrialsociety is stressfuland the family is a place where the working ma can return and destress by his wife and children which reduces conflicts in society. This is also known as the warm bath theory.

criticisms: Parsons paints a very rosey picture of family life, presenting it as a harmonious and intergrated institutions. However, they downplay conflict in the family particularly the 'darker side' of the family life. Fran Ansley also states it as oppressive and 'women are takers of shit'

Murdock's 4 basic functions

George Murdock argued that the nuclear family was a universal feature of all human societies. in other words the nuclear family is in all societies. he suggests there are four essential functions of the NF:

1. Sexual- stable satisfaction of sex drive within monogamous relationships, which prevents sexual jealousy.

2. Reproductive- The biological reproduction of the next generation without which society cannot continue.

talcott parsons argued that society was like a human body

-society was made up of various institutions that act like the organs of the body: they all need to be functioning properly for the body to work.

- the family is one of these institituations.

-by carrying out processes such as primary socialisation and social control the family helps society function well.

-if one function of the family fails, it will have an ongoing effect on society.

- Parts of society should be understood in terms of what they contribute to society as a whole e.g primary socialisation enables members to intergrate into society.

-when all members in society have been socialised into its norms and values it creates a well intergrated functioning society.

Criticisms:No such thing as social solidarity & society is fluid & diverse not interdependent(Beck).

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