The Functionalist Perspective on the Family

Parson's Functional Fit Theory
- Top down 'structuralist' theory
- 1950s!
- Asks 'what functions does the family perform for society?'
- Essential building block
- Positive Role of the Nuclear Family

Murdock's 4 Basic Functions
- Reproductive
- Economic
- Social
- Sex drive/ monogamy
- Studied 200 societies
- Pre-industrial society Extended family
- Larger family Many functions
- Industrial society Nuclear family
- Smaller family Fewer functions

Evaluation - The Nayar

The basics
- Industrial society
- Nuclear family
- Smaller family
- Fewer functions
- Many functions

Criticism
- Fit isn't as neat

Traditional gender roles
- Instrumental
- Expressive

Feminist criticism:
- Patriarchal
- Oppressive
- Ideological

Overall Evaluations
- Negative
  - Out of date - 1950s, can't explain diversity
  - Downplays conflict - darker side of family life
- Deterministic
  - Feminism - ignores oppression of women/ public private divide
- Positive
  - Link to New Right
  - Functional Fit Theory - some of it makes sense
  - Traditional gender roles

Critical evaluation:
- Feminist - ignores/ oppresses women
- Marxist - oppressive role of women
- Link to New Right

Murdock's 4 Basic Functions
- Economic
- Reproductive
- Social
- Sex drive

Two irreducible functions of the family
- Primary socialisation
- Stabilisation of adult personalities (Warm bath theory)