

Chapter 4 Families and households

Topic 3 Theories of the family

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Activity: Webquest

Alternatives to the nuclear family

Learning objectives

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Identify alternatives to the nuclear family.
- Identify whether these alternatives can perform Murdock's essential functions.
- Evaluate Murdock's view of the nuclear family being universal.

Murdock identified four essential functions of the family.

- Stable satisfaction of the sex drive
- Reproduction of the next generation
- Socialisation of the young
- Meeting its members' economic needs

He argued that the nuclear family was best suited to carry out these functions. He therefore claimed the nuclear family was found in all societies. However, in many societies alternatives to the nuclear family exist.

A. Using the websites below, answer the following questions:

1. What type of living arrangements are there in the group?
2. For each of Murdock's functions listed above:
3. Do the living arrangements carry out the function?
4. If yes, how do they do this?
5. If no, is the function carried out by another group or agency?
6. What do these examples tell us about the nuclear family and its functions?

B. What does this activity tell us about the functions of the family?

Are other ways of living as beneficial as the nuclear family?

<http://www.everyculture.com/South-Asia/Nayar-Marriage-and-Family.html> - the Nayar people

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kibbutz> - Kibbutzim

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foster_care - foster care

<http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/pages/childrens-homes.html> - children's homes

<http://www.livescience.com/6073-children-raised-lesbians-fine-studies-show.html> - lesbian parents

<http://www.livescience.com/17913-advantages-gay-parents.html> - gay parents