2.2 Feminist, New Right and Postmodernist Perspectives on the Family

AQA 7192 · about 55 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write full-sentence answers for the questions marked with 'full sentence required' on the paper (at least five). Spend about 55 minutes in total. The final 12-mark question requires a developed evaluation with a conclusion.

1 Stacey suggested families in late modern societies could be 'divorce-extended' or negotiated by members. Explain two features of Stacey's account of postmodern family life and give a brief example of each.

(Total for Question 1 is 6 marks)

2 Using the ideas of radical feminism, explain why some feminists argue that changes in law or employment alone will not end women's oppression in the family.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

3 State one strength and one weakness of using the New Right perspective to explain family change in late twentieth century Britain. Answer in two full sentences.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Item A: Extract on lone-parent families and policy. A recent government report states: 'Over the last two decades, the proportion of children living in lone-parent households has risen, while policy debates have focused on whether welfare rules encourage dependency or whether structural economic changes have caused family instability.' Using Item A and your sociological knowledge, evaluate the New Right view that lone-parent families are a cause of social problems and welfare dependency. Give a developed evaluation and a conclusion. Full sentence answers required.

Using Item A and your sociological knowledge, evaluate the New Right view that lone-parent families are a cause of social problems and welfare dependency.

(Total for Question 4 is 12 marks)

5 Define what feminist sociologists mean by the term 'dual burden' in studies of family life and paid work, as used in family sociology discussions.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

6 Identify and explain one reason why liberal feminists believe changes in law and policy can reduce gender inequality in the family, referring to opportunities and legal reform.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

7 Identify and explain two differences between liberal feminist and Marxist feminist explanations of the family, referring to the focus of each perspective and the proposed route to change.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

8 Define what is meant by the 'underclass' in New Right analyses of family and welfare, and explain why Murray linked this to lone-parent families and welfare dependency.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

9 State one criticism made by feminist sociologists of Murray's New Right claim that lone-parent families cause welfare dependency.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

10 Identify and explain one way the New Right's ideal of the traditional nuclear family differs from the postmodern idea of chosen or negotiated family arrangements.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

Mark scheme · 2.2 Feminist, New Right and Postmodernist Perspectives on the Family

Question 1

identifies first feature, e.g. divorce-extended family networks created after divorce, including ex-spouses and new partners	**B1**
develops first feature with example, e.g. a woman who divorces may retain support from her ex spouse for childcare and form kin-like ties with a new partner	**B1**
identifies second feature, e.g. negotiated family arrangements where roles and responsibilities are chosen rather than fixed	**B1**
develops second feature with example, e.g. couples agreeing flexible working and shared care duties rather than following a fixed male breadwinner model	**B1**
further development or clarification, e.g. Stacey emphasises individual agency within structural constraints	**B1**
additional example or link to postmodern diversity, e.g. chosen families may include friends or same-sex partners forming family-like networks	**B1**

Answer: Stacey describes divorce-extended families where networks formed after divorce, for example a woman who retains support from an ex spouse for childcare and develops kin-like ties with a new partner. She also describes negotiated family arrangements where roles are chosen rather than fixed, for example couples agreeing flexible working and shared care duties instead of adopting a male breadwinner model; she links these developments to greater individual agency and growing family diversity.

Question 2

identifies radical feminist claim, e.g. patriarchal power in private relations runs deeper than public laws	**B1**
develops point, e.g. Delphy and Leonard see the family as a system that allocates unpaid labour and control to men, not solved by legal reform alone	**B1**
offers further development, e.g. changing laws may alter public behaviour but private interactions and gender expectations persist	**B1**
links to implication, e.g. radical feminists therefore call for deeper social change in gender relations and personal power	**B1**

Answer: Radical feminists argue patriarchal power inside private family relations runs deeper than public laws; Delphy and Leonard view the family as a system allocating unpaid labour and control to men, so legal reform and employment change alone may not change private interactions and gender expectations. Therefore they call for deeper social change in gender relations and personal power.

Question 3

identifies one strength, e.g. highlights the social concerns about family breakdown and the role of economic incentives	**B1**
development of strength, e.g. this can explain policy focus on promoting marriage and reducing welfare dependency	**B1**
identifies one weakness, e.g. tends to blame the poor or lone parents and ignores structural causes like unemployment	**B1**
development of weakness, e.g. this oversimplification can lead to stigmatising policies rather than addressing root causes	**B1**

Answer: A strength of the New Right view is that it highlights social concerns about family breakdown and the role of economic incentives, which helps explain policy efforts to promote marriage and reduce welfare dependency. A weakness is that it tends to blame the poor or lone parents and ignores structural causes like unemployment, risking stigmatising policies rather than addressing root causes.

Question 4

Level 1 Simple statements about the New Right view or Item A with little application or development. May repeat the claim that lone-parent families cause problems without evidence or counter-argument. **1-3**

Level 2 Some developed points about the New Right view and its implications, with partial use of Item A. Includes at least one counter-argument or weakness but lacks a sustained evaluation or clear conclusion. **4-6**

Level 3 Clear explanation of the New Right argument, applied to Item A, and several well developed criticisms from other perspectives, such as feminist or Marxist critiques, with some analysis of evidence and policy implications. **7-9**

Level 4 A balanced, evaluative response that uses Item A and wider knowledge to assess the New Right claim. Presents competing explanations, evaluates evidence and policy, and reaches a justified conclusion about how convincing the New Right view is. **10-12**

Indicative content:

- Explain New Right claim: Murray and others argue lone-parent families, especially female-headed, remove male role models, reduce male responsibility and create welfare dependency, leading to social problems for children.
- Apply Item A: rising lone-parent proportion noted, debate over whether welfare rules encourage dependency or structural changes cause instability; use Item A to show the New Right causal claim is contested.
- Criticisms from feminists: argue that poverty, lack of jobs and structural inequality cause both lone parenthood and social problems; blaming family type stigmatizes women.
- Marxist critique: economic restructuring, unemployment and insecure labour markets produce family instability and welfare need, not family type per se.
- Empirical issues: evidence that many lone parents work or seek work; cross-national comparisons show different welfare regimes and different outcomes, suggesting policy context matters.
- Alternative explanations: relationship breakdown due to economic pressure, lack of affordable housing, and changes in gender roles; some children in lone-parent families do well with adequate support.
- Policy implications: New Right prescriptions of cuts to welfare and promotion of marriage may overlook need for childcare, employment and anti-poverty measures; evaluation of effectiveness and ethical implications.
- Conclusion example: on balance, the New Right claim is overstated; lone-parent families can be associated with social problems only when combined with poverty and lack of support, so structural solutions are more convincing than blaming family form alone.

Question 5

identifies that the dual burden means women perform paid work and also most unpaid domestic labour, including housework and childcare (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. this creates additional strain on women compared with men **B1**

Answer: The dual burden is when women do paid employment and also carry most unpaid domestic labour, such as housework and childcare, creating additional strain on women compared with men.

Question 6

identifies a reason, e.g. legal reforms and anti-discrimination laws increase women's opportunities outside the home **B1**

explains how this reduces inequality, e.g. by improving access to employment and education, women become economically independent and less subject to patriarchal control **B1**

Answer: Liberal feminists argue legal reforms and anti-discrimination laws increase women's opportunities outside the home; by improving access to employment and education, women become more economically independent and less subject to patriarchal control.

Question 7

identifies first difference, e.g. liberal feminists focus on legal reform and equal rights **B1**

explains first difference, e.g. they believe policy, education and legislation will gradually reduce discrimination **B1**

identifies second difference, e.g. Marxist feminists see women's oppression as rooted in capitalism and economic class relations **B1**

explains second difference, e.g. they argue abolishing or changing capitalist structures is needed because women reproduce labour power and provide unpaid labour that benefits capital **B1**

Answer: Liberal feminists focus on legal reform and equal rights, believing policy and education will reduce discrimination; Marxist feminists argue women's oppression is rooted in capitalism, so changing economic structures is required because unpaid domestic labour reproduces labour power and benefits capital.

Question 8

defines the underclass as a social group seen by the New Right as dependent on welfare, often unemployed and detached from mainstream work and norms **B1**

development, e.g. described as having lingering social problems that the New Right argue are self-perpetuating **B1**

explains Murray's link to lone-parent families, e.g. he argued lone-parent households, especially female-headed ones, could encourage dependency and reduce male responsibility **B1**

development, e.g. Murray claimed long-term welfare could create an underclass culture passed between generations **B1**

Answer: The underclass, in New Right terms, is a social group seen as dependent on welfare, often unemployed and detached from mainstream work and norms, sometimes with entrenched social problems. Murray linked this to lone-parent families by arguing that welfare support for single parents could reduce male responsibility and encourage a culture of dependency that might persist across generations.

Question 9

identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. critics argue poverty or structural unemployment cause both lone parenthood and dependency, not family type itself	**B1**
brief development, e.g. economic and policy factors rather than family structure explain welfare uptake	**B1**

Answer: Critics argue poverty or structural unemployment cause both lone parenthood and welfare dependency, so it is economic and policy factors rather than family type itself that explain welfare uptake.

Question 10

identifies difference, e.g. New Right values a fixed, heterosexual, breadwinner homemaker nuclear family	**B1**
explains difference, e.g. postmodern views emphasise diversity, negotiated roles and choices about family form rather than a single ideal	**B1**

Answer: The New Right values a fixed nuclear family with a male breadwinner and female homemaker, whereas postmodern perspectives emphasise diversity and negotiated, chosen family forms with flexible roles.