2.1 Functionalist and Marxist Perspectives on the Family: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. For full-credit answers in short questions write in full sentences where asked. Spend about 30 minutes on this pack.

1 Describe one limitation of Murdock's view of the family as performing universal functions, with reference to modern empirical evidence or critiques.

(Total for Question 1 is 3 marks)

2 Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the family serves the interests of capitalism, using relevant Marxist and non-Marxist perspectives.

(Total for Question 2 is 12 marks)

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3 Define what Parsons meant by 'primary socialisation' in the context of the family and industrial society.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 Identify and explain two functions Murdock claimed the family performs for society, referring to Murdock's theoretical context.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Describe one aspect of Parsons's 'warm bath' theory about the family and adult personalities in the context of postindustrial stress.

(Total for Question 5 is 3 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.1 Functionalist and Marxist Perspectives on the Family: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies one limitation: the functions Murdock assigns to the family may also be carried out by other institutions **B1**

development: this challenges the claim that the family is universally necessary to perform those functions, since they need not depend on the family alone **B1**

further development or example, e.g. some functions may be performed by other institutions like schools or the state **B1**

Answer: One limitation is that the functions Murdock assigns to the family may also be carried out by other institutions. For example, schools provide formal education and the state can provide economic support through welfare. This challenges the claim that the family is universally necessary to perform these functions, since they need not depend on the family alone. Diversity of family form does not itself show that a function is absent: whether a family performs a function must be considered separately from its structure.

Question 2

Level 1 Basic statements about the family and capitalism with limited use of sociological ideas. Little or no development or evaluation. Conclusions, if present, are unsupported. **1-3**

Level 2 Some relevant sociological knowledge and description of Marxist claims that the family benefits capitalism. Limited engagement with alternative perspectives and limited evaluation. Conclusion may be simplistic. **4-6**

Level 3 Clear explanation of Marxist views that the family serves capitalist interests, with some developed counter-arguments from functionalist and feminist perspectives. Good use of sociological evidence and concepts, and an attempt at evaluation leading to a reasoned conclusion. **7-9**

Level 4 Detailed and balanced answer: well-developed Marxist analysis (Engels, Zaretsky, Althusser) explaining how the family reproduces labour power, ideology and private property, combined with substantial, developed counter-arguments from functionalism, feminism and interactionism. Evaluation addresses strengths and limitations of Marxist accounts and reaches a supported, qualified judgement. **10-12**

Indicative content:

- Marxist agreement: Engels argued the family developed to protect private property and ensure inheritance, serving the bourgeoisie.
- Marxist agreement: Zaretsky argued the family reproduces labour power, provides emotional support that stabilises workers and acts as a unit of consumption, sustaining capitalism.
- Marxist agreement: Althusser saw the family as an Ideological State Apparatus, socialising children into acceptance of capitalist relations and legitimising inequality.
- Support for Marxism: empirical examples where families transmit wealth and class advantage, consumer culture targeted at families, roles that reproduce gendered labour power.
- Functionalist counter-argument: Parsons and Murdock claim the family performs necessary universal functions for social order and is not simply an instrument of capitalist class interests.
- Feminist critique: some feminists accept Marxist points about class but argue patriarchy within the family benefits men as well as capitalists, so class is not the only power structure reproduced.
- Interactionist critique: focus on family as site of action and meaning, suggesting families can resist or reinterpret capitalist ideology rather than simply reproduce it.
- Empirical and methodological limitations of Marxism: tends to be deterministic and economically reductionist, may overstate the unity of family interests and underplay diversity of family experience.
- Evaluation could conclude that Marxist theories offer powerful insights into links between family and capitalism, especially over inheritance and ideology, but that they need to be combined with other perspectives to account for gender, agency and family diversity. On balance a qualified agreement is plausible, with reservations.

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Question 3

identifies that primary socialisation is the process where young children learn basic norms and values	**B1**
development, e.g. this learning is carried out mainly within the family during early childhood and prepares children for adult roles in industrial society	**B1**

Answer: Primary socialisation is the process by which young children learn basic norms and values; Parsons saw this happening mainly within the family during early childhood, preparing children for adult roles in industrial society.

Question 4

identifies one function, e.g. reproduction	**B1**
explains how it fits Murdock's idea, e.g. reproduction provides new members to sustain society	**B1**
identifies a second function, e.g. economic support	**B1**
explains how it fits Murdock's idea, e.g. the family provides food, shelter and financial support for members	**B1**

Answer: Example: reproduction, which provides new members needed to maintain society; and economic support, where the family supplies food, shelter and care for dependent members.

Question 5

identifies the warm bath idea: the family soothes adults after work	**B1**
development, e.g. the family's emotional support helps restore adults, making them effective at work	**B1**
further development or example, e.g. affectionate family relationships reduce stress and help social stability	**B1**

Answer: The warm bath idea is that the family soothes adults after the stresses of work; the emotional support and affection provided by family life helps restore and stabilise adult personalities so people can return to work refreshed and maintain social order.

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