# 3.6 Criticisms of the Family, Including the Dark Side: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

**Answer ALL questions. Show your understanding by using sociological vocabulary and, where asked, your own examples.**

**1** Evaluate the view that the family is mainly a positive, supportive institution rather than a source of harm and inequality. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one perspective.

**(Total for Question 1 is 12 marks)**

**2** State one similarity between the Marxist view of the family, covered elsewhere in this strand, and Delphy and Leonard's feminist view.

**(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)**


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**3** Explain one reason schools or health professionals might be well placed to notice signs that a child is affected by problems at home.

**(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)**

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**4** The psychiatrist R.D. Laing challenged the idea that the family is always a source of support.

**(a)** Explain Laing's general argument about the family and mental distress. **(2)**

**(b)** Explain one way Laing's view challenges the functionalist view of the family. **(2)**

**(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)**

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**5** The social anthropologist Edmund Leach, in his 1967 Reith Lectures, was critical of the small, isolated modern nuclear family.

**(a)** Explain Leach's main criticism of the isolated nuclear family. **(2)**

**(b)** Explain how Leach's view differs from Parsons' 'warm bath theory'. **(2)**

**(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)**


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# Mark scheme · 3.6 Criticisms of the Family, Including the Dark Side: 30-minute Pack

## Question 1

**Level 4** A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH the positive/functionalist case for the family AND the 'dark side' case, supported by accurate reference to named sociologists. Strengths and weaknesses of each view are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout, and any reference to domestic abuse is handled factually and appropriately. **10-12**

**Level 3** A clear evaluation that explains both sides of the debate, with some accurate reference to sociologists. Some analysis of strengths/weaknesses. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported. **7-9**

**Level 2** Some relevant explanation of one or both sides of the debate, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between views. **4-6**

**Level 1** One or two isolated, undeveloped points about family life, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail. **1-3**

**Level 0** No relevant content. **0**

**Indicative content:**

- Positive/functionalist case: Parsons argued the family performs two 'irreducible' functions, including the 'stabilisation of adult personalities' ('warm bath theory'), providing emotional support that helps family members cope with the stresses of daily life; Murdock's (1949) four universal functions suggest the family reliably meets basic needs.
- Dark side case: R.D. Laing argued the family is not always a safe or supportive place, and that confusing or unsupportive family communication could contribute to psychological distress; Edmund Leach (1967) argued the small, isolated modern nuclear family could concentrate emotional strain rather than relieve it, compared with the wider kin networks of the past.
- Further dark side evidence: Delphy and Leonard's (1992) materialist feminist analysis argued family relationships can involve real economic exploitation of women's unpaid labour; sociologists also recognise that domestic abuse can occur within some families, challenging the idea that family life is always safe.
- Evaluation of the positive/functionalist case: critics argue it can present too harmonious a picture, ignoring conflict, inequality and harm that some family members experience.
- Evaluation of the dark side case: critics argue it can risk overstating how common serious harm is, when many families do provide real support, and that some dark-side theories rest on limited evidence, such as Laing's case studies.
- A balanced conclusion should recognise that family life can provide genuine support for many people while also acknowledging that, for some, it involves real inequality or harm, rather than assuming family life is uniformly positive or uniformly harmful.

## Question 2

identifies a genuine similarity, e.g. both view family relationships as involving exploitation of one group by another, rather than benefiting everyone equally **B1**

brief development, e.g. Marxists focus mainly on class and capitalism, while Delphy and Leonard focus mainly on gender, but both reject the idea that family life is equally beneficial to all its members **B1**

**Answer: Both the Marxist view and Delphy and Leonard's feminist view see family relationships as involving exploitation of one group by another; Marxists focus on class and capitalism, while Delphy and Leonard focus on gender, but both reject equal benefit for all.**

## Question 3

identifies a genuine reason, e.g. they see children regularly and may notice changes in behaviour, wellbeing or attendance **B1**

development, e.g. this can allow early support or referral to help, alongside or instead of relying only on the family to identify problems **B1**

**Answer: Schools and health professionals see children regularly and may notice changes in behaviour, wellbeing or attendance, allowing early support or referral to help.**

## Question 4

(a) identifies that Laing argued the family is not always a safe, supportive place, and can sometimes contribute to psychological or emotional distress (oe) **B1**

(a) development, e.g. he argued confusing, contradictory or unsupportive patterns of communication within some families could add to a family member's distress **B1**

**(a) Answer: Laing argued the family is not always safe or supportive, and that confusing or unsupportive patterns of communication within some families could add to a family member's distress.**

(b) identifies that functionalists such as Parsons presented the family as providing emotional support and stability, e.g. 'stabilisation of adult personalities' **B1**

(b) development, e.g. Laing's work challenges this by showing family relationships can sometimes be a source of harm rather than only support **B1**

**(b) Answer: Functionalists such as Parsons presented the family as providing emotional support and stability; Laing's work challenges this by showing family relationships can sometimes be a source of harm rather than only support.**


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## Question 5

(a) identifies that Leach argued the small, isolated nuclear family, cut off from wider kin, could place great emotional strain on its members **B1**

(a) development, e.g. unlike in the past, when responsibilities and emotional support were shared across a wider network of kin and neighbours **B1**

**(a) Answer: Leach argued the small, isolated nuclear family, cut off from wider kin, could place great emotional strain on its members, unlike in the past when support was shared across a wider network.**

(b) identifies that Parsons argued the family relieves adults' stress and provides stability **B1**

(b) development, e.g. Leach argued instead that the same small, private family unit can concentrate stress and conflict rather than only relieving it **B1**

**(b) Answer: Parsons argued the family relieves adults' stress and provides stability; Leach argued instead that the same small, private family unit can concentrate stress and conflict rather than only relieving it.**


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