



GSOC.FA6 Criticisms of the Family, Including the Dark Side

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

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

- 1** Which term do sociologists use to describe negative aspects of family life, such as conflict, inequality or abuse, that functionalist theories tend to overlook?

- ☐ A) The dark side of the family
- ☐ B) The beanpole family
- ☐ C) The pure relationship
- ☐ D) The second shift

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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- 2** Define what sociologists mean by 'the dark side of the family'.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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- 3** 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 3 is 4 marks)

4 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 4 is 4 marks)

5 The sociologists Christine Delphy and Diana Leonard (1992) offered a materialist feminist analysis of family life.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Explain what sociologists mean when they say the family can have a 'dark side', with reference to domestic abuse.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 State one criticism that has been made of Laing's approach to the family and mental distress.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 State one criticism that has been made of Leach's view of the isolated nuclear family.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

9 State one criticism that has been made of Delphy and Leonard's view of family exploitation.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

10 Functionalist sociologists such as Parsons describe the family as a source of support and stability. Other sociologists argue the family can also have a 'dark side'.

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 10 is 12 marks)

11 For each statement below, state whether it best reflects a functionalist view or a 'dark side' view of the family.

(a) The family gives adults emotional support that helps them cope with the stresses of work. **(1)**

(b) The isolated modern family can concentrate stress and strain on its members. **(1)**

(c) Family relationships can involve the exploitation of women's unpaid labour. **(1)**

(Total for Question 11 is 3 marks)

12 Explain one type of support, such as a helpline or refuge, available in the UK to someone experiencing domestic abuse.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

13 Give one reason sociologists give for why domestic abuse can be under-reported.

(Total for Question 13 is 2 marks)

14 State one strength of feminist perspectives for understanding the 'dark side' of family life.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

- 15** Explain two reasons some sociologists are cautious about using the single term 'dark side' to describe all criticism of family life.

(Total for Question 15 is 4 marks)

- 16** 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 16 is 2 marks)

- 17** 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 17 is 2 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.FA6 Criticisms of the Family, Including the Dark Side

Question 1

- **B1** A (the dark side of the family)
- **Answer: A**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies that this term refers to negative or harmful aspects of family life, such as conflict, inequality, neglect or abuse (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. sociologists use the term to challenge overly positive, harmonious pictures of family life given by some perspectives
- **Answer: The 'dark side of the family' refers to negative or harmful aspects of family life, such as conflict, inequality or abuse, used by sociologists to challenge overly positive pictures of family life.**

Question 3

- (a) **B1** identifies that Laing argued the family is not always a safe, supportive place, and can sometimes contribute to psychological or emotional distress (oe)
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. he argued confusing, contradictory or unsupportive patterns of communication within some families could add to a family member's distress
- **(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) **B1** identifies that functionalists such as Parsons presented the family as providing emotional support and stability, e.g. 'stabilisation of adult personalities'
- (b) **B1** development, e.g. Laing's work challenges this by showing family relationships can sometimes be a source of harm rather than only support
- **(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.**

Question 4

- (a) **B1** identifies that Leach argued the small, isolated nuclear family, cut off from wider kin, could place great emotional strain on its members
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. unlike in the past, when responsibilities and emotional support were shared across a wider network of kin and neighbours
- **(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) **B1** identifies that Parsons argued the family relieves adults' stress and provides stability
- (b) **B1** development, e.g. Leach argued instead that the same small, private family unit can concentrate stress and conflict rather than only relieving it
- **(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.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies that Delphy and Leonard argued family and marriage relationships can involve the exploitation of women's unpaid labour by men (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. they compared this to a class relationship, with men benefiting economically from women's work within the home
- **B1** identifies that this exploitation could include unpaid housework, childcare and other domestic labour
- **B1** development, e.g. Delphy and Leonard argued mainstream sociology had often overlooked this inequality within family life
- **Answer: Delphy and Leonard argued family and marriage relationships can involve exploitation of women's unpaid labour by men, comparing this to a class relationship, and argued mainstream sociology had often overlooked this inequality.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies that domestic abuse, which can include physical, emotional or financial abuse, can occur within some families, challenging the idea that the family is always a safe place
- **B1** development, e.g. sociologists and support organisations recognise that women are disproportionately affected as victims, though anyone in a family can be affected
- **B1** identifies that feminist sociologists in particular have argued mainstream sociology historically paid too little attention to domestic abuse when studying family life
- **B1** development, e.g. this connects to the wider feminist critique that functionalist accounts present too positive a picture of family life
- **Answer: Domestic abuse, which can include physical, emotional or financial abuse, can occur within some families; women are disproportionately affected as victims, and feminists argue mainstream sociology historically paid too little attention to this, connecting to a wider critique of overly positive functionalist accounts.**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. his ideas were based on a small number of case studies, which may not apply to families in general
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or that his approach was more influential in psychiatry than in mainstream sociology, and some of his claims are hard to test
- **Answer: Critics argue Laing's ideas were based on a small number of case studies, which may not apply to families in general, and that some of his claims are hard to test.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. many families today still have regular contact with wider kin, for example by phone or visits, so are not always as isolated as Leach suggested
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or that conflict and stress can also happen within extended family networks, not only within small nuclear families
- **Answer: Critics argue many families today keep regular contact with wider kin, for example by phone or visits, so are not always as isolated as Leach suggested, and conflict can happen in extended families too.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. it may understate genuine cooperation, affection and mutual support that exist within many family relationships
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or that patterns of paid work and domestic labour have changed since their original research, for example through policies such as shared parental leave
- **Answer: Critics argue Delphy and Leonard's view may understate genuine cooperation and support within many family relationships, and that patterns of work and domestic labour have changed since their original research.**

Question 10

- **Level 4** (10-12): 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.
- **Level 3** (7-9): 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.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant explanation of one or both sides of the debate, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between views.
- **Level 1** (1-3): One or two isolated, undeveloped points about family life, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **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 11

- (a) **B1** functionalist
- (a) **Answer: Functionalist**
- (b) **B1** dark side
- (b) **Answer: Dark side**
- (c) **B1** dark side
- (c) **Answer: Dark side**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies a genuine, appropriate example, e.g. a national domestic abuse helpline, or a women's refuge/safe accommodation
- **B1** brief development, e.g. these services offer confidential advice, support and, where needed, a safe place to stay
- **Answer: A national domestic abuse helpline, or a women's refuge, offers confidential advice, support and, where needed, a safe place to stay for someone experiencing domestic abuse.**

Question 13

- **B1** a genuine reason, e.g. fear of the abuser, shame, or not being believed
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: Domestic abuse can be under-reported because a victim may fear the abuser, feel shame, or worry they will not be believed if they report it.**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies a genuine strength, e.g. feminist perspectives draw attention to inequality and harm within families that other perspectives, such as functionalism, can overlook
- **B1** brief development, e.g. this has helped bring issues such as the unequal division of domestic labour and domestic abuse into mainstream sociological study
- **Answer: Feminist perspectives draw attention to inequality and harm within families that functionalism can overlook, helping bring issues such as domestic abuse and unequal domestic labour into mainstream sociological study.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies one reason, e.g. not all criticisms of family life involve serious harm; some, such as an unequal division of housework, are about inequality rather than abuse
- **B1** development
- **B1** identifies a second, different reason, e.g. using one broad term for very different issues, from mild inequality to serious abuse, could make it harder to study or respond to them separately
- **B1** development
- **Answer: Not all criticism of family life involves serious harm, e.g. unequal housework is about inequality rather than abuse; using one broad term for very different issues could make it harder to study or respond to them separately.**

Question 16

- **B1** 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
- **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 17

- **B1** 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
- **Answer: Schools and health professionals see children regularly and may notice changes in behaviour, wellbeing or attendance, allowing early support or referral to help.**