Your notes

GCSE Sociology: revision notes

Criticisms of families

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The dark side of family life

- Leach (1967) argued the nuclear family had become isolated and inward-looking, making it a source of tension and conflict rather than a place of harmony.
- **Domestic abuse** and child abuse show that the family can be harmful. Much abuse is hidden and not reported.

Critical perspectives

- Feminists: the family is patriarchal, with women doing most unpaid work and facing the dual burden and domestic violence.
- Marxists: the family reproduces inequality, passing on wealth and class advantage, and serves capitalism.
- Radical feminists go further, some arguing women should live separately from men.

Defences of the traditional family

- The **New Right** argues the traditional nuclear family is best for children and society, and that lone-parent families and **welfare dependency** cause social problems. Critics say this blames lone parents and ignores poverty.
- Others argue all family types can be successful, and what matters is the quality of relationships.

Key terms

Dark side of the family	The harmful aspects of family life, such as abuse.
Domestic abuse	Violence or control by a partner or family member.
New Right	A view that the traditional nuclear family is best for society.
Isolated nuclear family	A nuclear family cut off from wider kin and community.

Welfare dependency	Relying on state benefits rather than work.

Your notes

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What did Leach argue about the nuclear family?
2. What is the dark side of the family?
3. What do feminists criticise about the family?
4. What do Marxists criticise about the family?
5. What does the New Right argue?
6. What is welfare dependency?
7. What is a criticism of the New Right view?
8. Why is much family abuse hidden?

Answers

1. It had become isolated and a source of tension
2. The harmful aspects of family life, such as abuse
3. It is patriarchal and women do most unpaid work
4. It reproduces inequality and serves capitalism
5. The traditional nuclear family is best for society
6. Relying on state benefits rather than work
7. It blames lone parents and ignores poverty
8. It happens in private and victims may not report it

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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