

Cambridge AS & A Level · Sociology 9699 · Notes

Gender equality and experiences of family life

AS

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Read first: [Perspectives on the role of the family](#)

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What you need to know

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

1. **Explain the different feminist perspectives** on equality and power in the family (liberal, Marxist and radical feminism), and give their strengths and limitations.
2. **Explain conjugal roles** (the roles of partners in a couple) and weigh up the debate about whether men and women are now equal in the family, in four areas: **housework**, **childcare**, **power** (decisions and money) and **emotion work**.
3. **Weigh up whether family life is a positive or a negative experience** for its members: women, men, children and older relatives.

Questions on this topic also ask how gender shapes children's experience of the family, how women's paid work has changed families, and whether women's improved position explains the rise in divorce, so those are covered here too. The general theories of the family's role are in the note on perspectives on the role of the family; the other causes of divorce are in the note on diversity and social change.

Understand it

Conjugal roles: segregated or joint?

Conjugal roles are the parts the two partners in a couple play in running their home. **Bott** sorted couples into two kinds:

- **Segregated conjugal roles:** a clear "his" and "hers" split. He goes out to earn; she runs the house and raises the children; each has their own friends and free time.
- **Joint conjugal roles:** the line is blurred. Both partners do chores, make decisions together and spend their leisure together.

Parsons (functionalism) thought the segregated pattern suited modern industrial society. The husband takes the **instrumental role**: earning, providing, and dealing with the world outside the home. The wife takes the **expressive role**: caring, nurturing and holding the family together emotionally. His image of the **warm bath** pictures the wife as the place where a tired husband recovers each evening from the pressures of his job. Functionalists call the two roles **different but equal**, since the family needs both.

In practice the expressive role means feeding, comforting and nursing the children; teaching them language, manners and right from wrong in their first years, because the mother is the parent who is around; keeping the home going (meals, cleaning, laundry); and calming the husband after work. Parsons tied the role to women because he saw caring as part of female nature, a claim feminists call **biological determinism**.

The march of progress view: towards equality

Some sociologists argue that families have become steadily more equal, a **march of progress**.

- **Willmott and Young** (1973) described the **symmetrical family**: husband and wife still do somewhat different jobs, but each puts in a similar total of paid and unpaid work, and they spend their spare time together at home. They expected the pattern, first seen in younger and better-off couples living away from their wider kin, to spread.
- **Gershuny's** time-use studies showed that wives with full-time jobs did less housework than full-time housewives, while husbands slowly took on more. He called the delay **lagged adaptation**: men adjust to women's paid work, but a generation behind, as new ideas about men's roles spread.
- **Sullivan** tracked couples over several decades and saw a **quiet revolution**: a slow, steady rise in men's share of domestic work, fastest where both partners had full-time jobs.
- The **new man** or **new father** shares chores and childcare and is open about his feelings. **Dermott's intimate fatherhood** is about a close emotional bond with the children rather than just providing for them. A few fathers stay at home full time, and "**superdads**" hold down a job while doing a large share of the parenting.
- **Liberal feminists** such as **Somerville** accept that inequality remains but say women's position in the family has improved a great deal, through education, paid work and laws.
- **Same-sex couples**: **Dunne's** study of lesbian couples found tasks split much more evenly, because neither partner was following a **gender script** (an unwritten rule about what men do and what women do).
- **Covid lockdowns**: **Harkness and colleagues** compared UK couples' housework before and during the Covid-19 lockdowns. With many people working from home, men's share of housework rose, and couples without children became noticeably more equal. Parents were a different story: with schools and nurseries shut, the extra childcare and home schooling landed mainly on mothers, so the division in those homes stayed largely traditional.
- **Technology** such as washing machines, dishwashers and ready meals cut the hours housework takes, and supporters say it makes chores easier for men to share.

The feminist critique: inequality persists

Feminists argue the march of progress is exaggerated.

- **Oakley** (1974) found a weakness in Willmott and Young's evidence: a husband who did just one household job a week could be counted as "sharing". In her own interviews with London housewives, few husbands did a large share. Men tended to "**help**" with the enjoyable parts of childcare, such as play and outings, while wives kept the duty of care. She argued the full-time **housewife role** was created by industrial society, and that housework is genuine work: unpaid, repetitive and often isolating.
- **Boulton** separated helping from responsibility: fathers might help, but mothers still carried the duty and the worry for the child's safety and wellbeing. **Ferri and Smith** found fathers rarely became the main carer, even when the mother had a job.
- **The dual burden**: when a woman takes a paid job but still does most of the housework, she is doing two jobs. **Hochschild** called the unpaid evening one the **second shift**.
- **The triple shift**: **Duncombe and Marsden** added a third, **emotion work**.
- **Baxter's** time-use figures show the hours gap closing, yet the change is lopsided: women's housework time has dropped sharply while men's has crept up only a little.
- **Devault** studied the planning behind feeding a family and found that this **hidden work** falls overwhelmingly on wives and mothers: deciding menus, noticing what has run out, keeping track of everyone's tastes, appointments and school events.
- **Silva** found new household machines did not share out the work: some men said they did not know how the appliances worked, so the jobs stayed with women.
- Wives and daughters also do most of the looking after of frail older relatives. Women caring for their own children and an ageing parent at the same time are called **sandwich carers**.
- **Motherhood penalty**: a woman's pay and promotion chances usually fall after she has children, while a father's do not, which pushes couples back towards traditional roles.

Power in the family: decisions and money

Housework is only one part of equality. **Power** means who makes decisions and who controls money, and questions on power need this material, not just who does the chores.

<i>kind of decision</i>	<i>usually made by</i>
Very important <i>moving house, major spending</i>	→ husband, or his final say
Important <i>holidays, children's schooling</i>	→ husband and wife jointly
Less important <i>food, decor, children's clothes</i>	→ wife

- **Edgell** studied professional middle-class couples. The big decisions (moving house, large purchases and savings, the husband's job) were the husband's, or joint with him having the last word; everyday ones (food, decor, children's clothes) were left to the wife. Wives took many decisions, but husbands held **power** over the ones that mattered most.
- **Pahl and Vogler** found that even couples who **pooled** their income into one account usually let the man control it and the large spending.

- **Hardill and colleagues** found that in dual-career couples the man's career usually came first: the family moved for his job, not hers.
- **Domestic violence** is the most extreme use of power. **Dobash and Dobash** found that attacks on wives often followed a moment when the husband felt his authority was being questioned (over meals, money or housework). Women are the victims in most reported cases, though men can be victims too.
- **Against: Leighton** looked at well-paid couples after the husband lost his job and found that the wife, now bringing in the money, took over more of the major decisions. As more women earn, and some earn more than their partners, power is shared more evenly. Postmodernists such as **Giddens** and **Beck** argue that relationships are now **negotiated** between equals. Children too have more say (**pester power**).

Emotion work

Emotion work is the effort of looking after other people's feelings: listening, comforting, calming arguments, remembering what each person needs. **Duncombe and Marsden** found that wives felt their husbands gave little of it, so women carried it on top of paid work and housework (the triple shift). Parsons' warm bath is emotion work done by the wife for the husband, with no warm bath for her. Emotion work is hard to measure, which is one reason the equality debate is hard to settle.

Why is there still inequality?

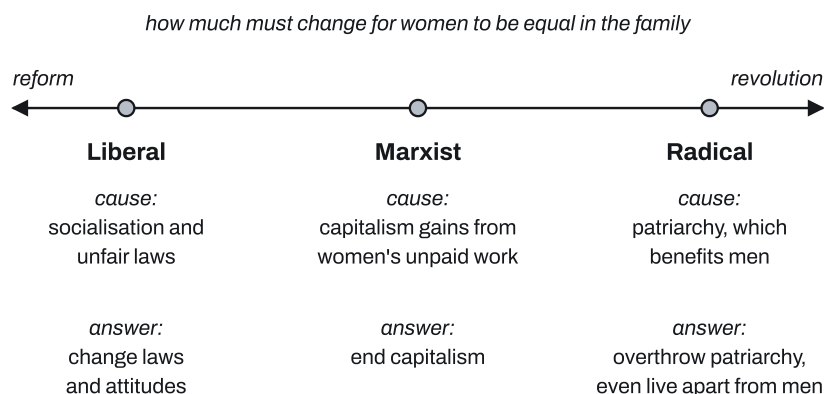
- **Economic reasons:** men still earn more on average. When a baby arrives, couples usually protect the bigger salary, so the mother cuts back, and the partner who brings in the money tends to have the last word (Edgell).
- **Patriarchy:** radical feminists see male dominance built into law, religion, the media and work, and the family copies and supports it.
- **Biology:** functionalists treat caring as women's natural role (**biological determinism**). Radical feminists such as **Firestone** agree that biology matters, but differently: pregnancy and caring for babies leave women needing support, and men turn that need into control.
- **Gender role socialisation:** girls and boys are brought up for different futures (see "How gender shapes children's experience"), so as adults they slip into the roles they were trained for.
- **Culture and religion:** some faiths and cultures teach that the husband leads and the wife serves the home. Joint roles are less common in more traditional societies, which suggests the "march of progress" story is built on Western couples. Research in Turkey found that a woman's degree or professional job made little difference to how much of the housework she did.
- **Social policy:** maternity leave that is far longer than paternity leave makes the mother the parent at home in the first months, and the habit often sticks.
- **Choice: Hakim's preference theory** says many women prefer a home-centred life, so unequal roles may reflect what women want, not oppression.

Why is there more equality in some families?

- **Women's earnings:** a wife who brings home a salary has a stronger hand over money and decisions (Leighton). **Wilkinson's genderquake** describes young women's values moving towards independence and careers, and **Sharpe** found girls' top priorities changing from marriage and children to jobs.
- **Laws and policies:** equal pay and anti-discrimination laws, paid paternity leave, easier divorce, and laws that treat violence and rape within marriage as crimes.
- **Changing masculinity:** the new man and new father; where traditional male jobs in mines and factories have gone, some men have become the parent at home.
- **Choice and negotiation (Beck, Giddens):** in a **negotiated family**, the couple work out who does what to suit them, instead of following tradition.
- **Feminist movements** changed what women expect from a partner, and **secularisation** has loosened religious rules about who does what.
- **Gender-neutral parenting:** some parents give boys and girls the same toys, chores and chances, so fewer gender scripts pass to the next generation; same-sex couples show roles can be shared without them (Dunne).
- **Cost of living:** in many homes one wage no longer covers the bills, so both partners work (the **dual-earner family**, Chester's **neo-conventional family**), and the chores have to be shared too.

Three feminist perspectives on equality and power

All feminists say the family has been unequal for women. They disagree about **why** and **what** must change.



Liberal feminism (Friedan, Oakley, Somerville):

- Inequality comes from **gender role socialisation** and **discrimination** (unequal laws, unequal pay), not from some deep structure of society.
- Things are improving step by step through **laws and policies** (equal pay, anti-discrimination, parental leave) and changing attitudes. **Friedan** wrote about the unhappiness of educated housewives shut in the home, which helped start the demand for change.

- **Strengths:** it fits the evidence of change, such as more mothers in work and more hands-on fathers; its campaigning has **influenced governments**, which then passed the equal pay, anti-discrimination and parental leave laws that changed family life; and because it asks men to change rather than leave, its goals look achievable and win wide support.
- **Limitations:** it **overstates** what laws can do, since women still do most housework decades after equal pay laws (radical feminists say patriarchy runs deeper than law); it neglects class and capitalism (Marxist feminists); it is built on the lives of comfortably-off women in rich Western countries, mostly white and in marriages to men, so it says little about poorer, black or lesbian women's family lives (black feminists); it can overlook families where roles stay segregated; and it may treat a woman's decision to stay at home as a problem rather than a choice (Hakim).

Marxist feminism (Benston, Ansley):

- Women's inequality serves **capitalism**. Women's **unpaid domestic labour** raises and looks after the workforce at no cost to employers (Benston). A husband who is powerless at work can take his anger out at home on his wife, which protects employers: the family is a **safety valve** (Ansley).
- Women are held down by both capitalism and men; real equality needs the end of capitalism.
- **Strengths:** links family inequality to the economy and to **social class**; explains why housework is unpaid and looked down on. **Limitations:** **economically deterministic**; patriarchy existed before capitalism and in non-capitalist societies; ignores progress and women's choices.

Radical feminism (Millett, Firestone, Greer, Delphy and Leonard, Dobash and Dobash):

- All of society is a **patriarchy** (rule by men), and the family is its key base, where men's control over women is most direct. Delphy and Leonard saw the family as an economic system in which men gain from women's unpaid work (domestic, sexual, emotional).
- **Firestone** traced oppression to **biology**: pregnancy and childcare make women dependent on men. She also argued that **love** draws women into relationships in which they are exploited. Reproductive technology could free them.
- **Domestic violence** keeps women subordinate (Dobash and Dobash).
- Laws alone cannot bring equality, because **patriarchal ideology** shapes everything. Their solutions include **separatism** (women living apart from men) and **political lesbianism**; **Greer** urged women to reject the conventional family.
- **Strengths:**
 - It puts **power** and **patriarchy** at the centre, where other theories look only at tasks.
 - It exposed the **dark side** of the family: by treating violence and abuse at home as part of a wider system of male power, it turned them from private troubles into a recognised social problem.
 - It shows why equal pay and other laws leave the ideas behind male dominance untouched.
 - It fits societies before capitalism, where women were also subordinate.
 - Its solutions look less far-fetched today: fertility treatment means a woman can start a family on her own, so separatism is no longer only a slogan.
- **Limitations:**

- It **exaggerates** oppression: women start most divorces and many earn their own living, so they are far from powerless.
- It **ignores progress**, such as shared parenting and softer forms of masculinity.
- It treats women as **passive victims** and overlooks women who choose and value the home role (Hakim).
- It is **biologically deterministic**, and gives capitalism almost no part in women's position.
- It assumes every heterosexual relationship is exploitative, ignoring love and respect between partners (Somerville).
- It generalises from the nuclear family, so it misses **diversity**, and it overlooks class and ethnicity: black feminists see the family as a **refuge from racism** outside the home.
- It ignores men as victims of domestic violence.
- Separatism is unrealistic for most women.

Is family life positive or negative for its members?

Positive:

- **Functionalists** (Parsons, **Fletcher**): the family provides every member with what they need: emotional support and the warm bath for adults, care and socialisation for children, and a secure base. Roles differ but all gain.
- **Children** are better off than in the past: families are **child-centred**, giving children more time, money and say.
- **Older people** gain care and company from kin, and many grandparents value their part in raising grandchildren.
- **Women**: many find motherhood rewarding (Hakim); for some ethnic minority women the family is a refuge from racism; more equal, negotiated relationships benefit both partners.
- **Postmodernists**: people can now choose family forms that suit them.

Negative (the dark side):

- **Women** carry the dual burden and triple shift, hold less power, and are the main victims of **domestic violence**. **Bernard** argued that every marriage is really two, "his" and "hers", and that his is the better one: married men gain more in health and happiness than married women.
- **Men gain more**: from women's unpaid labour, emotional care (the warm bath), more leisure time and more power.
- **Children** may suffer abuse, neglect or tight control; girls are often given less freedom than boys.
- **Older people** may be neglected or abused, or treated as a burden.
- **Leach** argued the isolated nuclear family puts too much emotional pressure on its members; **Laing** that intense family relationships can harm mental health.
- **Marxists**: the family only looks like a haven; it serves capitalism, not its members.

Whether family life is positive depends on **who** you ask (men or women, adults or children), **which** family (class, culture, family type) and **when** (life stage).

How gender shapes children's experience of family life

Oakley described four ways parents build gender:

- **Manipulation:** praising a child for behaviour thought to fit their sex and frowning on behaviour that does not (a boy told off for crying, a girl praised for being neat).
- **Canalisation:** steering a child towards toys, games and hobbies thought suitable for their sex, such as building sets and footballs for sons, toy kitchens and dressing-up for daughters.
- **Verbal appellations:** the pet names and descriptions parents use, such as "princess" or "sweetheart" for a daughter and "little man" or "tough guy" for a son.
- **Different activities:** daughters asked to help cook and look after younger children, sons sent to do jobs outside or fix things.

Many families watch daughters more closely: later curfews for sons, more questions about where daughters are going. **McRobbie and Garber** found girls' leisure centred on friends' bedrooms rather than the street (**bedroom culture**). Where money is short, some families put a boy's education first and expect a girl to leave school earlier. Children also copy the roles they see their parents play, so traditional roles repeat across generations.

Against gender being the main influence: **social class** shapes childhood strongly (**Lareau**: middle-class **concerted cultivation** versus working-class "natural growth"), as do **ethnicity**, **age**, **family type** and **poverty**; and many parents now raise children in a **gender-neutral** way.

Women's position and divorce

Women's improved position helps explain the rise in divorce. Women now expect marriage to bring happiness and equality, and are readier to end one that does not (**Thornes and Collard**). Feminism made unfairness at home easier to see. A woman with her own income can afford to live alone or raise children alone. A woman with a job is less willing to do most of the housework as well. And in many countries most divorce petitions are filed by wives. Other causes (law, secularisation, individualisation, longer lives) are weighed against it in the diversity and social change note.

Women's paid work and the family

The rise in women's paid work has changed families in several ways:

- **Money and say:** a wage gives a woman bargaining power, so decisions are more often made jointly.
- **Who looks after the children:** with both parents out at work, more children go to nurseries or childminders, or are cared for by grandparents; in a few families the father becomes the parent at home.
- **More work for women:** many working mothers still do most of the housework, the **dual burden**.
- **Family size and timing:** women with careers tend to have fewer children and have them later.

- **Freedom to leave:** a woman who can support herself does not have to stay in an unhappy marriage.

Why women now marry later (more detail in the note on diversity and social change):

- **Money of her own:** a woman with a salary does not need a husband for a secure living, so there is no rush.
- **Living together first:** many couples now cohabit for some years, partly to be sure of the relationship before making it legal.
- **Weaker pressure:** secularisation and less control by parents and wider kin mean an unmarried woman of thirty is no longer looked down on; where arranged marriages have declined, she decides when to marry.
- **Study and career:** university and the first years of building a career take up most of a woman's twenties.
- **Changed ambitions:** feminism encouraged women to put their own goals first, so marriage and children wait until those goals are met.

Key facts and formulas

There is no formula list in Sociology. "Learn it" means you must remember it.

Key term	Status
Conjugal roles: segregated versus joint (Bott); instrumental and expressive roles, warm bath (Parsons)	Learn it
March of progress: symmetrical family (Willmott and Young), lagged adaptation (Gershuny), quiet revolution (Sullivan), new man and intimate fatherhood (Dermott), Somerville, Dunne (gender scripts), Harkness et al. (Covid)	Learn it
Continuing inequality: Oakley (housewife role, husbands "help"), Boulton, Ferri and Smith, dual burden and second shift (Hochschild), triple shift (Duncombe and Marsden), Baxter, Devault (hidden work), Silva, sandwich carers, motherhood penalty	Learn it
Power: Edgell (husband decides the very important matters), Pahl and Vogler (men control pooled money), Hardill et al. (his career first), Dobash and Dobash (domestic violence); against: Leighton, negotiated family (Giddens, Beck), pester power	Learn it
Emotion work: managing others' feelings; the third part of the triple shift (Duncombe and Marsden)	Learn it
Liberal feminism (Friedan, Oakley, Somerville): socialisation and discrimination; reform through laws	Learn it
Marxist feminism (Benston, Ansley): unpaid labour serves capitalism; safety valve	Learn it
Radical feminism (Millett, Firestone, Greer, Delphy and Leonard, Dobash and Dobash): patriarchy; biology; love; separatism	Learn it
Choice: Hakim's preference theory; black feminists: family as a refuge from racism	Learn it

Key term	Status
Positive or negative: functionalists (Parsons, Fletcher) versus the dark side (Bernard's "his" and "hers" marriages, Leach, Laing, domestic violence, abuse)	Learn it
Gender socialisation (Oakley): manipulation, canalisation, verbal appellations, different activities; bedroom culture (McRobbie and Garber); class instead: Lareau	Learn it
Question 1: $2 \times 2 = 4$; Question 2(a): $2 \times 4 = 8$; Question 2(b): $2 \times 3 = 6$; Question 3: $10 + 6 = 16$; essays AO1 8, AO2 8, AO3 10	Learn it

How to do it

We have tagged 41 questions for this topic (2021–2026, Papers 21–23), 34 different (Papers 21 and 23 of a November session share questions). 17 of them mix two types (every Question 2 and every Question 3 has parts (a) and (b)), so the counts add up to 58.

Question type	Questions
Evaluate a view on gender equality in the family	18
Explain a view on gender and the family	9
Give one argument against the view	9
Explain two reasons for gender inequality or equality	8
Explain strengths or limitations of a feminist view of the family	8
Describe two features, ways or reasons	6

Every essay (26 marks) is marked **AO1** knowledge and understanding 8, **AO2** interpretation and application 8 and **AO3** analysis and evaluation 10, so $8 + 8 + 10 = 26$.

1. Evaluate a view on gender equality in the family (18 questions)

Section B, 26 marks. Asked as a claim about equality, roles or power (10): there is greater equality today, there is equality between men and women, conjugal roles are equally shared or continue to be unequal, roles are still traditional or no longer fixed, gender no longer influences roles, power is shared equally, the family is a patriarchal institution, the family benefits all its members equally. Also as a theory to evaluate (3: radical feminist views; feminist perspectives on equality), women's improved position as the main reason for rising divorce (3), and gender as the main influence on family life or on children's experience of it (2).

- 1. Introduction** (two or three sentences): define the key term in the question (conjugal roles, patriarchy, power) and say which perspectives hold the view.
- 2. For the view** (4–5 developed paragraphs), then **against** (4–5 paragraphs). Each paragraph: point, explanation, a sociologist or concept, and a link back to the question's key word.
- 3. Evaluate as you go**: after each point, say **how far** it supports the view and why ("this is convincing for middle-class Western couples, but..."). Turn rival theories into criticisms, not separate blocks.

4. **Conclude** with a judgement that answers the question: for which families, which societies, which area (chores, childcare, power, emotion work)?

Material by wording:

- **Equality, conjugal roles, roles no longer fixed:** for, Willmott and Young, Gershuny, Sullivan, new man and new father, Dermott, liberal feminism, Somerville, women's paid work, technology, laws, Covid (childless couples), same-sex couples (Dunne), negotiated families and postmodern choice (Giddens, Beck), gender-neutral parenting; against, Oakley, Boulton, Ferri and Smith, Hochschild, Duncombe and Marsden, Baxter, Devault, Silva, Harkness et al. (couples with children), sandwich carers, motherhood penalty, working-class and traditional cultures, the Turkish research, religion, maternity leave policy. Functionalists add that roles can be **different but equal**.
- **Power** (shared equally, men dominate, patriarchal institution): you must discuss **decisions, money and violence**, not only chores. For male power: Edgell, Pahl and Vogler, Hardill et al., Dobash and Dobash, radical and Marxist feminism, patriarchal culture and religion. Against: Leighton, women's earnings, negotiated families, children's power, Marxists (the family serves capitalism, not just men), functionalists (different roles, no domination).
- **Benefits all equally:** functionalism (Parsons, Fletcher) for; women's burden, Bernard, the dark side, abuse of children and older people, Marxism against.
- **Radical feminist views or feminist perspectives:** explain each strand separately (liberal, Marxist, radical), then use the others, functionalism, postmodernism, Hakim and black feminism to evaluate. Treating "feminism" as one view limits AO1.
- **Women's position and divorce:** for, economic independence, the dual burden, higher expectations (Thornes and Collard), feminism, control over fertility; against, divorce law, secularisation, individualisation, longer life expectancy, welfare (see the diversity and social change note).
- **Gender as the main influence:** for, Oakley's four processes, bedroom culture, stricter control of girls, the division of labour, patriarchy; against, class (Lareau), ethnicity, age, family type, poverty, gender-neutral parenting, media and peers.

2. Explain a view on gender and the family (9 questions)

Question 3(a), 10 marks. The quote may take the **inequality** side (3: women do most tasks, men dominate, men have more power), the **equality** side (3: domestic labour shared equally, conjugal roles have become equal), or be about divorce (1) or gender and children (2).

1. Write **two** clear, developed points that **agree** with the quote. No evaluation: that is part (b).
2. Each point is a paragraph: point, how it supports the view, then **sociological material** (sociologist, theory, concept) and how it backs the point.
3. Match the side and the key word. For "men have more power", write about decisions, money and violence (Edgell, Dobash and Dobash), not just about women doing more chores.
4. Two developed, supported points reach the top level (8–10); one developed and one thin point gets 4–7.

3. Give one argument against the view (9 questions)

Question 3(b), 6 marks.

1. Give **one** argument only; a second earns nothing.
2. Name it, develop it with material, and say why it **contradicts** the quote (5–6 marks).
3. Typical arguments:
 - Against an **inequality** quote: the new father and superdad, Harkness et al. (childless couples in lockdown), symmetrical family, technology, women's earnings (Leighton), negotiated families.
 - Against an **equality** quote: the dual burden or triple shift, Baxter, Harkness et al. (couples with children), patriarchy, same-sex couples more equal than heterosexual ones, cultural variation.
 - Against "women's position is the main reason for divorce": divorce law, secularisation, individualisation.
 - Against "gender is the most important factor for children": social class (Lareau), ethnicity, age.

An argument about women doing more housework does not, on its own, show men have more **power**: link it to power.

4. Explain two reasons for gender inequality or equality (8 questions)

Question 2(a), 8 marks. Usually reasons for **inequality** or men's greater power (5), sometimes reasons for **greater equality** (2), and once ways **men benefit** more than women from family life (1). Each reason earns up to 4:

1. **Make the point** (1): name the reason ("men usually earn more than their partners").
2. **Explain it** (1): how it causes the inequality or equality.
3. **Select sociological material** (1): Edgell, Firestone, Wilkinson, Dobash and Dobash, Oakley, an Equal Pay Act.
4. **Show how the material supports the point** (1).

Give a **reason** for inequality, not a **description** of it. "Mothers do most of the night feeds" only describes the gap; "maternity leave is far longer than paternity leave, so the mother is the parent at home" explains it. For "ways men benefit": the warm bath, women's unpaid labour, more leisure, more power, Devault's hidden work.

5. Explain strengths or limitations of a feminist view of the family (8 questions)

Question 2(b), 6 marks. **Radical** feminism (4: one strength and one limitation, two strengths, two limitations) or **liberal** feminism (4: one strength and one limitation twice, two strengths twice). Each point earns up to 3:

1. **Identify** it (1): "A strength of radical feminism is that it exposed the dark side of family life."
2. **Why the theory has it** (1): what it focuses on ("because radical feminists study power and patriarchy inside the home").
3. **Why it is a strength or limitation** (1): what it reveals or misses ("so domestic violence came to be seen as a social problem, not a private matter").

Use the lists under "Three feminist perspectives". Keep to the **family** (not work or society), keep the strands apart, and give only what is asked: two strengths means no limitations.

6. Describe two features, ways or reasons (6 questions)

Question 1, 4 marks: two bullet points, each **identified** (1) and **described** (1). Asked as features of the expressive role (2), ways gender shapes childhood (1), reasons women marry later (1), ways roles have become more equal (1), and ways women's paid work has affected the family (1). Use the lists in "Understand it" (later marriage is under "Women's paid work and the family"). No introduction or study needed, and the two points must be **different**.

Worked examples

Example 1

Describe two examples of emotion work done in families. [4]

- **Comforting a partner (1)**: listening to a partner's worries after a hard day and helping them feel calm, which Parsons' warm bath idea assigns to wives (1).
- **Keeping the peace (1)**: settling arguments between children or between relatives so that family relationships stay close and stable (1).

Two examples, each identified and described: **4 marks**.

Example 2

(a) Explain two reasons why women may still do more childcare than men. [8]

(b) Explain one strength and one limitation of Marxist feminist views of the family. [6]

(a) Reason 1. The first reason is the **gender pay gap (1)**. Because men usually earn more, when a couple decide who will cut their hours to care for a young child, it makes financial sense for the lower earner, usually the woman, to do so (1). **Hardill and colleagues** found that in dual-career couples the husband's job usually came first, for example when deciding whether to move (1), so the woman's job became secondary and she was left with more of the childcare (1).

Reason 2. The second reason is **gender role socialisation (1)**. From childhood girls are encouraged to care for others while boys are not, so as adults women feel caring is their job and men feel it is optional (1). **Oakley** described how canalisation channels girls towards dolls and caring play (1): this prepares them for the expressive role, so as mothers they take on most childcare as if it were natural (1).

Two reasons, each made, explained, supported and linked back: **8 marks**.

(b) Strength. Marxist feminism **links women's position in the family to the economy (1)**. It argues that women's unpaid housework reproduces the workforce at no cost to employers, as Benston showed **(1)**. This is a strength because it explains why domestic labour is unpaid and undervalued, which other theories take for granted **(1)**.

Limitation. Marxist feminism is **economically deterministic (1)**. It explains women's oppression almost entirely through capitalism **(1)**. This is a limitation because patriarchy existed long before capitalism and in non-capitalist societies, so ending capitalism would not by itself bring equality, as radical feminists argue **(1)**.

6 marks.

Example 3

"Family life is a positive experience for all its members."

(a) Explain this view. **[10]**

(b) Using sociological material, give one argument against this view. **[6]**

(a) Point 1. Functionalists such as **Parsons** argue the family provides for every member. For adults, home is where the pressures of work are eased (the **warm bath**) and where **personality stabilisation** keeps them emotionally balanced. Children receive care and **primary socialisation**, learning society's norms from people who love them. If every member gets what they need, family life is good for all of them.

Point 2. Families have become more **child-centred** and more equal. Children now have more say, time and money spent on them, and **Willmott and Young's symmetrical family** suggests partners share work and leisure, so women gain too. Postmodernists such as **Giddens** add that relationships are now **negotiated**, so people stay in families only while they meet their needs, which makes family life positive for those within it.

Two clear, developed points, each supported and focused on "positive for all": **Level 3 (8–10 marks)**.

(b) Radical feminists argue the family benefits **men** at women's expense. **Dobash and Dobash** found that violence against wives was used to enforce husbands' authority, and **Duncombe and Marsden** showed women carry a **triple shift** of paid work, housework and emotion work. **Bernard** argued there are two marriages in every couple, "his" and "hers", and his is the better one. So family life is not positive for all its members: for many women it brings extra work and, for some, danger.

One clear, developed argument against, with focused material: **Level 3 (5–6 marks)**.

Example 4

Evaluate the view that the "new man" has brought gender equality to the family. **[26]**

Introduction. The new man is a partner who shares housework, childcare and emotional life equally. Liberal feminists and march of progress writers see him as evidence of growing equality; radical and Marxist feminists doubt he exists in large numbers.

For the view (AO1/AO2).

- **Willmott and Young** found a symmetrical family, with men doing more at home as women entered paid work.
- **Sullivan's** quiet revolution and **Gershuny's** lagged adaptation show men's share of housework rising over decades.
- **Dermott's** intimate fatherhood: fathers today are emotionally closer to their children than in the past, and some are stay-at-home dads.
- Paternity leave and flexible work have made involved fatherhood easier.

Against the view (AO3).

- **However**, Oakley found Willmott and Young's measure counted very little work as "sharing". This weakens the march of progress evidence because it may overstate how much men really do.
- **Baxter** found the housework gap narrowed mainly because women do less. This suggests the new man is partly an illusion: equality has grown, but not because men changed much.
- **Ferri and Smith** and **Boulton** found fathers rarely take main responsibility for childcare. The new man may "help" with enjoyable tasks while the mother keeps the responsibility, so he has not brought equality in childcare.
- Even where men share tasks, **power** may not be shared: **Edgell** found husbands still made the most important decisions. This matters because equality in chores is not equality in the family.
- **Harkness and colleagues** found that in the Covid lockdowns men's share of housework rose and childless couples became more equal, but in families with children the extra childcare and home schooling fell mostly on mothers. So men's extra effort did not reach the heaviest load, childcare, which suggests the new man's change is limited and fragile.
- The new man is mostly found among middle-class Western couples; working-class and more traditional cultures keep **segregated** roles. So the view may be **ethnocentric**.
- **Hakim** argues inequality may reflect women's own **choices**, so the absence of full equality is not necessarily a failure of men.

Conclusion. Men do more in the home than in the past, so the new man is not a myth. But the evidence shows a narrowing, not equality: women still carry most childcare responsibility, hidden work, emotion work and less power, and the change is concentrated in some classes and societies. The new man has brought **more** equality, not equality.

How it would be marked. Many accurate points, each backed by a sociologist or concept (AO1 7–8), with every point tied to "the new man" and "equality" (AO2 7–8), with each counter-argument weighed and a justified conclusion (AO3 9–10). In the exam, make each bullet a full paragraph.

Common mistakes

- **Treating "feminism" as one view.** Liberal, Marxist and radical feminists disagree; examiners say mixing them up, or confusing radical with liberal feminism or postmodernism, limits marks.

- **Writing about chores when the question is about power.** Unequal housework does not by itself show male **power** or **patriarchy**; link it to decision-making, money or control, or use Edgell, Pahl and Vogler and Dobash and Dobash.
- **Describing inequality instead of explaining its cause.** In "explain two reasons for inequality", a fact about who does which chores is not a reason. Ask "why does that happen?" and write the answer (pay gaps, socialisation, policy, patriarchy).
- **Answering the opposite question.** Reasons for greater **equality** are not reasons for inequality, and a quote on men's dominance needs points about **men**, not just women's lives.
- **Mixing up "ought" with "is".** An essay on whether roles **are** equal needs evidence about what couples actually do. A theory's ideal, such as a feminist demand for equality or Parsons' view of the right roles for each sex, is not evidence either way; use studies of real households.
- **Drifting out of the family:** writing about pay gaps at work, women in politics or patriarchy in society at large, instead of roles and power at home.
- **Crediting liberal feminists with making laws.** Only governments legislate; the accurate claim is that liberal feminist campaigning pushed lawmakers towards equal pay and parental leave.
- **Two blocks with no weighing.** Setting out one side, then the other, without saying which is stronger and why keeps AO3 in the middle bands. Examiners keep asking for evaluation to be more explicit, since AO3 carries the most marks.
- **Using dated studies as if they describe today,** or writing about the 19th century when the question says "today". Say when a study was done and whether it still holds.
- **Common sense instead of sociology:** "men now help around the house" with no study or concept stays in the low levels.
- **Evaluating in Question 3(a),** giving two arguments in 3(b), or adding introductions to Question 1.

How to get the marks

- **"Describe two..." (4 marks):** two bullet points, each identified then described in one sentence.
- **"Explain two reasons..." (8 marks):** two paragraphs, "The first..." and "The second...", each with the point, its explanation, sociological material and how that material supports the point.
- **"Explain one strength and one limitation..." (6 marks):** "A strength of radical feminism is... It has this strength because... This is a strength because...", then the same for the limitation.
- **"Explain this view" (10 marks):** two developed points that agree, each supported with material; no evaluation.
- **"Give one argument against" (6 marks):** one developed argument with material, clearly contradicting the view.
- **"Evaluate..." (26 marks):** AO1 8 for many accurate, well-supported points using concepts and studies; AO2 8 for tying every point to the exact question; AO3 10 for evaluation that is spelled out and runs through the whole answer, not just the conclusion.

- **Sociological material** here means a sociologist (Oakley, Willmott and Young, Edgell, Hochschild, Duncombe and Marsden, Firestone, Somerville, Hakim), a theory (liberal, Marxist or radical feminism, functionalism, postmodernism) or a concept (dual burden, triple shift, emotion work, symmetrical family, patriarchy, gender scripts).
- **Use all four areas** of equality (housework, childcare, power, emotion work) and compare **class, ethnicity, culture and same-sex couples**: these comparisons are some of the strongest evaluation.
- **Answer the essay first** if time is tight: it carries 26 of the 60 marks.

Quick check

1. What is the difference between segregated and joint conjugal roles?
2. Which sociologist is linked with each idea? (a) The symmetrical family. (b) The second shift. (c) The triple shift including emotion work. (d) Husbands making the most important decisions.
3. Give one cause of women's inequality in the family for each of liberal, Marxist and radical feminists.
4. A student answers "Explain two reasons why men may have more power than women in the family" with "women do more housework and more childcare." Why does this score poorly, and what would be better?
5. Give one limitation of liberal feminist views of the family, with the reason it is a limitation.

Answers

1. In **segregated** roles partners do separate tasks (he earns, she does housework and childcare) and have separate leisure; in **joint** roles they share tasks, decisions and leisure (Bott).
2. (a) Willmott and Young. (b) Hochschild. (c) Duncombe and Marsden. (d) Edgell.
3. **Liberal**: gender role socialisation and discrimination. **Marxist**: capitalism, which gains from women's unpaid labour. **Radical**: patriarchy, by which men dominate and exploit women.
4. It describes inequality in tasks, not **power**, and gives no **reasons**. Better: men are usually the main breadwinner, so they control the money and the important decisions (Edgell); or men use domestic violence to enforce their authority (Dobash and Dobash).
5. It **overstates the effect of laws**: liberal feminists believe gradual legal reform brings equality, but women still do most housework despite equal pay and anti-discrimination laws, so it ignores deeper causes such as patriarchy.

Past questions to try

- 9699/22/O/N/23 Q4: essay on whether power is shared equally in the family.
- 9699/22/M/J/24 Q2: (a) two ways men benefit more than women from family life; (b) two limitations of radical feminism.
- 9699/23/O/N/23 Q3: (a) explain the view that domestic labour is now shared equally; (b) one argument against.
- 9699/22/M/J/22 Q5: essay on whether the family is a patriarchal institution.