

Answer Key for In-Text Questions

Chapter 10

Title: Chapter 10 Questions for Review

Question/Prompt: 1. How have feminist theorists informed critical theorists' approach to the family?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Feminist theorists expand on the ways that families promote social reproduction in a capitalist society. First, families biologically reproduce the next generation of workers and raise them until they are ready to enter the workforce. Second, families—as important agents of socialization—ideologically reproduce the next generation of workers by teaching them how to work compliantly under capitalism. Third, families help maintain class hierarchies, since legal marriage and reproduction preserve stable patterns of ownership and inheritance. In higher income groups, families also pass along cultural capital and social capital. Finally, it is through the unpaid and unrewarded practices of motherhood in a patriarchal society that capitalist businesses receive a continued supply of exploitable workers.

Question/Prompt: 2. How have family structures within Canada changed in the past 50 years? Describe three trends.

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Today, fewer families are made up of married couples, while common-law couples and lone-parent families have increased steadily over recent decades. Many children now spend part of their childhood in a lone-parent family, possibly living part of the time with each parent or in a stepfamily. Finally, children are staying home longer, long past childhood, and are taking longer to form their own family units.
- Family patterns everywhere have moved toward the nuclear family model and that the present-day family unit is smaller than it once was. These trends still hold true and, with the general increase in contraception use and a decreased birth rate, family size has shrunk almost everywhere.
- People have more freedom to live on their own today too, and one-person households have increased in Canada. This growth is highly correlated with the growth of national prosperity and personal incomes.
- Role relations within families have also changed and families have become more flexible. Individual family members, for example, have more freedom today than they did in the past. Parental authority over children has declined, and with an increase in women's rights, husbands' control over wives has dwindled too.
- Mainstream and legal definitions of family have come to include same-sex couples, with marriage and adoption as part of legitimizing same-sex family units.

- As people need more formal education to gain a foothold in the workplace, they tend to delay getting married or at least to delay child-bearing. This poses especially hard problems for highly educated women. They must decide whether to have a first child while still in school, immediately after graduating, or only after having gained some seniority and security in a job.
- Marriage rates have been decreasing and divorce rates have been increasing in Canada and elsewhere.
- Changes in family makeup have been experienced differently by Indigenous people within Canada over the past 200 years. Indigenous families have been profoundly altered by the establishment of the residential school system in 1892 and the Sixties Scoop. The separation of Indigenous children from their families undermined traditional Indigenous child-rearing patterns and hindered the spread of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next. It also imposed European ideals of marriage, sexuality, and patriarchy.

Question/Prompt: 3. Has technology reduced the amount of time spent on domestic labour?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Family work has been deeply affected by scientific and technological breakthroughs of the past century. New “labour-saving” devices—the electric iron and the vacuum cleaner, for example—eased women’s entry into paid work by making traditional housework less time-consuming. Ironically, however, the spread of new household technology did not dramatically reduce the time women spent on housework.

Today, developing technologies, especially information and communications technologies (ICTs) will further improve the standing of women. First, ICTs can help women reduce the work they do through more efficient multitasking. Second, thanks to ICTs, women can increase their peer-to-peer commodity services. Further, ICTs allow women to craft an online space for themselves. Social media platforms such as blogs, YouTube, and Facebook give women a platform to voice their experiences, become leaders, and work toward changing the gendered landscape.

Question/Prompt: 4. What is the *sandwich generation*?

Correct Answer Example(s):

The sandwich generation refers to middle-age adults who are caregivers for both their children and their elderly parents.

Question/Prompt: 5. Describe how technology is blurring the line between work and home life, and what that means for the family.

Correct Answer Example(s):

Information technologies—especially smartphones, social media, tablets, and email—have visibly changed families and family lives. Individuals are now always accessible and can take their work with them wherever they go. This trend is good for people wishing to stay in contact or continue unfinished work projects. However, it can be stressful for workers who find themselves forced to be on call 24 hours a day.

Indeed, sociologists today are concerned that technological progress is increasingly blurring the line between work and home. For example, many workers have reported experiencing technology overload, which has been linked to decreased family and job satisfaction, increased stress and absenteeism, lower productivity, and exhaustion. People may have a harder time relaxing and may feel more disconnected from their families. However, we need more empirical evidence to find out exactly how much of a threat ICT poses for family life.

Title: Chapter 10 Questions for Critical Thought

Question/Prompt: 1. Canadian families have become much more diverse in the last few decades. What is the significance of this increased diversity? Do you think new forms of science and technology have contributed to this trend and, if so, how?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Today, “the family” is no longer restricted to “two opposite sex, married parents with two biological children.” The idea of the family has expanded to include single parents, stepfamilies, families with adoptive children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, foster children, and families headed by gay and lesbian couples, among many other diverse permutations.
- New forms of science and technology have an enormous influence on the diversity of family forms. Industrialization, urbanization, and birth control technologies have played significant roles in reducing family sizes and promoting nuclear families.
- Fertility technologies such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), artificial insemination, surrogacy, and fertility drugs technologies all challenge the norm that there should be two parents (one sperm donor and one egg donor) in each family. It does so by allowing single parents, older people, and same-sex couples to choose how, with whom, and when to have children. It also allows heterosexual couples to conceive a child with donated genetic material from someone not part of their couple.

- Importantly, these technologies offer women new opportunities for freer choice and more varied personal development. Women have much greater opportunity to individualize (or personally tailor) both their family lives and their work lives.
- The diversity of family forms that exist today promote inclusivity, tolerance, and acceptance.

Question/Prompt: 2. With the rise of the internet, children are increasingly socialized by online peers and are exposed to the values of many different communities. Do you feel that this change is positive or negative? Explain.

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- The internet is starting to replace the family as the place where important socialization takes place. Social media give youths a wider access to community life, improve individual creativity, foster personal identity, and increase their storehouse of ideas. Further, being exposed to different cultures and viewpoints can promote tolerance, acceptance, and inclusivity.
- The internet provides enhanced learning opportunities by allowing children to connect with peers outside their class and find information more quickly. It also allows children to access information anonymously. In this way, youths can learn about sexually transmitted diseases, depression, and any other health worries they might have—topics they may feel uncomfortable discussing with their parents.

Question/Prompt: 3. Do you think the job of families today is still to socialize children? Why or why not? And how, if at all, do you think that science and technology have changed the role of families in society?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- The family is an important agent of socialization and promotes social reproduction in a capitalist society. Early childhood is an important stage for primary socialization, during which children develop basic values and norms as well as ideas of the self. This socialization occurs through role modeling and encouragement by primary caregivers.
- Increasingly, however, science and technology play a greater role in socialization. Because of the internet and social media, children are now growing up in an age of constant connection and communication. Parents who find it hard to navigate the web may find themselves excluded from much of the socialization their children receive. Besides, parents may not be able to influence their children to the same degree that online peers or other virtual influences can.

- The internet allows children to access information anonymously. In this way, youths can learn about sexually transmitted diseases, depression, and any other health worries they might have—topics they may feel uncomfortable discussing with their parents.

Question/Prompt: 4. Does technology unite or divide family members? Can you think of more ways (other than those mentioned in this chapter) in which science and technology can be used to unite families?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Technology allows families and friends to interact in real time (or nearly) as if they were in the same room. This proved especially important during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, when family members relied on information and communications technologies (ICTs) to share information and maintain a sense of social connection with their loved ones.
- However, researchers worry that ICTs are also weakening traditional family bonds. Cyber-obsessed youths spend much time online or texting friends, causing them to miss family time or skip family activities. As a result, many parents find it harder to connect with their children.
- Parents may fail to understand the importance of social media to their child, especially when social media convey the opinions of peers. This failure may keep parents from fully understanding their child’s perspective and from bonding with them. Older parents may see the internet and smartphones as potentially dangerous, since there are so many online predators and inappropriate websites. Some parents may deal with this by limiting or tracking their child’s online activities. These efforts may prove ineffective, however, and may alienate children who want to be more independent.
- Finally, parents find it hard to connect with their children because of age and generational differences. Forms of communication have changed so much that children may be biologically wired to communicate differently than their parents. Children who spend most of their time interacting with a screen can develop different neural pathways and may lose empathy or fail to form deep personal bonds.
- Other ways in which science and technology can be used to unite families include online activities that family members can do together, such as watching a movie or TV show, doing a virtual fitness class, and playing online games.

Question/Prompt: 5. How does the need to provide eldercare, child care, or care to sick family members change the way a family works? Does caregiving strengthen or undermine family cohesion?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Family members are expected keep one another safe from illness, accidents, and dangers. This burden of caregiving tends to fall disproportionately on women.
- Though caregiving is benevolent and even life-enhancing, it can have negative consequences for the caregivers. These can include stress, financial difficulties, and physical and mental health problems. Supports, on the other hand, such as financial support, help from neighbours and friends, and support from a partner or spouse, can ease some of this extra burden.
- In many families, caregiving means a shift in family power relations. The change from independent to dependent parent marks a shift in in the older adult's power and responsibility. This shift isn't without complications. Depending on the quality of the relationship between parent and child, this change may lead children to repay the parent for past kindness or to seek revenge for past injustices.
- Sometimes, family stress can lead to violence and elder abuse, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, neglect, or abandonment.