考試科目	專業英文	系所別	社會學系	考試時間	5月6日(六) 第一節

The following excerpt came from a recent article, "Implications of Changing Family Forms of Children," published in Annual Review of Sociology (2016, 42:301–22). Please read the excerpt carefully and answer questions (either in Chinese or English) at the end of the excerpt.

The questions of how, through what processes, and to what extent family forms influence children's well-being have been approached from at least four general frameworks. We refer to them here as (*a*) family structure, (*b*) evolutionary, (*c*) characteristics, and (*d*) context theories. Most scholarship developing these explanations seeks to explain apparent disparities in child academic performance and well-being among single- and stepparent families (Astone&McLanahan 1991, Dawson 1991, Pong & Ju 2000, Stewart 2007, Zill 1996). The first two frameworks posit direct effects of family form on youth, whereas the second two highlight primarily indirect effects.

Family structure theories are premised on the idea that traditional family structures—typically defined as families with a biological father and mother—are intrinsically more effective, offering youth an advantage (Amato 2005, Popenoe 1999, Wilcox & Lerman 2014). These explanations suggest that deviating from the SNAF (standard North American family) creates structural deficiencies and ambiguities. ...

The social sciences also have imported evolutionary theories that view alternative family structures as flawed. Kin selection theory treats parental investment as a form of reproductive survival, whereby parents, especially mothers, invest more in biological offspring to ensure the continuation of the line (Buss 1995, Salmon 2005, Smith 1988, Trivers 1972). This genetic link is at the heart of the traditional family structure and is viewed as the source of advantages for biological children. Evolutionary scholars often cite stepfamily studies, especially those with stepfathers, to support the tenets of kin selection theory; stepfathers may be less likely to provide resources like direct care or monetary support, and some evidence suggests children in stepfamilies experience higher rates of abuse and neglect (Anderson et al. 1999, Daly &Wilson 1998, Zvoch 1999).

The characteristics approach is not rooted in deficiencies of family forms themselves. Instead, it highlights sociodemographic features that are often associated with particular family structures as casual factors in children's outcomes. Characteristics theories also have been based on family forms that are associated with reduced resources for children. Specifically, much of this work arose from scholarship challenging the pathology of matriarchy, in which single-mother households are viewed as detrimental to children. Downey (1994) and Biblarz & Raftery (1999) show that it is often not family structure per se but related characteristics (e.g., lower parental income and less occupational prestige) thatmake particular alternative family forms less advantageous for children. Accounting for these factors reduces the benefits associated with traditional family structures, such that children from single-mother households have similar levels of educational success.

The fourth theory is the most nascent and suggests that the characteristics associated with alternative families are not static. Rather these features (and their effects) are contextual and vary with the social, legal, economic, and political climate. For example, a considerable body of comparative work indicates that single

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parenthood need not be associated with lower levels of maternal education and higher levels of poverty (Houseknecht & Sastry 1996, McLanahan & Garfinkel 1995). Where national policies equalize or at least minimize the differences in resources between single- and two-parent families, the achievement gap for children in these family forms is significantly reduced, or even becomes nonexistent (Pong et al. 2003). Scholarship also suggests that other family structure patterns, such as the negative effect of increasing sibship size on parental investment (Conley 2004, Downey 2001; but see Guo & VanWey 1999), are mediated by social and educational policy (Park 2008, Steelman et al. 2002, Xu 2008).

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Same-sex families have grown considerably over the past few decades. Some scholars attribute this change in part to the development of a young adult life stage that allowed youth independence from their families and communities of origin. As Rosenfeld (2007) argues, after the 1960s, parents lost much of their ability to control the mating choices of their children, who became more geographically mobile, urban, and disconnected from their hometowns. This created a context in which living in a nontraditional union that defied social norms was much more possible. Greater public approval of same-sex couples and same-sex marriage, along with legislative actions and court decisions that provide more legal opportunities to same-sex couples, has only accelerated the growth of this family form.

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Theories about how same-sex parenthood affects children can be grouped into roughly two groups. A small group of social scientists explicitly posits a deficit model in which same-sex families are impeded by the absence of two heterosexual parents who are biologically related to their children and by the absence of role models from both men and women (Regnerus 2012, Sullins 2015, Wardle 1997). Regnerus's (2012) study of the New Family Structures Survey (NFSS) is perhaps the best-known example. Regnerus asserts that children's success in adulthood in multiple domains is more likely if they lived with their married mother and father throughout their childhood and especially if their parents remained married even after the children reached adulthood. He posits that the decrease in the number of intact biological mother/biological father families will prove disadvantageous for children and families.

The analysis of small subsamples like same-sex families, however, is particularly dependent on researchers' analytical decisions. Cheng & Powell (2015) revisited the NFSS and identified numerous possibilities for themisclassification of respondents as having been raised by parents in a same-sex romantic relationship, as well as othermeasurement, modeling, and coding issues (also see Paik 2015). In reanalyzing the NFSS, Cheng & Powell (2015) show that once potential errors are accounted for,most of the supposed disadvantages reported by Regnerus for respondents raised in either single- or two-parent lesbian mother households and gay father households disappear. The very few remaining "disadvantages" are either normative judgments imposed by Regnerus (2012) (e.g., whether a respondent identifies as entirely heterosexual) or artifacts of a very small number of highly influential cases. ...

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A second, and larger, group of scholars finds minimal evidence of negative effects of same sex parenting on children. Recent amicus curiae briefs to the US Supreme Court filed by the American Sociological Association (2013, 2015) summarize this research on children's academic performance and cognitive development (Potter 2012, Rosenfeld 2010), social development and
mental health (Fedewa & Clark 2009, Lamb 2012, Tasker 2005, Wainright & Patterson 2008), and incidence of risky or problematic behaviors (Gartrell et al. 2012, Patterson & Wainright 2012, Wainright & Patterson 2006). Taken together, this body of work suggests that children of same- and opposite-sex parents are more similar than different (for comprehensive reviews, also see Adams & Light 2015, Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer 2013, Stacey & Biblarz 2001).

...Like much scholarship on same-sex families, these studies are typically and necessarily based on small, nonrepresentative samples (but see Prickett et al. 2015). Still, Biblarz & Stacey (2010) conclude that the published evidence to date is not inconsistent with the position that two women are better parents at least in some domains than are a father/mother couple, especially a man and woman who have a gendered division of labor. Whether the posited parenting advantages translate into long-term cognitive, social, or psychological benefits for children is unclear (Biblarz & Stacey 2010).

Although more research is needed, early evidence of highly skilled parenting among same-sex couples points to the social and legal context in which they exist. Like adoptive families and other family forms that face adversity (e.g., social stigma, blocked access to a full set of legal and economic benefits), same-sex families may engage in compensatory strategies that both display and build strong family relationships. ...Again, the evidence regarding the possible benefits of same-sex parenting is preliminary at best. But what is clear is that the cumulative evidence to date offers little reason to believe that children fare worse being raised by two parents of the same sex than by a mother and father.

Questions

1. What research hypotheses would you formulate based on each of the four general theoretical frameworks mentioned in the article concerning the relationship between various family forms and children's academic achievement? (Hint: Based on family structure theories, you may hypothesize that traditional family structure with two biological parents would have positive impacts on children's achievement because....) (50%)
2. Based on what you have read so far, how would you conclude about the possible impact of single-sex families on children's development in comparison with other family types? Please elaborate your answer with at least one of the four theoretical frameworks. (50%)