



GSOC.FA2 Family Forms and Diversity

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

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

Item A: The Kowalski-Bello Household

A hypothetical family scenario, written for Revision Library to illustrate family diversity. Not based on a real family.

Priya and Marcus are not married but have lived together for nine years, raising their two children in a rented flat. Priya works full time; Marcus works part time and does most of the school pick-ups. Two years ago, Priya's mother Grace, aged 78, moved in with the family after a health scare, because moving to a care home would have been very expensive and Grace wanted to stay close to her grandchildren. Priya's teenage niece, whose own parents separated last year, also stays at the flat for several nights most weeks while she studies at a nearby college.

- 1** Which term describes a couple who live together in a long-term relationship without being married?

- ☐ A) A nuclear family
- ☐ B) A cohabiting couple
- ☐ C) An extended family
- ☐ D) A reconstituted family

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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- 2** Define the term 'family diversity'.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Look at Item A.

(a) Using Item A, identify one feature of the household that shows a family form other than a simple nuclear family, and explain your choice. (2)

(b) Using Item A, identify one example of wider kin support shown in the household beyond the couple and their own children, and explain your choice. (2)

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 The sociologist Robert Chester (1985) argued that, despite rising family diversity, most people still spend part of their life in a nuclear family type household.

(a) Explain the main claim of Chester's 'neo-conventional family' thesis. (2)

(b) Explain how Chester's view differs from the New Right view of family change. (2)

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 The sociologist Anthony Giddens (1992) argued that modern intimate relationships increasingly take the form of a 'pure relationship'.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

- 6** The sociologist Julia Brannen (2003) used the term 'beanpole family' to describe a change in extended family structure.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

- 7** The sociologists Jeffrey Weeks, Brian Heaphy and Catherine Donovan researched same-sex relationships and used the term 'families of choice'.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

- 8** State one criticism that can be made of Chester's neo-conventional family thesis.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

- 9** State one criticism that can be made of Giddens' 'pure relationship' idea.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

- 10** Explain one reason for the rise in the number of single-person households in the UK.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

11 Explain what is meant by a couple who are 'living apart together' (LAT).

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

12 Some sociologists, such as Giddens, Brannen and Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan, argue that family diversity reflects positive social progress in choice and equality. Others, such as Chester, argue that a widely shared, workable pattern of family life remains important.

Evaluate the view that family diversity is best understood as positive social progress. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one perspective.

(Total for Question 12 is 12 marks)

13 For each family described below, name the sociological term from this pack that best describes it.

- (a) A grandmother, her adult daughter and her teenage granddaughter, spanning three living generations in close contact, with few siblings in each generation. (1)
- (b) A couple who have chosen to spend most nights together but each still keep and pay for their own separate home. (1)
- (c) A close-knit group of friends and an ex-partner who provide each other with the support a family might, chosen rather than based on blood ties. (1)

(Total for Question 13 is 3 marks)

14 State one criticism that has been made of the idea of 'families of choice'.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

15 Using Item A, explain one way Grace's move into the household reflects a real demographic trend affecting UK families.

(Total for Question 15 is 2 marks)

16 State one strength of studying family diversity through a specific example such as Item A, rather than only general statistics.

(Total for Question 16 is 2 marks)

17 Explain two ways family diversity in the UK has increased since the mid-twentieth century, other than those already covered in this pack.

(Total for Question 17 is 4 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.FA2 Family Forms and Diversity

Question 1

- **B1** B (a cohabiting couple)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** the idea that families in the UK today take many different forms, rather than one dominant type (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. including differences in structure, culture and the roles partners take within the household
- **Answer: Family diversity is the idea that families in the UK take many different forms today, rather than one dominant type, differing in structure, culture and the roles partners take.**

Question 3

- (a) **B1** a correct feature, e.g. Priya and Marcus are cohabiting rather than married
- (a) **B1** brief explanation, e.g. this means the household is not built around a married couple, unlike the traditional nuclear family model
- (a) **Answer: Priya and Marcus are cohabiting rather than married, so the household is not built around a married couple, unlike the traditional nuclear family model.**
- (b) **B1** a correct example, e.g. Grace (Priya's mother) living with the family, or the niece staying regularly
- (b) **B1** brief explanation, e.g. this shows the household includes relatives beyond the couple and their children, giving and receiving support across generations
- (b) **Answer: Grace, Priya's mother, has moved in with the family, and Priya's niece stays regularly. This shows the household includes relatives beyond the couple and their children, giving and receiving support across generations.**

Question 4

- (a) **B1** identifies that most people still spend part of their life in a nuclear family type household of parents and dependent children (oe)
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. Chester argued this is now usually a dual-earner household, with both partners working, rather than a declining family form
- (a) **Answer: Chester argued most people still spend part of their life in a nuclear family type household, but this is now usually a dual-earner household with both partners working, rather than a declining family form.**
- (b) **B1** identifies that Chester does not see rising family diversity as a decline or crisis (oe)
- (b) **B1** development, e.g. unlike the New Right's concern about rising lone parenthood, Chester argues the nuclear family has simply adapted (e.g. more dual-earner households) rather than disappearing
- (b) **Answer: Chester does not see rising diversity as a decline or crisis; unlike the New Right's concern about lone parenthood, he argues the nuclear family has adapted, for example into more dual-earner households, rather than disappearing.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies that a 'pure relationship' continues only for as long as it gives both partners satisfaction (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. unlike in the past, people are not held together mainly by tradition, religion or economic necessity
- **B1** identifies that Giddens linked this to greater equality and choice between partners
- **B1** development, e.g. this can help explain both rising cohabitation, since couples do not feel they must marry, and rising separation, since relationships can end once they stop working for one partner
- **Answer: Giddens argued a 'pure relationship' continues only as long as it satisfies both partners, based on equality and choice rather than tradition or economic necessity, which helps explain both rising cohabitation and rising relationship separation.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies that a beanpole family is long and thin: more living generations than in the past but fewer people in each generation
- **B1** development, e.g. increased life expectancy means great-grandparents are more often still alive
- **B1** development, e.g. smaller family sizes, with fewer children per couple, mean each generation is narrower
- **B1** further development, e.g. this can mean more contact between grandparents or great-grandparents and grandchildren, even while the number of siblings and cousins falls
- **Answer: A beanpole family is long and thin: increased life expectancy means more living generations, such as great-grandparents, while smaller family sizes mean fewer people in each generation, which can mean more contact across generations but fewer siblings and cousins.**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies that some people, particularly in same-sex relationships, build close supportive relationships with partners and friends that function like a family, chosen rather than based only on blood or marriage (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. this can include ex-partners, close friends and partners' relatives, not only traditional biological kin
- **B1** identifies that Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan found roles and responsibilities within these relationships were often negotiated between partners rather than fixed by traditional gender expectations
- **B1** development, e.g. this challenges the idea that there is only one 'normal' pattern of family life
- **Answer: Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan found some people, particularly in same-sex relationships, build 'families of choice' with partners and friends, chosen rather than based only on blood or marriage, with roles negotiated rather than fixed by gender, challenging the idea of one 'normal' family pattern.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. it may understate genuinely new or different family forms, such as families of choice, that do not fit even an adapted nuclear pattern
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or that simply passing through a nuclear-type household at some point in life does not mean it is the most important or influential family experience for everyone
- **Answer: Critics argue Chester's view may understate genuinely new family forms, such as families of choice, that do not fit even an adapted nuclear pattern, and that briefly passing through a nuclear-type household does not mean it is the most important experience for everyone.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. it may overstate how much free choice people really have, since money, housing, children and social pressure can make it harder to leave a relationship even when it is not satisfying
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or that it may apply more to some groups, such as wealthier or more educated people, than to others
- **Answer: Critics argue Giddens' idea may overstate real freedom of choice, since money, housing, children and social pressure can make it harder to leave a relationship, and it may apply more to wealthier or more educated groups than to others.**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies a genuine reason, e.g. more people living independently before partnering, or more older people living alone after a partner's death, or more people separating
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: More older people now live alone after the death of a partner, and more people live independently before forming a long-term relationship, both contributing to the rise in single-person households.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies that LAT describes a couple in a committed relationship who choose to live in separate homes rather than moving in together (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. this can happen at any stage, for example among some older couples who each keep their own home, or younger couples not yet ready to live together
- **Answer: Living apart together describes a couple in a committed relationship who choose to keep separate homes rather than move in together, for example some older couples who each keep their own home.**

Question 12

- **Level 4** (10-12): A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH the case for family diversity as positive progress AND the case for a shared, workable family pattern remaining important, 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.
- **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 diversity, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Case for diversity as progress: Giddens' (1992) 'pure relationship' suggests modern relationships are based on choice and equality rather than obligation, which many see as positive; Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan's 'families of choice' shows people, particularly in same-sex relationships, building supportive chosen families beyond traditional structures.
 - Further support: Brannen's (2003) 'beanpole family' shows extended family ties across generations persisting in new forms, not disappearing, alongside more choice in couple relationships.
 - Case for a shared, workable pattern remaining important: Chester's (1985) 'neo-conventional family' thesis argues most people still spend part of their life in a nuclear-type, usually dual-earner, household, suggesting continuity rather than dramatic decline or replacement.
 - The New Right perspective argues some shared, stable family pattern benefits children and society, and is concerned that too much instability in family life can cause social problems.
 - Evaluation of the 'diversity as progress' case: critics argue it can overstate real freedom of choice, since money, housing and social pressures still limit many people's options.
 - Evaluation of the 'shared pattern' case: critics argue it can wrongly treat one family type as more 'normal' or valuable than others, when evidence such as families of choice and beanpole families shows many different arrangements can work well.
 - A balanced conclusion should weigh evidence of genuine new choice and diversity against the continuing practical importance many people place on stable, supportive relationships, in whatever form they take.

Question 13

- (a) **B1** beanpole family
- (a) **Answer: Beanpole family**
- (b) **B1** living apart together (LAT)
- (b) **Answer: Living apart together (LAT)**
- (c) **B1** a family of choice
- (c) **Answer: A family of choice**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. it may be harder to rely on chosen relationships in a crisis, since they do not always carry the automatic legal rights or obligations that marriage or blood relationships often do
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or that not everyone has an equally wide or supportive network of friends to draw on
- **Answer: Critics argue chosen relationships can be harder to rely on in a crisis, since they may not carry the automatic legal rights of marriage or blood relationships, and not everyone has an equally wide or supportive network of friends.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies a genuine trend, e.g. increased life expectancy and an ageing population mean more older relatives may need extra support from their family
- **B1** development, e.g. or that rising costs of professional care can make some families choose to share a home with an older relative instead
- **Answer: Increased life expectancy and an ageing population mean more older relatives, like Grace, may need extra support from family, and the rising cost of professional care can make sharing a home a more realistic option.**

Question 16

- **B1** identifies a genuine strength, e.g. a specific example can show how several kinds of diversity, such as cohabitation and wider kin support, can exist together within one household
- **B1** brief development, e.g. this can reveal detail and context that summary statistics alone might miss
- **Answer: A specific example like Item A can show how several kinds of diversity, such as cohabitation and wider kin support, exist together within one household, revealing detail that summary statistics alone might miss.**

Question 17

- **B1** identifies one change, e.g. more people living in reconstituted or step-families, following divorce and remarriage
- **B1** development
- **B1** identifies a second, different change, e.g. greater diversity in family forms reflecting the UK's greater ethnic and cultural diversity, such as different traditions of extended family involvement
- **B1** development
- **Answer: More people now live in reconstituted or step-families following divorce and remarriage, and family life has become more culturally diverse, reflecting the UK's ethnic diversity, with different traditions of extended family involvement.**