3.4 Changing Patterns of Marriage, Divorce and Cohabitation: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

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

1 State one similarity between Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's individualisation thesis and Giddens' idea of the 'pure relationship'.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 State one criticism that could be made of relying only on marriage and divorce statistics to understand relationship changes in the UK.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Explain two ways rising life expectancy could affect patterns of marriage, divorce and remarriage.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

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4 Explain two demographic changes, other than divorce, that have affected the average age at which people first marry.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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5 Define the term 'cohabitation'.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

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6 The sociologists Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (1995) developed the 'individualisation thesis'.

(a) Explain the main claim of the individualisation thesis. **(2)**

(b) Explain one way the individualisation thesis can help explain the rise in cohabitation. **(2)**

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

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7 Divorce law in England and Wales has changed significantly over time.

(a) Explain how the Divorce Reform Act 1969 changed access to divorce. **(2)**

(b) Explain how the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 further changed divorce law. **(2)**

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

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8 Explain how secularisation, the declining social influence of religion, may be linked to changes in marriage and divorce.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 3.4 Changing Patterns of Marriage, Divorce and Cohabitation: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies a genuine similarity, e.g. both argue modern relationships are increasingly based on personal choice and satisfaction rather than fixed tradition or duty **B1**

brief development, e.g. both can help explain rising cohabitation and rising divorce, as people choose relationships that suit them and leave those that do not **B1**

Answer: Both Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's individualisation thesis and Giddens' 'pure relationship' argue modern relationships are based on personal choice rather than fixed tradition, helping explain both rising cohabitation and rising divorce.

Question 2

identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. official statistics do not capture cohabiting relationships that form or end without a legal marriage or divorce **B1**

brief development, e.g. this means marriage and divorce statistics alone may understate how many committed relationships form and end **B1**

Answer: Official marriage and divorce statistics do not capture cohabiting relationships that form or end without a legal marriage or divorce, so they may understate how many committed relationships really form and end.

Question 3

identifies one way, e.g. marriages can now potentially last longer before a partner dies **B1**

development, e.g. this can mean more years in which a marriage could also end in divorce rather than by a partner's death **B1**

identifies a second way, e.g. people who are widowed or divorced now have more years remaining in which they might remarry or re-partner **B1**

development, e.g. this can add to the number of reconstituted families and wider step-kin networks in later life **B1**

Answer: Marriages can now last longer before a partner dies, giving more years in which a marriage could also end in divorce; people who are widowed or divorced also have more years in which to remarry or re-partner, adding to reconstituted families and step-kin networks.

Question 4

identifies one change, e.g. more people now attend university or focus on starting a career before marrying, raising the average age at first marriage **B1**

development **B1**

identifies a second, different change, e.g. rising cohabitation means many couples live together for years before marrying, if they marry at all **B1**

development **B1**

Answer: More people now spend longer in education or building a career before marrying, and rising cohabitation means many couples live together for years before marrying, if they marry at all, both raising the average age at first marriage.

Question 5

a couple living together in a long-term relationship without being married (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. cohabitation can be a step towards marriage or a long-term alternative to it **B1**

Answer: Cohabitation is a couple living together in a long-term relationship without being married, which can be a step towards marriage or a long-term alternative to it.

Question 6

(a) identifies that in modern society people increasingly make choices about their own lives, including relationships, based on personal preference rather than fixed traditions (oe) **B1**

(a) development, e.g. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim argued this applies strongly to love and family life, which they described as becoming more like a personal project than a fixed duty **B1**

(a) Answer: The individualisation thesis argues people increasingly base life choices, including relationships, on personal preference rather than fixed tradition, treating love and family life more like a personal project than a fixed duty.

(b) identifies that if relationships are based on personal choice rather than tradition, fewer couples may feel they must marry before living together **B1**

(b) development, e.g. couples can choose cohabitation as a valid option in itself, not only as a step on the way to marriage **B1**

(b) Answer: If relationships are based on personal choice rather than tradition, fewer couples feel they must marry before living together, so cohabitation can be chosen as a valid option in itself.

Question 7

(a) identifies that it introduced 'irretrievable breakdown of marriage' as grounds for divorce (oe) **B1**

(a) development, e.g. this made divorce more accessible than under the older, narrower fault-based grounds, contributing to a rise in the divorce rate after it came into force **B1**

(a) Answer: The Divorce Reform Act 1969 introduced 'irretrievable breakdown of marriage' as grounds for divorce, making divorce more accessible than the older fault-based grounds and contributing to a rise in the divorce rate.

(b) identifies that it introduced 'no-fault' divorce in England and Wales, in force from 2022 (oe) **B1**

(b) development, e.g. couples no longer need to blame one partner or prove fault; a statement that the marriage has broken down is enough **B1**

(b) Answer: The Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 introduced no-fault divorce in England and Wales, in force from 2022, so couples no longer need to blame one partner or prove fault to divorce.

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Question 8

identifies that religious teaching has traditionally discouraged divorce and encouraged marriage before living together or having children	**B1**
development, e.g. as religion's influence on everyday life has declined for many people, these traditional expectations carry less weight	**B1**
identifies that this can make cohabitation, having children outside marriage, or divorce feel less stigmatised than in the past	**B1**
development, e.g. this is one factor, alongside legal change and individual choice, that sociologists link to rising cohabitation and divorce rates	**B1**

Answer: Religion has traditionally discouraged divorce and encouraged marriage before children; as religion's influence has declined for many people, cohabitation, having children outside marriage and divorce feel less stigmatised, contributing to rising cohabitation and divorce rates.

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