



Temps previst: 30-35 minuts

Es puntua la capacitat d'interacció de la persona candidata, la seva pronúncia, la seva competència gramatical i el seu ús de vocabulari.

GENDER ISSUES

Part 1. Individual task

Read the following text. During your text commentary, which is expected to be about 3 minutes long, you should:

- retell the main points of the text in your own words,
- relate an experience you or somebody you know may have had, or an event you know about, related to the topic.

Single Women: there's hope after 35

You mean “we weren't doomed” after all? said **Cristina Odone** in the *London Daily Telegraph*. Twenty years ago this week, *Newsweek* informed me and my girlfriends that if we weren't married by 30, we should resign ourselves to a lifetime of manless, childless, cat hair-covered spinsterhood. That infamous cover story, entitled “The Marriage Crunch,” memorably declared that a single woman of 35 had only a 5% chance of ever finding a husband, while a single woman of 40 had a better chance of being killed by a terrorist than of getting hitched. Career women everywhere were panicked –but now it turns out that the “scaremongers” at *Newsweek* admit they were wrong. Of 11 supposedly doomed single women featured in that article, eight subsequently married. After 20 years of social and economic change, the odds of getting married at 35 or 40 or even 45 are “better than at any time in history.”

This retraction comes a little late, said **Jessica Yellin** in *The New York Times*. Two decades later, the premise of that fateful article “seems to have lodged itself permanently in the national psyche.” From Glenn Close's psycho in *Fatal Attraction* to lovelorn Bridget Jones and the “ever-conflicted” 30-somethings of *Sex and the City*, fear of spinsterhood is now assumed to be the cornerstone of every single, working woman's personality. Obviously, the media can't take all of the blame for women's anxiety about finding a mate; after all, “fertility has an expiration date.” But it's now obvious that the marry-early-or-never-marry message was partly a backlash against the very idea of the career woman.

The Week, 9 June 2006



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At last, dads are keen to mind the kids

They are often portrayed as lazy buggers, sitting in the corner with as much knowledge about how to change a nappy as the baby itself. The reality is different. Today's fathers are capable and confident of caring for their children unaided while almost half would be happy to stay at home to look after their sons and daughters on their own.

According to an NOP poll, three out of five mothers also believe that acting as the family's breadwinner is not the most important role for fathers. Professor Charlie Lewis of Lancaster University, an internationally respected researcher on the family and fatherhood, describes the findings as 'highly significant', and said they signalled 'a seismic change' in the attitudes of both men and women to parenting and men's traditional roles in the family.

'We have been talking about a seismic shift in the role of fathers for over 30 years and nothing happened,' he said. 'Now we might suddenly be at a very exciting turning point. One recent trigger may be the number of women sharply increasing their hours of paid work, while men are cutting back.'

Previous polls have shown women to be much more ambivalent about the changing role of men. Just over half of the mothers disagreed with the statement that women are 'naturally' better than men at caring for children – a figure that includes 28% of mothers from ethnic-minority groups – challenging the notion that only 'mother knows best.'

Yvonne Roberts, *The Observer*, 9 October 2005



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Marriage: What Women Really Want

A new University of Virginia study has disproved feminism's principal tenet – that traditional marriage leaves women unfulfilled and miserable. In a survey of more than 5,000 couples, sociologists found that 52% of stay-at-home wives rated themselves as “very happy,” compared with 41% of working wives. In another blow to feminist orthodoxy, the survey also challenges the “utopian” notion that housework and child care should be split evenly. Instead, women are happiest when their husbands are committed to the marriage, appreciative of their wives' contributions, and emotionally open. It doesn't much matter whether they dust and do the dishes.

Men, the message is clear, said **John Tierney** in *The New York Times*. If you want a happy marriage, just make sure you bring home the bacon. In the study, “the happiest wives, regardless of the family's overall income, were the ones whose husbands brought in at least two-thirds of the money.” Even feminists who said they believed in “a partnership of equals” were far happier with men who provided most of the family's income. “In theory, these wives were egalitarians, but in their own lives they preferred more traditional arrangements.”

You silly man, said **Jenice Armstrong** in the *Philadelphia Daily News*. You're not listening. Women may be “hard-wired” to prefer a good provider, but the study's clearest finding is that women are happiest with “a loving partner” who's romantic, affectionate, and understanding. “In the end, the answer to the age-old question of what women want is no surprise. It's simply love.”

The Week, 10 March 2006

Part 2. Group discussion

After having heard various aspects of the topic in Part 1, you should now discuss it with your fellow examinees for approximately 15 minutes. You should compare opinions and give good reasons for them, or state facts so as to find possible solutions to the problems posed in the texts or those that come up during the discussion. To do this task, you may take into consideration the following guidelines. You may use them all or just those necessary.

- Equality of pay at work.
- Career prospects.
- Social pressures for single men and single women.
- Roles in childcare.