Outline and explain two ways that globalisation has led to changes in gender roles and relationships [10]

One way in which globalisation has led to changes in gender roles and relationships is through employment. Over the past 40 years, globalisation has resulted in the decline of traditional manufacturing industries in the UK, with many of these jobs being moved to lower wage economies in other parts of the world as global barriers to trade were removed. As a result, there has been a seismic shift in the employment market in the UK, with some sociologists suggesting that there has been a 'feminisation of employment' as the UK moves to a service sector economy. This has impacted on gender roles and relationships as it has created more opportunities for women in employment. This has led to more dual earner families, and in some families, women are the main wage earner. Consequently, women have more financial independence and relationships are now seen to be more a 'partnership of equals' between males and females, in contrast to traditional ideas of instrumental and expressive roles for men and women, respectively.

A second way in which globalisation has led to changes in gender roles and relationships has been the transmission of norms and values. As one feature of globalisation has been the greater interconnectedness of individuals on a global scale, this has allowed the easier transmission of norms and values through technological advancements, such as the internet. This has raised awareness of the inequality between males and females in gender roles and relationships and provided many women with higher aspirations than being just a housewife and mother. As a result, women are able to challenge patriarchal ideas about relationships and the domestic division of labour and this has altered the balance of these relationships. Furthermore, ideas about what constitutes masculinity have also been transmitted, with many males now seeing their role in the family as being as, if not more important than their employment, in part due to the increased insecurity in society. Beck argues that many males define themselves by their roles as fathers, rather than their employment as a result of this insecurity – created by the process of globalisation and the spread of capitalism.

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Item A

There have been many changes to the organisation and structure of family life over the past 50 years. Increased globalisation, technological innovation and changes to employment patterns have all impacted on family life.

2. Applying material from item A, analyse two reasons for changes in the structure and organisation of family life. [10]

One reason for changes in the structure and organisation of family life has been 'changes to employment patterns' (Item A). In recent years, employment patterns in the UK have seen a shift from heavy manufacturing and traditional male industries, such as coal mining and steel work, to a service sector economy based around customer service, retail and banking. The impact of this has been to increase the prominence of women in employment, with personal interactions being seen as part of the feminine domain. As a result, this has altered the structure of traditional families from being a single breadwinner (usually male) in the instrumental role and an expressive role (usually taken on by females) which looks after the caring and nurturing elements of family life. The impact of these changes is two-fold. With more women being in employment and having careers, and with males having to address a 'crisis of masculinity'. As a result, women delay marriage and childbearing as they seek out careers, whilst males re-evaluate their position as breadwinners and seek out the security of fatherhood as a form of identity. This impact on the structure and organisation of the family by creating different forms of family, such as lone person households, reconstituted families and lone-parent families as women are more financial independent and have higher expectations of men in relationships.

A second reason for changes in the structure and organisation of family life can be seen through 'technological innovation' (Item A). Examining the family in the 1970s, Wilmott and Young argued that families had become more symmetrical in nature. One of the reasons for this was that home had become more welcoming through advancements in technology. This led to shared leisure time between adults, as well as shared, but separate, conjugal roles between males and females, which was in contrast to the segregated conjugal roles on the early-industrial family. With the development of further home entertainment technologies, as well as technology that aids domestic labour (Silver and Schoor) this alters the organisation of family life from being based upon segregated roles to more joint, if separate, conjugal roles within the family.