



GSOC.FA12 Social Policy and the Law: Civil Partnerships and Same-Sex Marriage

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 70 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Write full sentences in extended answers Q16. Spend about 40 minutes on the whole paper, with 12-15 minutes on the final evaluation.

- 1** Which UK Act first gave same-sex couples legal recognition similar to marriage, allowing them to form a civil partnership from 2005 onwards?

- ☐ A) Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013
- ☐ B) Civil Partnership Act 2004
- ☐ C) Equality Act 2010
- ☐ D) Human Rights Act 1998

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Define what is meant by a 'civil partnership' in UK family law as introduced by the Civil Partnership Act 2004.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** Explain two legal changes introduced by the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 in England and Wales.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

- 4** State one way adoption law in the UK changed to include same-sex couples, naming the legal context and a relevant year if you can.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

- 5** Identify and explain one reason liberal sociologists welcome legal recognition of same-sex relationships in the UK, referring to equality and individual rights.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

- 6** Identify one argument the New Right gives in reaction to extending marriage and marriage-like rights to same-sex couples, keeping the point brief and clearly signposted as a reaction.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

- 7** Explain two ways the Civil Partnership Act 2004 affected practical rights for same-sex couples, such as financial or parental rights.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

- 8** State one social effect sociologists have linked to legal recognition of same-sex relationships, for example on social acceptance or family stability.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

- 9** Item A: A short summary of a local council leaflet about family support services. The leaflet says: 'Following changes in law, our adoption teams and family support services recognise and welcome families formed by same-sex parents. We provide the same advice on childcare, schooling and financial support to same-sex couples as to different-sex couples.' Using Item A and your own knowledge, identify two ways this leaflet illustrates the effect of legal change on local services.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

- 10** Using your knowledge of policy and family sociology, explain two reasons why some feminist sociologists support equal marriage and adoption rights for same-sex couples.

(Total for Question 10 is 4 marks)

- 11** Identify one limitation of using only legal change to judge how accepted same-sex families are in society.

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

- 12** Define the sociological term 'heteronormativity' and explain its relevance to debates about civil partnerships and same-sex marriage.

(Total for Question 12 is 4 marks)

- 13** State one piece of evidence sociologists could use to show that same-sex marriage has increased social acceptance of same-sex relationships.

(Total for Question 13 is 2 marks)

- 14** Explain two ways local institutions, such as schools or workplaces, may have to change their policies after the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 and related adoption law changes.

(Total for Question 14 is 4 marks)

- 15** Identify two sociological perspectives and explain briefly how each would interpret the impact of legal changes for same-sex couples, for example civil partnerships and same-sex marriage.

(Total for Question 15 is 4 marks)

- 16** Discuss how far sociologists would agree that legal changes such as the Civil Partnership Act 2004, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, and adoption rights for same-sex couples have increased family diversity and equality in the UK. In your answer, refer to relevant sociological perspectives and give a supported conclusion. Write in full sentences.

(Total for Question 16 is 12 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.FA12 Social Policy and the Law: Civil Partnerships and Same-Sex Marriage

Question 1

- **B1** B (Civil Partnership Act 2004)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies that a civil partnership is a legally recognised union between two people of the same sex registered with the state
- **B1** development, e.g. it gives many legal rights and responsibilities similar to marriage, such as inheritance and pension rights (oe)
- **Answer: A civil partnership is a legally recognised union between two people of the same sex registered with the state; it gives many legal rights and responsibilities similar to marriage, such as inheritance and pension rights.**

Question 3

- **B1** identifies one legal change, e.g. it allowed same-sex couples to marry in civil ceremonies
- **B1** development, e.g. this granted same-sex couples the same legal status and many of the same rights as opposite-sex married couples
- **B1** identifies a second legal change, e.g. it allowed conversion of existing civil partnerships into marriages
- **B1** development, e.g. this gave civil partners the option to become married without dissolving their partnership first
- **Answer: It allowed same-sex couples to marry in civil ceremonies, giving them the same legal status and many of the same rights as opposite-sex married couples, and it allowed existing civil partnerships to be converted into marriages.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies a correct change, e.g. same-sex couples were allowed to adopt jointly in England and Wales from 2005
- **B1** brief development, e.g. this meant same-sex couples gained the same adoption rights as different-sex couples in many parts of the UK
- **Answer: Same-sex couples were allowed to adopt jointly in England and Wales from 2005, meaning they gained adoption rights similar to different-sex couples.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies a reason, e.g. it promotes equality and reduces discrimination against same-sex couples
- **B1** development, e.g. legal recognition gives same-sex couples access to rights and social respect previously denied
- **B1** explains how this links to liberal values, e.g. liberals value individual freedom and equal civil rights
- **B1** further development, e.g. the law change is seen as removing unjust state barriers to personal choice and family formation
- **Answer: Liberals welcome legal recognition because it promotes equality and reduces discrimination, giving same-sex couples access to rights and social respect; this fits liberal values of individual freedom and equal civil rights and removes unjust state barriers to family formation.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies a New Right style criticism, e.g. that extending marriage beyond heterosexual couples weakens the traditional special status of marriage
- **B1** brief development, e.g. New Right thinkers may worry this undermines social stability linked to a traditional family model
- **Answer: A New Right reaction is that extending marriage beyond heterosexual couples weakens the traditional special status of marriage, and they worry this could undermine social stability associated with the traditional family model.**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies one practical effect, e.g. civil partners gained inheritance rights similar to married couples
- **B1** development, e.g. this protected surviving partners from losing property or benefits on the death of a partner
- **B1** identifies a second practical effect, e.g. civil partners gained pension survivor benefits and next of kin recognition
- **B1** development, e.g. this improved financial security and formal recognition in healthcare and tax situations
- **Answer: Civil partners gained inheritance rights similar to married couples, protecting surviving partners from losing property or benefits, and they gained pension survivor benefits and next of kin recognition, improving financial security and formal recognition in healthcare and tax situations.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a genuine social effect, e.g. increased social acceptance and visibility of same-sex families
- **B1** brief development, e.g. legal recognition tends to make same-sex relationships more visible and accepted in public institutions
- **Answer: Legal recognition has been linked to increased social acceptance and visibility of same-sex families, as laws can make such families more visible and accepted in schools, workplaces and public institutions.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies one way, e.g. local services now explicitly include same-sex parents in guidance and support
- **B1** development, e.g. this shows legal change has prompted institutional policies to be updated for equality
- **B1** identifies a second way, e.g. services offering the same advice indicate practical equal treatment in areas like schooling and financial support
- **B1** development, e.g. this reduces barriers to access and signals that same-sex families should expect equal provision
- **Answer: The leaflet shows local services explicitly include same-sex parents in guidance and support, indicating policies were updated after legal change; and it shows services offer the same practical advice on schooling and financial support, indicating practical equal treatment and reduced barriers to access for same-sex families.**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies a reason, e.g. equal rights reduce discrimination and structural inequality for LGBT people
- **B1** development, e.g. this supports gender equality goals by challenging heteronormative assumptions about family roles
- **B1** identifies a second reason, e.g. legal recognition can improve material conditions for parents and children in same-sex families
- **B1** development, e.g. this includes access to parental leave, adoption rights and social security that benefit children
- **Answer: Feminists support equal marriage and adoption rights because they reduce discrimination and structural inequality for LGBT people, challenging heteronormative assumptions about family roles, and because legal recognition improves material conditions for parents and children through access to parental leave, adoption rights and social security.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies a limitation, e.g. laws can change faster than social attitudes, so legal change does not guarantee immediate social acceptance
- **B1** brief development, e.g. discrimination and prejudice can persist despite formal legal equality
- **Answer: One limitation is that legal change can outpace social attitudes, so formal equality does not guarantee immediate social acceptance; discrimination and prejudice can continue despite changes in the law.**

Question 12

- **B1** defines heteronormativity as the assumption that heterosexual relationships are the normal or preferred form of sexual relationship
- **B1** development, e.g. it includes norms about gender roles and family structure that privilege heterosexual couples
- **B1** explains relevance, e.g. civil partnerships and same-sex marriage challenge heteronormative assumptions by giving legal recognition to non-heterosexual relationships
- **B1** further development, e.g. changing laws can reduce institutional reinforcement of heteronormativity in areas like adoption and public services
- **Answer: Heteronormativity is the assumption that heterosexual relationships are the normal or preferred form of sexual relationship, including norms about gender roles that privilege heterosexual couples; civil partnerships and**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies a suitable piece of evidence, e.g. survey data showing a rise in public support for same-sex marriage over time
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or statistics showing increasing numbers of same-sex marriages or conversions of civil partnerships
- **Answer: One piece of evidence would be survey data showing rising public support for same-sex marriage over time, or statistics showing increasing numbers of same-sex marriages or conversions of civil partnerships.**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies one change, e.g. schools may update forms and language to be inclusive of same-sex parents
- **B1** development, e.g. this ensures same-sex parents are recognised on admission forms and in parent communications
- **B1** identifies a second change, e.g. workplaces may update parental leave and benefits policies to cover same-sex parents equally
- **B1** development, e.g. this provides equal access to time off, paternity or shared parental leave and benefits for children of same-sex couples
- **Answer: Schools may update forms and language to include same-sex parents so they are recognised on admission forms and in communications, and workplaces may update parental leave and benefits policies to cover same-sex parents equally, giving equal access to time off and family-related benefits.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies one perspective, e.g. functionalism
- **B1** explains functionalist interpretation, e.g. sees legal recognition as promoting social stability and family integration by recognising stable relationships
- **B1** identifies a second perspective, e.g. the New Right or liberalism
- **B1** explains that perspective's interpretation, e.g. liberals welcome equality and individual choice, while the New Right may criticise the extension of marriage from a traditionalist viewpoint
- **Answer: Functionalists would interpret legal recognition as promoting social stability and integrating diverse family forms by recognising committed relationships; liberals welcome the changes as advancing equality and individual choice; the New Right may criticise extension of marriage from a traditionalist viewpoint, arguing it weakens the special status of heterosexual marriage.**

Question 16

- **Level 1** (1-3): Simple statements about legal changes with little linkage to sociological perspectives or conclusions.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some developed points linking legal changes to increased recognition of same-sex families or equality, with limited use of sociological perspectives and limited weighing of alternative views.
- **Level 3** (7-9): Clear explanations using at least two sociological perspectives to show how legal changes increased recognition and equality for same-sex families, and consideration of limits such as persistent social attitudes or uneven implementation.
- **Level 4** (10-12): A well-balanced discussion drawing on several perspectives, for example liberals and functionalists highlighting legal recognition and social inclusion, feminists noting improved parental rights, and the New Right offering a critical reaction; evaluation of evidence about social attitudes, policy implementation and remaining inequalities, and a supported conclusion that weighs the evidence.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Liberal perspective: legal changes promote equality, remove discrimination and expand individual choice, supporting same-sex couples to form legal families.
 - Functionalist perspective: recognising stable relationships, including same-sex unions, can support social cohesion and the welfare of children by providing legal stability.
 - Feminist perspective: legal recognition and adoption rights improve material and parental rights for same-sex parents, reducing gendered inequalities and supporting child wellbeing.
 - New Right reaction: some argue extending marriage weakens the special status of traditional heterosexual marriage and may have negative consequences for social norms; this is a minority reaction in this topic and should be treated as one perspective among several.
 - Limits: legal change does not guarantee immediate social acceptance; prejudice and discrimination can persist and implementation can vary between local services and institutions.
 - Evidence: use of survey data on public attitudes, statistics on numbers of civil partnerships converted to marriage, adoption rates, and examples of policy changes in schools or workplaces to support arguments.
 - Conclusion: balanced judgement weighing rights and recognition gains against remaining social and practical limits, stating how far sociologists would agree overall.