1.2 Sociological Perspectives: Functionalism, Marxism, Feminism and Interactionism: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Where a question refers to Item B, use both the Item and your own knowledge of sociological perspectives in your answer.

1 Evaluate the view that society is best understood as based on shared values and cooperation (a consensus view), rather than conflict between social groups. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one perspective.

(Total for Question 1 is 12 marks)

2 Sociologists use the term 'agency' to describe an individual's own ability to shape their life. Define agency.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 State one criticism that is often made of the Marxist perspective.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 Define the functionalist perspective in sociology.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

5 Marxism offers a very different, conflict-based view of society.

(a) Define the Marxist perspective in sociology. **(2)**

(b) Karl Marx used the terms 'bourgeoisie' and 'proletariat'. Explain what these terms mean. **(2)**

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Marxists argue that ruling-class ideas are spread through social institutions. Explain how Marxists argue ruling-class ideas are spread through social institutions.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 1.2 Sociological Perspectives: Functionalism, Marxism, Feminism and Interactionism: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 4 A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH the consensus (functionalist) view AND at least one conflict view (Marxist and/or feminist), 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.	**10-12**
Level 3 A clear evaluation that explains both the consensus view and at least one conflict view, with some accurate reference to sociologists. Some analysis of strengths/weaknesses. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported.	**7-9**
Level 2 Some relevant explanation of consensus and/or conflict views, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between perspectives.	**4-6**
Level 1 One or two isolated, undeveloped points about society being based on either shared values or conflict, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.	**1-3**
Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Functionalist (consensus) case: Durkheim and Parsons argued society is held together by a value consensus, with institutions such as the family, education and religion performing positive functions and socialising individuals into shared norms.
- Functionalist evidence: institutions like the Elmfield youth club (Item B) can be seen as bringing people together and teaching shared values such as teamwork and respect for rules, supporting social order.
- Marxist (conflict) case: Marx argued society is divided between the bourgeoisie and proletariat, with institutions serving ruling-class interests; Althusser's concept of ideological state apparatuses explains how ruling-class ideology is spread through ideas rather than force.
- Marxist evidence: the unequal cost of taking part in the youth club (Item B) can be seen as evidence that access to institutions is shaped by class inequality, not shared benefit.
- Feminist (conflict) case: feminist sociologists such as Ann Oakley argue that institutions, including the family, can reproduce patriarchy and gender inequality, for example through the unequal division of domestic labour.
- Evaluation of the consensus view: critics argue functionalism understates real conflicts of interest between social classes and genders, and struggles to explain persistent inequality if institutions genuinely benefit everyone.
- Evaluation of the conflict view: critics argue Marxism and feminism can understate genuine cooperation and shared values in society, and may not fully explain why many people willingly support institutions such as the family, school or a local youth club.
- A balanced conclusion might note that some sociologists, such as Anthony Giddens, argue that individuals are not simply shaped by social structure but also have agency to influence it (structuration theory), suggesting elements of both cooperation and conflict can exist in the same institution at once.
- A convincing top-level answer weighs the explanatory strengths of each perspective against real examples (such as Item B) rather than simply describing each view in turn.

Question 2

an individual's own capacity to make choices and act, rather than simply being shaped by social structure (oe)	**B1**
development, e.g. Anthony Giddens argued structure and agency both matter and interact ('structuration theory')	**B1**

Answer: An individual's own capacity to make choices and act, rather than simply being shaped by social structure; Anthony Giddens argued structure and agency interact (structuration theory).

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Question 3

identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. Marxism focuses mainly on social class and can underestimate other forms of inequality, such as gender or ethnicity **B1**

brief development, e.g. or that it can underestimate the genuinely positive functions institutions perform, focusing mainly on conflict **B1**

Answer: Marxism can be criticised for focusing mainly on social class, underestimating other inequalities such as gender or ethnicity, and for underestimating the genuinely positive functions institutions can perform.

Question 4

a consensus perspective that sees society as made up of interconnected parts/institutions working together (oe: like the organs of a body) **B1**

development, e.g. each institution (family, education, religion) performs a positive function that helps maintain order and stability **B1**

Answer: A consensus perspective seeing society as made up of interconnected institutions, each performing a positive function that helps maintain social order, often compared to the organs of a body.

Question 5

(a) a conflict perspective that sees society as divided by inequality between social classes (oe) **B1**

(a) development, e.g. institutions mainly serve the interests of the wealthy/powerful rather than society as a whole **B1**

(a) Answer: A conflict perspective that sees society as divided between social classes, with institutions mainly serving the interests of the wealthy and powerful.

(b) the bourgeoisie is the class that owns the means of production (e.g. factories, land, capital) **B1**

(b) the proletariat is the working class, who sell their labour to the bourgeoisie in order to earn a wage **B1**

(b) Answer: The bourgeoisie owns the means of production (factories, land, capital); the proletariat is the working class, who must sell their labour to the bourgeoisie for a wage.

Question 6

identifies 'ideology' as ruling-class ideas that are presented as natural, normal or common sense, rather than as serving one group's interests **B1**

explains that this ideology is spread through social institutions, e.g. education, the media, religion and the family **B1**

credits the Marxist writer Louis Althusser's concept of 'ideological state apparatuses', institutions that spread ruling-class ideology through ideas and persuasion rather than force **B1**

development, e.g. because this ideology comes to feel like ordinary common sense, ordinary people may accept an unequal system without questioning it **B1**

Answer: Marxists argue ruling-class ideas (ideology) are spread through institutions like education, the media and religion, so inequality comes to seem natural. Louis Althusser called these institutions 'ideological state apparatuses', which maintain ruling-class power through ideas rather than force.

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