



GSOC.SA2 Sociological Perspectives: Functionalism, Marxism, Feminism and Interactionism

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

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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.

Item B: The Elmfield youth club

A hypothetical scenario written for this exercise, for students to apply sociological perspectives to.

In the town of Elmfield, a local youth club run by volunteers organises weekly sports sessions for teenagers. Many residents believe the club successfully brings together young people from different backgrounds, teaching them teamwork, discipline and respect for shared rules. Other residents point out that taking part costs money for kit and transport, and argue that the club mainly benefits young people whose families already have time and money to spare, while poorer families in Elmfield rarely take part.

1 Which sociologist is most closely associated with founding the functionalist perspective?

- ☐ A) Emile Durkheim
- ☐ B) Sigmund Freud
- ☐ C) Jean Piaget
- ☐ D) B.F. Skinner

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 Define the functionalist perspective in sociology.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 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 3 is 4 marks)

4 Feminist sociologists focus on inequality between men and women.

(a) Define the feminist perspective in sociology. (2)

(b) Sociologists identify different types of feminism. Name one type of feminism and briefly explain its main idea. (2)

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Interactionism is a different kind of perspective from functionalism, Marxism and feminism.

(a) Define the interactionist perspective in sociology. (2)

(b) Explain one way interactionism is different from functionalism and Marxism. (2)

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Explain two ways functionalists believe society works to maintain order and stability.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 Marxists argue that ruling-class ideas are spread through social institutions.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

8 Feminist sociologists have criticised the family as an institution that can reproduce gender inequality.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

9 Look again at Item B. Some residents believe the youth club successfully brings young people together and teaches them shared values.

Using Item B and your knowledge of the functionalist perspective, explain how a functionalist sociologist might view the Elmfield youth club.

(Total for Question 9 is 6 marks)

- 10** Look again at Item B. Other residents point out that taking part costs money, and that the club mainly benefits families who already have time and money to spare.
- Using Item B and your knowledge of a conflict perspective (Marxism or feminism), explain how a conflict sociologist might view the Elmfield youth club.

(Total for Question 10 is 6 marks)

- 11** Functionalists argue society is based on shared values and cooperation. Marxists and feminists argue society is better understood in terms of conflict between social groups.
- 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 11 is 12 marks)

- 12** Sociologists sometimes describe the wider patterns that shape people's lives as 'social structure'.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

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

(Total for Question 13 is 2 marks)

14 State one criticism that is often made of the functionalist perspective.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

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

(Total for Question 15 is 2 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.SA2 Sociological Perspectives: Functionalism, Marxism, Feminism and Interactionism

Question 1

- **B1** A (Emile Durkheim)
- **Answer: A**

Question 2

- **B1** 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
- **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 3

- (a) **B1** a conflict perspective that sees society as divided by inequality between social classes (oe)
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. institutions mainly serve the interests of the wealthy/powerful rather than society as a whole
- (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) **B1** the bourgeoisie is the class that owns the means of production (e.g. factories, land, capital)
- (b) **B1** the proletariat is the working class, who sell their labour to the bourgeoisie in order to earn a wage
- (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 4

- (a) **B1** a perspective focused on gender inequality between men and women (oe)
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. feminists argue society is patriarchal, meaning it is structured to benefit men more than women
- (a) **Answer: A perspective focused on inequality between men and women, arguing that society is patriarchal, meaning it is structured to benefit men more than women.**
- (b) **B1** names a recognised type, e.g. liberal feminism, radical feminism or Marxist feminism
- (b) **B1** a broadly accurate explanation of its main idea, e.g. liberal feminism focuses on achieving equality gradually through changes to laws and policy; radical feminism sees the family/patriarchy itself as the root of women's oppression; Marxist feminism sees women's oppression as linked to capitalism, e.g. through unpaid domestic labour that benefits employers
- (b) **Answer: Liberal feminism: the idea that gender equality can be achieved gradually through reforming laws and policies, rather than by radically changing society's structure.**

Question 5

- (a) **B1** a perspective focused on small-scale, face-to-face interaction between individuals (oe)
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. it studies how people interpret situations and create meanings through everyday interaction, rather than starting from the structure of society as a whole
- (a) **Answer: A perspective focused on small-scale, face-to-face interaction, studying how individuals interpret situations and create shared meanings, rather than starting from the structure of society as a whole.**
- (b) **B1** identifies the key difference: functionalism and Marxism are macro (large-scale, whole-society) perspectives, while interactionism is micro (small-scale, individual interaction)
- (b) **B1** development, e.g. functionalism and Marxism try to explain how society as a whole is structured and held together, while interactionism focuses on how individuals experience and give meaning to everyday situations
- (b) **Answer: Functionalism and Marxism are macro perspectives explaining society as a whole; interactionism is a micro perspective focused on how individuals experience and interpret everyday situations.**

Question 6

- **B1** one way, e.g. institutions are compared to the organs of a body, each performing a function needed to keep the whole 'body' (society) healthy
- **B1** development of that way, e.g. if one institution fails to perform its function properly, this can cause problems (dysfunction) elsewhere in society
- **B1** a second way, e.g. society is held together by value consensus, a broad agreement on shared norms and values
- **B1** development of that way, e.g. institutions such as education and the family pass on this shared value consensus to each new generation through socialisation
- **Answer: Functionalists compare society's institutions to the organs of a body, each performing a function that keeps the whole system healthy; they also argue society is held together by a value consensus, passed on to each generation through socialisation.**

Question 7

- **B1** 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
- **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.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies that feminists such as Ann Oakley have criticised the unequal division of domestic labour within families
- **B1** explains that even when women work outside the home, research has found that they continue to carry out most housework and childcare
- **B1** development, e.g. Oakley's 1974 study of housework found claims of a fully 'symmetrical family' (shared roles between men and women) were exaggerated
- **B1** development/consequence, e.g. this means the family can reinforce, rather than challenge, wider gender inequality in society
- **Answer: Feminists such as Ann Oakley found that even when women work outside the home, they continue to do most housework and childcare; her 1974 study found claims of an equal 'symmetrical family' were exaggerated, so the family can reinforce wider gender inequality.**

Question 9

- **B1** correctly applies functionalist ideas to Item B, e.g. the club is a positive institution performing a useful function for society
- **B1** links this to value consensus, e.g. the club teaches teamwork, discipline and respect for shared rules, passing on shared values to teenagers
- **B1** links to social integration, e.g. bringing together young people from different backgrounds helps create social solidarity/cohesion
- **B1** further development, e.g. a functionalist would see this as evidence that institutions in Elmfield are working well to maintain order and prepare young people for adult roles
- **B1** further development, e.g. a functionalist might treat the club, alongside the family and school, as one of several institutions socialising young people into shared norms
- **B1** clear, accurate use of functionalist terminology throughout (e.g. function, integration, value consensus)
- **Answer: A functionalist would see the club as a positive institution that teaches shared values (teamwork, discipline, respect for rules) and integrates young people from different backgrounds, contributing to social order and cohesion in Elmfield.**

Question 10

- **B1** correctly applies a conflict perspective to Item B, e.g. the club is not equally available to everyone in Elmfield
- **B1** links this to inequality of resources, e.g. poorer families cannot afford the kit/transport, so they are excluded from taking part
- **B1** development using Marxist ideas, e.g. this reflects wider class inequality, where those with more money and free time can access opportunities that others cannot
- **B1** OR development using feminist ideas, e.g. if parents (often mothers) with paid work and domestic responsibilities have less free time to support their children's participation, this reflects wider gender inequality
- **B1** further development, e.g. a conflict sociologist would argue the club's apparent benefits are not shared equally, unlike the functionalist claim that it benefits the whole community
- **B1** clear, accurate use of conflict-perspective terminology throughout (e.g. inequality, class, patriarchy)
- **Answer: A conflict sociologist would point out that the club is not equally available: poorer families cannot afford kit or transport, so class inequality (or, if resources depend on parents' free time, gender inequality) shapes who really benefits, unlike the shared benefit a functionalist would claim.**

Question 11

- **Level 4** (10-12): 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.
- **Level 3** (7-9): 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.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant explanation of consensus and/or conflict views, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between perspectives.
- **Level 1** (1-3): 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.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **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 12

- **B1** the organised pattern of social institutions and relationships (e.g. class, family, education) that shapes people's lives (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. functionalist and Marxist perspectives both focus mainly on the effect of social structure on individuals
- **Answer: The organised pattern of institutions and relationships (e.g. class, family, education) that shapes people's lives; functionalism and Marxism both focus mainly on this.**

Question 13

- **B1** 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')
- **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).**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. functionalism understates conflict and inequality between social groups
- **B1** brief development, e.g. it can assume institutions benefit everyone equally, when in reality some groups may benefit more than others
- **Answer: Functionalism can be criticised for understating conflict and inequality, assuming institutions benefit everyone equally when in reality some groups may benefit more than others.**

Question 15

- **B1** 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
- **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.**