6.1 Theories of Social Stratification: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Show your understanding by using sociological vocabulary and, where asked, your own examples.

1 Evaluate the view that social stratification mainly benefits society as a whole, rather than mainly benefiting a small, powerful minority. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one perspective.

(Total for Question 1 is 12 marks)

2 State one similarity between the functionalist and Marxist views of stratification.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 Explain why sociologists distinguish between 'stratification' and simple, random inequality.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 Explain Davis and Moore's functionalist explanation of social stratification.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Karl Marx developed a theory of social class based on ownership of the means of production.

(a) Explain what Marx meant by 'the relations of production'. **(2)**

(b) Explain what Marx meant by the exploitation of the proletariat. **(2)**

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 6.1 Theories of Social Stratification: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 4 A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH the functionalist case for stratification benefiting society AND the Marxist/critical case for it mainly benefiting a minority, supported by accurate reference to named sociologists. Strengths and weaknesses of each view are analysed, Weber's alternative is used to add nuance, 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 sides of the debate, 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 one or both sides of the debate, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between views.	**4-6**
Level 1 One or two isolated, undeveloped points about stratification, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.	**1-3**
Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Functionalist case: Davis and Moore (1945) argued stratification is universal and beneficial because unequal rewards motivate the most talented people to fill the most functionally important positions, helping society function efficiently.
- Marxist case: Marx argued stratification under capitalism mainly benefits a ruling minority, the bourgeoisie, who own the means of production and exploit the labour of the proletariat for profit (surplus value); he believed this created fundamental class conflict.
- Weberian nuance: Weber argued stratification is multidimensional (class, status and party), so power and advantage are not held by a single unified ruling class in quite the simple way Marx suggested; some groups may hold high status or political power without great economic wealth.
- Evaluation of the functionalist case: Tumin (1953) criticised Davis and Moore for not clearly explaining how 'functional importance' is measured, and argued that inherited privilege and power, not pure merit, often explain who gets the top rewards.
- Evaluation of the Marxist case: critics argue the two-class model is too simple for modern societies with a large middle class, and that the revolution Marx predicted has not occurred in most advanced capitalist countries.
- A balanced conclusion could argue that all three perspectives capture something real: society may need some differentiation of roles and rewards, while also showing patterns of exploitation and multidimensional inequality that go beyond what pure functional necessity would predict.

Question 2

identifies a genuine similarity, e.g. both see stratification as a structured, patterned feature of society rather than something random or accidental	**B1**
brief development, e.g. though they disagree about whether this structure benefits society as a whole (functionalism) or mainly a ruling minority (Marxism)	**B1**

Answer: Both see stratification as a structured, patterned feature of society, though they disagree over whether it benefits society as a whole (functionalism) or mainly a ruling minority (Marxism).

Question 3

identifies that stratification refers to inequality that is structured and patterned, forming layers that tend to persist over time and across generations	**B1**
development, e.g. this is different from random inequality, which would not follow a consistent pattern linked to a person's social position	**B1**

Answer: Stratification refers to structured, patterned inequality that persists over time and across generations, unlike random inequality, which would not follow a consistent pattern linked to social position.

Question 4

identifies that Davis and Moore argued stratification is universal because every society must fill a range of positions of differing functional importance	**B1**
development, e.g. some positions, such as those requiring long training or carrying great responsibility, are more functionally important to a society's survival than others	**B1**
identifies that society attaches unequal rewards, such as pay and prestige, to these positions to motivate the most talented people to undergo the training needed to fill them	**B1**
development, e.g. Davis and Moore presented this as necessary and beneficial for society as a whole, not as simply benefiting a ruling minority	**B1**

Answer: Davis and Moore argued stratification is universal because society must fill positions of differing functional importance; unequal rewards motivate the most talented people to train for the most functionally important roles, which they saw as beneficial for society as a whole.

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Question 5

(a) identifies that the relations of production refers to the social relationships between those who own the means of production, such as factories, land and capital, and those who do not (oe) **B1**

(a) development, e.g. Marx argued this ownership divide is the basis of social class under capitalism, between the bourgeoisie (owners) and the proletariat (workers) **B1**

(a) Answer: The relations of production are the social relationships between those who own the means of production and those who do not; Marx argued this ownership divide is the basis of social class under capitalism, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

(b) identifies that Marx argued workers produce more value through their labour than they are paid in wages, which he called surplus value (oe) **B1**

(b) development, e.g. this surplus value is kept as profit by the bourgeoisie, which Marx saw as a systematic form of economic exploitation of the proletariat **B1**

(b) Answer: Marx argued workers produce more value through their labour than they are paid in wages (surplus value), which is kept as profit by the bourgeoisie; he saw this as a systematic form of economic exploitation.

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