



GSOC.ST1 Theories of Social Stratification

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

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

- 1** Which pair of sociologists argued that social stratification exists in all societies because it helps ensure the most functionally important positions are filled by the most talented people?
- ☐ A) Davis and Moore
 - ☐ B) Marx and Engels
 - ☐ C) Weber and Tumin
 - ☐ D) Durkheim and Parsons

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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- 2** Define the term 'social stratification'.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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- 3** Explain Davis and Moore's functionalist explanation of social stratification.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 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 4 is 4 marks)

5 Explain Weber's three-dimensional model of social stratification.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Explain one way Weber's view of stratification differs from Marx's view.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 State one criticism that has been made of Davis and Moore's functionalist theory of stratification.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 State one criticism that has been made of Marx's theory of class.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

9 State one criticism that has been made of Weber's three-dimensional model of stratification.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

10 Functionalist, Marxist and Weberian sociologists offer different explanations of why stratification exists.

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 10 is 12 marks)

11 For each statement below, state whether it best reflects a functionalist, Marxist or Weberian view of stratification.

(a) Unequal rewards motivate the most talented people to fill the most important positions. (1)

(b) Class is based on ownership of the means of production, and workers are exploited for profit. (1)

(c) Stratification has three separate dimensions: class, status and party. (1)

(Total for Question 11 is 3 marks)

12 Explain what Marxists mean by 'false consciousness'.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

13 Give one reason Weber gave for believing that political power ('party') is not always determined by a person's economic class position.

(Total for Question 13 is 2 marks)

14 State one strength of the Marxist perspective for understanding social stratification.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

- 15** Explain two reasons some sociologists find Weber's approach more useful than either functionalism or Marxism for understanding stratification in societies today.

(Total for Question 15 is 4 marks)

- 16** State one similarity between the functionalist and Marxist views of stratification.

(Total for Question 16 is 2 marks)

- 17** Explain why sociologists distinguish between 'stratification' and simple, random inequality.

(Total for Question 17 is 2 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.ST1 Theories of Social Stratification

Question 1

- **B1** A (Davis and Moore)
- **Answer: A**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies that social stratification refers to the way society is structured into layers or strata based on unequal access to wealth, power or status (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. these layers form a hierarchy that tends to persist across generations rather than being random
- **Answer: Social stratification is the way society is structured into layers based on unequal access to wealth, power or status, forming a hierarchy that tends to persist across generations rather than being random.**

Question 3

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

Question 4

- (a) **B1** 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)
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. Marx argued this ownership divide is the basis of social class under capitalism, between the bourgeoisie (owners) and the proletariat (workers)
- (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) **B1** identifies that Marx argued workers produce more value through their labour than they are paid in wages, which he called surplus value (oe)
- (b) **B1** 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
- (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.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies class as based on economic/market situation, e.g. skills, property and income
- **B1** identifies status as based on social honour or prestige, which may not always match a person's economic class
- **B1** identifies party as based on membership of organised groups seeking political power or influence
- **B1** development linking the three, e.g. Weber argued these dimensions do not always line up, so stratification is more complex than a single economic hierarchy
- **Answer: Weber argued stratification has three separate dimensions: class (economic/market position), status (social prestige) and party (political power/organisation), which do not always line up with one another.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies that Marx saw stratification as based mainly on one dimension, economic class/ownership of the means of production, while Weber argued it has three separate dimensions: class, status and party
- **B1** development, e.g. this means, for Weber, someone could have high status or political power without owning much economic capital, which Marx's model does not easily explain
- **B1** identifies a second difference, e.g. Marx believed class conflict would inevitably lead to revolution and the overthrow of capitalism, while Weber did not see historical change as so predictable or inevitable
- **B1** development, e.g. Weber thought status and party divisions could cut across class lines, potentially weakening the class-based unity Marx's theory relies on
- **Answer: Weber saw stratification as multidimensional (class, status, party), unlike Marx's mainly economic model, and Weber did not believe class conflict made revolution inevitable in the way Marx predicted.**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies a genuine criticism, e.g. Melvin Tumin (1953) argued it is very difficult to objectively measure how 'functionally important' a position really is
- **B1** brief development, e.g. Tumin argued unequal rewards may instead reflect the power of already-privileged groups to keep the best-paid positions for themselves, rather than pure functional necessity
- **Answer: Melvin Tumin (1953) argued it is very difficult to objectively measure how 'functionally important' a position really is, and that unequal rewards may reflect the power of already-privileged groups rather than pure functional necessity.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a genuine criticism, e.g. critics argue Marx's two-class model oversimplifies modern societies, which contain a large and varied middle class of professional and managerial workers
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or that the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism Marx predicted has not happened in most advanced capitalist societies
- **Answer: Critics argue Marx's two-class model oversimplifies modern societies, which contain a large middle class, and that the revolution he predicted has not happened in most advanced capitalist societies.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies a genuine criticism, e.g. critics argue that treating class, status and party as three separate dimensions can make stratification look more complicated than it needs to be
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or that Weber's model can underplay how much economic class still shapes a person's status and political power in practice
- **Answer: Critics argue treating class, status and party as three separate dimensions can make stratification look more complicated than it needs to be, and that the model can underplay how much economic class still shapes status and power.**

Question 10

- **Level 4** (10-12): 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.
- **Level 3** (7-9): 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.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant explanation of one or both sides of the debate, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between views.
- **Level 1** (1-3): One or two isolated, undeveloped points about stratification, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **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 11

- (a) **B1 functionalist**
- **(a) Answer: Functionalist**
- (b) **B1 marxist**
- **(b) Answer: Marxist**
- (c) **B1 weberian**
- **(c) Answer: Weberian**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies that false consciousness refers to workers failing to recognise their own exploitation or true class interests, e.g. seeing inequality as natural or fair rather than as a result of the capitalist system
- **B1** development, e.g. Marxists argue this can be encouraged by institutions such as the media, religion or education, which can present the existing social order as normal
- **Answer: False consciousness refers to workers failing to recognise their own exploitation or true class interests, which Marxists argue can be encouraged by institutions such as the media, religion or education.**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies a genuine reason, e.g. Weber argued people can gain political power through organisation and leadership within a party or pressure group, rather than only through wealth
- **B1** development, e.g. this means someone from a less wealthy background could still hold significant political influence, which a purely economic model of class would not predict
- **Answer: Weber argued people can gain political power through organisation and leadership within a party or pressure group, rather than only through wealth, so someone less wealthy could still hold significant political influence.**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies a genuine strength, e.g. it draws attention to structural economic inequality and exploitation that other perspectives, such as functionalism, can present too positively
- **B1** brief development, e.g. it has been influential in explaining conflict and social change linked to unequal ownership of wealth and resources
- **Answer: The Marxist perspective draws attention to structural economic inequality and exploitation that other perspectives can present too positively, and has been influential in explaining conflict and social change.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies one reason, e.g. Weber's model can explain divisions based on status or lifestyle, such as differences in prestige between occupations of similar income, that a purely economic model cannot
- **B1** development
- **B1** identifies a second, different reason, e.g. Weber's model can explain why some politically powerful people, such as senior civil servants or politicians, do not necessarily own large amounts of capital, which a strictly Marxist model struggles to explain
- **B1** development
- **Answer: Weber's model can explain status/lifestyle divisions and prestige differences a purely economic model cannot, and can explain why some politically powerful people do not necessarily own large amounts of capital, unlike a strictly Marxist model.**

Question 16

- **B1** 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)
- **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 17

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