

Theoretical perspective in prostitution sociology essay

[Sociology](#)



**ASSIGN
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3 Lecturer's Name: Ms QURAT UL AIN Due Date: FRIDAY, 22nd MARCH, 2013

Students' Details

Name: EDMUND KUA EIK MUN Matric No.: FSC00149 Assignment Overall
Marks : /100

Assignment's Weighted Marks (5%):

1. Describe and explain the three schools of thought.

Sociology has three schools of thought, which are structure-functional, social conflict and symbolic interaction.

Structure Functional Paradigm

Structure-functional paradigm also known as functionalism is a theory that sees society as a complex system or organisation and everything in society have a special function or contributes to maintain balance of the society (Macionis, 2012). Structural Functionalism is macro level analysis which focus on complex societies, large scale social structures, and social systems. It is origins in the works of Emile Durkheim. According to Herbert Spencer, society is like the structure of the human body (Macionis, 2012). Each part is like organs, bones, muscles in the body. The parts of the body are individually important, but they dependent on one another. Functionalism emphasizes on social stability. From this perspective, disorder in the system, leads to change because other parts must adjust to achieve stability. When one part of the system is not working or is dysfunctional, it affects all other parts and creates social problems, which leads to social change. In year
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1957, American functionalist sociologists Robert K. Merton divide functions into two types, which are manifest functions and latent functions. Manifest functions are intentional and obvious consequences whereas latent functions are unintentional and not obvious consequences. He uses the term "functions" to refer to the positive consequences of people's action. Functions help keep society or social system in equilibrium. In contrast, dysfunctions are consequences that harm society. They destabilize a system's equilibrium.

Social Conflict Paradigm

Social conflict is a theory that sees society as an arena of inequality which leads to conflict and social change (Macionis, 2012). Social conflict is a macro level analysis examines whole societies, large scale social structures, and social systems. This perspective is derived from the works of Karl Marx, who see society as segments that compete for social and economic resources. Based on conflict theory, society is ruled and control by the power elite and upper class. This elite and upper class not only want to maintain their dominance in society, they even like to increase upon it. Thus, they influence policy makers to form regulations and laws that legitimize its occupants in all other costs, resources and wealth.

Symbolic Interaction Paradigm

The symbolic interaction perspective, also called symbolic interactionism, is a theory that sees society as the results of interactions between individuals (Macionis, 2012). Symbolic Interaction is a micro level analysis, which focus on small and simple groups or community rather than large-scale social

structures. According to symbolic interaction theory, all social interaction has a symbolic meaning. Anything that said by any individuals, behaviours of any individual, or what any individual wears has an underlying symbolic meaning to it. Symbolic meanings are given importance because it is believe that people behave based on what they believe and not just on what is objectively true. Thus, society is thought to be socially constructed through human interpretation. People interpret one another's behaviour and it is these interpretations that form the social bond.

2. Case study to explain/ elaborate each of the perspective associated with each school of thoughts.

The topic that I use as my case study topic is prostitution. Prostitution is engaging in the sexual activity with another person in return for payment, such as money. Based on functionalism perspective, prostitution has still existed from few centuries ago until now because it does somehow serve the society. If an act is not serving the society, it wouldn't continue to exist. According to Erich Goode, social customs and institutions that persist over time tend to be those that are good for society because they serve one or more important functions (Goode, 2008). For prostitution, it provides sexually suppressed men with a sex life or an alternate sex life outside of their marriage. Moreover, it also allows women to earn money independently. They also can become entrepreneurs without any sort of start-up costs. Besides, prostitute does have manifest function, prostitute is a job because a prostitute earns for a living through the exchange and they can earn quite a number of money in a short period. Its latent function is to provide sexual outlet for those who are not competitive in the marriage

market, such as physically or mentally handicapped. Besides, existence of prostitution can reduce the incidence of rape and sexual harassment. The evaluation of the dysfunction of prostitution is transmission of sexual transmission diseases such as AIDS. For instance, in countries such as Vietnam, prostitution is illegal. This is because prostitution are recognised generally as a risk factor in the transmission of HIV infection and it will particularly affects women and children. Now, let's look at social conflict perspective. From social conflict perspective, people's race, ethnicity, gender, age, and social class are all linked to the uneven distribution of money. That is the reason why the majority of prostitutes are young, female, and poor. For example, large amount of low class citizens in country such as Vietnam, Thailand and Philippine are forced to be prostitutes. They do not know what to do, since they don't have any education. Thus, the only way that they can earn money without education is prostitution. Furthermore, pimps and madams also exist because of gender inequality in the sex industry. The pimps and madams oppress prostitute by take possession over them and exploit the use of their bodies for sexual favours. Thus, when these women earn their money, their pimps or madams will take a large portion of their earnings. This will cause the economic inequality gap to be widened. Hence, they need to perform sex continuously in order to live because of the social inequality. Now, let's look at symbolic interaction perspective. In Malaysia, prostitution is categorized into three forms which are escort, street and brothel prostitution. According to newspaper (<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/11/9/parliament/12294866&sec=parliament>), in Malaysia, about 47, 000 foreign prostitutes are arrested from

2008 to 2012 for soliciting sex. From symbolic interaction perspective, prostitution in Malaysia symbolizes sexual revolution occurs drastically which involve massive number of foreign prostitutes. Besides, sexual attitudes have become very lenient for woman and they are able benefit from men's sexual needs and involve in sexual activity with multiple partners in order to earn money.