

Sociology final exam critical thinking

Countries, United States



Section 1: Theoretical Perspectives

1) This is something a structural functionalist would say. In structural functionalism, a convoluted system is created that establishes patterns of behavior and attitudes that contribute to its continued existence. In this example, the relationship between individuals and consumption is discussed, as people consuming at the level they are entirely determines just how the system is upheld. If people want to change that system, they have to change their conceptual role in the structure, and find a way to change the structure to keep it stable. If people want to consume fewer products, they have to find a way to make sure that the system of production changes to suit that lowering of consumption.

2) This is something a conflict theorist would say. A conflict theorist is preoccupied with the social and economic inequalities that occur within a society. In this example, the government is said to be in the pocket of corporate interests, which unfairly game the system in their favor. This then creates an inequality in favor of corporate interests and against the environment (and environmentalists by extension). This broad critique of the sociopolitical system is a large part of the ethos behind conflict theory - the conflict is between the poor and the rich, as the rich keep the government from helping the poor, who are more interested in the environment and conservation than can be said of corporations.

3) This is something a symbolic interactionist would say. Symbolic interactionism has much to do with the thinking and acting nature of humanity, and their ability to define their situations. In this example, someone is expressing their dissatisfaction with the treatment of the

environment being exhibited by the government. They also imply that other people must be implicitly fine with it since they have done nothing to change it. Because this abuse of the environment is happening in the present, the cause is inferred that others consent to it. Symbolic interactionists define situations in this way, as they ascribe meaning to things beyond their control based on how they interact with society.

4) This is something a structural functionalist would say. Structural functionalism concerns itself greatly with traditions and norms, as well as institutions. One of these traditions, as expressed in the example, is nepotism - the desire to hire from within and follow patterns of expected behavior. This practice is implied to be a custom within this corporate culture, expressed at a macro-level in an individual company rather than society as a whole. The presence of in-groups that constantly reward and support each other is acknowledgement of a structure that serves a function; in order to keep the system whole and stable, this tradition is thought to continue. Structural functionalism discusses this concept in detail.

5) This is something a conflict theorist would say. In conflict theory, one of the ways in which the State manages to maintain control and entrench stratification is by distracting the poor so that they cannot form a consensus in ideology. Through corporate exploitation, human potential can be squandered through the consumption of goods spoonfed by corporations and functional necessity. In this example, Facebook, baseball news and Apple products are examples of these nullifying and pacifying systems put in place by the State in order to keep people from seeing the truth and forming

consensus. This emphasizes the conflict between individual and organization, between the rich and the poor, the corporations and the common man, etc.

Section 2: Theories of Stratification and Race

- 6) Albert W. Black, Jr.
- 7) Kingsley David & Wilbert Moore
- 8) Max Weber
- 9) William Julius Wilson
- 10) Karl Marx
- 11) Albert W. Black, Jr.
- 12) Kingsley David & Wilbert Moore
- 13) Max Weber
- 14) William Julius Wilson
- 15) Kingsley David & Wilbert Moore

Section 3: Concepts of Gender and Sexuality

16) Jennifer, despite having worked just as hard and as long as Steven in the same department at the law firm (if not more so), is dumbfounded when she finds out that Steven has received the promotion she has long been working for, despite several conversations with the partners that she wanted that job. This is an example of the glass ceiling, wherein women are stopped by an invisible but intangible barrier that prevents them from achieving success in the corporate world, regardless of how well they have achieved. Jennifer did not get the job over Steven, even though she was more qualified for it, because she was a woman.

17) Brandon, a male nurse, enters a nursing program with five other female

nurses. He works just about as hard as the rest of these nurses, but he does not necessarily show any overt qualities for leadership or being particularly good at administration. He also does not aggressively seek these positions out. Nonetheless, he is promoted to a management and administration in nursing position over his hard-working female colleagues who have expressed interest. This is an example of the glass escalator, wherein males in female-dominated professions quickly rise to the top because of social expectations of them taking the chief roles. Men get preferential treatment in these professions, and are given a greater chance to exert their influence.

18) Dolores votes against an amendment allowing for the possibility of gay marriage. When asked why, she simply states that " Marriage is supposed to be between a man and a woman," and " there's no reason for them to get married, they're not going to have kids." Dolores believes that allowing gays to marry or have equal rights would lead to social chaos, and believes in traditional family values. Dolores is exhibiting heterosexism - a noted prejudice against homosexuality in favor of heterosexuality. She believes that people are supposed to be heterosexual, and equal treatment of gays and lesbians (and other LGBT individuals) to actually be " special" treatment that they do not deserve.

19) Alaina is a strong-willed young woman who is in full support of abortion as a means to allow women to choose what to do with their bodies. She completely believes in and recognizes the glass ceiling at her workplace and calls individuals out on it. She participates in rallies and political activism to fight for equal pay and rights for women, and to protest anti-abortion legislation. Alaina is an example of a liberal feminist - this is a type of

feminist theory that is very individualistic in nature. In essence, women should be able to have the same choices and opportunities as men, as they are just as capable as men.

20) Francis, a young white woman, is speaking with her friend Rufaro, a Nigerian transfer student and refugee. Francis is complaining about her boss making sexually suggestive remarks and sexist jokes in the workplace, which makes her uncomfortable. Meanwhile, Rufaro is talking about several women from her village back in Nigeria, who had to undergo female genital cutting. This is an example of multicultural feminism - this is the concept of addressing different kinds of issues regarding equality and treatment that happen to women all throughout the world. While modernized nations still deal with glass ceiling politics and abortion rights legislation, there are other countries with women that have distinct and disparate problems.

Section 4: Education

21) Hidden curriculum

22) Credentialing

23) Tracking

24) Latent functions of education

25) Compulsory education

26) Compulsory education

27) Tracking

28) Credentialing

29) Latent functions of education

30) Hidden curriculum

Section 5: Racial Inequality

Deindustrialization has led to rampant social issues within the inner city communities of America. The changing economy and deindustrialization led to higher wages, more time spent working for lower pay, and decreased leisure time; this affected the total income and acted as a " principal barrier to the economic advancement for people of color" (Collins and Veskel, p. 134). Tony Washington, an NFL hopeful, denoted his early youth in New Orleans as a constant struggle to survive. Social mores collapsed along with deindustrialization - with the collapse of industry in the inner city came little economic growth and few prospects for inner-city black youth. This led to a lowering of social mores, as inner-city blacks turned to crime and violence in order to interact with each other. " I was never taught how to be good," says Washington, whose childhood involved incest, crime, pornography, and other things that were considered too adult for the young man (Glock).

The segregation of black and white Americans continues the disadvantage of black Americans for many reasons. First, the amount of time spent placing black Americans at such an overt disadvantage has diminished their ability to " catch up" with the progress of white Americans. Furthermore, the distance placed between each race leaves white Americans to have many different myths about black Americans and their inability to gain advantage. It also places minorities at a disadvantage because of the lack of informal contacts they can access and expose themselves to " Racial differences in access to the informal networks that are often so important in finding job also contribute to the racial/ethnic disparity in employment." (Barkan, p. 874 ebook version). Unaware of their own privilege, white Americans spread

myths that " they don't try," or that affirmative action uplifts black Americans at the expense of whites who are more qualified (Pincus & Reskin, " Affirmative Action Myths").

As of now, there exist several patterns of inequality that prevent black Americans from overcoming white privilege in America. First and foremost, there exists a trend in which whites are overcoming overt racism, but still have their prejudices come through in less apparent ways. For example, " although most of the American public reject racist beliefs, unlike social scientists they do not emphasize environmental explanations of racial differences" (Schuman, p. 108). In essence, there appears to be a trend that states, since racism has " been solved," the lingering socioeconomic problems that still occur within African-American communities are from a lack of hard work and determination on their part (p. 108). The need for affirmative action policies stems from the need to help black Americans overcome the inherent inequalities when competing with white Americans for jobs, as they often have a smaller chance of being given employment. " They had white, African American and Latino " testers," all of them " well-spoken, clean-cut young men" apply in person to low-level service jobs requiring no more than a high school education; all the testers had similar qualifications" (Barkan, p. 874 ebook version).

Section 6: Education

One of the most prevalent social movements in recent years has been the tacit understanding that every American, if they want to succeed, must go to college. " Colleges and universities are utilitarian organizations not only for

the people who work at them but also for their students, who certainly see education and a diploma as important tangible benefits they can gain from higher education." (Barkan, p. 294 ebook version) This success is measured in two ways: one, students can expect to have a better chance at getting a job than if they did not have a degree. Secondly, college is expected to educate students to become more knowledgeable and socially progressive individuals. There is a strong correlation between progressive beliefs like feminism and one's education level: "The lower the education, the lower the support for feminist beliefs." (Barkan p. 664 ebook version). However, there are distinct inequalities that can prevent people from having the same educational opportunities. Income is a major factor for many; there are some highly-qualified students who simply do not have the money to afford attending an Ivy League school. Even if they do, they may not have the informal connections to actually make it in, or cannot pull proper strings (Merrow, 2005).

Students often have to make hard choices that are for their own good, but may sacrifice the advantage that higher education is supposed to provide. First, the informal contacts and pull that one gets through social interaction with other high-profile students and alumni may not occur if you do not attend an Ivy League or similarly-regarded school; however, it may be more economically feasible for you to attend a more affordable school or get a degree that works around your specific timetable and desires (Merrow, 2005). Teachers may also choose to teach at certain universities, due to the fact that location, pay and convenience can factor into these decisions rather than clout or prestige. However, it may limit their capability to impart

knowledge and business/scientific acumen upon high-profile students and further the goal of educating and enlightening a greater number of students. Scientists and researchers may also choose to teach at certain schools in order to have the best research resources available, but may not work hard at their classes (Merrow, 2005). The same is true of administrators; they have to balance the need for more students and more tuition money with what resources they have available, and that often leads to sacrificing the attention that students need. Nannyism often occurs in higher education, where lower-performing students are kept on in order to maintain that income through tuition (Sacks, p. 165). These rational decisions, often borne of practicality or laziness, lead to diminished education and lower economic prospects for college graduates.