**Unit 7: P1: Key Sociological Perspectives**

Use the following Summary of key sociological concepts and perspectives to complete P1.

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| **Sociological Concept** | **Explanation** |
| Social Structures | These are the major building blocks in society and include the family, education, religion, political and justice system, employment and health and social care provision. Sociologists study these and how they affect human interactions for example how the family influences our behaviour.  |
| Social Diversity | Diversity means difference and from a sociological perspective it refers to age, gender, disability, class, sexuality, ethnicity and religious background.  |
| Socialisation | The process of learning the skills and attitudes which enable individuals to live easily with other members of the community. It is the process through which people learn the **norms** and **values** of society. Primary socialisation occurs in the family during a child’s early years. Children learn social attitudes, values and acceptable ways of behaving from observing and being informally educated by, parents/guardians, siblings and other relatives. Secondary socialisation occurs outside of the family. Friends and peers, school/college, work colleagues, the media, religious leaders and influential people such as teachers and employers are all agents of secondary socialisation. |

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| **Sociological Perspectives** | **Key ideas** |
| Functionalism | * Main sociologist - Durkheim
* All social structures in society have a purpose, they work together using methods of social control to deal with deviant behaviour, so society functions smoothly. For example, criminals are subjected to the justice system so they face consequences of their behaviour.
* Emphasis on the power of society over the individual. For example, the education system forces children to go to school and learn a set curriculum.
* Belief that the individual is largely controlled by society.
* Thinks that society is in us, moulding our thoughts and directing our actions. For example, we believe it is the ‘norm’ to get married and have children.
* Argues that we are socialised in terms of the culture of society. For example, ideas of beauty and happiness and what is considered ‘normal’ behaviour.
* Our behaviour is shaped by the social structures.
* We are kept in line by mechanisms of social control,
* We learn roles, norms and values and act accordingly.
* Without society working like this it would collapse into chaos where no one would be able to agree on how people should conduct themselves.
* Having shared values enables us to co-operate with each other and this provides unity.
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| Marxism | * Main sociologists – Karl Marx.
* Society is in a state of CONFLICT between the rich and the poor.
* Society uses a system called CAPITALISM to keep the rich - rich and the poor – poor.
* CAPITALISM is an economic system where a small minority of society owns the big business which make a lot of money.
* This minority is called the RULING CLASS – they employ people to work for them to produce goods that they sell.
* Marx argued that this arrangement EXPLOITED the SUBJECT CLASS. This is because poorer people (the SUBJECT CLASS) are being employed by the rich people or the government (RULING CLASS) for a wage to make products; which are sold to consumers for more than they cost to make which results in a PROFIT for the business people.
* Because the RULING CLASS are in power, they use IDEOLOGY (getting people to think in a certain way) to make up ways to convince the SUBJECT CLASS that CAPITALISM is normal, fair and right, even though it isn’t.
* They don’t just do this in relation to capitalism. They convince us to think certain ways about lots of stuff if it suit’s their interests. For example, tax evasion costs the economy much, much more than benefit fraud. Yet we see a lot of adverts encouraging us to report benefit cheats and nothing to prompt us to report tax evasion. Benefit fraud is a working class crime, and tax evasion is a ruling class crime. The ruling class own mass media so why would they publish advert prompting people to catch them at their own crime?!
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| Feminism | * Feminism is a movement fighting against patriarchy – where men hold power over women.
* Patriarchal ideology is a set of ideas that benefit men and keep women oppressed.
* Women are socially controlled by men in the home (as they take on most of the childcare and domestic housework, as well as work!), in employment (women still earn less than men and hold less powerful positions, glass ceiling on promotion to higher positions due to taking time off to have children or needing to work part-time), in relationships through expected behaviour (not acting psycho/needy, made to feel emotionally insecure), sexual behaviour (if a man is promiscuous he’s a ‘bit of a lad’ but if a girls is promiscuous she’s labelled a ‘slag’) and in public spaces (sexually harassed on tubes/made to feel embarrassed about breastfeeding).
* Women experience gender role socialisation through things such as stereotypes (girls should wear pink and play with dolls), parental expectations (letting sons play out later on the streets, but daughters play in the home or have earlier curfews), and in media images (this starts young with Disney princesses setting out what is expected of little girls – being beautiful and relying on a man to save them and continues into adolescence/adulthood with things such as Kardashian culture).
* There are different forms of feminism;
* Liberal Feminism - Focus on male/female relationships, laws need to address the male/female power imbalance, women are not inferior to men (should have legal/political/economic/ and social equality), main weapon is legislation (equal pay, child-care facilities for working women), women have a dual role (family and work).
* Marxist Feminism - Social class more important than Patriarchy, class causes female oppression, exploitation and discrimination. Family system benefits capitalism and men, women experience unpaid domestic labour and there is gender socialisation of feminine and masculine roles.
* Radical Feminism – we live in a Patriarchal society with gender inequality, men even exploit their incapacity to have babies and so women cannot be as successful as them in their careers. Marriage is institutionalised oppression (research magazine article on a good housewife!). This form of feminism believe men are the enemy and encourage lesbian relationships/female support groups.
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| Interactionism | * Focuses on small groups and how they influence behaviour and shape society. E.g teenage gangs, homeless people, visitors of hospital wards.
* They study the dynamics within the groups such as leadership, obedience and conformity. The look at factors such as size of group, the basis of power and any informal leaders.
* This theory believes we are NOT ‘programmed’ by socialisation process. People have the power to choose how they behave
* They see behaviour being driven by the way we interpret situations, how we see ourselves/other people and how they see us.
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| Collectivism | * Believes that a commitment should be made to care for and support the most vulnerable people in society.
* This could be to do with health care, trying to reduce illness and disease in these groups.
* Collectivism argues this is the responsibility of the community/government
* William Beveridge released a report (1942) outlining the five ‘evils’ vulnerable people were exposed to that need to be collectively challenged: Want (poverty), Squalor (poor housing), Disease (ill-health), Idleness (unemployment), Ignorance (inadequate education). His report led to the establishment of the NHS.
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| New Right | * This approach argues that welfare provision should be the responsibility of the individual and their family.
* Argue that by providing benefits and state support we are creating a dependency culture.
* This theory is often associated with Margaret Thatcher – she said people must plan for the future and take responsibility for their own needs and those of their families.
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| Post-modernism | * This theory acknowledges that we now live in a society that has seen rapid social change.
* Argue that social institutions like family, media, and religion cannot be talked about in sociology anymore because they have changed so much.
* Marxism and functionalism no longer apply or help us to understand society.
* This theory believes that people now make their own decisions about lifestyles, choosing from many leisure activities and consumer goods.
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