Theoretical Perspectives Knowledge Organiser.

**Key Term**

**Definition**

Theory

A set of ideas that used

to explain our society it

is used an overview to

explain how things are.

**Functionalism**

**It is a theory based on the view that society**

**works in a similar way to the human body**

**(organic analogy). Social institutions have dif-**

**ferent roles, and if some do not work, the**

**society cannot survive. Society can only exist** Concept

**if people share values and culture**

**(consensus).**

This is an idea ; a num-

ber of concepts go to-

gether to make a

theory.

Key Thinkers

Social Policy

Strengths

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

Talcott Parsons (1902—1979)

Organic Analogy Functionalists compare

society to the body. In

a body cells are organ-

ised into organs that

have different

function—it is the same

with society

every person &

Robert Merton (1910– 2003)

They provide scientific & factual evidence. They

are linked to conservative politics and support

traditional family structures and argue against lone

parenthood.

Explains how people are socialised into the values

of their culture and provides a starting point for

other theories to develop from.

Institution has its func-

tion. .

Macro-Sociology A term used to explain

the structural

Weaknesses

It doesn't explain why and how societies change.

It tends to view individuals as being governed by

social rules and overlooks the extent to which

approach; it looks at

society as a whole.

Positivist

Ideology

Positivists collect and

analyse quantitative

data focussing on

behaviour that can be

seen and measured.

people choose how to act & think.

**Marxism**

**It is a conflict view that is concerned with eco-**

**nomics and social control. It is based on the a**

**view that there are 2 social classes and that a**

**capitalist society Is based on the oppression**

**and exploitation of the poor by the rich.**

A system of ideas and

ideals, especially one

which forms the basis

of economic or political

theory and policy

Key Thinkers

Social Policy

Karl Marx (1818—1883)

Louis Althusser (1918—1990)

Repressive State Social institutions that

Apparatus

help to maintain the

ideology of the ruling

class through threat

and coercion.

They are critical of society and claim that political

structures favour the rich. They are linked to poli-

cies that support working people and poor people

Ideological State A social institution that

Strengths

It assumes change is normal for society so can be Apparatus

used to explain why societies develop through

transmits the ideology

of the ruling class and

helps to maintain their

power.

history. It illustrates the significance of social class

in terms of people access to wealth and power.

Weaknesses

It only focuses on economic relationships and

overlooks that people have a range of reasons for

their actions (culture, gender etc.). Marxism can

over look other inequalities within society and the

conflict view does not account for the rise of the

middle classes.

Bourgeoisie

Proletarians

Name given to the

wealthy and ruling

members of society

Marxist name given to

the poor members of

society.

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**Key Term**

**Definition**

**Feminism**

**Feminists look to explain why men and women**

**do not have equal wealth, power and status in**

**society. It is a conflict theory focusing on the**

**structural aspects of society and how it ac-**

**counts for gender differences.**

Patriarchy

This refers to socie

dominated by men and

where women have

power.

Radical Feminists

Marxist Feminists

Believe that gender ine-

quality is a result of the

collec

to dominate, control, and

exploit women

Key Thinkers

Sue Sharpe

Germaine Greer

Katherine Hakim

Ann Oakley

Social Policy

Strengths

Politics work to support male control of society, so

feminists will argue that laws should be made to

support the interests of women.

This perspec

that women are an ex-

ploited class in the capital-

ist mode of produ

both by their husbands

within families and by

employers in the paid

labour market.

Feminism highlights the reality of sexism in

society and how women have always been

important but quite often overlooked. Evidence of

inequality can be easily shown through

statistics.

Collec

This view of society em-

phasises the group over

the individual; a group

shares the responsibility

for the well being of all.

Weaknesses

Feminists can overlook other forms of inequality.

The gender system can be damaging to both

males and females in our society, women and

men can both experience oppression and ‘forced’

into certain behaviours.

Individualism

This view of society is

where the individual is

valued over the group; it is

up to everyone to look

**New Right**

**This can be seen as a poli**

**tradi**

**and compe**

**They believe that society should be more**

**individualis**

Trickle-down theory This theory suggests that

as the rich get richer the

poor will beneﬁt as wealth

will trickle down to them.

Key Thinkers

Social Policy

David Marsland (1939—)

Charles Murray (1943—)

Welfare System

The support provided to

families form the govern-

ment either in the form of

beneﬁts or services such

as edu

Sociologists should deliberately inﬂuence the

governments and believe that the correct way to

run society is to remove power from government.

welfare support.

Underclass

Capitalism

Used as a ne

Strengths

It has been extremely inﬂuen

policy and can be seen to appeal to popular

thinking about society.

referring to people who

rely on welfare beneﬁts

rather than work for their

income.

Weaknesses

Can blame vic

An economic & po

system in which a

country's trade & industry

are controlled by private

owners for proﬁt, rather

problems and they believe that people have equal

access to the rewards of society. It overlooks that

some groups in society are disadvantaged for

reasons beyond their control.

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**Interactionism**

**Focusses on what goes on within social**

**institutions particularly the interaction**

**between people. They see people as social ac-**

**tors who have a choice about how they play**

**their roles in society. They believe human be-**

**haviour is based on interaction and percep-**

**tion.**

**Key Term**

**Definition**

Micro-sociology This concept starts

with people and their

interaction before

moving on to look at

social

Key Thinkers

Strengths

William Thomas (1863 –1947)

Erving Goffman (1992-1982)

institutions &

society.

Social

construction

Refers to how people

define concepts and

social rules, this

means they can

change over time and

vary from place to

place.

It explains how people develop a sense of self-

identity and it offers understanding of social pro-

cesses. It gives rise to ethnographic methods and

has influenced research conducted by Feminists

and Marxists.

Weaknesses

It cannot explain social inequality and overlooks

material and social differences between groups of

people. It does not explain how or why societies

change and why some people have more power

than other to affect society and impose their

meanings.

Ethnography

Is the direct

observation of a group

and often involves

participation to

investigate the way

the group experience

interprets the social

world.

Qualitative

Data that is in words

describing social

situations and their

meanings.

**Post-Modernist Based on a view that society and its develop-**

**ment through diﬀerent stages. Sociological theo-**

**ries such as Marxism and Fun**

**ed that they had the answers to make the world**

**a be**

**form ofcertainty is inappropriate as knowledge**

**and beliefs are rela**

Quantitative

Numerical or statistical

data e.g. population

statistics, examination

results.

Key Thinkers

Strengths

Jean Francois Lyotard (1924—1998)

Jean Baudrillard (1929—2007)

Relativism.

The idea that

It shows how social a

knowledge, truth, and

morality exist in rela-

tion to culture, society,

or historical context,

and are not absolute

older belief systems have less inﬂuence and peo-

ple responding to choices helps explain social

change. It highlights the impact of the media and

consumerism on modern culture.

Weaknesses

The work of postmodernists can be descrip

it cannot be used as the basis of sociological

research. Iden

plain it. The theory states there is no theory

(contradic