FILM ANALYSIS: “GATTACA”

This film contains strong Sociological content and easily recognizable components of social structure. The society depicted in the film can be better understood by utilizing one or more of the three classical Sociological Theories (also called Sociological Perspectives): Conflict Theory, Functionalism and Symbolic Interactionism. You will use one of these theoretical perspectives in answering each of the following questions. The questions and responses include sociological terms and should help you begin to understand how to make a theoretical connection to your own social world. Be sure to record your responses on a scantron using a No 2 pencil, and be prepared to turn it in at the specified class meeting.

1. If you are utilizing a perspective based on economic processes to analyze the social structure that has been created in “Gattaca,” and that is depicted in the film, you would be using:
   a. Conflict Theory
   b. Functionalism
   c. Symbolic Interactionism

2. If you are utilizing a perspective based on social change that is gradual, and often built on slow, evolutionary processes, you would be using:
   a. Conflict Theory
   b. Functionalism
   c. Symbolic Interactionism

3. The film includes strong depictions of manifest and latent functions of human behavior. These functions are components of
   a. Conflict Theory
   b. Functionalism
   c. Symbolic Interactionism

4. If you are utilizing a perspective based on the importance of perceived perfection of both persons and things you would be using:
   a. Conflict Theory
   b. Functionalism
   c. Symbolic Interactionism

5. A sociologist relying on conflict theory to analyze much of the content of “Gattaca” would state it is essential to examine the film carefully and develop a clear understanding of the underlying economic processes that are responsible for the creation of Gattaca and for the perpetuation of its power structures.
   a. True
   b. False
6. The film emphasizes the use of science as a means for creating and controlling social structure. This is called social engineering, and is the use of formal processes and control systems to produce a particular social structure. The social engineering depicted in the film, as well as the attempts at genetic engineering that are currently taking place, might be viewed as being very functional in their nature and social purpose. Which Sociologist is most closely tied to the sociological theory of Functionalism that might be used to explain and understand the need for these engineering efforts?

a. Charles Horton Cooley
b. Emile Durkheim
c. Max Weber
d. C. Wright Mills

7. Social engineering would be described as a ________________ function of human social behavior.

a. manifest
b. negative
c. latent

8. While from your perspective much of the social structure depicted in “Gattaca” may seem to be unfair, it is, from a sociological perspective, functional in nature.

a. True
b. False

9. A sociologist relying on conflict theory to analyze Gattaca would point to the use of power and coercion to maintain the social order in Gattaca as evidence that no value is placed on the individual and that there is an ongoing struggle and competition for access to the society’s most valuable resources.

a. True
b. False

10. Functionalism envisions social structure being built around society’s institutions being dependent upon each other and working more, or at times less, harmoniously with each other. Within the film, Gattaca can be identified as a huge social institution around which other institutions work in a generally harmonious and supportive manner.

a. True
b. False
11. The film “Gattaca” is filled with images of human perfection, although sometimes these images prove to be false images. Whether the images of perfection are real, or are only imagined, which sociological theory would argue that they are still extremely important and powerful tools for directing the development of social structure.

a. Conflict Theory  
b. Functionalism  
c. Symbolic Interactionism

12. Relative to question 3, above, which sociologist is most closely associated with the theory of symbolic interactionism, and the importance of symbols as forces that drive social structure?

a. Karl Marx  
b. George Herbert Mead  
c. Robert Merton

13. To understand and answer this question you will need to do a little internet research (utilize a search engine like Google and you will discover there are many web sites devoted to “Gattaca”). Based on what you are able to learn, relate the source of origin of the film’s title (hint: The film’s title is derived from genetic code) to its sociologically symbolic message and tell which sociological perspective provides the best means of understanding the selection of the title.

a. Functionalism  
b. Conflict Theory  
c. Symbolic Interactionism

14. It is relatively easy to come to the conclusion that the film’s representation of the sociological purpose of authority and power, i.e. law enforcement, is that it serves primarily to maintain the social order, and the social stratification that exists. By maintaining the established social order, allowing for periodic minor adjustments to the system, the position of dominance of a particular social group is perpetuated. Which theoretical perspective best supports this conclusion

a. Functionalism  
b. Conflict Theory  
c. Symbolic Interactionism

15. The film’s view of the value of human beings, and individual human nature, as components of the social structure is that individual humans and their personal needs are expendable. This is because individual humans and their needs are only small, changeable components of the greater social structure. Upon which perspective is this statement based?

a. Functionalism  
b. Conflict Theory  
c. Symbolic Interactionism
16. The film’s message is that social engineering is important. But, the message is also that social engineering is subject to failure.

a. True  
b. False

17. It is clear that most people living in the social world depicted in Gattaca are in agreement as to which values and systems are most important to their society. This consensus is evidence of a _____________ social order

a. managed  
b. functional  
c. dysfunctional

18. There is absolutely no evidence that biological engineering of the type depicted in Gattaca would ever be attempted in contemporary society.

a. True  
b. False

19. From a functionalist perspective, the film provides absolute proof that if an individual defies the common values of the society, there will be chaos and social collapse.

a. True  
b. False

20. As it depicts the efforts of law enforcement officials to catch a murderer, the film reveals that at times law enforcement officials may be more concerned with protecting and preserving social stratification than with actually catching criminals.

a. True  
b. False