

## NZQA Assessment Support Material

<b>Unit standard</b>		<b>8991</b>			
<b>Title</b>	Evaluate sociological theories				
<b>Level</b>	3	<b>Credits</b>	5	<b>Version</b>	3

### Note

The following guidelines are supplied to enable teachers to carry out valid and consistent assessment using this internal assessment resource. In time, as quality examples of assessment activities become available naturally through the moderation process, these materials may be modified to include a variety of assessment activities and assessment schedules.

Teachers must manage authenticity for any assessment from a public source, because students may have access to the assessment schedule or to student exemplar material.

This assessment resource will need to be modified before it is used. The teacher needs to ensure that the assessment materials given to the student state the unit standard number, the title and the version of the standard being assessed, and the conditions under which the assessment is to take place (for example, as an in-class test or as a homework activity). The teacher may need to set an appropriate context, select relevant resources and modify tasks. The teacher will need to develop an appropriate assessment schedule by adding evidence and judgement statements.

## Teacher guidelines

### Context/setting

A sociological theory is a body of ideas that attempts to explain the structure of groups, organisations, and societies, and how people interact in these contexts.

In this activity students will evaluate sociological theories. To *evaluate* is a 'step up' from *explaining* (level 1) and *examining* (level 2) sociological theories. Evaluating involves analysing sociological theories by a) breaking down a theory into its component parts and showing how these interrelate; and b) assessing the theories explanatory power and applicability. Evaluating goes beyond explaining and examining to address larger 'so what?' and 'what if' questions. This may include, for instance, evaluating the extent to which a theory developed in the past, under different social and historical conditions, is able to offer valid explanations of contemporary social phenomena and across social and cultural contexts.

Students undertaking an assessment activity for this standard will require an understanding of the characteristics and purposes of scientific theories, in general, and of sociological theory in particular. This should be part of the teaching and learning prior to the assessment.

## THIS UNIT STANDARD CAN BE AWARDED WITH AN ACHIEVED, MERIT, OR EXCELLENCE GRADE

### AWARD OF GRADES

- For award with **Achieved**, students must be able to form a critical opinion, based on reason and evidence, of the usefulness of at least two sociological theories. The evaluation will explain the key concepts of the theories; explain how the theories are applied to an aspect(s) of society; and identify strengths and weaknesses of the theories.
- For award with **Merit**, students must form a critical opinion, based on reason and evidence, of the usefulness of at least two sociological theories. The evaluation will analyse, and compare the theories in detail; apply them to an aspect(s) of society; and evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of the theories.
- For award with **Excellence**, students must form a critical opinion, based on reason and evidence, of the usefulness of at least two sociological theories. The evaluation will present a coherent, perceptive analysis, comparison and evaluation of the theories which are applied to an aspect(s) of society.

#### Conditions of assessment

The timeframe and conditions for assessment will be set by the teacher.

#### Assessment activity

The teacher selects two appropriate sociological theories. It may be practicable to allow students some choice as to which theories they will evaluate.

It is possible to select more than two sociological theories, but teachers need to consider if that creates more work for students than is appropriate for 5 credits at level 3. Teachers should also avoid having students simply 'doing more of the same'.

This assessment activity has two tasks.

#### Task One

Students analyse two sociological theories and explain and apply the key concepts to an aspect(s) of society.

#### Task Two

Students evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of each theory.

#### Resource requirements

There are no specific resources required for this assessment.

## **Possible topics & approaches**

Different sociological theories and theorists could be presented in chronological order, showing how the development of the discipline went through different phases and 'paradigm shifts' and how sociologists have approached the same themes, topics and concepts in different ways. For example, Marx's understanding of class differs from that of Weber, who sought to critique and refine Marx's theory. Another approach would take a topic-based approach, presenting key sociological concepts and comparing how different theories and theorists have explained these; for example, gender inequality.

### Chronological & biographical approach

- Classical Marxist theory
- Functionalism (Durkheim)
- Weberian theory
- Critical Theory (Frankfurt School)
- Structural functionalism (e.g. Parsons)
- Symbolic interactionism (e.g. Mead, Goffman)
- Social constructionism (e.g. Berger & Luckmann)
- Postmodern theory
- Feminist theory

### Topic-based approach

Compares how different theories and theorists have explained key sociological concepts such as:

- Inequality
- Power
- Social stratification
- Class and status
- Religion
- Education
- Work

### Gender role inequalities

For the same job, job experience, and education, women typically earn significantly less income than their male counterparts. This gap in income earnings is one example of gender role inequalities. Are these inequalities bad for society as a whole and if so, how do we change them? To provide some experience in applying sociological theory to issues facing contemporary society, the following example interprets gender role inequalities from the perspectives of structure-functionalism, Marxism, and symbolic interactionism.

## **Key concepts and ideas:**

### Stratification

Positions in a social system are organised into layers with resultant inequalities.

### Socialization

Learning of cultural norms through language, institutions and behaviour.

- Language takes on a realist quality such that it influences individual behaviour.
- Behaviour toward persons is based in part on their gender.

## Structural Functionalism

Focuses on what is good for the whole of society. The SF perspective argues that social stratification can be good for society if it motivates persons in lower social positions to better themselves so they can experience upward social mobility.

- Gender role inequalities have functions and dysfunctions.
- Society both benefits and suffers from gender role relationships.
- The "balance" of functions and dysfunctions determines social action.
- If gender role inequalities, on the whole, are deemed dysfunctional, then macro-level changes in norms are introduced.
- Affirmative action and gender role inequalities?

## Marxism

Focuses on the exploitation of power, and the means to achieve power in society.

- Gender role inequalities reflect exploitation by dominant (male)
- Segments of society over secondary (female) segments of society.
- Females may be alienated from society due to gender role inequalities.
- Social change requires a move from false consciousness to class consciousness.
- Formal and informal organisations and action aimed at raising consciousness of gender role inequalities.

## Symbolic Interactionism

Focuses on the effect of language and behaviour and how it affects and is affected by groups, organisations, and society.

- Gender role inequalities are learned through language.
- Behaviour toward persons is based in part on their gender.
- Society, and therefore language, is dynamic – in a constant state of creation and negotiation of rules.

### **Additional information**

Teaching and learning guidelines that inform sociology as it is taught in New Zealand can be found at [www.nzqa.govt.nz/sociology](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/sociology).

## Assessment Schedule

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Teachers will need to develop an assessment schedule that is appropriate to the assessment activity and the context, by adding evidence and judgement statements. Evidence is examples of acceptable student responses to the various tasks being assessed; judgements indicate the quality and/or quantity of the student response needed to meet the requirements of the unit standard.

It may be convenient (but it is not compulsory) to present an assessment schedule as a table.

<b>Judgements and evidence for Achievement</b>	<b>Judgements and evidence for achievement with Merit</b>	<b>Judgements and evidence for achievement with Excellence</b>
[Teacher to insert judgement and evidence statements.]	[Teacher to insert judgement and evidence statements.]	[Teacher to insert judgement and evidence statements.]
<b>Examples of acceptable student responses:</b>	<b>Examples of acceptable student responses:</b>	<b>Examples of acceptable student responses:</b>

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## Student Instructions Sheet

### Introduction

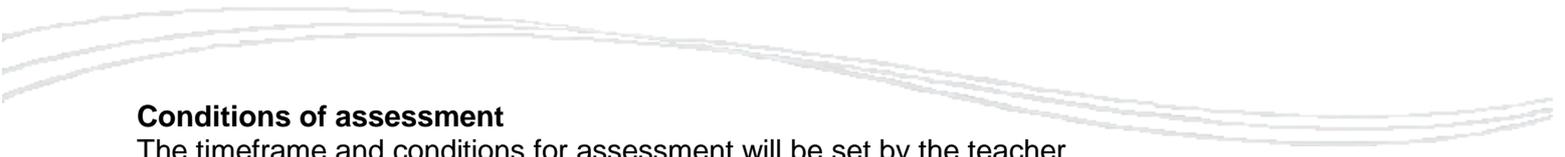
A sociological theory is a body of ideas that attempts to explain the structure of groups, organisations, and societies, and how people interact in these contexts. The purpose of social theory is to study and interpret social phenomena based on empirical evidence.

You will be assessed on your ability to evaluate sociological theories. This will involve analysing sociological theories by (a) breaking down a theory into its component parts and showing how these interrelate; and (b) assessing the theories' explanatory power and applicability. Evaluating goes beyond explaining and examining to address larger 'so what?' and 'what if' questions. This may include, for instance, evaluating the extent to which a theory developed in the past under different social and historical conditions is able to offer valid explanations of contemporary social phenomena and across social and cultural contexts.

**THIS UNIT STANDARD CAN BE AWARDED WITH AN ACHIEVED, MERIT, OR EXCELLENCE GRADE**

### AWARD OF GRADES

- For award with **Achieved**, you must be able to explain the key concepts of at least two sociological theories; explain how the theories are applied to an aspect(s) of society; and identify strengths and weaknesses of each theory.
- For award with **Merit**, you must analyse, compare and evaluate at least two sociological theories in detail, including evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each theory.
- For award with **Excellence**, you must provide comprehensive analysis, comparison and evaluation of sociological theories.

**Conditions of assessment**

The timeframe and conditions for assessment will be set by the teacher.

**Assessment activity**

This assessment activity has two tasks.

**Task One**

Analyse two sociological theories to explain the key concepts and the main ideas of the theories, and apply them to an aspect(s) of society. Both theories must be applied to the same aspect(s) of society.

**Task Two**

Evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of each theory.