

Worksheet 5.1 What is sociological theory? (pages 253–256)**Consolidate (work individually)**

- 1 Identify three examples of sociological theories.
- 2 Briefly explain what is meant by a 'sociological model'.
- 3 Suggest one reason why sociologists build models of society.
- 4 Suggest two disadvantages of sociological models of society.
- 5 Define relativism, using an example to illustrate your answer.
- 6 Using an example to illustrate your understanding, explain the 'problem of incoherence'.
- 7 Define 'proposition'.
- 8 Explain the idea of logical evaluation.
- 9 Explain the idea of empirical evaluation.
- 10 Suggest one reason why sociological theories cannot always be empirically tested.

Apply (work in small groups)

- 1 Identify three sociological theories that, when compared, hold contradictory views about the nature of the social world. Briefly explain how they contradict each other.
- 2 Suggest three sociological propositions (other than those in the textbook) you have encountered on your A level course.
- 3 Following the examples on page 254, construct a logical argument about some aspect of sociology:
 - a) where the conclusion *follows* from the premises of the argument
 - b) where the elements are true but the argument is logically flawed.
- 4 Suggest two arguments for and two arguments against sociological relativism.
- 5 Suggest three ways it is possible to empirically evaluate a sociological theory.

Evaluate (work as a class)

- 1 Carry out an empirical evaluation of any sociological theory with which you are familiar.
- 2 Examine the argument that all sociological theories should be subject to both logical and empirical evaluation.

Worksheet 5.2 Classical sociology and the advent of modernity (pages 257–269)

Consolidate (work individually)

- 1 Identify one economic, one political and one cultural feature of modernity.
- 2 Identify two common principles of the Enlightenment project.
- 3 Which three writers can be said to have established the principal frames of reference for modern sociology?
- 4 Identify three central features of Marxist sociology.
- 5 Identify two features of capitalism.
- 6 Define 'surplus value', using an example to illustrate your understanding.
- 7 Briefly explain the difference between mechanical and organic solidarity.
- 8 Define the concept of 'verstehen', using an example to illustrate your answer.
- 9 Identify four types of action suggested by Weber.
- 10 Suggest two criticisms of Weber's sociology.

Apply (work in small groups)

- 1 Draw up the following table and enter as many examples as you can of the different characteristics of the two types of society.

Characteristics	Pre-modern society	Modern society
Economic		
Political		
Cultural		

- 2 Draw a diagram to represent the relationship between base and superstructure in Marxist sociology.
- 3 Draw up the following table and then identify some of the key features of feudal and capitalist modes of production.

	Feudalism	Capitalism
Key features		

- 4 Which research methods are *most* and *least* likely to be used by sociologists who want to gain an 'empathetic understanding' of their subject matter? Explain your reasons for your choice of methods.
- 5 Suggest examples of Weber's four types of social action, other than those identified in the textbook.

Evaluate (work as a class)

- 1 How useful to our understanding of contemporary societies is the idea that society is like a living organism?
- 2 Which of the three classical sociologists – Marx, Durkheim or Weber – has the greatest contribution to make to our understanding of life in contemporary Britain? Explain your reasons for your choice.

Worksheet 5.3 The establishment of sociological theory (pages 270–283)

Consolidate (work individually)

- 1 Identify three assumptions functionalism makes about the nature of human beings and the societies which they inhabit.
 - 2 Identify four functional prerequisites that a society must resolve if it is to survive.
 - 3 Suggest three criticisms of functionalist theory.
 - 4 Identify three central beliefs of Marxism.
 - 5 Define hegemony.
 - 6 Briefly explain what the difference is, for symbolic interactionists, between human action and animal behaviour.
 - 7 Briefly explain the distinction Mead makes between the 'I' and the 'Me'.
 - 8 Briefly explain the idea of a 'dramaturgical analogy'.
 - 9 Identify two characteristics of a 'successful performance'.
 - 10 Explain, using an example to illustrate your answer, the concept of role distance.
- 3 Symbolic interactionists argue that there is a fundamental difference between (human) action and (animal) behaviour. Suggest and explain two ways in which action is different from behaviour.
 - 4 Identify and briefly explain any situations in your life where:
 - a) you have successfully completed a 'performance'
 - b) your performance has failed.
 - 5 Suggest three ways that the participants in your sociology classroom engage in impression management.

Evaluate (work as a class)

- 1 Critically assess the claim that human behaviour can best be explained in terms of the operation of structural forces acting on the individual.
- 2 Of the three models of society outlined in the text (functionalism, Marxism and symbolic interactionism), which, in your opinion, most convincingly explains how our society works? Give reasons for your answer.

Apply (work in small groups)

- 1 For each of Parsons' functional prerequisites (page 270) explain, using relevant examples, how they are solved by the education system in our society.
- 2 Using the following table as a template, suggest some similarities and differences between humanist and structuralist variations of Marxism:

	Humanist Marxism	Structuralist Marxism
Similarities		
Differences		

Worksheet 5.4 Structure and action in sociology (pages 283–290)

Consolidate (work individually)

- 1 Identify two central dimensions of structuralism.
- 2 Identify two features of all myths.
- 3 Define 'semiotics'.
- 4 Suggest two criticisms of structuralism.
- 5 Identify one central concern of phenomenology.
- 6 Explain, using an example to illustrate your answer, the concept of typification.
- 7 Identify an initial assumption ethnomethodologists make about the social world.
- 8 Define 'indexicality'.
- 9 Suggest two criticisms of ethnomethodology.
- 10 Briefly explain Giddens' concept of 'reflexivity'.

Apply (work in small groups)

- 1 Complete the following table and compare your answers with those of the other groups in your class.

Signifier (the form a sign takes)	Signified (the meaning of the signifier)
Red rose	Love, romance, affection
Light bulb	
Flag of St George	
A cigarette	
'Natural' yoghurt	
Your favourite song	
A kitten	

- 2 Identify three examples of 'cultural myths' in contemporary Britain.
- 3 Identify four 'cultural oppositions' (other than those given in the textbook) in our society.
- 4 Identify some of the typifications that go to make up our stock of 'commonsense knowledge' about either the education system or the family in our society.
- 5 Identify some of the 'assumed rules' currently operating in your sociology classroom.

Evaluate (work as a class)

- 1 According to ethnomethodologists social order is based on 'fragile rules'. Criticise this belief from a functionalist, Marxist or feminist perspective.
- 2 Structuration theory attempts to overcome the division between structural and action approaches. Criticise this theory from *either* a structure *or* an action perspective.

Worksheet 5.5 Challenges to sociological theory (pages 290–298)

Consolidate (work individually)

- 1 Briefly explain the term 'globalisation'.
- 2 Explain the meaning of 'time-space compression'.
- 3 Identify three 'contradictory aspects' of globalisation.
- 4 Identify four characteristics of postmodern society suggested by postmodernists.
- 5 How, according to Lyotard, is scientific knowledge justified?
- 6 Briefly explain the meaning of the phrase 'incredulity towards metanarratives'.
- 7 Briefly explain Baudrillard's concept of 'simulation'.
- 8 Define 'hyperreality'.
- 9 Identify three arguments put forward by postmodernists in their rejection of the 'Enlightenment project'.
- 10 Suggest three criticisms of postmodernist perspectives.

Apply (work in small groups)

- 1
 - a) List the 10 most important characteristics that you feel best define you (i.e. that answer the question 'Who am I?').
 - b) Which of the characteristics you have identified relate to class, gender, age, ethnicity or locality?
 - c) What does this tell you about the concept of postmodern identities?

- 2 The text (pages 293–294) cites four important features of postmodern society:
 - a) a diversity of images and values
 - b) postmodern identities
 - c) a loss of faith
 - d) how we view reality.

Find examples of each of these ideas in our society.

- 3 Explain, using examples to illustrate your answer, Baudrillard's argument that postmodern society involves a 'crisis in representation'.
- 4 Hyperreality involves the idea of 'simulations that are more real than reality'. Suggest ways that theme parks (such as Disneyland) are an example of hyperreality.
- 5 Suggest ways that new information and communication technologies expose us to an increasingly diverse range of ideas and values.

Evaluate (work as a class)

- 1 Criticise any one sociological perspective with which you are familiar, using the concepts of anti-foundationalism, anti-totalisation and anti-utopianism.
- 2 'The development of scientific knowledge has not led to greater human emancipation and freedom.' Suggest arguments for and against this statement.