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Assessment Annotation for Undergraduate Courses

Course Designation and Title	Principles of Sociology

Semester/Year	Spring 2012

Instructor	Mary Yager

Assessment Activity

Briefly describe your Assessment Activity

The primary theoretical perspectives of sociology are symbolic interactionism, functional analysis and conflict theory. One of the learning outcomes for this course is that each student will be able to "describe the sociological theories of symbolic interactionism, structural functionalism and conflict theory and apply the theories to various social structures." The purpose of this assessment was to ensure that students could analyze sociological research to determine which theoretical perspective was being used in various research scenarios.

Students were given three different research scenarios (see attached) in which the prostitution industry was studied by various Sociologists. Each of the Sociologists viewed the industry through a specific sociological lens of symbolic interactionism, conflict theory or functional analysis. Following a week of lecture about the three theoretical perspectives, students were asked to read the research about prostitution, and identify the theoretical perspective being used by the sociologists. They were asked to determine:
a. Which theoretical perspective was used.
b. Was it considered microsociological or macrosociological level of analysis.
c. For the symbolic interactionism scenario, what was the "symbol."
d. For the conflict theory scenario, what is the "scare resource" of competition.
e. For the functional scenario, what might be a latent dysfunction prostitution.

Attach document if necessary

PrinciplesofSociologyYagerCaseStudy.pdf (91 KB)

In assessment of Student Learning Outcome(s) [write out course objective(s) and number(s)]

Student Learning Outcome (course objective) #A
"Describe the sociological theories of symbolic interactionism, structural functionalism and conflict theory and apply the theories to various social structures."

Program Objective #NA, Arts and Science Division
Department Objective #4
Core Knowledge & Skills #2
Information Literacy Goal #4

Core Knowledge & Skills [Applicable to ALL Courses]

2. Demonstrate critical thinking skills and proficiency in acquiring, evaluating, communicating and applying information.

Arts & Sciences Objective(s) [Applicable to ALL Courses]

4. Formulate and apply logical research, including scientific and quantitative reasoning, to support life-long learning.

Information Literacy Objective(s) [Applicable to ALL Courses]	4. Individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose. (Uses)

Results of Activity

Briefly describe the Results of the Activity	Thirty-one students participated in this activity. All thirty-one students were able to identify the theoretical perspective correctly, and correctly identify the level of analysis. All students were able to identify latent dysfunctions in the functional scenario, all students were able to identify the scares resources being competed for in the conflict scenario, and 23 of the students accurately identified the "symbol" in the symbolic interactionism scenario.

Analysis of Results

Briefly describe your Analysis of the Activity	It is evident that some students struggle to be able to identify "symbols" that are not physical symbols. In class discussion and lecture, student could identify a symbol such as a "Handicap Parking" symbol, or the letter "F" as a symbol, or a "thumbs up" gesture as a symbol, and could easily identify how people related to and interpreted the symbols. They struggled to identify abstract symbols such as that identified in the prostitution scenario. The correct symbol in the research study was "the job itself". Symbolic interactionism questions how members of the group relate to and interact with their symbols. In this case, sex workers defined "the job" as a service industry, similar to any other provision of services such as child care, housekeeping, waitressing, etc. in order to maintain self-esteem and positive self-concept.

Actions to be Taken

Briefly describe the Actions to be Taken based on the Analysis of Results	Since 26% of the students were not able to identify the symbol in the symbolic interactionism scenario, it is evident that additional instruction will be needed to help students better identify abstract symbols. Additional lecture material related to abstract symbols will be added to address this teaching deficiency.

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