**AUTUMN 2021**

**101551 Understanding Society**

**Assessment Three: Take-home case study**

**Introduction: *Black Lives Matter*, social inequality and social change**

As discussed throughout semester, sociologists are concerned with studying how society is, how it came to be and how it could be. In conjunction with this, sociologists examine social institutions, systems and structures and consider how they shape lives and life chances. More specifically, sociologists look at how life chances are disproportionately distributed throughout society. They look at the interconnections between structure and agency, and alongside this, consider how power operates to reinforce social inequality or social division. On the other hand, sociologists – concerned with questions of how society could or *should* be – also examine processes of social change. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement embodies all of these sociological concerns. It is, on the one hand, emblematic of social inequality, and on the other, evidence of how social change can occur. It is then, the focus of this case study.

**Case Study materials:**

To complete this take-home exam, students are asked to read the following resources and articles about the Black Lives Matter movement in Australia and the United States of America. These articles form the base of your case study:

[From Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter - Scientific American](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/from-civil-rights-to-black-lives-matter1/)

[Black Lives Matter is a revolutionary peace movement (theconversation.com)](https://theconversation.com/black-lives-matter-is-a-revolutionary-peace-movement-85449)

[George Floyd Was Killed In America. His Death Has Sparked A Global Movement. | HuffPost](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/racism-protests-international-black-lives-matter_n_5ee0d5dcc5b6a457582a24d7)

[One year on, how George Floyd’s murder has changed the world | George Floyd | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/22/george-floyd-murder-change-across-world-blm)

[Relief at Derek Chauvin conviction a sign of long history of police brutality (theconversation.com)](https://theconversation.com/relief-at-derek-chauvin-conviction-a-sign-of-long-history-of-police-brutality-159212)

[We must bear witness to black deaths in our own country | The Canberra Times | Canberra, ACT](https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6775418/we-must-bear-witness-to-black-deaths-in-our-own-country/#gsc.tab=0)

['I can't breathe!' Australia must look in the mirror to see our own deaths in custody (theconversation.com)](https://theconversation.com/i-cant-breathe-australia-must-look-in-the-mirror-to-see-our-own-deaths-in-custody-139848)

[Here's why Black Lives Matter resonates in Australia | The Canberra Times | Canberra, ACT](https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6826632/heres-why-black-lives-matter-resonates-in-australia/)

[The Black Lives Matter movement has provoked a cultural reckoning about how Black stories are told (theconversation.com)](https://theconversation.com/the-black-lives-matter-movement-has-provoked-a-cultural-reckoning-about-how-black-stories-are-told-149544)

[Discrimination against Indigenous Australians has risen dramatically, survey finds | Indigenous Australians | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/may/24/discrimination-against-indigenous-australians-has-risen-dramatically-survey-finds)

**Question:**

Having considered the issues raised in these articles, which comprise the case study, and drawing on AT LEAST 4 ACADEMIC SOURCES, students should provide a 1000-word response to the following question:

**How can the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in Australia and/or the USA be understood sociologically? In answering this question, students must focus on two or more of the following topics:**

* **structure and agency**
* **power**
* **the enduring nature of social inequality**
* **social change**

**Detailed Instructions:**

1. In crafting your responses be sure to choose at least two of the topics (or concepts) listed above and explain them with reference to relevant academic literature (your readings from the unit are a good place to start).
2. Once you have explained what each of the key concepts you are focusing on refers to, then you should apply them to the BLM case study. This means drawing on examples from the articles above and analysing them sociologically.
3. In other words, you must think about what is presented in the media articles and then consider how the sociological reading you have undertaken, and the concepts and theories discussed therein, help you to make sense of what is observed.
4. Your response should be written in an essay style, meaning it should contain an introduction, body and conclusion.
5. Your response should be referenced using Harvard referencing.
6. You must use a minimum of 4 academic sources, which need to be cited in the body of your text and included in a reference list.
7. Any of the empirical examples from the case study that you refer to or draw upon should also be referenced appropriately.

**Length:** 1000 words (+/- 10%)

**Value:** 30%

**Learning Outcomes:**

This assessment responds to unit learning outcomes 3, 4 and 5, which are to:

1. Identify relevant sources, and assess approaches to and claims about social processes and institutions in contemporary society.
2. Apply a sociological understanding of power, social inequality and social change to case study materials.
3. Demonstrate reading, writing and referencing skills commensurate with university scholarship.

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| **MARKING RUBRIC: ASSESSMENT THREE** |
|  | **Fail (0-49%)** | **Pass (50-64%)** | **Credit (65-74%)** | **Distinction (75-84%)** | **High Distinction (85-100%)** |
| **Answers the Question** **( /20 marks)**    | Response does not effectively answer the question raised in the case study. The question may have been misinterpreted or the response was not based on relevant material and/or is frequently off topic.  | The question has been answered satisfactorily. However, some aspects may have been better addressed than others and/or the response was occasionally off topic.  | All aspects of the question have been addressed in a balanced fashion, and student has engaged with some of the case study materials. | All aspects of the question have been addressed in a balanced fashion. A clear line of argument has been established and student has engaged with the case study materials. | All aspects of the question have been addressed in a balanced fashion. The case study materials have been integrated into the response and a strong line of argument has been established. |
| **Conceptual Understanding ( /20 marks)**  | Submission contains frequent errors. It is not clear that the student has a satisfactory understanding of structure and agency, power, social inequality and/or social change.  | A basic understanding of structure and agency, power, social inequality and/or social change has been demonstrated. There is an over-reliance on lecture material and/or some errors or inaccuracies may be present.  | A satisfactory understanding of structure and agency, power, social inequality and/or social change has been demonstrated. Some minor inaccuracies may be present but there is a clear attempt to engage with published academic sources on the topic.  | Submission demonstrates a good understanding of structure and agency, power, social inequality and/or social change, which is well supported by academic literature. Student has been able to define/explain concepts and/or use them correctly. | Submission reveals a very good understanding of structure and agency, power, social inequality and/or social change. Student has been able to draw on academic sources to discuss the interconnections between the concepts and/or engage with relevant theories.  |
| **Application of sociological knowledge** **( /20 marks)** | Case study materials are described with no application of sociological concepts, or sociological concepts are discussed with little reference to the case study.  | Work is largely descriptive but student has made an attempt to apply at least one of the concepts to at least one article from the case study. More examples from the case study would be helpful and/or further elaboration is required.  | The analysis could be strengthened, but student has made a clear attempt to apply two or more concepts to two or more of the case study materials.  | Two or more concepts have been applied convincingly to the case study materials. Relevant examples have been chosen.  | Very good application of the concepts to the case study materials. The case study materials have been dealt with in a cohesive way, parallels are drawn between them and/or highly relevant examples have been chosen. Response is original and/or analytical. |
| **Structure** **( /15 marks)** | Work is poorly structured. There is no real introduction, body and conclusion. Disorganised/incoherent structure.  | Some problems but clear attempt has been made to provide introduction, body and conclusion.  | The response is reasonably cohesive and consists of an introduction, body and conclusion.  | Good organisation of material, which helps to strengthen the argument. Some minor improvements could be made with respect to linking key points.  | Very good organisation of material. There is a clear, logical flow and good sense of argument.  |
| **Expression** **( /15 marks)** | Work is poorly written. Frequent spelling/grammatical errors. Overall meaning is not clear.  | Meaning is mostly clear but problems with spelling, grammar, syntax and/or word choice cloud the argument from time to time.  | Work is reasonably well written, though some improvements could be made with respect to language/tone and/or spelling and grammar.  | Work is well written with only very minor spelling/grammatical errors.  | Work is extremely well-written. Language is appropriate to academic writing and aids overall clarity of argument. |
| **Referencing** **( /10 marks)** | Student has not referenced their work sufficiently. No reference list provided and/or multiple missing in-text citations.  | Student has made clear attempt to reference. There may be some inconsistencies with referencing style or some errors. | Student has made clear attempt to reference their work using Harvard style. Some minor errors are present. | Submission is thoroughly referenced. | Submission is very well referenced.  |