Faith Learning Integration and Interdisciplinary

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Appendix 4A: Faith-Learning Integration Worksheet

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Name of Scholar-Practitioner: Derrick Snow

Educational Background:

Master of Arts in Sociology - New Mexico State University, 2009

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Other Pertinent Information:

Tips for the SR805 100-Day Assignment Faith-Learning Integration Worksheet

See the published article about this process (Interdisciplinary Faith-Learning Integration for Social Change, JIS, V26 (2014)- Dr. David C. Ward). The article is much more detailed than the syllabus, because the method has refined in as a result of the growth in understanding each stage of the process, as a result of interaction with the methods standard in the national interdisciplinary studies movement. This is seen in the article.

Steps 2, 3, & 4 ought to have some sources to back up the process because it is an academic process in Steps 2-4, and a practical process in Steps 5-7. In my article describes this approach to faith-learning integration and interdisciplinary social change is described as "Learning... [in such a way as] to Change Your World."

Step 1 Research Problem/Question- In the Syllabus it is an assigned topic: i.e. work as job, profession, career, or calling. But you can select a topic based on your interests, especially if it is related to your sense of calling in some aspect. I am interested in how you work through the process. Please e-mail the professor your topic ideas and receive feedback about your topic idea at the beginning.

Step 2 Hermeneutics/Literature Review- can be whatever disciplinary sources are relevant; also, at this early stage in the program you can include in this stage any social research done on your subject, for example, if you found articles reporting research done on multi-generation businesses. As seen in Dr. Ward’s article, and by the dissertation stage of the OGS program, Step 4 is where your own social research project goes.

Step 3 Faith-Learning Integration-is where faith-integrated sources (Scripture, tradition [i.e. if theologians have addressed the topic or Christian worldview/theological truths involved in applying a Christian worldview to the topic], reason [if Christian businessmen have written on the topic-if it was a business topic, etc.], and experience [this is where personal Christian reflections guided by prayer and the Holy Spirit would come in].

STEP 1: OBSERVATIONS RAISING THE NEED FOR INQUIRY

What is the subject/problem that prompts the need to integrate faith and learning and do Christian interdisciplinary research?

This may be an atypical compared to many OGS students who have an aspect of a social problem as their focus, nevertheless my focus is Christian Sociology, in which I seek to research many social problems beyond the OGS program from a Christian perspective.

a. Why is the topic of interest to you given your profession or personal history?

In pursuing sociology as an undergraduate I found that much of sociology had an anti-religious tendency, but in actuality that it was a field of study that was very insightful to non-believers and believers alike. I found that the study of sociology actually gave me a broader perspective of God’s reign over His social creation and His love for His social creation, and thus made me a better Christian in seeing the vast love of God the Father and Christ, what I knew by intellectually but came to know by actuality. From that time, I saw the need of Christian to gain a sociological perspective in conjunction with their faith, to live the life of faith among the captives of sin and minister to them in such a way that serves them and cares for them in their needs, and being there to unshackle them from the bondage, given that we have been them, and walk with them to the light and love of Christ. I have wanted to bring the sociological perspective to my fellow brothers and sisters as a public Christian Sociologist, in addition to provide a Christian perspective in academic and public sociology as a professional sociologist.

b. Why is there a need to research this subject/problem?

As a sociologist there will be many subjects and problems I will research in the future, but what I am currently researching is who are the Christian Sociologist in the field, what they research and write, in addition to the sociology that is being done referring to Christians and Christianity in order to engage in the social research to offer a Christian sociology perspective on Christianity perhaps counter to the sociological secular perspective of Christians and Christianity.

c. What various disciplines or perspectives need to be brought to bear to adequately address this subject/problem?

Sociology by its nature is interdisciplinary, where besides the particular aspects of the field of sociology it brings in aspects of other fields of study, anthropology, economics, psychology, history, geography, environmental studies, race and ethnic studies, gender studies, technology studies, political science, and philosophy to study social phenomenon. As a Christian Sociologist I would also bring in aspects of Christian studies, theology, and the scriptures. As a sociologist, I tend to lean toward the conflict perspective.

d. How might faith-integration and interdisciplinary research yield better answers than either exclusively religious or exclusively academic research might provide?

As a Christian sociologist the faith-integration central to the sociological research and writing, where besides the results from our social research, we have the additional insight from the scriptures which provides us with historical and future perspective from God Himself that helps us bring a more complete understanding of social context and social phenomena.

STEP 2: LITERATURE REVIEW- HERMENEUTICAL INQUIRY OF NATURAL/SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES/HISTORICAL TRADITIONS

What are the different perspectives on the subject/problem from the relevant contemporary natural or social science disciplines as well as cultural trends and ideas?

There are several current Christian sociologists that I am interested in reading more of their work in order to gain a better understanding of the different perspectives within Christian Sociology. One Christian sociologist makes the point that our role is multifaceted, we are doing sociology, 1) for God’s glory 2) for social science understanding, 3) for a balancing of the sociology discipline. “As Christian sociologists we share responsibility for forming a generation which now needs to resist the commercialized nihilistic nonsense that challenges us all on all cultural sides. We are challenged to respect our scientific calling coram Deo, even if the dominant intellectual outlooks of our time are still on a collision course with our sociological work and profession.” (Wearne, 2020, p. 44)

a. How has the subject/problem developed relevant contemporary natural or social science disciplines?

Social thought has been with us since the beginning of time and became formalized in social philosophy and later in social sciences, and sociology in the 18 century Europe, applying the scientific method in studying the social world, which was considered a secular endeavor. However, the roots of American sociology were religious and had an alignment with the social gospel movement, which hope to use the sociology to help solve social problems. (Greek, 2019) American sociology did shift more to the secular perspective as it developed into a mainstream academic subject. The contemporary state of sociology, I believe has become field that has become lost in itself, as it became used as an academic shell game along with other academic fields, the production of academic sociology feeds itself and not the larger society, in addition to social thinking has been expanded into other fields (health, environment, business, art, etc.), which is good, but leaves sociology more and more isolated in academia. I believe Christian sociologist are in a prime position to revive the field into a public and action orientated field. As one Christian sociologist puts it, by and large secular sociologists tend to not ask the right questions and fail to engage in the discovery of daily human existence, due to their secular training and secular orientation. Therefore, Christian sociologist are needed to fulfill the gap in understanding more of the social human behavior. (Scimecca, 2023) We as contemporary Christian sociologist can make this happen, not only for the benefit of the larger public, but also for the Christian community.

Are there different traditions?

In sociology, there are many subfields of specialty, this allows particular focus for sociologists, however, I think we also need to be generalists, in order to see how our social research falls in under the larger social and historical context. Public sociology is a tradition that focuses on public enlightenment and social action, which has been the roots of sociology. Academic sociology is where academics are published for the sake of academic careers, with the illusion of contributing to a greater society. Applied sociology and clinical sociology is where sociological theory and methodologies are used in a variety of settings and careers that use the insights of sociology in program development and community action.

b. How has the subject/problem developed in cultural trends/history?

Culture is a very important concept and product to sociology, understanding culture is foundational to understanding social phenomena. Technology is one of the major factors that influence cultural changes. Sociology should be keeping in step with these technology/cultures changes, even looking at future developments and possible changes. These cultural changes, change the language, values and behavior of people, and people are the subject of sociology, especially the youth culture. In trying to understand how changes in culture impacts Christianity, sociological research can provide the understanding of, if and why church engagement changes. Younger generations’ criticism of the church does not necessarily mean disengagement. Sociological research can provide insight into the relationship between religion, social engagement, and race. (Allen, 2023) Christian Sociologist could play a vital role in helping the church in being culturally literate and being mindful of reaching people for gospel in the ever-changing cultural setting.

c. What disciplines have developed which have addressed the subject/problem?

How have they addressed it (briefly)?

Are there different schools of thought?

STEP 3: FAITH-LEARNING INTEGRATION INQUIRY WITH CHRISTIAN AND SCIENTIFIC SOURCES

How does Scripture speak to this issue? Realize that many issues that are a result of modernity or technological advances will not be directly addressed by the Bible, but Scripture may provide a parallel or precedent with a similar issue or subject, or the topic may be addressed through extrapolation.

a. Are there any developments in biblical thought about the issue from the Old Testament?

What the Old Testament provides us is an overview of the design and function of societies and cultures, and the human desires, needs, interactions, morals, and relationships that allows us to understand the social dynamics and the dynamics between God and His social creation. We also find detailed case examples of the wide range of human emotions, connections, wrongs, rights, and actions, to which we see this replicated throughout time and cultures. This provides us with a great deal of understanding of people and society even before going out to study social phenomena.

b. Are there any changes in biblical thought about the issue from the Old to the New Testament?

Are there any developments in biblical thought about the issue in the New Testament?

What we get from the transition into the New Testament is a key understanding that people exist within a historical context and that history not only shapes the future, but people can be informed of their current state by reflecting upon history. In addition, we not only get to see the fullness of redemptive process, but also, we see the vast contrast of a way of life in Christianity to the secular world and other religions. The characteristics of Christianity are all a model of a well-functioning society that allows individuals and the community to flourish in relationship to each other and God Himself.

c. Are there any developments in Christian thought and history about the issue since biblical times?

Even within the New Testament, we see the issues that arise in religion or anything else when humans are involved, but as we have looked upon Christian history we have seen time and time again the dysfunction of the human Christian church, and how it is very easy for people to use Christianity for their own purpose and gains. Many times, throughout history we find Christians on the wrong side of Christianity (i.e., racism, political moves and so on), which points to the issues of religion being a social construction, which Christianity is not but could be easily molded into a human religion.

d. If the subject/problem is not directly addressed in the Bible, what principle can be extrapolated from a clear biblical teaching which helps to frame the subject/problem within a Christian worldview?

e. Which contemporary natural or social sciences address this subject/ problem?

What additional perspectives does each science or discipline add?

f. How do religious and scientific perspectives interact or integrate in providing a more comprehensive account of the subject/problem?

Appendix 4B: Interdisciplinary Research Worksheet

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Step 4 Converting Your Synthesized Topic to a Formal Social Research Problem and Hypothesis:

See excerpt from Empirical Research in the Social Sciences by Richard Walters, pp.25-26.

At this stage of the program, Stage 4 (at he beginning of the Interdisciplinary Research Worksheet) is described as a synthesizing step. This is where to use sources on your subject written by Christians who are farther along than you, and who have done the faith-integrating work for you, and who have proposed Christian approaches to your topic.

You then need in this stage to imagine a hypothetical social research project. Assume you collect and analyze data (do not worry about how, it is too early in the program for that yet). Assume the project was completed (written in past tense) and that research findings supported the educated guess that produced your Research Problem and Hypothesis. See below:

Example Problem: It is not known whether teenagers abuse drugs or alcohol to escape from negative thoughts about themselves.”

Example Hypothesis: Drug abusing teenagers will score higher on the I Feel Worthless Inventory than non-drug abusing teenagers.

Hypothetical Research Results (this is what you project in STEP 4): The drug abusing teenagers scored higher in statistically significant measures on the I Feel Worthless Inventory than non-drug abusing teenagers.

You need to articulate a research discovery worth sharing before you figure out how to communicate it (Step 5, and then you influence with it through leadership application of “So What” change your world strategies to enact in Step 6).

Step 5 Contextualization- Who is the target audience you want to influence with this research project? How can you package your results to be persuasive with them? This stage and Stage 6 you work through as a hypothetical, kind of as a plan in the future tense. My target audience is XXXXX and they have these characteristics 1), xxxx, 2) xxxx, etc. Therefore, to adapt my findings to communicate persuasively with them, I can emphasize the following benefits, and use the following venues (??? research report, multimedia presentation, trade journal article, etc. ???), AND SO ON...

Step 6 Orthopraxis/Leadership- Also, for ease of understanding, Step 6 moved in the article from being called orthopraxis to leadership. Leadership is all about applying truth and solutions within groups, whether they are in the context of any kind of human organization in family, church or society, as the OGS world changer mission statement states.

Step 7 Evaluation (of the Process)- Make this Journal-like, i.e. here is what I learned from this process, and here is how, if I did follow through in practice with Steps 5 & 6, that I could assess the effective of the results.

STEP 4: SYNTHESIZED INTERDISCIPLINARY FORMULATION (WITH SOCIAL RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS)

How would you synthesize what you have learned to this point into a statement that describes the problem you want to address? One or two sentences should be adequate to the describe the problem you would use interdisciplinary social science research to address (i.e. you would need to collect and analyze real world data to test how you address the problem). What is the subject/problem that prompts the need to do Christian interdisciplinary research?

For this case, what I am interested in is learning more about the current state and role Christian sociology plays in academic and public sociology. However, I could break this down more into a actual research issue.

CONVERTING TO A FORMAL SOCIAL RESEARCH PROBLEM AND HYPOTHESIS:

See excerpt from Empirical Research in the Social Sciences by Richard Walters, pp.25-26.

How would you state your research problem and reframe it as a testable social research hypothesis?

Research Problem: How would you state your research problem in a declarative sentence about what is not known that the research will clarify?

Example: “It is not known whether teenagers abuse drugs or alcohol to escape from negative thoughts about themselves.”

My Research Problem: Does Christian sociology have a concern to address real world problems?

Research Hypothesis: How could you communicate your research hunches as predictions? A social research hypothesis asserts an educated guess about how two conditions or social phenomena are related so that it makes a comparison that can be tested by collecting real world data and analyzing it to see if the hypothesis is supported/confirmed.

Example: Drug abusing teenagers will score higher on the I Feel Worthless Inventory than non-drug abusing teenagers.

My Research Hypothesis: Christian sociological research has a higher rate of concern for addressing (action orientated) real world problems than does secular sociological research.

Significance: What difference would the research make to change the world? It would help inform Christian sociologist in their current role and perhaps guide us to lead sociology to the roots of social action orientation of sociological research.

STEP 5: CRITICAL (APOLOGETIC) AND CONTEXTUAL COMMUNICATION

What critical reasons (apologetic) can you give for why your interdisciplinary Christian perspective should be accepted?

The power of sociology needs to be shared to the greater public, for their benefit as well as being shared to believers for the benefit of others.

Christian sociologist could help move the larger body of sociology to more of a social action orientated discipline.

a. How will you answer the contrary perspectives to your view?

Secular sociologist may criticize Christian sociologist for not being concerned for people who may not live a life in line with Christianity. This may be the case; I do hope we as Christian sociologists can display our deep Christian love for all people.

b. Are there any objections or criticisms from variant views that should be anticipated and preempted?

I do find that sociology is a very diverse field with many different kinds of people and perspectives, which is a great benefit for the field. I also find that sociology can easily find the negatives of religion and in particular, Christianity. Nevertheless, we as Christians are called to engage the world, and sociology is a very robust place to engage the world. I found that the key factor in standing up for Christ is just showing up, and allow God to work through us who show up even in possible hostile environments such as sociology.

How do you need to contextualize your perspective to influence your culture/context where it applies?

This is a good question; I am not sure I have the complete answer. I do know as Christian sociologist we have the benefit of learning about the social world in a broader perspective than most people get to experience. This is a great benefit to us as we can open our minds beyond the typical socialization, it is almost we are allowed to see the world in a way that God see’s the world in a wide vibrant way, but could also feel ashamed by the harm we see that people cause each other in so many ways including using religion as a tool of harm.

c. What cultural conditions might cause resistance or misunderstanding of an approach to the subject/problem which sociologically integrates religion and society?

Many Christians hold an anti-sociology position, where it is seen as a secular anti-religious field, however, it is the most fruitful complimentary form of study to Christianity. I do hope to bring the benefits of sociological research into Christian studies, church development and outreach and community involvement to the church.

d. What social conditions need to be changed in order to sociologically integrate religion and society with regard to the subject/problem?

Christian sociologist not only need to work on sociology for the church, but also for secular social problems and contribute high quality sociological research on everyday social problems that impact all people no matter their religious beliefs.

e. What can you do to make your proposal more persuasive in order to “change your world”?

I would like to be a Christian sociologist that contributes to helping to change the world for Christ, to be an instrument of God. But also, I want to be Christian sociologist that contributes to helping changing the world for the betterment of people and for the love of people no matter who they are, even people who do not hold to Christian values.

STEP 6: ETHICAL & SOCIAL ORTHOPRAXIS (i.e. LEADERSHIP ACTIONS)

What practical implications does your interdisciplinary Christian perspective have for your orthopraxis or leadership for world change?

My Christian sociological perspective helps inform my orthopraxis and leadership for world change. I am no one special, I am not a talented academic, I am not even a model Christian. I do care and have a sincere love for people, I have sociological insight of a hurting world of people, so with that, I have to do something to try to make the world a better place for people, whether by sharing the gospel, or fighting for the rights of people along side of people, to supporting policy changes, God has given me this life and field to help live a large Christian life and to help make positive changes in the world, so I got to do it, I need to show up and let God lead.

a. What applications for your orthopraxis/leadership need to be made to your personal or family life?

This could be a double-edged sword, where we have a broader social calling that could consume our life, but we need to do our calling considering our family commitments. We do not want to create more social problems, while trying to solve other social problems.

b. What applications for your orthopraxis/leadership need to be made to your church life?

We need to share our sociological insight with our own home church as well as to churches in our community and beyond, to help bring a higher collaboration among believers and churches to support each other and their communities.

c. What applications for your orthopraxis/leadership need to be made to your work or community life?

I will need to keep focus on making contributions to academic sociology and public sociology with my sociological research. In addition to help support the community in social research needs and also be active in on the ground activism to support community concerns and social problems.

STEP 7: REFLECTIVE EVALUATION

a. How well did the research satisfy the original need for inquiry? Were there aspects of the problem left unanswered in the research design?

There may be Christian sociologist that are unknown if they are Christian but are doing action orientated sociological research.

b. Did the findings spawn new ideas that need to be taken through the interdisciplinary process?

Yes, new ideas on how to track the focus of Christian sociology verse secular sociology and both to see how it tracks with the current evens throughout the world.

c. Did the attempts at orthopraxis surface any gaps between your position in Step 4 and the adequacy of its ethical and/or social orthopraxis/leadership? Why?

I think a key role of Christian sociologist is to study the orthopraxis of the church, in order to help promote orthopraxis within believers. Because of the issue that Christian are still fallen humans and a susceptible to the ways of the world and the lure of power and pride, which may lead us to try to conform Christianity to our way of thinking and living instead of submitting to Christ’s transformative love.

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