SR 968-22

Sociological Methodology

Susan Flores-Edwards

Omega Graduate School

Date (April 29, 2024)

Professor

Dr. Joshua Reichard, DPhil, PhD, EdS, CCS

Assignment

### *Developmental Readings*

Review Assignment #3, the course essential elements, assigned readings, and recommended readings to identify selections of books and scholarly articles to identify and select developmental reading sources and entries.

* Refer to the “[Student Guide to Developmental Readings](https://drive.google.com/file/d/161V_FaYR2BnNGCSFUlWPjUSIQzcH04Hq/view?usp=share_link)” for updated information on sample comments, rubrics, and key definitions related to developmental readings.

**Source One:** Wallis, D., Coatsworth, J. D., Mennis, J., Riggs, N. R., Zaharakis, N., Russell, M. A., & Mason, M. J. (2022). Predicting self-medication with Cannabis in young adults with hazardous Cannabis use. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(3), 1850.

**Comment 1:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“The strength of this relationship is implicit in the substance’s reliable ability to alleviate unpleasant feelings, thus reinforcing this behavioral pattern” (p.2)

**Essential Element:**

This quote involves the Essential Element of Interdisciplinary Approach to Social Analysis and Faith-Integrated Sociological Analysis

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

**This quote is variant.** Young individuals turn to cannabis for depressive symptoms relief, but as the drug mislead them, so can supporters of medical marijuana laws. Heddendorf and Vos (2009) emphasized the use of "card stacking" propaganda techniques which selectively highlight an agenda at the expense of covering negative evidence. Critics of the Medical Marijuana Laws (MML) demonstrate this facade to advance recreational cannabis use by aligning them with Recreational Marijuana Laws (RML) (Williams et al., 2024).

 Further, Advocates posit that the legalization of cannabis could potentially result in the decriminalization of individuals arrested for possession, thereby reducing the prison population (Mohr-Avitia, 2024). Yet both (MML) and (RML) disregard the risks of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) addiction that can lead teenagers to develop cannabis use disorder (CUD) ( Mennis et al., 2023 )

**Contextualization:**

2 Peter 2:19 cautions against false teachers who promise freedom but lead us into slavery to our vices. This serves as a poignant reminder of how societal influences can deceive teens into believing that marijuana, whether viewed as medicinal or less harmful than opioids, is a harmless recreational choice. However, this illusion can spiral into addiction, as individuals turn to the drug to numb the silent pain of depressive symptoms. Womack et al, (2016) highlighted, that marijuana use causes a dual impact. Adolescents and young adults use it to alleviate mental health struggles like depression and anxiety, or to combat sleep deprivation but inadvertently develop depression symptoms.

As a change agent, my goal is to raise awareness about the symptoms of depression in teenagers and their use of cannabis as a means to alleviate the pain they experience in silence. I aim to educate them about the significant risks associated with cannabis use disorder. Throughout my life, I have encountered numerous instances of deck-stacking agendas that masquerade as genuine interest only for a specific group, but ultimately to my detriment. Groothuis (2009) cautioned that “lies become idols, and every idol obscures the truth. This is because all idols are unrealities in deceptive dress, untruths and shabby social constructions of the supposed sacred.” Therefore, I am primarily concerned with the impact of cannabis on the adolescent mind, rather than the societal policies that neglect a vulnerable group.

**Comment 2:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“To better understand this high-risk behavior, a sample of 290 young adults (ages 18–25; 45.6% female) were recruited from two U.S. universities in January and February of 2020 to complete a survey about their cannabis use and self-medication. Results: seventy-six percent endorsed using cannabis to reduce problems such as anxiety, sleep, depression, pain, loneliness, social discomfort, and concentration” (p.1, Wallis et al., 2022)

**Essential Element:**

This quote involves the Essential Elements of Methods for Christian Social Change Faith-Integrated Sociological Analysis

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is additive and variant. Prominent universities in the United States highlight that young adults and teens turn to cannabis consumption to alleviate the complex issues they encounter. In his 2016 work, Benn Tweedell highlights that when the social aspects of illicit cannabis use disrupt the system, it creates a further social problem for teenagers grappling with adverse psychological issues. To establish societal order, sociologists must address this structural-functionalist perspective.

Furthermore, other sociologists observe the tensions, such as social conflict, that emerge among teenagers, mental health organizations, and society as a whole. Tweedell suggests that an *interactionist* research approach can assist teenagers in comprehending their depressive symptoms, acquiring improved coping mechanisms, and learning to collaborate with family, mental health support groups, and professional mental health providers ( Benn Tweedell, 2016).

**Contextualization:**

It is clear that adolescents and young adults require the guidance of alternative medicine practitioners to recognize that cannabis is not a sleep aid, pain reliever, or social crutch, nor does it enhance focus. Cannabis does not serve as a solution for these challenges.

I am currently pursuing a Ph.D. in naturopathy, aiming to utilize my training to guide young adults toward healthier coping techniques beyond relying on cannabis.

Research indicates that individuals diagnosed with depression are prone to experiencing sleep disturbances compared to those without such a diagnosis (Leone, 2022). For young adults, maintaining good sleep hygiene plays a critical role in promoting mental well-being and combatting depression. Given that teenagers' brains are still developing, they need between 8 to 10 hours of sleep. Sleep deprivation can exacerbate symptoms of depression and concentration.

 A study by Williams et al. (2024) suggests that long-term marijuana use bears similarities to attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). This association raises worries about how prolonged cannabis use may affect cognitive functions and behaviors linked to ADHD symptoms. Thus, relying on cannabis for focus may ironically lead to decreased focus and the development of ADHD.

**Source Two:** Saunders, Stephen M. (2023). *Martin Luther on Mental Health: Practical advice for Christians today .* Concordia Publishing House.

**Comment 3:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

Christians might get caught up in their subjective experience of distress and mistakenly question whether their faith is “good enough.” Many mistakenly believe that the idea of salvation and God’s love should always cause them joy. They condemn themselves for their sin and because they do not feel the joy of salvation (p.59).

**Essential Element:**

This quote involves the Essential Element ofMethods for Christian Social Change

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

**This quote is additive**. In a world where sin exists, pain and sorrow are inevitable. It can be challenging for believers to comprehend that their suffering is not necessarily a result of their own actions or the actions of others. The story of Job in the Bible serves as a reminder that God may allow suffering to teach individuals the importance of leading a righteous life, even in the face of adversity (Ross, 2020).

As part of a Christian church body, it is crucial not to passively observe young individuals struggling with depression and suicidal thoughts, but to offer them counsel rooted in the teachings of God (Saunders, 2023). Providing them with hope in times of despair, especially when dealing with an illness that diminishes their ability to cope.

Encouraging practices such as meditation, maintaining a healthy diet, regular exercise, and utilizing natural remedies can offer a more constructive approach compared to relying on drugs or succumbing to hopelessness (Leone, 2022). A Christian community is vital to rekindle hope to those enduring mental anguish and guide them towards a path that reinstates faith and their desire to live despite their pain.

**Contextualization:**

Stanford (2021) argues that people tend to seek support from clergy members rather than primary care physicians or psychiatrists when dealing with psychological distress, as shown in a seven-year study. It is time for the church to reembrace the omniscience of God and operate under His authority rather than ceding it to humanity in the guise of science (Heddendorf & Vos, 2009).

Teens grappling with depression should understand that their brains, integral to their bodies, are divinely created (Psalm 139:13). Thus, damaging their brains with cannabis in an attempt to escape the harsh realities of their suffering is not the solution.

 I recently read "By the Time You Read This," authored by Simpkins and Kryst, which revealed that Kryst, in her suicide note, expressed a desire to end her life due to the pain of depression. She tragically took her life by jumping from the 29th floor of her apartment building in New York City. This passage moved me to tears as I read it, reinforcing my conviction that my purpose is to guide teenagers to embrace the life that God has already ordained for them.

**Comment 4:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

He said, “In cases of melancholy and sickness, I conclude it is merely the work of the devil. For God makes us not melancholy, nor affrights nor kills us, for he is a God of the living.” Saunders, (p. 47).

This quote involves the Essential Element of Methods for Christian Social Change

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is additive and variant. Mental Illness and all illness stem from the fall of man but the sin is not attributed to the afflicted sinful ways. In John 3 9:3 the man born blind narrative Christ assured his disciples that the man’s blindness did not occur because of retributive punishment but to Glorify the works of God miraculous healing.

 Saunders (2023) asserted that Christians may sometimes associate mental health issues with sin, lack of faith, or divine punishment. These ideas are inaccurate and misguided, yet they are perpetuated by supporters of the theology of glory. While mental health is linked to sin as discussed earlier, blaming the individual for their suffering is deemed heretical by Saunders.

The church often believes that prayers alone can address mental health concerns, overlooking the fact that individuals with heart conditions or diabetes seek medical treatment along with prayers (Pingleton, 2023). In the account shared by Stanford (2019), the author recounted the tale of Rachel, a member of a different church, who was said to have been miraculously healed. Subsequently, members of her church advised to discontinue her medications and depend solely on their teachings and prayers. Rachel followed this advice, and tragically, a few weeks later, she took her own life.

**Contextualization:**

McIntyre (2013) suggests that researchers should approach their work with a sociological framework and maintain a critical mindset, avoiding assumptions. This does not imply skepticism towards scripture, but rather a cautious attitude towards healing methods that necessitate a combination of professional allopathic and naturopathic medicines.

McIntyre (2013) suggests that researchers should approach their work with a sociological framework and maintain a critical mindset, avoiding assumptions. This does not imply skepticism towards scripture, but rather a cautious attitude towards healing methods that necessitate a combination of professional allopathic and naturopathic medicines.

**Comment 5:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

Affect is a feeling at a particular moment. My affect is happy when I get news of another grandchild on the way, but later my affect is tense during a discussion with a colleague (p. 359) Saunders, 2023

**Essential Element:**

This quote involves the Essential Element of Interdisciplinary Approach to Social Analysis

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

“The simplest answer is that the world suffers from sin.” (Heddendorf & Vos, p.313, 2009). Sin influences the mind, shaping thoughts that dictate one's daily life. These thoughts become the master of the individual. Attributing negative and positive thoughts to chemicals in the brain, Amen (2015) suggests that one can harness the power to manage their thoughts by challenging automatic negative thoughts (ANTS). By questioning the reality of these thoughts, their absolute truth, awareness of feelings during the thought, and potential alternative thoughts, individuals can take control of their cognitive patterns.

However, societal norms often overlook mental health conditions like anxiety and depression due to their invisible nature. *Social norms* establish behavioral expectations and enforce consequences by society if not followed, often resulting in stigmatization (McIntyre, 2013). Consequently, behaviors that deviate from the social norm can lead to ostracism. Locke likens the mind to a blank slate, a *tabula rasa* suggesting that thoughts are shaped by experiences (Scimecca, 2009). In (Philippians 4:7) God reminds believers must open their minds and filled it with that peace comes from him and those who seek his wisdom that is beyond understanding will obtain a clear mind that is protected and guarded in Christ name. The *Thomas theorem* posits that one's perceptions play a crucial role in shaping outcomes (McIntyre, 2013). Individuals experiencing negative thoughts associated with anxiety and depression may succumb to feelings of despair, perceiving life as futile.

**Contextualization:**

God created us with a sense of joy and contentment, reflecting his goodness in all creation (Gen 1:31). However, the fall introduced unhappiness. Unfortunately, many teenagers battling depression face constant sorrow alone. Durkheim coined the term *egotistic suicide* to explain that a weakened family or community unit allows individuals to succumbed to isolation (Newman, 2021). In this case youth suffering with depression and egoistic suicided is a detrimental combination that results in negative coping skills if ending their lives of the pain they experience.

Ross (2020) reminds us that the book of Job provides an opportunity to draw near to God to uncover a deeper interpretation, and illuminate the message of suffering in the lives of others. Job undoubtedly teaches us to find inspiration in his unwavering faith amidst suffering.

 In my efforts to aid depressed teens with cannabis, I aim to guide them in embracing their struggles as part of our human condition in a flawed world yet delivered by it in wisdom through God (Job 36: 15-23). Similar to how the Apostle Paul recognized that his weaknesses only made him stronger for God's work (2 Cor:12).

**Comment 6:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

Behaviors that are particularly bad for mental health are social isolation and lack of participation in enjoyable activities, which leads to an unhealthy lifestyle.

Saunders, S (p. 102).

**Essential Element:**

This quote involves the Essential Element of Interdisciplinary Approach to Social Analysis.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is additive. Sociologists delve into social issues to uncover their connections with broader society, encompassing culture, family, friends, employment, class, and race relations (McIntyre, 2013). Communities addressing the needs of teens with mental health concerns exemplify what sociologists define as essential community support. Neglecting social connections and engaging in stigmatizing situations can evoke emotions such as fear, shame, embarrassment, guilt, and isolation (McKenzie et al., 2022 ).

Sociologists advocate for enhancing life through fostering community bonds. Embracing diverse cultures, languages, beliefs, and histories is pivotal for peaceful coexistence (Newman, 2021).Therefore, teenagers are urged to engage in activities such as martial arts, team sports, or running, which stimulate neurobiological processes in the brain, triggering the release of mood-boosting chemicals like dopamine and serotonin (Amen, 2015)

Scripture promotes individual involvement in the church community for worship and creating ministries that reflect God's gifts of mercy to others, inspiring a deeper understanding of spirituality(Ross, 2020).

**Contextualization:**

Upon reading "Depression Hates a Moving Target" by Sweeney (2019), I realized the importance of staying active to combat negative thoughts and engage in the wonders of God's creation. Being outdoors allows us to appreciate the beauty around us and serves as a reminder of the magnificence of the universe.

When my children feel stressed, I always encourage them to take a run or a walk in our neighborhood. These activities, especially walking, not only enhance our creativity in writing and planning but also provide us with a moment to reflect and connect with God. During our Sunday service, the pastor emphasized the significance of worshipping God in both times of sorrow and joy.

**Comment 7:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“He or she needs to hear God’s words of love. He or she needs the embrace of the community of believers. You and your church can offer comfort and consolation to those with mental illness and their loved ones” (Saunders,2023)

**Essential Element:**

This quote involves the Essential Element of Methods for Christian Social Change

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is additive. God's work, commanded by him, can be viewed from a sociological perspective as establishing an *absolute norm* that fosters structure and stability within a culture (Heddendorf & Vos, 2009). Embracing an absolute norm is exemplified in the care and support provided to individuals battling mental health challenges like depression and anxiety.

The church, serving as advocates for teenage mental health within and beyond their community, can function as quasi-professionals. As the coaches intertwine their experiences with the broader societal landscape, particularly concerning teenagers grappling with mental health issues, a phenomenon referred to as the *sociological imagination* occurs (Furr, 2022).

 In this capacity, ministries take charge of identifying, acknowledging, and linking individuals with mental health issues to community resources, psychologists in the church or local healthcare, and psychiatrists.

Moreover, as Pingleton (2022) research underscores, the proactive involvement of ministries in addressing the mental health needs of others not only facilitates access to critical care facilities but also underscores the significance of a compassionate and responsive approach in promoting holistic well-being.

**Contextualization:**

I started training with Light University's mental health coaching program for adults and teens. The program enlightened me after reading "Mental Illness is Real" (Pingleton, 2022). This experience elevated my training to actively assist and connect individuals with mental health services. I feel privileged to gain in-depth knowledge as a mental health coach, especially considering the shortage of para-health professionals. My intention is to extend this service and training to the English-speaking Caribbean, where mental health support is lacking for conditions like depression and anxiety. Unfortunately, in countries like Trinidad, mental health needs are often approached with a clinical and distant demeanor, rather than the compassion required. This impersonal approach by nurses and mental health assistants can lead those in need to self-stigmatize and shy away from seeking help within their communities. As per Brown's (2020) recommendation, the ultimate aim is to establish a pastoral care approach that is inclusive of all individuals.

**Source Three:** Dempsey, B., Looney, K., McNamara, R., Michalek, S., & Hennessy, E. (2022). An experimental investigation of adolescent and young adult responses to stigmatizing and supportive social media posts in response to a depressed peer. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *131*, 107229.

**Comment 8:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

Examples of stigmatizing comments included: ‘Your physical health is all that's important, don't forget that’, and ‘We've missed you at training, but don't come back with this attitude’. Positive comments included: ‘Hope you're doing well’ and ‘It'd be great seeing you back at training again’ (p.3).

**Essential Element:**

This quote involves the Essential Element of Methods for Christian Social Change

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

Stigmatization hinders individuals from seeking treatment as they perceive society has abandoned them, leading to self-abandonment. While stigmatization is a prevalent phenomenon across various cultures, fostering a culture of inclusion not only helps to combat prejudices but also nurtures a profound sense of belonging among individuals (Lehmann et al., 2022). This emphasis on inclusivity can contribute significantly to creating a more supportive and understanding environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

Social stigma ranks as the second most cited reason for not accessing mental health care (Stanford, 2019). Scimecca (2009) posits that sociologists are equipped to decipher human behavior patterns. They may link an individual's depression to societal treatment. For instance, due to discriminatory practices, African Americans the LGBQT community often exhibit higher rates of depressive symptoms (Mohr-Avitia, 2024 ). Sociologists like Tönnies champion supportive relationships based on empathy and care, known as *Gemeinschaft* or communal relationships. *Gemeinschaft* fosters societal responsibility towards one another (McIntyre, 2023).

**Contextualization:**

Whenever I visit Trinidad, a place close to my heart, the scenes that unfold often reveal a poignant reality. My brothers, resilient yet burdened by the weight of societal stigma, continue to grapple with its enduring effects. In a recent incident, a heartfelt wedding invitation extended by a friend was met with a bittersweet response from one of them.

Overwhelmed by a sense of unworthiness, he declined the invitation, expressing deep-seated feelings of not fitting in and apprehensions about being perceived as different. When I gently probed further, seeking to understand the source of his reluctance, he simply uttered, "Because of how I am." It pains me to witness how pervasive stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding mental health can deeply impact individuals, leading them to feel marginalized and unwelcome in social settings. Society's tendency to unfairly label those with mental illness as "crazy," "violent," or "worthless" only serves to perpetuate the cycle of discrimination and misunderstanding (Clinton, 2019).

Youssef, (2018) noted that there exists a lack of awareness about mental illness in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and Jamaica, accompanied by significant stigma towards individuals dealing with schizophrenia or addiction.

During my last visit to Trinidad in January 2019 for my nephew's wedding, I made it clear to my brother that his presence was a must for me to attend the event. I not only showed up but also danced with him at the ceremony, where he looked dashing in a stylish summer suit. Instead of simply offering a quick assurance (Saunders, 2023). I crafted a solution that treated him as a person distinct from his illness. From a theological standpoint, it is crucial to grasp Christ's ministry, understanding that our actions towards the least among us are akin to serving Christ (Matt 25:40).

**Source Four:** Wolny, R. W. (2017). Hyperreality and simulacrum: Jean Baudrillard and European postmodernism. *European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, *3*(3), 75-79.

**Comment 9:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“For Lyotard, the postmodern condition was marked with the crisis of the status of knowledge expressed as incredulity towards metanarratives (also called grand narratives) like Christianity, liberalism (and later, neo-liberalism), Marxism, etc., with their privileged truths to tell.” (p.5).

**Essential Element:**

This quote involves the Essential Element of Methods for Christian Social Change

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

Christianity is founded on a divine truth believed to emanate from a faithful God who created his people. Throughout history, God's faithfulness is evident in Scripture, where he rescued the Hebrews from their enemies as foretold, promising a future king from the line of Judah to deliver humanity from sin.(Rev 5) Those who trust in God's truth and promises find salvation from sin and its repercussions (John 3:16).

From a sociological standpoint, Weber’s rationalism is in view- God having created mankind and providing for their needs in a calculated manner. This provision is exemplified through historical suffering, yet there remains hope in the redemption and restoration offered through God sending his son (Romans 8:32)

In essence, the God of truth intricately orchestrates each individual's life on earth while granting them the autonomy to make choices under his guidance.

**Contextualization:**

To guide teens in making informed choices for their mental, physical, and spiritual well-being, it's crucial to present the truth about medical marijuana and recreational laws (Anderson eta al., 2023) Often, the interests of cannabis laws align more with businesses than with the vulnerable youth who may not fully grasp the repercussions of their actions. In a Marxist interpretation, those advocating for such laws are akin to the bourgeoisie, benefitting financially, while teenagers, unknowingly supporting the industry through their cannabis use, are like the proletariat (Benn Tweedle, 2016 )

Cannabis use can lead to both physical and psychological dependence, with THC receptors in the brain driving cravings for more (Womack, et al., 2016) Meanwhile, this addiction may divert teens from exploring their spirituality. As an agent of change, I feel compelled to emphasize the role of faith in overcoming challenges like addiction. Saint Augustine's words resonate,

**Source Five:** Heddendorf, R.; Vos, M. (2009). *Hidden threads: A Christian critique of Sociological Theory* . UPA. Kindle Edition.

**Comment 10:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“Our tendency is often to lock into a mode of thinking and then explain all problems with a view that is overly biased by that thinking. Such an approach usually avoids the facts and clings to the convenience of past answers. The study of social thought enables us to look at these issues more objectively and, hopefully, to act more decisively”

It's easy to get stuck in one way of thinking and then try to explain everything with a view that is too skewed toward that way of thinking. This way of thinking usually stays away from facts and sticks to easy answers from the past. We can look at these problems more clearly and, hopefully, act with more resolve when we study social thought.

**Essential Element:**

This quote involves the Essential Element of Interdisciplinary Approach to Social Analysis

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is additive. Objective social thought relies on factual data for scholars' research. Exploring teen depression symptoms and coping mechanisms, specifically those involving cannabis, highlights the cognitive impairment caused by the drug (Mennis et al., 2023). Moreover, the concerning suicide rate in America continues to rise (Anderson et al., Tragically, suicide remains the leading cause of death among teenagers. Augustine (2011) emphasizes to Christians that nowhere in the holy books is there a divine command or allowance to end one's own life, whether to attain immortality or to avoid or rid oneself of anything.

**Contextualization:**

Through my exploration of social reform in teen mental health, I have honed my ability to research and think objectively. As researchers, our social perspectives can be clouded by biases, leading us to become emotionally attached to viewpoints unsupported by facts.

Initially skeptical about the link between cannabis and depression or psychosis, I doubted that such a substance could truly impact cognitive and mental well-being. Despite lacking personal interest in the drug, extensive research revealed the profound effect of the THC component on the brain. Consequently, my social research prioritizes objective analysis over emotional biases or preconceived notions.

Conversations with older individuals often highlight a general lack of awareness regarding cannabis' adverse effects, with many influenced by the positive portrayals propagated by medical marijuana proponents.

**Source Six: :** Argyriou, A., Goldsmith, K.A. & Rimes, K.A. (2021). Mediators of the disparities in depression between sexual minority and heterosexual individuals: A systematic review. *Arch Sex Behav* 50, 925–959. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-020-01862-0>

Comment 11 :

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“This review found evidence consistent with suggestions that stressors such as victimization, harassment, abuse, life stress, and reduced social and familial support contribute to the increased depression rates found in sexual minority individuals compared to heterosexuals” p.946

**Essential Element:**

This quote involves the Essential Element of Methods for Christian Social Change, Sociological Framework for Cultural Analysis

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

A sociologist asserts that social issues stem from the influence of individuals by others through social factors (McIntyre, 2013). For young individuals experiencing depression, contributing factors may include victimization, abuse, lack of family support, external stressors, and sexual orientation.

Modern sociologists utilize a Marxist or conflict tradition to categorize the contributing factors of teen depressive symptoms (McIntyre, 2013).

Sociologists perceive teen depression and cannabis use as societal issues, not just individual ones. For instance, a history of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) can shape the onset of depression. Discrimination based on sexual orientation, family stress, job-related pressure, and family conflicts are all contributing factors. These are aspects that social researchers consider when collecting data.

In Christian doctrine, all individuals are vulnerable to mistreatment and neglect, regardless of their sexual orientation. The proposed approach involves educating sexual minorities on God's judgment of all transgressions and guiding those affected towards solace and solidarity within the Christian community.

The Christian perspective opposes any form of violence or prejudice towards sexual minorities. Instead, it encourages inclusivity to unveil the truth of God's wisdom. Presently, misled by misleading doctrines that normalize same-sex inclinations and advocate for societal approval, individuals are led astray. (Romans 15:7).

**Contextualization:**

Dedicated to supporting young individuals facing mental health challenges like depression and anxiety, I champion a service that warmly welcomes all youths. Inspired by successful programs in Australia and Ireland, this initiative focuses on improving the social well-being of young people dealing with mental and sexual health issues. According to Malla et al (2018), the community-based support group should allow youths to join without a referral, providing access as needed. It's crucial to consider the preferences and technology access of young individuals while ensuring the availability of counseling, psychotherapy, and mediation services at the proposed support center. To enrich the center, I propose incorporating biblical counseling to reflect Christian values and integrate the word of God, creating a nurturing and inclusive environment.

**Source Seven:** James, A. C. (2024). *Psychotherapists’ Attitudes Toward and Experiences With E-therapy in Trinidad and Tobago* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University).

**Comment 12:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“The research suggests that while there has been an increasing national conversation and awareness about mental health in Trinidad and Tobago, the stigma associated with mental health issues persists” (p.197).

**Essential Element:**

This quote involves the Essential Element of Methods for Christian Social Change and the Sociological Framework for Cultural Analysis

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

Personal stigma encompasses an individual's biases, discrimination, and self-perception within a minority group (Kaushik, Kostaki, & Kyriakopoulas, 2016). According to Dempsey et al. (2019), recent research confirms that social media comments tend to stigmatize and belittle mental disorders more than physical health conditions. As online social interactions increase, it is crucial to proactively address and counteract stigma and trivialization on social media platforms (Matthews & Robinson, 2019). The researchers wisely targeted a younger, tech-savvy demographic for their study on combating stigma, as this group is more adept in navigating technological realms.

Stigma acts as a barrier hindering the progression of young individuals and their integration as productive members of society. In Trinidad, the sole psychiatric hospital faces significant challenges. Youssef (2018) highlights that despite the hospital's efforts to enhance services and reputation, it remains negatively perceived by the public. This perception leads families to conceal their loved ones in need of assistance due to the deep-seated stigma associated with mental health needs. Consequently, the hospital's reputation perpetuates the misconception of a high prevalence of mental illnesses and a perceived lack of government support for citizen rehabilitation efforts.

**Contextualization:**

My goal is to one day support young people struggling with depression in Trinidad and Tobago, helping them overcome self-stigma and social discrimination. A while back, I spoke with Mr. Jones, a family friend and nurse at St. Ann’s Hospital, to gather insights on youth support services and future interventions. He highlighted the positive impact of government-funded organizations like NWRHA, established by the Ministry of Health. These entities play a vital role in promoting mental wellness across different cities in the country. Assigned to each district, these agencies offer crucial social support to individuals with mental health challenges through outpatient services and counseling by dedicated social workers.

Trinidadian culture holds diverse views on mental health compared to developed nations, often leading to public stigmatization. Mr. Jones shared an experience from a health fair where only a few visitors engaged with the mental health information booth, reflecting prevalent beliefs associating mental illness with despair. I aim to raise awareness that individuals battling depression experience the same pain as anyone else, emphasizing that amidst our struggles, God provides solace. Trinidad’s spiritual landscape may seem to be diminishing, yet it presents an opportunity to emphasize the role of faith in my endeavors. Despite increasing secularism, many Trinidadians still hold onto their belief in a higher God.

**Works Cited**

Amen, G. D. (2015). *Change your brain, change your life.* Harmony/Rodale.[https://www.amazon.com/Change-Your-Brain-Revised-Expanded-ebook/dp/B01208WMYQ/ref=tmm\_kin\_swatch\_0?\_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Change-Your-Brain-Revised-Expanded-ebook/dp/B01208WMYQ/ref%3Dtmm_kin_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)

Anderson, D. M., & Rees, D. I. (2023). The public health effects of legalizing marijuana. *Journal of Economic Literature*, *61*(1), 86-143. <https://doi:10.1257/jel.20211635>

Augustine, S. (2011). *The complete works of Saint Augustine: The confessions, On grace and free will, the city of God, on Christian doctrine, expositions on the book of Psalms,*

Brown, Young. J. (2020). *Making space at the well:* *Mental Health and the Church* . Judson Press. [https://www.amazon.com/Making-SPACE-Well-Mental-Health-ebook/dp/B081S579XQ/ref=tmm\_kin\_swatch\_0?\_](https://www.amazon.com/Making-SPACE-Well-Mental-Health-ebook/dp/B081S579XQ/ref%3Dtmm_kin_swatch_0?_)

Clinton, T. (2019) *The struggle is real: How to care for mental and relational health needs in the Church* . WestBow Press. [https://www.amazon.com/Struggle-Real-Mental-Relational-Health-ebook/dp/B07965WJWZ/ref=sr\_1\_](https://www.amazon.com/Struggle-Real-Mental-Relational-Health-ebook/dp/B07965WJWZ/ref%3Dsr_1_)

Dempsey, B., Looney, K., McNamara, R., Michalek, S., & Hennessy, E. (2022). An experimental investigation of adolescent and young adult responses to stigmatizing and supportive social media posts in response to a depressed peer. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *131*, 107229. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107229>

Furr, Allen (2022). *The sociology of Mental Health and Illness* . SAGE Publications.

[https://www.amazon.com/Sociology-Mental-Health-Illness-ebook/dp/B09ZRXV4DZ/ref=sr\_1\_1?crid=2UD8694AIJ9](https://www.amazon.com/Sociology-Mental-Health-Illness-ebook/dp/B09ZRXV4DZ/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=2UD8694AIJ9)

Groothuis, D*.* (2009). *Truth decay: Defending Christianity against the challenges of postmodernism*. [https://www.amazon.com/Truth-Decay-Christianity-Challenges-Postmodernism-ebook/dp/B001XUR77A/ref=tm](https://www.amazon.com/Truth-Decay-Christianity-Challenges-Postmodernism-ebook/dp/B001XUR77A/ref%3Dtm)

[Seminal]

Heddendorf, R; Vos, M. (2009). *Hidden threads:* *A Christian critique of sociological theory .* UPA. [https://www.amazon.com/Hidden-Threads-Christian-Critique-Sociological-ebook/dp/B00BZAMWTG/ref=sr\_1\_1?crid](https://www.amazon.com/Hidden-Threads-Christian-Critique-Sociological-ebook/dp/B00BZAMWTG/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid)

Lehmann, C. S., Whitney, W. B., Un, J., Payne, J. S., Simanjuntak, M., Hamilton, S., ... & Fernandez, N. A. (2022). Hospitality towards people with mental illness in the church: A cross-cultural qualitative study. *Pastoral psychology*, *71*(1), 1-27.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-021-00982-1>

Fernandez, N. A. (2022). Hospitality towards people with mental illness in the church: a Cross-cultural Qualitative Study. *Pastoral psychology*, *71*(1), 1-27.

https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11089-021-00982-1

Leone, M. (2022). *Depression in youth and adults: Etiology, outcomes, and comorbidities*. [Doctoral dissertation, Karolinska Institute]. https://www.proquest.com/openview/55a8bef045a52878892d0d5d1d60e4d5/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=2026366&diss=

Malla, A., Shah, J., Iyer, S., Boksa, P., Joober, R., Andersson, N., ... & Fuhrer, R. (2018). Youth mental health should be a top priority for health care in Canada. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, *63*(4), 216-222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0706743718758968>

Matthews, J., & Robinson, T. (2019). Modern vagrancy in the anglophone Caribbean. *Caribbean Journal of Criminology*, *1*(4), 123-154.

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Janeille-Matthews/publication/337717837_Modern_Vagrancy_in_the_Anglophon>

Mennis, J., Stahler, G. J., & Mason, M. J. (2023). Cannabis legalization and the decline of cannabis use disorder (CUD) treatment utilization in the US. *Current Addiction Reports*, *10*(1), 38-51. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40429-022-00461-4>

McIntyre, L. (2013). *The practical skeptic: Core concepts in Sociology,* 6th edition (p. 2). McGraw-Hill Higher Education. [https://www.amazon.com/Practical-Skeptic-Core-Concepts-Sociology/dp/0078026873/ref=sr\_1\_1?crid=86OJAL3Y3VYI&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.re5TSYXyJKitsMMEbZsaKVw5DaHYHeXOA\_U5E7Uhu2Y](https://www.amazon.com/Practical-Skeptic-Core-Concepts-Sociology/dp/0078026873/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=86OJAL3Y3VYI&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.re5TSYXyJKitsMMEbZsaKVw5DaHYHeXOA_U5E7Uhu2Y)

McKenzie, S. K., Oliffe, J. L., Black, A., & Collings, S. (2022). Men’s experiences of mental illness stigma across the lifespan: a scoping review. *American journal of men's health*, *16*(1), 15579883221074789. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15579883221074789>

North West Regional Health Authority

<https://health.gov.tt/regional-health-authorities/north-west-regional-health-authority>

Pingleton, J. (2022) *Mental Health Ministry: The struggle is real* . Kindle Edition.

[https://www.amazon.com/Mental-Health-Ministry-Struggle-Real-ebook/dp/B0CQMPDWHT/ref=sr\_1\_1?crid=16DB9TXBBYZ03&dib=ey](https://www.amazon.com/Mental-Health-Ministry-Struggle-Real-ebook/dp/B0CQMPDWHT/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=16DB9TXBBYZ03&dib=ey)

Ross, H*.* (2020) *Hidden treasures in the Book of Job (Reasons to Believe): How the oldest book in the Bible answers today's scientific questions .* Baker Publishing Group. [https://www.amazon.com/Hidden-Treasures-Book-Reasons-Believe-ebook/dp/B005BOXNZ4/ref=sr\_1\_1?crid=2G0YHXW](https://www.amazon.com/Hidden-Treasures-Book-Reasons-Believe-ebook/dp/B005BOXNZ4/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=2G0YHXW)

Scimecca, Joseph A. (2018). *Christianity and Sociological Theory: Reclaiming the promise (Routledge advances in Sociology)*. Taylor and Francis. [https://www.amazon.com/Christianity-Sociological-Theory-Reclaiming-Routledge-ebook/dp/B07H47P7P1/ref=sr\_1\_](https://www.amazon.com/Christianity-Sociological-Theory-Reclaiming-Routledge-ebook/dp/B07H47P7P1/ref%3Dsr_1_)

Saunders, S. M. (2023). *Martin Luther on mental health: Practical advice for Christians today .* Concordia Publishing House. [https://www.amazon.com/Martin-Luther-Mental-Health-Christians-ebook/dp/B0CB6XJDGK/ref=tmm\_ki](https://www.amazon.com/Martin-Luther-Mental-Health-Christians-ebook/dp/B0CB6XJDGK/ref%3Dtmm_ki)

Simpkins, A & Kryst, C. (2024). *By the time you read this: The space between Cheslie's smile and mental illness—her story in her own words*

[https://www.amazon.com/Time-You-Read-This-Illness-Her-ebook/dp/B0CQKDRG1F/ref=sr\_1\_1?crid=2EE3VZWPQSYSY&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.zhhSjA-gUBzOHsu](https://www.amazon.com/Time-You-Read-This-Illness-Her-ebook/dp/B0CQKDRG1F/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=2EE3VZWPQSYSY&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.zhhSjA-gUBzOHsu)

Sweeney, Nita (2019). *Depression hates a moving target: How running with my dog brought me back from the brink*. Mango Media. [https://www.amazon.com/Depression-Hates-Moving-Target-audiobook/dp/B07WT5M3SP/ref=sr\_1\_1?crid=2NEEXHJ8WYD12&](https://www.amazon.com/Depression-Hates-Moving-Target-audiobook/dp/B07WT5M3SP/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=2NEEXHJ8WYD12&)

Stanford, M. (2021). *Madness and grace: A practical guide for pastoral care and serious mental illness* (*spirituality and mental health)*. Templeton Press. [https://www.amazon.com/Madness-Grace-Practical-Pastoral-Spirituality-ebook/dp/B094NSXKPC/ref=sr\_1\_1](https://www.amazon.com/Madness-Grace-Practical-Pastoral-Spirituality-ebook/dp/B094NSXKPC/ref%3Dsr_1_1)?

Wolny, R. W. (2017). Hyperreality and simulacrum: Jean Baudrillard and European postmodernism. *European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, *3*(3), 75-79.

<https://doi.org/10.26417/ejis.v8i1.p76-80>

Womack, S. R., Shaw, D. S., Weaver, C. M., & Forbes, E. E. (2016). Bidirectional associations between cannabis use and depressive symptoms from adolescence through early adulthood among at-risk young men. *Journal of studies on alcohol and drugs*, *77*(2), 287–297. <https://doi.org/10.15288/jsad.2016.77.287>

Youssef, F. F. (2018). Attitudes toward mental illness among Caribbean medical students. *Education for Health*, *31*(1), 3-9. *DOI:*10.4103/1357-6283.239029