Sociological Methodology

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Omega Graduate School

Date (May 25, 2024)

Professor

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***Assignment #4 – Course Learning Journal***

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while working in each course. The Learning Journal integrates the essential elements of the course within your professional field of interest. The objective of the course journal is to produce a degree of acculturation, integrating new ideas into your existing knowledge of each course. This is also an opportunity to communicate with your professor insights gained as a result of the course. **The course learning journal should be 3-5 pages** in length and should include the following sections:

1. **Introduction** –Summarize the intent of the course, how it fits into the graduate program as a whole, and the relevance of its position in the curricular sequence.
2. **Personal Growth** - Describe your personal growth–*how the course stretched or*

*challenged you*– and your progress in mastery of course content and skills during

the week and through subsequent readings – *what new insights or skills you gained.*

1. **Reflective Entry** - Add a reflective entry that describes the contextualization (or

*adaptation and relevant application*) of new learning in your professional field. What questions or concerns have surfaced about your professional field as a result of your study?

1. **Conclusion** – Evaluate the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional, religious, and educational goals.

In**troduction**

Sociological Methodology is a foundational course for all students at OGS. Through our studies, we learn and process the “why” and “how” in being a life-long scholar practioner, and world changer. Using critical thinking, research along with scripture, and discussion with peers, we can know and possibly understand how a Christian view of culture, both historically and presently can help in interpreting and analyzing current social issues.

 The order in which these courses are taught at OGS is interesting. Until I experienced each class, I had no idea how each study built on the previous one. It is interesting to note that Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis, and History of the Integration of Religion and Society, are before Faith-Learning Integration and Interdisciplinary Studies, and then follows Sociological Methodology.

 In Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis, I learned much about God and my thinking practices in relationship with Him, right Christian beliefs with right Christian practices. Did I really believe that my beliefs affected my thinking which affected my actions and behaviors? It was an inside-out learning. If I can know and understand myself, I may be able to analyze, know and understand society. Through the study of religion and societal history, my critical thinking skills were more developed as I was challenged to think through social reforms and Christian worldview.

 Faith-Learning Integration and Interdisciplinary Studies followed the above courses in my Omega Graduate School journey. As I pondered and analyzed issues and problems that need Christianity and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I used biblical integration and truths from scripture that would multiply my knowledge in helping adults in my sphere of influence and career.

 All these foundational courses I’ve mentioned continue to be favorites and I have found another one. Now, researching through sociological theories and analyzing writings of major sociological thinkers, with faith-integration has captured my interest. Most of all I’m fascinated with the book, *Hidden Threads: A Christian Critique of Sociological Theory,* by Russell Heddendorf and Matthew Vos.

 “Popular Christian social thought is, for the most part shallow. Perhaps a better word would be simplistic,” (Heddendorf & Vos 2009, p. 219). I agree with this statement, although a sad thought for the modern Christian church. However, when studied with Scripture, social principles are like hidden threads or Christian principles that need consideration if we are to make a difference in culture that is ever changing.

**Personal Growth**

I enjoy serendipitous moments! It seems the older I get, the more enjoyable they are. If it is true that sociology and Christianity can be “threads woven together,” (p. ix), then I believe that revelations by Jesus Christ given to us about these thoughts are part of these moments. These connections can take more time through research and contemplation of social theories with Christian principles and scripture, but they are worth the effort! These principles were given by God a long time before sociologists began their research.

 For me, inquisitive growth process continues as I understand thinking from beliefs causes reflective evaluation of what I am exposed to. I love people and making relationship with them. I’m learning as I read about Modernist, Post-modernist and Post-post-modernist Thinkers, through the book, they were created in the image of God, just like me. I did not look at them with a critical eye, as I used to. Studying them and their history and experiences through my biblical worldview, I understand more clearly, a little, why they thought as they did. They like me, are products of their experiences, whether they were Christian or not.

 This has sparked an interest in me to consider the Clinical Sociologist career, possibly a Clinical and Applied Sociology Certificate. As I researched on the internet after reading in *Hidden Threads*, the American Scientific Affiliation, I was able to join free, because I was a student. Now, from time to time, I read articles of interest there that may be of use in my current position as a school administrator.

 I’m always communicating with teachers and adults and am interested in helping them grow in relationship with God and with others. These moments with others as I listen to what Father God would have me say to them are not happenstance, coincidental, or accidental. Many of these moments are serendipitous and I’m thankful! I am learning what I am willing to teach!

**Reflective Entry**

 We are a society of people who question why others do what they do and how they are influenced by one another. In our grandson’s wedding recently, I had opportunity to view a way this current generation treats and respects others of older generations. This was the first wedding I attended as a grandmother of the groom. I was quite shocked at first, but swallowed hard, took a deep breath and observed new things.

 In our children’s weddings, as the mother of the bride (or groom) perhaps 20 years ago, traditions were quite different. Parents played an integral role in the wedding and were walked down the aisle to sit in a prominent place. As my husband and I got to the wedding venue, attended by at least 150 people, we were told by the coordinator that we could sit anywhere we wanted to. I found my daughter (mother of the groom) to ask if we were supposed to sit in the front with her, and she said she didn’t know. She herself had not received much information about the wedding and to ask the bride many logical questions all along the wedding process.

 I felt confused and did not understand. I did notice others my age and they seemed estranged from the bride and groom. All adults were, except for “friends” of the wedding party, the seemingly “chosen” family. It was so different from any wedding I’d gone to as far as the family was concerned. At this point, I had a choice to make to be who I was and lovingly care for others or continue to feel out of place. Because I love relationships, I knew there was a better way to influence.

 I thought back to other generations before for family weddings, even to the one mentioned where Jesus turned water into wine. I thought about international historical weddings that parties seemed to go on for days. Weddings where the parents chose the spouses for their children. Weddings where parents were respected and recognized in a place of honor where children were thankful to the ones who sacrificed for what they had been given.

 I watched for the interactions of the “chosen” family with one another. They were only talking, eating, and dancing with each other. No one conversed with the older generations. The older ones seemed to be okay with this. But I was praying, “Lord, what would you have me do to make a difference?”

 I remembered being encouraged to read, *Gracism: The Art of Inclusion,* by David Anderson. From my reading, “Systemic gracism emerges when a person of influence takes gracism principles of strategically extending favor and applies them to transform official policies to unofficial practices of the communities they lead in order to cultivate an environment where everyone flourishes together,” (Anderson 2007). Could I as the groom’s grandmother make a difference by giving favor to young and old here at this wedding community to cultivate a flourishing evening together? Yes!

 As I noticed another couple our age moving at the table as if they wanted to go to the dance floor, I encouraged my husband to get up and we both started dancing with the young people. In just a few moments, the older couple joined in the circle. It looked as if others were intrigued at our old dancing styles. But soon the circle drew larger, and smiles and much laughter ensued. Soon the bride and groom joined the dancing circle. As the song ended, and we were exhausted, several of the young wedding party congratulated us and it was genuine. I know because later as we were leaving, our Groom grandson approached and said, “Thank you for coming and for dancing with us tonight.” Some of his other college friends bid us a kind farewell to the evening, as well.

 I believe we made a good connection that night with young friends. I still question the interactions and/or lack of interactions of these new friends, however, I know we can learn from them instead of being polarized from them. Yes, it may take time, but time is what we have.

**Conclusion**

 Professional goals are extremely important to me, professionally, Christianly and educationally. As an administrator, I model the life-long learner life, of one who seeks knowledge, practices wisdom, loves Jesus and points others to him. This course showed me new ways in which to model the importance of relationships, such as child to teacher, teacher to parent, teacher to administrator, administrator to parent, people to people, in Christian schooling, while analyzing social problems with an interdisciplinary approach.

 How does the church see education for their parishioners, adults, and children, that need to be explored that would be helps to all in the education world? Should the church care about the education of their flock, spiritually and academically? What does the church believe about sociology and theology? How does knowing these answers enhance my career as an administrator follower of Christ and a lover of people?

 I believe there are answers to these questions that can change the way Christians view those who are not like them. Instead of judging and forming opinions that work in comfortable groups alone, we can all learn and be interested in others for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world. “For God so greatly and dearly prized the world, that He even gave His (one and) only begotten Son, so that whoever believes and trusts in Him (as Savior) shall not perish, but have eternal life,” (John 3:16).