SR 968-22 Sociological Methodology

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Omega Graduate School

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Professor

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**Assignment #3 – Essay**

Complete the Hidden Threads assignment as detailed below and explain it in class.

**Requirements**

1. Topic Selection and Approval:

a. Email your topic and a rough outline to Dr. Reichard for feedback and approval well in advance of the assignment due date deadline. (president@ogs.edu)

b. Schedule a meeting with Dr. Reichard to review feedback. ([president@ogs.edu](mailto:president@ogs.edu))

c. After receiving approval of the topic and rough outline, submit a rough draft to Dr. Reichard before the turn-in deadline (president@ogs.edu). He will provide the feedback necessary for preparing the final paper.

2. The Essay – This paper should be **approximately 5-7 double-spaced pages** and may be longer. Provide an appropriate (and interesting) title for your essay. **Write a short paragraph** introducing the reader to the topic you will explore in your paper (i.e..... This paper explores theological and sociological dimensions of the obesity epidemic in the United States…). Then, follow the steps listed below: (Develop each in paragraph form, and explicate all concepts you will develop.)

Follow this pattern and **organize your work under headings**, or use the numbers for the parts of the assignment listed below:

a. Identify a few concepts to be used to interpret the problem you have chosen. (i.e., for a topic dealing with obesity, you might choose “hunger” or “emptiness.”) Define/explicate this concept(s), explaining how it will be employed in your analysis.

b. Identify sub-concepts related to the concepts you chose in #1. (i.e., for obesity, sub-concepts might include “gratification,” “satisfaction,” etc.) Define/explicate these sub-concepts, explaining how they offer additional analysis of your chosen problem. This extends your analysis beyond #1, offering additional depth and nuance.

c. Identify several biblical passages or concepts that provide meaning for these concepts and sub-concepts. (Perhaps something that addressed “food and drink that satisfy” … or other passages that deal with such matters as being “filled with the spirit, “gluttony,” “fasting,” “feasting,” etc.) Drawing on these passages and related theological ideas, explain their connection to the

d. concepts/sub-concepts you have employed in your analysis of the problem. Note: This is not simply attaching Bible verses that “inspire” or “shed light on…” Rather, the emphasis should center on the conceptual and analytical. (I am All rights reserved. © 2022 Omega Graduate School. Revised Jan 2024 SR-968 Sociological Methodology 6 not as interested in “normative” [Christians must… Christians should…] approaches.)

e. Identify secular (i.e., sociological) studies that utilize or address these concepts and sub-concepts. (Supersize Me [a movie], The McDonaldization of Society by George Ritzer, Studies on anorexia or bulimia, etc.) Use these to develop your analysis sociologically. You can think of this as a concise “literature review.”

f. Explain how your analysis aids /offers insight into contemporary life/society. (i.e., the burgeoning fast-food industry, Western society’s focus on efficiency and calculability, etc.) Where is your chosen problem “visible” in contemporary society… what contemporary illustrations can you identify and briefly interpret using some of the analysis developed in #1- #4)?

g. How does your analysis contribute to Christian thinking on the topic/problem? (For example, understanding the relationship between appetite, indulgence, and a life of the Spirit and extending these ideas to areas other than obesity and food.) What fresh new idea(s) can you offer to fellow Christians?

h. How does your analysis contribute to sociological thinking about this issue? Can you offer a new sociological insight or two derived from your analysis?

**Historical Context of Decolonizing and Policing**

The evolution of policing in the United States closely mirrored the progression of policing methods in England. During the early colonial period, the approach to law enforcement was characterized by two primary forms: informal and communal. Informal policing often involved community members taking on duties to maintain order and resolve disputes, reflecting a reliance on social cohesion and mutual responsibility among residents. Communal policing, on the other hand, involved organized groups such as watchmen or constables selected from the local population to patrol neighborhoods and ensure safety. This dual approach laid the groundwork for more structured law enforcement systems that would develop later in American history.

**Colonial Policing**

During colonial periods, European powers established police forces primarily to maintain social order and control colonized populations. These police units were not just focused on preventing crime; they were instrumental in suppressing various resistance movements that emerged as a response to colonial rule. Their functions extended to enforcing discriminatory laws designed to uphold the privileges of the colonizers while significantly limiting the rights and freedoms of indigenous peoples.

This study delves into the intricate urban history of the Kenya neighborhood in Lubumbashi, offering a comprehensive examination of how urban space, colonial policing strategies, and African social unrest interrelate. During the colonial era, policymakers were increasingly apprehensive about the neighborhood's densely populated conditions and its African inhabitants' behaviors. In response to these concerns, they devised urban planning initiatives that served a dual purpose: to promote welfare by providing basic services and infrastructure while enforcing discipline and control over the local population. This approach, often called welfare colonialism, aimed to enhance living conditions and sought to manage and mitigate dissent among the African community in Lubumbashi (De Nys-Ketels, 2020). This analysis reveals the complex layers of colonial governance and their impact on urban life, highlighting the tensions between state-imposed order and residents' lived experiences (De Nys-Ketels, 2020).

In many instances, these police forces operated with considerable autonomy. They were tasked with monitoring and controlling not only public assemblies and protests but also the everyday activities of the colonized populations. By employing tactics such as intimidation, violence, and mass arrests, they were instrumental in quelling dissent and maintaining the status quo. Additionally, these forces often acted as enforcers of colonial economic policies, protecting the extraction of resources and exploiting local labor to benefit colonial powers. The legacy of these police forces has had lasting impacts on the relationship between authority and communities in formerly colonized regions (Kienscherf, 2018).

**Legacy of Colonialism**

The enduring influence of colonial-era policing practices continues to shape modern policing systems across numerous countries significantly. Many communities, particularly those that are marginalized or historically oppressed, experience an alarming trend of over-policing, which often manifests in heightened surveillance, frequent stops, and aggressive law enforcement tactics. This has resulted in a pervasive fear and mistrust toward law enforcement agencies.

Contemporary debates on policing trace the rise of law and order populism and police militarization to colonial histories and imperial boomerang effects. In a time marked by the renewed imperative to decolonize, however, few studies examine what decolonizing policing did or could look like in practice (Maoz, 2022). This article draws on oral history narratives of Jamaican police officers to recover their ideas about transforming the colonial Jamaica Constabulary Force in the 1970s. Born out of black power mobilizations and under a democratic socialist government, police decolonization was considered part of a broader transformative effort to rid the country of colonial inheritances in economics, culture, and politics. Jamaican police officers have been radicalized since the early twentieth century, then began revising their social mandate and asking who the police should serve and protect (Maoz, 2022).

Additionally, racial profiling remains a systemic issue, with individuals from specific racial or ethnic backgrounds disproportionately targeted based on their appearance rather than any criminal activity. This form of discrimination not only contributes to social tensions but also undermines the foundational principles of fairness and justice within policing.

Further exacerbating these issues is the increasing militarization of police forces, where law enforcement agencies adopt military-style equipment and tactics. This approach fosters a further divide between the police and the communities they serve and can escalate conflicts rather than resolve them.

The combination of these factors creates a significant rift in the relationship between police and the communities, leading to a profound lack of trust that perpetuates cycles of discord and violence. As a result, many individuals feel alienated from a system that is supposed to protect them, prompting urgent calls for reform and a reevaluation of policing strategies to foster more equitable and constructive community interactions.

**Decolonization and Policing**

Decolonization in the context of policing refers to the critical process of dismantling the colonial legacies and practices that have historically perpetuated inequality, discrimination, and injustice within law enforcement systems. This process acknowledges that many contemporary policing practices can trace their roots to colonial systems that marginalized and oppressed specific communities, particularly Indigenous peoples and communities of color.

It is essential to clarify that decolonizing policing does not equate to entirely abolishing police forces. Instead, the goal is to fundamentally transform policing into a just, equitable, and genuinely responsive system to the diverse needs and voices of all communities. This transformation involves re-evaluating and redefining the roles, purposes, and methods of police work to prioritize community safety and well-being over punitive measures.

**Community-Based Policing**

Transforming the approach from traditional law enforcement to a comprehensive model centered on community safety and well-being requires a fundamental shift in strategy. This involves actively fostering strong relationships between law enforcement agencies and their communities. Law enforcement can better understand various neighborhoods' unique needs and concerns by prioritizing engagement and open communication.

While community-oriented policing was not explicitly designed to impact outcomes such as police use of force, it has been assumed that approaches that improve community-police relations and enhance trust in police agencies should reduce the types of police-citizen encounters that result in police use of force (McCarthy et al., 2019). There are many plausible pathways through which community-oriented policing could impact police coercion. As noted, when citizens trust their local police service and see them as legitimate, they are more likely to comply with orders, reducing the need for coercive policing. Additionally, partnerships or collaboration between police and citizens to design crime-fighting solutions should facilitate acceptable policing methods and accountability (McCarthy et al., 2019).

**Indigenous Policing**

Acknowledging Indigenous communities' distinct needs and lived experiences is essential for fostering their empowerment. This involves allowing these communities to create and implement policing models rooted in their cultural values, traditions, and practices. By prioritizing Indigenous perspectives and approaches, we can support a more relevant and effective justice system that addresses these communities' specific challenges.

Furthermore, the focus should be on prevention rather than punishment. This entails developing and implementing proactive strategies to foster safe environments, such as community outreach initiatives, youth programs, and restorative justice practices. Night patrols represent a distinctive form of community self-policing among Indigenous Australians (Anthony & Blagg, 2014). These patrols do not conform to the conventional frameworks of 'policing' from the Global North. They must be integrated into the state police apparatus or provide commodified private security services; unlike mainstream police, they lack a legitimate reservoir of coercive powers to ensure compliance (Anthony & Blagg, 2014). However, the contested space of Indigenous self-policing exemplified by these patrols should be examined through a postcolonial lens, particularly emphasizing the role of Indigenous women's agency in creating, nurturing, and sustaining night patrol efforts within an Indigenous framework of care and concepts of wellbeing (Anthony & Blagg, 2014).

By prioritizing support and rehabilitation over punitive measures, communities can work towards long-term safety and a healthier social fabric. This holistic approach enhances public safety and builds trust and collaboration between law enforcement and community members.

**Police Reform**

They are implementing comprehensive reforms to address systemic issues within law enforcement practices. This includes tackling pervasive racial bias that affects policing strategies and community interactions, ensuring that the use of force is appropriately regulated to prevent excessive and unjustifiable aggression, and establishing stronger mechanisms for accountability that hold officers responsible for their actions. These reforms should also involve training programs focused on cultural competency and de-escalation techniques and transparent oversight processes involving community input to foster trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Despite Canada’s international reputation as a racially tolerant and multicultural society, the experiences of its Black population tell a different story regarding policing practices. Many members of the Black community have raised serious concerns about patterns of discriminatory treatment by law enforcement. This includes not only biased practices such as stop-and-search activities, where individuals are singled out based on their race, but also instances of excessive use of force during policing encounters (Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2022).

Recent events concerning police killings of unarmed Black individuals, coupled with the subsequent acquittals of the officers involved, have once again highlighted the critical issues of racism within policing. The global protests that erupted in 2020 following the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, along with earlier uprisings in Baltimore and Ferguson in 2015 for Freddie Gray and Michael Brown, respectively, are part of an extensive history of Black activism against police violence. This history can be traced back to the 1960s and even earlier to the resistance against slave patrols during the colonial period. These movements reflect a persistent struggle for justice and reform in the face of systemic racism in law enforcement (Roychoudhury, 2022).

An extensive survey asked participants about specific proposals designed to reform police practices. Respondents were randomly assigned different perspectives, including those from traditional advocates of police reform, Black lawmakers who have been vocal about these issues, and opponents who represent law enforcement's stance on reform efforts (Boudreau et al., 2022).

The findings from our survey reveal a significant level of bipartisan support for the proposed reforms. Notably, both Democrats and Republicans who align themselves with the Black Lives Matter movement demonstrated strong backing for the reform initiatives, irrespective of the viewpoints presented to them. This suggests that contrary to common assumptions, partisanship among the general public is a manageable obstacle to pursuing meaningful police reform. Most respondents across party lines showed a robust inclination toward supporting substantial changes in police practices (Boudreau et al., 2022),

**Religious Responses to Colonial Injustice**

The religious perspectives on decolonization and policing reflect a complex interplay between faith, justice, cultural identity, and social responsibility. As societies navigate the legacies of colonization, various religious traditions and communities contribute to the discourse on decolonization and the reform of policing practices. Religious groups may promote restorative justice approaches that seek to heal communities and address the harms caused by colonialism rather than relying on punitive measures. This aligns with many religious teachings emphasizing forgiveness, reconciliation, and compassion.

The struggle to decolonize theology is deeply rooted in historical contexts, tracing back to influential thinkers such as Edward Said, who articulated a critical perspective on colonial theology by associating it with white theology, which he viewed as a product of the bourgeois class. Said emphasized the necessity of comprehending the intricate dynamics of colonialism to engage meaningfully with the movement toward its decolonization. For Said, colonialism was not simply a political or economic dominion but was poignantly likened to slavery, reflecting the dehumanization and oppressive systems inherent in colonial practices (Msabah, 2024). He viewed decolonization as an essential process to dismantle the inhumanity and moral failings wrought by colonialism (Msabah, 2024). This process seeks to liberate the colonized populations and address the objectification of individuals rendered as things within the structures of colonial rule. Said's understanding aligns closely with the mission of Jesus as articulated in the biblical passage of Luke 4:18–19, which emphasizes liberation, healing, and the proclamation of good news to the marginalized. In this light, decolonization becomes a theological imperative, striving to restore dignity and full humanity to those who have been historically oppressed and objectified (Msabah, 2024).

Throughout history, numerous religious leaders and organizations have voiced their condemnation of the injustices linked to colonization, along with the associated violence. These groups emphasize the importance of acknowledging the rights and dignity of Indigenous peoples and other marginalized communities, advocating for their recognition and protection.

**Challenges and Considerations**

**Resistance from within police forces**

Officers should be more open to embracing changes that put their longstanding roles and sources of authority into question. This resistance can stem from a fear of losing power or influence within the department and concerns about how new policies or practices may alter their daily responsibilities and interactions with the community. Additionally, the deeply entrenched culture within law enforcement can make it difficult for some officers to adapt to innovative approaches that prioritize transparency, accountability, and community engagement.

In recent years, there has been increasing criticism regarding the ethics surrounding policing practices. This growing scrutiny reflects widespread concern about accountability, transparency, and the treatment of diverse communities within law enforcement. Despite these challenges, police officers must be able to effectively fulfill all facets of their duties. Upholding their professional responsibilities is crucial for promoting public safety and ensuring the integrity of the rule of law in a democratic society (Dempsey et al., 2023). The delicate balance between maintaining order and respecting citizens' rights is fundamental to building trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve (Dempsey et al., 2023). The complexities involved in policing have grown tremendously, presenting numerous challenges that impact decision-making processes. Law enforcement officers operate in high-stakes environments where they are often faced with rapidly evolving situations that require split-second judgments (Dempsey et al., 2023). This reality is compounded by alarming rates of fatalities among officers, which fuels a heightened sense of vulnerability. As a result, the traditional notions of right and wrong in their decisions and actions have become increasingly blurred. Officers are often trained to approach every individual as a potential threat, a perspective shaped by the ever-present dangers inherent in their line of work (Dempsey et al., 2023); such an approach not only affects how they interpret interactions with the public but also influences their responses to various situations they encounter on the job, leading to a complex interplay of fear, caution, and the desire to ensure safety for themselves and those they serve (Dempsey et al., 2023),.

**Conclusion**

The policing narrative has developed over centuries and is shaped by various social, political, and cultural factors. It reflects the changing symbols of authority and justice, which have evolved alongside societal perceptions of law enforcement. The history of policing is deeply intertwined with colonialism, where police forces often served as instruments of control and oppression. In many former colonies, the police maintained colonial authority and focused on enforcing imperial rule. Throughout history, numerous religious leaders and organizations have voiced their condemnation of the injustices linked to colonization, along with the associated violence. The transition to independence did not immediately alleviate the oppressive structures established during the colonial period; instead, these legacies persisted, often manifesting in corrupt and abusive policing practices.

Ultimately, the vision of decolonized policing seeks to create a system that fosters trust, supports communities, and upholds the principles of justice and equity for everyone, reflecting a deeper understanding of the needs and human rights of all individuals within society.

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