**SR 950-32**

**Clinical and Applied Sociology**

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Omega Graduate School

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Professor

Dr. Joshua Reichard

**Assignment**

***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.

3. 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?

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

# Introduction

This course aimed to introduce students to the ideas, concepts, and practice of applied and clinical sociology. This is the side of sociology that focuses on “real world” problems and identifying solutions to those problems. This is also the side of sociology that truly resonated with me. I have always been inclined to see problems around me and then seek to identify a solution. As Marine Corps officers, we were taught to always come to the boss with a solution if we were going to complain about a problem. I was able to grasp this concept with relative ease.

Applied sociology is focused on the macro level of social systems, while clinical sociology is focused on the micro level. I did not realize there was a career for sociologists inclined to motivate change in a social system. Sociologists can serve as organizational development consultants, policy planners, or community organizers. The developmental readings introduced me to applied sociologists working and researching in education, health care, and government (to name a few). I feel silly admitting that I had no idea those were jobs for sociologists.

I also found that this course came at the most opportune time in my studies with OGS. I recently completed a proposal for my Action Research Project[[1]](#footnote-1) (ARP) and was able to easily integrate some of the concepts from this course into my ARP proposal. I was specifically inspired by one of the developmental readings on *policy sociology*. In the context of applied sociology, Thibodeaux[[2]](#footnote-2) says, “…policy sociologists apply sociological knowledge to decipher the best means actors (clients) can take to solve problems and make social improvements.” This was directly applicable to some of the psychedelics legalization efforts I have been researching for my ARP.

# Personal Growth

Most of my growth from this course was in getting me back in the groove of OGS courses and the learning process. It is a special process and methodology that I did not realize I missed. I always dreaded the developmental readings for courses. However, I was always glad that I completed the developmental reading assignment. Although I am personally more focused on action and motivating change in social systems, I enjoy the rabbit holes I am sucked into while doing research. Many of my greatest discoveries have been from reading the references of an interesting article and seeking out tangential and supporting works of an article.

I spent significant time digging into how sociologists were writing about identifying challenges and creating change. I ended up applying some of those ideas or identifying their strategies and concepts in some of the psychedelic legalization efforts. Organizations like the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies[[3]](#footnote-3) (MAPS) and Decriminalize Nature[[4]](#footnote-4) are using strategies that I recognized in some of my developmental readings. Dr. Rick Doblin is the Founder and President of MAPS. He wrote his PhD dissertation on the drug approval process of the federal government with a focus on legitimizing and legalizing psychedelics. This has been a 40-year journey for Dr. Doblin. This inspiring story motivates me to find a purpose in my academic work as an OGS student.

# Reflexive Entry

I have often wondered about the people who effectively manage organizational change. The ability to proactively identify problems and implement resolutions in a special skill. It is common to respond reactively to organizational or societal challenges, especially in the government sector. I would like to be one who can see a problem developing and present solutions before any damage is done to the organization. If that is not possible, I’d like to be at least one who can recommend or implement solutions that are measured and appropriate to the challenge. This is in contrast to overreacting and overcorrecting to an issue.

I was a helicopter pilot in the Marine Corps for two decades. One of the major errors a pilot can make is over-correcting in response to a potential issue. One informal and somewhat tongue-in-cheek initial step of an emergency procedure is to *wind the clock*. This was a colloquial way to tell the pilot to relax, take a deep breath, correctly identify the real issue, and start the emergency procedure. In a retrospective analysis of the response to the issue of psychedelics in the late 1960s, it appears that there was a severe overcorrection. President Nixon’s declaration of a “War on Drugs” made psychedelics enemy number one. By classifying all psychedelics as Schedule I drugs, they eliminated the ability of the medical community to continue research that was already in progress. In an attempt to decrease or control the recreational use of psychedelics, the federal government threw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater.

With a reasoned and scientific approach to this issue, an applied sociologist could have better analyzed the *real* issue and provided a more temperate solution set. Using the foundation of pure sociology, an applied sociologist would have been able to include the perspectives, impacts, and causality of a vast landscape of stakeholders and societal actors. I believe that it is more than probable that the benefits of those researching the use of psychedelics for the treatment of mental health (and other medical) maladies.

I believe this topic presents an outstanding opportunity for future research. My personal goal is to complete my ARP for the DSL as a pre-requisite and foundation for a PhD. The research from the ARP would provide a foundation for a Dissertation. I am still cogitating on the precise question to be addressed in the Dissertation, but my initial thoughts are leading me to qualitatively examine the Christian response to the use of psychedelics by believers.

# Conclusion

This course met my expectations and needs for future work at OGS and my professional career. I feel better equipped to address many personal, academic, and work-related questions. I have not previously addressed the impact on my Christian faith or faith practice. I can share that this project forced me into the Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the writings of theologians and Church Fathers. I was able to read and re-read many academic articles and books through the lens of my Christian faith. It is incredibly interesting and eye-opening to seek out God’s presence in the research of a *pure* academic.

It can be challenging to see God in the business and chaos of everyday work and life. My experience with OGS helps me keep my eyes on Him and constantly reminds me of the idea and philosophy of Imago Dei. It is such a blessing to grow in my faith and relationship with Christ while simultaneously growing intellectually. But… that is the OGS way, isn’t it?

1. I will send you a copy of my ARP proposal if you have not seen it yet. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Thibodeaux, J. (2015). Production as social change: Policy sociology as a public good. *Sociological Spectrum, 35*(6), 543–555. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://maps.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://decriminalizenature.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)