SR 950-32 Clinical and Applied Sociology

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Professor

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**Assignment #3 – Essay**

1. Write a 5-page essay addressing the following:

a. Select a social issue or problem relevant to your profession. Clearly state your thesis

(purpose) for your essay.

b. Critique the issue through the lens of one or more of the major sociological theories

(Structural Functionalism, Conflict Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, Postmodernism).

c. Draw on Christian perspectives of cultural critique to consider where your chosen

sociological theories might fall short or might affirm Christian principles from your faith

tradition.

d. Answer the question, "How can sociology foster understanding of this issue?"

e. Construct potential "constructive" approaches to the problem through a sociological

lens.

f. Synthesize and integrate sources from your developmental reading.

g. Compose a succinct conclusion and restate your thesis.

h. Include your references.

**2. Paper Outline**

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph with a succinct thesis statement.

b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.

c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

d. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the

remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

Many police departments nationwide changed their enforcement strategy from community policing to strict enforcement strategies. This change in the department's approach has led to saturation patrols and over-policing in marginalized communities and an increase in negative contact with law enforcement. As a result, this style of policing has resulted in more incidents of excessive force used by officers and an increase in cases of police brutality. A sociological intervention to tackle rising police brutality would involve police departments enacting policy changes that include training in policing strategies to help officers better understand the dynamics of the communities they serve while encouraging community involvement.

The old school policing model had policies and procedures that centered around traditional policing that focused on authority and control. Police officers would respond to calls for service with the mission of command and control, with arrest being the outcome when engaging with the community. This approach to policing resulted in use of force incidents that culminated in brutality cases. This authoritarian approach to policing has resulted in many high-profile incidents and legal cases that have now been addressed with a push for police reform. The primary component to police reforms is changes based on community-oriented policing with a preventive and proactive approach to crime.

Department policies are essential for the effective functioning of police agencies nationwide. To evaluate whether agency policies impact race-specific civilian fatalities, this exploratory study compared fatality rates among agencies with specific policies thought to reduce killings to those lacking such policies (Thomas et al., 2021). These policies govern the operations of both sworn officers and civilian staff. Increasing evidence indicates that organizational factors in law enforcement contribute to higher rates of racial disparities in police killings (Thomas et al., 2021). The notable difference in the percentage of African Americans shot in comparison to whites suggests that discrimination is widespread (Dempsey & Forst, 2016). Organizational policies influence police culture, with regular internal evaluations of officers and high standards for conduct affecting officer behavior (Thomas et al., 2021). Therefore, organizational policies, along with clear regulations, procedures, and best practices that set ethical and moral standards for operations and employee conduct within law enforcement agencies, may affect the incidence of police killings, even though they receive less scrutiny (Thomas et al., 2021).

The deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in 2020 have drawn increased social attention to incidents involving police use of force. The focus brought by these events has resulted in a divisive perspective on police tactics (Callahan & Hayes, 2024). New training models that focus on understanding diverse communities and over-policing need to be implemented to quell the concerns of those living in communities of color. Recent debates surrounding policing have centered on its appropriate role in society. We propose that through democratic policing and police legitimacy, the public's willingness to engage with law enforcement is a vital indicator of their consent to be policed and their perceptions of the legitimate role of law enforcement (McLean et al., 2023).

There is a different mindset to community policing between marginalized and affluent neighborhoods. Affluent communities tend to be more welcoming when developing community policing policies. Research shows a correlation between police presence and public satisfaction; residents who see their neighborhoods as regularly patrolled perceive the police as more effective and express greater confidence in them (Metcalfe & Qassim Bolaji, 2024). In marginalized communities, residents often prefer the police to serve as protectors rather than merely enforcers of the law. When asked about preferred crime prevention strategies in high-crime areas, foot patrols ranked as the second most popular strategy, following situational crime prevention (Metcalfe & Qassim Bolaji, 2024). Residents of marginalized communities often worry about becoming victims of over-policing. While the public may favor an increased police presence, it is important to recognize that this support can vary among racial and ethnic groups based on perceived neighborhood conditions (Metcalfe & Qassim Bolaji, 2024). Given the historical context, it is vital to evaluate the implications of police strategies in communities that interact more frequently with law enforcement, particularly for communities of color and disadvantaged groups (Metcalfe & Qassim Bolaji, 2024).

By gaining an understanding of the sociological impact of police brutality, it may create a more equitable form of policing in all communities. The topic of police brutality and police reform is viewed differently by those in white communities as opposed to how it is viewed in black or marginalized communities. We find that Whites’ views of police remain relatively neutral, on average, in response to news of a fatal police shooting. Our findings suggest that protest mobilization adjacent to police brutality may mask an underlying neutrality in opinions about policing (Crabtree & Yadon, 2022). The identity of a police violence victim influences perceptions of the police themselves. White victims of police violence engender a harsher reproach for police among White Americans than police violence against a black victim. A body of work on race, stereotypes, and public opinion demonstrates that white Americans tend to hold more punitive attitudes toward black Americans (Crabtree & Yadon, 2022). Racial perspectives align with a growing literature on the dehumanization of black people relative to whites (Crabtree & Yadon, 2022). This suggests that White people may have stronger negative reactions to non-Black victims of police shootings when compared to Black victims (Crabtree & Yadon, 2022).

Racism is the root of anti-black police brutality. Since other articles in this issue address police brutality more fully, and people more readily agree that anti-black police brutality kills black people, racism kills Black people that are not as easily recognized or considered (Holmes IV, 2020). Although police killings and physical violence are primarily associated with police brutality, it is important to note that police brutality also includes emotional and sexual violence, verbal assaults, psychological intimidation and other forms of police misconduct (Holmes IV, 2020). This assertion is in the minority stress, discrimination, and identity threat literature that finds that racism negatively impacts black people's psychological, emotional, social, spiritual, financial, and physical well-being (Holmes IV, 2020).

Addressing the growing issue of police brutality requires engaging with community members, understanding their concerns, and collaborating to address the challenges (Evers et al., 2024). This approach demands accountability from law enforcement officers, empowers community members and the public to participate in decision-making, and prioritizes civil rights and liberties (Evers et al., 2024). When police officers arrive at a scene, people notice the uniform. If individuals have had negative experiences with other officers, it leaves a lasting impression, leading to the demonization of the uniform rather than the person wearing it. Recently, there has been heightened scrutiny on policing in the United States, as instances of police misconduct have been heavily reported in the media. A 2015 Gallup poll indicated that public confidence in the police as an institution was at its lowest since data collection began in 1993 (Keaton et al., 2023). Many interactions between police officers and the public are inherently unbalanced because officers play a pivotal role in the relationship, as they are meant to protect and serve. Protecting and serving often translates into enforcement actions within a community (Keaton et al., 2023). The outcomes of these enforcement actions influence public perception. If the public holds negative views of the police, it may lead to a perceived deficit in results, as officers seek appreciation or recognition for their service (Keaton et al., 2023). Encouraging collaborative interactions between police officers and community members can help humanize law enforcement personnel.

Due to police reform, community review boards and law enforcement agencies have begun implementing new policies to connect with the public. Community-oriented policing tackles the root causes of crime to alleviate law-abiding citizens' fears (Evers et al., 2024). Among the existing studies that examine the police-civilian interface, most concentrate on factors that shape community members' perceptions of the police, including civilian experiences and views on police legitimacy (Keaton et al., 2023).

Many police departments nationwide have changed their enforcement strategy from community policing to enforcement strategies. Department policies are necessary guardrails to guide the functioning of police agencies nationwide. There is a different mindset when patrolling marginalized and affluent neighborhoods. An intervention to address the escalating issue of police brutality involves collaboration with community members to understand and address their concerns. Policy changes that include diversity training and encourages community involvement will act as a catalyst to build a bridge of trust between officers and the communities they serve.

Interventions in the form of police reform aim to create a more equitable and effective policing model by prioritizing engagement with community members, understanding their concerns, and collaborating to find solutions that allow effective policing and trust. Gaining an understanding of the sociological impact of police brutality may create a more equitable form of policing in all communities. At this stage, it is too early to evaluate the impact of these interventions on police brutality; however, there has been a rise in holding police accountable for actions outside standard policing practices.

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