SR 950-32 Clinical and Applied Sociology

C. Brian Diggs

Omega Graduate School

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Professor

Joshua D. Reichard, DPhil, Ph.D., EdS, CCS

**Assignment #4 –** Course Learning Journal The journal reflects 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, incorporating new ideas into your existing knowledge of each course. This is also an opportunity to communicate with your professor, the insights gained due to 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 course's effectiveness in meeting your professional, religious, and educational goals.

Sociological interventions are strategies and actions designed to address social issues and improve community well-being. Applying this concept to law enforcement involves police reform that addresses issues related to law enforcement policies, community involvement, and training.

The change in law enforcement away from community policing models, which limited the community's direct access to police officers on the beat. This shift in the policing model eroded the public's trust in marginalized communities. Ultimately, this model shifted the police mindset to strict enforcement, which caused an image of over-policing in these communities. Over-policing caused more negative contact, which led to more incidents of police violence and brutality.

**Personal Growth**

Police departments with clear and concise policies that guide how their agencies operate are necessary bumper guards that set up how their officers complete their jobs. Policies are significant; however, there is a sociological importance in officers' ability to bridge the gap in understanding social dynamics to improve community relations and create effective policing relationships.

The goal of law enforcement is to make communities across this country safe. However, the use of strict enforcement policies needs to be assessed so that the criminal justice system is more equitable and just regarding encounters and outcomes in marginalized communities.

When I began my career in law enforcement, it was built around the old-school policing model, which focused on responding to a call for service and immediately taking command and control, with the outcome often being an arrest. Over years, this has diminished communities' trust in the police that patrol their neighborhoods. Officers are viewed as the enemy, and even when needed, people are reluctant to dial 911 due to fear of the possible outcome. As a young trooper, I flourished in that environment, all of us who were recent graduates from the police academy did. We trained for six months and we were ready to prove ourselves. When we heard a call of service go out, if we were not busy, we headed there to help. The goal was to get as much action as possible in a shift.

Ironically, marginalized communities often had the most calls for service, and that perception influenced how we would respond. Usually, we would run code 1, which is lights and sirens, which created a negative image. The relationship between the police and the residents in marginalized communities is often strained due to a lack of dialogue. Residents of marginalized communities often worry about becoming victims of over-policing. By gaining an understanding of the sociological impact police have on these communities, it has caused a shift in how we train, respond, and communicate with those that we are sworn to protect.

The sociological importance of law enforcement lies in its ability to create relationships that allow officers and community members to shape enforcement measures within neighborhoods. The balance between compassion and strict enforcement in law enforcement is challenging, however, this approach does not lessen the authority of the police but addresses inequalities, and builds community relations, all essential for effective policing and social cohesion. When building this bridge of trust, we must not forget the psychological effects of crime on victims in the communities. Addressing victims' concerns shows empathy and compassion within the community. This cannot be accomplished by just officers walking the beat; addressing these concerns requires a support system that involves mental health professionals, counselors, and trusted clergy members in the area. An interdisciplinary approach will build community relations, improve public safety, and contribute to a more just and equitable system.

**Reflective Entry**

When I began my career with the Maryland State Police, I was a young man who had the ambition that I could change the world. This vision started many years earlier, when my cousin’s partner on the Harrisburg Police Department was killed in the line of duty. I wanted to stop that from happening. So, I stayed laser focused throughout high school and college to accomplish this goal. Upon graduating from the police academy and completing my field training, I was a ball of fire, I stayed at the top of the barracks on traffic stops and arrests. In my mind, I was saving the world, however, I quickly realized how untrue that was. I could only do my part of protecting and serving. I was unprepared for the ugly side of policing, the bad officers that abused their power. I had no control over officers from allied agencies. My impact was in my lane. I often had to navigate the professionalism and integrity that we as troopers prided ourselves in, and do my job while assisting those bad officers from other agencies.

When I was researching institutions to attend to pursue my doctorate, it was frustrating because nothing fit until I came across OGS. The idea is to attend an institution and conduct research for social change regarding police brutality. As I began my research and interacted with professors from OGS, I quickly realized that addressing the topic of police brutality was a big bite of the apple. I recently heard the quote “change the world within your reach” during a Zoom meeting. The light bulb came on, allowing me to reflect on everything I have done in my career over the past thirty-eight years. It has allowed me to now focus on the weight of the badge, which I can research and address from my experience with responding to calls and seeing how officers respond and react. The badge is what causes some officers to engage in the use of excessive force and police brutality. Addressing excessive force and police brutality is the social reform that needs to be addressed to get the profession of police back to what it should be, a profession of empathy, compassion, and security for those in the community that officers are sworn to protect.

**Conclusion**

Sociological interventions are strategies and actions designed to address social issues and improve community well-being. Public or private organizations can conduct them to effect change. The shift in law enforcement away from community policing models, which effectively limited the community's direct access to police officers on the beat. Police departments with clear and concise policies that guide how their agencies operate are necessary bumper guards that set up how their officers complete their jobs.

The sociological importance of law enforcement lies in its ability to create relationships that allow officers and community members to shape enforcement measures within neighborhoods. Addressing excessive force and police brutality is the social reform that needs to be addressed to get the police profession back to what it should be: a profession of empathy, compassion, and security for those in the community that officers are sworn to protect.