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Omega Graduate School

SR 950-32 Clinical and Applied Sociology

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***Assignment #2 – Developmental Readings***

* 1. Create Developmental Readings from seminal sources and scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles. Review instructions for Assignment #3, the course essential elements, and course readings to identify selections of books and journals to create entries.
  2. Refer to the "**Student Guide to Developmental Readings**" in the **General Helps** folder for updated information on *sample comments*, *the grading rubric*, and *key definitions* related to developmental readings.

**Source One: Sociological Theories of Juvenile Delinquency: A Criminological Perspective**

**Comment 1:** Sociology has many theories that help us understand systemic issues affecting people and institutions. The labeling theory explains how labels influence people and the long-term implications of those labels in a group setting or institution.

**Quote/Paraphrase:** In *Sociological Theories of Juvenile Justice Delinquency: A Criminological Perspective*, Dr. Raturi Smriti and Dr. Sachin Rastogi study Juvenile delinquency from the lens of sociological theories. The article discusses the labeling theory that explains how deviant behavior can arise from various factors. Once people are labeled as something, whether as “unreliable” or “uncommitted,” they face ongoing challenges due to preconceived notions or stigmas that follow them, and those labels have repercussions.

**Essential Element:** This developmental reading reflects the essential element of applied sociological practice because Dr. Smriti and Dr. Rastogi apply sociological theories to real-world problems in the juvenile justice system. In my perspective, the labeling theory is not an abstract idea for only the youth labeled but also for the staff experiences in juvenile justice facilities.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** The labeling theory is often used to explain how youth in the juvenile and criminal justice systems are stigmatized. The same stigmas apply to staff, facilities, and contractors working at those facilities. Educators in these facilities experience similar labels and are as disinvested as the youth they serve. When teachers or educators feel undervalued or unsupported, they may disengage from work, leading to turnover, absenteeism, and inconsistent education outcomes. The notion of the labeling theory explained in this article only states that institutional stigmas impact the youth. However, it is important to note that young people aren’t the only ones impacted by the label, as there are stigmas in the workforce and overall system performances.

**Contextualization:** I recently signed a one-term contract with the University of Baltimore to teach an English composition course at a Juvenile Detention Center in Baltimore, Maryland. My first day in the facilities was last week, and we were supposed to start class two weeks earlier. When I spoke with the transition specialist assisting me, I learned the delay was due to a shortage of teachers willing to enter the facilities and teach. They were concerned about security protocols, facility culture, and teaching the juvenile justice incarcerated youth.

Applying the labeling theory to this situation made me realize that we often focus on the youth when we discuss institutional stigmas. However, the same applies to the staff and teachers. When teachers are absent, young people do not learn; they fall back educationally, developmentally, and socially when they do not. The way we label and treat educators directly affects retention and commitment. The juvenile facility could reframe its approaches to teacher recruitment, training, and support, and that could create a stable workforce and consistent learning experience for the students.

**Source Two:**

**Comment 2:** Teachers' absences from the classroom, especially in juvenile detention centers, directly impact young people's learning environment. In these facilities, education is one of the only structured and rehabilitative experiences that the young person receives. When the teachers are absent, it disrupts stability and consistency and impacts their lives.

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Agustin Porrees, in *The Impact of Teacher Absenteeism on Student Achievement,* detailed study on teacher absenteeism and student performances on AP exams. The quality of education affects everyone. Education creates better communities and newer jobs and prepares people for the workforce. One of the main concerns about education is the quality of education.

One of the biggest concerns about education is quality. Education is often measured by its quality. From a teacher's perspective, Porrees explains that quality education is influenced by salaries, training, school environment, and parent engagement (not the case for juveniles in facilities).

Teachers are essential, and their absence can cause significant problems for schools. Some negative implications of teacher absenteeism include financial burdens on schools, weakened student-to-teacher relationships, lower morale, and poor student performance and behavior. Porrees points out that schools should adopt better policies to reduce absenteeism.

**Essential Element:** This developmental reading closely relates to Applications for Sociological Research.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** Teacher absenteeism is often discussed in the context of traditional schools. However, it affects correctional education. In juvenile facilities, strict security protocols make hiring teachers even more difficult—the problem of not having enough teachers or teachers being absent sets young people far behind.

Porrees focuses on these concerns in a general education setting. However, I believe they apply in any educational setting. In the correctional setting, I believe it is more profound than educational issues; it is a social justice issue. If we are serious about rehabilitation and reducing recidivism, we must prioritize quality education for the young people in those facilities.

**Contextualization:** Early in my career, working in juvenile detention centers and teaching in Baltimore, I saw firsthand how teacher shortages delay learning and disrupt young people. Portree research confirms my experiences by saying that when teachers are present, students fall behind. In facilities such as juvenile facilities and prisons, it should be about the future of rehabilitation and future opportunities for reducing recidivism. We should want them all to succeed and support them when teachers show up for them.

**Comment 3:** Education in juvenile justice detention centers faces challenges beyond teaching. Systemic challenges such as professional development, poor communication, and inadequate resources hinder quality education.

**Quote/Paraphrase:** The study stated, "Many educators working in the juvenile justice system have not had sufficient training, either pre- or in-service, that is required to perform their job well. Furthermore, even if they have been exposed to the proper training, many educators entering the system experience “culture shock” due to the complexity of working in secure facilities and the high concentration of special education needs in classrooms.”

**Essential Element:** This developmental reading closely relates to Applied Sociology and Sociological Practice as it discusses systemic challenges and solutions to improve education in detention centers.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This article pinpoints how teacher burnout, lack of training, and high turnover rate affect the education of juveniles in juvenile detention centers. Addressing the teacher shortage is more than about hiring; it is about retention and training. These systemic concerns shed light on the teacher's lack of support, which can cause students to have setbacks and impact the young people's experience in the classroom.

**Contextualization:** My onboarding process was the bare minimum. I never received clearance from my background check before starting, but I was emailed a roster of students, a list of prohibited items, and instructions on where and when to show up. There was no training, orientation, or guidance on managing a classroom in a detention setting.

To make things worse, I was given a course syllabus three years ago and expected to implement it. The “culture shock” mentioned in this study is real; teachers are placed in environments with little preparation and outdated resources.

If we want a better educational outcome for youth in detention, the system must invest in proper onboarding, updated curricula, and ongoing teacher training. Otherwise, we could continue to face teacher departures and students falling behind.

**Comment 4:** Social Control Theory explains the importance of education for young people in detention centers. This theory explains that when young people feel connected to institutions such as schools, they are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior.

**Quote/Paraphrase:** The article explains that a strong bond with schools, teachers, and structured activities lowers the risk of delinquency. When those bonds are weak, students become disengaged, making them more likely to act out or give up on education.

**Essential Element:** Applied sociology is essential for this developmental reading, as it uses social theory to explain a real-world problem.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** Juvenile detention centers serve many purposes, such as punishment, behavioral intervention, or rehabilitation; this article discusses the importance of relationships and keeping young people engaged. It also supports the idea that teachers who are not adequately supported or connected cause negative consequences that lead to the system not having qualified and engaged staff.

**Contextualization:** This study confirms that when students do not feel connected to their education or positive relationships, they are less engaged, which can lead to academic and behavioral problems. Without that, the cycle of delinquency continues.

**Comment 5:** Improving the education system in Maryland detention centers requires planning and testing before making significant policy changes. The Plan Do, Study Act model helps facilitate pilot small changes, assess their impact, and refine them before implementing them fully.

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “The PDSA method follows a prescribed four-phase approach: ‘plan’ identifies necessary improvements, ‘do’ test the change, ‘study’ evaluate success, and ‘act’ adapts for next steps.”

**Essential Element:** For this part of this developmental reading, this study closely relates to sociological interventions because it offers an approach to finding solutions to the problems facing the education system in juvenile detention centers.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This study focuses on suicide prevention, but the same principles apply to education reform in juvenile detention. By using the PDSA, facilities can pilot new teacher training, update the curriculum, and improve system support without disrupting youth education.

**Contextualization:** I used a similar model at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, applying systemic strategies in child welfare and juvenile justice. We did not make significant changes starting in the pilot but could scale what worked and what did not and advance the work forward. This study reinforced what I already knew about successful reform.

**Comment 6:** The success of educational programs in juvenile facilities depends on teachers' voices and ability to use their skills and experiences to create a structured learning environment for young people. This study shows that teachers' feedback is significant in shaping educational outcomes. Without their input, education policies may fail to address the challenges faced in those facilities' classrooms.

**Quote/Paraphrase:** In *How Teachers Perceive Educational Programs in Juvenile Justice Facilities*, Connie Mitchell applies the social learning theory, stating that education is most effective through social interactions and hands-on learning. Here, she explored programs in South Carolina's juvenile justice detention centers that study GED programs, Career and Technology Education, and the debate between online and in-person learning.

**Essential Element:** This developmental reading's essential element aligns with applied sociology, which applies theories of learning and engagement.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This study discusses the engagement and interaction between teachers and students through social learning theory. Many classrooms in juvenile detention centers struggle with classroom disruptions and disengaged students. This study offers alternative academic programs and discusses the effectiveness of those programs, including online learning.

While online learning lacks the interpersonal dynamics of social learning, it does offer an alternative with institution limitations, security concerns, or strict security protocols. This suggests that piloting online learning instruction in juvenile detention settings could be a practical way to test its effectiveness without overhauling existing programs.

**Contextualization:** My work implementing small tests could apply to conducting a test for online learning in a controlled environment before fully rolling it out. A trial run could determine how to schedule online classes effectively, what technology needs improvements, what support is needed for those operating it, whether students would be engaged, and the effectiveness of a virtual platform. Rather than focusing on a size approach, we could create a hybrid model and adjust as needed.

**Comment 7:** Implementing interventions without first evaluating the barriers can risk more challenges with system design. Implementing online learning in juvenile detention centers presents itself as an opportunity to support a structured learning environment for both the student and the teacher. The Oregon Virtual School District demonstrated what is required for a clear plan for piloting an effective online learning community for young people in juvenile facilities.

**Quote/Paraphrase:** The Oregon Youth Authority and the Oregon Department of Education collaborated on implementing a learning program for young people in the youth detention facilities. Their findings showed that education provided an opportunity for Individualized learning. However, it came with its own challenges and had to be addressed through many trials and tests.

**Essential Element:** This developmental reading aligns closely with sociological interventions.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** Earlier, I focused on readings that focused on the issues of staff shortages, outdated curricula, and security restrictions negatively impacting the classroom learning environment in juvenile facilities. At least from my experiences, I believe that online education is a well-suggested alternative, and this study supports my test of change. They stated that online education isn’t just the answer alone, but without a well-structured evaluation process, educators and students will struggle with the program.

The Oregon model shows gaps that they experienced when implementing their online program. Before rolling out any major policy shifts, they suggested the following: running pilot programs to assess feasibility, gathering feedback from teachers and students to understand the barriers, ensuring technology infrastructure is in place to prevent disruptions, and adapting the instructional methods to a juvenile setting and not a one size fit all approach.

**Contextualization:** Testing and refining policy changes before full implementation is important for the project's sustainability. Rather than rush for a quick fix for teacher shortages and limited curriculum options, juvenile facilities can assess whether students can stay engaged and perform, teachers feel supported, and security concerns are addressed. If evaluation is not a part of the process, intervention will be inconsistent, underdeveloped, and ineffective in improving the educational system in juvenile detention centers.

**Comment 8:** The effectiveness of faith-based programs and interventions in preventing delinquency remains debatable. This article examines how religious interventions, potential benefits, and ethical and legal concerns influence delinquent youth. Faith-based interventions provide moral guidance, mentorship, and structure, but they raise concerns about the separation of church and state and whether their effectiveness extends beyond religious teachings.

**Quote/Paraphrase:** The study *Faith-Based Approaches for Controlling the Delinquency of Juvenile Offenders* by Cox and Matthews discusses the role of faith-based programs in reducing delinquency. They discuss that religious involvement impacts delinquent behavior from the lens of theories such as the social control theory, social learning theory, and cognitive theory to explain why they work.

The social control theory implies that relation functions as a constraint against delinquency by cultivating internal moral beliefs. One quote that I like from the article states, “The more attached a person is to a religious institution, the less likely he or she is to commit a crime, for he or she has something of value to lose.” The social learning theory suggests that young people learn from their environments. They are less likely to engage in delinquent acts if they have positive religious mentors and pro-social behavior. They pointed out this in the cognitive theory, which states that faith-based programs shift youth from delinquency to having a higher sense of responsibility and concern for others.

**Essential Element:** This essential element evaluates how faith-based approaches serve as a solution to reducing juvenile delinquency and align with the essential elements of sociological interventions.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** Faith-based programs can help make improvements with young people and systems- from mentorship to structure and social stability. However, their effectiveness depends on accessibility, inclusivity, and evaluation. Without the proper assessment, the impact remains unclear.

**Contextualization:** With many of the implications of implementing a religious program in a state funded system, this would be an uphill battle. Reading this article reaffirmed my commitment to using my beliefs, mentorship expertise, and moral compass to help guide the students under my care. However, faith-based initiatives should still be considered and evaluated as a way to properly support youth in detention and integrate them into other reform efforts.

**References**

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