PHI 923-32 Contextualization for Social Change

C. Brian Diggs

Omega Graduate School

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Professor

David Ward, Ph.D., Th.M.

**Assignment #1 – Core Essential Elements**

**1. Select One (1) Core Essential Element from the Syllabus Outline:**

a. Create a 350-word original discussion paper (with cited sources) during the week of the residency. Be prepared to discuss and engage with other students during the live sessions. Post this document in DIAL.

b. The professor will check for content quality and word-count requirements. The grade assigned will be Credit or No Credit (CR/NC).

Contextualization considers societal, personal, or organizational factors that can positively or negatively affect a group or individual. Constructive social change involves a collaboration between groups impacted by adverse social events that cause unrest in a particular community or group. Coinstructive social change focuses on equity, justice, and inclusion. The need for constructive social change has been at the forefront of law enforcement over the past ten years. In recent years, high-profile police use-of-force encounters with individuals of color (e.g., George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky; Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin) have increased the long-standing scrutiny of law enforcement actions and deepened the mistrust between communities and police when police behave inappropriately (Zare, 2024).

In April 2015, Baltimore, Maryland, was the epicenter of societal unrest due to the death of Freddie Gray while in the custody of Baltimore City Police (Barron, 2023). This event was one in which my unit, along with agencies from around the state, responded to Baltimore City due to the riots that ensued as a result of Freddie Gray’s death. The truth is much harder to swallow: Every difficulty and challenge that Gray faced in both his childhood and adulthood was the result of a deliberately designed, long-standing, deeply entrenched, and very American system of racial inequity and oppression (Barron, 2023).

As a result of the aforementioned high-profile cases involving police brutality, police agencies across the country have had to go through widespread police reform. Police reform is a highly controversial topic due to the generational views of enforcing the law that permeate police departments throughout the country. Institutional reforms often diverge from substantive problems and societal demands that initially prompted reform, raising questions about democratic responsiveness. Such reform gaps are prevalent in policing, wherein some police forces improve capacity and performance while extrajudicial violence persists (González, 2022). I argue that police evade pressure for reform through strategic policy substitution, pressuring politicians to replace reforms that threaten bureaucratic autonomy with favorable reforms that preserve it (González, 2022). Police reform is needed to overhaul the practices that have been utilized by law enforcement over the years in marginalized communities. However, this reform must bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community.

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