

Sociology 1125 -- Social Processes

Winter Semester, 2017

Essay Assignment

Assignment

A **written essay/narrative assignment** will constitute *25% of the course grade* (expectations, due date, and more detailed instructions will be provided in a separate handout). **Please note the written assignment's due date for your section:**

- Section 001, Monday Feb. 20;
- Sections 002 & 008, Wednesday, Feb. 22;
- Section 010, Fri., Feb. 24.

Late essay/narrative assignments will be penalized 15% per day late (including weekends).

The narrative assignment should address the following research question by employing sociological theories, concepts, and research evidence (demonstrating the student's ability to apply the sociological imagination to this topic):

“What are the *social consequences* of physical and verbal *abuse* and *social neglect* for children/youths' life chances and socialization”?

Note that the student's narrative should address two areas of social consequences: First, 'life chances' should be addressed following Max Weber, who defined this concept to include the person's chances (opportunities) for educational attainment, health, material reward, and status mobility (preferably in the upward direction). “Opportunities in this sense refer to the extent to which one has access to resources, both tangible ones such as food, clothing and shelter, and intangible ones such as education and health care” (Wikipedia).

Secondly, how do abuse/neglect impact 'socialization', meaning the person's basic social skills, competencies, abilities, and development of self? Students should explore the hypothesis that abuse/neglect adversely affects socialization. Consideration should also be given to whether abuse/neglect *may have positive effects for socialization outcomes*. The student's consideration of the impacts of abuse/neglect on socialization (i.e., social skills, abilities and competencies) should also consider, as a subset of possible impacts of abuse/neglect on socialization, how sociologist Charles H. Cooley's concept of 'the looking glass self' might apply to analysis of the social consequences of the child/youths' experience of abuse/neglect. In other words, how does abuse/neglect affect the self and its development (i.e., 'self concept', sense of self, self-esteem, etc.), in addition to the development of social skills, abilities, and competencies?

To summarize: this narrative assignment should focus on these two identified areas: 1) assessment of the social consequences of abuse/neglect for 'life chances' and 'socialization' outcomes [including social skills and competencies and the development of the self (self concept, sense of self, self esteem)].

The essay narrative should contain the following elements in addressing these two foci: the essay narrative should have three recognizable features -- a beginning, middle, and ending (i.e., an *introduction* where the objective of the essay is clearly and explicitly provided (**please note that a brief descriptive phrase or title does not constitute an adequate or acceptable statement of essay purpose**), the *main body of the essay* where evidence is advanced in support of the student's claims, proposals, and arguments concerning the social consequences of abuse/neglect, and a *conclusion* that draws the essay to a close by summarizing a body of 'findings' the student has unearthed in relation to the central research question.

The essay assignment should be written in clear, grammatical prose, based on logical argumentation and the advancement of relevant social research evidence that focuses on the two areas identified above (i.e., 'life chances' and 'socialization' impacts as indicated above).

Bear in mind that 'abuse' and 'neglect' refer to different patterns of interaction-based 'mistreatment' of the child/youth by adults (typically parents/guardians), within a family social context. In the case of 'abuse' (verbal and physical) the child/youth is subject to *discernable mistreatment* (the infliction of pain and distress), whereas various forms and degrees of social 'neglect' suggest *lost opportunities for learning* (about self and group) resulting in limits on the development of 'social capital' (improving the ability of the individual to easily navigate the social and cultural contexts of modern life), hindering the individual's ability to socially adapt and adjust in order to achieve recognizable social success, etc. Whereas 'abuse' imposes psychological pain and distress on the victimized child/youth experiencing it, 'neglect' reflects patterned relationships reflecting an absence of effective parental guidance and inappropriate and/or dysfunctional parental role models. What does the research literature have to say about the social consequences of these two problematic kinds of interpersonal treatment?

Students should avoid adopting a 'psychological' focus (where the focus of analytical interest is the *individual*). The focus should be sociological, which means focusing on how groups and group life (forms of 'collective organization') affect the individual (where the focus of analysis is to address how 'collective organization and action' affect individual-level consequences).

To summarize again, in addressing 'social consequences' students should first explore how social abuse and neglect affect 'life chances' and social impacts children/youths experience as a result of abusive and neglectful treatment by parents and adult caregivers. Do abused and neglected children/youths experience diminished 'life chances' (meaning reduced opportunities to develop socially productive, pro-social abilities and competencies)? How do children/youths who are abused/neglected do in their schooling compared to young people who grow up without the experience of abuse/neglect? What patterns of substance abuse do abused/neglected children/youths experience? What is the connection between abuse/neglect and substance abuse? (i.e., why do youths develop these patterns of substance abuse as a consequence of their experienced abuse/neglect.?)

The second focus of the essay is the assessment of how abuse/neglect affects the child/youths' socialization (including a consideration of learning and skill/competency development and the developing 'sense of self', including an assessment of the application of Cooley's 'looking glass self' theory to the social circumstances of abuse/neglect.

Students' written assignments will be evaluated in terms of their demonstrated ability to apply the sociological imagination and an ability to apply critical thinking in using the research-based evidence (from scholarly sources) to make their case in answering the assignment question.

Students submitting essays that focus on psychological variables or essays submitted that are not clearly sociological are not acceptable and will not receive a passing mark for their written assignment. If you have any questions as to whether this topic and your approach to developing it are properly 'sociological' in character, then consult with the instructor before you proceed with your research and writing efforts. The length of this paper is 1500-2000 words (6-8 pages) of 'body text' in standard university/college format: **typewritten, 1" margins (top/bottom; left/right), 12 point type font, double-spacing, and separate pages for bibliography, appendices, and title page.** The title page must contain the following information: essay title, course identification (including course name/number/section number), instructor's name, student's name, and date of submission. Failure to comply with these essay guidelines will result in a 2% deduction for each essay guideline violation. **Students must use the APA style guide** for the term essay written for this course (for more information on style guides, see the Douglas College Library webpage – click on **Library** at the bottom of the main webpage under **Quicklinks** to access *Citation and Style Guides* including the **APA Style Guide**).