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Roundtable Discussion

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**Is Community College Criminal Justice Education Contributing
toward Systemic Issues among America's Police?**

- Central premise of this discussion - is criminal justice (CJ) education at the community college level indoctrinating negative career practices, thus contributing to systemic issues within the CJ system and its police?
- Conflict theory aligns well in that underlying congruent tones become prevalent regardless of innovative CJ pedagogy, thus influencing the overall CJ educational experience.
- Conflict theory (Marx and Engels, 1848) suggested that social order in society is controlled through domination and power of particular groups and void of consensus.

- School systems of all levels have developed two distinct institutions: public and private; meaning, in parallel with Conflict Theory, public schools are set aside for the proletariat, while private schools are set aside for the bourgeoisie.
- Research continues to focus on the root causes of systemic issues among the institution of the police, rather than examining further beyond the uniform, into the potentially negative foundational influence of CJ higher education. Caldero and Crank (2015) suggest college "...programs influence how recruits think about police work" (p.188).
- Today's police officer, current or retired, now educating our CJ students at the community college level, undoubtedly fill the classroom with experiences, which he/she should. However, are such biased experiences, laced with unknowing negative indoctrination, socializing our CJ students into a realm of racism, segregation, degradation, and domination before the uniform is attained?
- The study, Perceptions of undergraduate students on criminology and criminal justice education in the US: An empirical analysis, offered by Schanz (2013) learned that CJ students "...strongly agree that their college education...is essential to their career goal and...current or future job" (p.110).
- The study, What's with the attitude? Changing attitudes about criminal justice issues, offered by Mandracchia, Shaw, and Morgan (2013) revealed satisfaction among CJ students in that their CJ coursework prepared them well from entry into their chosen professions, but equally so impacted their perceptions upon various CJ issues.

- In the study, College for all: How two-year criminal justice transfer students perceive their educational experiences, Monk and Turner (2016) examined 23 community college criminal justice students; many students expressed community college offered numerous positive attributes when compared to the larger university, such as ease of access to the instructor.
- It must be noted that ease of access to the community college instructor is an essential ingredient, suggesting individual instructor contact on a regular basis may indeed contribute to negative future practitioner socialization.
- Could such innovative teaching tools, such as High Impact Teaching Practices, produce negative results among CJ students?
- In the study, what motivates today's criminal justice student to become an engaged learner, Wagers, Pate, Turmel, and Burke (2018) examined student-centered high impact learning practices (HIPs) among CJ students. High Impact Teaching Practices involve: deep discourse between student and faculty, collaborative assignments, research, and service/community-based learning, and provide frequent and substantive feedback, among a few characteristics. Results revealed student positively reacted to HIPs with enthusiasm.
- HIPs are often deployed at the community college level; therefore, the community college instructor does have a positive impact upon CJ students, albeit, such an impact may result in negative career outcomes.
- "Police officers who hold more prestige and social status than a particular group become powerbrokers and are more likely to apply law to those in more disadvantaged social positions" (Shjarbacka, Pyroozb, Wolfec and Deckard, 2017, p.50).

- Ask yourselves, what is the state of my criminal justice program?
- Is my criminal justice program “...geared more toward training than education” (Finckenauer, 2005)?
- Do you have diversity among your CJ faculty? In other words, how many CJ faculty members represent law enforcement, corrections, law, social advocacy groups (domestic violence advocacy), mental health, children and family services, human services (addiction counselling), probation/parole services, forensic psychology, forensic chemistry?
- Do you know what your CJ faculty are teaching? Do you really know?
- Do you incorporate the social sciences within your CJ program, such as sociology, psychology, political science?
- Clearly, future research requires in-depth focus on the making of the CJ practitioner at its birth, the CJ college student. Pedagogical approaches tremendously influence the CJ student to become the CJ practitioner they are today.
- The root of systemic issues among America’s police may cultivate a level of superior socialization into an untrustworthy subculture, founded in conflict theory, at the commencement of CJ higher education.
- I suggest examining the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Standards for College/University Criminal Justice/Criminology, Associate Degree Programs, found at <https://www.acjs.org/page/ProgramStandards>

Thank you for attending.

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