

The Basic Concepts of Sociology

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Why Sociologists Love Parades

Sociologists love parades because the social relationships in that society can be viewed. The function of the society is revealed through the interactions of people at the parades. Interactions between participants demonstrates who has the power in that area. Interactions between participants and the parade goers reveals many social aspects of that society. Overall, the values and the cherished entertainment of the society are highlighted in the parade.

When I have attended parades in the past, it is always obvious which class the person comes from in the parade. In the Louisiana Sugarcane Festival Queen's Parade in New Iberia, the King and Queen are always chosen from the upper middle class. The different upper middle class krewes in the parade help to choose the King and Queen from amongst their own. These different krewes are often dressed very well and throw a lot better things than the poorer krewes. The poorer krewes ride on homemade floats, usually utility trailers or wagons converted for the day, while the upper middle class krewes own or rent factory made floats. The poorer krewes will be drinking and dancing to loud music on their floats while the upper middle class krewes sit or stand quietly and wave to the crowds. A bystander can easily see who is who in the city just from watching the parade go by.

The Sociological Imagination

The sociological imagination is the ability to evaluate people or events in reference to how their social conditions helped to shape their lives. I often use my sociological imagination without ever knowing that is what I was doing. Quite often while eating at a restaurant for lunch, I will evaluate the people who come in and eat. Generally, two types of people will come into the restaurant: blue collar laborers and white collar professionals. They are easy to distinguish because of their dress, and quite often, the way they speak also. While speaking to one of the professionals I have come to know, I know that he came from a middle class family that could afford to send him to college. In contrast, one of the laborers I have come to know works very hard so that his children could have a better future. He comes from a poor family that were once farmers. At a young age, he quit school to take care of his mother and younger siblings after his father died. In his situation, money for the family was needed immediately. Waiting a few more years to go through college was not an option for him.

Social Conditions and My Life

Social conditions are individual things which contribute to our way of life. Social conditions include our place in society, as determined by the society itself. Understanding the social conditions of an area helps to understand the reason people act or think the way they do.

I come from a middle class family where my parents have worked very hard to elevate their economic status in order to provide better for their children. My parents have had to work for what they have. I on the other hand was given everything that I have. We live in an area where crime is very, very low, as compared to crime inside a large city. My economic situation is stable and I do not have to worry about protecting myself or my belongings, in general. My social condition allows me to be free from economic and safety concerns, which allows me to focus more on my studies.

Interactionism, Functionalism, and Conflict Theory Perspectives and How They Apply to Me Personally

When taking a correspondence course, the interaction of teacher and student is limited; thus, it is much harder to apply the interactionist perspective. The teacher and student interact through emails to simulate a classroom type experience of questions and answers with explanations. The information I receive to this course contributes to my understanding of society in general; thus, it is applied to real life situations (which is part of the rational choice or exchange theory). The teacher-student interaction establishes a social structure where the teacher is the leader with more knowledge and wisdom (which is the symbolic-interactionist perspective).

On the other hand, there are certain functions that both the teacher and student must perform as part of the university system. The teacher is the instructor and the person who grades the student's progress. The student is required to submit lessons and take tests in order to receive a grade. If the student and the teacher are both performing their roles correctly, then they are "well integrated" and also in equilibrium. From the functionalist perspective, the teacher and the student are nothing more than role players in the even larger university system where thousands of students are educated by hundreds of teachers in order to perform an even greater function in society.

One of the problems with the functionalist perspective is that equilibrium is rare overall. Conflict is present just as much as equilibrium. Conflict also exists within the university system and between the teacher and student. On a large scale, a higher GPA might be needed for graduation or disciplinary action might result in the student's expulsion. On a smaller scale, a conflict over a correct answer might arise between the teacher and the student, and, if unresolved, it could involve the head of the department. The general thing here is that the person with the power is the one who the conflict is brought. At first, the conflict might be between the student and the teacher. The teacher has the power until a greater conflict arises, then the head of the department is the one in power. The power here is "the one who knows better" and the conflict here is "which one knows better."

Sociobiology

Sociobiology is the theory that social behavior is rooted in genetics. Sociobiology can be used to explain an aspect of our culture. In one of the examples, sociobiology is utilized to explain the taboo of incest. In this case, sociobiologists claim that human evolution has led us to evolve the trend to avoid inbreeding. They claim that avoiding incest became an instinct over time. However, other scientists argue that the illusion of sociobiology is actually the result of biological evolution and culture interacting. Rather than incest being rooted in biology, natural selection and cultural and social aspects allowed for incest to become a taboo.

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativity

Ethnocentrism is a bias towards one's own culture. Cultural relativity is the ability to forgo judgment of a culture and to recognize that cultures develop and adapt in their own ways. Social scientists face a problem with ethnocentrism because they have to evaluate other cultures, especially their values, without placing a judgment based on their own culture's acceptance of the practices.

In the past, I have looked at the Vietnamese culture with an ethnocentric point-of-view. I noticed early on that they do not keep a close watch on their children while in a busy public place. They often let them wander aimlessly anywhere they wish. Americans, in general, watch or want to know where their

small children are all the time. Some Americans have even gone as far as to put their children on a leash! However, most Vietnamese women that I know allow their children to roam freely without fear of them being abducted. In one instance, my friend Kieu was shopping in the electronics department in Wal-mart while her three-year-old nephews played in the toy department nearby, but she did not pay any attention to them at all. Often, while shopping with my other friend Kip, he allowed his 14-month-old niece stagger behind us and never looked back to see if she was still following us. When I went to grab the girl's hand, he told me: "She will follow." I assume they are teaching their children to defend for themselves and to be independent by their actions, but to me, it seems extreme. I know of no American who would just let a baby stagger behind without looking back or allow small boys to roam a store.

Social Norms and People's Behavior in Restaurants

Social norms are principles that regulate behavior in a society. Social norms are important because they establish order in a society. By telling people how they should act and interact with others, social norms produce what is acceptable behavior within a certain society.

Inside of a fast food restaurant, I noticed how interact with one another. When walking into the fast food restaurant, a person already knows that he or she might have to stand in line until their order is taken. A person proceeds to the end of the line. There is no sign telling a person to go to the end of the line, but the socially acceptable behavior is for the person to walk in and to go the end of the line rather than attempting to squeeze into the front. People stand in line about two to three feet from a stranger. Any closer and others around them might feel uncomfortable. When at the counter, it is expected that you order and then move out of the way once you pay for your food. After picking up your food, people generally pick tables that are generally spaced apart, unless the dining area is full. While in the dining area, it would not be acceptable to belch, to pass gas, and maybe even to blow your nose. These actions would be considered rude and disgusting, especially in a place where people are eating. When leaving, a person is expected to dump their trash into a bin if there is no waitress. This is a courtesy not only for the workers, but also for other people who want to sit and eat.

Role Taking and the Development of Self

Role taking is when people step into the roles of different people around them. That is, in role taking, people pretend to be someone else. Mead's model divided role taking into three stages: preparatory, play, and game. Each stage contributes to the development of self. In the practice of role taking, people look at similar situations from other points of view, allowing them to understand why certain things happen the way they do. It allows the person to understand why the role they are taking on requires certain actions.

While I am a student and answering the question as a student, I have to take on the role of a sociologist and evaluate role taking in my own personal experience. I have to analyze a simple situation of a boy put on a tie to look like his father as role taking rather than simple child's play. So, just to answer this question, I have to pretend to be a sociologist to see how they see role taking behaviors.

Face Work

Face work is a set of socially acceptable actions that an individual does in order to maintain a positive image. In order to maintain face work, you have to be considerate of others around you. You have to

make sure your politeness, humor, strength, cuteness, and sensitivity is acceptable to those present. If you make the wrong jokes or you are insensitive to other's feelings, you might "lose face." You must defend yourself if you are threatened to lose face; that is, be prepared to back up the claims you are making to boost your image. The possibility of losing face is very emotional. Quite often, people "front" to make a better image for themselves; that is, they make unsupportive claims in reference to their abilities, wealth, or other in order to boost their image to others.

When in a social setting, such as a bar where I am attempting to impress someone else, I often brag to boost my image. In this bragging, sometimes I exaggerate and I hope the other person does not question my story. I also look at the person's face while speaking, to judge whether or not I am upsetting that person with a joke or with conversation in general. Generally, I avoid sexual topics with women because that would not be polite, even if it is meant to be humorous. I avoid racial, religious, or political jokes because you never know where the other person stands on issues if I am not familiar with that person. Basically, conversation revolves around subjects that are not controversial or impolite because I want to maintain my own image and not hurt the feelings of others around me.

My Perspective on the Conclusions Reached by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray in their book The Bell Curve.

One reason social scientists disagree with Herrnstein and Murray's book is because they believe that there is more than one way to measure intelligence other than IQ. They also claim that IQ tests are have a middle-class biased. Also, the social scientists disagree with the author's previous claims that correlation and causality are the same. In other words, lower IQ scores cause poverty. Social scientists believe the authors have it backwards.

I agree with the social scientists on all their points. I do not think that low intelligence leads to poverty. I also do not think that genetic factors cause lower IQ scores, but rather, they are asking questions that are biased. I do not believe it takes an intelligent person to make money. Many people who cannot read or write have succeeded in making livings for themselves. People who work hard, whether they have lower IQ scores or not, are able to succeed. Economic and social deprivation leads to lasting poverty in a single group, not intelligence. Intelligent poor people appear all the time and are able to move out of the impoverished areas. Mexican workers with little education move out of Mexico and into the United States to make a better living.

The Agencies of Socialization and How They Have Affected My Life

In the case of gender identity, school was probably the most influential agent of socialization. The male teachers and my male friends, which would actually be my peers, helped me to understand what it was to be a man. I incorporated the behaviors of my peers into my own, such as using certain words, dressing a certain way, and interacting with one another. While my father, as part of the family agent, played a major role, he is not the person I have come to model myself after. My interaction with my family as always been limited, even with my immediate family, because I am a private person. If anyone, my brother, who is 12 years older than me, is probably the one who influenced me the most, besides my peers that is. My brother is the one who I often engaged in anticipatory socialization, since I dressed and acted more like him.

The mass media agent has had a medium effect on me. While I have tried to model myself after the behaviors of the men on TV, I often gave up later. In attempting to model the behavior of people on TV, I often found myself struck down. Acting out violence was detestable by the people I knew and

acting out fantasies, like superman and Star Trek, were scrutinized for being unrealistic. Therefore, I modeled myself after my male peers and my older brother.

The influence of the community agent is quite limited, since I never went to day care, scout groups, churches, recreation centers, or any other the sort other than school. As a child, I was taken care of by my mother. I was always by her side. I have never played for a team and I rarely, if ever, attend festival events. On few occasions, I have attended festival events but rarely do I interact with those present. If anything, the influence festivals and community gatherings have had on me is how not to act. That is, from the church leaders I have seen and the festivals that I have been to, I have decided for myself that is not how I want to act. The excessive hatred by church leaders against other religions and the intoxicated fool at the festivals drive me away from such communities. So, the community has had little effect on my gender identity.

The Division of Labor at Home as Compare to Hochschild's Work on the "Second Shift"

In my present household, I am the lazy student who does nothing. My father, who is almost 70 years old, is not retired; therefore, he stays home and takes care of all the household chores: cooking, cleaning, making beds, cutting the grass, etc. My mother, who is her early 50s, continues to run the family business and is often out on the road for a few days at a time (she drives a truck). My mother does not do much work in the household. She dusts pictures sometimes, because she says that my father does not do a good job doing it, and she will wash the dishes after we all eat, since my father cooked. Often times, my father and I will cook each for ourselves, since him and I differ on our taste in food.

Other than keeping my room clean, I have no chores in the house. Sometimes when I am home alone and bored, I will wash the clothes or the dishes, since both of my parents are out. I also have my own private garden, which I call my sanctuary, which I keep up personally.

Hochschild seems to place more burden on the mother, but in my house that is simply not the case. In the past, my parents roles were reversed. But now, my father bears the burden of the work in the household, virtually becoming "Mr. Mom." When I was a child, I spent most of my time with my mother. Now that I am older, I see my father more often. When I was in middle school and high school, my parents shared the work load equally, both contributing to the household through chores and through working outside the home. It has always seemed that my parents have shared responsibilities. I believe my mother's job outside the home is just as hard as my father's job of keeping up the house. He is older and it is harder for him to work like he used to. My mother, who took over my grandfather's business, has done this time of work most of her life and is quite familiar with it.

Hochschild, in later work, points out that people are scared to show less dedication at work, for fear of not being able to do better. With my mother and father, they were always their own boss. They took time out when they needed to be with the family. One of them was usually with me, other than middle school and high school. My mother knew how much money she had to make in order to live for the year. When she saw that she had exceeded her goal, she generally worked less.

The Differences Between Social Groups and Social Categories

A social category is a group of individuals who are grouped together by an outsider because they share a common trait. A social group is a group of individuals who have bonded through a shared similarity and interact regularly.

I would fall under many social categories, such as a male, a young adult, a Republican, and a Cajun. My social groups do not have names, but rather they are three distinct groups. I have a group of friends I went to high school with, a group I go to college with, and a group that I hang out with at the bar. None of my social categories and social groups are really related. For example, most of my friends from the bar could be categorized as “people who attend the bar,” but our group is not everyone who attends the bar, just a small group. Everyone in my social groups has common interests, but they are not all the same. For instance, a few of my friends from the bar share a common music interest, but not all. We all have common interests which links is all together, it is just not only one thing and there are varying degrees of each thing.

“Two is company, and three is a crowd” and Sociologically

Yes, the saying “Two is company, and three is a crowd” makes sense sociologically. The bond between two individuals is stronger than the bond between three. People want an exclusive relationship with another person and the introduction of a third challenges that. There are many instances where one becomes jealous because a third is introduced. For example, a couple is most likely to divorce after the arrival of a child. In another instance, the coming of a third child might challenge the relationship between the two older siblings.

The Usefulness of the Four Principles of Interaction

I believe the pleasure principle and the rationality principle to be the most useful to me. When I evaluate a situation, I tend to approach it by questioning whether or not this will be good for me. I wonder if it will give me more pleasure and if it will produce more good for me than harm. When a friend offers to take me to the movies, the event is both pleasurable to me as well as rational, since it is bringing me more good than harm. Since we are friends, I am not concerned with returning the favor or am I concerned if he is paying is unfair. This is why the reciprocity principle and the fairness principle are the least useful to me. Generally, I do not care if I am giving what I receive and being fair to the other person. All that matters is if I am satisfied or not. While this does sound selfish, I admit that, I believe that the other people in the group are generally looking out for their own self interests as well. I believe everyone looks to benefit from a relationship, not necessarily considering if they are taking too much from the other person. My friend is probably offering to pay for me just to have someone to go with him, which I conclude my company outweighs the cost of the movie ticket. While there is a sense of giving and receiving and some fairness from that point of view, I look at it from the rationality principle’s point of view.

An Example of Max Weber's Six Aspects of Bureaucratic Organizations

The bureaucracy of LSU can be clearly defined in the terms of Max Weber. At LSU, the positions of the employees is clearly defined. For instance, a janitor sweeps the floors; he does not teach. An instructor teaches the class; he does not make departmental decisions. Each position has its own lists of duties. A hierarchy also exists. That is, the chancellor of the university is the head. Below him are the deans of the colleges, which report to the chancellor. Below the deans are the department heads. Below the department heads are the professors. The hierarchy is clearly defined and the responsibilities of each group are clear. There are rules and precedents set at the university and most are written in the university’s catalog. Everyone must conform to these rules in order for the system to work. As one person retires, another with the qualifications is able to fill that open position. This career ladder gives employees the ability to “move up” and do better for themselves.

Ethnomethodology and the Encounter with My Mother

When my mother returned home today, I continued to stare at the television screen. She said hey, but when I did not respond, she walked directly into the kitchen. A few minutes later when I walked into the kitchen, she asked me if I was mad at her. An ethnomethodologist would say that I violated the rules of behavior in regards to greeting my mother. By ignoring her, at first she probably did not know what to make of it. Because I did not answer, my mother simply walked away instead of insisting on getting my attention. While in the kitchen, she probably made the assumption that I was angry with her and avoided a direct confrontation by not responding.

Evaluation of the Milgram Study

The Milgram study found out that people obeyed the commands of the authority. People generally have respect the authority for the bureaucratic organization and abide by the rules. If they follow the rules, then the responsibility of what happens does not weigh on the individual but rather on the organization.

I think that the results would be slightly different now. I believe people would be more likely to do whatever they are told for money, so long as the organization, rather than themselves, is the scapegoat. With the increase in crime in the last thirty years, it seems that people have less respect for authority. Therefore, I believe people would be willing to do it now more than ever.

I also believe the results of this study are biased toward who the laboratory subjects are. I believe people would be more reluctant to shock a child or an old lady for instance. Today, a person might be less reluctant to shock a child or an old lady than a person from the 1970s.

Collective Behaviors

Social movements generally start out as instances of collective behaviors. That is, organized movements for a certain cause develop out of instances where people react completely different to an event than they would normally. However, not all instances of collective behaviors turn into social movements. If a guest speaker gives a speech people do not agree with, the entire audience might walk out on the speaker. In another instance, a group of people might use the same terminology that one of their favorite celebrities use. For instance, Paris Hilton fans might start using the term "that's hot." Another example of a spontaneous instance of collective behavior might be for a group of friends to have dinner or go to the movies on a Sunday night because they are all bored. These are instances of spontaneous collective behaviors that do not become social movements.

Crowd Behavior vs. Mass Behavior

Crowd behavior and mass behavior are influenced by the emotion being expressed and the generally acceptable behavior for that event. Crowds are large groups of people who gather and are near one another. A mass is a large group of people who are more distant but share common symbols or objects. With crowd behavior, people are in a close proximity setting where they are able to look around and see what is acceptable behavior. Crowd behavior is more dramatized because people who are part of the crowd might not feel the exact same way as the majority, but they exhibit the behavior of the majority. With mass behavior, you are dealing with a general emotion of a large population. Crowd behavior might influence a mass behavior. That is, the fears or joys of a local group may be spread to the

masses. For example, a rock concert takes place in a confined space, a building or an open area. The people watching the concert from their seats are the crowd and they exhibit crowd behavior. However, if the same concert were to be broadcasted through a television station, the crowd behavior influences the behavior of the people watching abroad.

Lofland's Typology of Spontaneous Collective Behaviors categorizes crowd and mass behaviors according to their emotion. A family taking refuge in a shelter during a hurricane would be experiencing the crowd behavior directed by fear. Meanwhile, the entire population of a city being evacuated brings about fear everywhere, making it a mass behavior. A group of high school teachers protesting the firing of another teacher exhibits a crowd behavior of hostility. Republicans calling for the impeachment of a president who lied under oath exhibits a mass behavior of hostility. A high school pep rally exhibits a crowd behavior of joy. People waiting in line across the country for the latest Harry Potter book exhibits a mass behavior of joy.

Collective Action Frames

Collective action frames are either points-of-view or unique ideas which call for social movements. Collective action frames contain three parts: an injustice component, an agency component, and an identity component. Collective action frames are models that exist for certain scenarios, introducing a problem, how to work together, and who should work together to solve the problem, usually offering a solution. These models may fit to a certain situation where a group of people are dissatisfied. Because the model offers a solution to the problem, a group could be swayed to follow its advice. In this manner, a collective action frame affects the collective behavior of the group by calling for action, rather than no action at all.

Sociologists and Their Interest in Resource Mobilization

Sociologists are interested in the problems of resource mobilization and free riders because of all the benefits that have been gained through social movements. Sociologists want to study the degree of mobilization and the percentage of participants.

The free rider problem is present in an organization to which I belong. In a religious organization I belong to, many members of the congregation often complain about church events. However, only a few from the congregation volunteer their time to help organize and set up church events. Like the book says, the congregation agrees that something should be done to make the events better, but they are not motivated to participate to help the situation.

The Mass Media and Elian Gonzalez

The Elian Gonzalez situation was quite unique and the mass media helped to shape the public opinion during the spring of 2000. The mass public was divided into two groups, those who wanted Elian to stay in the United States and those who believed he should be with his father. The spontaneous collective behavior of hostility on the mass level arose quickly as the two groups debated their own set of beliefs. The Cuban population of Florida, many refugees themselves, developed collective action frames which supported Elian's family in America. This social movement called for the United States government to declare Elian a political refugee. Meanwhile, the opposing social movement sought to return Elian to his father in Cuba. Only a few took part in the resource mobilization on either side. While public opinion was formed on all sides of the issue, many were free riders and did nothing to aid either side. This lack of support brings in to question the degree of severity of the situation. Most

probably did not enter the social movement because it did not directly concern them. However, many Cuban refugees in Florida did enter the debate because they felt the situation affected them directly.

Challenging Norms and Values

The Salem witch-hunt served to reaffirm the Puritan norms and values. By prosecuting witches, the Puritans demonstrated their devotion to God, which provided for the social solidarity.

Many times people have used religion to justify the self-interest of a group. In our society today, homosexuals are challenging "traditional" marriage. In order to maintain society's norms and values, the conservative Christian community cites passages from the Bible which condemn homosexuality. By condemning homosexuality using religion, the conservative Christians are attempting to maintain the traditional family structure, which is struggling to exist in today's society.

Deviance

Deviance is a type of behavior that is not considered normal. Stigma is a trait that makes a person less desirable to the taste of society. The distinction is important because deviants make the decision to be deviant from the norms. Deviant people can change by changing their behavior. On the other hand, a person who has a stigma attached to them cannot do anything to change that.

Prostitution as Viewed by Different Perspectives of Sociology

A functionalist would approach prostitution as deviating from the norm of society because of a rise on anomie. What happens is a person adopts a new set of norms which allows that person to sell sex as a legitimate means of acquiring money. This results from the need to acquire money. Even though prostitution is not considered normal, it is rationalized by the individual. This approach seems to be the more appropriate one because it shows how not all people have the same acceptable morals and provides a reason as to why someone would enter the profession.

From the conflict perspective, prostitution is seen as evolving out of an institution where one group has limited the norms of another group. As such, a conflict between the two groups arises. One group is the prostitutes and those who support prostitution and the other group is those who want to impose their "higher morals" in the form of laws.

A functionalist would approach embezzlement as a means to acquire money through behavior that deviates from the norm. Even though the person who is embezzling has adopted a different set of norms which approve of embezzlement, it is still considered deviant. Again, the functionalist approach seems to be the more appropriate one since the acquisition of wealth is a good reason to rationalize crime.

The conflict perspective would approach embezzlement as arising because of a conflict between those who accept embezzlement as "okay," so long as you are not caught, and those who are morally against stealing. It is hard for me to see how embezzlement might be rationalized; however, the conflict perspective seems not to carry as much weight as the functionalist perspective in this instance.

The Rosenhan Study

The Rosenhan study on labeling could be applied to anyone. Anyone who labels themselves is

judged according to that stereotype. For example, someone who has served time in prison will continue to be labeled a criminal and treated as a deviant no matter what that person has done to move on from his or her past. Even if this person was a thief as a child and grew up to be a charitable person, people who knew this person as a child would still treat him or her as a thief. In another instance, imagine if a white woman would have walked into a “whites only” restaurant and said that she was “colored,” even though it was clear she was white to customers in the diner. The restaurant owner would probably throw her out. Someone with a criminal record, maybe stealing food to feed a hungry family member, would be treated the same as a rapists if the term was generalized as “having a criminal record.” The process of labeling, whether you do it to yourself or to others, brings out people’s predispositions on the subject.

Rehabilitation of Prisoners

I think prisoners could be re-socialized to become productive members of society. Some prisoners could become productive members of society by receiving a fair education, which would allow them to compete in the job field without having to resort to crime. Others would have to go through years of psychological help to help them see that their actions were wrong. Another group would be incapable of help, probably because of some mental disorder or lack of wanting to better one’s self. Criminals are people, just like everyone else, and generally can be reasoned with, given the proper setting. Showing a criminal how to get by in society without resorting to crime would allow them to reenter society. Prisoners who serve long prison sentences forget how to be productive members of society and probably resort to worse criminal behavior that they learned while in prison. Long prison sentences for non-violent criminals are breeding grounds for more troublesome criminals.

Thomas Malthus's Theory of Population Increase

Thomas Malthus theorized that the human population increases faster than food and energy resources. He said that the human population increases geometrically (2, 4, 8, 16. . .) in accordance with the ability to feed as many children as a family can afford. However, the food and energy resources increase arithmetically (2, 3, 4, 5. . .). He said that “natural checks” like famine, disease, and war would then result from this difference.

There are two reasons why Malthus’s theory is wrong. First, humans are not biologically programmed to grow beyond their carrying capacity. Humans have developed ways, such as late marriage and celibacy, to control population growth. Secondly, technology and improvements in institutions allow for energy and food resources to grow with the population growth. Technology such as farming techniques to allow higher crop yields allow for population growth.

In the future, it is possible that Malthus’s theory may be correct in countries that remain undeveloped. In these regions, society might not adapt to prevent population growth and technology might not be utilized in the area to increase food and energy resources.

Society and the Three Stages of the Demographic Transition

It is possible that each and every society will eventually go through all three states of the demographic transition considering the world’s shift toward industrial development. Starting with the industrial revolution in Europe, society there changed from high growth potential to a transitional growth stage. Eventually, many parts of Europe entered into incipient decline, where birthrates and death rates are almost even. This trend has not only happened in Europe, but it has also happened in

other parts of the world. Countries with industrial growth like China and India are encouraging birth control through legislation. China and India will eventually enter incipient decline if their efforts are effective. This has also happened in Singapore and other countries which have become more industrial. It seems there is a correlation between industrialization and the demographic transition. Thus, any society moving toward industrialization would eventually go through all three stages of the demographic transition.

The Subcultural Theory of Urbanization

The subcultural theory of urbanization states that people will find commonality, either through kinship, ethnic background, interests, or lifestyle, and establish communities. The subcultural theory disagrees with the decline-of-community thesis by demonstrating that people of urban areas create a different type of community, not one necessarily based on residential location but rather based on the ability to communicate, either through technology, social organizations, or business establishments. The subcultural theory also shows that residential communities, based on ethnicity in the example given, still exist within an urban center. The subcultural theory contradicts the decline-of-community thesis, which believes “city dwellers” have become detached from one another.

Social and Economic Inequality in Urban America

American cities are becoming more socially and economically stratified because of the decrease in manufacturing jobs. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, manufacturing jobs provided immigrants and the poor to establish the middle-class society. Today, there are less manufacturing jobs in the city. Established Americans have taken jobs in business offices and other higher paying jobs while struggling Americans and immigrants find themselves working in less desirable job fields with low pay.

Because of this economic inequality, the poor are becoming more subservient to the rich. That is, the rich have started “urban renewal” projects which export the poor from an area and revamp the area to make it more desirable, a process known as gentrification.

I have witnessed a rise in discrimination based on class rather than ethnicity. This is brought about by the economic inequality in American. The more privileged in society make the decisions and influence the decisions that promote their own self-interests with little regard as to how it will affect the poor. The rich have elevated themselves above the poor and are not interested in helping American society become less stratified. The middle-class, which established itself in an economic boom of industry, is separating into two groups: those who can afford higher education and those who will become servants of the higher classes.

New Immigrants vs. Old Immigrants

The new immigrants are viewed as newcomers and usually are part of the lowest class of society. The immigrants take the work that many people do not want to do because that is one of the only occupations open to them. The immigrants offer U.S. citizens cheap labor and an elevation in status. Immigrants come to the United States because of its open stratification system. By working hard in fields typical Americans see as undesirable, distasteful, or just underpaid, immigrant workers do everything possible to improve their situation. Working hard in an open stratification system allows immigrant or the children of immigrants to experience upward mobility. Eventually, the immigrant family will rise to the middle-class, and in some cases maybe into the higher classes reserved for “old

money.”

Structural and Spatial Mobility and My Place in the Stratification System.

In my father's youth, he and his twelve other siblings worked on the family farm. They were sharecroppers. They worked the land and gave the landowner a percentage of the crops they raised, generally making the landowner richer every year and putting the sharecropper deeper in debt. However, the industrialization of the area in the 1950s allowed my father and his family to move from the farm and into a job working in the oil field. The entire institution of sharecropping was eliminated in the area in just a few years. When an entire class of people are eliminated, this is called structural mobility. Machines replaced the hundreds of sharecroppers who formerly tended the fields.

In order for my father to take a job in the oil field, he had to move from the farm in Leroy, Louisiana and into a larger community. They moved to Abbeville, Louisiana and worked out of the Port of Vermillion (just outside of the city). Many sharecroppers from the Leroy area moved to either Abbeville or Lafayette when better jobs in the oil field opened up. This mass exodus from the farm to the city is an example of spatial mobility.

Farming in the area no longer needs the manpower it once did; therefore, not many people are farmers and the entire institution of sharecropping is gone. Furthermore, the area of Leroy, once a farming community, is now a suburb just outside the city limits of Lafayette, Louisiana. The flight of my father from farming to working in industry and from the farm to the city has placed our family in a higher social status. Because of this, I am placed in a different area of the stratification system than I would have been if my father would have stayed where he was. His brother chose to remain a farmer. While sharecropping eventually faded, his brother became a paid worker on the farm and employed his children to help. They remained very poor and in a lower place in the stratification system.

Status Symbols, Deference, and Demeanor and the Social Stratification

Status symbols help to display one's own place in the stratification system. These status symbols could be objects or behaviors. Deference is a behavior to show respect for another person, either of higher or lower status. Most often, people show deference to someone of a higher class by addressing them a certain way or bowing. Likewise, deference is often reciprocated by the member of the higher class in the form of thanking or blessing the member of the lower class. For example, if my teacher asked me a question, I would respond with "yes ma'am" or "no ma'am." To reciprocate the deference, she might say "thank you" or "good job." Because I was polite to my teacher, I presented myself as a person who should be respected as well. Being polite, dressing well, or using manners is part of a person's demeanor; that is, a person's demeanor is a way of conducting one's self. We use demeanor as a means to determine our social status as well. I always dress respectable when going to a meeting with a professor. I also address them as Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Dr. rather than by their first names. I am presenting myself in a manner that is respectable to them. I would never say "Hey you" to one of my professors.

Class Consciousness

Class consciousness is the class's opinion of its own social situation. In order for a class to change its situation, the class has to become aware of itself; that is, the class itself must understand what is happening and that something must be done in order for it to experience social mobility.

I experience class consciousness every time I read the opinion section of the newspaper.

Policemen are currently protesting the local government that their pay is lower than that of firefighters, who they perceive as men and women who are able to lounge around all day. Objective classes are different classes that are grouped by facts that can be easily seen, such as the occupation of a group or the way they live. Firefighters would be one objective class and policemen make up another objective class. However, when the policemen are able to identify themselves as separate from the firefighters and that there is a problem with their situation, they have class consciousness. Their objection to firefighters receiving higher pay for less work is an effect of class consciousness.

Conflict vs. Functionalist Theories of Stratification

The conflict theory of stratification concludes that social change is the result of the conflict between social classes. On the other hand, the functionalist theory of stratification concludes that social classes are created out of a necessary unequal distribution of rewards. Rewards are given to the talented or harder working in society in order to facilitate the drive for excellence.

The functionalist theory seems to work better because it explains how classes would be created in the beginning. While the functionalist theory seems to fail under some instances, such as the children of hard workers receiving an easy life or the talent of a low class person being overlooked, I think people of all classes would want to work as hard as possible or exploit their talents in order to reek the rewards. We all want our children to have it “easier” than we did, in general. Therefore, we work hard and given them some of the rewards we receive. However, we should only give the children a portion of our rewards when it is due. For example, if my child were to make all A’s, I would allow him to buy a new toy.

Race is a Social Concept

Kornblum claims that race is a social concept because there is no such thing as a pure race. Scientifically, there is no way to define exactly what a race is. The traits that define a race is determined by society, not science. Society determines which traits, ones that determine race, are favorable. Racism is the belief that certain traits are inferior, which allows for discrimination. Social-scientific studies have debunked beliefs that different races have different personalities, racial cultures, and different ethical standards.

Ideological Tendencies in the Process of Assimilation of Ethnic Groups

The three “ideological tendencies” mentioned by Kornblum are Anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism. Cultural pluralism would probably be the best approach in attempting to resolve racial and ethnic inequality. Cultural pluralism allows people to retain their own cultures while participating in the greater society. In the Anglo-conformity ideology, we would be asking an entire group to give up its culture because of the belief that the Anglo-Saxon culture is “better.” In the melting pot ideology, we would mix everyone together to the point that what we perceive as “race” today would disappear and only one culture would emerge; however, there is no doubt that people would chose new traits to discriminate against. The best approach is clearly to allow people to retain their cultural uniqueness but show them how to participate in the dominant culture. The cultural pluralism ideology would foster with it tolerance for different cultures, allowing for discrimination to eventually fade away.

Prejudice and Discrimination

Prejudice is an attitude where one person prejudices the another, which can be positive or negative, but it is based on stereotypes of a group to which they belong. Discrimination is the act of treating someone unfairly because they belong to a certain group. Prejudice can exist without discrimination, and discrimination can exist without prejudice. Some people are prejudice but do not discriminate. Some people discriminate because of a social norm but are not prejudice.

Prejudice is probably more prevalent in the United States than discrimination. Discrimination is illegal and is regulated by law and organizations that strive for equality. Even though not all discrimination is controlled, it is a behavior that can be observed at least. Prejudice, on the other hand, is an attitude that is not easily observed. People prejudge nearly everything and everyone. For every prejudice we see, such as a facial expression or stated opinion, there are probably hundreds more thoughts that are prejudging people which are never acted out.

Interactionist Theories Concerning Ethnic and Racial Inequality

The interactionist theories seem to be the most useful in explaining ethnic and racial inequality. It explains how two groups might get along or conflict with one another. Generally, people think of the other group as inferior. People believe that their own group is more important.

I see this in my own community. South Louisiana thinks that its culture is better than the culture in northern Louisiana. We call ourselves “us” and designate everyone else as “them.” The interactions between the two groups is minimal because of our ethnocentric beliefs.

African Americans vs. European Immigrants

African Americans have received a smaller piece of the pie for a number of reasons. First, African Americans are far more easy to identify than European immigrants. Second, the rate of broken families is higher for African Americans. Finally, African Americans lag behind economically because the American economy switches before the African Americans can fully adjust to a certain structure and because of job discrimination.

Gender vs. Sex

Sex is a biological condition that differentiates between male and female. Gender is a culturally defined role or psychological condition that differentiates between masculine and feminine. The distinction is important because the gender someone assumes might not agree with their biological condition. The way a person feels or acts is different from their physical characteristics. While a person’s biological condition generally agrees with their gender identity, this is not always the case.

The Gender Separation Theory

The gender separation theory argues that the separation of boys and girls by gender causes the two groups to assume different values and interactions, thus allowing two separate cultures to arise. This is influenced by their parents as well as the media. As men and women, they carry on the values and interactions developed in gender separation as children into their adult lives. This seems to be supported by studies which suggest that boys organize themselves into larger, hierarchical groups and use neutrals to solve problems while girls organize themselves into smaller, equal groups and solve problems by discussing it amongst themselves.

A few problems arise with the gender separation theory however. First, the question of “how separated are boys and girls really?” Boys and girls are raised together in families and spend a large amount of time together, as opposed to separate. Also, there is an increase in activities where both boys and girls participate. One must also take into account that gender separation revolves around the elite and socially successful people called the “Big Man bias.” Finally, what is referred to as “girl’s culture” is actually an emphasis on upper-class white girls and neglects girls from other classes, races, and ethnic backgrounds.

The gender separation approach seems to be based on what the parents want their child to be like. By making boys do only “boy” activities or play with only “boy” toys, parents are rearing a child in a specific direction. I think this is what causes much confusion later in life when men have trouble interacting in a situation for which is neither masculine or feminine or with their own gender identity issues.

One of the problems with the gender separation theory, the one which arises the question of “how separated are they really?” brings to light several issues. I believe boys and girls interact more with one another than in only male or only female settings. The interaction between a boy and his mother is not part of the gender separation theory, but a boy learns a lot from his mother as well as from other females.

The gender separation approach seems to be flawed in many areas and should not be an emphasized practice. I think it is idealized and not a practical application, thus its main flaw.

The Term Gender-Poverty Ratio

The gender-poverty ratio is a ratio that determines the difference between the poverty rate of women and men. It reveals a percentage of how more likely women are to be impoverished than men. It exists because women are paid less for the same job that men perform. This payment inequality leads to women earning significantly less, as a group, than men. It also exists because our social institution is not advanced enough to aid single women with children, since women are generally the caretakers.

Beauty Contests and Discrimination

Beauty contests are discriminatory since it emphasizes the dominate culture’s belief as to what beauty is. For example, women who win the Miss America and Miss Universe pageants have characteristics which favor white middle-class people from Western society. Beauty pageants are sexist and exploitive of young women. They reinforce stereotypes. Women who do not display these beauty characteristics are not as desirable to others. This leads to self-esteem problems especially in young women, who are generally treated as objects by men rather than as equals. This inequality, in which men generally see women as objects, is why female pageants are more popular than male pageants. The winner of the pageant is presented as a prize and their main attribute is their beauty. Male pageants often involve different competitions other than just how good the man looks. The woman are not graded on their intelligence but rather only on their beauty.

The "Feminine Mystique"

The feminine mystique resurfaced in the 1960s. Different women’s groups began to come together and voice their opinions about inequality that still existed. By the 1970s, they made much progress. However, inequality still exist today. Women are expected to perform most of the household and the

childcare duties. While men are performing more household duties, once assigned as women's work, they are not contributing 50% of the labor.

I have witnessed families where both the husband and the wife work 40 hours a week. At home, the man will mainly cut the grass or tend to jobs assigned for "men." The women will still do all the laundry, the cooking, and taking care of the kids. In other families, both simply do nothing, leaving the children doing most of the chores or leaving the house a total wreck. I definitely see where men are not contributing to the household, in terms of household work, as women.

I have also witnessed the inequality in the workplace, where men snicker that "don't send a woman to do a man's job." Also, women are generally not hired at jobs where they are generally assigned for men. For instance, there are many women who are mechanics but I have never seen one working in the actual shop. Most have been forced to clerical or secretarial work at the shops. Not only is this demeaning, but it is unfair to someone with the same skills.

Age Cohorts

Age cohorts are people who are grouped into age groups that are going through the same life stages. Age cohorts are placed in graphs which display the distribution of people grouped by age over their population called population pyramids. The age cohorts allow demographers to study the change in population. They are able to study the distribution of age in a certain society as well as the birthrate.

I am in the 20 to 24 age cohort. In the more developed nations, the cohort is significantly smaller than the less developed cohort. The difference exists because more developed nations have a significantly lower birthrate and a delay in reproduction as opposed to a high birthrate and reproduction at early ages in a less developed nation.

Life Expectancy

The life expectancies of men and women are narrowing because women are now living more like men. That is, women are now working as long and adopting the same traits as men. For example, more men proportionately have stopped smoking than women. Also, medical advances in the future might improve the life expectancy of men.

Economic Worthlessness of Children

Children are no longer vital to the financial survival of the family. Because of child labor laws by the 1930s and the increase of earning by parents, children no longer had to help provide for the family. Children then became the protected and the cherished ones of the family. Children are now allowed to have longer a longer childhood experience. Children have become spoiled to leisure and free time longer. In turn, this has caused conflict in society, especially between parents and the establish institutions. Social institutions are lagging behind or they are not adjusting to the standards. For instance, most states allow children over the age of 14 to be tried as an adult, although they are still treated as children. There is also other the problem of deprived children. Some children have a heavy burden that they carry in a poor family. They do not have the great childhood as many middle-class children.

Age and Inequality

My father is one of the elderly which now relies on Medicare. While my mother does own her

own business, she cannot afford health insurance for us. My father suffers from Chron's Disease and Heart Disease. He has been hospitalized several times, but if it were not for Medicare we would not be able to afford the hospital bills. My mother pays \$10 a month to each of his doctors and the hospitals because that is all she can afford without plummeting us into poverty. My brothers and sister do not help my parents, but I vowed to help them as soon as I can. They have given me the world and I will indeed provide for them in their elder years. My father worked all his life but now he has no money. As he gets older, he can do less and less. His disabilities are catching up with him. Before, he could still do work around the yard, so long as he kept it to a minimum. However, now that he is approaching seventy, he is secluded to household chores. He feels worthless. His social life has not been limited however. My mom, who is fifteen years younger than him, keeps him going. They do have outings occasionally, but she does complain that he does not go out like he used to. I think by working around the house he maintains his worth around the house. As much as my mother works, she cannot keep up the house by herself. His work around the house allows him to contribute to the home. My father does not suffer from ageism, since most people think he is far younger than he is. Many ask if my mother is older than him, which does not sit well with my mother. I do not think he gets stereotyped but I know others in the community do. My father often helps the old man across the street from us, whom most of the neighborhood hates. My father understands his need to protect his territory I guess. Since they are the same age, Mr. Doucet is more willing to let my father take him to the hospital or the doctor than one of his kids.

Institutional Differentiation and Its Affects on the Family

Most of the functions of the family have now been transferred to social institutions. The rise of women in status has partially brought about this change. Women challenged the double standard in the first part of the twentieth century. This led to the decrease in the importance of the father as the central authority figure in the family. Social institutions now provide services that the family once performed, like protection and communication. There is no reliance on the family for support, since social institutions have now established themselves.

The Stepfamily

Sociologists Frank Furstenberg and Andrew Cherlin believe that stepfamilies are of sociological interest because they represent the merger of two organizational structures. This allows sociologists to study how relationships are maintained, specifically how stepparents get along with each other and establish the family structure.

Since my parents both had children from previous marriages, they too represent a stepfamily. My father's children were adults by the time he married my mother, so my brother Clint and I were the only two raised by them both. Clint is my mother's son from a previous marriage. My father was quite hard on Clint, making him work hard when he was young. Clint's father was actually harder on him than my father was; therefore, Clint chose to live with us most often. My father and Clint's father never had any conflict over the raising of Clint, probably because they are both of the same generation and have similar values. Clint's father played an integral role in his upbringing and Clint always saw my father as the stepparent, more as a boss than as a father figure. However, this changed in 1997 when my father and mother were both critically ill at the same time. First, my father became ill. Clint, who is not even my father's son, stayed by his side most of the time. A few years later, Clint told me that he realized how much my father had helped him through the years by teaching him the value of hard labor and by giving him money to get his life started. A deeper relationship other than stepparent had emerged.

Conflict and Functionalist Views of the Family

The conflict views of the family demonstrate how class conflict causes poverty in families. Many debates which are questioning the structure of the family involve both the family and the social institutions responsible for the welfare of the family. Thus, conflict has risen due to the transference of family responsibilities to social institutions. The family structure is evolving and conflict brings about these changes.

The functionalists views of the family explain that the form and structure of the family has changed. They emphasize that social institutions have now replaced traditional family responsibilities, which seems to agree with the conflict views of the family. According to the functionalists, the family is becoming a more specialize institution which correlates to the more specialization in labor. Thus, the function of the family has adapted and will continue to adapt to society as it changes.

Legal and Symbolic Dimensions of Marriage.

Marriage is not only a legal contract which is entered into by two people, but it is also a symbolic event as a display of two people becoming one. That is, as a legal contract, marriage joins the assets of individuals. In some societies, money or property is exchanged for the ability to obtain the mate. Not only does this combine two families, it also makes the relationship a single union. The husband and wife become treated as one entity, in a legal sense. While this may not be the case for all societies, it certainly comes to light here. As a symbol event, it is a joining of two people, either in love, arrangement, financial reasons, or other. They also come together as one entity in a symbolic sense. Husband and wife become a single unit, supposedly inseparable. Marriage symbolizes that two people belong together and now share a single life.

The Effects of Divorce

There are many immediate effects of divorce. Divorce has a significant impact on people financially. Women experience a decrease in income and men experience an increase on average. Many women obtain public support because of this decrease. Also, in the separation of the household, people move to different locations, which is another costly events. Divorce also leads to other immediate effects, such as separation of friends and familiar surroundings.

The long term impacts of divorce are just as devastating. Women and men have negative psychological effects, such as feelings of anger, humility, and rejection. The children of divorced parents often have a host of psychological problems as well. This comes from the parents being unable to cope and not parenting as well as they would in the marriage situation.

The prevalence of divorce today has had some positive effect on people. They are more cautious about selecting a mate. Also, they try to become financially stable before entering marriage.

I have some experiences with divorce, but none that effect me personally. While my parents were both married before and have children from those marriages, I grew up in a stable family structure with both my parents. On the other hand, I have witnessed divorce amongst friends and I know how bad it can be. Women are generally reliant upon their husband for income here. They do not have an easy escape for marriage. At least in divorce, a woman can take 50% of the assets of the marriage through community property laws. If this was not the case, many women would be stuck in marriage

with no way out. I have also seen the negative effects that divorce has on children. Children growing up in broken homes or with single parents is very stressful for children. My brother's children live with their mother and wonder why they rarely see their father. They do not understand why kids in their class live with their mommies and daddies but they do not. I think it is easier for young children to adapt and for adult children to adapt, but adolescent and young adult children is harder for them to adapt.

Post-Industrial Society

When an economy of a society shifts from being based on products produced by industry to an economy based on services, especially professional and technologically sophisticated jobs, is said to be a Post-Industrial Society. The Post-Industrial Society is based on knowledge and organized according to the acquisition of knowledge. Industry does not disappear but it is no longer at the core of the economic system.

In a Post-Industrial Society, professional and technologically sophisticated jobs become very important. There is a decline in jobs in industry, which forces industrial workers into low paying service jobs or without jobs at all. Also, the rise in professional jobs means that professionals will receive higher paying jobs. Meanwhile, industrial workers will experience lower wages. We see this trend in the dual-earner households where both partners must work to maintain the household. This contrast with industrial societies where one person alone could provide for his or her family.

Alienation

When an employee feels that he or she is not part of the whole or separated from the complete product assembly, he or she is said to be feeling alienation. Alienation leaves the employee feeling powerless and uninvolved. The employee has a feeling of distance from control of the outcome, and thus, the employee is powerless to control the product's outcome.

I have felt alienation at a job. When I was working at South Louisiana Community College as a Mathematics Tutor, I felt my job was incomplete. Even though I helped the students to the best of my abilities, sometimes going out of my way and helping them outside of my office hours, I had no control over their understanding once they left my room. When one of the students did bad on a test but had shown extraordinary mathematical abilities, I felt powerless and unable to control the outcome of the testing requirements. It seemed that I was only there to train them but someone else had to pass them.

Similarly, I can definitely see how students themselves feel alienation. In large classrooms with more than 50 people, students are often isolated from the teacher. They are unable to speak one-on-one with the professor. This may lead to a feeling of alienation, especially if the student fails his or her first test. The student is unable to control the outcome and does not feel like part of the whole. Perhaps the student was not motivated enough to do well in the class, leading to the poor test result and the feeling of alienation.

Corporations and Their Effects on Society

The establishment of a corporation allows "owners" to remove liability from themselves and invest the responsibility solely in the corporate structure. That is, instead of the individual owner being personally liable for the company, a board of directors, or fictional persons acting as owners, assumes the power of the company. These persons are not liable, but rather, they are able to place full liability

on the company as a whole. They are only responsible for making the corporation work. If the corporation fails, these fictional persons can be easily replaced with more capable people.

Individuals in society are less reluctant to take care of corporate property than they are of private property. Individuals know that corporate property is owned by the whole and it is not affecting anyone specific if the property is damaged or destroyed. This means that individuals are more likely to steal or cheat the corporation than they are a private owner. Stealing or cheating the corporation takes many forms, but could include sharing cable lines with a neighbor, destroying a cell phone purposely to receive a new one, or taking small things from the corporate office home for personal use. While this may not seem like much, the corporation is losing in these acts.

Secularization

Secularization is the shift from society being controlled by religion to being controlled by separate social institutions. These institutions are not guided by religion as they were in the past. Secularization began with the Renaissance, when people began to break away from the church in Europe. People started to focus more on worldly things than on spiritual things.

The term “Secularization and Its Limits” refers to the extent to which we take secularization. While we attempt to remove religion from our independent social institutions, we are not removing religion completely from our lives. In secularization, religion is removed from the mundane life but this does not mean that religion is not still important. Religion remains strong in the secular world, it is just not the foundation for which everything is based. Even though we have made the shift to a rational outlook on life, we still use religion to explain its meaning and what will happen later.

Civil Religion

Civil religion is a set of beliefs and rituals that exist in the secular society. That is, social institutions detached from the religious institutions or the church often develop their own beliefs and rituals. For example, the veneration of political leader such as Martin Luther King, Jr. or Mahatma Guandi is an example of a civil religion. A crowd singing the national anthem, parades on patriotic holidays, the Pledge of Allegiance, inaugural ceremonies, monuments to great leaders or historical events, and the reverence for one’s country and laws are all examples of beliefs and rituals of civil religion.

A religion based on abstract ideals is based on spiritual evolution of the individual. While a religion based on abstract ideals focuses on human behavior and improving society, it continues to deal with the spiritual. A civil religion is concerned with the society as a whole and developing unity and is not concerned with spirituality. A civil religion revolves around nationalism and does not focus on individualism.

Religion and Its Effects on Society

Marx believed that religion shrouds the horrors of injustice in society and causes people to just accept their worldly situation. In essence, the next life is better than this one; therefore, religion forces people to just deal with the situation and accept it because they will go on to something better. Weber, on the other hand, believed religion could be the cause of social change. The book gives the example of the Roman Catholic Church and its involvement in Latin America. The church is advocating social change and its beliefs help to strengthen this concept.

I agree with Weber on this issue. I have seen how religious institutions can bring about revolution and change in society. The principles of “love thy neighbor” in Christianity helped the civil rights movement in the United States. The Christian Leadership Council helped to boost the movement's power. This is a clear example of how religion is sometimes used to boost social change.

Separation Causes Conflict

The belief that the dead brought about their own deaths is the basis for the argument. An alternative religion is seen as a “cult” and deviant, which brings about fear from those in the mainstream religion. The religious movement becomes responsible for the fears people have against them. In this sense, anything that is different must be wrong. Basically, people bring about their own misery because they chose to break with the whole. Thus, the basis of argument seems to be that separation, as opposed to reform, brings about conflict between two groups, the majority and the minority, instead of conflict within a single group. When two groups collide, the group which is both the minority and the losing side is considered wrong in their actions. On the other hand, the majority obviously prevailed because they were right.

Spiritual vs. Religious

Yes, it is possible to be a spiritual without being religious. Spiritual refers to someone's condition, not their religious devotion. A person who is spiritual is said to be “delicately refined.” A spiritual person seems to be more enlightened and in tune with nature. The term “spiritual” itself is used to mean that the person is closely akin to the spirits, moral and wise beings. When you say a person is religious, you mean that the person is strongly devoted to his or her religious beliefs. A religious person does not have to be spiritual. Many laymen of the church are religious but not spiritual. They do all the duties and carry out all the morals of the church, but they do not analyze and bring deeper understanding around with them. The theology is what is important to them and not upsetting the status quo. On the other hand, a spiritual person is more concerned with upsetting nature and the flow of the universe, not society and all its institutions.