Derrick Snow

Omega Graduate School

Dr. Schmidt

Submission Date:6/28/2023

***100 Day – Essay***

Complete the **Hidden Threads** assignment as detailed below and explained in class.

***Requirements***

* 1. **1. Topic Selection and Approval:** a. Email your topic and a rough outline to Dr. Schmidt for feedback and approval well in advance of the assignment due-date deadline. (schmidt@umassglobal.edu)
	2. b. Schedule a meeting with Dr. Schmidt to review feedback. (schmidt@umassglobal.edu)
	3. c. After receiving approval of the topic and rough outline, submit a rough draft to Dr. Schmidt **in advance** of the turn-in deadline (schmidt@umassglobal.edu). He will provide the feedback necessary for preparing the final paper.
	4. **2. The Essay** – This paper should be **approximately 5-7 double-spaced pages in length** and may be longer. Provide an appropriate (and interesting) **title** for your essay. **Write a short paragraph** introducing the reader to the topic you will explore in your paper (i.e., This paper explores both theological and sociological dimensions of the obesity epidemic in the United States…). Then, follow the steps listed below: (Develop each in paragraph form, and clearly explicate all concepts you will develop.) Follow this pattern and **organize your work under headings**, or using the numbers for the parts of the assignment listed below: a. Identify a few **concepts** to be used for the interpretation of the problem you have chosen. (i.e., for a topic dealing with obesity, you might choose “hunger” or “emptiness.”) Define/explicate this concept(s), explaining how it will be employed in your analysis.
	5. b. Identify **sub-concepts** that are related to the concepts you have chosen in #1. (i.e., for obesity sub-concepts might include, “gratification,” “satisfaction,” etc.) Define/explicate these sub-concepts, explaining how they offer additional analysis of your chosen problem. This extends your analysis beyond #1, offering additional depth and nuance.
	6. c. Identify several **biblical passages or concepts** that provide meaning for these concepts and sub-concepts? (Perhaps something that addressed “food and drink that satisfy” … or other passages that deal with such matters as being “filled with the spirit, “gluttony,” “fasting,” “feasting,” etc.) Drawing on these passages, and related theological ideas, explain their connection to the
	7. d. concepts/sub-concepts you have employed in your analysis of the problem. Note: this is not simply attaching Bible verses that “inspire” or “shed light on…” Rather, the emphasis should center on the **conceptual and analytical**. (I’m not as interested in “normative” [Christians must… Christians should…] approaches.)
	8. e. Identify **secular (i.e., sociological) studies** that utilize or address these concepts and sub-concepts. (*Supersize Me* [a movie], *The McDonaldization of Society* by George Ritzer, Studies on anorexia or bulimia, etc.) Use these to develop your analysis sociologically. You can think of this as a very short “literature review.”
	9. f. Explain how your analysis aids /offers insight into **contemporary life/society**. (i.e., the burgeoning fast-food industry, Western society’s focus on efficiency and calculability, etc.) Where is your chosen problem “visible” in contemporary society… what contemporary illustrations can you identify and briefly interpret using some of the analysis developed in #1- #4)?
	10. g. How does your analysis make a **contribution to Christian thinking** on the topic/problem? (For example, understanding the relationship between appetite, indulgence, and a life of the Spirit, and then extending these ideas to areas other than just obesity and food.) What fresh new idea(s) can you offer to fellow Christians?
	11. h. How does your analysis make a contribution to **sociological thinking** about this issue? Can you offer a new sociological insight or two derived from your analysis?

**3. Structure (Assignment evaluation includes the following structure below).**

* 1. a. Download the “OGS APA Course Assignments Template 7th Ed 2021” template from the **General Helps** folder in the AA-101 The Gathering Place Course on DIAL. Using the template create the following pages.
	2. b. Title Page (not included in page count).
	3. c. Copy and paste the assignment instructions from the syllabus starting on a new page after the title page, adhering to APA 7th edition style (APA 7 Workshop, Formatting, and Style Guide, APA 7 Quick Guide).
	4. d. Start the assignment on a new page after the copied assignment instructions.
	5. e. Document all sources in APA style, 7th edition (APA 7 Reference Example, APA 7 Quick Guide)
	6. f. Include a separate **Works Cited** page, formatted according to APA style, 7th edition (not included in page count).

**4. Submit through DIAL to the professor.**

**A Sociological Approach to Understanding Christian Attitudes on the Environment and Environmentalism**

**Key Words**

Sociology, Christian, Christianity, Environment, Environmentalism, Stewardship, Creation, Climate Change

**Introduction**

This paper explores how Christians understand the environment and their attitudes toward the environment and environmentalism. This is important to know what Christian thought is regarding environmental issues and in turn, what are the best ways to communicate environmental concerns and promote Christian involvement and action in environmentally friendly stewardship.

**Concepts**

The main concepts used in examining the attitude of Christians toward the environment and environmentalism are; Christianity, Creation, Environment, Climate Change, Morality/Ethics, Political and Environmental Risks. Christianity is defined as all Jesus Christ-affiliated churches, however many of the articles focus on a conservative/rightwing brand of Christianity. Creation is based on the understanding that God created the heavens and earth and everything in them, and He called it good. Environment as the larger ecological world, the non-human world around us. The concept of climate change, the shifting impact on climate and thus the environment that could be natural change, but more so human driven climate change. The concepts of Christian morality and ethics, following the spiritual attributes of God and Christianity. Political being defined as following a political positions and parties. Environmental Risk as the environment (plant, animal and human) impact of climate/environmental change.

**Sub-Concepts**

Some of the sub-concepts used in examining the attitude of Christians toward the environment and environmentalism are; Stewardship, Political Conservative, Public Health. Stewardship refers to the God passed down to humankind to care for God’s creation, the heavens and the earth. Political Conservative being defined as to those believers and non-believers that hold political conservative/rightwing ideas and beliefs. Public Health, being referred to as population health concerns and impacts to the health of the population. These sub-concepts have been used in some reviewed articles.

**Biblical Passages/ Concepts**

The biblical passages that are related to the environment, only a sample will be provided.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1: 11-13 Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

Genesis 1:21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Psalm 24:1 The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

1 Peter 4:10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.

**Conceptual and Analytical**

These selected Genesis and Psalm texts have to do with God’s great creation of the heavens and earth and the things He created, the plants, the animals, the seas the land, water, life and ground. God called it good and gave human being responsibility of the plants and animals. This means that all humans, especially believers, have a responsibility to take good care of the resources of the planet to maintain its ordained goodness. We are to be good stewards of God’s creation as Genesis and 1 Peter states, one of God’s graces is His creation.

**Secular Studies**

This following is a sampling of sociological studies related to the topic of how Christians view the environment and environmentalism.

 “For many environmentally concerned Christians engaging their own church about environmental issues is disappointing.” (Harmannij, 2019, p. 5)

This quote is to the point, where some or ‘too many’ Christians have view environmental issues are not a concern for Christian it’s something that those ‘secular’ groups are involved in. Christians may have a dull sense of what is happening around us in the world, and not realize that environmental issues are real, and really do affects people’s life.

 “Our research suggests that people who are skeptical about human-caused climate change often hold pro-environmental views.” (Haltinner & Sarathchandra, 2020, p. 37)

The findings of this article identify that people who are skeptical of human caused climate change are likely to have pro-environmental views. These people are likely to hold that the climate change that is occurring is a natural phenomenon, a historical cycle perhaps. No matter if these people do not believe the human caused impacts of climate change, they are allies in environmental movements and we should work together in preserving the earth.

“Most of the major public health problems with which I have wrestled in my life—epidemics and pandemics, natural disasters, and chronic noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)—are all symptomatic of, or related to, climate change and/or destruction of the environment. As a Christian, the roots lie in lack of respect for our Creator and lack of reverence for the goodness and inter-dependence of all of creation.” (Hospedales, 2021, p. 3)

This article informs us about the health effects relating to environmental issues and climate change and provides a perspective that Christians could take by thinking about the environment which lies in a perspective the environment is God’s creation. The idea that environmental issues affect public health/people’s health may not be on top of the list of environmentalists, but its health of people is a large concern of climate change. Historically, Christians based on teaching of the Bible, that we are to care for the sick, the poor, and outcasts, and Christianity has a rich history of caring for the health of people. Given this, Christianity should be very interested in the environment and become invested in participating in environmental movements to care for God’s creation and for the health of people.

 **“**However, it is a hopeful sign that some groups of politically conservative evangelical adults are not as immune to changing their minds about climate change as perhaps previously thought.” (Hayhoe et al., 2019, p. 8)

This quote is information that a group that seeming are ardent opponents to climate change understand and action, could become allies in environmentally friendly policies and action. The message needs to be framed in such a way that it does not downplay their concerns about the skepticism of climate science but dialogs and addresses the concerns in a thoughtful way.

 **“**The study found causal evidence that the treatment message increased a diverse set of environmental and global warming beliefs and attitudes indirectly through increasing the belief that environmental protection is a religious issue or a moral issue, and that other in-group members (i.e., Christians) also believe environmental protection is important.” (Goldberg et al., 2019, p. 17)

The authors found that when Christian participants received a pro-environmental message framed as a moral and religious issue, they were likely to take away that environmental protection was important. This informs me that as a sociologist studying and writing on environmental issues for Christian consumption that it will be important to include moral and religious arguments besides the social impacts and scientific information. As a public sociologist, I not only want to inform my brothers and sisters on issues, but provide them with action items that they could engage in to help be part of the solution to these environmental issues.

**Contemporary Life/Society**

Christianity is the largest world religion with about 31% of the world’s population are Christians and about 23% of the world’s population is Muslim. This is a large population who could have a major impact on worldwide environmental policy. Thus, I think it is important to gain an understanding of how Christians view environmental issues as well as environmentalism. Since Christians are a majority of the world population, they could play a major role in environmental policy and outcomes. In addition, some people may think environmental issues are limited to ecological impact, however, environmental issues not only have ecological impacts, but also impact humans’ health and life. Given Christianity’s concern for human life, do Christians make the connection of environmental issues impacting human life.

**Contribution to Christian Thinking**

Having a proper understanding of environmental issues is necessary for Christianity to be taken seriously. Though there are many Christians who hold pro-environment positions there are some Christians who hold a naive view of environmental issues. and deny climate change while daily there is evidence of climate change. People view these types of Christians with skepticism.

Whether Christians believe that climate change is human caused or a natural cycle, we should be able to agree that climate change is real, and impacts God’s creation, mainly nature and humanity. If we Christians could look at the environment through the lens of stewardship, we can not only become partners in helping care for the environment/God’s creation, we also could be engaged in act of worship as stewards of God’s great creation.

**Sociological Thinking**

The task of investigating Christian’s views on environmental issues and environmentalism has been a sociological investigation of finding what is the case in today’s society. We can understand environmental issues in any given major sociological perspective, functionalism, conflict, interactionism. There are many factors that may be causal to environmental harm, largely relating to economic development in some form, such as factory emissions, or clearing forest for agriculture use, or overconsumption. The question is how a society’s economy growth without producing negative environmental issues. Technology is sought to be the answer, with technology we can produce things in a cleaner fashion. This sounds good and seems right, but unfortunately it is wrong. Technological development has lent itself to environmental harm, such as coal, fossil fuels, etc., even technology that is meant to help the environment such as electric vehicles and solar power. Each of these create an environmental problem of their own, disposing of batteries and deposing of used up solar panels. It seems what we need to do is create and consume less and develop environmentally friendly technologies.

Given this prospective, how are we to sociologically understand the Christian’s position on the environment, I believe that we can understand this through each of the main sociological theories, especially conflict and symbolic interaction. Where Christians can understand the thing that create environmental harm are in conflict with God’s good creation, that we as Christians should want to protect His good creation. And where was as Christians take on the understanding that we are God’s stewards in taking care of His creation, where this interaction of Christian stewardship and the environment is an act of worship.

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