A Tri-Disciplinary Analysis of Religion

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Research Proposal:

Studying the Social Sciences exposes one to an opportunity not just to learn a single discipline, but three, and this unique learning experience can teach one to look at the world's phenomena with a multi-perspective view. Using a tri-disciplinary approach when exploring topics can broaden ones outlook on how there are many ways to explore and investigate a topic in greater detail. By using Anthropological, Sociological and Geographical theoretical perspectives one can understand a topic more fully by using a multi-perspective approach when exploring this diverse world culturally, socially and physically.

The intent serving as the basis for this senior project is to illustrate how one can use a multi-disciplinary perspective approach to help explain the dynamics as to how religion functions in society and how it affects social institutions; the family, economics and government. By using theoretical perspectives from each disincline one can examine and explore how religion functions in society and how it affects the family, economics and governmental social institutions. The world has become interconnected and globalization is prevalent, thus examples will be drawn from many different cultures, societies and places around the world to help explain how religion functions in multiple societies. For example, from a Bio-Anthropological perspective one could analyze the evolutionary benefits of religion. In Further illustration from a sociological theoretical perspective, religion can influence the family structure through the process of socialization and social integration. Lastly, a Geographical perspective would examine

the importance of cultural and environmental landscapes in the development of religious structures.

Students of the Social Sciences learn that there are many valid perspectives that don’t always agree; however, they can help explain any topic in a different light. By having a multi-perspective lens one can hold judgment and can approach questions of this world with a broader understanding. In reality, this can help one to evaluate decisions in greater detail and to better understand the needs of humanity and the earth.

Annotated Bibliography:

De Waal Malefijt, Annemaire. (1989). *Religion and Culture, An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion.* Prospect Heights, Illinois. Macmillan Publishing Co.

In An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion a variety of cultures are studied in which to how religion can influence social, political and economic structures. De Waal Malefijt uses mostly anthropological theories and quoted case studies to help explain the natural world and the historical developments of religion from small-scale societies to large complex societies. Many examples were derived from case studies derived from participation observation from many different anthropologists. Drawing from Durkheim Waal Malefijt argues religion can provide personal security, she writes: "Society submits man to many inconveniences, it constrains and compels him. But it also protects him, for man cannot survive alone. Because society both dominates man and protects him, he respects it. The gods of society have the same power and the same moral authority. The individual knowing that he is part of society, will believe that the sacred forces are present in him, and he can thus approach the world with confidence and energy"(Waal Malefij, 1989: 62).

Diamond, Jared. (1999). *Guns, Germs, and Steel The Fates of Human Societies*. United States of America, Norton & Company, Inc.

In the chapter "Egalitarianism to Kleptocracy" Diamond discusses how government and religion arises in human societies and how environmental factors permit some societies to have food production and surplus of food. Food production, and a surplus leads to sedentary living lifestyle, and more dense populations. Thus a different

social type must evolve too to accommodate larger populations. Diamond uses the model of classification of forms of sociocultural integration to describe the varying levels of societies, which is based on mode of production. Starting with Hunter and Gatherers, who are nomadic small bands that forage for wild plants and animals that consist of 5-80 individuals. Bands are organized socially through kin-ship ties and are egalitarian, meaning there is no social stratification other then division of labor between men and women everyone has access to means of production.

Tribes have a larger group sizes than bands and live in close knit clusters of villages consisting of 100 's of people. Tribes are egalitarian and may have an informal "big man" as a leadership position, but do not have a centralized government or organized religion.

When populations reach certain sizes they need new ways of organizing one's self, and a new levels of political, economical, and social functions evolve. With the intensification of agriculture creates surpluses and a new social type known as chiefdoms emerge. Chiefdoms consist of 100-1000's people who live in villages. Kinship relationships exist, but there is a hierarchal system that dominates the access to resources and land. Chiefdoms are stratified societies that consist of chiefly lineage and commoners. Centralized leadership is passed on through hereditary line of status. Many societies have religious ideologies to justify chiefly positions and wealth of resources. Chiefs control the distribution of resources through a system call redistribution or tribute.

Within chiefdoms and state level societies one may find Kleptocrates, rulers who take a disproportionate percent of the surplus for their own wealth and pleasure. Diamond describes how these Kleptocrates gain support and maintain their plush lifestyle by disarming the commoners and arming the elite, appeasing the masses by redistributing

the surplus in favorable ways, maintain public protection, and the construction of religious ideologies to justify the Kleptocrates actions.

Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, (Joseph Ward Swain,Trans.). UnitedStates: First Free Press George Allen & Unwin. (1915/1965).

Durkheim used sociological perspectives to define and explore society and religion. Durkheim used a macro-scale perspective to analysis religion as a social fact; beyond the individual level, but as a social construction of reality. Religion is a construction of social reality and this varies among cultures and societies. According to Emile Durkheim society is the source of the sacred and religion can be seen as the worship of society. For example Durkheim said: “religion symbolically embodies society itself.” Religion can be defined in many ways, but it is society that defines what religion is by the classification of what are sacred and profane aspects in life. Durkheim believed morality to be an essential factor for maintaining social order within society. Many cultures practice different religions and Durkheim believed that modern religions are collective representations that can take on many different forms; for example, Muslim, Christianity, Catholicism, and Buddhism.

Glock, Charles, B. Ringer, and E. Babbie. (1967). *To comfort and to challenge*. Berkeley, California: University of California press.

According to Glock, Ringer and Babbie, “women’s prominent role in raising children increases their religiosity because it correlates with concern for a family’s well-being” (Glock, Ringer, and Babbie 1967). If women receive some sort of support from

the church in child rearing aspects it could be seen as a benefit reward and motivation to seek the help of the church.

Iannaccone, Laurence. (1990). *Religious practice: A human capital approach*. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 29; 297-314.

Sociologist Iannaccone argues that females are socialized into the role of the religious consumer and are more skilled at receiving religious rewards (Iannaccone 1990; 297). Ianaccone found an increased religious participation among females due to their structural location in society. Iannoaccone views religion as a household commodity and religious participation as reflecting an implicit division of labor (Iannaccone 1990; 297)

Kurtz, Lester. (Ed. Second). (2007). *Gods in a Global Village: The world's Religions in Sociological Perspective*. University Of Texas, Austin. Sage Publications.

According to Kurtz, author of *God in a Global Village* states, "the female identity is shaped from a very early age, so that religious legitimations of inferior status affect the lifelong socialization process and the ways in which women will be treated and, consequently, think of themselves" (Kurtz 2007; 233). Religion can influence the family structure through the process of socialization and social integration. As children grow up parents, family, church, and education serve to help socialize children to behave in socially accepted ways.

Morris, Brian. (1987). *Anthropological Studies of Religion*. Cambridge University Press.

Morris explores the dynamics of religion using an anthropological paradigm.

Many case study examples were conducted from participation observation research. She draws upon work from Anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown. Radcliffe-Brown who was influenced by Durkheim's work conducted anthropological fieldwork that studied the rituals and ceremonies of the Andaman Islanders. Radcliffe-Brown studied the functions of the Andamanes weeping rituals and ceremonies. The Andamanes weep on many different occasions, which can serve many social functions. Radcliffe-Brown believed rituals and rites serve a specific function in society. For example, he writes, "every custom and belief of a primitive society plays some determinate part in the social life of the community, just as every organ of the living body plays some part in the general life of the organism" (Quoted in Morris, 1987:124). Weeping can appear to be a very personal act or behavior, but among the Andamenes weeping plays an important social function that is outside of the individual. Radcliffe-Brown states that weeping rituals "serves to mark occasions" "in which social relations that have been interrupted are about to be renewed, and the rite serves as a ceremony of aggregation" (Quoted in Morris, 1987: 123). Weeping among the Andamenes is the affirmation of a bond of social solidarity (Morris, 1987: 124).

Paul, Gregory. *Cross-National Correlations of Quantifiable Societal Health with popular Religiosity and Secularism in the Prosperous Democracies.* Journal of Religion and Society. Vol. 7 (2005).

In Paul's research he uses quantitative data such as, data from General Social Survey to compared basic correlations between religiosity factors and social dysfunction indicators. The notion that religion and the belief in a "god" creates societal advantageous

such as lower rates of lethal violence and better health is tested. The idea that religion can be a detriment to society is proposed. The hypothesis that “faith in a creator or disbelief in evolution improves or degrades societal conditions to be tested on an international scale” was investigated. The results indicate that Japan and Scandinavia are the most secular nations in the west, and the U.S. is the only prosperous first world nation to retain high rates of religiosity otherwise limited to second and third world countries (Paul, 5;2005). Prosperous democracies such as Japan where religiosity is low are referred to “below as to secular developed democracies”, except in the U.S. Also, Japan ranked highest in an agreement with evolutionary theory and the U.S. ranked the lowest level of acceptance in evolution and is the most religious developed democracy. As to the notion that societies that do not believe in god have more social dysfunction such as higher rates in lethal violence, teen pregnancy, and general health proved wrong. The results show that least theistic nations are usually the least dysfunctional. Higher rates of belief and in worship of a creator correlate with higher rates of homicide, STD infection rates, teen pregnancy and abortion in prosperous democracies, specifically the United States. No data supports the idea that belief in a creator equals societal health, but that of the opposite; secular and pro-evolution democracies have less societal dysfunction.

Different U.S. regions had different findings, such as; “strong disparities in religious belief versus acceptance of evolution are correlated with similarly varying rates of societal dysfunction. The strongly theistic, anti-evolution south and mid-west having markedly worse homicide, mortality, STD, youth pregnancy, marital and related problems than the northeast where societal conditions, secularization, and acceptance of

evolution approach European norms”(Paul 8;2005; Aral and Homes: Beeghely, Doyle, 2002).

Ritzer, George. (Eds. Seven). (2008). *Sociological Theory*. New York. The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Ritzer’s work explores historical and contemporary sociological theorist. Drawing from sociological theoretical perspectives to explore religion from the works of Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Lewis Coser.

Max Weber’s elective affinities sociological perspective states that people are constantly creating ideas to explain the world around them and their place in it. Some ideas have an affinity with the social circumstances of particular groups of people and thus the success of a given religion with a certain group of people will depend on their social circumstances. Religion can influence and validate economic structures in a society. For example, Capitalism is the economic structure in America and this system is validated by the attitudes that hard work pays off and that those who are successful are rewarded with material things. This attitude is evident in the idea of the “American Dream”. In Max Weber’s book *Protestant Work Ethic, he* argued that it was the Protestant work ethic that helped kick start the rise of Capitalism (Ritzer, 2008: 148).

Emile Durkheim’s gave many contributions to the study of religion in a sociological context. Durkheim believed that religion is the “worship of our own group” (Ritzer, 2008:80). Durkheim also stated “Moral power of society uses religious symbols that can bind people together” (Ritzer, 2008: 96). The use of rituals within a “collective representation” can define and reinforce what is deemed sacred and profane for its

believers. Durkheim also states that rituals and "rites are a means through which a group reaffirms itself" (Ritzer, 2008: 97).

Lewis Coser's conflict theoretical perspective on group solidarity illustrates how conflict can bind a group closer together. According to Lewis Coser conflict may serve to bind a loosely structured group together (Ritzer: 2008, 269). Also, conflict among groups can restore an integrative core within a group (Ritzter, 2008:269). This could be evident among Israeli Jews who share a strong cohesive relationship with each other. The strong "collective consciences" among Israeli Jews may be due to the strong opposition and long historical conflict with Arab nations (Ritzer, 2008:269.) Coser also, argues that conflict with one group may serve to provide new alliances with other groups. "For example, conflicts with Arabs have led to an alliance between United States and Israel" (Ritzer, 2008:269).

Stark, R. and Baninbridge, W. (1985). *The Future of Religions.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

According to Stark and Bainbridge individual religiosity involves a decision-making process where rewards and costs are considered rational. Women may be benefiting from the social rewards the church may offer. For example, If women receive some sort of support from the church in child rearing aspects it could be seen as a benefit reward and motivation to seek the help of the church.

Yinger, J. Milton. (1970). *The Scientific Study of Religion*. London: Macmillian.

According to Yinger's research women are more religious than men and demonstrate consistently greater interest in religion, religious behavior and church

involvement (Yinger 1970; Sasaki 1979; Lenski 1953). Many sociological studies of religious intensity, behavior and beliefs indicate women are more religious compared to men. Yinger used empirical studies and quantitative data, such as the 1990 General Social Survey dataset to conduct a scientific study of religion. The findings indicate a statistical relationship between gender and religiosity and the hypothesis women are more religious then men are supported.

Outline:

I. Definitions of Religion

A. Sociological perspective definitions of religion.

-Emile Durkheim definition: " A unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, which unit into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them".
-Thomas Odea's definition: Religion is the manipulation of non-empirical or supra-empirical means for non-empirical or supra empirical ends."

B. Anthropological perspective definitions of religion.
-Richard Dawkins Meme theory and religious ideas.
- E.O Wilson Religion as an adaptation.

Geographical perspective:
-Examples from different locations around the world will be used to illustrate the importance of physical landscapes and environmental influences that affect religious representations.

II. Historical developments:

A. Sociological Explanations:
-Religion as a reflection of society. Society as whole and individual groups with in it determines the shape religion takes.
-Durkheim: Religion as the worship of society. Religion is part of the glue that holds society together
-Polytheism→monotheism→post-theism

B. Anthropological Explanation:
-Explaining the natural world
- Disposition for religion; Psychologically, physically, environmentally and socially.
- Developed from the study of small-scale societies
- Naturalistic (reason by analogies) create cosmic world to help explain world phenomena.
- Animistic: Everything has a spirit
- Shaman: manipulate the supernatural

C. Psychological Theories:
-Freudian Theory: The future of an illusion. Wish fulfillment: wish someone would take care of us. Projection of a father figure: infantile prototype.
-The general psychological view: Life as contingent (cant control), frustrating, and fearful. Religion as a supernatural framework to make sense of it all.

D. Geographical Perspective: Jared Diamond

-Environmental influences on religion and society.

III. How Religion functions in society: personal security/identity

1. Offers personal security/certainty and personal identity

A. Sociological perspective-personal security and identity
-Durkheim: provide a road map and guide to how to live providing personal security and certainty.
-Waal Malfij example: "Society submits man to many inconveniences, it constrains and compels him. But it also protects him, for man cannot survive alone. Because society both dominates man and protects him, he respects it.
-Anomie and immigrants
-George Mead self construction of identity

B. Anthropological perspective-personal security and personal identity
-Can help explain the natural world and origin.
-Historical view of self-H&G (group view)compared to Modern (self view).
-Religion can influence individual's identities. Ex. Andamanes and the threefold system.
-Provides therapy and coping mechanism

C. Global Geographical examples:
-Muslim religion can offer security in an unstable arid environment.
-Immigrants and cultural/ethnic/religious identity

IV. How Religion functions in society: Group Solidarity

2. Group solidarity

A. Sociological view: Group solidarity
-Durkhiem: "worship of our own group." "Moral power of society uses religious symbols that can bind people together." "Rites are a means through which a group reaffirms itself."
- Coser: Conflict can bind a group together

B. Anthropological view: solidarity
-Radcliffe-Brown's study of the Andamanes weeping rituals.
- In-group/out-group theory

C. Geographical examples: group solidarity
-Geopolitical conflict between Israel and Palestine can create group solidarity.
- Hopi Native Americans(Southwest) rituals for rain and bountifully harvest and cohesive mechanism.
- Rituals among the Plains Indians
-Migration and immigration/ethnic enclaves.

V. How Religion is dysfunctional in society

A. Sociological view: dysfunction
-Marx-"opiate of the masses" the distraction of religion
-Rodney Stark- Religious Market Place theory—accepting religious ideas that are against ones best interest.
-Gregory Paul-Social dysfunction and religiosity in 1st world nations. "American anomaly"

B. Anthropological view: dysfunction
-Gregory Paul-Evolutionary perspective: Is religion a human universal trait?
-Guilt, fear, and doubt
-Meme theory-Dawkins

C. Global Geographical examples will be used to illustrate how religion has created dysfunction among societies.
-Jared Diamonds and klepocracy
-Suicide bombers in Muslim sects seeking 72 virgins in the afterlife.

VI. How religion influences social institutions: Social control

A. Sociological view: social control
-Max Weber the Routinization of Charisma. Institutionalization through rituals, doctrine, to routinize and institutionalize into social structures.
- Durkheim-sacred and profane

B. Anthropological view: social control
-In-group/out group theory
-Meme transmission –Dawkins

C. Geographical examples that illustrate different means of social control in different places around the world.

VII. How religion influences the social institution: The Family

A. Sociological perspective: religion and the family
-Socialization process-Primary and Secondary
-Vertical authority theory
-Sex differentiation in religiosity between men and women
B. Anthropological view: The family
-Mating strategy: monogamy and pair bonding that can lead to higher reproductive success.
-Parental investment

C. Geographical examples of how different religions have affected the family institution.

VIII. How religion influences the social institution: Economics
Religion can validate and influences economic structures.

A. Sociological view:

-Weber and the Protestant work ethic

-Weber: Religion and the political economy.

B. Anthropological view:

-Examples drawn from H&G societies

C. Geographical view:
-White/environmental determinism and its affects of economics
-Global examples of religious validation of economic structures.

VIIII. Religion can influence and support Political and governmental structures.
-Historical Background/social organization of religion

A. Sociological view: Politics and government
-Johnsons Classification: theocracy, totalitarianism and separation.
- Weber: The Nature of the political economy: markets, states, social stratification, and cultural structures.
-Gregory Paul: Modern Secular and religious states

B. Anthropological view: politics and government
-Social organization and religion
-Religious specialization
-H&G example Among the Black foot Indians- Sun Dance ritual incorporates trading and redistribution of goods.

C. Geographical examples: Politics and government
-Global Example of a theocratic, totalitarianism and separate states.
-Sun God Egypt
-Manifest destiny
-Bush's faith based foreign policy
X. CONCLUSION

I. Introduction:

It can be insightful and fascinating to learn about human behavior. Studying the diverse activities of peoples helps one understand more about humanity, increase one's empathy of others and even give ideas of ways to improve lives. However, exploring social phenomena of this world can be overwhelming and challenging. A multi-perspective approach reduces this vastness by providing a framework to work within. Using theoretical perspectives from three Social Sciences disciplines of Anthropology, Sociology, and Geography, allows one to combine the disciplines' various ideas and expand explanations of how, why and where a particular human phenomenon occurs. In order to demonstrate the various insights that Social Sciences provide, this paper will analyze the subject of religion. Some theories are more useful than others when explaining certain subjects and circumstances. Different theories may compliment or contradict one another; however, most are valid, simply seen through different lenses. A combination of definitions will be drawn upon from Anthropology, Sociology and Geography to define religion. Different perspectives can illustrate the in-depth scope to which a topic can be classified. These fields provide theoretical frameworks to systematically analyze this extensive and complex subject. Utilizing the subject of religion by using the perspectives from all three disciplines clearly illustrates the benefits of having multiple views in the analysis and investigation of the world.

II. Anthropology:

A. Anthropology and Its Subfields

Anthropology is the study of the evolution and the development of humans, human nature and culture. The study of human beings is complex, thus there are many sub-disciplines within anthropology to help explain the how, why, when, and where of Homo *sapien sapien*.

Anthropological theoretical perspectives are many; therefore, the study of Anthropology is divided into four major categories: Physical or Biological, Cultural, Linguistic, and Archeology (Lewis 2008). Physical Anthropology focuses on the anatomy and the biological evolution of the human species (Peoples and Bailey). "Cultural Anthropology is the study of contemporary and historically recent human societies and cultures" (Peoples and Bailey 5). Linguistic Anthropology is concerned with how language is interrelated to human behavior and thought (People and Bailey 3). Archeological Anthropology, also known as Prehistoric Archeology, is the investigation of the human past before the advent of written history (Jones 2009). Studying the evolution of humans by using Biological Anthropology can help explain the development of art and religious ideologies. Cultural Anthropology uses "cultural relativism," which helps suspend judgment when exploring unique cultural phenomena and deters ethnocentric biases (Lewis 2007). Furthermore, Archeological records reveal physical evidence of how, when and where humans lived in the past. Using a combination of the methods and specializations offered by Anthropological subfields can help explore and explain the interrelationships between man, religion and society.

B. Anthropological Definitions of Religion

Many people around the world view religion as a personal and spiritual matter. This adds to the complexity of defining religion. Just the topic of religion can alienate some and enrage others depending upon ones approach to this sensitive topic. However, in order to discuss a topic, one must define its terms. An anthropological definition serves to indicate which observed behaviors are related to religion. For instance, when declaring what date the first religious phenomena may have occurred, an Archeologist would need to know what signifies religion. Anthropologist E.B. Taylor defines religion as "belief in spiritual beings"(People and Bailey 2006, 289). Often belief in the supernatural is coupled with teachings and traditions, whether they are oral or written. Also, rituals that entice the powers of the super natural are associated with religious behavior. (Lewis 2007). An Anthropological explanation of religion includes the trend of naturalistic analogies to explain human origin and the natural world. Small-scaled hunting and gathering societies usually practice animism, which is the belief that plants and animals have spirits and supernatural powers (Lewis 2007). These societies often have part-time religious specialists to aid the supernatural experience. For example, the "shaman" is known to aid in Native American religious rituals. Most Anthropologists believe that these activities emphasize what is deemed important to the society. The key aspects of Anthropological definitions of religion usually include distinction of the mundane and supernatural world, the importance of passing on religious memes to future generations, as well as evolutionary benefits that participation may provide (Dawkins 1989).

Biological Anthropology defines religion while considering its evolution in culture alongside the physical changes found in hominid fossils. According to Steven Mithen, author of *The Cognitive Origins of Art, Religion and Science*, the rise of religion

among humans occurred within the Upper Paleolithic (Mithen 1996). Biological Anthropologists rely primarily on physical evidence found in the Archeological record. The archeological excavation of Neanderthal burials found at Shanidar contained flower pollen, physical evidence of deliberate burial rituals. Furthermore, this may indicate a belief in an afterlife. The Shanidar site is about 50,000 years old. Another significant Archeological find is the Sungir burials in Russia that are dated to 28,000 years ago. The Sungir burials consist of joint burials of a male and female. Both individuals were decorated with thousands of ivory beads. These burials suggest that these people believed in an afterlife (Mithen, 175). According to Daniel Dennet author of *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* religions emerged in humanity 170,000 years ago, "in evolutionary and neurological as well as philosophical and moral terms"(Dennett 2006, 9). Dennett defines "religion as social systems whose participants avow beliefs in a super natural agents whose approval is to be sought" (Dennet; 9, 2006). Within the discipline of Anthropology and its subfields the definitions of religion contrast greatly, but one can gain a more insightful definition of the multiple facets of religion.

C. Anthropological Analyses of Religion

There are several different interpretations of religion within the field of Anthropology, which can give one deeper insight into such a vast and complex phenomena. The subfields implore multiple research methods in their analyses. Both Cultural Anthropology and Biological Anthropology provide a plethora of theoretical perspectives that can juxtapose or compliment certain aspects to study religion.

1. Cultural Anthropological Analysis of Religion

Cultural Anthropology often views religion as a universal cultural trait found in all societies, and religion is expressed through acts of ritual in various ways throughout the world. Participation observation is an important research tool in the field of Cultural Anthropology. This method captures and records real life cultural experiences, and is known as ethnography. Field research produces first hand accounts of situations and experiences. Case studies produced by participation observations have provided detailed accounts about mythical origin legends, rituals, and ceremonies. An important thing to remember when looking at this research is that humans have biases of their own, and these can influence the results of case studies. However, they are the best way to discover detailed qualitative information from first hand experience and provide detailed accounts into the lives of peoples.

Religious practices often play a huge part within many religions and cultures, and are used to influence or direct the powers of the super natural. Ritual is defined as an "organized performance of behaviors intended to influence the super natural" (Peoples and Bailey 2006, 282). They can be expressed verbally or physically. Prayer and meditation are examples of verbal religious ceremonies (Lewis 2007). Compelling performances are often used to coerce and control behavior. For instance, every spring theatrical performances of Christ's crucifixion remind followers of God sacrificing his only son Jesus for their sins. In this way, rituals play an important role within many religious ideologies and bind its followers together. By examining origin myths and rituals associated with natural and social aspects of various societies, one can see how religion can be expressed in many forms.

Myths are influenced by nature; often individuals associate their own origin with natural elements. For example, among the Andamanes, individuals come to understand who they are and where they come from by explaining the natural world in a threefold system; the water below, solid earth, and upper regions of the forest above (Morris 1987). Native American tribes origin myths contain latent messages, this is evident in the Snohomish origin story "Pushing up the Sky," which explains the origin of the world, but also, has messages of cooperation and group solidarity. The Snohomish believe that a "Creator" made the world, and he had made the sky terribly low so that people bumped their heads (Erodoes 1984). The people devised a plan to lift the sky above their heads, but needed many people to do such a big task. The problem was how would all the people of the world communicate, and how would they know when to push the sky up at the same time? Therefore, they created a universal signal. "When the time comes to push, shout the word 'Ya-hoh, which means 'lift together' in all the languages, and the sky was lifted above their heads' (Reported by Ella Clark, Quoted by Erodoes 1984, 96). This story was told by Chief William Shelton, who said that as a child his family elders told this story to "teach him what could be accomplished if people work together"(Erodoes 1984, 95).

Many rituals and ceremonies have important social functions that serve to bring people together. Anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown conducted fieldwork that studied the functions of the Andamanes weeping rituals and ceremonies. The Andamanes weep on many different occasions, which can serve many social functions. Radcliffe-Brown believed rituals and rites serve a specific function in society. He writes; "every custom and belief of a primitive society plays some determinate part in the social life of the

community, just as every organ of the living body plays some part in the general life of the organism" (In Morris 1987,124). Weeping can appear to be a very personal act or behavior, but among the Andamenes weeping plays an important social function that is outside of the individual. Radcliffe-Brown states that the weeping ritual "serves to mark occasions […] in which social relations that have been interrupted are about to be renewed, and the rite serves as a ceremony of aggregation" (In Morris 1987, 123). Weeping among the Andamenes is the affirmation of a bond of social solidarity (Morris 1987, 124).

Another Native American tribe with rituals associated with group solidarity, is the Hopi. The "rain" and "snake" dances illustrate this. The Hopi's "rain dance" or "snake dance" ceremonies have two important functions: the manifested function of the ritual is to bring rain in hopes of a bountiful harvest, and the latent functions within the "rain dance" or "snake dance" rituals are group solidarity mechanisms. For instance, in order for these elaborate ceremonies to take place there is interdependence among the participants to achieve the necessary steps to complete the ritual properly. Social structure insures that all group members are present to conduct such ceremonies, which can create cohesive mechanisms for integrating the group into one. The importance of group cooperation is clearly illustrated within the Hopi's elaborate rituals.

In many indigenous cultures religion plays an important part within an individuals' identity and social roles. Religious ideology can provide answers about the natural world, and reinforce one's own mortality. Myths and rituals among tribes vary, but serve to provide answers about the natural, personal and social spheres. Native American tribes have stories to help explain world phenomena. Such myths describe

natural processes, for instance how the world was created and how the moon and the stars travel across the sky. These origin myths also play an important role in shaping how individuals view themselves within the world. For example, many Native tribes have some form of a 'vision quest,' which is often a spiritual journey to gain insight from the super natural about oneself (Lewis, 2008). The vision quest plays an important role in an individuals' identity and social roles, and ultimately dictates the life path of an individual. For instance, many tribes have individuals who are known as "third gendered" or 'berdache'. Many of these individuals experienced a vision quest that directed them to be neither man nor women but 'berdache,' which serve important spiritual roles within their tribes (Roscoe 1998).

The berdache have contact with the supernatural, and fulfill special spiritual roles within their tribes (Roscoe 1998, 8). Berdache were common among Native American groups, being documented in over 155 tribes (Roscoe 1998, 7) Their roles included but were not limited to; possessing special healing powers, having luck in times of war, and being know to produce the "finest" crafts. For example, among the Dakota there was a saying that represented the quality of the berdache's work: "fine possession like a berdache's" (Roscoe 1998, 13).

The berdache fulfilled special social ceremonial functions due to their supernatural abilities. The spiritual roles of the berdache aids others in times of illness or distress because they are the tribe's shamans. The luck associated with berdache creates a need within the community for the berdache. Evidently, the Plains Indians berdache performed special naming rituals. The Dakota tribe's berdache or "winkte" grant names to infant boys. It was thought the name given by the berdache would protect the child

from illness and insure a long life, as it was believed that the “winkte” lived long lives (In Roscoe 1998, 196). The berdache also performed ceremonies that functioned to bring success during battle, ceremonies that could only be performed by the berdache. Such a ceremony is practice among the Cheyenne, which is the “scalp dance” (Roscoe 1998, 11). According to Hoebel, “the Cheyenne’s felt it was necessary for successful fighting…the fact that on the return from battle all the scalps were placed in the custody of the half-men-half-women indicated that warriors felt their success was due to the presence of these personages (In Roscoe 1998, 266). The special roles of these individuals have religious tasks as well as several social functions.

Anthropological case studies and oral legends can provide a snapshot picture into the lives of people. The information provided from these ethnographical accounts are often very detailed, but it is vital to remember that humans have their own lens in which they view the world and one’s own lens can become enmeshed within the stories that are recorded. The origin stories and the special spiritual roles created by many Native American cultures provide clear examples to how religion provides an important component for social roles and group cohesion. By expanding upon the research found in case studies and having a theoretical foundation, one can have a wider understanding to how religion varies greatly among different cultures.

2. Biological Anthropological Analyses of Religion

Biological Anthropology provides another dimension when examining religion, its theories and methods are often quite different than cultural anthropology. It focuses on human evolution, both genetically and culturally through an evolutionary lens. For

example Biological Anthropological views may not see religion as a human universal but as an adaptation. According to Daniel Dennet the human mind is equipped with the right psychological components to believe in the super natural. When combined with the right environmental conditions, humans acquired religion as a coping mechanism (Dennett 2006). Biological Anthropology encompasses the study of Evolutionary Psychology, which can help explain how human behavior evolved, and the physiological components of the human brain.

The study of Biological Anthropology views religion as a meme, which is a cultural idea, or belief that is easily passed from parent to offspring (Barrett and Dunbar 2005, 356). The process of socialization can help spread religious memes as indicated by the creator of this term, Richard Dawkins. He defines a meme as “any unit of information capable of being stored in a brain and transmitted to another organism by social learning”(Barrett and Dunbar2005, 357). The rate in which memes can spread and change are fast when compared to biological traits. The process of socialization and imitation among humans promotes religious memes that spread from one generation to the next (Rucas 2007). Sociobiologist, E.O. Wilson, describes religion as a psychological predisposition that is influenced by the environment, and is subjected to the laws of natural selection. Thus, those memes that survive will be passed to future generations (Rucas 2007). Like genetic traits, memes may be subject to sexual selection. By using evolutionary perspectives, one can examine religion in the context as a mating strategy and could help explain why women are more religious then men. Evolutionarily speaking, religion can be a beneficial reproductive strategy for women. Religion often promotes monogamy and encourages reproductive activities. Examining religiosity

through an evolutionary lens and using quantitative research methods provides an empirical means to understand why religion is a useful reproductive strategy and affects religious gender differences.

Although most religions oppress and dominate women, women continue to express greater interest in religion compared to men. The General Social Survey data set of 1990 does indicates that women are more likely than men to pray, read the bible, and attend church; further more, they tend to have stronger involvement than men (Davis and Smith 1990 GSS Codebook). Religious ideologies are memes that are spread through the process of socialization and passed down from parent to child like a biological trait. Research conducted by Cavalli-Sforza examined the heritabilities of biologically and culturally transmitted traits. The results indicated a strong correlation between parent and offspring for heritability of religion [see figure 1](In Barrett and Dunbar 2002, 358). It is an autocatalytic cycle that is repeated when religious women have children and the religious socialization process is repeated upon them. Women may benefit from religious dogma in evolutionary terms. A secondary analysis from the data set of 2006, Social General Survey, indicates a statical relationship between gender and religiosity. It also found a correlation between religious intensity and number of children. Religion may offer a beneficial reproductive strategy for women by promoting monogamy and large family sizes.

A cross tabulation was conducted with the variables “strength of affiliation” and “number of children” to test the hypothesis: women who are more religious will have more children, compared to women who are not religious. The results from the cross tabulation indicated a statistical relationship (see Appendix 1). By using evolutionary

perspectives and statistical analysis to explore religion, one can see how religion can be a useful reproductive strategy for women.

As illustrated Cultural and Biological Anthropological perspectives and research methods are very different from one another; however, Anthropology as a whole, examines how and why religion evolved. Anthropology and its subfields provide qualitative and quantitative research methods when examining religion. Studying aspects of religion through an Anthropological lens brings a unique way to evoke empathy and understanding.

III. Sociology:

Sociology is defined as the study of human society, culture, and groups. It focuses on the study of human behavior in relationship to society (Anderson and Taylor 2004). Points of view within sociology vary, and are generally categorized as “macrosociology,” or “microsociology.” Macrosociology focuses on society as a whole, while microsociology studies individuals and social interactions that occur within society (Anderson and Taylor, 2004).

Sociology has many theoretical views, but often uses three broad perspectives to help explain social phenomena: functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionist (Anderson and Taylor, 2004). Functionalism examines each part of society in terms of how it may contribute to the stability of society as a whole (Clucas 2009). For example, sociological perspectives can be useful when examining how religion functions and dysfunctions within social institutions, such as the family, politics and economics. “Conflict theorists stress the role of coercion and power, in which the ability for people

and groups to exercise, influence, and control over others, in producing social order" (Anderson and Taylor 2004, 22). Symbolic Interactionist is a microsociological perspective, which is concerned with the face-to-face interaction between individuals. It focuses on the subjective meanings that people impose on objects, events, and behavior (Morgan 2007). A key concept used in interactionist theory is the idea that society is constantly being "socially constructed" by human interpretations (Morgan 2007). Theoretical perspectives of Sociology are diverse and come in many different packages to help aid in research and analysis. The contrasting Sociological theoretical perspectives bring a broader understanding to how religion functions and dysfunctions within society, and how it affects other social institutions.

A. Sociological Definitions of Religion

Sociological explanations of religion are macro in scale, vary greatly, and often view religion as a reflection of society (Coleman 2009). According to Emile Durkheim, society is the source of the sacred, and religion can be seen as the worship of society. In Durkheim's book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* he said, "Religion symbolically embodies society itself" (In Ritzer 2008, 96). Durkheim defined religion as: "A unified set of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite one single moral community, and all those who adhere to them"(Durkheim 1964,37).

A functionalist definition of religion from Peter Berger author of *Sheltering Canopy*, describes religion as a "scared canopy" that functions as a protective cover shielding society from chaos and individuals from emptiness. According to Berger,

"Religion is a set of beliefs and rituals by which a group of people seek to understand, explain, and deal with a world of complexity, uncertainty, and mystery, by identifying a sacred canopy of explanation and reassurance under which to live" (In Johnson 2007, 15). Johnson's definition of religion clearly illustrates his view that religion serves a functional purpose for individuals by providing protection, and explanations in an uncertain world. Sociology generally accepts that religion is a social construction.

B. Sociological Analysis of Religion

The study of Sociology has many theoretical perspectives to aid in the analysis of religion. Emile Durkheim provides a macro-functionalist perspective when analyzing religion and often views religion as an important aspect for society to function. Religion is viewed as a social institution that affects other social institutions such as the family, economics and government (Ritzer2008). The research conducted by Gregory Paul provides an opposing view of religion when compared to Durkheim. Paul uses empirical data to examine religion and its affects upon society (Paul 2005). Paul views religion not as a functional part of modern day society but as dysfunctional. Sociological theories often conflict but by using a combination of many sociological theories, one can analyze religion within society.

1. How Religion Functions in Society

Sociology views religion as a construction of social reality that varies among cultures and societies. Many cultures practice different religions and Durkheim believed that modern religions in societies with organic solidarity are "collective representations" that can take on many different forms; as is the case with Christianity, Catholicism, and

Buddhism. Religions offer society many positive and negative consequences and serve to bring people together. This creates group solidarity and helps mitigate conflict. Religion has negative consequences as seen in kleptocracy and theocratic governments, such as Hitler's reign during WWII.

Many societies have religions to help individuals, families, communities and governments to function more efficiently. This institution contributes to and influences a myriad of social institutions, such as family, government and economics. Religion can function in society to help create personal security and certainty, individual identity, group solidarity, and social control.

Religion serves a psychological function for individuals providing confidence, certainty, security and individual identity in an unpredictable world. Religion functions to create meaning in the natural world by classifying the world into sacred and profane categories. Religion also provides security, support and confidence for its believers. According to Durkheim, religion is an, "interdependent system of faiths and practices relating to things scared. That is, to such things as are separate and proscribed, faiths and practices uniting all their adherents in a single community, known as a church" (Durkheim 1962, 23). The "collective consciousness" and "collective morality" that religion can help create in societies guide and provide confidence in everyday life activities. Drawing from Durkheim, Waal Malefijt argues this point as she writes:

> Society submits man to many inconveniences, it constrains and compels him. But it also protects him, for man cannot survive alone. Because society both dominates man and protects him, he respects it. The gods of society have the same power and the same moral authority. The individual knowing that he is part of society, will believe that the sacred forces are present in him, and he can thus approach the world with confidence and energy" (Waal Malefij 1989, 62).

Religion shapes societal norms and values, which help provide security, and confidence for its believers. It is a road map for its adherents, pointing them in the “right” direction in life. The bible serves as a road map for Christians. The unwritten rules of society, which are known as “social norms” can be influenced by religion, for instance ‘the golden rule,’ ‘do unto others as you would have others do onto you.’

Religion affects other social institutions in society. Durkheim noted the close integration between religion and other cultural institutions, especially the correlation between religion and societal value systems (Wall Malefijt 1989, 62). The modern world contains many different types of religions, but according to Durkheim, “Religion symbolically embodies society itself” (In Ritzer 2008, 97). Religions have different symbolic representations that serve similar functions and help create security, certainty and personal identity for its believers.

Religion functions to bring people together through acts of rituals, for example Durkheim said, “the moral power of society uses religious symbols that can bind people together” (In Ritzer 2008, 96). The use of rituals within a “collective representation” define and reinforce what is deemed sacred and profane for its believers. Rituals are compelling performances. They coerce, control and manipulate, at the same time promote unity and cohesion among its believers. Rituals are practices aimed at influencing the super natural (Lewis 2007). The power of the ritual act lies in the meaning given to the act by the practitioner. For example, in the ritual act of Holy Communion, participants consume bread and wine, which symbolizes the body and blood of Christ. Their aim is to embody the good qualities of Christ, and this ritual act binds believers together (Lewis

2007). Durkheim states that rituals and "rites are a means through which a group reaffirms itself" (Ritzer 2008, 97).

Religion also serves to mitigate conflict and strengthen a group, for example Lewis Coser provides a conflict theoretical perspective in which conflict serves to bind a loosely structured group together (Ritzer 2008, 269). This is seen among the Ndemebu tribe of Africa. According to Victor Turner, "The unity of the Ndemebu was […] a moral rather than political solidarity. Conflict is endemic in the social structure, but a set of mechanisms exists where by conflict itself is pressed into the service of affirming group unity" (Morris 1989, 237). Those who belong to a religion can find group unity within their 'in-group.' According to Lewis Coser conflict among groups can restore an integrative core within a group (Ritzter 2008, 269). This could be evident among Israeli Jews who share a strong cohesive relationship with each other. The strong "collective consciences" among Israeli Jews may be due to the strong opposition and long historical conflict with Arab nations (Ritzer 2008, 269.) Coser also argues that conflict with one group may serve to provide new alliances with other groups. "For example, conflicts with Arabs have led to an alliance between the United States and Israel" (Ritzer 2008, 269). It is evident that religion can help form group solidarity and mitigate conflict through rituals, common morality, division of labor, specialization and conflict. Religion can be represented in many forms, and it is the use of religious symbols and rituals that bind people together.

Religion serves a function of social control and can influence other social institutions such as the family, government, and economic structures. Religions dominate and provide social control by defining what is sacred and profane, and ultimately can

determine how individuals 'ought' to behave in a given society. Radcliff-Brown, who closely followed Durkheim states:

> An orderly social life amongst human beings depends upon the presence in the minds of members of society of certain sentiments, which control the behavior of the individual in relation to others. Rites can therefore be shown to have a specific social function when […]they have for their effect to regulate, maintain and transmit from one generation to another sentiments on which the constitution of society depends (In Morris 1989,127).

Religion influences the family structure through the process of socialization and social integration. As children grow up parents, family, church, and education serve to help socialize children to behave in socially accepted ways. The family can be considered a vertical authority structure, which promotes an attitude of 'awe'. For example, those who are taught to obey your parents have been socialized to obey authority and those who are in power. The "awe" of authority can serve the purpose of social control within religious groups and among governmental structures. Religion is used as validation for authority and power. For example, Egyptian pharos where believed to be gods (Waal Malefijt 1987, 287). Manifest destiny is a modern example of religious validation for conquering the new world. This demonstrates how powerful religion is in the justification of governmental authority.

Lastly, religion can influence and validate economic structures in a society. For example, Capitalism is the economic structure in America and this system is validated by the attitudes that hard work pays off and that those who are successful are rewarded with material things. This attitude is evident in the idea of the 'American Dream.' In Max Weber's book, *Protestant Work Ethic*, he argued that it was the religious values that helped kick start the rise of Capitalism (Ritzer 2008, 148). It serves many functions and

also influence other social institutions. Social control provided by religious ideology affects other social structures in society by providing validation for its current practices, either positive or negative.

Emile Durkheim's sociological contribution changed the way religion was viewed. His theories provided a macro-analysis approach. Durkheim's attempt to explain 'primitive' and 'modern' religious systems falls short due to the unilineal perspective he followed during his time. As the field of Anthropology and Sociology became more involved in fieldwork it was clear that this view was racist. By using other theorists such as Lewis Coser, and Weber, one could further explain the functions of religion in society and its affect upon other social institutions. Coser's conflict theory provided an interesting argument; conflict could bind people together and strengthen a group. Lastly, Weber's *Protestant Work Ethic* provided an example of how religion could influence and provide validation in governmental and economic structures.

It is evident that religion provides vital functions to our society. Religion creates security and confidence in a chaotic world. It also serves an important psychological role in defining an individual's identity and can bind groups together. It also provides social control by providing validation for governmental and economic structures. Religion has provided many positive elements to society, but does it also hinder society? Sociologist Gregory Paul explores this question in his article *Cross-National Correlations of Quantifiable Societal Health with Popular Religiosity and Secularism in the Prosperous Democracies.* Paul's research provides opposing sociological perspectives when analyzing religion and society. His research focuses upon the dysfunctional aspects of religion and its affects upon social institutions.

2. How Religion is Dysfunctional in Society

Sociologist Gregory Paul uses quantitative data from the General Social Survey to compare basic measurements of religiosity and found correlations between religiosity factors and social dysfunction indicators. Paul questions and tests the notion that religion and the belief in a "god" creates societal advantages such as lower rates of lethal violence and better health. He proposes the idea that religion can be a detriment to society. In his hypothesis, the "faith in a creator or disbelief in evolution improves or degrades societal conditions [was] tested on an international scale." The results indicate that Japan and Scandinavia are the most secular nations in the West, and the U.S. is the only prosperous first world nation to retain high rates of religiosity otherwise limited to second and third world countries (Paul, 5). In most democracies, such as Japan, religiosity is ranked low; however, the U.S. is an exception. Also, Japan ranked highest in an agreement with evolutionary theory and the U.S. ranked the lowest level of acceptance in evolutionary theory. The U.S. was ranked as the most religious developed democracy in the world.

Some theories propose that secular societies suffer from more social dysfunction, such as higher rates in lethal violence, teen pregnancy, and general health. However, this view was proven to be wrong. Paul's results indicate that least theistic nations suffer from the least social dysfunction. Also, "higher rates of belief in god" and "worship of a creator" was correlated with higher rates of homicide, sexually transmitted disease infection rates, teen pregnancy and abortion in prosperous democracies, specifically in the United States. No quantitative data supports the hypothesis that belief in a creator equals societal health; however, there is empirical evidence that indicates the opposite. Secular and pro-evolution democracies actually have less societal dysfunction.

Paul finely points out in his research that within the U.S., different regions had different results. These differences include a “strong disparities in religious belief versus acceptance of evolution, and are correlated with similarly varying rates of societal dysfunction. The U.S. “southern” region illustrated a strong theistic and anti-evolutionary belief pattern. The South, in spite of being a very religious region, does suffer from the worst homicide, mortality, sexually transmitted diseases, youth pregnancy, marital and related problems when compared to the northeast regions in the U.S., but the Northeast region does have a higher rating in societal conditions, secularization, and acceptance of evolution approach to European norms”(Paul 8;2005; Aral and Homes: Beeghely, Doyle, 2002). Paul’s research provides empirical measurements to test religiosity and its affects upon society either negative or positive.

The research provided by Emile Durkheim, Coser, Weber, and Gregory Paul provides a well-rounded investigation to studying religion through the Sociological lens. Although these theorists are all quite different from each other, each provide a unique outlook when examining religion. Emile Durkheim’s sociological contribution to the study of religion provides a Functionalist theoretical approach to understanding how religion functions within society as a social institution. Lewis Coser provides a different outlook on conflict and how it can be used to strengthen group bonds. Coser’s conflict perspective clearly illustrates the power of religion in politics. Although very different from Durkheim’s research, Gregory Paul uses empirical research to measure and test the correlations between religiosity and societal health. His results indicated that the most religious countries, especially the United States, actually suffer more from societal dysfunction when compared to secular nations who ranked high on the scale of societal

health. Sociological perspectives on religion vary widely, but whether the effects of religion are negative or positive, religion clearly influences society and its social institutions.

IV. Geography:

A. Geography Definitions

Geography is defined as the study of how human beings relate to their natural, physical and cultural environments. Geographical sciences study the spatial relationships among natural systems, geographic areas, society, and cultural activities and the interactions between them (Christopherson, 2006). The study of Geography can focus on many factors to answer the questions from the natural and Social Sciences.

Geography is divided into two categories; Physical Geography and Human Geography. Physical Geography studies the natural processes of the earth including: climate, vegetation, soils and landforms (Timms 2009). Physical Geographers attempt to answer questions dealing with where and why natural forces happen (Rubenstein, 2008). Earth's processes influence human behavior, but this is a two way street. Religious ideologies can influence where humans live and how they interact with the environment. Human geography tries to answer the questions about where and why human activities are located in certain places on Earth (Rubenstein, 2008). Geographical analysis help's one understand the interconnectedness of physical, natural, and cultural environments.

B. Geographical Definitions of Religion

The Geographical study and definition of religious phenomena is harder to pinpoint than in the other Social Sciences; however, religion does impact the land and the environment influences religion. Therefore, Geography is an important factor when examining religion. Religious institutions have great impact upon their environment, and the way various religions are distributed upon the Earth is directly connected to its geography. Geographers categorize religions into two types, universalizing religions and ethnic religions. Universalizing religions aspire to appeal to all people, no matter where they live; on the other hand, ethnic religions appeal to a certain group of people living in one place. For example, Hinduism is an ethnic religion, where 97 percent of Hindus live in India (Rubenstein; 198, 2008).

Often religions have various distributions and organize the landscape in distinctive patterns. Christianity is one of the largest religions in the world with 275 million followers in North America alone (Rubenstein 215, 2008). The distribution of Christianity is predominantly located in the Western Hemisphere where 90% of Christians reside (Rubenstein 184, 2008). Understanding where religious systems are located can help in analyzing the how religious systems evolve and diffuse. Religion and the environment are interconnected and religious beliefs can have a positive or negative impact upon the earth.

Geographer David Sopher author of *Geography of Religions* provides a clear framework to analyze religion using Geographical perspectives. For example, he writes,

> [Religion] is treated here within the framework of four cultural geographic themes. (1) The significance of the environmental setting for the evolution of religious systems and particular religious institutions; (2) the way religious systems and institutions modify their environments; (3) the different ways

> whereby religious systems occupy and organize segments of the earth's space; (4) the geographic distribution of religions and the way religious systems spread and interact with each other (Sopher, 2).

By utilizing Sopher's cultural geographical themes one can understand how the environment impacts religion and the effects religion has upon the physical and cultural environments. Religion plays a big role in shaping cultural and physical landscapes from places of worship, religious communities, and religious toponyms (Rubenstein 215, 2008). The importance of place is often reflected in religious structures of worship and holy sites of pilgrimage. For example, the territory of Jerusalem has important sites for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Some pilgrimage destinations provide hot spots for conflict and war, such as the Palestine and Israel territories, which have been a source of geo-political conflict for generations (See Appendix 2). The Geo-political conflict in the "Middle-East" illustrates how acts of suicide bombings have left everlasting scars upon the physical and cultural landscape. Understanding the importance of place and religion can help one see how humans, religion, and the environment are an interconnected system.

C. Geographical Analysis of Religion

The study of Geography increases understanding of how religion affects the physical and cultural environments and how the environment influences religious systems. Religion is an important component in many societies, and ultimately shapes the cultural and physical landscapes of the Earth. Different religions mark and use the physical environment in different and similar ways. For example, many religions have religious structures that are used for worship; these structures can be different in design,

but all serve a similar purpose. Furthermore, the land can affect where these structures are built.

1. How the Environment Affects Religious Systems

The environment influences religious structures and Geographer Jared Diamond argues this point in his book *Guns, Germs and Steel*. Diamond's theoretical perspectives address how the environment influences the evolution of religious systems. His main argument explains why organized religious systems evolved and how they are linked to environmental factors, such as food production and surpluses. He states that extra food for a society ultimately leads them to a sedentary lifestyle with a dense population and specialized labor. Thus a different social type must evolve too, to accommodate larger populations. Diamond uses a geographical lens and blends anthropological perspectives to help expand upon his views. Diamond expands upon the work of Anthropologist Julian Steward, organizing societies into a socio-cultural integration typology system that describes the varying levels of societies. This classification type is based on mode of production. Its classification groups include, Hunters and Gatherers, horticulturalist, agriculturalist. Social types like band, tribe, chiefdom, and state can also categorize these communities. Diamond encompasses a multi-perspective drawing upon Anthropological theories to complement his Geographical analyses and focuses upon the environmental influences upon societal and religious systems.

Diamond argues that organized religion occurs within chiefdoms and state level societies. Religious ideology is used by rulers who are known as Kleptocrates, rulers who take a disproportionate percent of the surplus for their own wealth and pleasure.

Kleptocrates gain support and maintain their plush lifestyle by disarming the commoners and arming the elite. They appease the masses by redistributing the surplus in favorable ways, maintain public protection, and by the construction of religious ideologies to justify their actions.

Jared Diamond's explanation of how the environment shapes social and religious systems clearly illustrates the power of the environment's impact on society. It is important not to blur the lines between environmental determinism and environmental influences. Diamond's explanation provides a framework to help analyze the different sociocultural structures, while using an environmental lens to help explain the environment's impact upon human societies. Regardless which social type, tribe, band, chiefdom or state, most societies share a religious component. At the levels of chiefdom and state, religious specialization could occur due to the access to surpluses and fulltime religious specialist, such as priest. Within bands and tribes, members practice animism and have part-time religious specialist known as shamans. Societies that had Chiefdoms often had religious ideologies to validate the social inequality. For example, in many Polynesian cultures practiced "mana a diffuse, [which was an] incorporeal power that permeated certain people and objects, and the gods gave mana to certain people" (People and Bailey, 281). Usually those who obtained the mana were chiefs or those in charge, and possession of the mana validated the power and special privileges of the chiefs (Peoples and Bailey, 281). Thus mana could explain why some chiefs had more than others. In states, industrialized modern societies, religion has become a social institution with many representations and forms. Diamond clearly shows how the environment can shape religion, but religion can shape the environment too.

2. How Religion Affects Physical and Cultural Landscapes

Religion can shape people's attitudes towards the environment and can ultimately affect natural and social systems. For example, the European Imperialist powers had 'manifest destiny' direct permission from god to conquer and to Christianize the world. As well the attitudes held by certain religions in regard to the environment can impact the Earth. For example, the Christianity's view most often sees the environment as God's gift and one uses the Earth without constraint (Preston 2008). Religion can impact the cultural and physical landscapes indirectly and directly; as seen when religious connotative ideas are used to name places, or associate landscapes with miraculous experiences. Religious ideology can have a direct impact on the landscape; this is evident in places like the Middle East; where the acts of suicide bombers have left a definite mark upon the landscape of Iraq, Israel and Pakistan. Whether the influences of religion upon landscapes are positive or negative really depends upon the eye of the beholder. Religion does and continues to shape and mark the cultural and physical landscapes around the world.

The beliefs and attitudes held by the people who settle different places can shape and mark cultural and environmental landscapes. This is evident in places like Quebec, Salt Lake City, Utah, Coast of California and Latin America. French settled Quebec, the Spanish built a mission system in California, and Roman Catholicism infiltrated the physical landscape with holy crosses, cathedrals, missions and sacred places. Mormonism, however, is quite different in their religious presentation when compared to Catholicism, and has not only influenced the morphology of Salt Lake City, Utah, but

also many other cities across the United States. Religion influences how people interact indirectly and directly with the physical environment. The Mormon and Catholic faiths illustrate how differently religious ideologies can shape and mark the physical and cultural landscape.

In French Canada, the Catholic faith has shaped the landscape of Quebec with the use of religious typonyms, visceral shrines, and 'miracle' churches. Names can impact a place and can give clues to its religious heritage embodied within a particular place. In Quebec settlements have been named with a Catholic religious connotation. There are numerous places just in Quebec that include 'Saint' in their name, to name a few, Saint Pascal, Sainte Marie, Saint Agapit, Saint Apollinaire, and Saint Jean Chrysostome [See Appendix 3] (Quebec; Google Maps). In *Geography of Religions,* Author David Sopher explains why French settlements were named with a Catholic association. He writes, "The New World Catholic population has been a conservative, dispersed, rural one of European origin. This condition is epitomized in French Quebec, where places take their names from the originally isolated parish churches, each serving a band of separate homesteads"(Sopher, 34). The historical Catholic settlements ultimately became the names of many cities in Quebec; leaving long-lasting Catholic marks upon Quebec's physical and cultural landscapes.

Those who adhere to certain religions often have sacred places associated with their beliefs. Holy sites are the destinations for religious pilgrims. Those making the religious trek are often seeking the guidance of the super natural. Religions have special places of worship, and landscapes become associated with religious acts of miracles. For example, the Sainte- Anne-de-Beauprein Basilica in Quebec is a sacred destination for

many Roman Catholic pilgrims. This Catholic holy site is visited by millions of pilgrims, many who have come to seek the aid from the miraculous statue of Sainte Anne. The Sainte Anne statue is known to have miraculous powers, especially to heal physical ailments. The first recorded miracle was in 1658, when Louis Guimont, a construction worker who help build the church, was healed from a bad back (Sainte-Anne-de-Beauprein). Another famous Catholic pilgrimage site is the Vatican in Rome, where many visitors hope to be blessed by the Pope. Some visitors of sacred sites come to seek the aid of the supernatural, and others for the spectacular art, but many are seeking religious experiences.

Many Catholic holy sites are very aesthetic and visceral in their presentation. Often these holy places are spectacular for some who come have religious experiences. Sociologist Tillic defines a religious experience as an encounter with the ultimate, and Anthropologist Rudolf Otto defines it as a majestic and overpowering experience (Coleman 2009). Often religious experiences are associated with particular sacred places, this is evident at Sainte-Anne-de-Beauprein Basilica in Quebec. According to the Sainte Anne de Beauprein's website people come to visit, "to implore a favour and to live a faith experience in the company of Saint Anne; others come to find meaning in their lives"(Sainte-Anne-de-Beauprein). Another important Catholic pilgrimage site is the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. At the Basilica there is a miraculous apron that many believe to cure any illness. Lady of Guadalupe serves an important role to Catholics, but also serves as the patron Saint of Mexico City.

Another religion that has shaped many physical and cultural landscapes is the Mormons. The Mormon faith is not as visceral in their religious symbolic representation

as that which is Catholic. However, Mormonism has influenced the United States landscape from the east to west, in its member's search for religious freedom. Many people are unaware of the other predominately Mormon cities, besides Salt Lake City, Utah, that have been tremendously influenced by the Mormon church.

The Mormons suffered a great deal of religious persecution during their efforts to create a physical place to live and peaceably reside in the Salt Lake Valley of Utah. The Mormon's physical trek across the United States has ended up dominating, as well as, socially affecting such locations as the city of Palmyra, in northern New York state, the city of Kirtland, in the state of Ohio, and creating the city and township county of Nauvoo in the state of Illinois. The state of Utah has been tremendously affected by the Mormon faith and provides a clear example to how the Mormons created religious utopian cities.

Mormonism has also influenced the morphology of many modern cities, especially in Utah. The cities were built following a distinctively hierarchal spatial organization with grid style city planning. Mormons also have unique architectural designs. Salt Lake City was built replicating the city of Zion, a concept involving a righteous place and designed for religious gatherings. The Mormon layout included: gridiron streets, wide boulevards, and houses with adjoining gardens, as well as, fields bordered by Lombardy poplars (Sopher 45). Not only did the Mormons have specific layouts of their towns, but also influenced how space was organized hierarchally. For example, Sopher points out similarities between Mormon hierarchical spatial structures that resemble the Freemasonry's ritual and hierarchical organization (Sopher, 57). According to Sopher,

> The Church of Latter-Day Saints has a precisely laid out system of territorial organization. Settled Mormon territories are organized in wards, a ward being the equivalent of a parish and having ideally a population of about 750. Wards are grouped in stakes, supervised by a cleric of higher rank […] having on the average a population of about 5,000"(Sopher, 63).

The Mormon's use of hierarchical spatial structures clearly represent a religious hierarchy of space. The Zion style city planning that designed the city of Nauvoo continued in Mormon settlements in Utah. For example, Salt Lake City's morphology was designed and controlled by the Mormon Church. The city was marked out in ten-acre city blocks and subdivided into one-and-a-quarter-acre town lots, and forty-four yard wide streets. A ten acre block just west of Brigham Young's house severed as the "Temple Square" where the famous Mormon Temple is located (Ingolf Vogeler, 3). The Salt Lake City temple is the largest and, many would say, the most historically sacred of Mormon temples, and is a major pilgrimage site for Mormons. The Salt Lake City Temple is a distinctive landmark for Mormons and is a place of pilgrimage. The morphology of many Utah cities are planned and organized in very distinctive patterns leaving a lasting imprint upon the landscape across the United States.

The French settlements created in Quebec were strongly affected by Roman Catholicism as the names given to settlements, and clearly reflect a Catholic connotation. The Sainte Anne Basilica is a sacred destination for many Roman Catholics and plays an important role in Quebec's cultural identity, as the Patron Sainte of Quebec. Although, very different then Catholicism, Mormonism has played an important factor in shaping many cities across the United States. As the Mormons migrated west in search for a place to create a religious utopia they created historical Mormon cities like Kirtland and Nauvoo. The Mormon faith has an overwhelming impact upon Utah and especially in the

Salt Lake Valley area. Salt Lake City provides an excellent example to how Mormons planned the city morphology, using grid-style patterns. The spatial organization in Mormon settlements created a unique hierarchical pattern by organizing settlements into wards and stakes. While Catholicism and Mormonism might appear to be very different religions from a strictly doctrinal perspective, both show how religion can shape, and thereby help to facilitate its implementation onto many cultural and physical landscapes. The cultural and physical impacts of religious ideologies vary and can leave positive and negative impressions upon landscapes.

V. Multi-perspective analysis of Suicide Bombers:

Religious ideologies have a direct impact upon the physical landscape and acts of martyrdom or suicide bombings clearly illustrate a physical mark left upon the landscape. For example, the events of "9/11/2001" forever changed the skyline of New York City. Using the example of suicide bombings may be extreme, but it is relevant in a time where religious ideology is being used as a military and political strategy. The physical landscapes of places like Israel, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq clearly show the impacts of religiously motivated acts that have left lasting affects upon both the cultural and physical landscapes. The physical landscape that bears the scar is only the physical representation of martyrdom or suicide bombings; the sociological, psychological and cultural impacts are everlasting within the societies that experience these acts. By using theoretical perspectives from Anthropology, Sociology and Geography to explore the acts of suicide bombers illustrates the cultural, social and geographical factors to such a behavior.

Although deadly to many, these acts of martyrdom or suicide bombers do maintain a multitude of purpose and functionality within several societies worldwide. Most evident since the start of the 21st century, a great abundance of suicide bombings have continually occurred in the Middle East among many Islamic extremist groups, including Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and perhaps most well known, al-Qaeda. Likely due to its physical geographical location, the Middle East has many religions that reside within this geographical region, perhaps most evident the long-lasting skirmish between Israel and Palestine, a skirmish that has long been plagued by suicide bombings and near-invisible attacks. If anything, the thoughts and views of how a society judges the act of suicide bombers in various world regions more often than not either validates and contributes to the breeding of sacrificial lambs, or in the case of an opposite thoughts process, brings about a total demise of impartiality, indifference and acceptance of such self-destructive and unnecessarily deadly acts. Of course, dependent upon who is being attacked, the act of suicide bombing is not so much considered a gift as much as an outright act of terrorism. On the contrary, the individual bomber is led to believe that committing such an act is no different than giving a gift sanctioned by that person's society and religion (an intertwined idea, in many countries and cultures). For instance, within some Islam sects, "human bombings" are both a sacrifice for and a gift to Allah. And no matter how one person's perspective may choose to view it, suicide bombing can provide an advantage in the arenas of politics, military strategy, religion, community and social prestige, in any society.

No matter the form the act might take, a suicide bombing is often primarily enacted to further a political and/or military agenda. Over the last decade, the political

agendas of Islamic extremist groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas and the PIJ have visibly and audibly used human bombs as an offensive strategy to combat their enemies, or at least the ideas for which their enemies stand. This use of suicide bombing (in terms of an offensive military strategy) is undoubtedly comparable to the Japanese kamikaze pilots who forcefully waylaid Pearl Harbor and Allied fleets throughout WWII (Isreli 1997). Islamic suicide bombers have even been labeled lately as "Islamikaze" (Isreli 1997, 96). According to Robert Pape of the University of Chicago, this aggressive form of suicide appeals to these groups principally because it is the most accessible method to kill the largest possible number of people (Economist). To these groups, it is considered a low-risk tactic because it can inflict massive damage to enemies, while only ending one life on the offensive side in the process. Osama bin Laden's right hand man Ayman al Zawahiri has been quoted saying that "the method of martyrdom operations is the most successful way of inflicting damage against the opponent and least costly to the mujahedeen in terms of casualties" (Economist). In terms of gaining some form of superiority over a rival faction or region, many Palestinian terrorist groups have also adopted suicide bombings as a strategy intended to counteract conventional military superiority, yet another fact evident between Palestinian and Israel. This advantage stems from the overall adaptability of the bomber, he or she can adapt to both the place and the time in which they are intending to "blow up" (Economist). According to Bruce Hoffman, suicide bombers could be viewed upon as "the ultimate smart bomb, or human cruise missile." If spotted, this individual can easily detonate their bomb and immediately complete the mission at any given moment (Economist). Also evident by the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, suicide attacks are quite often part of a wider campaign

usually associated with purposes to liberate a geographical location held by democracies. All in all, the psychological effect on the victims and communities in which suicide bombing campaigns occur creates a terrifying impression of an impenetrable enemy, one who can strike anytime, anywhere, at anyone. The religious ideology within these extremist groups often justifies and glorifies suicide bombing. For example Fathi Shiqaqi, a founder of the PIJ casts these acts as "martyrdom operations" (Economist). While the strategy of using suicide bombers in offensive military attacks seems to serve to meet political and military functions, these attacks also strengthen certain religiously dogmatic ideals and promote powerful propaganda in an attempt to impress individualized constituency.

Communities promoting suicide bombings or "martyrdom operations" also quite often believe in and support religious dogma giving weight to this type of behavior. If the group did not approve of such acts, most certainly the number of willing sacrificial lambs would not exist. But, if communities and religious dogma promote such acts, there may likewise be an increase in willing lambs. This is evident in amongst Islamic groups such as the JIP, Hamas and al-Qaeda, all of whom follow a strict fundamentalist code. These groups have manipulated the meanings of suicide, martyrdom and jihad to fit within their own religious contexts. For example, to some Islamic extremists, the martyrdom is seen as "a human response to the call of Allah to sacrifice oneself for the sake of Islam and to inflict loss on the enemies of Allah" (Israeli 35). If a death occurs in jihad in the name of Allah, these groups wholeheartedly believe they will earn eternal bliss. Often, these suicide bombers are glorified within their communities for a courageous sacrifice to Allah and for the benefit of their region of the Earth. Maurice Halbwachs, who defined

martyrdom as a social role in certain communities, argues that "society claims sacrifice as its own proper work, to accomplished within the bosom of the community, where all the spiritual forces converge" (Halbwachs 475). According to most Muslims, the idea of martyrdom is not a status to be achieved by the individual warrior, nor is it to be performed as though it were a private act of worship (Strenski 278). "The act of Martyrdom is something bestowed by Allah as a favor on the warrior for his selflessness and devotion to the community's defense" (Halbwach 475). Thusly, the social rewards of martyrdom have both earthy and transcendental benefits. Avishai Margalit published an analysis of suicide bombers in Israel territories in which she argued that acts of suicide bombings are a "kind of communal recognition and subsequent ritual celebration of the operations by the community from which the bomber comes." Margalit also points out that these bombers, although deceased, receive social prestige, especially from children in their communities (38). As far as the transcendental side, multitudes of benefits can be drudged from the Koran:

> The Koranic outline of the martyr's rewards in paradise is elaborated in the hadith and has been embellished by generations of scholars. Some suicide bombers go to their deaths expecting to meet the Prophet and to see the face of Allah. Their sins will be forgiven, and they can intercede for their relatives on the day of resurrection. They will live amid rivers of wine and honey, and be married to 72 black-eyed virgins (Economist).

By using a blend of geographical and evolutionary perspectives when examining the behavior of suicide bombers one can explore the possible motivations to why suicide bombers are willing to blow themselves up. Using evolutionary perspective could help explain why mostly single men sacrifice themselves as human bombs. In many Muslim societies, patriarchy is prevalent and the competition among males for wives is quite high, leaving many men empty-handed. The promise and reward of 72 virgins could be

very tempting for a man, especially a man who has not gotten his fair opportunity for women, to consider martyrdom. According to Alan S. Miller Ph.D., and Satoshi Kanazawa Ph.D., authors of "Ten Politically Incorrect Truths About Human Nature," evolutionary perspective can be used to argue the following point:

> It is the combination of polygamy and the promise of a large harem of virgins in heaven that motivates many young Muslim men to commit suicide bombings. Consistent with this explanation, all studies of suicide bombers indicate that they are significantly younger than not only the Muslim population in general but other (nonsuicidal) members of their own extreme political organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah. And nearly all suicide bombers are single (2).

The competition between males for wives could possibly serve to create a population willing to sacrifice themselves in this world, in an attempt to obtain a much more beneficial reproductive opportunity in their afterlife. Motives aside, it is evident that if a belief system condones this type of behavior and rewards are given, the lambs will come.

The attitudes of specific societies about suicide and religious doctrine can definitely provide validation and rich incentive for suicidal behavior, as the idea of sacrifice is absolutely prevalent among Islamic extremist groups. These groups often claim to be committing such acts in the name of Allah and in the defense of Islam, creating a movement and a campaign to spread Islamic beliefs through terror. And though other groups, countries and regions have done everything possible to dissuade such an idea, the act of suicide bombing has indeed proven to be a successful offensive strategy, both in politics and within various militaries. Ultimately leaving everlasting scars upon physical landscapes. The social prestige and glorification of suicide bombers has opened the floodgates for willing participants to do the deed for their own governments and goals. The promise of 72 virgins is believably far too tempting for the unlucky few who

do not have reasonable chances at obtaining women in this life. And concerning those blowing themselves up, they truly believe that what they are doing is a just and ambitiously brave act. They have social and religious validation, as well as rewards to commit such acts of self-annihilation. Though the one receiving the bomb does not view it as a gift, the one delivering it is giving the ultimate gift in his or her eyes. To better understand the act of suicide bombers, it is beneficial to understand the ideology and motives behind those blowing themselves up, as ideologies supported by a society can breed a population of willing sacrificial lambs, especially when there are hidden political and military agendas using the cloak of religious ideology to create incentives and validation for such acts.

At first glance the acts of suicide bombings seemed to be only negative; only leaving a physical scar upon the landscape, but it is evident that suicide bombings affects whole societies. This example may have been extreme, but it is relevant in modern times and merges Geographical, Sociological and Anthropological perspectives to help understand how religion affects physical, cultural, and societal landscapes.

VI. Conclusion:

It is evident by using a combination of theoretical perspectives from the disciplines Anthropology, Sociology and Geography one can gain an in-depth and broad analysis of religion. Although these disciplines and their theoretical perspectives vary they do provide interesting angles to explore topics such as the issues of religion.

Anthropology provides an examination to how religion affects human cultures and the human mind itself. Cultural anthropological field research has provided detailed accounts and information about Native rituals and ceremonies. Biological Anthropology

compares cultural memes to biological traits and illustrates the power of religious ideas.

Sociological perspectives provide a macro analysis of religion, and Durkheim's functionalist approach illustrates how religion is functional with in society. Contemporary Sociologist Gregory Paul counters Durkheim's functionalist perspective and provides a different point of view of religion and society.

Lastly, Geographical examples illustrate how the environment can impact religious systems, but also, how religion impacts cultural and physical landscapes. Discussion of Diamond's work included the influence that environment has on food surpluses and how that influenced the evolution of religious mechanisms. Furthermore, Catholic and Mormon institutions are Geographical examples of how religion alters the world we live in.

While analyzing the topic of religion many themes are common among all three disciplines, such as rituals. Anthropological case studies provided detailed accounts of many different religious rituals among Native American tribes. Often Anthropological and Sociological perspectives are combined, and this is evident when exploring the latent and manifested functions of rituals in society. For example, the act of Holy Communion serves to not only remind it's followers of Christ's message, but also binds people together in this common belief. Geographical perspectives analyze how rituals are connected to the physical and cultural environments, for instance the rituals associated with the act of pilgrimage are closely tied to holy landscapes. Also, religion shapes physical and cultural landscapes through acts of ritual, as seen in the case of acts of 'martyrdom' or suicide bombings. It is evident that all three disciplines share a common interest in religious rituals, but the focus may be applied to different aspects; culturally,

societal, and spatially.

By using the three disciplines to help analyze religion one can see the similarities and differences among the theoretical perspectives provided by the Social Sciences. As discussed above not all theories agree, and are often in conflict, but by examining many explanations one can gain holistic understanding about the world's phenomena. Having a multiple perspective lens in this world one can have greater empathy and a deeper understanding for other humans, cultures, societies and the Earth. Psychological, political, and art disciplines are some others that could compliment the Social Sciences in revealing a greater understanding of religion and other fascinating phenomena.

Through this analysis one can see that religion has had a profound influence on society today and may even be the predominant actor in the shaping of human culture. With Paul's discovery of increased secularization in the modern world and the dis-functionality of religion one wonders what affect this will have on future society. Further analysis should be done on how other institutions can serve the same functions as religion.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Cross Tabulation Women, Children and Religiosity

Respondents Number Of Children Into * STRENGTH OF AFFILIATION Crosstabulation

			STRENGTH OF AFFILIATION				
			STRONG	SOMEWHAT STRONG	NOT VERY STRONG	NO RELIGION	Total
Respondents Number Of Children Into	Zero Children	Count	358	144	438	295	1235
		% within STRENGTH OF AFFILIATION	22.6%	27.7%	26.6%	41.5%	27.7%
	1 Child	Count	222	73	271	111	677
		% within STRENGTH OF AFFILIATION	14.0%	14.0%	16.5%	15.6%	15.2%
	2 Children	Count	401	125	456	173	1155
		% within STRENGTH OF AFFILIATION	25.3%	24.0%	27.7%	24.3%	25.9%
	3 Children	Count	321	89	245	77	732
		% within STRENGTH OF AFFILIATION	20.2%	17.1%	14.9%	10.8%	16.4%
	4 Children Or More	Count	285	89	235	55	664
		% within STRENGTH OF AFFILIATION	18.0%	17.1%	14.3%	7.7%	14.9%
	Total	Count	1587	520	1645	711	4463
		% within STRENGTH OF AFFILIATION	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

(Wallace 2009).

Appendix 2: Israeli A Sacred Place to Many

(Cookson; National Geographic Society 2008)

Appendix 3: Sainte Names

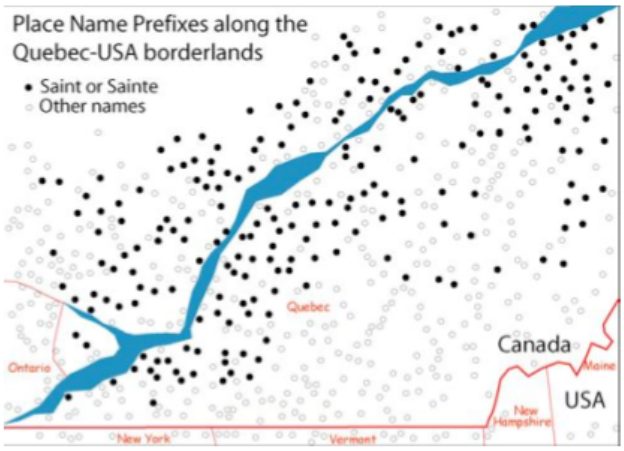

Figure 3-II-24. Settlement names with the Prefix "Saint" or "Sainte" (black circles) are concentrated in the French settlements on either side of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec. Source: Canadian and USA topographic maps.

(Vogeler 2008, 27).