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Critical Thinking Paper 2

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Religion plays an important role in human society, according to John Macionis. In the text, religion is defined as “a social institution involving beliefs and practices based on recognizing the sacred” (Macionis, 2016). Some can even argue that it is an integral part of what many sociologists believe to be the characteristics of ethnicity. Seeing as how religion has such an impact on who we are, it is no surprise that our beliefs can have an effect on our perspective and what we deem appropriate or inappropriate. These effects can be seen in perspectives about gender inequality, family life, and social change.

Gender inequality has been an issue among many religious groups due to the fact that religion explicitly defines gender roles (Macionis, 2016). It is widely known that many religions have taken up stances that favor the male. The most popular religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, all promote the concept of a patriarchy. The main person worshipped in all three of these religions are given masculine pronouns. Men are expected to be the head of their households and to lead the way in which their religion expects them to. Much of the responsibility falls on the hands of the males so they are generally more respected than women. Women, on the other hand, are not given the same leadership opportunities as men. Many religions, such as Christianity, expect submission from the women when it comes to their husbands. Other religions, such as Islam, have more conservative sects that take more drastic

measures to ensure that women do not have any power over men. These measures include barring them from being able to work or even denying them advanced schooling (Macionis, 2016). These beliefs have characterized themselves in ways beyond just submission in the household and denying the right to work or go to school. I believe in the part about wives being submissive to their husbands so I can't say I completely disagree. However, when it goes beyond the household and respect is not equal on both ends, then it becomes a problem.

In regards to family life, religion has a great influence on what is appropriate or inappropriate. One main issue is the topic of divorce. Macionis recognizes that people who are not religious are more likely to divorce than those who have strong religious beliefs. He then attributes this to the fact that religious people tend to define their marriages as holy matrimony, which in turn makes their bond much stronger (Macionis, 2016). Taking this into consideration along with the concept of leading the household previously mentioned, I feel that the children benefit from this. For one, they are able to grow up in a two parent household. This can be considered a rarity depending on the part of the country you live in. Secondly, with both parents on the same page from a religion standpoint, the children are raised with a strong foundation and a sense of morality. Most religions instruct children to respect their parents so there is where most of the appropriate and inappropriate stance derives from in this case.

Social change is an issue that isn't directed specifically to men, women or children in regards to this question, but I believe it is a pertinent issue in regards to what religious people consider appropriate or inappropriate. Many conservative religions tend to want you to focus more on living according to the lifestyle instructed to them. The afterlife is too important to waste our time on the things of this world. Macionis argues that this part of religion encourages people to accept the social problems of this world while they look hopefully to a 'better world to

come.' (2016). This sometimes comes off as staying away from politics. However, I do not believe that we should neglect what is going on in the world and offer our religion as a band aid. Part of loving people is recognizing their pain and if we have to get into social policy in order to do so then I feel that we should do whatever it takes to help people in need. Because, at the end of the day, your religion doesn't mean much if you can't love someone.