

Dear Professor Belli,

In my process of writing the archive essay, I was anxious, by way of I had no idea how to start the assignment, much less find a topic of discussion. After a series of decisions, I concluded to do my project on Human Behavior in the Post-Apocalypse. While it was advised be careful with this topic, being that it is broad and tricky to stay on a single topic. The difficulty of tackling the topic motivated me more, as challenges are good for the thinking mind. I started my research and noticed majority of my research were of zombies and epidemics. I was skeptical of these sources at first, as I did not really want to focus on zombies as my main subject. However, I realized the zombie apocalypse is a popular subject when discussing post-apocalyptic text. Also, in my research I found myself reading all sorts of psychological text. Because psychology is so intense, in terms of information, I found myself being very cautious to what I added in my overall paper.

For the reason my proposal was difficult to understand, I was advised to list my topic proposal idea into details, rather than it being constructed in a paragraph format. By doing this, I was able to grasp a better understanding of my topic, as well as, create more concrete questions that will extend my main focus. As a result, I was able to construct the following question to enhance my topic on Human Behavior in Post-Apocalyptic setting. These question are: Do people personality change when placed in a life threatening setting? How would ethics, morality, and perception evolve in a world centered on Post-apocalyptic destruction? If people were born into a dystopian society where survival is priority, how would they behave?

Ultimately, the more research I did, the clearer my topic came together. There is many sources to support my topic, still my main concern was confusing fluff sources with credible sources. In the end, it will complicate the reader's point of view on what I'm trying to convey. I only wished I had more time to do the assignment. Only because, I wanted to do more extensive research that would have made my essay stronger and my thesis more well-rounded. Hopefully, this assignment will be above standards, as it was well-thought out and conducted with the intentions of success.

Sincerely,

Tajay Douglas

Abstract

The horrors of the apocalypse doesn't only change the environment, it also diminish the improvements in society, most of all it changes the behavior of human beings. Normally, in a civil society people thrive for success, advancement and the pursuit of happiness. All things taken away from society, people reactions will determine their will to survive. However, in the journey of survival, existence will be based on how a person is able to adapt to chaotic change and the will to overcome fear and confusion of a post-apocalyptic world. Social norms require people to act in a mannerism of morality and politeness. Human behavior in the post-apocalypse is extensive, therefore exploring the reasons people change will create an indication as to why humans rely so heavily to a civilized society. The human mind is critical when creating apocalyptic text. For the reason that all human beings behave differently given a change in setting, from normal to chaotic, their perception on things will differ. Thus, research surrounds the psychology, as well as, the sociology of human behavior, at the same time basing it on a post-apocalyptic setting. Moreover, examples of post-apocalyptic text will support the way humans change and behave in the Post-Apocalypse.

Human Behavior in the Post-Apocalypse

In hindsight, all humans are different and have distinctive traits that make them an individual. In the genre Science Fiction, apocalyptic text is extensive as it explores the social structures of a destroyed world. Thus, the human mind is an important aspect to explore when creating apocalyptic material. Remember, every person is unique and handle situations differently. In theory, humans are biologically designed to survive by all means necessary, in a broad sense to continue the protection of life. The way a person's behavior switch from nonviolent to violent, can be a means of survival of their situation. To shed light on, the change in human behavior is based on the reality of their setting. This is an important outlook on humanity because of the possibilities of an apocalyptic world becoming a reality. All things considered, the behavior of human beings change during the post-apocalypse as a way to cope and survive the destruction of their norm.

In the event of total destruction, people are known to act differently because of fear and confusion. The psychology of human behavior switches from empathic to aggressive. Because human share the trait of fear, they are triggered to react erratically as a way to adjust to the situation. In this case, the situation being the post-apocalypse, everyday society will not react the same way in a post-apocalyptic world as they would in normalcy. In addition, disconnecting from reality will cause humans to behave outside of their comfort zone.

Continuing, in the post-apocalypse people tend to cope to change differently than they would in a civil society. The psychology aspect of how human behave in a post-apocalyptic setting can imitate society's ability to handle catastrophic change. For instance, recent chaotic events gave humanity a glimpse of disaster and the impact it had on the general public and infrastructure. Hurricane Katrina (2005) and Hurricane Sandy (2012), both storms are

categorized as two the most destructive hurricanes in modern history. According to Lydia Ramsey of the Business Insider, Hurricane Katrina is arguably the most notorious hurricane of the 21st century. The category 5 caused \$108 billion dollars in damages, with death tolls of more than 1200 people. Another being Hurricane Sandy, which literally shutdown a major metropolitans, such as New York City. There were \$74.4 billion in damages, as well as numerous deaths and a plunge in the New York economy. With this in mind, these storms caused a panic domestically in the United States, and had a major impact on the world's development. Also, communication was limited and people had to survive without electricity or running water. The effects of the hurricanes made it uneasy to maintain peace and order in the flooded cities. Homes were destroyed, food and water was limited, and consequently people were forced to survive without the safety and security of their families. Because of this people resorted to violence, theft and a rebellion against government aid, as a means of survival. In a psychological study conducted by Dr. A. R. Roberts, Roberts noted that people first begin to recognize that there is a threat. Next, individuals discover that the stress and trauma of the event cannot be dealt with existing coping skills. People then begin to experience fear, confusion and stress. Roberts continues by stating, those facing begin to exhibit symptoms of distress and discomfort. Finally, people enter a state of imbalance where the crisis situation seems impossible.

Other examples come from visual text, such as *The Walking Dead* (2010) and *Mad Max* series, these post-apocalyptic film are prime examples of human behavior in post-apocalyptic settings. In these text, the viewer is given a visual of how people change in extreme condition. Beginning with, *The Walking Dead* (2010), a television series that follows a group of survivors in the zombie apocalypse. The main goal of the characters is to find stability in a world raided by the living dead and unruly human beings. In *The Walking Dead* (2010), the protagonist, Rick

Grimes starts off as a County Sheriff, who is just and righteous in so many ways. After falling in a coma pre-apocalypse, Rick woke up into a world different from what he remembers.

Throughout his journey, Rick realized his moral ways did not mend well with the change in society. As a result, Rick's benevolent behavior slowly manifested into ruthless and hostile. Rick realized in order to protect those he cared for, he had to change the way he perceived morality.

Essentially, in the world of *The Walking Dead* (2010) everyone has dealt with a form of psychological trauma, certain trauma that questioned their rationality.

Moreover, Dr. Steven Schlozman, of *Psychology Today*, conducted a research where he defined each character of the *Walking Dead* of having misfortune of suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Dr. Schlozman, explains that each characters show their PTSD in different ways. Some tend to be merciless and dangerous, and others shutdown out of fear and anxiety. In all, the show serves as a reminder that humans are more receptacle to a traumatic horror than any other living being. It can be said, whenever our survival is at risk, living beings are instinctively triggered into survival mode. Initially, the way fear is perceived in society, as being the manifestation of a stressful situation, that's why the human mind unconsciously seek salvage from being in trapped in survival mode.

Survival mode, however, isn't only a manifested state of fear, or primal terror of death, but a human behavior to cope with a fearful reality. Survival mode can be defined as high levels of stress when placed in overwhelming situations. Usually, when an individual is stressed out they tend to be a person they don't want to be. To extend, human behavior is tricky, especially given a post-apocalyptic setting where survival is vital. Usually, when people are forced into a highly, stressful situations, centered on fear and confusion, they rely heavily on intuition and their ability to adapt as a way to survive. In his *Huffington Post* article, Dr. Marc Schoen of

UCLA recognized that fear triggers survival mode, which is the way people cope with stressful situation. In addition, given a fearful situation, the human psyche forces people to do the unthinkable as a way to continue existence. Basically, fear is a natural part of being human. Whereas fear allows people to be more alert and cautious, nevertheless fear can cloud the ability to think and act logically. Afterwards, confusion affects the way people perceive rationality and righteousness. In confusion, whenever panic of survival becomes the subject of living, human beings behave in a manner out of terror, inevitably eliminating their morality and ethics. Also, whenever someone is surrounded by chaos, irrational thoughts tend to overlap logic and good judgement. Besides, in a survival situation, fear and confusion are the same, but one more intense than the other, still the consequences remain severe.

In the same way, it is important to acknowledge the emotional state that a person is experiencing and take into account how it might impact their situation. Moreover, intuition, which is defined as having a strong internal sense of what's right without relying on facts or data. Therefore, reasoning what you perceive to be right is vital in surviving a catastrophic setting. In the case of a chaotic event, a person will have to rely on instinct rather than logic. And lastly, depend on their adaptability, it's no secret people of today's society are comfortable with the way civilization has become technologically relaxed. Still inn adaptability, how well a person is an able to adjust to new routines, systems, situations and settings; will determine the survival of the individual. One has to become open to change and accustomed to a system outside of their comfort zone.

As for the Mad Max series, this motion picture set the tone for an entire genre of films set in a Post-Apocalyptic wasteland. Additionally, this film showcased the savagery of humans as they become scavengers and merciless killers as a mean of survival. Moreover, in Mad Max 2:

Road Warrior (1981) the setting is in a harsh, desert-like wasteland where water and fuel are the only valuable commodities. Additionally, this film creates the imagery of barbarism, and the ferocious behavior humans are capable of given a situation where resources become scarce. Likewise, the characters of Mad Max: Fury Road (2015) are outlandish and behave in a manner out of civil. The brutalities of the environment cause people to act out in a barbarous manner, as the only way to survive is being ruthless and physically superior. Immediately, viewers are given an idea of the anarchy disposed on humanity, run by monstrous tyrants and their horrific warriors. Essentially, fear of humanity surpassed the post-apocalyptic environment. Goes to show that the destruction in setting can transform the behavior of a person, which inevitably dictate the outcome of civilization in the post-apocalypse.

Furthermore, creators of dystopian worlds often take modern topics and feed to the fears of the public by creating the possible future. As people read or watch depictions of apocalyptic civilizations, the mind can't help, but wonder what the future may be like if society collapsed into a post-apocalyptic world. In reality, people do imagine a society overtaken by anarchy. Note, human behavior is very complex and can be influenced by many environmental and biological factors. That being said, in the topic of Nature vs. Nurture theory, the ongoing argument of human beings are somehow born good or evil is false. Philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, believed that "all natural things can be reduced to one principle, which is nature, and all voluntary things can be reduced to one principle, which is human reason, or will." Ideally, if an individual is placed in a post-apocalyptic location, normally they would react in qualm and extreme anxiety. Thus, their natural instinct of surviving will conflict with their mental reasoning with the post-apocalyptic world.

In further study, Roberto Hernandez explained that an organized government system is pleasant and most effective when the human condition is peaceful. Hernandez adds, "When violence, war, social injustice, human rights violations, and other harmful things are added to society, people quickly lead to discontent and sometimes even revolt against their leaders." All things considered, some people would rather live in anarchy and fend for themselves than live in a cruel and corrupt government system. This could be the reason why post-apocalyptic societies often promote the cruel ways of people. This may also be the reason why viewers find themselves rooting for post-apocalyptic text protagonists such as Rick Grimes, to find his peace. The popularity of post-apocalyptic novels, movies, and television shows reflects on society's wonderment of being able to survive inhospitable surroundings.

As mentioned by Angelo Elauria, the post-apocalyptic genre can be categorized as sociological fiction. Basically, if people were born into a world where society is reduced to nothing and the concept of humanity becomes ambiguous. To elaborate, instead of living for the progression of humankind, people will likely resort to self-regard and control. Moreover, there are theories of social psychology and concepts of human nature on the subject of how people balance empathy and self-perseverance in catastrophic situations. One of those theories is the Terror Management Theory, Elauria states that this theory has shown exceptional examples as to how human behavior is viewed. Additionally, Elauria explains "This theory combines both philosophies of evolutionary and existential psychology to explain certain functions of in-group/out-group behavior, aspects of self-esteem, and the psychological foundations of culture." In response, human behavior in the post-apocalypse can be conducted into two hypotheses based on the Terror Management Theory. The first hypothesis gives the notion that people are able to create their own life fulfilling purpose through aesthetics and culture, which provides the

foundation for valuing life. In other words, the character one creates for themselves will be based on their appreciation for all things developed throughout a lifespan. Thus, depending on how well an individual can eliminate their ego for the prosperity of life, will ultimately define their ability to accept life after destruction. And second, humans are biologically inclined to survive by all means necessary, on a whole to continue the preservation of life. In a nutshell, human beings have a primal instinct to live, unless mentally incapable to adapt to the post-apocalypse.

Overall, in a post-apocalyptic world there is no government system to regulate order. There isn't any law enforcement to uphold the law, much less an emergency system for people's well-being. Moreover, money is useless and the social infrastructure cease to exist. Ultimately, humanity is forced to neglect all knowledge of a normal society, in order to adapt to an unforeseeable way of life. In a literal sense, survival of the fittest becomes the way someone survives the shattered world. Normally, the things society frown upon, such as theft and murder, inevitably becomes the norm in a post-apocalyptic society. While it is easy to be a refined citizen in society, however to survive the post-apocalypse one has to be able to be brutal, while adapting to the abysmal change. As a final thought, the ultimate challenge is surviving the post-apocalypse, while keeping ones humanity intact. The way someone can overcome the gray area between right and wrong will manage their behavior in the post-apocalypse.

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