Creating the Reality for War: Mobilizing the Citizenry

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Abstract

The two questions: 'why do nations go to war', and 'why do individuals join the fight' is the focus of our research. These questions will be explored using Q-Sort Methodology. Q-Sort systematically studies participants' viewpoints. Participants rank and sort a series of statements. The statements will be based from International Relations theories of Realism, (neo)Liberalism, and Constructivism. The responses are analyzed using factor analysis. The study also includes a qualitative component of individual interviews with each participant as to better understand why the participant ranked certain statements more or less important than other statements. Statements are ranked from 'most important' to 'less important'. The results of these two research questions will be compared against each other to assess the similarities and differences of why the research respondents believe nations fight, and why they themselves would join   the fight.

Keywords

nations war, individuals fight, Q-Sort methodology, social construction, generational differences, power, Liberal Arts

Background

There were two questions in this research study: *why does the USA go to war*; and *why would you go to war/fight*? The data for this project came from undergraduate students in the spring 2019 Introduction to Sociology (SO152DA) course at Carlow University. Carlow University (Mt. Mercy College) was started in 1929 by the Sisters of Mercy. Their values of: Mercy; Hospitality; Service; Discovery: and the Sacredness of Creation are deeply rooted at Carlow; and the phrase "a just and merciful world" appears in the Vision, Mission, and Philosophy Statements[1]. Carlow students see, hear, and feel this ethos everyday on campus. Most of the students in the SO152DA course Spring 2019 were Nursing or Biology majors (wanting to go into the medical field) and several Social Work majors. This data coming from a sample of students from a Mercy school, from

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[1] Please refer to the website for Carlow University's Mission Statement, Values, and Philosophy Statement; https://www.carlow.edu/Vision_Mission_Values_Philosophy.aspx .

students going to the medical professions, may not be reflective of the entire population of traditional-aged college students at Carlow or in the USA.

To start the research process, two psychology and four political science faculty members were interviewed and asked the question, "*What is your top-of-mind response to: why do nations/people/groups go to war*"*- No analysis nor explanation, just top five words or phrases*."   The responses were: nationalism, religion, money, resources, culture, greed, militarism, human nature, tribalism, hatred (of 'the other'), ideology, 'us' vs 'them' thinking, xenophobia, and power (one respondent stated- all of the other reasons given are just sub-sets of the struggle for power.) The six faculty members consistently used the above listed words. A literature review of classical and current theories and thinkers was the next step in gathering words and phrases. A variety of concepts reviewed were: the Ionians, the Sophists, Socrates, Plato, Normative Theory, Aristotle, Realist, Classical/Modern Liberalism, Environmentalism, Feminism, Marxism, Traditional Conservatism, and Constructivism. Resulting from these two steps: faculty interviews and a literature review, came the 45 words used in the Q-Sort:

(1)   Power
(2)   Justice
(3)   National Self-Interest
(4)   Nationalism
(5)   Freedom
(6)   Duty
(7)   Ideology
(8)   Democracy
(9)   Technology
(10) Human Rights
(11) Religion
(12) Control over scarce Resources (water, oil, etc.)
(13) Economics
(14) Costs/Human Life
(15) Greed
(16) Culture
(17) Militarism
(18) Hatred of the "Other"
(19) Common Cause
(20) Safety/Security of Nation,
(21) Conscientious Objector (Would not fight/Would not kill)[2]
(22) Equality of all groups and people
(23) Tradition of serving in the military
(24) Human Nature
(25) Country-First
(26) Humanity-First
(27) Ethics
(28) Trust in Leadership
(29) Patriotism
(30) Allegiance
(31) Honor
(32) Virtue
(33) Rhetoric
(34) Environment
(35) Climate Change
(36) Costs/Monetary
(37) Beliefs
(38) Values
(39) Camaraderie
(40) The military history of the USA
(41) "Us" versus "Them"
(42) Safety/Security of Family
(43) Safety/Security of Self
(44) Injustice
(45) Distrust

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[2] The 45-sort words intentionally not defined the words, other than Conscientious Objector (would not fight/ Would not kill). Many students never heard this phrase.

Research Aims

One aim of this exploratory research was to determine whether nations and individuals go to war and fight for the same reasons. A second aim was to ascertain what words/statements may need to be added, discarded, or changed for a future larger, more definitive study. This was exploratory research; we were not assessing an individual theory or trying to test a hypothesis.

"If we knew what we were doing, it wouldn't be called research, would it?"

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Method

There were two questions in this research study: *why does the USA go to war*; and *why would you go to war/fight*? The data for this project came from undergraduate students in the spring 2019 Introduction to Sociology (SO152DA) course at Carlow University. Question one, *why does the USA go to war* was asked on Monday, April 8, 2019; question two, *why would you go to war/fight* was asked on Wednesday, April 10, 2019. Each student had their own 45-word set of index cards to arrange in a normal distribution format into a symmetrical bell-shaped graph of 2 words in the first column, 3 words in the second column, 6 words in the third column, 7 words in the fourth column, 9 words in the fifth/middle column, 7 words in the sixth column, 6 words in the seventh column, 3 words in the eight column, and 2 words in the ninth column. The graph from left to right was labeled less important to most important. Each student had their own work station, a table of approximately 48 inches in length and 36 inches in width to sort their words into the distribution. This allowed each student to sort and view their distribution while making the decision in which column to place each word or statement. The average time for the students to do the sorts was approximately 15-25 minutes. Both questions used the same set of 45words.

-4 (2)	-3 (3)	-2 (6)	-1 (7)	0 (9)	4 (7)	3 (6)	2 (3)	1 (2)

PQ Method 2.35 by Peter Schmolck, a free download, from http://schomolck.org/qmethod/ was used for the factor analysis portion of this research. The Q Method or Q sorting is "the technical means whereby data are obtained for factoring" (Watts and Stenner, 2005, p. 77). According to Stenner, the Q method is *qualiquantological*; the data obtained from the sorts are used in the factor analysis, keeping in mind that these words and statements are arranged from the *viewpoint* of each participant, and the subsequent interview with each participant after completing each sort is the *subjective expressions* of the participant (p. 69). The Watts and Stenner article in *Qualitative Research in Psychology* provides a detailed explanation of Q Methodology.

> Q Methodology employs a *by-person* correlation and factor analytic procedure. It is the *overall configurations* produced by the participants that are intercorrelated and factor analyzed. The initial correlation matrix reflects the relationship of each Q sort configuration with every other Q sort configuration *not* the relationship of each item with every other item.
> (p. 80)

Each student was individually interviewed on Monday and Wednesday. The Monday sort question *why does the USA go to war* had three interview questions: (1) why did you choose those words/concepts as "most important"; (2) why did you choose those words/concepts as "less important"; (3) is there anything else you would like to add the USA and war/ overall, reasons why the USA goes to war. The Wednesday interview questions for *why would you go to war/fight* were: (1) why did you choose those words/concepts as "most important"; (2) why did you choose those words/concepts as "less important"; (3) why are your perceptions/beliefs similar/or dissimilar as to why the USA would go to war and why you as an individual would go to war/fight.

Student Participants

There were 28 students registered for this course; all were between the ages of 18 to 21 years old. Of the 28 students, we obtained 21 completed Monday/Wednesday sorts; two students did not follow the directions, and five students attended on Monday and completed the sort, but not on Wednesday to complete the sort for the second question. Of the five students who did not come to class on Wednesday for the second question, all were female, three were not born in the USA; they were born in the Nepal/Bhutan region of the world, (all age 19), and did not have a political affiliation. The other two female students who did not sort the second question were born in the USA; one was Republican (age 19) and the other had no political affiliation (age 20). Of the two

students who did not follow directions, one was born in the USA and a Democrat; the other was foreign born with no political affiliation.

Within the group of 21 students that completed both Monday and Wednesday sorts, 16 were female and five were male. The summary of female students' political affiliation is as follows: Independents = 6; Democrat = 5; Republican = 4; and None = 1. There were no male Republicans in the sorts; male affiliations were: Democrat = 3; Independent = 1; and, None = 1. All but two of the 21 students who completed the sorts on both Monday and Wednesday were born in the USA. The male foreign-born student was from Myanmar (previously Burma before 1989), age 19 with a political affiliation of Democrat. The female foreign-born student was from Nepal/Bhutan region, age 19 with no political affiliation.

Findings

Question One

Based on the Factor Matrix and Scores for question one, *why does the USA go to war*, the analysis produced three strong factors. Factor 1A has been labeled *Political Hegemony*; the interpretation is based on high factor scores for: Safety/security of Nation; Freedom; Power; Safety/security of self; and Control over scarce resources (water, oil, etc.). The next set of words with high scores were: Democracy, Allegiance, Country-first, Nationalism, and National self-interest. The lowest scores were: Technology; Culture, Rhetoric, Environment, and Climate change. Two highest ranking Distinguishing Statements for this factor were: Safety/security of Nation; and Freedom.

Factor 1B has been labeled *Economic Hegemony*; the interpretation is based on high factor scores for: Power; Country-first; Greed; Economics; and Safety/security of Nation. The next set of words with high scores were: Technology; Patriotism; National self-interest; Nationalism; and Militarism. The lowest scores were for: Culture; Injustice; Common cause; Costs/monetary; and Ethics. Four closely ranked Distinguishing Statements for this factor were: Country-first; Economics; Technology; and Patriotism.

Factor 1C has been labeled *Social Hegemony*; the interpretation is based on high factor scores for: Power; Control over scarce resources (water, oil, etc.); Hatred of "Other"; Safety/security of Nation; and Greed. The next highest set scores were for the words: Freedom; Distrust; Inequality of groups and people; and "Us" verses "Them". The lowest scores were for: Values; Technology; Tradition of serving in the military; The military tradition of the USA; and Camaraderie. The highest ranking Distinguishing Statement for this factor was Hatred of "Other". Two lesser ranking Distinguishing Statements were: Freedom; and Distrust.

Question Two

Based on the Factor Matrix and Scores for question two, *why would you go to war/fight*, the analysis produced two strong factors. Factor 2A has been labeled *Good of All Humankind*; the interpretation is based on high factor scores for: Human Rights;

Safety/security of Nation; Humanity-first; Justice; Freedom. The next highest scores were for the words: Inequality of groups and people; Safety/security of family; Injustice; Democracy; and Ethics. The lowest scores were for: Tradition of serving in the military; The military tradition of the USA; Greed; "Us" verses "Them"; Hatred of the "Other". The very highest ranking Distinguishing Statement was Human Rights; followed by four closer ranked Distinguishing Statements: Human-first; Justice; Inequality of groups and people; Safety/security of Family; and Injustice.

Factor 2B has been labeled *Security based in Democratic Freedom*; the interpretation is based on high scores for: Safety/security of Family; Safety/security of Nation; Safety/security of Self; Freedom; and Power. The next highest scores were for the words: Human Rights; Allegiance; Country-first; and Democracy. The two lowest scores were for: Rhetoric, and Climate Change. The only two high ranking Distinguishing Statements were: Safety/security of Nation; and Freedom.

Discussion

According to the website Oldest.org, as of October 2018, the average age of the 115th Congress was 57.8 years for the House of Representatives and 61.8 years for the Senate. This was among the oldest Congress in history (Quorum.) In 2018, the oldest ten members ranged from 82 to 88; birth years were 1936 to 1930: three were Democrats, of which two were females, one white, one black, and one white male; seven were Republicans, all white males. The oldest member, a Republican, was 11 years-old when the USA entered World War II. On November 6, 2018, the youngest person to be elected to serve in Congress was 29 year-old Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC), a female Democrat of Puerto Rican decent from New York, born in 1989; almost a 60-year difference between the oldest and youngest in the 116th Congress.

Why is the age difference important to this exploratory research? Generations[3] exhibit similar characteristics, experienced certain life events together that shaped their generation, and preferences for certain values based on life these experiences (Center of Generational Kinetics.) The oldest ten members of the United States Congress lived through the Great Depression (1929-1939) and World War II (1939-1945), a time period that shaped the worldview of the USA as a world savior and hegemon. The youngest person of Congress was barely over two-years old during Desert Storm, the first Gulf War in 1991. The first war to be shown in real time on television (Atlanta Magazine.) And, for some the Gulf War was a manipulation of the press and a pack of lies (Moyers), (Timeline). "Generation-shaping trends are most influential as people come of age, which means that members of a particular generation will develop and share

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[3] Gen Z, iGen, or Centennials: Born 1996 – TBD
Millennials or Gen Y: Born 1977 – 1995
Generation X: Born 1965 – 1976
Baby Boomers: Born 1946 – 1964
Traditionalists or Silent Generation: Born 1945 and before
https://genhq.com/faq-info-about-generations/

similar values, beliefs, and expectations" (Generational Kinetics). Also, according to Generational Kinetics, "Millennials are the most consistent generation globally. However, there are important differences between Millennials raised in an urban environment versus those raised in a rural one or those who move to a new country." The construction of *reality* is very different for each generation. The current Congress of the United States is making laws, policies, appointing judges, etc., based on a certain generational view of their reality, which may or may not be *true* to today's world.

As stated in Karaffa (2012) The phenomenological analysis base is everyday life, "knowledge is almost always characterized by typification and oriented to solving practical problems…then this knowledge is influenced by the accumulated weight of institutionalized knowledge produced by others" (Abercrombie, 2006, p. 290). The critics of phenomenology contend that it deals with trivial topics, is purely descriptive, has little empirical application, and neglects social structure; however, it is that these "trivial topics" and intentions are the building blocks of social structure. *Constructivism* focuses on "the meaning-making activity of the individual mind" (Crotty, 1998, p. 58), whereas *constructionism* focuses on "the collective generation and transmission of meaning" (p. 58). The students in this study grasped the notion of ontological relativity-- that each person has a unique personal history from which to make sense of and create an individual reality that is valid to the self, while at the same time knowing that culture has an enormous influence on an individual's worldview. "A large swaying factor in a person's political opinion, especially the younger generation, are the families. The families are typically the first influencers to someone's political stance. From then on, the person gathers their own knowledge and experiences forming their opinions to suit their desired political party. It is not uncommon for a person to change their political preferences throughout their lifetime" (female, age 20, Republican, born in the USA).

For the question *why does the USA go to war*, one student, during the interview, summed it up in one word "GREED!". "The world is a greedy place and everyone wants more for nothing. The government is corrupt; elites only think of themselves, and not others. The government does not care about the environment, climate change, the cost of individual lives, they are not the ones doing the fighting" (female, 19, Democrat, born in the USA). In the interviews, many students stated that the environment and climate change would not cause the USA to go to war. A 19-year-old Independent believes that the United States puts "virtue and ethics" as the least important reasons to go to war, and that "power impacts" everything. "We don't have to go to war. Only if we are threatened. We don't have to establish power because all the countries know we are superior" (male, 19, Democrat, born in the USA). "I think power is the most important reason the USA goes to war because people tend to fight over control. I think people disagree and go to war because of the differences in their beliefs" (Female, 20, Republican, born in the USA). Many of these college students believe no country would challenge the USA. And, many believed that cyber-terrorism, or cyber threats are not a major concern for the USA.

However, what do the active-duty troops of the United States Military believe? Please refer to the graph on the next page from the Military Times. According to a Military Times 2018 poll, troops fear a new war[4] is coming soon:

> Nearly half of all current military troops believe the United States will be drawn into a major war soon, a jarring rise in anxiety among service members worried about global instability in general and Russia and China in particular. About 46 percent of troops who responded to the anonymous survey of currently serving Military Times readers said they believe the U.S. will be drawn into a new war within the next year. That's a jarring increase from only about 5 percent who said the same thing in a similar poll conducted in September 2017. The fears of war come as President Donald Trump in the last year has repeatedly emphasized improving military readiness in the face of growing threats from foreign adversaries…top Pentagon officials have spoken publicly about the need to prepare for a conflict against a "near-peer" adversary. When asked about specific countries, troops said Russia and China were among their top concerns.
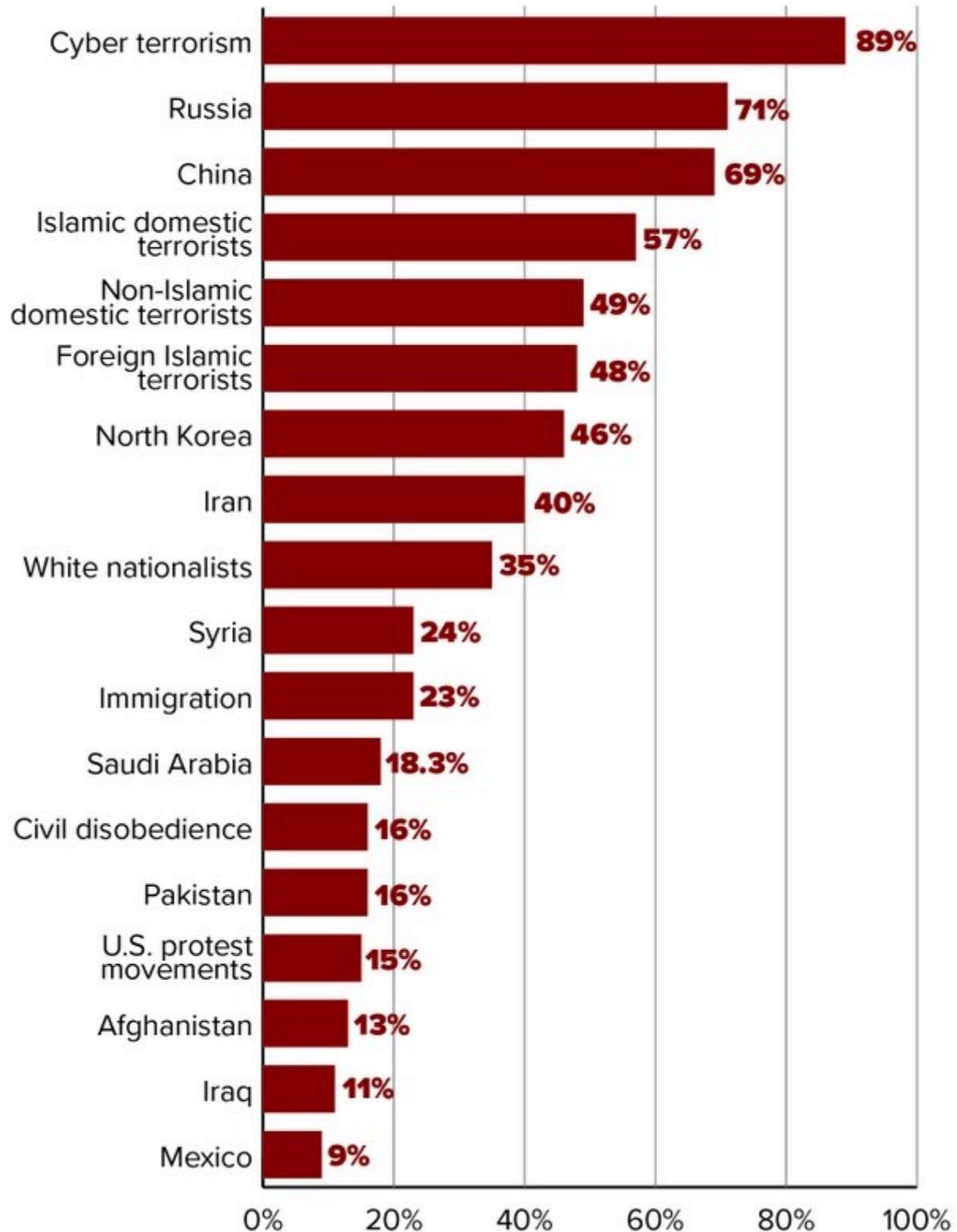
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[4] https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2019/05/14/iran-trump-bolton-dragging-tehran-devastating-and-unnecessary-war/3664144002/
As of mid-May 2019, some believe that the current Administration may 'drag' the USA into a war with Iran.

What Troops Worry About Most

Which of the following groups or issues do you believe are a significant or a very significant threat to national security?

Group/Issue	Percentage
Cyber terrorism	89%
Russia	71%
China	69%
Islamic domestic terrorists	57%
Non-Islamic domestic terrorists	49%
Foreign Islamic terrorists	48%
North Korea	46%
Iran	40%
White nationalists	35%
Syria	24%
Immigration	23%
Saudi Arabia	18.3%
Civil disobedience	16%
Pakistan	16%
U.S. protest movements	15%
Afghanistan	13%
Iraq	11%
Mexico	9%

SOURCE: Poll of active-duty Military Times readers conducted in between Sept. 20 and Oct. 2.

The students in this exploratory research have strong beliefs about why the USA would go to war, however their attitudes for personally joining the fight are very different from what they believe to be the national dogma. "Greed or 'us' verses 'them' isn't going to get us ahead. The world already has too much greed. Top priorities should be to build the U.S., for example-drop the poverty rates, spread awareness and help other nations" (female, age 19, Democrat, born in the USA). "I chose human rights as the most important reason" (female, age 19, Republican, born in the USA). "I think that people, all people, should be considered when we think about war. The safety of humanity should be considered first, then our nation. Also, considering the environment which could impact everyone in a negative way. I think the U.S. worries too much about power…everyone has human value and should be considered when entering war, and war should be the last resort. We can't always allow personal ideas to get in the way, cause a war, and impact billions of people. Hate and immediate action should not be the cause for direct action of war. War can't solve everything" (female, age 19, Independent, born in the USA).

Again, stating the quote from Generational Kinetics, "generation-shaping trends are most influential as people come of age, which means that members of a particular generation will develop and share similar values, beliefs, and expectations". The world is a vastly different place then it was after WWII. How do we bridge opposing viewpoints?   Education is not only a foundation for individual security, but also for global security (Karaffa, 2015). Christopher Williams' article "Education and Human Survival" (2000) assesses the discipline of international education and the global security framework. The fundamental rationale of global security is the assurance of human survival. Many of the Founders (Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Franklin) of the United States of America believed that an informed citizenry was necessary for the survival of the newly created country.   "There has always been a linkage in the United States between the rights and duties of national citizenship and public education" (Thornton, 2005, p. 81). Thornton proceeds to position his case for incorporating Internationalism into the curriculum by stating the world's nations have become "more interdependent…Americans now live in a world in which vital civic concerns routinely cross national boundaries" (pp. 81-82). The Liberal Arts are:

> understood as the key to survival in any field that is subject to change over time. The standard definition of liberal arts education implies a program of study designed to foster capacities of analysis, critical reflection, problem solving, communication, computation and synthesis of knowledge from different disciplines. Its goal is to provide students with an intellectual, historical, and social context for recognizing the continuity between the past and future and for drawing on the human capacity of reason to understand human experience, to question the values dimension of human

enterprise, and to articulate the results of this process of
thinking. (Nolan, 2010, Online)

For two thousand years Western civilization held the belief of a "final end" and
education was oriented to the "highest good" as the central concern for humanity (Glyer
& Weeks, p. 12).   The Liberal Arts support the understanding that social phenomena
are "interpreted entities whose existence and qualities are dependent in a large part on
people's meaning-making practices" (Harris, 2008, p. 233). We need to understand the
"other." We need to understand the moral, political, religious, social and psychological
struggles for power between competing entities or ideologies where perceptions,
misperceptions, interpretations and misinterpretations can be deadly (Karaffa, 2012,
2015).

Limitations

Limitations include: time, money, access to a variety of respondents, and current
events. Two event happened shortly before this study was conducted: The Squirrel Hill
Synagogue shooting on October 7, 2018; and the police shooting of an unarmed
teenager on June 19, 2018. The officer was acquitted on March 22, 2019. In response
to the synagogue shootings, a very popular phrase and now T-shirt became popular in
Pittsburgh; "Stronger than Hate". The police shooting of unarmed teenager three times
in the back triggered a visceral reaction in many of the students and produced several
discussions in the Introduction to Sociology class concerning the issue of what is legal
verses what is ethical. One student stated that "we have been in recent threats and
crisis" citing school and mass shootings (female, 19, Democrat, born in the USA).   The
qualiquantological method is based on the researcher's interpretation. It is quite
possible for different researchers to have different interpretations of the data; this is a
limitation and an advantage. Also, the difficulty of condensing so much rich data
collected from this brief exploratory research into a concise summary.

Future Research

Good exploratory research should raise more questions than it answers. Future
research would include the words: terrorism, cyber threats, nuclear threats. The current
statement (#12) "control over scare resources (water, oil, etc.) would be separated into
two statements: control over scarce resources, such as oil; and control over scarce
resources, such as water. Also, a bigger, more diverse sample populations:
generational, urban/rural, educational level, political affiliation, female/male, and a
history of familial military service starting either pre or post conscription 1973.

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