

Riesman and merton essay example

[Sociology](#), [Population](#)



Towards the middle of the twentieth century, David Riesman expressed grief the alienation he experienced in the post-war America, as he supposed people were becoming heavily concerned on the approval of those around them because they wanted to conform to the society. Similarly, Thomas Merton commented on western cistern culture and society, pointing out the problematic assumption of intense socialization toward conformity. Their main concern was that people experienced a profound social and spiritual crisis taking control of the whole world. This essay aims at comparing the position of Riesman and Merton as it relates to the changes that took place after the World War II when people stopped thinking of their individual conception of the world around them.

In his book, *The Lonely Crowd*, characterized people into different groups and claimed that the prevalence of each within a society depended on the on the trends in the population. He contended that in cultures with a relatively stable population, a balanced social order and limited technological change, for example, during the Middle Ages, or modern nations relatively unaffected by industrialization were directed traditional norms. He argued that such people live as a community with a stronger degree of power relations specific to various groups and their modification was less successful.

However, Riesman maintains that the second century, the world experienced a series of changes that led to insecurity forcing people to turn to other for affirmation (Riesman, 1950). It encouraged the habit of adopting to changes such as consumerism that saw rapid increase in impulsive behavior.

Merton attempted to correct some of the weaknesses within structural functionalism. He argues that assumptions led to intense socialization toward

conformity. Like Riesman, Thomas Merton examines some of the dominant American social issues of the 1960, including the Vietnam War racism, and militarism (Merton, 1959). Thomas Merton argues that the spirituality is not exclusively private. He poses that an individual's personal spiritual life must result in concern for the welfare and life of others and extends to persons of all nations and religions. During this period, the world was recovering from war, which culminated to social problems. As such, both authors did a great job bringing social justice the American system.

The concerns of Merton and Riesman have greatly intensified and still relevant to the modern global society more than half a century after they were written. Human beings are social creatures, depend on natural life-support for physical wellbeing and socio-cultural development systems for realization and nurturing of their cognitive, emotional, and creative capacities. The events unfolding from World War II were so profound that they destroyed faith that had existed in throughout the 19th century (Riesman & Gans, 1979). It led to western civilization that led to the basic assumptions were no longer credible meaning that man could use reason to discern and solve every problem and thus control world through reason.

Reference:

Riesman, D. (1950). *The lonely crowd: A study of the changing American character*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Merton, T. (1959). *The secular journal of Thomas Merton*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy.

Riesman, D., & Gans, H. J. (1979). *On the making of Americans: Essays in honor of David Riesman*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.