

Reflection paper of the film "john q" essay sample

[Sociology](#)



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After watching “ John Q”, I have found a number of sociological concepts that are closely related to the movie and they are illustrated below.

The first concept is social stratification. John Q and his family is classified as the under class of the society, as John Q’s family faced financial difficulty in paying their rent and their car was taken away at the beginning of the movie. John Q had worked in the heavy machinery industry for 15 years, and he was desperate to find more jobs as his working hours had been cut. His family typically belongs to the working class of the society and it shows the problem of low social mobility – people find it hard to move up to another class and gain a better socio-economic status. No matter how hard John Q worked he could not raise the living standard of his family. There is a scene about a rich old patient who just recovered from surgery chatting pleasantly with a physician about him playing tennis and a young lady joking about his bequest. This sets a big contrast to John Q who could not afford to pay to put his son’s name on the heart recipient’s list and desperately seeking assistance. This indicates the problem of social inequality which distribution of resources are unequal among different classes of people.

Above phenomena are common in Hong Kong. Taking students as an example, students who come from rich families have much more resources to receive better education, so that they can get jobs with higher salary and prestige. There is no room for working class to move, and they all result in low social mobility and wide wealth gap.

The second concept is deviance and social control. Knowing the hospital was releasing his son since they were not able to pay the fee, John Q took the emergency room hostage. He held a gun and threatened everyone he would kill people unless his son's name was put on the list. John Q was performing deliberate deviant behavior which his armed threatening and kidnapping action is regarded as committing crime. It is against the social norm. From a sociological perspective, social control is used to avoid and discourage deviance, and to pressurize individuals to follow social norms. John Q was sentenced to law imprisonment which is a form of formal social control. Another deviant behavior found is the protests of people walking on the streets and asking for better insurance policy on healthcare system. This is considered as functional deviant behavior since it is a kind of civil disobedience and induces social changes. From the conflict perspective, it proves the existence of inequalities and power differentials, that insurance companies could arbitrarily change policies and hospitals could arbitrarily send sick patients home.

Deviance could be easily discovered in our society. Recently, Hong Kong-Chinese conflict raises our concern. For Hong Kong residents, it is unacceptable that Chinese tourists squatting on the roadside which is uncivilized. However, Chinese tourists claimed that it is common to take a rest when they are tired. As Hong Kong residents never act this way, they think it is an irregular way to have a break. Therefore, Chinese tourists are doing against to social norms. They become undesirable in Hong Kong. Protests and demonstrations also occurred demanding restriction on number of mainland tourists coming to Hong Kong.

The third concept is social reality. Social reality is an individual's interpretation of the objective world, and it could differ from individual to individual. When it comes to the offering of medical treatment to patients, In John Q's view, saving human's life should be put the first priority, life is more important than everything, even free medication should be considered reasonable. But in the hospital's view, money must be paid in order to receive medical treatment. For emergent cases, dying patients would first be settled down, but further treatments must require paying of money, no matter how serious the case is. As we can see there are two extreme interpretations on the same event, and it implies the concept of the construction of social reality.

The final concept is about religion's function. One of it is supportive function. John Q and his wife kept on praying to the God when his son was dying and there was no heart for transplantation. They believed that god would give blessings to their son. This supports Durkheim's view that religion supports people during difficult times of their lives. John Q also said, " God would give me direction. I'm waiting for miracle." People believe god give them strength to get through life-course transitions.

I remember joining an evangelistic activity in church last year. All function organisers had a one-hour meeting to pray to Jesus. Some of them cried and knelt the ground. They said without the help from god, everything cannot be smooth. In the mind of Christian, god is much more powerful than everyone.

In short, social stratification, deviance, social control, social reality and religion are the sociological concepts found. They are not only exist in the life of the imaginary story but our real life.