

Anth 2

Introductory Cultural Anthropology

Lecture 13: Religion

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Walk-in Music

- A. “My Sweet Lord” George Harrison (4:26)
- B. “You Raise Me Up” Josh Groban (4:49+)
- C. “Winter Winds” Mumford & Sons (3:54)
- D. “One of Us” Joan Osborne (4:58)
- E. “Jesus is Just Alright” The Doobie Brothers (4:39)

Today's Lecture

- Your Paper Part B
 - Methods, Data, and Significance

Religion

- Perspectives on Religion
- Problems Categorizing Religion
- The Origin of Religion
- The Functions of Religion

The Path of your Proposal

- Applied anthropologists do ethnographic research to gain knowledge which may be useful to address contemporary problems.
- There are several paths from doing research to helping to solve problems
- **Which path do you think would be most effective for the problem you are exploring?**

26% A. **Awareness:** raising awareness or giving voice

10% B. **Policy:** creating or improving policies or laws

10% C. **Activism:** getting involved, designing or implementing a solution, determining cultural compatibility

36% D. A combination of paths

19% E. Really not sure yet

Your Paper Part B

Proposal to apply anthropology

- Like a formal proposal to get funding to do research
- Three Parts (with headings!)

1. Statement of Purpose

Third

- **Goals** of the research

Second

- The **Special Features** of anthropology that will help you to realize those goals

First

- The **Ethics** of your research and your goals

Fourth

2. Methods and Data

3. Significance

Methods and Data

- **Methods:**

- **Participant-Observation Fieldwork**
 - All proposals should include participant-observation
 - Think about where, how long, and with whom
- **Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Procedures (REAP)**
- **Other supplemental methods (interviews, surveys, etc)**

- **Data:**

- **Qualitative ethnographic information**
 - What kind of questions you will ask
 - What kind of information you are going to look for

Set your i>clicker to AB

- The belief that all living things have souls or spirits in addition to their physical bodies is called:
 - A. Animatism
 - B. Animism**
 - C. Spiritualism
 - D. Spirituality
 - E. Religion

Religion

- Religion is something in which many people believe very strongly!
 - That makes it a critical topic for anthropologists to explore
 - That also makes it a sensitive topic for many students
- Religion is one of the hardest topics to understand from both the emic and etic perspectives
 - If you **are not** religious, you will probably never understand the emic perspective and meanings of religion
 - If you **are** religious, the etic perspective of your own religion may seem almost blasphemous

**Do you believe:
that people have souls or spirits in
addition to physical bodies?**

A. YES 66%

B. NO 34%

Which most closely matches your beliefs?

I Believe...

- 40% A. In one God
- 13% B. In a “higher power”
- 0% C. In several Gods or Deities
- 32% D. There may or may not be a God/higher power
- 15% E. There is no God/higher power

What Religion do you most closely identify with?

- 53% A. Christianity (all sects and denominations)
- 0% B. Islam
- 4% C. Judaism
- 6% D. Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto
- 36% E. Other

How religious or spiritual are you?

- 6%^{A.} Religion or spirituality is a fundamental and central part of who I am
- 28%^{B.} Religion or spirituality is pretty important to me
- 6%^{C.} I practice religion mainly because of family and tradition
- 28%^{D.} I am only a little bit religious or spiritual
- 32%^{E.} I am not religious or spiritual at all

Religion

- Religion is a cultural universal
- All societies have:
 - Rituals that appease supernatural forces
 - Sets of beliefs concerning what we would call the soul
 - Notions about life after death
- But what exactly is religion?

Religion

- Religion is a cultural universal
- All societies have:
 - Rituals that appease supernatural forces
 - Sets of beliefs concerning what we would call the soul
 - Notions about life after death
- **Religion:** A shared system of myths, beliefs, symbols, and rituals dealing with cosmology and the "supernatural", which binds communities of people together

Categorizing “Religion”

1. A Problem of Separation: Religion is not a discrete (separate, unconnected) category
 - Religion is not something that can be separated from the rest of a culture
 - When we categorize something as “religious”, we have to be aware that it may also be other things
 - **Example:** A Kikuyu elder sacrifices a goat at the grave of an ancestor-god.
 - Is that religion?
 - Is it economic?
 - Is it social or kinship



Categorizing “Religion”

1. A Problem of Separation: Religion is not a discrete (separate, unconnected) category
 - Religion is not something that can be separated from the rest of a culture
 - When we categorize something as “religious”, we have to be aware that it may also be other things
- The importance of **Holism**: “Religion” is integrated with different aspects of culture

Categorizing “Religion”

- 2. A problem of ethnocentrism: We use our meanings to interpret their culture
- **Supernatural:** The extraordinary realm outside the observable world, which is non-empirical and inexplicable in ordinary terms
- **Example: Nyoro “Sorcery”**
 - The Nyoro have a word that means “To injure another person by the secret use of harmful medicines”
 - 1. Putting a person’s body substances in an animal horn and placing it on the roof of the person’s house
 - 2. Putting poison in a person’s food or drink
- **Example: The “Evil Eye”**

Categorizing “Religion”

- 2. A problem of ethnocentrism: We use our meanings to interpret their culture
- **Supernatural:** The extraordinary realm outside the observable world, which is non-empirical and inexplicable in ordinary terms
 - A believer may not find anything out of the ordinary
 - It may very well be based on observable evidence
- It is not the observable evidence that makes something natural or supernatural, it is the cultural way that evidence is interpreted!

Categorizing “Religion”

- 2. A problem of ethnocentrism: We use our meanings to interpret their culture
- The importance of **Cultural Relativism**: What “religion” is, how it functions, and what it means are different in different cultures

The origin of Religion

- **To believers:** Religion comes from God
- **To non-believers:** Religion is a human invention
- **Universal Beliefs:**
 - **Animism:** The belief that people and other beings have individual souls or spirits in addition to physical bodies.
 - **Animatism:** The belief in a generalized, impersonal power over which people have some measure of control
- Anthropologists now argue that no religion is more or less logical or evolved than any other

Science and Religion

What do you think...

- Is science replacing religion?

28% A. YES

13% B. NO

59% C. In Some Ways

The Functions of Religion

- **Cognitive:** To Explain the Unexplainable
 - **Cosmology:** Knowledge about the universe and humanity's place in it
- **Philosophical:** To Explain Meaning and Purpose
 - The meaning of life and other “why” questions
- **Emotional:** To Give Comfort and Solace
 - Comfort and optimism in times of uncertainty
 - Solace and meaning to help deal with loss
- **Social:** To Promote Social Order and Harmony
 - Ethical systems that outline right and wrong behavior
 - Religion may function as a form of hegemony that reinforces a society's stratification system
- **Community:** To Build Solidarity
 - Binds people together through common faith and shared ritual

A cosmological battle between science and religion?

- The origin of human beings
 - Creation, Evolution, or Both!



Which of the following statements comes closest to your views on the origin and development of human beings?

- A. Human beings have developed over millions of **41%** years from less advanced forms of life, **but God guided this process**
- B. Human beings have developed over millions of **52%** years from less advanced forms of life, **but God had no part in this process**
- C. God created human beings pretty much in their **7%** present form at one time within the last 10,000 years or so