

The Impact of Religion Views on Culture and Values

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Introduction:

Religion can be defined as belief in spiritual beings. More broadly, religion can be defined as a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life. The quality of being religious implies two things: first, a belief that evil, pain, bewilderment and injustice are fundamental facts of existence; second, a set of practices and related sanctified beliefs that express a conviction that man can ultimately be saved from those facts. Religion and culture have both been subjects of much scholarly debate throughout history and remain in the spotlight of many discussions. Their relationship is complicated at best, and not easy to explain, but they are both important in the lives of humans and how they construct and make sense of the world around us. Even the terms themselves, "religion" and "culture," ask for explanations that are out of the scope of this article. Many of the cultural traditions are closely associated with religion, and many religious practices and behaviors have become so rooted in the daily lives of people all over the world that it is hard to make a distinct difference between culture and religion. Religion can affect more than a particular person's habits. These beliefs and practices can influence an entire community, nation, or region. Religious practices shape, and are shaped by, the culture around them.

There are more than 10,000 religions in the world, some of which you probably never heard of or knew they existed. The majority of the world population is associated with Christianity (the largest religion), Islam, and Hinduism. However, around 1.2 billion people are without religious affiliation, those that associate themselves as atheists, agnostic, or secular. The widespread practice of religious beliefs can only benefit the nation, and the task of reintegrating religious practice into American life while protecting and respecting the rights of non-practice rights that, despite persistent demagoguery on the subject, remain totally unthreatened. Religion

incorporates the relation of human beings to supernatural, spiritual aspects of existence.

Religious practices are one of the most common ways people show their allegiance or respect towards a particular religion. Such practices can be, or not, limited to rituals, sacrifices, prayer, art, the commemoration of the dead, going to churches, and many more, extending into various facets of human culture that we witness and experience daily.

There are many ways of conceptualizing how culture influences an individual. Culture can be seen as a frame through which one looks at the world, as a repertoire of beliefs and practices that can be used as needed, as a narrative or story explaining who people are and why they do what they do, as a set of institutions defining different aspects of values and traditions, as a series of boundaries that use values and traditions to delineate one group of people from another, and so on. According to Lamont and Small (2008), such schemata recognize that culture shapes what people believe (i.e., their values and worldviews) and what they do to demonstrate their beliefs (i.e., their traditions and practices). Cultural groups define the values, worldviews, and traditions of their members—from food preferences to appropriate leisure activities—including use of alcohol and/or drugs (Bhugra and Becker 2005). Thus, it is impossible to review and summarize the variety of cultural values, traditions, and worldviews found in the United States in this publication. Providers are encouraged to speak with their clients to learn about their worldviews, values, and traditions and to seek training and consultation to gain specific knowledge about clients' cultural beliefs and practices.

Culture refers to human activity patterns and symbols that give an identity to a group of people in a particular society. Culture is manifested in language, religion, literature, art, customs, and clothing. Culture dictates how people live and shows their specific beliefs. Culture is the

characteristic of group of people defined by everything such as language, religion, lifestyle etc. Different people in different societies have different culture but they also have some similarities. The culture varies in different things such as clothes, foods, religion and many others. The beliefs, values and ideas of religious traditions have made, and continue to make, significant contributions to the development of human societies and cultures. Religious belief systems articulate responses to questions relating to human nature, identity and purpose, and urge believers to embrace the imperative to live ethical lives. In essence, religions provide a frame of reference for understanding the world and for guiding personal and communal action.

A religion is a set of beliefs that is passionately held by a group of people that is reflected in a world view and in expected beliefs and actions (which are often ritualized). ... These beliefs according to some religious sects, are often linked to supernatural beings such as God, a number of gods or spirits. Religion can influence the culture of an entire community, nation, or region of the world. This goes beyond a person's individual habits to affect much bigger issues, such as how the government is run and what artistic and scientific advances are made. The beliefs, values and ideas of religious traditions have made, and continue to make, significant contributions to the development of human societies and cultures. Religious belief systems articulate responses to questions relating to human nature, identity and purpose, and urge believers to embrace the imperative to live ethical lives. In essence, religions provide a frame of reference for understanding the world and for guiding personal and communal action.

Religion plays a crucial role for a person in giving a cultural identity. Each religion has festivals, traditions, mythologies which form a part of the tangible and intangible heritage of the country. Thus, religion contributes in order to protect this heritage and also adds to the diversity in the country. Religion helps in creating an ethical framework and also a regulator for values in

day to day life. This particular approach helps in character building of a person. In other words, Religion acts as an agency of socialization. Thus, religion helps in building values like love, empathy, respect, and harmony. People are always on the quest of fulfilling the economic and material pursuits in today's world. It is the religion which plays a crucial role in establishing our connection to the divine and developing the belief that there is a supreme energy that acts as a regulator in our day to day lives. Thus, the components of prayer, chants, hymns, etc. creates the spiritual bond. The practice of religion not only stabilizes marriage, but also improves its quality.

Language is a key element of culture, but speaking the same language does not necessarily mean that people share the same cultural beliefs. For example, English is spoken in Australia, Canada, Jamaica, India, Belize, and Nigeria, among other countries. Even within the United States, people from different regions can have diverse cultural identities even though they speak the same language. Conversely, those who share an ethnicity do not automatically share a language. Families who immigrated to this country several generations earlier may identify with their culture of origin but no longer be able to speak its language. English is the most common language in the United States, but 18 percent of the total population report speaking a language other than English at home (Shin and Bruno 2003).

Styles of communication and nonverbal methods of communication are also important aspects of cultural groups. Issues such as the use of direct versus indirect communication, appropriate personal space, social parameters for and displays of physical contact, use of silence, preferred ways of moving, meaning of gestures, degree to which arguments and verbal confrontations are acceptable, degree of formality expected in communication, and amount of

eye contact expected are all culturally defined and reflect very basic ethnic and cultural differences (Comas-Diaz 2012; Franks 2000; Sue 2001). More specifically, the relative importance of nonverbal messages varies greatly from culture to culture; high-context cultural groups place greater importance on nonverbal cues and the context of verbal messages than do low-context cultural groups (Hall 1976). For example, most Asian Americans come from high-context cultural groups in which sensitive messages are encoded carefully to avoid giving offense.

A behavioral health service provider who listens only to the literal meaning of words can miss clients' actual messages. What is left unsaid, or the way in which something is said, can be more important than the words used to convey the message. African Americans have a relatively high-context culture compared with White Americans but a somewhat lower-context culture compared with Asian Americans (Franks 2000). Thus, African Americans typically rely to a greater degree than White Americans on nonverbal cues in communicating. Conversely, White American culture is low context (as are some European cultural groups, such as German and British); communication is expected to be explicit, and formal information is conveyed primarily through the literal content of spoken or written messages.

Religion serves several functions for society. These include giving meaning and purpose to life, reinforcing social unity and stability, serving as an agent of social control of behavior, promoting physical and psychological well-being, and motivating people to work for positive social change. Religion reinforces and promotes social inequality and social conflict. It helps convince the poor to accept their lot in life, and it leads to hostility and violence motivated by religious differences. This perspective focuses on the ways in which individuals interpret their

religious experiences. It emphasizes that beliefs and practices are not sacred unless people regard them as such. Once they are regarded as sacred, they take on special significance and give meaning to people's lives.

Christianity, in its various forms, remains the predominant religion in the United States today. According to Kosmin and Keysar (2009), 76 percent of the population in 2008 identified as Christian, with the largest denomination being Catholics (25.1 percent), followed by Baptists (15.8 percent). Christianity encompasses a variety of denominations with different beliefs and attitudes toward issues such as alcohol and/or other substance use. Most mainstream Christian religions support behavioral health treatment, and many churches serve as sites for self-help groups or for Christian recovery programs. Some Christian sects, however, are not as amenable to substance abuse and mental health treatment as others.

Judaism is the second most common religion in the United States (1.2 percent of the population as of 2008; Kosmin and Keysar 2009). Most Jews believe that they share a common ancient background. However, the population has dispersed over time and now exists in various geographic regions. The majority of Jews in the United States would be considered White, but Ethiopian Jews (the Beta Israel) and members of other African-Jewish communities would likely be seen as African Americans; the Jewish community from India (Bene Israel), as Asian Americans; and Jews who immigrated to the United States from Latin America, as Latinos. In 2001, approximately 5 percent of people who identified as adherents to Judaism (the religion, as opposed to people who identify as culturally Jewish) were Latinos, and approximately 1 percent were African Americans (Kosmin et al. 2001).

Regarding beliefs about and practices surrounding substance use, there are no prohibitions against alcohol use (or other substance use) in Judaism, but rates of alcohol abuse and dependence are significantly lower for Jews than for other populations (Bainwol and Gressard 1985; Straussner 2001). This could be partially attributable to genetics, yet there is also a definite cultural component (Hasin et al. 2002). Conversely, rates of use and abuse of other substances are about the same or slightly higher for Jews in the United States compared with other populations (Straussner 2001). Because some Jewish people will feel uncomfortable in 12-Step groups that meet in churches and are largely Christian in composition, mutual-help groups designed specifically for Jewish people have been developed. The largest of these is Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons and Significant Others (see <http://www.jbfcs.org/programs-services/jewish-community-services-2/jacs/> for more information). Other Jewish people in recovery may prefer participating in secular self-help programs (Straussner 2001). Most Jewish people support behavioral health treatment.

In 2008, roughly 1.3 million people identified as Muslims in the United States, making it the third most common religion (Kosmin and Keysar 2009). Many Americans assume that all Arabs are Muslim, but the majority of Arab Americans are Christian; Muslims can come from any ethnic background (Abudabbeh and Hamid 2001). Islam is the most ethnically diverse religion in America, with a membership that is 15 percent White, 27 percent Black, 34 percent Asian, and 10 percent Latino (Kosmin et al. 2001).

Attitudes of Muslims toward mental illness and seeking formal mental health services are likely to be affected by cultural and religious beliefs about mental health problems, knowledge and familiarity with formal services, perceived societal prejudice, and the use of informal

indigenous resources (Aloud 2004). Attitudes toward substance use, abuse, and treatment will likely be shaped by Islam's prohibition of the use of alcohol and other intoxicants. Many Muslim countries have harsh penalties for the use of alcohol and other drugs. For these reasons, Muslims appear to have low rates of substance use disorders. Despite there being no current data regarding levels of alcohol and other substance use among Muslim immigrants in the United States, Cochrane and Bal (1990) found that, in a comparison of Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, and White (probably Christian) men in a British community, Muslims by far drank the least, yet those Muslims who consumed the most alcohol experienced a greater number of alcohol-related problems on average. High levels of alcohol consumption among Muslims who do drink could be related to feelings of guilt and shame about their behavior, thus potentially leading to further abuse and avoidance of seeking substance abuse treatment when problems arise (Abudabbeh and Hamid 2001).

In 2008, about 1.2 million Buddhists were living in the United States (Kosmin and Keysar 2009). In 2001, according to Kosmin et al (2001), the majority of Buddhists were Asian Americans (61 percent), but a significant number of White Americans have embraced the religion (they make up 32 percent of Buddhists in the United States), as have African Americans (4 percent) and Latinos (2 percent). In China and Japan, Buddhism is often combined with other religious traditions, such as Taoism or Shintoism, and some immigrants from those countries combine the beliefs and practices of those religions with Buddhism.

Buddhists believe that the choices made in each life create karma that influences the next life and can affect behavior (McLaughlin and Braun 1998). The Fifth Precept of Buddhism is not to use intoxicating substances, and thus, the expectation for devout believers is that they will not use

alcohol or other substances of abuse (Assanangkornchai et al. 2002). In the United States, no specific substance abuse treatment programs specialize in treating Buddhist clients. Buddhist substance abuse and mental health treatment programs do exist in other countries (e.g., Thailand) and report high outcome rates (70 percent) using culturally specific practices (e.g., herbal saunas) and religious practices (Barrett 1997).

What Impacts does religion have on society.

Religion and spirituality are both rooted in trying to understand the meaning of life and, in some cases, how a relationship with a higher power may influence that meaning. While religion and spirituality are similar in foundation, they are very different in practice. Religion is an organized, community-based system of beliefs, while spirituality resides within the individual and what they personally believe. “The idea of religion and spirituality is like a rectangle versus a square.

Within religion there is spirituality, but if you have spirituality, it doesn’t necessarily mean you have religion,” says someone who practices both religion and spirituality.

Both religion and spirituality can have a positive impact on mental health. In some ways, they provide the same impact. For example: Both religion and spirituality can help a person tolerate stress by generating peace, purpose and forgiveness. But benefits generally vary between the two due to their different nature. Religion gives people something to believe in, provides a sense of structure and typically offers a group of people to connect with over similar beliefs. These facets can have a large positive impact on mental health—research suggests that religiosity reduces suicide rates, alcoholism and drug use. Here are some of religion’s main mental health benefits. Community initiates social connections with other members Community creates a sense of belonging to a group and offers trustworthy and safe social engagement. Religion helps people to

cope with difficult life situations (i.e. a ceremony for the loss of a loved one) and provides structure, regularity and predictability and allows for time to rest as well as holidays and other special times of the year. Teachings and provides guidelines to live by (i.e. the importance of doing the right thing) Teaches compassion, forgiveness and gratitude Identifies life lessons, even from challenging situations. Spirituality is a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves it helps a person look within and understand themselves while also figuring out the greater answer of how they fit in to the rest of the world. In other words: It helps people understand their interpretation of the meaning of life.

My Cross cultural Experience in America with religion.

I noticed that in America religion is not influenced by culture and its value. Living in the United States has made realize that religion does not really affect culture. Religion does not affect culture here in the states. This is because religion is not a big deal here. Spirituality which incorporates healthy practices for the mind and body, which positively influences mental health and emotional wellbeing is only viewed by religious people. I noticed that an atheist may not be religious but still he or she may be part of a culture and has value. Individuality which Enhances a person's sense of self and empowerment through the choice to decide what their practice looks like. Focuses on an individual's connection to what they believe in and their own personal growth. Accepts any person, whether they are part of a religion. Although religion encourages meditation and self-reflection and leads to a meaningful life philosophy (i.e. feeling connected to others, nature or art) doesn't mean it can influence a culture.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Chandra Muller and Christopher G. Ellison, "Religious Involvement, Social Capital, and Adolescents' Academic Progress: Evidence from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988," *Sociological Focus*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (May 2001), pp. 155-183.

Religious involvement and social change was article that sums up all ideas about how religion changes academic progress. It stated that a religious person is more likely to succeed in life. It also concluded that as a spiritual person you may have capital gains. This is right because when we look at the Arabs and Chinese they are more successful. Their believe leads them to the right part.

2. Cooley, P. (1991). *The Tension between Religion and Culture*. *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 11, 248-254. doi:10.2307/1390270

In a society or within a culture, tension of religion values arises and is known. This article talks about the tension between culture and its values and religion in which case, Christianity. This article clearly the effects Christianity has on culture. I chose this article because it is related to my paper. This article has connection and shared same ideologies.

3. Eckersley, R, M (2007) *Culture, Spirituality, Religion and Health: Looking at the Big Picture*. Retrieved from: <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2007/186/10/culture-spirituality-religion-and-health-looking-big-picture>

This article talks about how religion provides things that are good for health and wellbeing, including social support, existential meaning, a sense of purpose, a coherent belief system and a

clear moral code. And how these benefits can also come from other sources such as culture. It also stated that religion as a practice of beliefs is integral to culture and they interinfluence and complementarily define each other more significantly than the core tenets of that religion which may be shared between multiple cultures and locations. This is why the article was chosen. The details provided was interesting.

4. Glanville, L, J. David Sikkink, and Edwin I. Hernandez, “Religious Involvement Outcomes: The Role of Social Capital and Participation,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (2008): 105-137.

This article talks about religious involvement outcomes and the role it has on social capital and participation. It later talks about how capital gains and participation enforces growth. This article later on talked about the gains between a religious community and its affiliations.

5. Hordern J, 2016. Religion and Culture: Retrieved from:
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mpmmed.2016.07.011>

This articles conveys that ideas of how and religion and culture corelates. This articles distinguishes the differences between language and culture. It further shows other sub divided contexts that talks about religion being part of a culture norm. This is why this article made use to this research. It explains the influences religion has on culture.

6. Hazareesingh, K. (1966). *The Religion and Culture of Indian Immigrants in Mauritius and the Effect of Social Change*. *Comparative Studies in Society and*

History, 8(2), 241-257. Retrieved March 11, 2021, from
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/177707>

This article by Hazareesingh explains the effects of religion with an Indian culture. It goes on and conveys that ideas of the effectiveness religion has on social changes. An interesting statement made in this article was the idea of how Indian immigrants were affected as they moved to the States.

7. Patrick F, Kirk A. Johnson, and Jonathan Butcher, A Portrait of Family and Religion in America, The Heritage Foundation, 2006.

This article related more to my topic. It conveyed the ideas of a family and its religion affairs in America. It had an connection with my cross cultural experiences. These authors made it clearly known about religion and culture in America. This article had connections to my ideas.

8. Dawson, C. (2013). Religion and Culture. (1 ed.). Washington: The Catholic University of America Press.

With this article, it talks about religion and culture as a whole. In the introduction, the author explained what religion was and then explained what culture. This article then differentiated religion and culture. It concluded that religion has an effect on culture. The format of this article was a hook and this made me choose this article as reference.

9. Rees A. J (2017). Religion and Culture values. The Religion Gap. Retrieved from:
<https://www.e-ir.info/2017/01/08/religion-and-culture/>

Running Head: Religion and Culture

This article talks about Religion and culture which seem like complex ideas to study from the perspective of International Relations. After all, it concluded that scholars and philosophers have long debated the meaning of these terms and the impact they have had on our comprehension of the social world around us. So is it an impossibly complicated task to study religion and culture at the global level. This is the main reason why this article was referenced and included.

10. March (2020). “Views About Religion in American Society”. Pew Research center:

Religion and Public life. Retrieved from:

<https://www.pewforum.org/2020/03/12/views-about-religion->

This article talks about how U.S. Christians perceive their religion as losing influence in America, and many go so far as to say that there is tension between their beliefs and the mainstream culture. These views are particularly widespread among white evangelical Protestants, two-thirds of whom see at least some conflict between their own religious beliefs and mainstream American culture. I chose this article mainly because of its cross cultural experiences shared.

