Rituals, Rites and Religion

March 20, 2006

Quiz 12

1. T/F Hair color is characteristic used by teacher to divide class.
2. T/F Movie showed that children have no racial bias.
3. T/F The children in this school had never socialized with people of other races.
4. T/F Children had no reaction to the division of themselves into two groups.
5. T/F The divisions were arbitrary.

What is religion?

1. Animism: Doctrine of Souls (Tylor, 1871)
   - Inside ordinary bodies there are intangible beings
   - "god" is elaboration of soul
2. Natural vs. Supernatural (Emile Durkheim)
   - Souls are not necessarily cause of lifelike behavior in inanimate objects
   - Concentrated form of animistic force: Mana

Mana, broadly defined

- Belief in powerful force
  - Vitamins
  - Soaps and detergents
  - Lottery tickets
    • (rituals!)

Two elements

- Natural
- Supernatural

Magic vs. Religion

- Supernatural
- James Frazier, Golden Bough
  - Control vs. lack of control over supernatural
  - Religion is lack of control, Magic is controlled
Shamans:
- Religious specialists
  - Examples?
  - Fulltime vs. part time

Rituals
- Patterned behaviors that deal with supernatural realm
  - (vs. Secular ritual; Mana?)
  - What’s the difference?
  - Periodic vs. Non-Periodic

Life cycle rituals
- (rites of passage)
    - Separation
    - Transition (liminal phase)
    - Reintegration

Separation
- Physically, socially, symbolically
  - Special dress
  - Real exclusion (menstrual hut)

Transition (Liminal)
- Literally between separation and integration
- No longer previous status, but not yet member of next stage
- Learning of special skills,

Reintegration
- Initiate is welcomed back
- Ceremonial
Cross-cultural comparison: Birth
- Where infant mortality high -- babies stay in liminal phase longer
- Named, probably a human, but not necessarily “person” (with rights and moral status)
- Ultrasound in U.S. -- ritual that confers “personhood” status on fetus

Other Rituals
- Pilgrimage
- Sacrifice
- Rituals of Reversal
  - Carnival, Mardi Gras, Mummering, St. Patrick’s Day

Cults
- Revitalization
- Cargo

Revitalization
- Ghost Dance
  - Under circumstances of severe disadvantage
  - Concerned with dramatic improvement in immediate conditions of life, or prospects of afterlife
  - Ghost Dance in Plains, 1880s,
    - Return of dead, return of Bison

Cargo Cults
- Return of ship with European goods
  - Throwing away of trade goods
  - Building of airstrips
  - Shows that distinction between supernatural and natural is not accurate

Quiz 13
1. T/F Shamans are religious specialists.
2. T/F Doctors can be regarded as shamans in contemporary U.S. society.
3. T/F Taboos are natural.
4. T/F Lottery tickets are a kind of cargo cult.
5. T/F Taboos are immutable.