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This is a graded discussion: 100 points possible

due Apr 5



Week 3 Discussion: Ritual and Altered States

109 109

[Arion Melidonis](#)

Select a specific ritual and discuss it from an anthropological perspective. What type of ritual is it and how does it operate within the culture. Is it a prescriptive or spontaneous ritual? Does it follow the stages of the ritual process and how? Does the ritual operate on a symbolic, material or functional level? How does the ritual relate to the culture's beliefs, symbols and myths? Does the ritual work to reinforce or invert cultural values and taboos? Why? Does it work to create an altered state of consciousness? If so, how is this altered state brought about and what does it do for the ritual participants? Does the altered state to create a sense of identity, wellbeing, healing, transformation or connection with the supernatural? Is this altered state beneficial to the culture that practices it? Does it reinforce or invert the social structure?

Complete your initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 pm. Respond to at least two other posts by Sunday at 11:59 pm. When completing this assignment be sure to apply the course theories and perspectives. When you respond to another student, don't just tell us that you like their post or not, utilize the course theories to analyze their posts.

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[Lesley Guerrero](#)



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Yesterday

I chose to analyze and discuss the Polynesian, Samoan tattoo ritual. Through the video that was posted on our lecture instruction, "Polynesian Cultural Center Samoan Tattoos High" it is discussed the importance of tattoos within the culture and the sense of status it signifies. The name of the ritual of creating a tattoo comes from the name "tatau" that signifies close ties to the Samoan culture and for young men a great honor (1). This practice began from the 1400's and would be considered to be a prescriptive tattoo for it is a type of requirement from the culture in order to show respect and honor toward not only the hierarchy of the group but to to honor their cultural heritage. The ritual does not entirely follow the stages of a ritual practice for there is not a particular time in which it is done or in a certain circumstance. This ritual acts on a functional level to represent each person of the Samoan group as worthy of the culture and the history it represents, serving as a type of cultural identity (2). The ritual reflects Samoans cultural expression using tattoos that represent different symbols that have important meaning to Samoan's such as the " canoes that correlate with the knowledge of the ocean and rafters of the chief's house that relate to unity and honor" (1). The ritual works to reinforce cultural values, through traditional practice especially of sons of chiefs and the people of Samoa in relating with one another (2). The process of the ritual is very painful and takes more than a week to complete which in itself may cause a state of altered consciousness that creates a sense of identity and healing; also a transformation into a leader who leads with honesty and pride (1). This altered state is beneficial in the sense that it reflects unity and identity that reinforces social structure of the cultural group of Samoa.

1. "Polynesian Cultural Center Samoan Tattoos High." YouTube. YouTube, 05 Feb. 2013. Web. 04 Apr. 2017.

<[%28Links to an external](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wYFtyq-d9o&index=3&list=PLyci2-qbzo8_ESifSUX5WKgG42WQ3sbab)

site.%

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[Ryan Whitlow](#)



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Yesterday

In the highlands of Papua New Guinea, the men of the Metaousa tribe practice a rite of passage ritual to turn their boys into men. The ritual is a blood initiation. The men of the tribe believe that when a male is born he still contains blood from his mother. Women are seen as weak in their culture so to purify themselves and become warriors they drain blood from strategic parts of their body. It follows the stages of the ritual process because the men are separated from the rest of the tribe and taken to an isolated area. It has a phase of transition when the men begin cleansing their body in the sacred stream, then they go through three painful events to extract the impurities from their body. The ritual relates to the cultures belief because they feel that women are weaker than men. In order to be a warrior, you must have no weaknesses because they encounter violent enemies frequently. An altered state occurs in the men after the ritual because when it is over they believe that they are stronger as purified men. The only way a man can get married and have a family is if he goes through this process. The men that are to afraid to make the transition die alone. The purpose of the ritual is to help develop brave men from timid boys for the survival of their tribe.

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[Ramon Rodriguez](#)



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Yesterday

The ritual's that I choose to observe and discuss are the burning of sage and sweat lodge's. Burning sage is an old method that many cultures use but, I will focus on how the Native American culture use sage. The Native American's use sage to clean or clear spaces and people. Sage is used in ritual ceremonies or events to help reduce or increase spiritual encounters. It is more of a perspective type of ritual because of what the Native Americans believe it does for them. Most people will see a man burning an herb and moving it around in the air but, can't grasp or understand what is trying to be cleared or kept out. I have had friends who used sage to cleanse their home or apartment before moving in. This is performed to fight off any bad spirits or energies that may have been left from previous owners. The same friend that explained to me what sage is used for, used sage to cleanse our camping area on our 3-day camping trip in the dessert. It was a very windy weekend and there were many tents and set ups that were blown away. Lucky for us, we found our area unharmed.

Sage is also used when performing a different ritual known as a sweat lodge. During a sweat lodge people gather inside of a tent or hut. Sage is used to start the ritual and then coals are lit to cleanse their body and spirits of any negativity. This can be considered an altered state of consciousness because of what the heat can do to a person. This can also be used to create a state of healing since it is known that sweat lodges are used for purification. These rituals will always reinforce the social structures of the Native Americans as they are still practiced today.

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[Marie Noble](#)



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The Apache Girl's Initiation is a rite of passage ritual that serves to transform a young girl and deliver her into adulthood. It is a prescriptive ritual that is practiced by the culture every fourth of July.

The initiation does indeed follow the ritual process as the young girls must detach from their normal status and enter a transition phase. This occurs as her family prepares for the ceremony and she works with a medicine woman to learn the ways of proper Apache womanhood. The liminal phase of her ritual is dangerous because she must prove endurance by dancing through the night with little food and sleep. The four day ceremony is symbolic of the creation story which includes the different stages of life.

During the last night of the ceremony in which the girls must dance with hungry stomachs, it is easy to imagine that they experience an altered state of consciousness. This altered state serves to bring about a change in the young girls as they are pushed to their limits.

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[Vanessa Williams](#)



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Yesterday

Ritual: Thaipusam

I watched the ritual video on Thaipusam. Their ritual had to do with possession, music, dance, pain, and drug use. After observing the video, I would say that thaipusam ritual is prescriptive. It follows the stages of the ritual process because they take drugs and then undergo some pain that then transitions them into the possession. People practicing thaipusam are experiencing trials that are painful, dangerous, or psychologically challenging. The use of drugs helps create an altered state of consciousness necessary for the spirit possession.

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[Mera Ross](#)



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Yesterday

A ritual that is very common, at least in the States, is going to church. Routinely going every Sunday in religions from Christian descent falls into the prescriptive category of rituals. In many religions and cultures, following a strict schedule of going to church is the only way to stay a member of that church. To many, it is unacceptable to miss a service. My best friend hails from a very strict Catholic family. To them, if you miss a service, you'd better be dead or in the process of dying because it is an absolute disgrace and sign of disrespect to them and to God to not attend. Going to church is extremely important to them. I think that it does create an altered state of consciousness for a lot of people. When they are at church, being present mentally and physically is all that matters. No one (who is there because they want to be) is worried about their phones or anything else in the outside world. They get lost in the sermon and prayers. Participating in the ritual gives them a sense of well-being and defines who they are. To the culture that practices it, going to church every Sunday is beneficial as it allows them to have a close connection with the spiritual figures that they believe in and it brings the culture together. Aside from Sundays, church is also a big deal on Christian holidays such as Easter and Christmas. This falls into the calendrical category within the prescriptive ritual classification alongside regular attendance on Sundays. Going to church can also be considered an occasional ritual. To be classified as such, church would have to be attended only for special occurrences like baptisms, communions, funerals, and weddings. For those who are not as devout as their counterparts, occasionally attending church is enough for them to maintain their relationship to God and still classify themselves as being a part of that particular religion. This can bring up many issues for those who do attend periodically. The aforementioned friend's grandmother is often caught saying that occasionally sitting in church doesn't make you a Christian any more than

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[Christina Lopez](#)



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Yesterday

For this assignment I chose "wiccaning" as my ritual, this is merely a blessing ceremony. In some religions the infant's soul is saved when anointed with holy water or oil. In this religion the parents stand in front of the priestess and ask the goddess/god to protect the child. Wicca allows a person to choose for themselves their own path. The child is passed over a candle/ incense and in this case the goddess "Bast" is asked to watch over the boy until he can choose his own path and wisdom. It is not a spontaneous ritual and other than the parents changing a few things or requesting changes it is a set ritual. The preparing, the birth rite and then the moment in feeling the presence of the deities. It is very symbolic with the passing over incense while praying to the goddess. The priestess chooses a name to be used in the coven only. It is a family joyful experience celebrating life. The priestess gives the mother a can of cat food and requests that she always show love to the children of Bast the cat-headed deity of Egypt. She is to show compassion a very common value in Wicca to all the reincarnations of Bast. This ritual of blessing and positive energy and animism is very much the core of Wicca. To this day a little boy is protected by 5 cats along with his sister. Both very gentle and loving to animals following the harm none virtue.

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[Andres Mediano](#)



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Yesterday

I would like to discuss the scarification ritual that takes place in the Papua New Guinea culture where such scars resemble the skin of a crocodile. This practice would fall under an ideological ritual. It is a rite of passage that a male must participate in so that he may reach full status as a man. The ritual indeed follows the three stages of the ritual process. In the first stage known as separation, the group of participants are isolated in a spirit house for six weeks. While there, they enter the transition phase because they hold no status during that time. Those who receive the crocodile-like scars enter the incorporation stage as they are now accepted into society with the highly respected status of a man. This ritual operates on a symbolic and functional level. It is believed within the culture that man evolved from crocodiles. To pay tribute to the crocodile, they participate in this act. As said in the "Crocodile Scars" video shared by Melidonis, the pain is an essential part of the process as it will remind the man that he can overcome any obstacle he may face in the future since he has endured the pain caused by the cutting. This ritual definitely reinforces cultural values as it can be seen that every male is compelled to take part in it so that they can be considered a man.

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[Jess Flower](#)



<https://vcccd.instructure.com/courses/1509/users/22599>

Yesterday

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based in the cultural context; from tattooing and piercing, to scarification and the “remolding” of body parts, the ritual of modification allows for distinction between participants and nonparticipants. As explained in the text *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*, “Physical appearance serves to distinguish individuals socially with regard to such attributes as gender, age, social status, and occupation as well as membership in age and social groups.” (Stein 91) For the participating members it is an act of cohesion and camaraderie, while those who are not included in the ritual may be seen as an outsider (and vice versa). Additionally, the pain of these modifications is an important element, “the process of producing the alteration creates a situation in which the individual must endure a painful procedure”. (Stein 91) In many instances, the intense pain leads to altered states of consciousness. Again, the significance of the pain and its subsequent alter mental status, is contextual. In some cultures enduring the pain quietly is seen as a necessity to fulfill one’s rite of passage, while in other cultures the pain is seen as cleansing or “healing and transformative” (Stein 106).

Works Cited:

Stein, R & Stein, P. (2011) *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*. 3rd Edition . Pearson: NY, NY.

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<https://vcccd.instructure.com/courses/1509/users/20787>

[Mike Schwartz](#)



<https://vcccd.instructure.com/courses/1509/users/20787>

Yesterday

The ritual I am choosing to discuss for this post is a very odd one that I bet most have not heard of. Originated in certain temples in Karnataka, South West India, Made Made Snana is a ritual that literally translates to “taking a bath by rolling over leftovers”. Yes, Made Made Snana is a ritual that consists of rolling in leftover food therefor “cleaning” yourself from skin diseases. This is a mixture between a prescriptive and spontaneous ritual because it is only practiced on some festival days but it has no really “right” way in going about it because of how straight forward it is. This ritual does not follow the stages of the ritual process because frankly it is not a traditional ritual practiced on a specific day of the year annually. Made Made Snana operates on a functional level being that it only has the purpose of cleaning by bathing. There is nothing this ritual directly symbolizes. The ritual does relate to the cultures practices because the culture who practices Made Made Snana is very in to purity and heavily attached to being cleansed. This practice continues even though it has stirred conflicts whether it works. The ritual reinforces the culture values and taboos because, like I said earlier, the Indian culture is heavily into being cleansed and purified. Made Made Snana does not work to create an altered state of consciousness it is solely purposeful for the single reason to cleanse one’s self. This ritual reinforces the social structure because not only does it bring people together but it also acts as a reliever to many people who are thought to have skin diseases and by believing that this works it gets more people to be social to others not having to worry about the disease that accompanies them.

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[Antoinette Chavira](#)



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Yesterday

After viewing the therapy rituals and healing the anthropological perspective is it is more of a positive ritual, if you will. No individual or animal is being sacrificed. The healing therapy seems to be more of a spiritual ritual. The healer has a gift of feeling. When I was younger I

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However, these certain healers have a certain ability of curing someone whether it is a disease, illness or injury. And to some prayer may also be a ritual of healing, but not to all. The healing therapy relates to the cultural beliefs by believing in the power of curing by either prayer or by using the hands to cure, as it was seen in the Filipino Psychic Surgery video. The rituals could operate on a symbolic and functional level. I say functional level because of the process of doing surgery procedures by the hands. I say symbolic because being Hispanic I was brought up to also pray to the saints for help as well as God. It was instilled in me that prayer always works.

Healing therapy does reinforce cultural values because it has proven itself in miraculous ways. For instance with the healing by touch or using a plant as a medication. For example, the gel from an aloe vera plant could be used to prevent a scar when a cut is healing. I believe in somehow an altered state of consciousness is created. Not all people, especially now a days, believe in healing therapy. However, I would consider physical therapy some sort of healing therapy. The physical therapist is educated on strengthening or exercising certain areas of the body to regain better movement. The altered state creates a sense of healing with the supernatural and is beneficial to the culture that practices it.

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Ryan Abraham



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Yesterday

I'm going to discuss a baseball related ritual that I personally perform before each baseball game during the season. As Ive mentioned in previous posts, baseball is filled with pre,mid,and post game rituals/ superstitions. The ritual I perform involves eating a certain shake (bannana, peanut butter, choclote) after taking a shower, then making sure i arrive early to the game to run/ stretch in order to feel comfortably prepared. The baseball culture revolves around comfort, when a player is comfortable you can tell right away by a positive performance that day. On the other hand is easy to pick out a player who is uncomfortable and struggles. I would describe this ritual as spontaneous, I do not always use the same ingredients for the pre game shake, as it solely depends on how i feel that particular day. I do use two of the pb, chocolate, banana ingredients each time but may leave one out depending on the day. This particular ritual does not follow the "stages of ritual process". I would describe my ritual as symbolic. My ritual symbolizes the importance of repetition of certain steps to feel comfortable in my body to perform a certain task. I would agree that my ritual alters my state of conciseness, when I show up to the field before all of the other players I feel I have an edge mentally. The preparation prior to game allows me to get locked in mentally where I feel a gained sense of focus.

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Miguel Coronel



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Yesterday

The ritual I chose is the celebration of the Virgen Mary. It happens every year and this celebration for her consists of a gathering usually at a church and dancing and praising her. This celebration relates to the cultures beliefs because in the story of the Bible, the Virgen was a great figure for the culture and where this culture stand today. The people who participate will be blessed in a sense and could bring them good fortune in the future for being a good follower. This celebration shows Malinoskis view because these individuals are alleviating their troubles by believing the Virgen will help them and take care of their troubles. All of this comes back to Malinowski to his view on people feeling in control of what is uncontrollable.

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Mark Rivera



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Yesterday

I chose to write about Samoan Tattoos because tattoos are very meaningful and especially in a culture I know they can mean even more than we could know if we don't belong to that specific culture. This ritual is prescriptive because in order for young men to go into the chiefs house they must have tattoos to go in so basically it is required or they are not allowed. They go to the Chief's house gain more information about their culture. Also to become a Chief you need to be tattooed from your waist to your knees and this is required. This ritual operates on symbolic level because the tattoos may just be patterns or small object tattooed on the body but something as small as the canoes tattooed on someone can signify their knowledge of the ocean that their culture has. Also the rafter of a house can signify unity in a family and also honor. Yes, these tattoos alter people's consciousness because they believe that tattoos signify of a boy becoming a man and and the honor they have for their ancestors. It's like a man growing up and elevating your status in the community.

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Esmeralda Vilandeva



[\(https://vcccd.instructure.com/courses/1509/users/7735/\)](https://vcccd.instructure.com/courses/1509/users/7735/)

12:09am

The ritual I will be talking about is based on my personal experiences, I grew up in a catholic household. Being baptized in my family was seen as a very important ritual. This was a symbolic milestone in my life that meant I was one step closer to God, so it was crucial it happened at a young age; at the time I was just about to turn one year old. My whole family was present when I went thru this ritual. Afterward, we celebrated my godparents with delicious food and plenty of drinks.

When I went thru my first communion I was about seven or eight and I remember feeling nervous and scared. As I went thru this ceremony I was welcomed to the table of the lord. By going thru this ceremony I was one step closer to god. I can also remember I was dressed in a white dress and that morning when I woke up I was planning on having breakfast but my parents told me I had to fast and could not eat a meal till after the ceremony. For that event, I also remember making a party to thank my godparents but it was a bigger party than the one for my baptism. After I did my first communion I felt like I could not do anything bad such as fight with my brother or disobey my parents because I felt I was letting god down and if I did do something like that I would right away ask my mom to take me to church so I could go do my confessions to the priest. I felt like going through this process was making me feel like a new and improved person and keeping me out of trouble.

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Robert Johnson (https://vcccd.instructure.com/about/15476/)



12:44am

Much is said about when a boy becomes a man? Is it when he can vote (Age 18), when he can purchase beer (Age 21), or is it some other age? The Coming of Age rituals in our society are blurred. A youth can commit certain crimes resulting in adult prison terms, when as young as fourteen. Women enjoy the Sweet 16; yet what about the males?

Many Native American tribes have specific Coming of Age rituals. Often after fasting, the boy enters a Sweat Lodge (Not all tribes use Sweat Lodges); it is believed he will begin to have a vision, of his path in the culture.