

# Psy 1010-60 - general psychology



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Ethnographic View in General Psychology In a society that is deeply ingrained with cultural influences, similarities and distinctions can be exhibited by groups of people separated by individual interests and values in life. In the study in ethnography, standpoints of ethnic races or even groups of uniquely common interests are analyzed and interpreted. Ethnography, as defined by several texts, is the active pursuit of revealing the experiential opinions and thoughts of local native units (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001). A certain group of people, then, are selected in such study. Generally, this provides a cultural background that portrays the elements that keep communities working together in harmony (Moore & Matthews, 2001). As the precise description of ethnographic study is established, the patterns which distinguish various groups may be apparent, but the universality in some aspects of culture may also bring a variety of groups in mutual standpoints. In practical example, a brief experiential study on a religious Catholic mass set in a local community had been conducted for more than an hour. Keeping the exact location of the place confidential, a number of relevant observations can be drawn from such cultural sector. Majority of the individuals who attended the mass are white Americans, with several mixtures from other races--including Hispanic Americans. Female population seemed to dominate the congregation, with a few attendance from the male counterpart. Some have been dozing off in their seats, while others prefer to stand while attending the mass. In terms of the ceremony, gospels songs are played in muted tones, while the priest had been quite forceful in delivering his religious speech to the congregation--several of them looked bored while a few are avidly listening. It had been obvious that most attendees are already aware of the routines followed: the cues on when

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to stand, sing, and perform religious hand gestures. Fairly, there is a monotonous atmosphere in the way the whole ceremony took place. As the solemn mass ended, the people greeted each others, others gossiped, as they all milled out of the Catholic Church. With an outside perspective viewing the whole activity in the Catholic mass, Rosen (2000, p. 41) indicated that the interpretation of actions performed by common groups can be based on three main themes: “ functionalism... structuralism...(and) structural-functionalism.” Simply put, the significance of enduring the whole mass and undertaking several activities falls on the combination between functionalism and structuralism. On the former form, it symbolizes the transcendent spiritual need that people have to fulfill, while the latter portrays the distinctive cultural influence--Catholic groups conduct their ceremony in silence while a more boisterous manner is exhibited by the Protestants and other groups. In common harmony, man’s nature to create camaraderie surpasses the cultural diversity, as evident with the active participation between each group within the congregation. Surprisingly, there is a lack of racial discrimination during and after the religious mass, indicating the significance of human interaction compared to hostilities borne out of cultural differences. Witnessing such event, one can conclude that the universality of some cultural elements prevails, exceeding the stamp of racial stereotyping in the name of fulfilling the individual transcendent needs. The structure by which a religious service is conducted may differ, but the function behind such feats remains the same, hence, creating a mutual ground by which diverse groups meet at the middle.

References Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (eds.). (2001). *Handbook of Ethnography*. New Delhi: SAGE Publishers.

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