

Importance of intercultural communication to ist assignment

[Art & Culture](#)



Chapter 4 – The Deep Structure of Culture Introduction Our interpretation of reality determines how we define the world and how we interact in that world. We believe the source of how a culture views the world can be found in its deep structure. It is this deep structure that unifies and makes each culture unique. Meaning of the Deep Structure of Culture Although many intercultural communication problems occur on the interpersonal level, most serious confrontations and misunderstandings are as a result of cultural differences that go to the basic core of what it means to be a member of one culture or another.

Cultural collisions are evident worldwide e. g. “ ethnic violence” in Africa, clashes between Hindus and Muslims in both India and Pakistan, and hundred of people being killed in conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians. In each of these instances it is the deep structure of culture and not interpersonal communication that is at the heart of these problems. When there are ethnic and cultural confrontations in various parts of the world, the deep structure of culture is being acted out. Great divisions among humankind and the dominating sources of conflict will be cultural.

The people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy. Such issues as (God, loyalty, family, community, state, allegiance, etc.) have been part of every culture for thousands of years. To better understand any culture, one needs to appreciate that culture’s deep structure.

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The deep structure of a culture not only has history on its side, but its roots are deep in the basic institutions of the culture. As Delgado points out, “ Culture produces and is reproduced by institutions of society, and we can turn to such sites to help recreate and represent the elements of culture. ” Our aim is to look at those “ sites” so that we might better understand how and why cultures have different visions of the world. The influence behind a culture’s collective action can be traced to its: (a) World view (religion) (b) Family structure, and c) State (community, government) These three social organizations working in combination, define, create, transmit, maintain, and reinforce the basic elements of every culture. Not only do these three institutions have a long history, but also remain the “ essential components of modern life. ” The are four interrelated reasons as to why world view, family and community hold such importance over the actions of all cultures and assist one appreciate the importance of a culture’s deep structure to any study of intercultural communication.) Deep Structure Institutions carry a Culture’s most important Beliefs The three institutions, church, family and state carry the messages that matter most to people. Religion, parents and community are given the task of “ teaching” an individual what is important and what one should strive for. Whether it be a desire to gather material possessions or a life that seeks spiritual fulfillment, the three institutions of church, family and state help one make those major decisions and choices regarding how to live your life.

These institutions tell you how we fit into the grand scheme of things, whether you should believe in fate or the power of free choice, why there is suffering, what to expect from life, where your loyalties should reside, and

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even how to prepare for death – these and other consequential issues fall under the domain of church, family, and state. ii) Deep Structure Institutions and their messages endure The enduring quality of the major institutions of culture, and the messages they carry, is one of the ways in which cultures are preserved.

These institutions are important because they endure through time we can trace the strong pull of religion, family and community. Generations after generation of children are told about Abraham, Moses, the Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, and the like. Whether it is the Eightfold Path, the Ten Commandments, or the Five Pillars of Islam, the messages of these writings survive. Each generation is given the wisdom, traditions and customs that make a culture unique. However, one needs to be aware of the fact that often deep-seated hatreds that turn one culture against another also endure.

ii) Deep Structure Institutions and their Messages are Deeply Felt The content generated by these institutions, and the institutions themselves, arouse deep and emotional feelings. Think for a moment about the violent reactions that can be produced by taking God's name in vain. Countries and religious causes have been able to send young men to war, and politicians have attempted to win elections by arousing people to the importance of God, country, and family. Regardless of a person's culture, the deep structure of that culture is something people feel intensely about. v) Deep Structure Institutions Supply Much of Our Identity We are not born with an identity and of the most important responsibilities of any culture is to assist its member in forming their identities. Through countless interactions we discover who we are. " We learn our identities through socialization. Charon.

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Remember that socialization takes place in the family. As you come in contact with other people, you begin to develop a variety of identities. “ Everyone has multiple identities which may compete with or reinforce each other e. g. inship, occupational, cultural, institutional, territorial, educational, partisan, ideological and others. Your identity, who you are, is composed of many facets (Huntington). These and countless other “ memberships,” help define you. However the identities that mean the most to people are gained through deep structure institutions. That is, at some point in your life you move from identities based on the “ I” to identities linked to “ We. ” You begin to see yourself as part of a larger unit. At some point of time in early life, the child’s “ I am! ” announces the birth of a sense of community. I am” differentiates me from other individuals. “ We are” makes me aware of the other dominant group (or groups) sharing the physical and cognitive space of my community. ” Kakar As you can see, this “ we” identity connects the individual to cultural groups and the main institutions of the culture. “ People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs and institutions. ” Huntington, Regardless of the culture, each individual identifies himself or herself as a member of these cultural organizations.

These identities are important to the study of intercultural communication in that these identities, according to Guirdham, “ can be used to identify similarities and differences in behaviors, interpretations and norms. ” “ A person’s cultural identity exerts a profound influence on his or her “ lifeways. ” Lynch and Hanson World View A culture’s world view is the basic

foundation of that culture because it governs both perception and behavior in large and small ways.

Rapport and Overing defines world view “ as the common English translation of the German word Weltanschauung, meaning overarching philosophy or outlook, or conception of the world. It is the phrase “ overarching philosophy” that unmistakably marks the significance of world view. World views are “ used in constructing, populating and anticipating social worlds. ” What is unique about these “ social worlds” is that they are directly linked to perception and culture. World view is an “ inside view of the way things are coloured, shaped, and arranged according to personal cultural preconception. “ Hoebel and Frost

World views, again like culture, are automatic and unconscious. Hall reinforces this key point when he writes: Often, worldviews operate at an unconscious level, so that we are not even aware that other ways of seeing the world are either possible or legitimate. Like the air we breathe, worldviews are a vital part of who we are but not a part we usually think much about. Dana offers an excellent summary of the importance of world view: Worldview provides some of the unexamined underpinnings for perception and the nature of reality as experienced by individuals who share a common culture.

The worldview of a culture functions to make sense of life experiences that might otherwise be construed as chaotic, random and meaningless.

Worldview is imposed by collective wisdom as a basis for sanctioned actions that enable survival and adaptation. ” As Hoebel writes, “ In selecting its

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customs for day-to-day living, even the little things, and the society chooses those ways that accord with its thinking and predilections ways that fit its basic postulates as to the nature of things and what is desirable and what is not. “

The pervasive impact of our world view Olayiwola to conclude that a culture’s world view influences the social, economic and political life of a nation. Because world views deal with the topics that penetrate all phases of human existence, they start with questions about what we commonly call the meaning of life. The importance of examining these crucial issues has been identified by Pennington: “ If one understands a culture’s world view and cosmology, reasonable accuracy can be attained in predicting behaviors and motivations in other dimensions.

Worldview, therefore, is a culture’s orientation toward God, humanity, nature, questions of existence, nature, the universe and cosmos, life, morals and ethical reasoning, suffering, sickness, death, and other philosophical issues that influence how its members perceive the world around them. E. g. , the Islamic world view provides insight into the Islamic culture’s perception of women. Bianquis points out, “ Generally speaking a woman as an individual, was subordinated to man both by the Quran and the Hadith. God created woman from a fragment of man’s body that she might serve him. Knowledge of world view can even help you understand a culture’s perception of nature. People perceive them as lasting things among which their ancestors lived and died Another link between world view and behavior can be seen in how a culture perceives the business arena. The foundation of

a nation's culture and the most important determinant of social and business conduct are the religious and philosophical beliefs of a people. From them 'spring' role perceptions, behavior patterns, codes of ethics and the institutionalized manner in which economic activities are performed.

The manner in which a culture actually conducts its business can be reflected in its world view. E. g. , if a culture values " out-of-awareness" processes and intuitive problem solving, it might reach conclusions in a manner much different from that of a culture valuing the scientific method. Howell enumerates with an example: A Japanese manager who is confronted with a perplexing problem studies it thoroughly and once he feels he understands what the problem is, he does not attempt to collect data and develop hypotheses. He waits, He knows that his " center of wisdom" is in his lower abdomen, behind and somewhat below the navel.

In due time a message will come from the center, giving him the answer he desires. " What is interesting about Howell's example is that in the Buddhist tradition, where meditation is stressed, a common meditation technique is watching one's breath as it originates in the abdomen. Here again you can see the tie between world view and behavior. We have attempted to make it very clear that world view, perception, and communication are bound together. Regardless of category or description, we're all inextricably connected through a system of actions and their effects, which can go according to cosmic order or fall out of synchrony with it.

Religion as a World view With all deep structure elements, the long history of religion is directly linked to culture. Coogan repeats the same important

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point when he tells writes, “ A belief in the existence of a reality greater than the human has served as a definer and creator of cultures. ” Importance of Religion For some unexplainable reason, the responsibility of generating and preserving the elements of world view has rested with either religious institutions (for example, the Catholic Church) or spiritual leaders (for example, the Buddha).

Whether it is the teachings of the Bible, Vedas, Koran, Torah, or I Ching, people have always felt a need to seek outside themselves the values by which they live their lives and guidance on how to view and explain the world. In many ways, religion has provided the peoples of the world with advice, values and guidance since time in memorial. Most experts agree that religions have endured because they perform a variety of essential needs. Haviland notes the needs of religion as under: All religions serve a number of important psychological and social needs.) They reduce anxiety by explaining the unknown and making it understandable, as well as provide comfort with the belief super-natural aid is available in times of crisis. ii) They sanction a wide range of human conduct by providing notions of right and wrong, setting precedents for accepting behavior, and transferring the burden of decision making from individuals to supernatural powers. iii) Through ritual, religion may be used to enhance the learning of oral traditions. iv) Finally, religion plays an important role in maintaining social solidarity.

Culture deals with the nature of life and death, the creation of the universe, the origin of society and groups within the society, the relationship of

individuals and groups to one another, and the relation of humankind to nature. (Nanda) The deep structure of culture deals with issues that matter most to people. Whether it is conceptions of the first cause of all things, or natural occurrences such as comets, floods, lightning, thunder, drought, famine, disease, or an abundance of food, people rely on religious explanations.

The study of religion not only assists one in their quest for a meaning and purpose to life, but it also gives clues into the social aspects of a culture. The social functions of religion are no less important than the psychological functions. A traditional religion reinforces group norms, provides moral sanctions for individual conduct and furnishes the substratum of common purpose and values upon which the equilibrium of the community depends. (Haviland) Religion offers insight into the members of that culture. As Lamb observes, " It is clear that religion and culture are inextricably entwined

The study of religion prepares us to encounter not only other centers and calendars, and numerous versions of the sacred and profane, but also to decipher and appreciate different modes of language and behavior. Toward that end, knowledge about others plays its indispensable role. " (Paden)

Selecting Religious Traditions for Study While we grant the importance of other religious traditions and world views, we examine Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism based on three criteria numbers, diffusion and relevance.

Most statistical studies reveal that worldwide, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism each have over a billion followers. And while Buddhists are most

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difficult to count, Buddhism is practiced in much of Southeast Asian and is one of the many traditions of China and Japan. Regarding our first criteria i. e. numbers, Carmody and Carmody notes: " When we speak of the great religions we mean the traditions that have lasted for centuries, shaped hundreds of millions of people, and gained respect for their depth and breadth. Second, by diffusion as a criterion we are referring to the notion of dispersion of a religion throughout the world. E. g. , while the Jewish population is numerically small (14 million worldwide), Jews are spread throughout the world. Only one third of the world's Jews live in Israel. Christianity and Islam, because of their missionary zeal, are also diffused throughout the world. Finally, the six traditions are worthy of serious study because they are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago.

Not only are they important because they have historical significance, but they have a global impact. We need only look at the worldwide reach of Islam to see how information about this religion, and others, can be helpful in understanding other cultures. Religious Similarities Seven parallel points that illustrate how in many ways cultures, like people, are somewhat alike in their search for a meaning to life and explanations to the experience of death.

They are: 1) Sacred Scriptures " Sacred scriptures express and provide identity, authorization, and ideals for the people of the tradition. (Crim). At the heart of all the world's main religious traditions lies a body of sacred wisdom. Each of these scriptures, whether oral or written, enables a culture to pass on the insights and tradition from generation to generation. (Crim) A religion's scriptures are the repository of its essential principles and the touchstone for its formulations of doctrine. (Coogan). The Bible, consisting of

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the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, written in Hebrew and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, written in Greek, serves as the written centerpiece of Christianity.

For Jews, the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament, is an important document that has lasted thousands of years and offers guidance to the present and future. The Koran, Muslims believe, was dictated to the prophet Muhammad by Allah, is written in classical Arabic. For Muslims, “ the memorization of the text in childhood acts simultaneously as an introduction to literacy. ” In Hinduism, the sacred writings are found in the Vedas. These divine wisdoms cover a wide range of texts and are written in Sanskrit. The Pali Canon, based on oral tradition, contains the teaching of the Buddha. Pali became the canonical language for Buddhists from many countries, but comparable texts came to exist in other languages, such as Chinese and Japanese, as the religion evolved. Confucian tradition people depend on the Analects. This collection has for centuries helped shape the thoughts and actions for billions of people. 2) Authority In nearly all cases, religious orientations have one or more individuals who are recognized as having special significance who are usually authority figures that provide guidance and instruction.

Whether the figure is a supreme all-knowing God such as Allah, a philosopher such as the Buddha, Jesus, “ the Son of God,” recipients of divine revelation such as Moses or Muhammad, or the wise counsel of Confucius, all traditions have someone greater than the individual who can be turned to for emotional and spiritual direction. 3) Traditional Rituals Rituals, like so many aspects of culture, are not instinctive and therefore, need to be passed on

from generation to generation if they are to endure. Ritual is one of the oldest, most complex and persistent symbolic activities associated with religions.

According to Haviland, not only is ritual a means for reinforcing a group's social bonds and for relieving tensions, but it is also one way many important events are celebrated and crises, such as death, made less socially disruptive and less difficult for individuals to bear. Rituals serve an assortment of purposes. In addition to what Haviland notes, rituals also express the psychic, social and religious world to its participants while providing " identity and structure. " Rituals take a variety of forms.

They range from traditions dealing with rites of passage (Bar Mitzvahs (Judaism-ceremony marking the 13th birthday of a boy who then assumes full religious obligations), circumcision, etc.), the lighting of candles or incense, to the wearing of certain attire, to deciding whether to stand, sit, or kneel when you pray. There can be rituals dealing with " space" (Muslims going to Mecca) and others that call attention to " time" (Christians celebrating Christmas and Easter). 4) Speculation Every religion knows that all human beings seek answers to the great mysteries of life.

Each tradition, knowing that people usually are vexed by the great riddles of life, attempt to address questions about mortality and immortality, suffering, the origins of the universe, and countless other events. From Genesis stories to descriptions of reincarnation, death, heaven, and hell, all traditions supply answers to timeless and overpowering questions. 5) Ethics It is intriguing that ethical standards are nearly the same for all cultures. Regardless of the

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tradition, religion always includes an ethic for example, all religions say you should avoid murder, thieving, lying and adultery.

In addition, they all stress the virtues of “ humility, charity and veracity (truthfulness). According to Coogan, what they all seek to accomplish by the formation of ethical principles is to “ enable their adherents to achieve the ultimate objective of the tradition the attainment of salvation, redemption, enlightenment and the `liberation of the soul. 6) Security. Religious beliefs offer the comforting sense that the vulnerable human condition serves a great purpose. Strengthened by such beliefs, people are less likely to collapse in despair when confronted by life’s calamities. ” Macionis.

All religions, provide their members with a sense of identity and security. Religion unites people by influencing them to share symbols, values and norms. There is a strong feeling of security to know that you are part of a religious family that is feasting on the same day, wearing the same attire when they pray, bowing in one direction or another or taking Holy Communion. Part of the similarity of security can be found in the fact that all traditions provide meaning and purpose. 7) Sacred Time The acknowledgment of sacred and distinctive times is yet another common experience found in all religious traditions.

This recognition of the importance of time may mark important days, months, years, life cycles and significant historical events. Religious Traditions Something worth noting: i) Religion is but one kind of world view, and even the person who says “ There is no God” has answers to the large questions about the nature of truth, how the world operates, life, death,

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suffering, and social relationships. It is important to realize that everyone has a worldview whether or not he or she can recognize or state. Ridenour ii) Religion pervades many spheres which we might call secular and it cannot easily be separated from them.

Hendry It is often difficult to draw a line between religion and a subtle manifestation of religion. What one person might call religion or world view another might call philosophy. For our purposes, the labeling is not nearly as important as the notion that a culture's heritage includes ways of dealing with timeless and fundamental questions. iii) " The world's major religious traditions have both reflected and shaped the values of the societies of which they have been an inseparable element. The focus of religion is in persons and in human interaction. Christianity

A religion of over a billion people throughout the world, Christianity is also the dominant world view found in America. There are thousands of groups or denominations that can be classified as Christian. While many of the groups might have specific rituals, beliefs and traditions that mark them as unique, they are all alike with regard to the basic characteristics and tenets that are called Christianity. Basic Assumptions Essentially, Christianity is a monotheistic tradition centered on faith in God (the eternal creator who transcends, creation and yet is active in the world) and in Jesus Christ as the savior and redeemer of human kind.

Christianity holds that God became incarnate-fully human-as Jesus of Nazareth. Christians believe that Jesus died on a cross and was resurrected, physically rising from the dead. The belief in the Trinity, the sacred mystery

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of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one, triune ('three-in-one') God is central to the Christian tradition's. As you can observe from the above summary, at the heart of Christian faith is the assertion "that the crucified Jesus was resurrected by God and present in the church 'the body of Christ. Of the thousands of directives that Jesus and his apostles carried to the world, let us select a few of those that have most shaped the Christian tradition. It should be noted that many of the teachings of Jesus, like so many religious doctrines have been modified over time. For example, the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Martin Luther and the Protestant movement have influenced much of modern Christianity. Yet we can still point to numerous characteristics of Christianity that help demonstrate the link between religion, perception, and behavior. Organized Worship

For Christians the church serves a variety of purposes, ranging from the religious to the social. Simply stated, Christian theology believes in organized worship as a means of proclaiming God's message. A point to remember is that this notion of organized worship has contributed to the social dimension of Western cultures. Americans are social creatures and belong to numerous clubs, committees and organizations. Perhaps the stimulus for such behavior can be found in Christianity. In the East, one's spiritual life is conducted in solitude; in the West, God's "message" is shared with others.

Ethics For the two thousand years of Christian history, starting with Jesus, this religion advanced ethical principles intended to give direction to the followers of the faith. These ethical injunctions are found in the Ten Commandments and scattered throughout the Bible. Perhaps the most

powerful ethical teachings are found in the manner in which Jesus lived his life and preached about the importance of love. The central ethic Jesus taught was love. The word love appears with astonishing frequency in the New Testament. “ Love your neighbor as yourself. What you would like people to do to you do to them,” You can clearly observe the manifestations of these ideas of love and compassion reflected in everything from the large amounts of charitable contributions Americans make to their willingness to go to foreign countries to improve the lives of strangers. Individualism While membership in a church community is important to Christians, most religious scholars maintain the notion that “ Christianity discovered the individual. “ That is to say, the Western concept of the importance of the individual, can be linked partially to Christianity.

For example, salvation, particularly for Protestants, “ is achieved by our own efforts alone and there is a tendency for deeds to count more than prayers. ” Christianity discovers individuality in the sense that it stresses personal conversion. In addition, the Christian theology begins with the assumption that the world is real and meaningful because God created it. Human beings are significant because God created them in his image. God has a special relationship with each person in that God sees and hears, rewards, and punishes. Each person is important to him.

The Christian God is a personal God, who desires a relationship with his creation. ” In a culture that values individualism, Christianity is perhaps the perfect religion. “ Doing” Much of the Western “ doing” orientation can be found in the life of Jesus. Peter, one of Jesus’ disciples, once said, “ He went

about doing good. " This example set by Jesus was translated into action. For instance, the Romans would cast out people into the streets at the first sign of sickness because they were afraid of dying. Christians would take an active role and try to nurse the sick. " This is not an isolated instance.

Anyone who has studied Christianity and knows the lessons of Jesus is aware that he was an active man and urged his followers to be energetic. As we indicated, the Bible is full of accounts of how he traveled from place to place healing the sick and counseling misfits and ordinary people. In short, activity and Christianity are bound together. Future Put in slightly different terms, in comparison to other religions, one of the " lessons" of Christianity is that the future is important. For Christians " no matter what happened in the past, it is the future that holds the greatest promise.

God forgives mistakes, regret, and remorse. Christians hold that those who repent of their sins and turn to Jesus Christ will be forgiven and will join him in heaven after death. "" In this sense, the individual is to " move on. " Hence, even the notion of a heaven places emphasis on the future.

Language While there are countless reasons for every cultural trait, we are now offering the contention that one of the reasons lies in Christianity a religion that stresses language. Much of Christian religion is filtered through language.

From the phrase " God as the Word" to the fact that New Testament gospels are a written document, you see that for Christians, language is important. Even the notion of preaching and standing on a pulpit underscores that role of language in Christianity. To be part of a " religious community" you must

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interact with others. In addition, Christians believe that “ God relies on language to reveal himself to humans in the Bible and through godly people. You also see the importance of language revealed in the fact that most of the teachings in the Bible, and the act of “ preaching,” usually take the form of stories.

Gender The enduring legacy for women is, of course, the Garden of Eden story. This view of women is perhaps best illustrated when Paul speaks in 1 Timothy: I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became the transgressor. While this story is often used to justify placing women in second-class positions, recent events and a more modern interpretation of the Bible reveal a view of women that is more consistent with current perceptions.

For example, with the exception of the Catholic Church, the number of women who are becoming priests is growing at a rapid rate. Some biblical scholars are asserting that Jesus might well have been a feminist. They offer some of the following examples to justify their claim. First, prior to the coming of Jesus, Roman society regarded women as inherently inferior to men. Husbands could divorce their wives but wives could not divorce their husbands. Jesus banned all divorce. Men could even marry girls ten or eleven years old. Jesus challenged all of these practices.

Wrote one biblical scholar, “ The new religion offered women not only greater status and influence within the church, but also more protection as wives and mothers. “” Second, “ although he called only men to be apostles,

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Jesus readily accepted women into his circle of friends and disciples. “”

Defying custom, Jesus even invited women to join him at meals. All of this leads Murphy to note, “ Women were often prominent in the accounts of his ministry, and he acknowledged the oppression they face. ” Finally, Jesus helped define a new role for women by giving them greater responsibility.

For example, they “ shared with men the cultural responsibility for teaching children, as reflected in the Proverbs: `My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching. ” Courage A strong message in Christianity is courage. Jesus was courageous. A careful reading of the life of Jesus reveals a man who would not be intimidated by his opponents. On occasion after occasion, we have accounts of Jesus’ strong personality emerging. His strength and courage are traits that all Christians are reminded of repeatedly. As you know from your own experience, these are also two powerful values in the American culture.

Here again, you can see the link between world view and communication styles. b) Judaism Background Judaism is the oldest of the religions being practiced today and the smallest of all the major religious traditions.

Although Jews represent less than one-half of 1 percent of the world’s population (approximately 14 million Jews), and approximately 2 percent of the entire population of the United States, their geographical distribution and their interest in politics, the arts, literature, medicine, finance, and the law have, for thousands of years, made them important and influential.

As Smith notes, “ It has been estimated that one-third of Western civilization bears the marks of its Jewish ancestry. ” Judaism is believed to have been

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founded in approximately 1300 B. C. when twelve Israelite tribes came to Canaan from Mesopotamia. Later, many of them settled in Egypt where they were held as slaves until they fled to freedom under the leadership of Moses in about 1200 B. C. As we have indicated, in approximately 3, 500 years Judaism has spread throughout the world. Basic Concepts As a religion, Judaism has three essential elements: God, Torah, and Israel.

Arguably the oldest monotheistic faith, it believes in one universal and eternal God, the creator and sovereign of all that exists. God has entered into a special relationship, or covenant, with one people, the Jews, or Israel, and given them the task of being a “ nation to the nations. The Jewish faith is unique in that it is both a culture and a religion. It is common, for example, to find nonreligious Jews who identify fully with the culture but not with the theology. Judaism has no single founder, no central leader or group making theological decisions; Judaism is a people, a very old family.

This family can be defined either as a religious group or a national group. At the heart of the Jewish religion, lies the existence of a covenant between God and his people. Although Jews believe that God’s providence extends to all people, they also hold to the notion God entered into this special covenant (solemn agreement) with them. In this agreement God promised to make Israel a great nation; in response the Jewish people were to be obedient to God and to carry God’s message by example. From circumcision to the observing of the Sabbath, signs of the covenant abound in Jewish culture and religion.

It is this covenant that is at the heart of why Jews consider themselves God's "chosen people. In Jewish theology this special consideration never meant advantages for the Jews, only increased responsibilities and hardships. The Jewish world view is expressed through a number of concepts basic to the faith: (1) God is one, (2) no human ever will be divine (3) humans are free (4) humans are the pinnacle of creation (5) Jews belong to a group or nation whose goal is to serve God, and (6) humans must be obedient to the God given commandments in the Torah (first five books of the Bible) and assume personal responsibility

These six concepts compose a belief system stressing the secular notion that order must be maintained if Jews are to have a collective life. The Ten Commandments in the Torah therefore give structure to and make possible a social world. Judaism penetrates every area of human existence, providing humankind with a means of communicating with both the secular and transcendental worlds (based on intuition not experience). It is not simply a religion that serves spiritual needs but a guide to worship, ceremonies, justice, friendship, kindness, intellectual pursuits, courtesy and diet.

Oppression and Persecution Historically, oppression and persecution have been part of the Jewish religion and view of the world. As Ehrlich notes, "All too often the story of Jews has been presented as a litany of disasters. The history of Judaism and the Jews is a long complicated story, full of blood and tears. Through the belief that God is using them "to introduce insights into history that all people need," suffering, oppression, and persecution seem to be built into the Jewish faith.

Only the Jews have had their homeland destroyed (twice), been dispersed wherever they have lived, survived the most systematic attempt in history (aside from that of the Gypsies) to destroy an entire people, and been expelled from nearly every nation among whom they have lived. Prager and Telushkin With all that, the Jews are still, essentially the same stubborn, dedicated people, now and forever maybe, affirming the same three things. First, they are a people of the law as given in the only books of Moses. Second, they are the chosen people of God, having a covenant with him. Third, they are a witness that God is and will be forevermore. Van Doren Learning So strong is the value of learning for Jews that the Jewish prayer book speaks of the love of learning as one of three principles of faith. For thousands of years Jews have made the study of the Talmud (a holy book that is over five thousand pages long) an important element of Jewish life. Some Hebrew translations of the word Talmud actually contain the words “ learning, “ study,” and “ teaching. References to the importance of education are sprinkled throughout Jewish holy books.

As early as the first century, Jews had a system of compulsory education. Even today, after being in existence for thousands of years, occupations using the mind (teacher, lawyer, doctor, writer, and so on), are popular professions in the Jewish community. Justice The Jewish faith also teaches a strong sense of justice. An individual’s responsibility and moral commitment to God and other people is clearly spelled out in detail in all Jewish religious writings. In fact, one of the four categories of Jewish law is actually “ To ensure moral treatment of others. “” You can see this concern for justice in

everything from ancient Jewish writings to the active role Jews played during the civil rights movement in the 1960s. So strong is this basic precept that Smith believes much of Western civilization owes a debt to the early Jewish prophets for establishing the notion of justice as a major principle for the maintenance of “ social order. Family For the Jew the family is the focus of worship and devotion. On nearly every occasion, be it in the home or the synagogue, the family is an active participant in the Jewish religion.

From circumcisions, to Passover Seders, to Bar Mitzvahs, to marriage and death, the family and religion are strongly bond together. For 4, 000 years, the Jewish family has been the very core, mortar, and citadel of Judaism’s faith and the central reason for the survival of the Jews as a distinct ethnic group. The Jewish home is a temple, according to Judaic law, custom, and tradition. Rosten. c) Islam Some 1. 3 billion human beings one person in five- heed Islam’s call in the modern world, embracing the religion at a rate that makes it the fastest growing on Earth, with 80 percent of believers now outside the Arab world.

Islam is the most misunderstood religion on earth. The events of September 11, 2001, seem to have only added to the incomplete or false information many American have about this religion. The heart of Islam is well hidden from most Westerners, and the outer images of Islamic countries present bewildering contrasts: stern ayatollahs ordering the lash for prostitutes, camel drivers putting down prayer mats in the desert, a sophisticated royal prince discussing international investments, and fiery national liberators proclaiming equality and denouncing Western values. Noss and Noss.

History The Arabs were mostly polytheists, worshiping tribal deities. They had no sacred history linking them to one universal god, like other Middle Eastern peoples. They had no sacred text to live by, like the Bible; no sacred language, as Hebrew is to Jews and Sanskrit is to Hindus. Above all, they had no prophet sent to them by God, as Jews and Christians could boast. This early history was greatly altered with the arrival of Muhammad. For Muslims, Muhammad (570-632) was the messenger of God. Muslims believe that their God, Allah, spoke to human beings many times in the past.

But it was Muhammad who delivered a religious message and established a social order. Muhammad, believing that community and religion were one and the same, established the city-state that became known as Madina. This fusion of church and state was unique to Muhammad's time. This and other accomplishments marked him as one of the most remarkable and charismatic men in history. Muhammad's message was so powerful that within a few centuries Islamic religion and rule, as Gordon points out, was extended to North Africa, Persia, Jerusalem, Damascus, the Caucasus, central Asia, Europe, Egypt and Turkey.

This phenomenal growth and popularity continued unabated until today where Muslims form the majority in more than fifty countries and a substantial minority in many others. Pillars of Faith Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, is monotheistic. It believes in one God, and that God is Allah. The two major forms of Islam Sunni and Shi'a – both accept that Muhammad was the heir to the religious mantle passed down by the prophets of the

Bible. Muslims are supposed to believe in five cardinal points, which are so central to the religion that they are called the “ Pillars of Faith Divine Unity.

The first Pillar is called tawhid. While this term can have a variety of meanings, it mainly calls attention to the fact that Muslims believe in one, unique, incomparable, eternal God. So strong is this commitment to the “ one true God” that Muslims believe that every other deity is false and that “ it is a grievous sin to worship any other force or being in the universe. You can clearly observe this obligation and commitment to a single God in the word Islam, which is the infinitive of the Arab verb meaning “ to submit. The word Muslim is the present participle of the same verb.

A Muslim, then, is one who accepts and submits to the will of Allah. So powerful is this belief in Allah that, according to Fisher and Luyster, “ The first sentence chanted in the ear of a traditional Muslim infant is the Shahadah-`La ilaha illa `llah. ” This saying literally means, “ There is no god but God. ” To utter this allegiance to a single God is also one way a person can become a Muslim. They also believe that everything, good or evil, proceeds directly from the divine will as it is irrevocably recorded on the Preserved Tablets. This orientation produces fatalism: whatever happens has been willed by Allah.

The saying “ in sha’a Allah” (if God wills it) looms large in the thinking of the average Muslim. The word inshalla is also used with great frequency. ii) Prophecy. Muslims are supposed to believe that God wishes to communicate with human beings, and he uses prophets for this purpose. These “ messengers of God” included, among others, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses,

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and Jesus. However, Muslims “ consider Jesus to have been the second last prophet, who foretold the coming of Muhammad. Muslims believe that his final prophet-Muhammad-revealed God’s eternal message. iii) Revelation.

Muslims hold that God revealed scriptures to humanity as guidance for them. Four such scriptures are recognized: the Torah as revealed to Moses, the Psalms of David, the New Testament of Jesus, and the Qur’an of Muhammad. Muslims believe that the all the scriptures before the Qur’an were tampered with and corrupted by humans. Hence, they hold that the Qur’an is God’s final word and “ supersedes and over rules all previous writings. iv) Angelic Agency Muslims believe in the existence of angels, for Muslims angels are everywhere; they come to our help in every thought and action.

The two most important angels in Islamic theology and the function they serve are: a) The most famous angel is Gabriel, who served as an intermediary between God and Muhammad in the revelation of the Qur’an. b) Iblis, who used to be the chief of all angles but was punished for disobeying God by being cast out of Heaven. After that he turned into Satan and now not only rules Hell but also tries to tempt human beings from the path of goodness. v) Last Judgment and Afterlife. The concept of the “ final judgment” and the notion of an afterlife are linked because the ending of the earth determines what happens to each person on the Day of Judgment.

Muslims, like Jews and Christians believe in the Day of judgment (the Day of Resurrection) when all people will be resurrected for God’s judgment according to their beliefs and deeds. “ Islam says that what we experience in the after life is a revealing of our tendencies in this life. Our thoughts,

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actions, and moral qualities are turned into our outer reality. The notion of a moral code, and its tie to an afterlife, is one of the most fundamental and crucial elements of Islamic doctrine. Elias writes, “ Judgment, reward, and punishment are central points in Islam and are the foundation upon which its entire system of ethics is based.

The result of Allah’s judgment determines whether each person will be sent to heaven or hell. The Islamic teaching makes it very clear that these two places are poles apart. Speaking of heaven Elias notes, “ The Qur’an paints an extremely vivid picture of Heaven as a garden with streams and fruit trees, where we will live a lavish and comfortable life. The picture of Hell, for those who oppose Allah and his prophet Mohammed, is very different. For example, in Hell, according to Islam “ infidels, or unbelievers, will experience the torments of Hell, fire fueled by humans, boiling water, pus, chains, searing winds, food that chokes, and so forth.

While many Muslims may only see these two descriptions are metaphors for an afterlife, the two depictions nevertheless underscore the importance of good and evil, and the consequences of each, in Islamic teaching. vi) Five Pillars of Practice Having looked at the Five Pillars of Faith, we are now ready to see how these Pillars are put into practice. The acting out of these Pillars is referred to as the Five Pillars of Practice (Statement of Belief, Prayer, Fasting, Alms, and Pilgrimage). Many Muslims follow a sixth Pillar-Jihad-which we will include in our analysis.

All Muslims are expected to learn and perform these duties and rituals as part of their practice. They outline specific patterns for worship as well as

detailed prescriptions for social conduct, to bring remembrance of God into every aspect of daily life and practical ethics into the fabric of society. The Pillars of Practice are: Repetition of the creed, (Shahada), – uttering of the creed ‘ There is no God hut Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah’.

Prayer (Salat) Almsgiving (Zakat) Fasting (Sawm) The Pilgrimage (Hajj)