

Rubyclare Moore
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Professor Gregg
Sociology of Religion

Death, Abortion, and Children's books; A Red String and Corkboard Induced Comparison

The three articles chosen to best represent each week's topic are as follows; Reported Contact with the Dead, Religious Involvement, and Death Anxiety in Late Life by Neal Krause, Faith, Race-Ethnicity, and Public Policy Preferences: Religious Schemas and Abortion Attitudes Among U.S. Latinos by John P. Bartkowski, Aida I. Ramos-Wada, Chris G. Ellison and Gabriel A. Acevedo, and Perpetuating Stereotypes: A Study of Gender, Family, and Religious Life in Jewish Children's Books by Emily Sigalow and Nicole S. Fox. Each article shows a different religion and a different view on religion. The first article follows along strictly with Christianity, the second with Catholicism and Protestantism and the third with Judaism. In this paper I will discuss what I have learned from each article and the ways each of these articles, though vastly different topics have a connection to each other and Sociology of Religion; Contemporary Developments by Kevin J. Christiano, William H. Swatos Jr., and Peter Kivisto.

Reported Contact with the Dead, Religious Involvement and Death Anxiety in Late Life by Krause is a study about death anxiety, specifically comparing how Christians who have had contact with the dead, ranging from feeling like someone is watching you to seeing or speaking to the dead, vs. those who haven't react to death anxiety in later life. The research team collected data from practicing Christians, over the age of 66, who identified as either black or white, who lived in the United States. Many people dropped the study over time because it lasted on and off for eight years. In the end, those who were older and have had contact with the dead according to the researcher, "are more likely to feel more closely connected with others than older individuals who have not had frequent contact with loved ones who died" (Krause 14). It is also stated in the study that those who have a close relationship to religion and have attended church services more often than others feel less anxiety over death.

Faith, Race-Ethnicity, and Public Policy Preferences: Religious Schemas and Abortion Attitudes

Among U.S. Latinos by Bartkowski, Ramos-Wada, Ellison and Acevedo, is a study trying to understand which group of Latinos had stronger anti-abortion views. The participants were people who identified as Latino, and either Catholic or Protestant. Though some people practiced religion under different subsets of Christianity and some non-religious personal in the study, the main portion of people that the study looked into were either Catholic or Protestant. The outcome the researchers found showed that those who practiced Protestantism were more likely to be anti-abortion than those who practiced Catholicism. According to the researchers, “we find that regularly attending conservative Protestants and Catholics are significantly more opposed to abortion than their infrequently attending same-faith peers,” (Bartkowski, Ramos-Wada and Ellison 13). It was also clear in the study that no matter what religion the person practiced those who were less religious or attended church less than others were more likely to be pro-choice than those who were very religious.

Perpetuating Stereotypes: A Study of Gender, Family, and Religious Life in Jewish Children's Books

by Sigalow and Fox is a study about how gender roles are taught through Jewish children’s books specifically those targeted towards preschool-age kids. The books chosen for the study were picked from the Sydney Taylor Jewish children’s book award from the years 1980-2011. The researchers focused on Halacha a Jewish rule that regulates what men and women should and shouldn’t do related to the religion and family. According to Sigalow and Fox,

“Jewish men are required by halacha, for example, to fulfill the time-bound responsibilities of public Jewish prayer, education, and holiday and life-cycle rituals and ceremonies. Because traditionally Jewish women were responsible for bearing and raising children and maintaining the household,” (Sigalow and Fox 5).

The results the researchers found showed that the children’s books heavily relied on the Jewish rule Halacha. Meaning that many of the books portrayed men as strong central characters, while it portrayed women in more nurturing and domestic roles such as a mother rather than a friend.

The textbook relates to the study Reported Contact with the Dead, Religious Involvement, and Death Anxiety in Late Life by Krause because both the study and the textbook show that there is a worry about death. This is especially prominent within older people, along with those who have lost faith in religion. According to Christiano, Swatos & Kivisto's,

“The effects of the death of older generations being powerfully compounded by the small sizes of rising generations, as the elderly often may lose potential connections to their religious base when family members are not nearby,” (CS&K 203).

The findings of Finke and Stark's work with religious membership were quoted as major contributors to the study and highly praised for their work in the textbook. Faith, Race-Ethnicity, and Public Policy Preferences: Religious Schemas and Abortion Attitudes Among U.S. Latinos by Bartkowski, Ramos-Wada, Ellison and Acevedo, relates to the textbook in the way that they both show the topic of abortion in very clear lighting, specifically when it comes to it being related to religion. According to Christiano, Swatos & Kivisto's,

“People who accept all four of the principal doctrines and are in an evangelical Protestant denomination and define themselves as part of the evangelical movement are overwhelmingly pro-life,” (CS&K 194).

This though is not the same as in the study because the textbook is broader, and the study is more niche it does directly correlate to what the study's final results state.

The textbook relates to the study Perpetuating Stereotypes: A Study of Gender, Family, and Religious Life in Jewish Children's Books by Sigalow and Fox through the Jewish rule of Halacha. In the textbook, specifically in chapter 6, the book mentions the ways that Judaism changed over the years because of different groups of Jewish immigrants. These different migrations of Jewish people to the United States created an Orthodox Judaism that many Jewish people follow and allow to govern both their religious and personal

actions. Halacha became one of the rules Jewish people lived by because of the new Orthodox Judaism.

Christiano, Swatos & Kivisto's refer to Halacha stating,

“The Orthodox community likewise grew. Orthodox Judaism was the vehicle for an anti-accommodationist stance toward the hegemonic culture. It served as the institutional home for traditionalists intent on limiting social relations with Gentiles while demanding the strict observance of Jewish law (Halacha),” (CS&K 272).

This explanation in the textbook shows Halacha in the same light that the article does.

Each article though vastly different, from topic to religion specified in the study, all make sense cohesively in some ways. Each one talked about rather western religions that are shown in United States media. I learned that many Christians have had some form of contact with the dead, that extremely protestant Latinos are more likely to be anti-abortion than their Catholic counterparts, and those older Jewish laws such as Halacha govern the way Jewish people see their roles in religion from a very early age. The RAO system is great, it helped me identify the most important part of the study and still have the ability to skim over the less important parts. It helped me understand and take notes on the article in a way that I had not been able to do before. I hope to use this skill later in life. I learned a lot about capitalism and how it in-turn governs religion. I opened the textbook expecting to learn facts about how each religion started but instead of that, I ended up learning about the ins and outs of how religion grew in western society and how people like Carl Marx and Max Weber influenced people's views on religion. The best takeaway I can think of would be that no matter what religion a person practices, if one practices at all, people are all connected in their values of a higher power and each one can be corrupt by said higher power.

Works Cited

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