
ANNOTATION

Schieler, FSC, Robert. "An Assessment of Animistic Beliefs Among Filipino High School Students" EdD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1988. 202 pp.

The researcher designed a significant mixed methods study to understand and assess the duality of spiritual beliefs in 100 urban and 100 rural (n=200) first and fourth year students in a rural region of the Philippines. The purpose of this study was to increase the understanding on how a duality between traditional animist beliefs were existing with Christianity as taught and practiced and taught in the Catholic schools these participants attended (19). Of particular interest were the effects of enculturation, as defined in the study as "...the successful implantation, adaptation, and adoption of the message of Christ in the new cultural environment" (3).

The co-existence, relationship, and nuances of the existence of animism and Roman Catholicism in Filipino youth was the principle dualism under study, within the context of influences of education, urbanization, and post-WWII economic, political, and social factors (18-19). The study attempted to assess the strength and to some degree dissonance caused by the duality of spiritual beliefs held by participants. This inquiry was buoyed by seven sub-questions: a) to what extent is urban living associated with animistic beliefs? b) to what extent is parental occupational level associated with animistic beliefs? c) to what extent parental educational level associated with animistic beliefs? d) to what extent is years of Catholic education associated with animistic beliefs? e) to what exposure to mass media associated with animistic beliefs? f) to what extent is age associated with animistic beliefs? g) to what extent is gender associated with animistic beliefs? (19-20)

The review of literature describes a fascinating comparison of traditional Filipino animist traditions juxtaposed with foundational Christian theology. The study provides a helpful description of the approach and characteristics of folk religions (11-12) As described by the author, a helpful base of comparison is the commonality of belief in a Supreme Being and "lesser spirits," mediators, intercessors that is shared between faiths (17). The review of literature also posits two interesting question of religious scholars regarding the adaptation of folk Catholicism: a) is Catholicism being absorbed or doing the absorbing in the foreign culture? b) what is the Church's position when Catholicism and an indigenous religious belief system meet? (38-39) The author explores the concept of syncretism, or the mixing of two religious systems to the point where at least one, if not both, lose their basic structure and identity (39). A salient point for consideration is offered through this discussion as to the importance of the origin and form of the perspective offering the syncretism assessment, whether it be from the Western or indigenous point of view. The researcher also provides a critical aspect of cultural history and context by reflecting that in 300 year of Spanish control of the Philippines, the Spaniards did not encourage or force the learning of Spanish by the Filipinos, however the learning of English was a requirement of the established American model of education (44-45).

The sample was stratified into four subgroups of first and fourth-year high school students from a urban and rural Catholic high school in the province of Lanao del Norte on the southern island of Mindanao, Philippines (24). Each subgroup, first year urban, first year rural, fourth year urban, fourth year rural contained 50 participants (24). The dependent variable in the research was defined as the belief in animism, with the independent variables being defined as residence, years in Catholic education, sex, age, mass media exposure, parental occupation, and parental educational attainment (56). After two pilot studies, five instruments were utilized in the data collection: a) a 20 item Likert scale questionnaire was employed to assess animistic beliefs b) a narrative two question vignette free-response tool was use to gage either an animist or modern response c) a free-response tool was developed to assess participants response to frightening experiences in their lives as an attempt to minimize any animistic mindset among the participants d) a short answer instrument was utilized in which participants read three Biblical passages which mention evil spirits in an attempt to assess their perceptions of the relationship between the Christian spirit world and animistic spirit world and e) participants completed a personal background questionnaire (25, 60, 61). Items on all five instruments were presented in both Cebuano and English (62). SPSS was utilized in the statistical analysis of collected data and creation of Chi-square analysis, Pearson's correlation, t-tests and factor analysis (64).

To varying degrees, animistic beliefs seemed to be held by students in the study. In response to the seven sub-questions, the research found: a) place of residence did not appear to have a significant influence on the acceptance or rejection of animistic beliefs b) parental occupational level did have correlation to the place of residence, but not acceptance or rejection of animistic beliefs c) parental educational level was not associated with participant acceptance or rejection of animist beliefs d) the acceptance or rejection of animist beliefs did not seem to correlate with type of school attended e) mass media exposure was highly correlated with residence, it was not correlated to acceptance or rejection of animistic beliefs f) based on the analysis of the data, age was the only significant variable related to animistic beliefs; the older the student, the less likely they were to maintain animistic beliefs g) based on the data collected, males and females did not differ significantly statistically differ in the acceptance of animistic beliefs (127-130).

The author offers a detailed interpretation of the study findings at the paper's conclusion. Significantly, in addition to confirming the belief in the existence of animistic beliefs continue to be evident among lowland Filipino youth, the findings of this study suggest a dual-belief system can exist within the same individual, even in the presence of confusion and dissonance, and that Filipinos can move from one belief system to the other (136-137). As an unanticipated result, the data do show a lack of significant difference in acceptance or rejection of animistic beliefs when comparing urban and rural groups (137). The researcher concludes with suggestions for future research, including a call for further investigation of the significant independent variable identified in the study, age of the student, into college age students (151).