

Case Study Procedures

INTR 565: Folk Religions

A. Scott Moreau

Why a case study? The purpose of working through case studies in this course is to enable you to develop skills in four major areas:

- a. The ability to think through and discern what the actual issues are (**critical reasoning and analysis**)
- b. The ability to avoid major mistakes which can set a ministry back for years to come (**developing biblical/theological sensitivity and wisdom**)
- c. The ability to work together with a group and arrive at a group decision as to how to deal with a real life problem (**community and team relationships and learning in the theologizing process**)
- d. The ability to learn and change your thinking as a result of discussion with others who see things differently from you (**learning to learn!**)

Prior to the class period in which we discuss the case:

1. Read the case carefully to become thoroughly acquainted with all of the details under consideration. Be sure to identify the theological issue(s) in the case.
2. Construct a rough time line of the events that led to the situation being considered (simply draw or write it out in your book)
3. Using a high lighter, identify all of the significant characters in the case.

On your worksheet . . .

. . . list the major sets of factors involved in choosing a course of action.

4. Decision(s) faced (front of worksheet): what decision does is the person being asked to make? Include any contextual specifics of relevance (i.e., important factors in the immediate context of the case study such as deadlines, impending dangers, etc.);
5. Phenomenological analysis (front of worksheet):
 - a. From the insider's and, *when appropriate*, the cross-cultural worker's perspectives, what folk religious issues come from each of the six dimensions of religion (see Case Studies Supplement), and how might they affect the decision-making process?
 - b. Especially in the social dimension, what *cultural* and *institutional pressures* are present in the social institutions? For the institutional pressures, refer to the Case Studies Supplement.
6. Relevant Scriptural guidelines (back of worksheet):
 - a. What are the most significant and **relevant** scriptural texts, principles, case studies, and guidelines which must be weighed in the decision-making process? List ideas together with

appropriate biblical references. You should have at least five references, with at least 2 from the Old Testament.

- b. Are there non-Scriptural principles which are being promoted as Scriptural? What are they, and why are they inappropriate?
7. Identify what you consider to be the one best solution (back of worksheet). For that solution, propose
- a. What the solution is and
 - b. How that solution may be implemented, involving a specific course of action (how the main character in the case study would implement the proposed solution). This course of action should accord with scriptural principles, be culturally sensitive, and focus on the central issue(s) of the case.

During class time . . .

I will use a variety of methods to split you into groups and discuss the case. You may write corrections, clarifications, new thoughts, etc. on your Worksheet, but write them in a different color from your pre-class work.

After class . . .

And *before* the next class session, write a brief post-discussion report (*maximum* of 500 words) noting what you learned under the following three headings:

Section I. What I Learned about Theological Development

What insights did you gain or were reinforced in this case study about the process of developing theology and theological convictions? How does culture interfere and/or enhance our approaches to theological thinking about practical issues? When cultures or values clash, how might our theology change as a result?

Section II. What I Learned about Applying Contextualization Theory to Live Settings

How does the theory and discussion in the course notes and class apply to the settings seen in the case studies? What theory(ies) or idea(s) did you find particularly helpful in this case? This section may overlap with the first section, but is intended to be broader than just theological development. You may also consider which of the dimensions of contextualization has the most relevance for your study and why.

Section III. What I Learned about Myself as a Contextualizer

This should include both positive and negative lessons. Did you see how your own theology is intertwined with your cultural values? Did you see evidence of flexibility? Did you find yourself compromising too easily? How did you handle the tensions between truth and relationships? What type of role(s) did you play in your group (initiator, respondent, facilitator, peace-maker, conflict initiator or evader, etc.)? On your original solution, what did you propose that would help develop trust?

At the start of the following week's class session, turn in your worksheet and your post-discussion report (in 1st person). Note that I will be looking for evidence that you know both your weaknesses and strengths.

Case Study Supplement:

DREEMS: The Six Dimensions of Religion

Doctrine: Important *truths expressed in religious form*. These may be propositional or experiential, objective or subjective. They teach about the world, the universe, and the relationship of people within the larger structures. May or may not be directly related to “real life”. They may be organized in a stand-alone fashion, or scattered within the mythic, ethical, and ritual structures. Answer “What is truth about the world, people, and the unseen powers?”

Ethics: Values of *how people are to behave* as they relate to other people, animals, and the world. These are found on the personal, group, and social level. They are deeply interwoven into the cultural values and doctrine, and often enshrined in heroic (or evil) acts discussed in cultural myth. They provide the maps which we negotiate as we live and interact with others.

Myth: The *stories of a culture* which reflect its thinking about the world, itself, its laws and values. Myth concretizes important values for the culture and enables those values to be passed from generation to generation. Technically focused in timeless stories of creation, redemption and human/divine drama (Scripture, epics and classics). On an informal level found in folklore, fairy stories, and proverbs.

Ritual: *Regularized ceremonies of life* which provide “places” of security 1) through reparation for broken taboo ,2) events which mark transition from one phase of life to another, and 3) intensifying social cohesion through participation with the community in culturally important celebrations.

Experience: How we *feel the transcendent* in our lives and whether we consider that experience to be a significant element of our religious lives. Can range from the mundane to the sublime, though generally focused more on the latter. Includes such things as dreams, visions, out-of-the-body events, trance, possession, shamanic journeys, and so on.

Social: The element of religion that expresses the *linking of people to each other*, built on the cultural values of how people are to relate socially in religious contexts. Includes social institutions (see below) as well as the sense of belonging inculcated through socially -experienced religious events. For the types of institutions and their importance, see the AKEEL system description below and overleaf.

Social Institutions: A Summary Chart of the AKEEL System

	System	Need	Elements
A	Association	Polarization of people with similar purposes and/or objectives	Symbols or slogans, purpose (formal or informal), number of persons belonging
K	Kinship	Biological reproduction of new members	Descent, authority, residence, inheritance, marriage
E	Education	To provide new members with the knowledge, values, and skills of the society	Formal: schools, universities, trade schools Informal: books, television, newspaper, effective others Nonformal: Kin, friends, peer groups
E	Economics	To distribute the goods and services which sustain the livelihood of its members	Types of enterprises, population of persons who work, ecology, systems of exchange and means of payment
L	Law, Political	To maintain internal order and to regulate relations with others	Government: courts, city hall, police Public Utilities and services

Case Studies Supplement:
The Social Dimension of Contextualization:
Human Social Institutions

In every culture we must face the fact of human institutions which together give cohesiveness to the culture and facilitate the functioning of all elements of life. AKEEL is a helpful acronym for the first letters of the individual systems (modified from the KEEPRAH paradigm presented in Harris and Moran, "Understanding Cultural Differences," pp. 62-72 to fit the particularities of the INTR 532 case studies and the Hiebert and Meneses discussion):

A = **Association**. The associational system of a community is one of the more difficult categories to conceptualize. It would include social groupings such as unions, clubs, societies, cooperatives, parties, etc. These are often seen within the other institutions (e.g., alumni associations, political parties, and economic cooperatives)

K = **Kinship**. Every society must provide for the biological reproduction of new members and see that they are nourished and cared for during infancy and childhood. Nearly everywhere it is the family which provides the basic context for the performance of these activities. Most of the early training and socialization of children also takes place within the family.

K = **Education**. Education (formal, non-formal, and informal) is a facet of the socialization process necessary to all societies. As an institutional term, education refers to all those activities which, in any way, directly or indirectly, contribute to providing new members, either by birth or immigration, with the knowledge, values and skills of the society. These are transmitted to the new member in order to prepare her or him to live and function within the society in a socially acceptable manner with some degree of independence.

E = **Economics**. Every culture must have some way of producing and distributing the goods and services which sustain the lives of its members. The set of institutions and roles which are organized around the performance of these activities constitutes the economic system of the culture. Often there is an idealized portrait of what that system is which may not correspond to the actual events of life for the average person.

L = **Law, Legal, and Politics**. All communities or cultures must have some means of maintaining internal order and, at the same time, regulating their relations with other communities or cultures. Internal threats to a culture's existence come from the competition for power, here defined as the control over human, man-made, and natural resources. Since the availability of such resources has ultimate limits in any community (or culture) conflict of images and plans over the use of those resources is inevitable. The political system, therefore, is the network of institutions and social roles which exist to control the competition for power.