

RLG101H FIELD RESEARCH ANALYSIS – EXAMPLE PARAGRAPHS

Description + analysis: Below you will find an example of **describing** a pattern or theme in the first paragraph, and then **analyzing** that pattern/theme in the second paragraph using a theory from Nye’s text. The description concerns the various ways in which blankets are used by a fictional religious community focused on iguana worship (i.e., the pattern/theme is “blankets”). The theory used to analyze these observations comes from chapter 6 of Nye’s book (Ritual). Note: you may NOT use this theory (or any other theories from chapter 6) in your own assignment.

In your analysis, you MUST choose your theory ONLY from chapter 2, 3, or 4.

Description + Analysis Example Paragraphs

One aspect of our visit to the “Shrine of the Holy Iguana” that stood out to me was the presence of blankets. Just outside the entrance to the building was a large stone statue of an iguana covered with a worn, weather beaten, red afghan. Inside we saw four more statues and six paintings of iguanas, and in each case the iguana was similarly wrapped. Along one hallway, I noticed bulletin boards containing various notices, including information about community events and charitable causes. However, most of the board space was filled by advertisements for blanket manufacturers, outlets, and websites. The main ritual itself was led by a woman at the centre of the largest room in the shrine, who had a red blanket draped over her shoulders. Everyone at the ritual was dressed differently from one another, but each person had a soft, blue blanket beside them. At one point the woman in the centre yelled out: “By the power of the Holy Iguana, let us be covered!” All the people in the room then wrapped themselves in their blankets. These blankets were large enough to envelop each person entirely.

According to Emile Durkheim, “ritual actions do not only involve people in relationships with each other, the performance of rituals actually creates those relationships” (Nye 2008, 141–2). Given the presence of blankets throughout the shrine and especially in the group activity that I witnessed, blankets seem to be a key ritual item for creating relationships at the “Shrine of the Holy Iguana.” The blankets first of all generate an economic connection between participants in this religion and the people and companies outside the religion who manufacture and sell blankets to the Iguana community. They also of course link the members of the community with one another. Before the final ritual action everyone was dressed distinctly and appeared separate from one another. The blankets during the final ritual action created a clear connection between the people as the physical differences between everyone were covered over, leaving each person looking like everyone else inside their blanket. The blankets also symbolically linked people to the holy iguana itself, since all of the statues and images of the iguana were similarly covered. In this respect, Durkheim’s theory that rituals create relationships between people definitely seems applicable to the ways in which I saw blankets used in the Shrine of the Holy Iguana.

Bibliography

Nye, Malory. 2008. *Religion: The Basics*, 2nd edition. London and New York: Routledge.

Note: See next page for annotations on the above text. These comments will help you understand key features of the “Iguana” paragraphs.

Description + Analysis Example Paragraphs

One aspect of our visit to the “Shrine of the Holy Iguana” that stood out to me was the presence of blankets. Just outside the entrance to the building was a large stone statue of an iguana covered with a worn, weather beaten, red afghan. Inside we saw four more statues and six paintings of iguanas, and in each case the iguana was similarly wrapped. Along one hallway, I noticed bulletin boards containing various notices, including information about community events and charitable causes. However, most of the board space was filled by advertisements for blanket manufacturers, outlets, and websites. The main ritual itself was led by a woman at the centre of the largest room in the shrine, who had a red blanket draped over her shoulders. Everyone at the ritual was dressed differently from one another, but each person had a soft, blue blanket beside them. At one point the woman in the centre yelled out: “By the power of the Holy Iguana, let us be covered!” All the people in the room then wrapped themselves in their blankets. These blankets were large enough to envelop each person entirely.

According to Emile Durkheim, “ritual actions do not only involve people in relationships with each other, the performance of rituals actually creates those relationships” (Nye 2008, 141–2). Given the presence of blankets throughout the shrine and especially in the group activity that I witnessed, blankets seem to be a key ritual item for creating relationships at the “Shrine of the Holy Iguana.” Rituals using blankets first of all generate an economic connection between participants in this religion and the people and companies outside the religion who manufacture and sell blankets to the Iguana community. These rituals also of course link the members of the community with one another. Before the final ritual action everyone was dressed distinctly and appeared separate from one another. The blankets during the final ritual action created a clear connection between the people as the physical differences between everyone were covered over, leaving each person looking like everyone else inside their blanket. The blankets also symbolically linked people to the holy iguana itself, since all of the statues and images of the iguana were similarly covered. In this respect, Durkheim’s theory that rituals create relationships between people definitely seems applicable to the ways in which I saw blankets used in the Shrine of the Holy Iguana.

Bibliography

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Ken Derry 2018-3-4 11:19 PM

Comment [1]: Indent each paragraph by tabbing half an inch from the left margin.

Ken Derry 2018-3-4 11:19 PM

Comment [2]: Identify the theme or pattern at the start (e.g., “presence of blankets”). This tells your reader what the topic of the paragraph will be.

Ken Derry 2017-10-30 4:44 PM

Comment [3]: Descriptions of past events and observations are in PAST tense.

Ken Derry 2017-10-30 4:31 PM

Comment [4]: It is acceptable to use “I” in certain contexts, such as descriptions of your experiences and observations.

Ken Derry 2018-3-4 11:18 PM

Comment [5]: Notice that this paragraph is **entirely descriptive**. There is no mention of the theory here and no attempt to interpret any of the observations. **No assumptions** are made about what anything at the site might **mean**. Also, even though this is a short paragraph it still contains five separate observations (about the statue outside, the statues and paintings inside, the bulletin boards, what the woman wore and said, and what the people did in response). This is meant to show two things:
1. You can pack a lot into a short space if you choose your words carefully.
2. A “pattern” or “theme” consists of *several* linked observations, not just one point.

Ken Derry 2018-3-4 11:18 PM

Comment [6]: The topic of this paragraph must be the application of a particular theory to your data (in this case it’s Durkheim’s theory of ritual actions and relationships).

Ken Derry 2017-10-30 4:36 PM

Comment [7]: Once again use the CMS author-date method of citing Nye.

Ken Derry 2017-10-30 4:35 PM

Comment [8]: Analysis (using theory) must be in PRESENT tense.

Ken Derry 2017-10-30 4:37 PM

Comment [9]: Note how theory is woven together with *brief* references back to the descriptions in the previous paragraph, leading to a conclusion. Note also that this analysis is an *argument*. Someone might use this same evidence to support a different conclusion.

Ken Derry 2017-10-30 4:37 PM

Comment [10]: Your bibliography should **ONLY** contain Nye’s text.