



Project 2021-1-BG01-KA122-ADU-000035679 Safety and success, Erasmus+



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Methods and techniques for increasing interreligious tolerance



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Partners:

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Introduction to interreligious tolerance

- Interreligious tolerance refers to the ability to appreciate spiritual values, beliefs and practices which are different from your own. This goal is a complex one due the diversity of religions and spiritual beliefs existing in the world today. Religion is also a very emotional topic. It can often be difficult for individuals to put their personal biases aside and consider ideas or situations objectively.
- There is an ongoing debate between theorists who favor cultural/ethical relativism (the idea that the “moral rightness and wrongness of actions varies from society to society and that there are no absolute universal moral standards binding on all men at all times) and those who favor the idea that all human beings share an inherent sense of right and wrong, which can be determined objectively. Given these difficulties and controversies, any discussion of religion can present special challenges.



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Religious intolerance

- Religious intolerance is intolerance of another's religious beliefs or practices or lack thereof.
- Mere statements which are contrary to one's beliefs do not constitute intolerance. Religious intolerance, rather, occurs when a group (e.g., a society, a religious group, a non-religious group) specifically refuses to tolerate one's practices, persons or beliefs on religious grounds.
- According to contemporary study, religion is the “final frontier” of personal prejudice, with attitudes to faith driving negative perceptions more than ethnicity or nationality.
- Religion is a “red line” for many people, the study – based on a survey of 11,700 adults in the UK– says. This is particularly so in the case of Muslims.



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How to develop interreligious tolerance

- Rethinking the category of religion:
- People think of religion as grouping humans based on shared social qualities. Yet, religion is not a naturally occurring phenomenon under a rigid framework of categorization. Identifying what is religion is like identifying what counts as a sport—the criteria are ambiguous. Although we think of religion as being connected by a common feature, what we call religion may be connected by a series of similarities, where no 1 feature is common to all. Religious traditions do not reveal discrete, bounded entities.
- Providing youth with definitions about what religion “is” can perpetuate misconceptions about religious groups. Some religious traditions may appear on the surface distinct from any type of religion. This invites the danger of relegating other people’s beliefs to a “lesser” category, such as paranormal, superstitious, etc.. Just like racial categories are weak markers for genetic diversity, religious traditions do not reliably reveal differences between humans, yet may continue to fuel prejudice and discrimination.

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A recipe for tolerance

- ▶ The fractionation method reveals that religious traditions, which appear different on the surface, are more similar than we think.
- ▶ Consider a hypothetical example of tradition A, B, and C. Tradition A engages with ancestors in the immediate environment, tradition B pays homage to an all-powerful God, and Tradition C accepts the notion of karma. All traditions evoke culturally transmitted ideas about supernatural punishment, though they may take different forms. In tradition A, “the ancestors are seeking revenge,” B “God is punishing us,” and C, “it is the result of karma.” These propositions ultimately depend upon intuitions of interpersonal fairness, including immanent justice and punishment proportionate to misdeeds. These biases encourage the transmission of cultural information about both karma and moralizing supernatural forces. The scientific re-configuration of religious elements provides more rigorous points of comparison between and across traditions.



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Scientific methods

- By dividing up religious systems into smaller components, a scientific approach can reveal underlying similarities within and between cultures. By showcasing how religions are similar, this approach has the potential to cultivate a sense of togetherness and tolerance within and between cultures.
- This method has facilitated a deeper understanding of many aspects of religion. These include how and why children reason about and respond to phenomena that are staples of religion, such as gods and supernatural agents, the design and origin of the natural world, and life before, or after, death.
- Likewise, evolutionary and cognitive research has also demonstrated how adults represent and respond to a variety of religious concepts. These include the transmission of religious ideas; gods and supernatural agents, supernatural causes of illness, the origins of the natural world, and a creator deity; prayer, reasoning about life events; continued existence in the afterlife, and ritualized actions.

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