

Durkheim's Theory of Religious Gatherings

Answers question of how sacred/profane division arose

Three crucial components

1. Periodic assembling
2. Establishing a common focus (e.g., sacred object)
3. Engaging in collective ritual actions regarding the object

Effects of these gatherings:

1. Periodic gatherings make the social group real

“It is by uttering the same cry, pronouncing the same word, or performing the same gesture in regard to the same object that they become and feel themselves to be in unison... So it is the homogeneity of these [common] movements that gives the group consciousness of itself and consequently makes it exist”

2. Feelings of emotional solidarity, excitement, exhilaration & comfort
3. Feelings are attributed to common focus/group symbol
4. Makes symbols of the group sacred

Research using Durkheim's theory of religious gatherings

Pevin (1968): Tupperware as sacred object

Schweingruber (1999): periodic gatherings of door-to-door salespersons