

Title of Lesson: An Exploration of Religious Behaviors between Brazil and the United States

Target Audience: 9th-12th grade.

Time Required: (1-2) 45-minute class periods.

Goal: Students will compare and contrast religious behaviors of Americans and Brazilians.

Objective(s): Given the Spirit and Power Survey, students will be able to compare and contrast religious attitudes, practices and experiences of Americans and Brazilians by answering a set of 24 questions. Based on their findings, students will determine whether there is a difference in religious behavior between Americans and Brazilians.



An Exploration of Religious Behaviors

Most religions include a comprehensive belief system that connects its followers to a spiritual force or divine being and offers a set of moral values and practices prescribed by these beliefs. Culture, geographical location and tradition often influence the practices and behaviors of a religion's adherents and the form of the religion itself. In this module, we will compare and contrast the religious expressions found in Brazil and the United States. Although both are a part of the Americas, and both have a high percentage of their residents identifying as Christian, these two countries are decidedly distinct from each other. One is known for soccer, samba, and carnival, and the other is known as the land of freedom, opportunity and high living standards. Yet, when it comes to religion, are they all that different? Let's find out! Using quantitative data from the Association of Religion Data Archives (the ARDA) you will explore the religious attitude, practices and experiences of Americans and Brazilians.

Step 1- Country Profile

Before beginning to explore Brazilian and American religious behavior, you will gather some information about both countries.

Using the compare nation tool from the Association of Religion Data Archive (the ARDA) website, [located here](#), gather the following summary information about both countries. First, select Brazil as country number 1 and the United States as country number 2 from the drop-down menu. Click on the run comparison button directly below the drop down menu.

Population:

Brazil	United States

Total Area (square miles):

Brazil	United States

Life Expectancy at Birth:

Brazil	United States

Gross National Income Per Capita (US dollars):

Brazil	United States

Before we begin exploring the religious behavior of each nation, answer the following questions.

1. What religious group do you think has the largest number of adherents in Brazil?

2. What religious group do you think has the largest number of adherents in the United States?

3. Are you correct? Let's find out. Use the Adherents tab, which is located directly to the right of Summary tab, to find the correct answer. From the list of religious adherents, which religious group has the largest percentage of adherents in Brazil?

4. Which religious group has the largest percentage of adherents in the United States?

Step 2 – Comparing and Contrasting

Were you surprised? In both the United States and Brazil, the majority of religious adherents are Christian. Let's now examine some of their religious behaviors to determine any differences or similarities in practices, beliefs or experiences between Christians in both countries. In this step we will use the Spirit and Power survey, a multi-country survey commissioned by the Pew Forum of Religion and Public Life, to dig deeper into the religious lifestyles of Americans and Brazilians. To access the Spirit and Power survey conducted in Brazil, [click here](#). To access the Spirit and Power survey conducted in the United States [click here](#).

5. Considering the degree of the importance of religion in the life of American and Brazilians, what percentage of participants answered that religion was the single most important thing, very important, and not at all important? (Hint: [BR Q8](#), [USA Q8](#))

	% of Brazilians	% of Americans
<i>Single most important thing</i>		
<i>Very important</i>		
<i>Not at all important</i>		

6. According to your findings, is there a difference between the groups? If so, which group would you say prioritizes religion the most?

Religious Involvement

Now let's examine yet another aspect – religious involvement.

7. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do Americans and Brazilians attend religious services? (Hint: [BR Q29](#), [USA Q29](#))

	% of Brazilians	% of Americans
<i>More than once a week</i>		
<i>Once a week</i>		
<i>Never</i>		

8. How often do Americans and Brazilians pray outside of religious services? (Hint: [BR Q15](#), [USA Q15](#))

	% of Brazilians	% of Americans
<i>Every day</i>		
<i>More than once a week</i>		
<i>Never</i>		

9. According to your findings above, is there a difference between the groups? If so, which group would you say attends services more? Which is more involved in prayer?

10. How often do both groups read scripture outside of religious services? (Hint: [BR Q20](#), [USA Q20](#))

	% of Brazilians	% of Americans
<i>Every day</i>		
<i>More than once a week</i>		
<i>Never</i>		

11. How often do both groups participate in prayer groups, scripture study or religious education programs? (Hint: [BR Q17](#), [USA Q17](#))

	% of Brazilians	% of Americans
<i>Once a week</i>		
<i>More than once a week</i>		
<i>Never</i>		

12. According to your findings above, is there a difference between the groups? If so, which group would you say is more involved in reading scripture? Which is more involved in prayer groups, scripture study or religious education programs?

13. How often do both groups share their faith with non-believers? (Hint: [BR Q19](#), [USA Q19](#))

	% of Brazilians	% of Americans
<i>Every day</i>		
<i>More than once a week</i>		
<i>Never</i>		

14. According to your findings above, is there a difference between the groups? If so, which group would you say is more involved in sharing their faith with non-believers?

Religious Experience

15. When asked if they have ever received a definite answer to a specific prayer, what percentage of Americans and Brazilians said yes? (Hint: [BR Q33](#), [USA Q33](#))

	% of Brazilians	% of Americans
<i>Percentage of participants that have received a definite answer.</i>		

16. How many have received a direct revelation from God? (Hint: [BR Q34](#), [USA Q34](#))

	% of Brazilians	% of Americans
<i>Percentage of participants that have received a direct revelation from God.</i>		

17. How many have ever experienced or witnessed a divine healing of an illness or injury? (Hint: [BR Q31](#), [USA Q31](#))

	% of Brazilians	% of Americans
<i>Percentage of participants that have experienced or witnessed a divine healing of an illness or injury.</i>		

18. How many have experienced or witnessed the devil or evil spirits being driven out of a person? (Hint: [BR Q35](#), [USA Q35](#))

	% of Brazilians	% of Americans
<i>Percentage of participants that have experienced or witnessed the devil or evil spirits being driven out of a person.</i>		

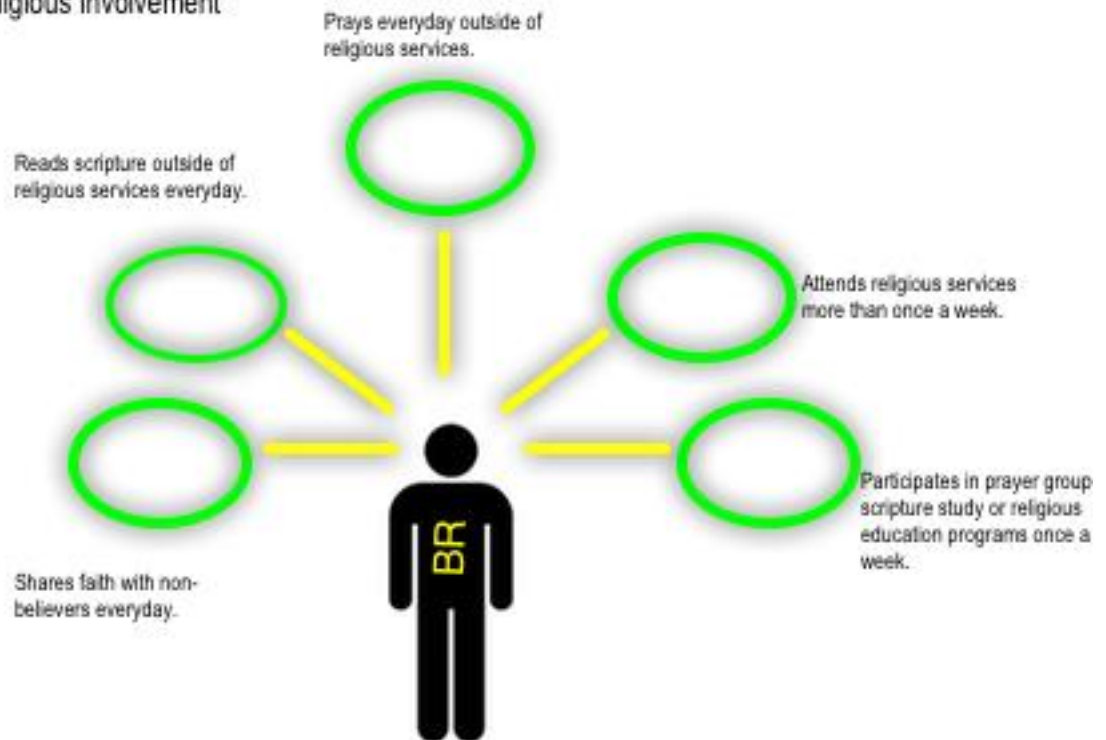
19. According to your findings above, is there a difference between the groups? If so, which group would you say is more involved in religious experiences?

20. Are there any interesting patterns in your findings when comparing religious involvement and religious experience between Brazil and the United States? Please explain your answer.

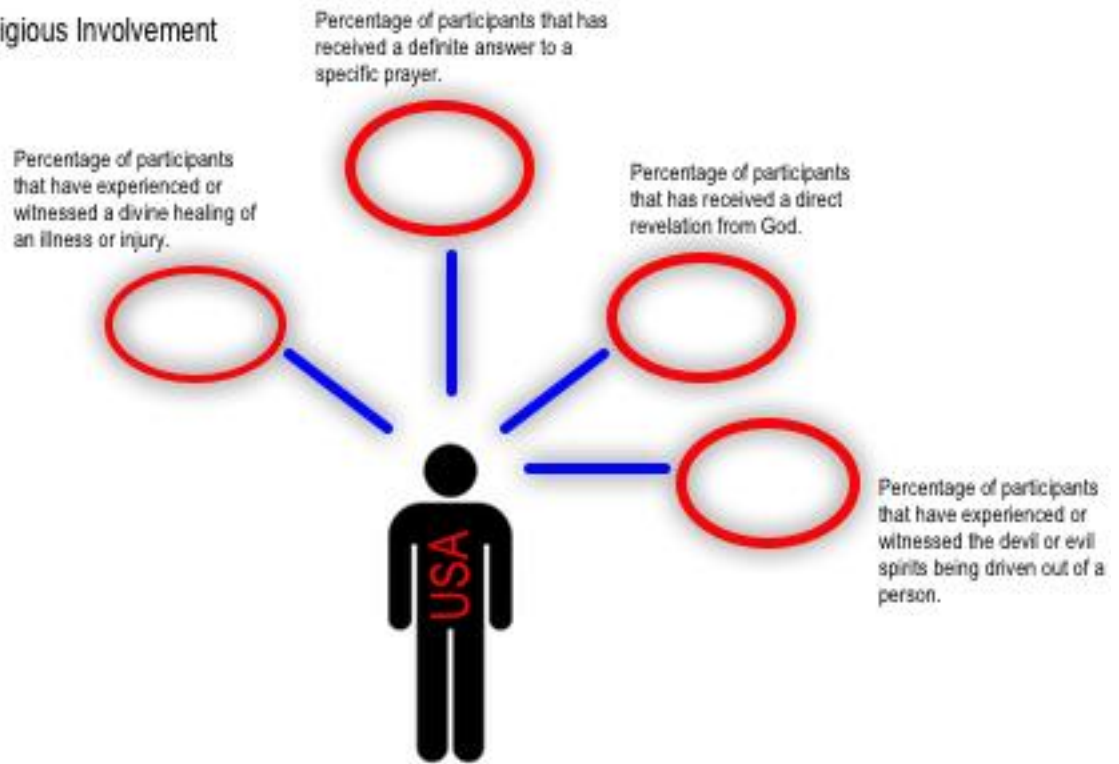
Step 3: Drawing Conclusions

21. Now that you have compared and contrasted the expressions of Christianity in Brazil and the United States, your next step will be to draw some conclusions. Based on the trends you may have observed in step 2, complete the diagrams below that represent the religious involvement of American and Brazilian Christians.

Religious Involvement

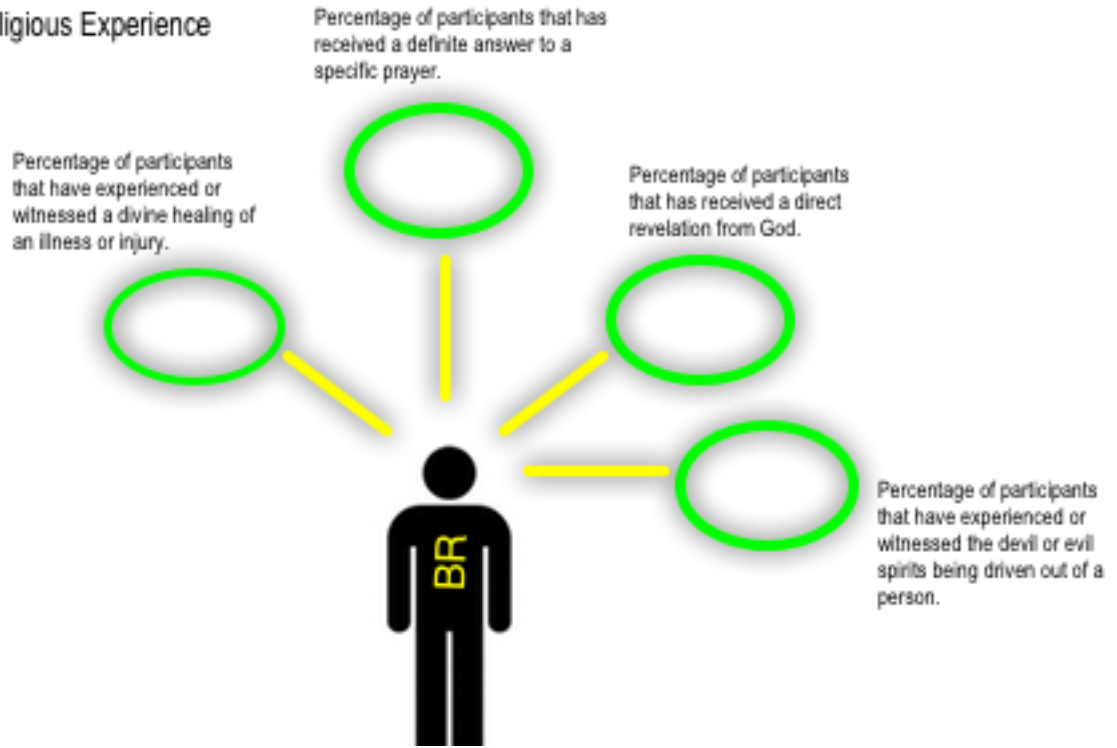


Religious Involvement

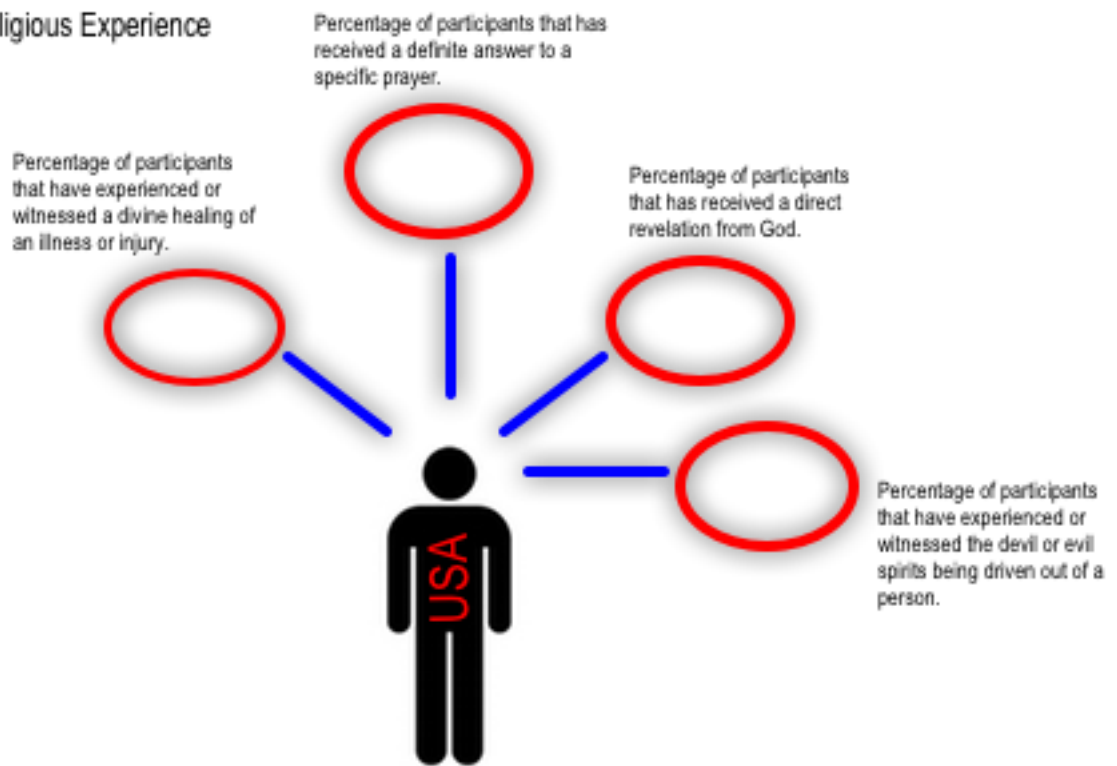


21. Diagrams help us analyze, visualize, and organize data. The next step is to complete the diagrams below that represent the religious experiences of Brazilian and American Christians.

Religious Experience



Religious Experience



Use the diagrams you have created above to help you answer the following questions.

22. At the end of step two, you were asked to share interesting patterns and findings when comparing the groups. How do the diagrams you created above support or contradict the patterns/trends you found?

23. From the diagrams above, did you find any relationship between religious involvement and religious experiences? For example, the relationship between the percentages of participants who pray every day and the percentage of participants who have received a definite answer to a specific prayer.

24. Based on your findings, which country seems to be more religious? Please explain.