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**ANTH 1102**

**Attendance/Participation Questions for Week 2: Symbols**

**Week 2: Symbols**

**Attendance/Participation:** Your attendance/participation will be determined by your post in the discussion board. Read the entire article before answering the questions. Only answer one option each covering the topic, thesis, and cultural example (aim for 250 words):

**Option 1 (Ortner article):**

Ortner, Sherry B. "[On Key Symbols."](https://login.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu/login?qurl=https://www.jstor.org/stable/674036)*American Anthropologist*, New Series, 75, no. 5 (1973): 1338-346. Accessed March 16, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/674036>.

A. (Topic) What is the main point of the Ortner article?  (One sentence)

B. (Thesis) Ortner’s defines three types of key symbols (Summarizing Symbol, Root metaphor, Key Metaphor). Here is her definition of summarizing symbol:

 “those symbols which are seen as summing up, expressing, representing for the participants in an emotionally powerful and relatively undifferentiated way, way the system means to them.  This category is essentially the category of sacred symbols in the broadest sense, and includes all those items which are objects of reverence and/or catalysts of emotion” (2008: 154).  Summarizing symbols “ operate to compound and synthesize a complex system of ideas, to “summarize” them under a unitary form which, in an old-fashioned way, “stands for” the system as a whole” (Ortner 2008: 154).

What does she mean by summarizing symbol? ( Explain in your own words what the above quotation means and how it contributes to her over all thesis argument). (This should be at least 3 sentences)

C. (Cultural Example) Ortner uses the American Flag as an illustrating example of a summarizing symbol.  Can you give an example of another summarizing symbol (not a flag)? (Explain how your example fits her definition of a summarizing symbol – how does your example sum up what is important for the culture, how does it emotionally express the cultures meaning, how is it sacred?).

**Option 2 (Wolf article):**

Wolf, Eric R. "[The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol."](https://login.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu/login?qurl=https://www.jstor.org/stable/537957)*The Journal of American Folklore* 71, no. 279 (1958): 34-39. Accessed March 16, 2021. doi:10.2307/537957.

A. (Topic) What is the main point of this article?  (One sentence)

B. (Thesis) Wolf’s article illustrates several key points (An origin myth, Syncretism, Multivocal Master symbol). Wolf states that “In this paper, I should like to discus this Mexican master symbol, and the ideology which surrounds it” (Wolf 1958: 34). He goes on to clarify what he means by master symbols to suggest they “provide the cultural idiom of behavior and ideal representations through which different groups of the same society can pursue and manipulate their different fates within a coordinated framework.  This paper, then, deals with one such cultural form, operating on the symbolic level.  The study of this symbol seems particularly rewarding, since it is not restricted to one set of social ties, but refers to a very wide range of social relationships” (Wolf 1958: 34).  At the end of the article, he summarizes:

“The Guadalupe symbol thus links together family, politics and religion; colonial past and independent present; Indian and Mexican.  It reflects the salient social relationships of Mexican life, and embodies the emotions which they generate.  It provides a cultural idiom through which the tenor and emotions of these relationships can be expressed.  It is, ultimately, a way of talking about Mexico: a “collective representation” of Mexican society” (Wolf 2008: 165).

After reading the article, can you explain what these quotations means in your own words? ( Explain in your own words what the above quotation means and how it contributes to Wolf’s over all thesis argument). (This should be at least 3 sentences). C. (Cultural Example) Wolf uses the example of the Virgin of Guadalupe to illustrate his thesis.  Can you give an example of another multivocal Master symbol or can you discuss your own experience with a multivocal master symbol?  (Explain how your example relates to the Wolf article – in what way does it link the personal (family) with politics or religion? In what way does it link history with the present day?  In what way does it link different types or groups of people together (such as different ethnic or class groups), in what way does it represent a “collective representation” of  a culture or society