

Religion

Ryan Cragun – Summer, 2005

The sociology of religion

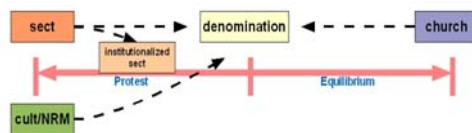
- Not a normative evaluation
- But this perspective can challenge religious beliefs
 - the source of conversion experiences

Definitions of Religion

- sacred vs. profane
 - profane: ordinary elements of life
 - sacred: extraordinary elements of life; revered and awed
- religion as existential questioning
 - immortality; purpose in life
- religion as supernatural
 - beliefs about things outside of nature
- What is included in each definition?

Church-Sect Typology

The Church-Sect Continuum



Structural-Functional Theory

- social cohesion - religion helps maintain social solidarity through shared rituals and beliefs
- social control - religious based morals and norms help maintain conformity and control in society; religion can also legitimize the political system
- providing meaning and purpose - religion can provide answers to existential questions (see the social-psychological approach below)

Social-Conflict

- maintains the status quo
- encourages docility

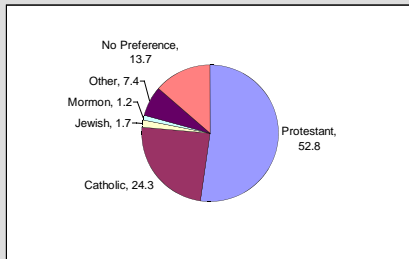
Social Constructionist

- religion does not have supernatural origins
- it is a human created institution
- objectifies elements of society that it wants to keep sacred or worship
- plausibility structures – elements of society that help support belief structures/religion

Religious Pluralism

- multiple religions – leads to denominationalism
- possible explanation for the high levels of religiosity in the U.S.

Religious Affiliation - U.S.



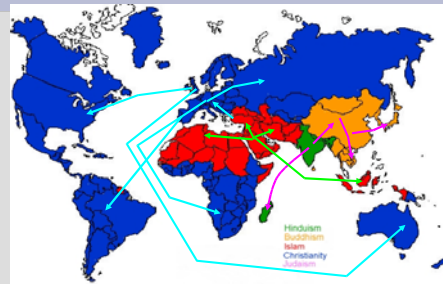
Social-Psychological

- possible explanations for why people continue to affiliate with religion
- after-life
- higher purpose in life
- existence of god
- fear of the unknown
- socialization - taught religion by parents

World Religions

- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Buddhism
- Judaism
- Size and influence on society

Religion Map



religion and other factors

- religion and gender
 - women are more religious and more involved
 - socialization
- religion and race
 - blacks are more religious
 - utility of religion in civil rights and community organizing
- religion and class
- religion and education
- religion and health

secularization

- differentiation of elements of society
- differentiation of parts of peoples' lives
- classic definition - declining affiliation with race
- declining authority – less influence on the lives of adherents
 - neo-secularization

Class Questions