Religion and Socialization

Agents of Socialization
Elements of a Religion

• Four Common Themes of what makes up a religion
  • Love – How can we make the world better?
  • Purpose – Why are we here?
  • Mysteries – How to explain the unexplainable
  • Death – What happens when we die?

• Faith important in following of religion
  • Belief anchored in conviction not evidence
A Sociological Perspective of Religion

• Characteristics of Religion
  • Common Elements:
    • Beliefs
    • The Sacred and Profane
    • Rituals and Ceremonies
    • Personal Experience

• Functions of Religion
  • Social Cohesion
  • Social Control
  • Provides Meaning and Purpose
Relationship Between Religion and Sociology

- Sociology seeks to examine Religion’s role in society
  - Not Critique
- Seeks to examine how religion dictates the responsibilities of someone within the society and what sort of participation is required
Perspectives of Religion: Structuralism

• Developed by Emile Durkheim
• Defined Religion As:
  • The Social institution involving beliefs and practices based upon a conception of the sacred.
• Religion focuses on things that surpass our own knowledge by dividing events in the Sacred and the Profane
  • The Profane
    • Ordinary Elements of everyday life
  • The Sacred
    • The Extraordinary that inspires awe, reverence, or fear
• Rituals and Ceremonies
  • Prayer as a ritualistic and/or ceremonial link to personal experience.
Purpose of Religion: Build Moral Communities

• Moral Communities
  • Religious groups that share common beliefs and values.

• A religious community serves several functions:
  • Provides continuity form one generation to another
    • Argument as to whether it is education or indoctrination?
  • Allows the laity to look after the profane matters while an elite tend to the sacred
  • Provides social support
  • In times of threat, religious communities can offer some protections
Perspectives of Religion: Functionalism

- Religion is just one of the social institutions that contribute to the stability of a society through the social processes of:
  - Builds Societal cohesion
  - Used as a method of Social control
    - Religion applies authority and direction to important points of a person’s life cycle including marriage, birth, and death
  - Gives members a Provision of purpose
    - Religion helps reduce social anxiety by providing answers to broad questions about the meaning of life, existence, and non-existence

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It is not the function of religion to answer all the questions about God's moral government of the universe, but to give us courage through faith to go on in the face of questions to which we find no answer in our present status.

—Harold B. Lee—

A2quotes
Perspectives of Religion: Conflict

- Conflict theorists are highly critical of religion.
  - Marx called religion the “opiate of the masses”
  - Religion has been used to keep the masses in check for fear of divine punishment

- By diverting thoughts to future happiness in a coming world, religion relieves the suffering of this world
  - Religion legitimizes the social inequalities of society.
    - Divides society into “Chosen” classes and those out of “god’s graces”