

# 10. Education and Religion

## Objectives

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- Understand the structure and function of education
- Evaluate the structure and function of religion
- Identify and assess the issues in U.S. education and religion

## Vocabulary

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animism	ethnocentric	New Age	supernaturalism
apprentice	fundamentalism	polytheism	televangelism
ecumenical	monotheism	religion	theism
ethicalism	multiculturalism	shaman	totemism

## Background

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In this chapter, students see the influence, relevance, and social control that educational and religious institutions exercise in society. Examining how these institutions function and the kinds of complex issues that have affected their growth can help students to better question and identify the influences these institutions have on their own lives.

Students learn that a society's views about education can vary greatly. They see how their country's colonial roots and key historical events shaped the kind of education they are now receiving. Being exposed to the three main sociological views of education—functionalist, conflict theorist, and interactionist—can help students to assess the education system around them.

The chapter goes on to expose students to the complex issues that often burden the U.S. education system. Students do an in-depth examination of these key issue-areas—like bureaucratization, equalizing opportunities, and school violence—and become better aware of how their own school measures up in these problem areas.

Students also benefit from learning what religion means and the various qualities and features world religions possess. Learning to categorize beliefs of many world religions in terms of theism, ethicalism, animism, and supernaturalism helps give students a greater grasp of religion on a global level. Learning how functionalists and interactionists interpret the roles and social needs that religion has served in society can help students consider, question, and develop their own perspectives on the issue and institution. The chapter's review of the history, diversity, and changing beliefs of U.S. religion help further this process.

### Further Resources

- Jencks, Christopher, and others. *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America*. New York: Basic Books, 1972.
- Milbank, John. *Theology and Social Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991.

## For Discussion

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### Review

1. According to functionalists, what are the five primary social functions of education?
2. According to conflict theorists, the educational system produces social inequalities in which five areas?
3. What are four categories of religious beliefs?
4. According to functionalists, what four needs or social functions does religion serve in a society?
2. What do you consider to be the biggest problem or issue affecting the U.S. education system today? Why? Support your answer with examples.
3. What do you think are some advantages and disadvantages of the “schools within schools” solution that attempts to address the problem of school bureaucratization?
4. What does the separation of church and state mean to you? What do you think America would be like without this constitutional amendment?
5. Consider how current trends are changing the nature of religion in the U.S. Do you view this to be a good or bad development? What do you foresee happening to the fabric of U.S. religion in the next 100 years?

### Critical Thinking

1. Do you think the key purpose of education should be “putting in” information and skills or “drawing out” what is already in the student? Support your answer.

## Activities

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### 1. Addressing the Issues

Divide students into five groups with each group addressing a major educational issue presented in the chapter—bureaucratization, equalization, school choice, accountability, and school violence. Have each group examine and discuss the complexities of each and report to the class any insights and potential solutions that might help to improve these problem areas.

### 2. Education and Religion in the U.S.

In small groups, have students choose an area or aspect of education or religion and contact national and local groups or organizations for information and statistics on this area. Have each group report to the class why they chose to research this area and present to the class their ideas and findings.

### 3. Internet: Exploring a Faith

Divide students into pairs and have each team choose one of the 21 U.S. religions listed in the chapter. Direct teams to research websites devoted to their religion and report to the class the religion’s origins, beliefs, practices, trends, and other unique features. Encourage open-class discussions of each.

### 4. Special Sources: Vouchers

Divide students into two main groups—those for or against the use of vouchers in education. Direct them to use library resources to research, report, and debate the merits or shortcomings of this highly controversial educational program.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Education and Religion

As you read Chapter 10, write an answer to each question below.

1. What are the differences between the functionalist, conflict, and interactionist perspectives of education?

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2. What kinds of issues affect the potential shift of the U.S. education system from a knowledge-centered system to a student-centered one?

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3. Which program do you think is more effective in providing disadvantaged children better "equalizing opportunities": Head Start or magnet schools? Why?

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4. What are the differences between the functionalist and interactionist perspectives of religion?

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5. What trends are said to be changing the nature of religion in the U.S.?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Education and Religion

Find the best answer for each item. Then circle the correct answer.

1. What is centered on a belief in the superiority of one's own ethnic group, from the perspective of that group?
  - a. ethicalism
  - b. ethnocentric
  - c. multicultural
  - d. multinational
2. What is the point of view that includes the perspectives of many cultures within a society rather than in only a mainstream culture?
  - a. animism
  - b. ethnocentric
  - c. multiculturalism
  - d. credentialization
3. What is a system of shared beliefs and rituals that surround the realm of the sacred and deal with fundamental questions of life?
  - a. monotheism
  - b. polytheism
  - c. televangelism
  - d. religion
4. What is the belief in one or more supreme beings whose actions influence human affairs and who deserve worship?
  - a. theism
  - b. monotheism
  - c. totemism
  - d. supernaturalism
5. What is the belief that moral principles have a sacred quality?
  - a. theism
  - b. animism
  - c. ethicalism
  - d. New Age
6. What is the belief in the existence of spirits that occupy the same world but in a different plane of existence?
  - a. animism
  - b. ecumenical
  - c. totemism
  - d. supernaturalism
7. What is the belief in spirits within natural objects such as trees, mountains, animals, or natural phenomena?
  - a. animism
  - b. ecumenical
  - c. supernaturalism
  - d. totemism
8. What term refers to a movement that promotes unity among religions or churches?
  - a. apprentice
  - b. ecumenical
  - c. shaman
  - d. fundamentalist
9. What is the perspective that is based on basic principles, as in religion, where strict rules and literal interpretations of scriptures are emphasized?
  - a. monotheist
  - b. minimalist
  - c. anarchist
  - d. fundamentalist
10. What is a unique blend of magic and religion, ancient and futuristic beliefs, and practical and mystical philosophies?
  - a. televangelism
  - b. totemism
  - c. the Pygmalion Effect
  - d. New Age

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Education and Religion

Read each description, and write the letter of the correct term on the line.

1. With regard to education, sociologists have looked at each of the following areas EXCEPT \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. how education has contributed to social mobility
  - b. the importance of pupil-teacher interactions
  - c. the merits of revamping private education
  - d. the role schools play in cultural transmission
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ declared that "separate but equal" schools were "inherently unequal" and unconstitutional.
  - a. *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1887)
  - b. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)
  - c. the Coleman Report (1966)
  - d. A Nation at Risk report (1983)
  
3. The social function in which schools teach values like patriotism and competition is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Socialization
  - b. Cultural Transmission
  - c. Assimilation/Social Control
  - d. Development of Social Relationships
  
4. The functionalist perspective of education maintains that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. schools give students the opportunity to achieve whatever they want in life
  - b. schools need to focus solely on training students for the workforce
  - c. curricula are slow to adjust to social change
  - d. curricula poorly reflect minority cultures
  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is the term used to describe how race, class, and gender biases in curriculum lowers the esteem of students from lower socioeconomic strata.
  - a. Tracking
  - b. Ethnocentric
  - c. Hidden curriculum
  - d. Credentialization
  
6. \_\_\_\_\_ are two programs that attempt to equalize school opportunities for disadvantaged children.
  - a. Head Start, vouchers
  - b. Head Start, magnet schools
  - c. Magnet schools, charter schools
  - d. Charter schools, home schooling
  
7. Each of the following is said to be a cause of the increase in school violence EXCEPT \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. school busing programs
  - b. social isolation that many students endure
  - c. easier access to guns, weapons
  - d. the disregard of adolescents by adults
  
8. \_\_\_\_\_ include prayer wheels, holy water, and shamanic medicine bundles.
 

a. Rituals	c. Sacred writings
b. Symbols	d. Sacred objects
  
9. Christianity is this type of religion.
 

a. theism	c. animism
b. ethicalism	d. supernaturalism
  
10. Each is a generalization sociologists have made about religious memberships EXCEPT: \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. young people are more active in church than older people are
  - b. median incomes can vary among members of different religious groups.
  - c. ethnic group members tend to share similar beliefs and practices
  - d. women seem to be more religious than men

### Essay Question

Why is it important to examine the sociological roles and impact education and religion have in society? Support your answer with examples.