

Institutions of Religion

Formal typologies of religious groupings

Name and date begun:

Time allocation:

4 lessons

Learning objectives:

- Students should understand the variety of religious institutions.
- Students should be aware of the difficulties in defining the nature of religious institutions.
- Students should understand that although differences in belief are often small, the feelings that people have about these differences are extreme enough to kill and be killed for.
- Students should recognise that religious institutions have a 'life cycle' and that some become formalised while others die out.

Key Concepts and vocabulary

See your lesson notes in addition to the following:

- Non-conformity
- Disestablishment
- Schism
- Church
- Cult
- Denomination
- Sect
- Ecclesia
- New (or Modern) Religious Movements

Additional reading and references

This is an area that is fascinating to sociologists and is a likely area of questioning.

Selfe and Starbuck (1998) *Access to Sociology: Religion* Ch. 5

Giddens (1997) *Sociology 3rd edition* p 446 ff.

Taylor et al (1996) *Sociology in Focus* p 508 ff.

Marcus and Ducklin (1998) *Success in Sociology* p 637 ff.

Make a note of any additional sources that you have used below

Personal Development ideas

- Make notes from as many sources as possible and share these notes with others in the group.
- Make sure that you know something of the beliefs and origins of one sect or cult well enough to use it as an example in an essay.
- See if you can suggest reasons, other than the nature of the beliefs themselves, which might attract people to cults and sects.

Overview of the debate

- What forms of religious organisations are there?
- What role do religious organisations play in terms of an individual's relationship to wider society?
- Why are cults and sects so attractive to people?
- Why are other people so threatened and rejecting of minority religions?
- Why are large religious organisations so liable to split and deviate from one main tradition?

Revision tips

- Be certain that you understand and can define the key terms in this area.
- Make sure that are aware that there is considerable debate within sociology as to how one can type religious organisations.

What you should have in your folder when this work has been completed correctly:

- A clear explanation of each of the glossary terms
- Acceptable lesson notes.
- Evidence that you have looked at least two textbooks and made notes.
- Evidence of a research into a minority religion.
- Evidence of some attempt to develop knowledge taken from the various exercises that you have been given as personal development.
- Some evidence of use of IT and Web to develop your notes and ideas.