

# Chapter 11

## *Education and Religion Answering “What” and “Why”*



# Overview of the World's Education

- Schooling:
  - Learning skills like reading, writing, and math, in a building, through systematic instruction by a trained professional
- In most affluent countries and urban areas, formal schooling is necessary for survival and success.
- Literacy is necessary for democratic governments, where informed citizenry elect officials and vote on public policies.
- Formal schooling is a modern concept, which became necessary once jobs required literacy and math skills.

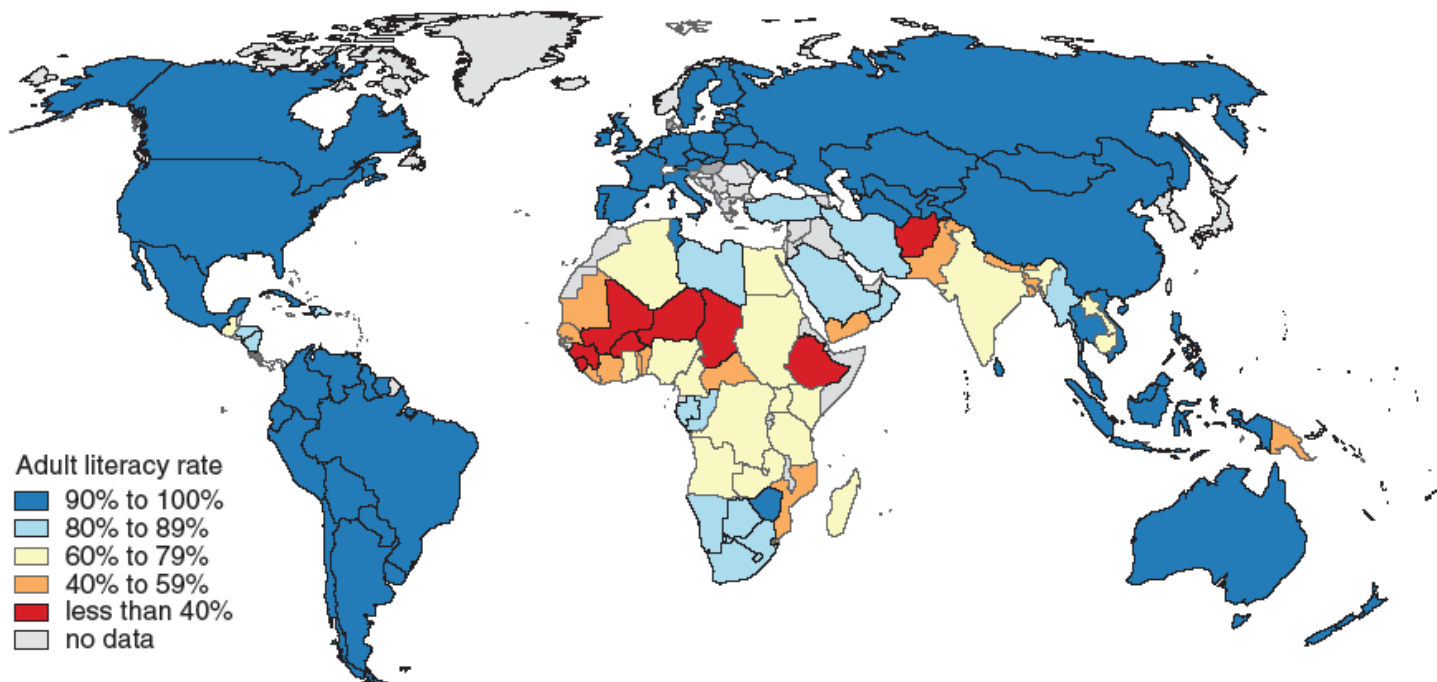
# Overview of the World's Education

- UNESCO:
  - The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
    - “global center for discussion and implementation of educational ideas and organization models”
    - The UNESCO standard:
      - 6 years of primary school
      - 3 years each of intermediate and secondary school
      - Emphasis on comprehensive rather than specialized training

# Overview of the World's Education

- What is considered essential knowledge to be taught in schools is based on a country's level of development, cultural values, and political ideology, and on international guidelines.
  - Education around the world is strongly influenced by models developed in Global North countries.

# Overview of the World's Education



**Map 11.1 Adult Literacy Rates by Country, 2007**

*Source:* UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in Huebler 2008; United Nations Development Program Report 2007/2008, p. 226.

# Education: Micro-Level Theories

## Symbolic Interaction Perspective

- Focuses on meaningful interaction in schools and classrooms, and how students actively construct reality
  - For example, popularity contests
- Because young people spend much time in school or school-related activities, the status of students affects their self-concepts and selves.

# Education: Micro-Level Theories

## Rational Choice Theory

- Focuses on cost/benefit analysis in individual decisions about education
  - If benefits of an action outweigh costs, individuals are likely to take the action; if costs outweigh benefits, they will seek other courses of action.
- For example:
  - Students deciding whether to drop out of school
  - Teachers deciding whether to stay in the profession

# Statuses and Roles in Education Systems

## Students and the Peer Culture of Schools

- Student peer culture:
  - A stable set of activities, routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers
    - Peer cultures create identities and labels.
- Students' class, race, gender, and sexuality affect their school experiences.
- The environment outside the school affects students' experiences within it.



# Statuses and Roles in Education Systems

## Teachers: The Front Line

- The front line in implementing school goals
- Serve as gatekeepers, controlling the flow of students, activities, resources, and privileges
- Role strain: need to judge students' performance while also encouraging them
- Fair status and rewards?
- Threats to professional autonomy and self-regulation

# Statuses and Roles in Education Systems

Administrators:

Managers of the school system

- The top of the hierarchy in local schools
- Mediate between individual schools and larger educational systems
- Responsible for:
  - Budgeting, reporting, regulatory compliance
  - Staff hiring, firing, training, and negotiations
  - Parent and public relations; acting as a buffer in conflicts between parents and teachers
  - Overseeing discipline

# What Really Happens Inside Schools?

## The Informal System

- Informal system of schooling:
  - Unspoken, unwritten, and implicit norms of behavior
    - Created and enforced by teachers and/or by student peer culture
    - Includes the hidden curriculum, educational climate, value climate, and classroom power dynamics and coping strategies
- The hidden curriculum:
  - The implicit “rules of the game” students must learn and respond to in school to be socially accepted and to succeed in the education system

# The Meso-Level: Educational Organizations

## Formal Education Systems

- Developed in 16th-century Europe, when other social institutions required new roles, skills, and knowledge that parents could not teach
- Originally, schooling was only for the elite; later it became available to the masses and some societies began to require it for basic literacy (usually the third-grade level)
- Schools became major formal organizations and developed extensive bureaucracies

# The Meso-Level: Educational Organizations

## The Bureaucratic School Structure

- Weber's bureaucratic model applied to schools:
  - Division of labor
  - Administrative hierarchy
  - Specific rules and procedures
  - Formalized relations
  - Rationality
- Pros of bureaucratic schools:
  - Cost-effective, efficient, productive
- Cons of bureaucratic schools:
  - Impersonal, rigid, alienating, lack of attention to personal needs

# The Meso-Level: Educational Organizations

Educational decision-making at the meso level:

- Who should decide what children learn?
- Decision-making in the United States:
  - Local level influences: Interest groups engage in conflict over contents of school curriculums and libraries
  - National level influences:
    - National influence limited by the U.S. Constitution, which leaves many educational decisions to the states
    - Ability to give or withhold funding to schools depending on compliance with federal laws
    - The Race to the Top for all schools

# The Meso-Level: Educational Organizations

Educational decision-making at the meso level:

- Positive aspects of NCLB:
  - Expects every child to succeed
  - Helps create consistency between school systems
- Negative aspects of NCLB:
  - Overemphasizes testing
  - Penalizes schools with high numbers of low-income and/or disabled students
  - Gives schools unrealistic timetables for improvement
  - Does not provide necessary funding
  - Disadvantages small, poor, and rural school districts

# Education: Macro-Level Theories

## The Purposes of Education: The Functionalist Perspective

### Manifest Functions

- Socialize children to be productive members of society.
- Select and train individuals for positions in society.
- Promote social participation, change, and innovation.
- Enhance personal independence and social development.

### Latent Functions

- Confine and supervise underage citizens.
- Weaken parental controls over youths.
- Provide opportunities for peer cultures to develop.
- Provide contexts for the development of friendships and mate selection.

**Figure 11.1** Key Functions of Education



# Education: Macro-Level Theories

## Stratification and Education: Conflict Perspective

- Schools are used by powerful and affluent groups to ensure that their self-interests are met.
- Schools do not provide equal educational opportunities for all children in society.
  - Opportunities are manipulated to preserve privileges for the children of “haves”; children of “have-nots” are prepared for less rewarding positions.
  - This results in the reproduction of class: socioeconomic positions are transmitted across generations.

# Education: Macro-Level Theories

Can schools bring about equality in society?

- Equal opportunity:
  - All people have an equal chance of achieving high socioeconomic status regardless of class, ethnicity or race, or gender
- The goals of equal educational opportunity, according to James Coleman:
  - Provide a common curriculum for all children, regardless of background
  - Provide for children from diverse backgrounds to attend the same schools
  - Provide equality within a given locality

# Education: Macro-Level Theories

Can schools bring about equality in society?

- The Coleman Report:
  - Differences in test scores between minority and white students were due not only to in-school factors but also to parents' education levels and other environmental factors.
  - Coleman recommended integration of schools to create a climate for achievement.
  - Busing and magnet schools were two policies enacted to address the problems.
- Jencks's study of inequality:
  - Schools alone cannot create equal opportunity.

# Education: Macro-Level Theories

## The Role of Education in Stratification

- Education is supposed to be a meritocracy.
  - Meritocracy: a formal system in which people are allocated to positions according to their ability and credentials.
  - Meritocracy is consistent with bureaucracy.
- However, in many cases educational meritocracy does not exist.
  - Conflict theorists maintain that education perpetuates inequality.

# Education: Macro-Level Theories

## The Role of Education in Stratification

### Sources of Inequality:

- Testing
  - A means of placing students in school according to their achievement and merit, and of determining their progress
  - Critics claim tests are biased against lower-class, immigrant, minority, and/or female students
  - International tests reveal educational inequalities between countries

# Sources of Inequality: Testing

Table 11.7 ACT and SAT Scores by Sex and Race/Ethnicity

<i>ACT Scores (2007)</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>SAT Scores (2008)</i>	<i>Average</i>
Composite (total scores)	21.2	Writing (all students)	497
Male	21.2	Male	491
Female	21.0	Female	502
Race/Ethnicity		White	519
African American	17.0	Black/African American	424
American Indian	18.9	Mexican American	447
Hispanic	18.7	Puerto Rican	445
Caucasian	22.1	Other Hispanic	449
Asian American	22.6	Asian American	516
Critical reading (all students)	502	American Indian	470
Male	504	Other	494
Female	500	Math (all students)	509
White	528	Male	527
Black/African American	430	Female	499
Mexican American	454	White	537
Puerto Rican	456	Black/African American	426
Other Hispanic	455	Mexican American	463
Asian American	513	Puerto Rican	453
American Indian	495	Other Hispanic	461
Other	496	Asian American	591
		American Indian	491
		Other	512

*Source:* Inside Higher Ed (2007) for ACT scores; Inside Higher Ed (2008) for SAT scores.

*Note:* ACT, American College Testing; SAT, Scholastic Assessment Test.

# Education at the Macro-Level

## The Role of Education in Stratification

### Sources of Inequality:

- Tracking or streaming:
  - Placing students in ability groups so educators can better address individual learning needs
- Research suggests that track placement is not always a measure of a student's ability
  - Tracks correlate with ethnicity, language skills, appearance, and other socioeconomic variables
  - Tracking can reinforce preexisting inequalities
- Other research suggests that children learn more when working in groups based on achievement level.

# Education at the Macro-Level

## The Role of Education in Stratification

### Sources of Inequality:

- School Funding
  - In the United States, unequal school spending results from reliance on local property taxes as well as state and federal funds.
  - Spending is closely related to the race and class composition of the schools, and to student achievement levels.
  - Spending differences perpetuate existing inequalities.



# Educational and Social Policy Issues

## Educational Policies in the United States

- Despite numerous policies and reports, data on school success show a worsening picture.
  - There are 27 million functionally illiterate citizens.
  - Many 17-year-olds lack the basic skills needed to enter business and the military.
- In response each new presidential administration proposes reforms:
  - The Bush administration sponsored NCLB.
  - The Obama administration is attempting to increase funding for early-childhood education.

# Global Issues in Education

Comparative research shows that:

- A society's social and economic values are reflected in its approach to learning and in motivation of students.
- There is some evidence of global convergence in school curricula.
- National education systems are affected by external political, economic, and technological trends.

# Global Issues in Education

Education of girls around the globe:

- Lack of basic education for the poor, especially girls, is a “silent killer” in developing countries.
- In past surveys, more than 110 million children—60% of them girls from ages 6 to 11—received no schooling at all.
- More educated girls have lower fertility rates, lower maternal and infant mortality, lower rates of HIV/AIDS, increased labor force participation and earnings, and greater ability to pass on these benefits to the next generation.

# Global Issues in Education

## The Future of Education in the Global System

- Need to keep up with 21st-century technological and economic needs
- Use of electronic educational materials and distance learning
- The “school-to-work” transition

# Religion: The Search for Meaning

## What Does Religion Do for Us?

- Helps give meaning to life, death, suffering, injustice, and events beyond our control
- Provides guidelines, beliefs, and values that separate right from wrong; important in controlling everyday behavior
- Helps individuals define reality
- Sacrilizes (makes sacred) aspects of our culture, making them unquestionable
  - Durkheim’s “sacred realm”: the dimension of life separate from the mundane world, which elicits awe and fear

# What Does Religion Do for Us?

## Components of Religion

- Meaning system:
  - A faith or worldview that provides a sense of meaning and purpose in life
- Belonging system:
  - A set of interpersonal relationships and friendship networks
- Structural system:
  - A stable pattern of roles, statuses, and organizational practices

# What Does Religion Do for Us?

Components of religion:  
Meaning System (micro level)

- Ideas and symbols that provide a sense of purpose in life and help explain why suffering, injustice, and evil exist
- Provides a “big picture” explanation for chaotic and irrational events
- Religious meaning systems vary with the needs of each culture

# What Does Religion Do for Us?

Components of religion:

Belonging System (micro-meso levels)

- People remain in religions because they feel they belong in the friendship and kinship networks, not just due to meanings.
- The religions that have grown the most recently are those that have fostered a sense of belonging, for example, by encouraging endogamy or marriage within the group.



# What Does Religion Do for Us?

Components of religion:

Structural System (meso-macro levels)

- Religions require some system of control and screening of new revelations; otherwise, meanings would become too individualized.
- Designated religious leaders have authority to:
  - Interpret theology and define essentials of the faith
  - Raise funds and ensure continuation of the group
- To survive, religions must be institutionalized.
  - Routinization of charisma:
    - Development of established roles, statuses, groups, routines, bureaucratic organization

# What Does Religion Do for Us?

Micro-level analysis:

How do individuals become religious?

- Religion is mostly learned through family socialization.
  - Formal means: within a temple, church, or mosque
  - Informal means: observing others practice their faith
- Individuals usually change religions first on the belonging level, and later on the meaning and structural levels.
- There is more fluidity in religious membership now than ever before, though religions try to gain members' commitment.

# Micro-Level Theories of Religion

## The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

- Concerned with how people make sense of things and construct their worlds:
  - Myths: stories embodying ideas about the world
  - Rituals: group activities that reinforce myths
    - Orthopraxy: conformity of behavior
    - Orthodoxy: conformity of beliefs
  - Symbols: anything that can stand for something else
    - Religious symbols often stand for elements of a transcendent realm that cannot be directly experienced
    - Symbols are used extensively in rituals to represent myths
- Symbolic interactionists focus on how symbols, rituals, and myths influence perceptions of reality.

# Micro-Level Theories of Religion

## The Rational Choice Perspective

- People who can choose their religion decide by weighing costs and benefits.
  - Costs include financial contributions and time
  - Benefits include salvation, belonging, and meaning
- An economic model of behavior:
  - Churchgoers seen as consumers; churches as entrepreneurial establishments
  - Religions produce rituals, meanings, etc. to meet consumer demand
  - When religion is chosen, there is a competitive marketplace

# Religion and Modern Life

Meso-level analysis:

Types of Religious Associations

- Denominations-centralized bodies that connect local congregations with similar history and theology
- In traditional societies, religion is not separate from other social institutions.
- In complex societies, religion is distinct, but influences and is influenced by other institutions.
  - The dominant religion generally supports the political system and ideology of the dominant group, and is related to economic, education, family, and health systems.
  - Other systems can exert pressures on religion.

# Religion and Modern Life

Religion and other institutions:  
Types of Denominational Structures

- Congregational polity-authority of local congregation is supreme
- Episcopal-hierarchical-places ultimate authority over local churches in the hands of bishops; arranged geographically
- Presbyterian polity-middle ground. Authority is shared, can have a local board

# Religion and Modern Life

## Types of Religious Associations

- Ecclesia: official state religions that claim everyone within a certain society as members
- Denominations: have legitimacy but not a religious monopoly; have clear hierarchies and trained leadership; support the state; members more privileged than disenfranchised
- Sects: form in protest against parent religions; separate from other religious and social groups; claim monopoly over religious truth, often demand total allegiance of members
- New religious movements (cults): splinter or protest groups that become new religions rather than denominations; often started by charismatic leaders, often persecuted

# Macro-Level Theories of Religion

## The Functionalist Perspective

- Religion has positive consequences for society:
  - Promotes social cohesion
  - Legitimizes social values and norms
  - Social change: religion can help maintain the status quo or change it



# Macro-Level Theories of Religion

## The Conflict Perspective

- Links religion to stratification:
  - Religion can reinforce socially defined differences in a way that legitimizes prejudice and inequality
- The class basis of religion:
  - Karl Marx
    - Religion perpetuates the current power structure by acting as “the opiate of the masses”
  - Max Weber’s “elective affinity”
    - People belong to religious groups that espouse values compatible with their social class

# Macro-Level Theories of Religion

The Conflict Perspective, cont.

- Religion, racial bias, and gender prejudice:
  - Most religions have discriminated against some group at some time.
  - Some religions reject race discrimination formally, but members practice it informally.
  - Many religions legitimate treating women differently and/or as inferiors; often women cannot attain high positions in religious hierarchies.
  - Religion can reinforce ethnocentrism.
  - Religion has also been a force for greater equality.

# Religion in the Modern World

## Religion and Secularization

- Secularization:
  - The diminishing influence of religion in everyday life
    - Religion isn't the dominant institution, but one of many
    - Movement away from the supernatural and sacred in favor of logic and empirical evidence
- Secularization varies across social levels:
  - Individuals remain religious, but . . .
  - Macro- and meso-level organizations use secular policies and procedures, and
  - The global level is highly secular.

# Religion in the Modern World

Religion: Contributor to war or peace?

- Many religious meaning systems advocate peace and harmony.
  - Fundamentalist groups
- Structural systems may foster “we vs. they” thinking that draws large numbers and promotes financial vitality, but undermines peace.
- Liberal theologies believe that God can speak through many religious traditions.

# Religion in the Modern World

Religious groups vary in tolerance:

- Fundamentalist groups believe they must defend their one true religion, which may lead to ethnocentrism and violence.
  - Religious nativism-groups that insist only their own view of life and the divine is Truth
- Conflict between religious groups is especially intense if ethnic and economic differences are also involved.
- Religion can reduce hatred between groups if there is a common identification or purpose.
  - Rapid social change can lead to anomie

# Religion in the Modern World

## Religion, Technology, and the World Wide Web

- Prior to the modern era, church hierarchies controlled the dissemination of religious truth.
- Religious reformers used the printing press to bring religious texts to the people.
- Now, new technologies such as television and multimedia spread religious ideas and information even further.
  - They have also enhanced the “marketing” of religion to “consumers.”