

Study Questions, Week 12

Topic for the Week: Social Institutions: Family and Religion

Readings for the Week:

Society: The Basics, Chapter 13

Sociological Footprints, Chapters 23 (Skolnick, et al.) and 35 (Berger)

Questions:

- (1) What is a *family*? Describe ways that families vary in organization by culture and residence.
- (2) What important *functions* do families fulfill in society? How do these functions vary by culture?
- (3) Describe how the *structural-functionalist*, *social-conflict*, and *symbolic interactionist* perspectives on the family differ.
- (4) How might a typical family change over time? What events generate these changes? What factors influence how these changes might vary?
- (5) How do *class*, *race*, *ethnicity* and *gender* affect family structure? How do they affect family life for individuals?
- (6) What are some of the causes of *divorce*? Who is most likely to divorce? Why? What are some important social problems produced by an increasing divorce rate?
- (7) Suggest how the following trends have developed in the United States, and some problems associated with these trends: family violence, one-parent families, cohabitation, gay and lesbian families, postponing marriage/choosing to remain single.
- (8) What is meant by *religion*? What are some important functions of religion?
- (9) Contrast the *structural-functionalist*, *social-conflict* and *symbolic interactionist* perspectives on religion. Apply each to analyze a religion with which you are familiar.
- (10) According to Weber, how are *religion* and *capitalism* connected? Explain the elements of his argument.
- (11) Distinguish the following religious forms: *church*, *state church*, *denomination*, *sect*, and *cult*. Suggest examples of each type of organization. Explain how churches, sects and cults interact in "religious markets."
- (12) How has the institution of religion changed over time? What are some factors that affect religious change?
- (13) Explain how *class*, *ethnicity* and *race* affect religious beliefs and institutions.

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(14) How does *religiosity* and *church membership* vary across the United States? Where are you most likely to find members of the following churches: Baptist, Catholic, Latter Day Saints, Lutheran, Methodist?

(15) Identify four widely held beliefs (or “myths”) about the family and suggest how sociological studies have either supported or challenged these beliefs. What is meant by the “triple revolution?” Describe the three aspects of this revolution, and how these have reshaped families.

(16) America has been called “a nation with the soul of a church.” What does this mean? What role does religion play in modern American society?