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**SociologicalYOU - Chapter 12 Audio Lecture Transcript**

**SociologicalYOU** by Angela Thompson and Keith Whitworth.

This is Next-Gen Introductory Sociology

Welcome to Chapter 12: Religion and Education

There are five modules in this chapter.

Module 1: Understanding Religious Beliefs and Practices

Module 2: The Structural Foundation of Religion

Module 3: The American Educational System

Module 4: Education and the Sociological Imagination

Module 5: Changes in the Educational Landscape

This PowerPoint does not cover every key term in Chapter 12. Please read your textbook to see what is not covered in the PowerPoint. As we review the contents of this chapter, I would encourage you to consider the following points to ponder. These should help you think critically about religion and education.

1. How is religion socially constructed and defined?
2. How are religion and education intertwined?
3. How is the educational system changing in the United States?

**Module 1: The Sociological Perspective**

Let's begin by defining religion. Religion is either monotheistic or polytheistic.

Monotheistic refers to the belief or worship of a single god. Polytheistic is the belief or worship of more than one god.

Durkheim's definition of religion is that it is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, which unite into one single moral community called a church.

Marx said that religion is “the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of the soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”

Berger said that religion is the “audacious attempt to conceive the entire universe as humanly significant.”

SociologicalYOU co-author Keith Whitworth defined religion as a socially constructed and culturally specific set of beliefs and practices related to defining the meaning of our existence.

Religion is a social construct and has different meanings for different people. Religions can be monotheistic, polytheistic or even lack a deity, such as in Buddhism.

Durkheim provides a functional definition that includes the sacred and a church as a metaphorical social institution.

Marx describes religion from a conflict perspective and defines it in terms of providing relief for the oppressed.

Berger's definition is broad and views religion as a means of seeking order and meaning within a chaotic social world.

The fourth definition by Whitworth is that religion is a socially constructed and culturally specific set of beliefs and practices related to defining the meaning of our existence.

Let's consider individual religious beliefs and practices, beginning with religiosity. Religiosity is the beliefs and behaviors associated with transcendent or spiritual concerns.

A mega church is a Protestant church with an average of 2,000 or more people in weekly attendance.

The three Bs of religion are beliefs, behaviors and belonging.There is evidence to suggest that religious beliefs and practices are significantly changing in the United States.

In regards to beliefs, there is a decrease among Americans who believe in God and an increase among those who believe in a higher power.

Trends in religious behaviors include less denominational loyalty, a desire to attend more informal worship services that incorporate the use of technology and the attraction of mega churches.

Religious attendance among Evangelical Protestants is remaining constant and

decreasing among Catholics and mainline denominations.

The decrease among Catholics may be due to changing views of the importance of

Catholicism among women and the various church scandals.

The conservative beliefs of evangelical churches rely on moral absolutes and this may be a significant reason Americans are drawn to these churches.

Figure 12.1.1 offers an overview of world religions.

Let's discuss religious beliefs and practices among Muslims, beginning with key terms. First fundamentalism, fundamentalism is a strict adherence to conservative religious ideology.

Next, we have sharia; sharia is the revealed word of god based on the Qur’an, serving as the body of Islamic law.

Islam represents 22.5% of the world's population and is a monotheistic religion. The Sunnis sect comprises approximately 90 % of Muslims, with the remaining

percentage being the Shia sect.

Adherents practice the five pillars of Islam which include the testimony of faith, prayer, giving zakat, fasting during the month of Ramadan and the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Islamic fundamentalism is a radical ideology that can be violent. The fundamentalists seek to protect their culture from the influence of Western cultures. Many Muslims are in favor of sharia or Islamic law.

Islamic fundamentalists differ from protestant fundamentalists as education and income affect groups differently.

The primary agents of socialization impacting religious preference include national religiosity, family, peers and schools.

Denominations are a distinct group of churches with a common doctrine and name. Your understanding of sociology can help you understand how the process of socialization impacts your personal religious beliefs and practices. Your national religiosity, the social learning process within your family and peers, and schools significantly influence your decisions about religiosity.

It is highly unlikely that you will convert to another world religion but likely that you will change denominations in your lifetime. If you are under the age of 30 you have a one in three likelihood of becoming a non or unaffiliated with religion.

**Module 2: Social Structures**

Let's discuss the societal functions of religion, beginning with key terms.

First, we have sacred; sacred is defined as things set apart and requiring special religious treatment.

On the other hand, profane refers to the ordinary and familiar realm of everyday existence.

Social cohesion is about the bonds between members that maintain stability in society and social control refers to the informal and formal regulation of members of society to gain conformity and compliance.

Every religion has a few basic functions.

1. Religion provides comfort and quells dissatisfaction.
2. Religion builds and strengthens communities of people.
3. Religion assures its followers that there is a larger cosmic order.

Every society of record has had some kind of religious influence, which indicates that religion must serve important functions if all societies have one or more religions integrated.

Durkheim explored the functions of religion within his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. By studying the Australian Aborigines, he determined that religion's main functions are to provide social cohesion and control.

Other sociologists indicate religion provides comfort and quel's dissatisfaction, strengthens community and provides assurance to followers of cosmic order.

It is important to examine the structural elements of religion in relation to gender and sexuality by examining patriarchy and heterosexism.

Patriarchy refers to lines of descent that are traced through the paternal side of the family and characterized by male dominance.

Heterosexism refers to prejudice or discriminatory attitudes and behaviors against homosexuals and homosexuality.

In regards to gender and sexuality, religion is heavily impacted by patriarchy and heterosexism. Both of these structural elements have been present within world religions for thousands of years and it has only been in the last century that changes are beginning to be seen.

More women are entering the ministry in the US and lay persons are being allowed to hold leadership positions in the church.

Two issues of importance are the ordination of gay and lesbian ministers and the sanctioning by churches of same-sex marriages. The Presbyterian Church USA has officially approved gay and lesbian ordination and allows ministers to officiate wedding ceremonies for gay and lesbian couples. The Danish Parliament voted to require all Danish national churches to perform same-sex marriages.

Most Americans will not recognize how religion and sustainability are intertwined

Structurally, the majority of religions focus on social justice issues, such as taking care of the poor and being an advocate for the socially marginalized, which aligns with the focus of sustainability.

The creation care movement focuses on the stewardship of God's creation as opposed to the concept of dominion over the planet, animals, natural and human resources.

There are local, national and international religious organizations that are developing structural means to communicate the importance of taking care of our planet, as well as the religious dictates to do so.

**Module 3: Social Problems**

Education is the transmission of knowledge, skills, values and beliefs from one group to another.

Schooling is the formal educational process that takes place in institutions, such as schools and centers of learning.

Education transmits knowledge, skills, values and beliefs, primarily through schooling. The basic function of education around the world is to transmit culture, prepare students for their careers and control society's youngest members.

Education is one of the largest industries in the United States. Module 3 identifies the social problems associated with education. These include the teacher expectancy effect and the hidden curriculum.

The teacher expectancy effect refers to teachers' perception of students having an effect on their academic achievement.

The hidden curriculum refers to the lessons that are not associated with the formal educational curriculum.

The social problems associated with the cost of education include inequality in the educational system.

Wealthy communities collect more taxes and spend more per pupil than poor communities. The impact of this disparity can be seen in tangible ways such as the unequal equipment and classes of poor school kids as compared to wealthy kids.

Intangible items such as the hidden curriculum also show evidence of inequality.

The research of gene anion found that these inequalities have long-term consequences for student academic and future success.

There has been an ongoing debate over changing academic standards. Concerns include the common core and school choice.

The common core was created with the initial goal of establishing unified knowledge standards for each grade level in English and mathematics, with science being added at a later date.

School choice refers to programs that allow students to transfer to schools outside those assigned to them by their particular school district.

Under the rubric of school choice, we have school vouchers and charter schools. School vouchers are programs that allow parents to apply some or all of their child's public school tax revenue towards a private school education instead.

Charter schools are publicly funded academic institutions that operate independently of school districts yet are required to comply with state academic standards.

Private schools are schools that are independent of local and state academic standards. Typically, private schools have a curriculum based on particular religious or academic emphasis and offer some type of specialized learning.

Homeschooling varies tremendously around the country but generally involves the

parents taking responsibility for the education of their child at their home instead of in a public or private school setting.

Depending on the requirements of the state, this option may not involve the parents using a professionally approved curriculum.

Online learning involves students following state-approved educational material online as opposed to inside a traditional classroom. Online learning may be done full or part-time and requires students to be virtually connected to their teachers.

The government's effort to implement uniform educational standards with the common core has been met with skepticism by many.

Other efforts to reform the educational system include the introduction of programs that allow students to transfer outside of their district or choose alternative educational options.

Charter schools and vouchers are designed to provide alternative school choices, especially when the assigned school is underperforming.

Private schools, home schooling and online learning are other alternative educational methods.

**Module 4: The Sociological Imagination**

This module examines education and the sociological imagination by looking at high school dropouts. The top reasons for dropping out of school include feeling that the classes were boring and not being motivated to work on school, family issues like teen pregnancy or the need to get a job to help the family, too many absences and or failing classes, family and friends being unsupportive with school and too much freedom and too few rules.

Personal troubles and public issues are explored through an examination of school performance. While the high school dropout rate has fallen over the years, the United States still ranks 21st when compared to other countries around the world.

The personal reasons for dropping out of high school range from boredom in the classroom to teen pregnancy.

The impact of dropping out of high school is considered not just in regards to the individual but also in terms of its impact on society overall. More dropouts means less revenue for taxes which equates to fewer resources to maintain and improve schools.

Let's examine educational tracking; tracking is the practice of schools grouping students based on academic achievement.

One way to monitor student progress is through tracking. Those in favor of tracking argue that it groups by ability so they can receive the attention they need to succeed.

Those opposed to tracking argue that the teacher quality and classroom dynamics of the lower tracked students is not ideal and the negative consequence of this approach outweighs the positive advantages.

The teacher expectancy effect may be more likely to occur as less qualified and underperforming teachers may be assigned to the lower performing track of students which may result in the teachers having lower expectations for the students.

**Module 5: Social Change**

This module evaluates changes in the educational landscape. There is a gender gap between men and women on college campuses.

Reasons for this development include changing demographics and the labor market. There are more women enrolled in higher education and women are more likely to

graduate from college.

Interestingly, men may have better job prospects without earning a college degree than women. The cost of college debt is more beneficial to women and eventually women will likely earn more than men.

Let's examine the cost of college education, beginning with the key term distance learning; distance learning is defined as college level schooling that occurs online at a time and place convenient to the student.

Cost of attending an American college or university has increased dramatically over the last 30 years. The stark increase compares to the low tuition for German and other European students.

Alternative options are being explored by legislators and students alike. These run the gamut from making community college free to exploring distance learning options.

For-profit institutions that offer distance learning are increasingly facing scrutiny and questions about their tactics and whether or not their students are getting what they hoped for from their education.

This concludes the PowerPoint for **SociologicalYOU** Chapter 12 where we strive to “Connect Sociology and YOU!”

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