

Education and Religion

 Listen to Chapter 13 on MySocLab

13 CHAPTER



Kathy Spiegel was upset. *Horace Mann, the school principal in her hometown in Oregon, had asked her to come to his office. He explained that Kathy's 11-year-old twins had been acting up in class. They were disturbing other children and the teacher—and what was Kathy going to do about this?*

Kathy didn't want to tell Mr. Mann what he could do with the situation. That would have gotten her kicked out of the office. Instead, she bit her tongue and said she would talk to her daughters.

“Kathy's 11-year-old twins were disturbing other children and the teacher—and what was Kathy going to do about this?”

On the other side of the country, Jim and Julia Attaway were pondering their own problem. When they visited their son's school in the Bronx, they didn't like what they saw. The boys looked like they were little gangsta wannabes, and the girls dressed and acted as though they were sexually active. Their own 13-year-old son had started using street language at home, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to talk to him.

In Minneapolis, Denzil and Tamika Jefferson were facing a much quieter crisis. They found life frantic as they hurried from one school activity to another. Their 13-year-old son attended a private school, and the demands were so intense that it felt like the junior year in high school. They no longer seemed to have any relaxed family time together.

In Atlanta, Jaime and Maria Morelos were upset at the ideas that their 8-year-old daughter had begun to express at home. As devout first-generation Protestants, Jaime and Maria felt moral issues were a top priority, and they didn't like what they were hearing.

Kathy talked the matter over with her husband, Bob. Jim and Julia discussed their problem, as did Denzil and Tamika and Jaime and Maria. They all came to the same conclusion: The problem was not their children. The problem was the school their children attended. All four sets of parents also came to the same solution: home schooling for their children.

Home schooling might seem to be a radical solution to today's education problems, but it is one that the parents of 1½ million U.S. children have chosen. We'll come back to this topic, but, first, let's take a broad look at education.

Education: Transferring Knowledge and Skills

Education in Global Perspective

Have you ever wondered why people need a high school diploma to sell cars or to join the U.S. Marines? You will learn what you know on the job. Why do employers insist on diplomas and degrees? Why don't they simply use on-the-job training?

In some cases, job skills must be mastered before you are allowed to do the work. On-the-job training was once adequate to become an engineer or an airline pilot, but with changes in information and technology it is no longer sufficient. This is precisely why doctors display their credentials so prominently. Their framed degrees declare that an institution of higher learning has certified them to work on your body.

But testing in algebra or paragraph construction to sell gizmos at Radio Shack? Sociologist Randall Collins (1979) observed that industrialized nations have become **credential societies**. By this, he means that employers use diplomas and degrees as *sorting devices* to determine who is eligible for a job. Because employers don't know potential workers,

Learning Objectives

After you have read this chapter, you should be able to:

- 13.1** Understand how education is related to a nation's culture and economy; compare education in Japan, Russia, and Egypt. (p. 403)
- 13.2** Explain the functions of education: knowledge and skills, values, social integration, gatekeeping, and replacing family functions. (p. 408)
- 13.3** Explain how the educational system reproduces the social class structure. (p. 410)
- 13.4** Explain the significance of teacher expectations and give examples. (p. 413)
- 13.5** Discuss mediocrity in education, grade inflation, social promotion, raising standards, cheating by administrators, and violence in schools. (p. 415)
- 13.6** Explain what Durkheim meant by sacred and profane; discuss the three elements of religion. (p. 418)
- 13.7** Apply the functionalist perspective to religion: functions and dysfunctions. (p. 421)
- 13.8** Apply the symbolic interactionist perspective to religion: symbols, rituals, beliefs, and religious experience. (p. 422)
- 13.9** Apply the conflict perspective to religion: opium of the people and legitimating social inequalities. (p. 426)
- 13.10** Explain Weber's analysis of how religion broke tradition and brought capitalism. (p. 426)
- 13.11** Compare cult, sect, church, and ecclesia. (p. 427)
- 13.12** Summarize main features of religion in the United States. (p. 430)
- 13.13** Discuss the likely future of religion. (p. 432)



In this 1921 photo of a one-room schoolhouse in Marey, West Virginia, you can see how public education had spread to even poor, rural areas of the United States. Notice the bare-foot children.

13.1 Understand how education is related to a nation's culture and economy; compare education in Japan, Russia, and Egypt.

Watch on MySocLab
Video: The Big Picture: Education

Watch on MySocLab
Video: Thinking Like a Sociologist: Graduation Rates

mandatory education laws laws that require all children to attend school until a specified age or until they complete a minimum grade in school

they depend on schools to weed out the incapable. For example, when you graduate from college, potential employers will presume that you are a responsible person—that you have shown up for numerous classes, have turned in scores of assignments, and have demonstrated basic writing and thinking skills. They will then graft their particular job skills onto this foundation, which has been certified by your college.

Education and Industrialization

In the early years of the United States, most people worked on farms, and there was no free public education. But by 1918, all U.S. states had **mandatory education laws** requiring children to attend school, usually until they completed the eighth grade or turned 16, whichever came first. Graduation from the eighth grade marked the end of education for most

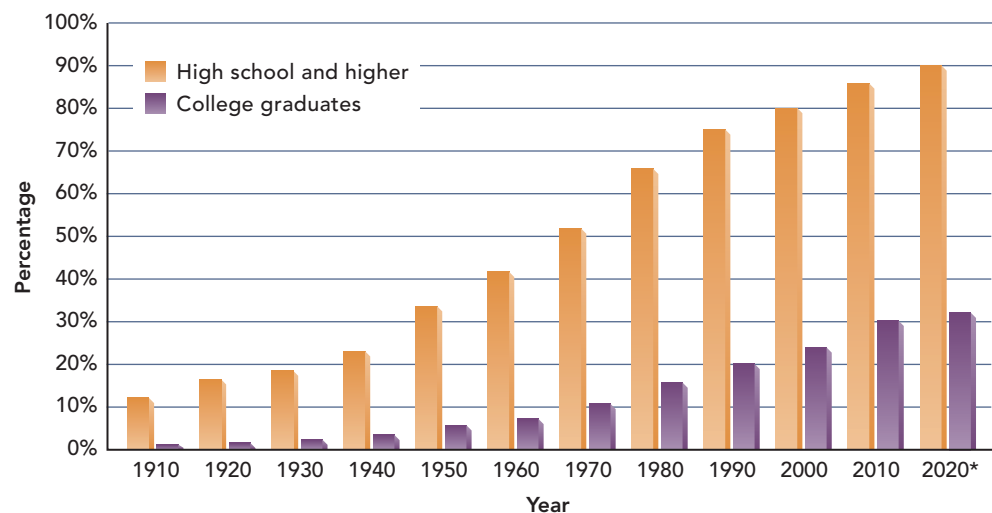
people. “Dropouts” at that time were students who did not complete grade school.

It is no coincidence that universal education and industrialization occurred at the same time. The economy was changing from farm to factory, and as political and civic leaders observed this transformation, they recognized the need for an educated workforce. They also feared the influx of “foreign” values and looked at public education as a way to “Americanize” immigrants (Jones and Meyer 2010).

As industrialization progressed and fewer people made their living from farming, even more years of formal education came to be regarded as essential to the well-being of society. Graduation from high school became more common, and more students wanted a college education. Free education stopped with high school, however, and with the distance to the nearest college too far and the cost of tuition and lodging too great, few high school graduates were able to attend college. As discussed in the Down-to-Earth Sociology box on the next page, this predicament gave birth to community colleges.

Figure 13.1 below gives you a snapshot of the incredible change in educational achievement. As you can see, receiving a bachelor's degree is now more than *twice* as

FIGURE 13.1 Educational Achievement in the United States



Note: Americans 25 years and over. Asterisk indicates author's estimate. College graduates are included in both categories (High school and higher, and College graduates).

Sources: By the author. Based on National Center for Education Statistics 1991:Table 8; *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2013:Table 236.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Community Colleges: Facing Old and New Challenges

I attended a junior college in Oakland, California. From there, with fresh diploma in hand, I transferred to a senior college—a college in Fort Wayne, Indiana, that had no freshmen or sophomores.

I didn't realize that my experimental college matched the vision of some of the founders of the community college movement. In the early 1900s, they foresaw a system of local colleges that would be accessible to the average high school graduate—a system so extensive that it would be unnecessary for universities to offer courses at the freshman and sophomore levels (Handel 2013).

A group with an equally strong opinion questioned whether preparing high school graduates for entry to four-year colleges and universities should be the goal of junior colleges. They insisted that the purpose of junior colleges should be vocational preparation, to equip people for the job market as electricians and other technicians. In some regions, where the proponents of transfer dominated, the admissions requirements for junior colleges were higher than those of Yale (Pedersen 2001). This debate was never won by either side, and you can still hear its echoes today (Handel 2013).

The name *junior* college also became a problem. Some felt that the word *junior* made their institution sound as though it weren't quite a real college. A struggle to change the name ensued, and several decades ago, *community* college won out. The name change didn't settle the debate about whether the purpose was preparing students to transfer to universities or training them for jobs, however. Community colleges continue to serve this dual purpose.

Community colleges have become such an essential part of the U.S. educational system that 37 percent of all undergraduates in the United States are enrolled in them (*Statistical Abstract* 2013:Table 279). They have become the major source of the nation's emergency medical technicians, firefighters, nurses, and police officers. Most students are *nontraditional* students: Many are age 25 or older, come from

the working class, have jobs and children, and attend college part-time (Osterman 2010; Jackson et al. 2013).

To help students who are not seeking occupational certificates transfer to four-year colleges and universities, many community colleges work closely with four-year public and private universities. Some provide admissions guidance on how to enter flagship state schools. Others coordinate courses, making sure they match the university's title and numbering system, as well as its rigor of instruction and grading. Many offer honors programs that prepare talented students to transfer with ease into these schools.

An emerging trend is for community colleges to become four-year colleges without changing their names. Some are now granting work-related baccalaureate degrees in such areas as teaching, nursing, and public safety (Hanson 2010). This raises questions: Will these community colleges eventually develop into full four-year colleges? If they do, will this create the need to establish community colleges to replace them?

Community colleges face continuing challenges. They must secure adequate budgets in the face of declining resources, adjust to changing job markets, and maintain quality instruction and campus security. Other challenges include offering financial aid, re-

medial and online courses, and flex schedules. Still other challenges are teaching students for whom English is a second language and providing on-campus day care for parents. A pressing need is to increase graduation rates. For this, community colleges are improving their orientation programs and developing better ways to monitor their students' progress. (Osterman 2010; Diamond 2013; Dunn 2013; Wang 2013).

For Your Consideration

➤ Do you think the primary goal of community colleges should be to train students for jobs or to prepare them to transfer to four-year colleges and universities? Why?



Community colleges have opened higher education to millions of students who would not otherwise have access to college because of cost or distance.

common as completing high school used to be. Two of every three (68 percent) high school graduates enter college (*Statistical Abstract* 2013:Table 276).

To place our own educational system in global perspective, let's look at education in three countries at different levels of industrialization. This will help us see how education is related to a nation's culture and its economy.

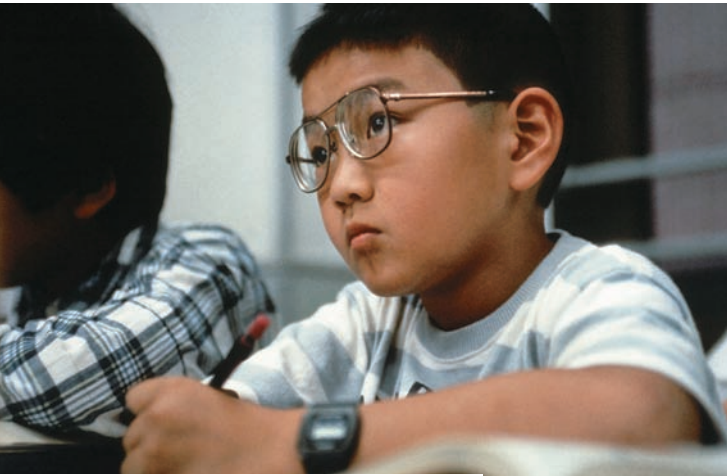
Education in the Most Industrialized Nations: Japan

Japanese students outscore U.S. students. Why? One reason is that hardly any nation takes education as seriously as Japan does. Japan has 50,000 (*juku*) cram schools. These schools operate *after* the regular school day. Let's peer inside one:

An instructor flashes an abbreviation from the periodic table. The grade school children shout "Magnesium!" Then come shouts of "Lithium!" "Gadolinium!" "Tantalum!" As a stream of flags passes by, the students shout out the names of the countries. When the instructor displays photos of the skies, the students shout the names of constellations they have memorized.

Older students use timers on their tests. Each night, they try to get faster in their answers and to memorize more materials for more tests.

These schools aren't free. The parents pay over \$3,000 a year to enroll a child in a cram school. And one in five first graders is enrolled in these schools ("Testing Times" 2011).



School is over—but not for this student. After the regular school day, hundreds of thousands in Japan attend 50,000 cram (*juku*) schools.

What an emphasis on education. Japanese parents pay over \$3,000 a year to enroll a child in a cram school. And one in five first-graders is enrolled in these schools, which operate after the regular school day. In grade school, children work as a group, all mastering the same skills and materials. On any one day, children all over Japan even study the same page from the same textbook ("Less Rote . . ." 2000). This uniformity is accompanied by a personal touch: Teachers are required to visit each student's home once a year (Yamamoto and Brinton 2010).

A central sociological principle of education is that a nation's education reflects its culture. Studying the same materials at the same time reflects the core Japanese value of solidarity with the group. In the workforce, people who are hired together are not expected to compete with one another for promotions. Instead, they work as a team and are promoted as a group (Ouchi 1993). Japanese education reflects this group-centered approach to life.

In a fascinating cultural contradiction, college admission in Japan is highly competitive, and this is where the cram schools come in. The Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), taken by college-bound high school students in the United States, is voluntary. Japanese seniors who want to attend college, however, must take a national test. U.S. students who perform poorly on their tests can usually find some college to attend—as long as their parents can pay the tuition. Until recently, in Japan only the top scorers—rich and poor alike—were admitted to college. Because Japan's birth rate has dropped so low, more space is available, and it is becoming easier for students to get into college. Competition for entrance to the best colleges remains intense (Okada 2012).

As in the United States, children from Japan's richer families score higher on college admission tests and are more likely to attend the nation's elite colleges (Okada 2012). In each country, children born in richer families inherit privileges that give them advantages over others. Among these privileges, which sociologists call **cultural capital**, are having more highly educated parents, encouragement and pressure to bring home top grades, and cultural experiences that translate into higher test scores.

Education in the Industrializing Nations: Russia

Prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917, the czar had been expanding Russia's educational system beyond the children of the elite (Andreev 2012). The Soviet Communist party continued this expansion until education encompassed all children. Following the



Watch on MySocLab

Video: Sociology in Focus:
Education

cultural capital privileges accompanying a social location that help someone in life; included are more highly educated parents, from grade school through high school being pushed to bring home high grades, and enjoying cultural experiences that translate into higher test scores, better jobs, and higher earnings

sociological principle that education reflects culture, the new government made certain that socialist values dominated its schools, for it saw education as a means to undergird the new political system. As a result, schoolchildren were taught that capitalism was evil and communism was the salvation of the world. Every classroom was required to prominently display photographs of Lenin and Stalin.

Education, including college, was free under the Soviets. Just as the economy was directed from central headquarters in Moscow, so was education. Schools stressed mathematics and the natural sciences. Each school followed the same state-prescribed curriculum, and all students in the same grade used the same textbooks. To prevent critical thinking, which might lead to criticisms of communism, there were few courses in the social sciences. Students memorized course materials, repeating lectures on oral exams (Deaver 2001).

Russia's switch from communism to capitalism brought a change in culture—especially new ideas about profit, private property, and personal freedom. This, in turn, meant that the educational system had to adjust to the country's changing values and views of the world. Not only did the photos of Lenin and Stalin come down, but also, for the first time, private, religious, and even foreign-run schools were allowed. For the first time as well, teachers were able to encourage students to think for themselves.

The problems that Russia confronted in “reinventing” its educational system are mind-boggling. Tens of thousands of teachers who had been teaching students to memorize Party-dictated political answers had to learn new methods of instruction. As the economy faltered during Russia's early transition to capitalism, school budgets dwindled. Some teachers went unpaid for months; instead of money, at one school teachers were paid in toilet paper and vodka (Deaver 2001). Teachers are now paid regularly (and in money), but the salaries are low. University professors average only \$1,000 a month (Agranovich 2012). The economic crisis is global, and Russia's education is again feeling the pinch as budgets shrink (Filatova et al. 2012).

For obvious reasons, politicians are interested in their country's educational system, and Russia is no exception. The president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, declared that the new history books did not do justice to Russia's glorious past. Educational bureaucrats immediately jumped into action, and now officials inspect the content of history books to make certain they are sufficiently patriotic (Rapoport 2009). We can confidently predict that Russia's educational system will continue to glorify Russia's historical exploits and reinforce its values and world views—no matter in what direction those values and views may take.

Education in the Least Industrialized Nations: Egypt

Education in the Least Industrialized Nations stands in sharp contrast to that in the industrialized world. Because most of the citizens of these nations work the land or take care of families, there is little emphasis on formal schooling. Mandatory attendance laws are not enforced. As we saw in Figure 7.3 (pp. 207–208), many people in the Least Industrialized Nations live on less than \$1,000 a year. Consequently, in some of these nations few children go to school beyond the first couple of grades. As was once common around the globe, it is primarily the wealthy in the Least Industrialized Nations who have the means and the leisure for formal education—especially anything beyond the basics. As an example, let's look at education in Egypt.

Several centuries before the birth of Christ, Egypt's world-renowned centers of learning produced such acclaimed scientists as Archimedes and Euclid. The primary areas of study during this classic period were astronomy, geography, geometry, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, and physics. The largest library in the world was at Alexandria. Fragments from the papyrus manuscripts of this library, which burned to the ground, have been invaluable in deciphering ancient manuscripts. After Rome defeated Egypt, however, education declined and has never regained its former prominence.

Although the Egyptian constitution guarantees six years of free school for all children, many poor children receive no education at



Listen on **MySocLab**

Audio: NPR: U.S. Universities No Longer Only Game in Town

The poverty of the Least Industrialized Nations carries over to their educational system. These students in Zimbabwe are being taught outside because their school has run out of space.



manifest functions the intended beneficial consequences of people's actions

latent functions unintended beneficial consequences of people's actions

cultural transmission of values the process of transmitting values from one group to another; often refers to how cultural traits are transmitted across generations; in education, the ways in which schools transmit a society's culture, especially its core values

13.2 Explain the functions of education: knowledge and skills, values, social integration, gatekeeping, and replacing family functions.

The cartoonist captures a primary reason that we have become a credential society.



"Hey, how come no diplomas?" "Oh, I'm self-taught."

all. For those who do attend school, qualified teachers are few, and classrooms are crowded. As a result, one-third to one-half of Egyptians are illiterate, with more men than women able to read and write (UNESCO 2012). After the six years of grade school, students are tracked. Most study technical subjects for three years, and are then done with school, while others follow these three years with two years of academic subjects: arts, science, or mathematics ("Egyptian Overview" 2010).

The emphasis is on memorizing facts to pass national tests. With concerns that this approach leaves minds less capable of evaluating life and opens the door to religious extremism, Egyptian educators have pressed for critical thinking to be added to the curriculum (Gauch 2006). The general low quality of education—including university classes, which are free—leaves Egypt uncompetitive in the global economy (Loveluck 2012). Without fundamental reforms, which are not on the horizon, Egypt will continue to lag behind in the global race for economic security.

The Functionalist Perspective: Providing Social Benefits

A central position of functionalism is that when the parts of a society are working properly, each contributes to the well-being or stability of that society. The positive things that people intend their actions to accomplish are known as **manifest functions**. The positive consequences they did not intend are called **latent functions**. Let's begin by looking at the functions of education.

Teaching Knowledge and Skills

Education's most obvious manifest function is to teach knowledge and skills—whether the traditional three R's or their more contemporary counterparts, such as computer literacy. Each generation must train the next to fill the group's significant positions. Because our postindustrial society needs highly educated people, the schools supply them.

Cultural Transmission of Values

Another manifest function of education is the **cultural transmission of values**, a process by which schools pass on a society's core values from one generation to the next. Schools in a socialist society stress values that support socialism, while schools in a capitalist society teach values that support capitalism. U.S. schools, for example, stress the significance of private property, individualism, and competition.

Regardless of a country's economic system, loyalty to the state is a cultural value, and schools around the world teach patriotism. U.S. schools—as well as those of Russia, France, China, and other countries around the world—extol the society's founders, their struggle for freedom from oppression, and the goodness of the country's social institutions. Seldom is this function as explicit as it is in Japan, where the law requires that schools "cultivate a respect for tradition and culture, and love for the nation and homeland" (Nakamura 2006).

To visualize what the functionalists mean, consider how differently a course in U.S. history would be taught in Cuba, Iran, and Muncie, Indiana.

Social Integration

Schools also bring about *social integration*. Among the ways they promote a sense of national identity is by having students salute the flag and sing the national anthem.

Integrating Immigrants. One of the best examples of how U.S. schools promote political integration is their teaching of mainstream ideas and values to tens of millions of immigrants. The schools help the immigrants to regard themselves as Americans and give up their earlier national and cultural identities (Carper 2000; G. Thompson 2009).

Stabilizing Society: Maintaining the Status Quo.

This integrative function of education goes far beyond making people similar in their appearance, speech, or even ways of thinking. *To forge a national identity is to stabilize the political system.* If people identify with a society's institutions and *perceive them as the basis of their own welfare*, they have no reason to rebel. This function of education is especially significant when it comes to the lower social classes, from which most social revolutionaries emerge. The wealthy already have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, but getting the lower classes to identify with a social system *as it is* goes a long way toward preserving the system as it is.

Integrating People with Disabilities. People with disabilities often have found themselves left out of the mainstream of society. As a matter of routine policy, students with special needs used to be placed in special classes or schools. There, however, they learned to adjust to a specialized situation, leaving them ill prepared to cope with the dominant world. To overcome this, U.S. schools have added a manifest function, **inclusion**, or mainstreaming. As in the photo above, this means that educators try to incorporate students with disabilities into regular school activities. Wheelchair ramps are provided for people who cannot walk; interpreters who use sign language may attend classes with students who cannot hear. Exceptions include most blind students, who attend special schools, as well as people with severe learning disabilities. Most inclusion goes fairly smoothly, but mainstreaming students with serious emotional and behavioral problems disrupts classrooms, frustrates teachers, and increases teacher turnover (Tomsho and Golden 2007). About 90 percent of students with disabilities now spend at least some of their days in regular classrooms, with over half there most of the time (IES 2010).



Children with disabilities used to be sent to special schools. In a process called *mainstreaming* or *inclusion*, they now attend regular schools. This photo was taken in Detroit, Michigan.

Gatekeeping (Social Placement)

Sociologists Talcott Parsons (1940), Kingsley Davis, and Wilbert Moore (Davis and Moore 1945) pioneered a view called **social placement**. They pointed out that some jobs require few skills and can be performed by people of lesser intelligence. Other jobs, such as that of physician, require high intelligence and advanced education. It is up to the schools to sort the capable from the incapable. They do this, say the functionalists, on the basis of merit, that is, the students' abilities and ambitions.

As you can see, social placement, more commonly known as **gatekeeping**, means to open the doors of opportunity for some and to close them to others. The question is what opens and closes those doors. Is it merit, as the functionalists argue? To accomplish gatekeeping, schools use some form of **tracking**, sorting students into different educational "tracks" or programs on the basis of their perceived abilities. Some U.S. high schools funnel students into one of three tracks: general, college prep, or honors. Students on the lowest track are likely to go to work after high school, or to take vocational courses. Those on the highest track usually attend prestigious colleges. Those in between usually attend a local college or regional state university.

The impact of gatekeeping is lifelong. Tracking affects people's opportunities for jobs, income, and lifestyle. When tracking was challenged—that it is based more on social

inclusion helping people to become part of the mainstream of society; also called *mainstreaming*

social placement a function of education—funneling people into a society's various positions

gatekeeping the process by which education opens and closes doors of opportunity; another term for the *social placement* function of education

tracking the sorting of students into different programs on the basis of real or perceived abilities

class than merit, which perpetuates social inequality—schools retreated from formal tracking. Placing students in “ability groups” and “advanced” classes, however, serves the same purpose (Loveless 2013).

Replacing Family Functions

Over the years, the functions of U.S. schools have expanded, and they now rival some family functions. Child care is an example. Grade schools do double duty as babysitters for families in which both parents work, or for single working mothers. Child care has always been a latent function of formal education, for it was an unintended consequence. Now, however, with two wage earners in most families, child care has become a manifest function, and some schools offer child care both before and after the school day. Some high schools even provide nurseries for the children of their teenaged students (Bosman 2007).

Another function is providing sex education, and, as in some school-based health centers, birth control (Elliott 2007). This has stirred controversy, for some families resent schools taking this function away from them. Disagreement over values has fueled the social movement for home schooling, featured in our opening vignette and in the Down-to-Earth Sociology box on the next page.

In Sum: Functionalists analyze the functions, the benefits, that schools provide to society. Not only do the schools teach the knowledge and skills needed by the next generation, but they also stabilize society by forging a national identity. A controversial function is gatekeeping, sorting students for various levels of jobs. Schools have expanded their domain, taking over some functions formerly performed by families.

13.3 Explain how the educational system reproduces the social class structure.

The Conflict Perspective: Perpetuating Social Inequality

Unlike functionalists, who look at the benefits of education, conflict theorists examine how *the educational system reproduces the social class structure*. By this, they mean that schools perpetuate the social divisions of society and help members of the elite maintain their dominance.

Let’s look, then, at how education is related to social classes, how it helps people inherit *cultural capital*, the life opportunities that were laid down before they were born.

The Hidden Curriculum: Reproducing the Social Class Structure

The term **hidden curriculum** refers to the attitudes and the unwritten rules of behavior that schools teach in addition to the formal curriculum. Examples are obedience to authority and conformity to mainstream norms. Conflict theorists stress that the hidden curriculum helps to perpetuate social inequalities.

To understand this central point, consider the way English is taught. Schools for the middle class—whose teachers know where their students are headed—stress “proper” English and “good” manners. In contrast, the teachers in inner-city schools—who also know where *their* students are headed—allow ethnic and street language in the classroom. *Each type of school is helping to reproduce the social class structure.* That is, each is preparing students to work in positions similar to those of their parents. The social class of some children destines them for higher positions. For these jobs, they need “refined” speech and manners. The social destiny of others is low-status jobs. For this type of work, they need only to obey rules (Bowles and Gintis 1976, 2002). Teaching these students “refined” speech and manners would be wasted effort. In other words, even the teaching of English and manners helps keep the social classes intact across generations.



Read on **MySocLab**

Document: Racial Stratification and Education in the United States: Why Inequality Persists

hidden curriculum the unwritten goals of schools, such as teaching obedience to authority and conformity to cultural norms

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Home Schooling: The Search for Quality and Values

You're doing WHAT? You're going to teach your kids at home?" is the typical, incredulous response to parents who decide to home school their children. The unspoken questions are "How can you teach? You're not trained. And taking your kids out of the public schools—Do you want your kids to be dumb and social misfits?"

The home-schooling movement was small at first, just a trickle of parents who were dissatisfied with the school bureaucracy, lax discipline, incompetent teachers, low standards, lack of focus on individual needs, and, in some instances, hostility to their religion. That trickle grew into a social movement, and now 1,500,000 U.S. children are being taught at home (*Statistical Abstract* 2013:Table 245).

Home schooling is far from new. In the colonial era, home schooling was the typical form of education (Gaither 2009). Today's home-schooling movement is restoring this earlier pattern, but it also reflects a fascinating shift in U.S. politics. Political and religious liberals began the contemporary home-schooling movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Their objection was that the schools were too conservative. Then the schools changed, and in the 1970s and 1980s, political and religious conservatives embraced home schooling (Stevens 2001; Gaither 2009). Their objection was that the schools were too liberal. Some home-schooling parents have no political motivation. Their concerns are their children's safety at school, boring classes, and the lack of individual attention (MacFarquhar 2008; Lewin 2011).

Does home schooling work? Can parents who are not trained as teachers actually teach? To find out, researchers tested 21,000 home schoolers across the nation (Rudner 1999). The results were astounding. With median scores for every test at every grade in the 70th to 80th percentiles, the home schoolers vastly outscored students in both public and Catholic schools. Follow-up studies have confirmed the initial research (Ray 2010).

The basic reason for this stunning success appears to be the parents' involvement in their children's education. Home schoolers receive intense, one-on-one teaching. Their curriculum—although it includes the subjects that are required by the state—is designed around the students' interests and needs. Mothers do most of the teaching—90 percent of

students versus 10 percent by fathers (Lines 2000). The parents' income is also above average.

We do not know what these home schoolers' test scores would have been if they had been taught in public schools. With their parents' involvement in their education, they likely would have done very well there, too. In addition, although the Rudner study was large, it was not a random sample, and we cannot say how the average home schooler is doing. But, then, we have no random sample of all public school students, either.

What about the children's social skills? Since they don't attend school with dozens and even hundreds of other stu-

dents, do they become social misfits? Contrary to stereotypes, home-schooled children are not isolated. As part of their educational experience, their parents take them to libraries, museums, factories, and nursing homes (Weiner 2012). Some home schoolers also participate in the physical education and sports programs of the public schools (Longman 2012). Parents have also formed regional and national home-schooling associations and hold national sports championships (Cooper and Sureau 2007; Drape 2008). Some get together and hold group graduations (Lewin 2011).

Slowly coming to terms with home schooling, some public schools have begun to offer hybrid programs (Gaither 2009; Cummings 2012). Some offer dual enrollment: The home-schooled child can attend public school part of the day, such as to gain access to specific classes, and learn the rest of the day at home. Others offer "cyber schools," full public education delivered at home via the Internet.

How about getting into college? How can home-schooled children be admitted without official transcripts? This has been a problem, but as home schooling has become widespread, colleges have adjusted. Now three of four colleges have procedures for admitting home schoolers (Cooper and Sureau 2007).



Homeschooling has come a long way. These children are performing in a musical at the annual Homeschool Theater Workshop in Lexington, Kentucky.

For Your Consideration

➤ Why do you think that home schooling has become so popular? Do you think this social movement could eventually become a threat to U.S. public schools? Would you consider home schooling your children? Why or why not?



Stressing that education reproduces a country's social class system, conflict theorists point out that the social classes attend separate schools. There they learn perspectives of the world that match their place in it. Show here are students at a private school in Argentina. What do you think this school's *hidden curriculum* is?



Explore on **MySocLab**

Activity: High School Dropouts and Educational Funding



Watch on **MySocLab**

Video: Thinking Like a Sociologist: Dollars and Degrees

FIGURE 13.2 Who Goes to College? Comparing Social Class and Ability in Determining College Attendance

		Students' Test Scores	
		High	Low
Students' Background	Rich	90%	26%
	Poor	50%	6%

Source: Bowles 1977.

Tilting the Tests: Discrimination By IQ

Even intelligence tests help to keep the social class system intact. Let's look at an example. How would you answer this question?

A symphony is to a composer as a book is to a(n) ____
 ____ paper ____ sculptor ____ musician ____ author ____ man

You probably had no difficulty coming up with "author" as your choice. Wouldn't any intelligent person have done so?

In point of fact, this question raises a central issue in intelligence testing. Not all intelligent people would know the answer. This question contains *cultural biases*. Children from some backgrounds are more familiar with the concepts of symphonies, composers, and sculptors than are other children. This tilts the test in their favor.

To make the bias clearer, try to answer this question:

If you throw two dice and "7" is showing on the top, what is facing down?
 ____ seven ____ snake eyes ____ box cars ____ little Joes ____ eleven

Adrian Dove (n.d.), a social worker in Watts, a poor area of Los Angeles, suggested this question. Its cultural bias should be obvious—that it allows children from some social backgrounds to perform better than others. Unlike the first question, this one is not tilted to the middle-class experience. In other words, IQ (intelligence quotient) tests measure not only intelligence but also acquired knowledge.

You should now be able to perceive the bias of IQ tests that use such words as *composer* and *symphony*. A lower-class child may have heard about rap, rock, gangsta, or jazz, but not about symphonies. One consequence of this bias to the middle-class experience is that the children of the poor score lower on IQ tests. Then, to match their supposedly inferior intelligence, these children are assigned to less demanding courses. Their inferior education helps them reach their social destiny, their lower-paying jobs in adult life. As conflict theorists view them, then, IQ tests are another weapon in an arsenal designed to maintain the social class structure across the generations.

Stacking the Deck: Unequal Funding

Conflict theorists stress that the way schools are funded stacks the deck against the poor.

Because public schools are supported largely by local property taxes, the richer communities (where property values and incomes are higher) have more to spend on their children's schools, and the poorer communities have less to spend on theirs. The richer communities, then, can offer higher salaries and take their pick of the most highly qualified and motivated teachers. They can also afford to buy the latest textbooks, computers, and software, as well as offer courses in foreign languages, music, and the arts. This, stress conflict theorists, means that in *all* states the deck is stacked against the poor.

The Bottom Line: Family Background

Reproducing the Social Class Structure. The end result of unequal funding, IQ testing, and the other factors we have discussed is this: Family background is more important than test scores in predicting who attends college. In a classic study, sociologist Samuel Bowles (1977) compared the college attendance of high school students who were the most and least intellectually prepared for college. Figure 13.2, shows the results. Of the students who scored the highest on tests, 90 percent of those from affluent homes went to college, but only half of the high-scorers from low-income homes went to college. Of the least prepared, those

who scored the lowest, 26 percent from affluent homes went to college, while only 6 percent from poorer homes did so.

Other sociologists have confirmed this classic research (Carnevale and Rose 2003; Bailey and Dynarski 2011). Regardless of personal abilities, children from more well-to-do families are more likely not only to go to college but also to attend the nation's most elite schools. This, in turn, piles advantage upon advantage, because they get higher-paying and more prestigious jobs when they graduate. The elite colleges are the icing on the cake of these students' more privileged birth.

Reproducing the Racial-Ethnic Structure. Conflict theorists point out that the educational system reproduces not only the U.S. social class structure but also its racial-ethnic divisions. From Figure 13.3, you can see that, compared with whites, African Americans and Latinos are less likely to complete high school and, of those who do, less likely to go to college. Because adults with only a high school diploma usually end up with low-paying, dead-end jobs, you can see how this supports the conflict view—that education is helping to reproduce the racial-ethnic structure for the next generation.

In Sum: U.S. schools closely reflect the U.S. social class system. They equip the children of the elite with the tools they need to maintain their dominance, while they prepare the children of the poor for lower-status positions. Because education's doors of opportunity swing wide open for some but have to be pried open by others, conflict theorists stress that the educational system perpetuates social inequality across generations (or, as they often phrase it, helps to reproduce the social class structure). In fact, they add, this is one of its primary purposes.

The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective: Teacher Expectations

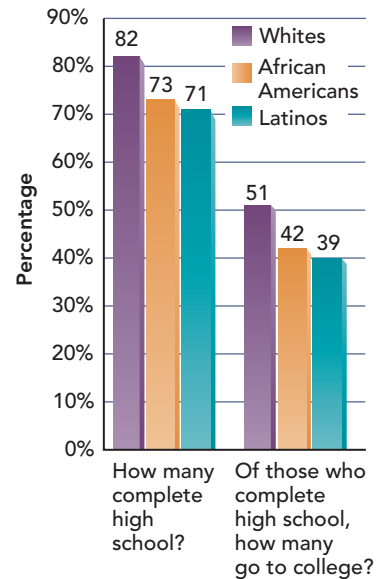
As you have seen, functionalists look at how education benefits society, and conflict theorists examine how education perpetuates social inequality. Symbolic interactionists, in contrast, study face-to-face interaction in the classroom. They have found that what teachers expect of their students has profound consequences for how students do in school.

The Rist Research

Why do some people get tracked into college prep courses and others into vocational ones? There is no single answer, but in what has become a classic study, sociologist Ray Rist came up with some intriguing findings. Rist (1970, 2007) did participant observation in an African American grade school with an African American faculty. He found that after only eight days in the classroom, the kindergarten teacher felt that she knew the children's abilities well enough to assign them to three separate worktables. To Table 1, Mrs. Caplow assigned those she considered to be "fast learners." They sat at the front of the room, closest to her. Those whom she saw as "slow learners," she assigned to Table 3, located at the back of the classroom. She placed "average" students at Table 2, in between the other tables.

This seemed strange to Rist. He knew that the children had not been tested for ability, yet their teacher was certain that she could identify the bright and slow children. Investigating further, Rist found that social class was the underlying basis for assigning the children to the different tables. Middle-class students were separated out for Table 1, and children from poorer homes were assigned to Tables 2 and 3. The teacher paid the most attention to the children at Table 1, who were closest to her, less to Table 2, and the least to Table 3. It didn't take long for the children at Table 1 to perceive that they were treated better and come to see themselves as smarter. They became the leaders in class activities

FIGURE 13.3 The Funneling Effects of Education: Race-Ethnicity



Note: The source gives totals only for these three groups.

Source: By the author. Based on Statistical Abstract of the United States 2013:Table 272.

13.4 Explain the significance of teacher expectations and give examples.

 **Watch on MySocLab**
Video: Pygmalion Experiment

and even called children at the other tables “dumb.” Eventually, the children at Table 3 disengaged themselves from many classroom activities. At the end of the year, only the children at Table 1 had completed the lessons that prepared them for reading.

This early tracking stuck. Their first-grade teacher looked at the work these students had done, and she placed students from Table 1 at her Table 1. She treated her tables much as the kindergarten teacher had, and the children at Table 1 again led the class.

The children’s reputations continued to follow them. The second-grade teacher reviewed their scores and also divided her class into three groups. The first she named the “Tigers” and, befitting their name, gave them challenging readers. Not surprisingly, the Tigers came from the original Table 1 in kindergarten. The second group she called the “Cardinals.” They came from the original Tables 2 and 3. Her third group consisted of children she had failed the previous year, whom she called the “Clowns.” The Cardinals and Clowns were given less advanced readers.

Rist concluded that *each child’s journey through school was determined by the eighth day of kindergarten!* As we saw with the Saints and Roughnecks, in Chapter 4, labels can be so powerful that they can set people on courses of action that affect the rest of their lives.

What occurred was a **self-fulfilling prophecy**. This term, coined by sociologist Robert Merton (1949/1968), refers to a false assumption of something that is going to happen but which then comes true simply because it was predicted. For example, if people believe an unfounded rumor that a credit union is going to fail because its officers have embezzled their money, they all rush to the credit union to demand their money. The prediction—although originally false—is now likely to come true.

How Do Teacher Expectations Work?

Sociologist George Farkas (Farkas et al. 1990a; Farkas et al. 1990b; Farkas 1996) became interested in how teacher expectations affect grades. Using a stratified sample of students in a large school district in Texas, he found that teacher expectations produce gender and racial-ethnic biases. *On the gender level:* When boys and girls have the *same* test scores, girls on average are given higher course grades. *On the racial-ethnic level:* Asian Americans who have the *same* test scores as the other groups average higher grades.

At first, this may sound like more of the same old news—another case of discrimination. But this explanation doesn’t fit, which is what makes the finding fascinating. Look at who the victims are. It is most unlikely that the teachers would be prejudiced against boys and whites. To interpret these unexpected results, Farkas used symbolic interactionism. He observed that some students “signal” to their teachers that they are “good students.” They show an eagerness to cooperate, and they quickly agree with what the teacher says. They also show that they are “trying hard.” The teachers pick up these signals and reward these “good students” with better grades. Girls and Asian Americans, Farkas concluded, are better at giving these signals so coveted by teachers.

So much for Texas. How about the other states? Their interest piqued, other researchers examined data from a national sample of students from kindergarten to the fifth grade. The results? The same. Regardless of race-ethnicity, if girls and boys have the same test scores, the girls, on average, receive higher grades (Cornwell et al. 2013). The researchers had another measure. They had the teachers rank their students on their “interpersonal skills,” how often they “lose control,” and how “engaged” they are in the classroom. The teachers reported that the girls had a “better attitude toward learning.” Like the Texas researchers, these researchers conclude that the teachers are responding to the children’s behavior.

We do not have enough information on how teachers communicate their expectations to students. Nor do we know much about how students “signal” messages to their teachers. Perhaps you will become the educational sociologist who will shed more light on this interesting area of human behavior.

self-fulfilling prophecy Robert Merton’s term for an originally false assertion that becomes true simply because it was predicted

When you were in grade school (or high school), did you ever see teacher expectations affect student performance?



Problems in U.S. Education—and Their Solutions

Now that we've looked at some of the dynamics within the classroom, let's turn to three problems facing U.S. education—mediocrity, cheating, and violence—and consider potential solutions.

Mediocrity

The Rising Tide of Mediocrity. Since I know you love taking tests, let's see how you do on these three questions:

1. *How many goals are on a basketball court?* a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4
2. *How many halves are in a college basketball game?* a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4
3. *How many points does a three-point field goal account for in a basketball game?* a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 d. 4

I know this sounds like a joke, but it isn't. Sociologist Robert Benford (2007) got his hands on a copy of a twenty-question final examination given to basketball players who took a credit course on coaching principles at the University of Georgia. It is often difficult to refer to athletes, sports, and academics in the same breath, but this is about as mediocre as mediocrity can get.

Let's move to a broader view of the mediocrity that plagues our educational system like pollution plagues gasoline engines:

- Arizona officials gave their high school sophomores a math test covering the math that sophomores should know. One of ten passed.
- To get its students out of high school, Arkansas dropped its passing score in math to 24 out of 100 (Urbina 2010a).
- In Washington, D.C., most of the students who graduate from high school operate at about the *fifth grade* level. How do they graduate? When they fail a course, they take something called "Credit Recovery," which does not require a test (Rossiter 2012).
- In Florida, only 27 percent of the state's 4th graders passed the reading test. That didn't sound good, so the state dropped the passing grade. Then 80 percent passed. Much better. (Kristof 2012)

The SATs How are we doing on the SATs? Look at Figure 13.4. You can see how fast and far the scores dropped from the 1960s to 1980. At that point, educators sounded an alarm—and even Congress expressed concern. School officials decided that they had better do something if they didn't want to lose their jobs.

Here's the *good* news. When school officials raised their standards, the math scores started to climb, and they continued going up for the next 20 years. Although scores have dropped recently, today's high school seniors score the same in math as seniors did in the 1960s. Administrators are requiring more of math teachers, who, in turn, are demanding more of students. Each is performing according to these higher expectations.

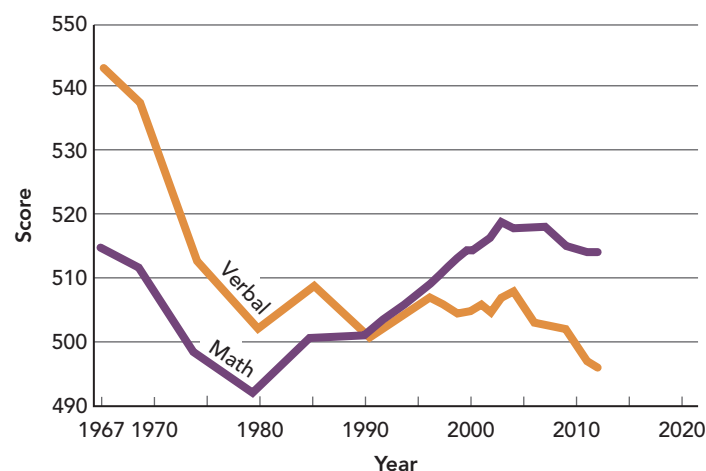
But there is also the *bad* news. Look at the verbal scores on Figure 13.4. Their drop from the 1960s, was even larger than the drop in math. They have stayed down, and now have dropped even more. No one knows why these scores are so low, but the usual suspects have been rounded up: "dummied

13.5 Discuss mediocrity in education, grade inflation, social promotion, raising standards, cheating by administrators, and violence in schools.



Watch on MySocLab
Video: Current Issues in U.S. Education

FIGURE 13.4 National Results of the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)



Note: Possible scores range from 200 to 800.

Sources: By the author. Based on College Board 2012; *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2013:Table 266.

grade inflation higher grades given for the same work; a general rise in student grades without a corresponding increase in learning

social promotion passing students on to the next level even though they have not mastered basic materials

functional illiterate a high school graduate who has difficulty with basic reading and math

down” textbooks, less rigorous teaching, and less reading because of television, videos, and computer games.

The news is actually worse than what you see on this figure. To accommodate today’s less prepared students, those who develop the SAT have made it easier. They shortened the test, dropped the section on analogies and antonyms, and gave students more time to take the test. The test makers then “rescored” the totals of previous years to match the easier test. This “dummying down” of the SAT is a form of grade inflation, the topic to which we shall now turn.

Grade Inflation, Social Promotion, and Functional Illiteracy.

Some graduates of prestigious law schools were having difficulty getting jobs. This reflected badly on these proud law schools—Georgetown, Golden Gate University, Loyola Law School, Tulane University, and New York University. They couldn’t have this—so they found a quick solution. To make their graduates look better when recruiters came to campus, they raised everyone’s grades (Rampell 2010). Much better-looking transcripts—all in a flash.

The letter grade C used to indicate average. Since more students are average than superior, high school teachers used to give about twice as many C’s as A’s. Now they give more A’s than C’s. Students aren’t smarter—grading is just easier. **Grade inflation** is so pervasive that 50 percent of all college freshmen have an overall high school grade point average of A. This is about twice what it was in 1980 (*Statistical Abstract* 2013:Table 286). Unfortunately, some of today’s A’s are the C’s of years past.

Easy grades and declining standards have been accompanied by **social promotion**, passing students from one grade to the next despite their failure to learn the basic materials. One result is **functional illiteracy**, high school graduates who have never mastered things they should have learned in grade school. They even have difficulty with reading and writing. Some high school graduates can’t fill out job applications; others can’t even figure out whether they get the right change at the grocery store.

Raising Standards for Teachers. It is one thing to identify problems, quite another to find solutions for them. How can we solve mediocrity? To offer a quality education, we need quality teachers. Don’t we already have them? Most teachers are qualified and, if motivated, can do an excellent job. But a large number of teachers are not qualified. Consider what happened in California, where teachers must pass an educational skills test. The teachers did so poorly that to fill the classrooms officials had to drop the passing grade to the 10th-grade level. These are college graduates who are teachers—and they are expected to perform at the tenth-grade level (Schemo 2002). I don’t know about you, but I think this situation is a national disgrace. If we want to improve teaching, we need to insist that teachers meet high standards.

Raising Standards for Students. What else can we do to improve the quality of education? An older study by sociologists James Coleman and Thomas Hoffer (1987) provides helpful guidelines. They wanted to see why the test scores of students in Roman Catholic schools average 15 to 20 percent higher than those of students in public schools. Is it because Catholic schools attract better students, while public schools have to put up with everyone? To find out, they tested 15,000 students in public and Catholic high schools.

Their findings? From the sophomore through the senior years, students at Catholic schools pull ahead of public school students by a full grade in verbal and math skills. The superior test performance of students in Catholic schools, they concluded, is not due to better students, but to higher standards. Catholic schools have not watered down their curricula as have public schools. The researchers also underscored the importance of parental involvement. Parents and teachers in Catholic schools reinforce each other’s commitment to learning.

 **Watch on MySocLab**
Video: Attracting and Retaining Good Teachers

On average, students in Roman Catholic schools score higher on national tests than students in public schools. Is it because Roman Catholic schools have better students, or because they do better teaching? The text reports the sociological findings.



These findings support the basic principle reviewed earlier about teacher expectations: Students perform better when they are expected to meet higher standards. To this, you might want to reply, “Of course. I knew that. Who wouldn’t?” Somehow, however, this basic principle is lost on many teachers, who expect little of their students and have supervisors who accept low performance from students. The reason, actually, is probably not their lack of awareness of such basics, but, rather, the organization that entraps them, a bureaucracy in which ritual replaces performance. To understand this point better, you may want to review Chapter 5.

A Warning about Higher Standards. If we raise standards, we can expect to upset students and their parents. It is soothing to use low standards and to pat students on the head and tell them they are doing well. But it upsets people if you do rigorous teaching and use high standards to measure performance. When Florida decided that its high school seniors needed to pass an assessment test in order to receive a diploma, 13,000 students across the state failed the test. Parents of failed students protested. Did they demand better teaching? No. What they wanted was the state to drop the test. In their anger, they asked people to boycott Disney World and to not buy Florida orange juice (Canedy 2003). What positive steps to improve their children’s learning!

Let’s look at a second problem in education.

Cheating

The cheating I’m referring to is not what you saw in your social studies or math class in high school. I’m referring to cheating by *teachers and school administrators*. Listen to this:

The state school board of Georgia ordered an investigation after computer scanners showed that teachers in 191 schools had erased students’ answers on reading and math tests and penciled in correct ones (Gabriel 2010b). The cheating was apparently led by the superintendent of Atlanta’s school system. She was charged with several crimes, including theft for taking \$500,000 in bonuses for producing good test scores (Winerip 2013).

The school district was facing pressure to show that their teaching had improved, and this was a quick way to do it. It is not far-fetched to think that these same teachers cheated on tests when they were students to show that their own learning had improved.

Now look at this:

Mississippi keeps two sets of books: The one sent to Washington reports the state’s graduation rate at 87 percent. The other, which the state keeps, reports that 63 percent of its students graduate. Other states do the same. California reports its totals at 83 percent and 67 percent. (Dillon 2008)

Why do high school administrators across the nation fake their graduation rates? The reason is that federal agencies publish these reports, and states don’t want to look bad. Also, Washington might reduce the money it gives them. It’s like a girl telling her parents that she received a B in English when she really received a D. She doesn’t want to look bad, and her allowance might be cut.

School administrators can be quite creative in faking their numbers. Some count the number of students who begin their senior year, and report the percentage of these seniors who graduate. This conveniently overlooks those who drop out in their freshman, sophomore, and junior years. Some even encourage high school students who are doing poorly to drop out before they reach their senior year. This way, they won’t be counted as dropouts (Dillon 2008).

The Solution to Cheating. The solution to this cheating is fairly simple. Zero tolerance. Require all states to follow the same measurement of high school graduation, and fire teachers and administrators who cheat. A simple measure is to compare the number of those who graduate from high school with the number who entered high school in the ninth grade, minus those who died and those who transferred out plus those who transferred in. Federal officials can spot-check records across the nation. With loss of job



Listen on **MySocLab**

Audio: NPR: Chicago Charter School Network Defies Expectations



Education is undergoing controversial changes. One of them is MOOCs, Massive Online Open Courses. The course in philosophy taught by this professor at Duke University enrolled 180,000 students.

the punishment, we could expect honesty in reporting to jump immediately. Real graduation rates could help pinpoint where the problems are, letting us to know where to focus solutions. If you don't know where it's broken, you don't know where to fix it.

Let's turn to the third problem.

Violence

The man stalked the high school's hallways. He pressed his ear against a door, trying to determine if students were in the classroom. Hearing nothing, he moved silently to another classroom and did the same thing. Going from one locked door to another, he proceeded down the length of the entire hallway. Students were behind each door, but they remained absolutely quiet.

Still hearing nothing, the man smiled.

The man smiled? Yes, because he was not a sociopath seeking random victims. This was a teacher checking how well the school was performing in a "Code Blue" drill. In some schools, the safety of students and

teachers is so precarious that armed guards, metal detectors, and drug-sniffing dogs are permanent fixtures. In an era of bomb threats and armed sociopaths, some states require lockdown, or "Code Blue," drills: The classrooms—each equipped with a phone—are locked. Shades or blinds on the windows are closed. The students are told to remain absolutely silent, while a school official wanders the halls, like an armed intruder, listening for the slightest sound that would indicate that someone is in a classroom (Kelley 2008).

Certainly, a good teaching-learning environment starts with safety, and school shootings have become a national concern. Are they getting worse? The answer—in the Mass Media box on school shootings on the next page—might surprise you.

The Need for Educational Reform

Most of the changes in education are merely minor adjustments to a flawed system: giving this test instead of that test, requiring more memorizing or less memorizing, measuring progress this way instead of that way, tinkering with the curriculum, or motivating teachers and students by this carrot or that carrot. Each might be important in its own way, but each is but a minute adjustment to the details of a system that needs to be overhauled from top to bottom.

We are unlikely to do this.

13.6 Explain what Durkheim meant by sacred and profane; discuss the three elements of religion.



Watch on **MySocLab**
Video: The Big Picture: Religion

Religion: Establishing Meaning

Let's look at the main characteristics of a second significant social institution.

What Is Religion?

Sociologists who do research on religion analyze the relationship between society and religion and study the role that religion plays in people's lives. They do not try to prove that one religion is better than another. Nor is it their goal to verify or disprove

Mass Media in Social Life

School Shootings: Exploding a Myth

The media sprinkle their reports of school shootings with such dramatic phrases as “alarming proportions,” “outbreak of violence,” and “out of control.” They give us the impression that wackos walk our hallways, ready to spray our schools with gunfire. Parents used to consider schools safe havens, but no longer. Those naïve thoughts have been shattered by the media accounts of bullets ripping through our schools, children hovering in fear, and little bodies strewn across classroom floors.

Have our schools really become war zones, as the mass media would have us believe? Certainly events such as those at Sandy Hook elementary school, Columbine High School, and Virginia Tech are disturbing, but we need to probe deeper than screaming headlines and startling images.

When we do, we find that the media’s sensationalist reporting has created a myth. Contrary to “what everyone knows,” *there is no trend toward greater school violence*. In fact, we find just the opposite—the *trend is toward greater safety at school*. Despite the dramatic school shootings that make the screaming headlines, as you can see from Table 13.1, shooting deaths at schools are *decreasing*. Because school homicides are high one year and low another, to see trends we need to average them out. Here is where we get the surprising results. The average number of annual shooting deaths for 1992 to 2000 is twenty-eight. This is more than twice as high as the annual average of thirteen for 2000 to 2010.

School shootings are a serious problem. Even one student being wounded or killed is too many. But contrary to the impression fostered by the media, school shooting deaths have dropped. Headlines like “No Shootings This Month!” or “Schools Safer Than Ever!” simply don’t get much attention—nor bring in much advertising revenue.

This is one reason that we need sociology: to quietly, dispassionately search for facts so we can better understand the events that shape our lives. The first requirement for solving any problem is accurate data, for how can we create solutions based on hysteria? The information presented in this box may not make for sensational headlines, but it does serve to explode one of the myths that the media have created.



This frame from a home video shows Eric Harris (on the left) and Dylan Klebold (on the right) as they pretend that they are searching for victims. They put their desires into practice in the infamous Columbine High School shootings.

TABLE 13.1

Exploding a Myth: Deaths at U.S. Schools¹

School Year	Deaths		Victims		Total
	Shooting Deaths	Other Deaths ²	Boys	Girls	
1992–1993	45	11	49	7	56
1993–1994	41	12	41	12	53
1994–1995	16	5	18	3	21
1995–1996	29	7	26	10	36
1996–1997	15	11	18	8	26
1997–1998	36	8	27	17	44
1998–1999	25	6	24	7	31
1999–2000	16	16	26	6	32
2000–2001	19	5	20	4	24
2001–2002	4	2	6	0	6
2002–2003	14	8	16	6	22
2003–2004	29	13	37	5	42
2004–2005	20	8	20	8	28
2005–2006	5	0	4	1	5
2006–2007	16	4	13	7	20
2007–2008	3	0	3	0	3
2008–2009	10	3	11	2	13
2009–2010	5	2	4	3	7
Total deaths 1992–2010	348	121	363	106	469
Mean 1992–2010	19.3	6.7	20.2	5.9	26.1

¹Includes all school-related homicides, even those that occurred on the way to or from school. Includes suicides, school personnel killed at school by other adults, and even adults who had nothing to do with the school but who were found dead on school property. Source does not report on deaths at colleges, only K–12 (kindergarten through high school).

²Beating, hanging, jumping, stabbing, slashing, strangling, or heart attack.

Source: By the author. Based on National School Safety Center 2013. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) also reports data on school deaths, but they, too, go only to 2010 and do not include a breakdown by sex. The killings at Sandy Hook will change the totals but likely not the long-term trend of fewer school deaths.

For Your Consideration

➔ How do you think we can reduce school shootings? How about school violence of any sort? Why are people’s ideas often based more on headlines than facts?



Parents around the world teach their children their religious beliefs and practices. This photo is of Sikh children in India.

anyone's faith. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, sociologists have no tools for deciding that one course of action is more moral than another, much less for determining that one religion is "the" correct one. Religion is a matter of faith—and sociologists deal with empirical matters, things they can observe or measure. When it comes to religion, then, sociologists study the effects of religious beliefs and practices on people's lives. They also analyze how religion is related to stratification systems. Unlike theologians, however, sociologists do not try to evaluate the truth of a religion's teachings.

Emile Durkheim was highly interested in religion, probably because he was reared in a mixed-religion family, by a Protestant mother and a Jewish father. Durkheim decided to find out what all religions have in common. After surveying religions around the world, in 1912 he published his findings in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Here are Durkheim's three main findings. The first is that the world's religions are so varied that they have no specific belief or practice in common. The second is

that all religions develop a community centering on their beliefs and practices. The third is that all religions separate the sacred from the profane. By **sacred**, Durkheim referred to aspects of life having to do with the supernatural that inspire awe, reverence, deep respect, even fear. By **profane**, he meant aspects of life that are not concerned with religion but, instead, are part of ordinary, everyday life.

Durkheim (1912/1965) summarized his conclusions by saying:

A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.

Religion, then, has three elements:

1. *Beliefs* that some things are sacred (forbidden, set apart from the profane)
2. *Practices* (rituals) centering on the things considered sacred
3. *A moral community* (a church) resulting from a group's beliefs and practices

Durkheim used the word **church** in an unusual sense, to refer to any "moral community" centered on beliefs and practices regarding the sacred. In Durkheim's sense, *church* refers to Buddhists bowing before a shrine, Hindus dipping in the Ganges River, and Confucians offering food to their ancestors. Similarly, the term *moral community* does not imply morality in the sense familiar to most of us—of ethical conduct. Rather, a moral community is simply a group of people who are united by their religious practices—and that would include sixteenth-century Aztec priests who each day gathered around an altar to pluck out the beating heart of a virgin.

To better understand the sociological approach to religion, let's see what pictures emerge when we apply the three theoretical perspectives.

One of the many functions of religion is providing emotional support. This photo was taken in Newark, New Jersey.



The Functionalist Perspective

Functionalists stress that religion is universal because it meets universal human needs. Let's look at some of the functions—and dysfunctions—of religion.

Functions of Religion

Questions about Ultimate Meaning. Around the world, religions provide answers to perplexing questions about ultimate meaning. What is the purpose of life? Why do people suffer? Is there an afterlife? The answers to questions like these give followers a sense of purpose, a framework for living. Instead of seeing themselves buffeted by random events in an aimless existence, believers see their lives as fitting into a divine plan.

Emotional Comfort. The answers that religion provides about ultimate meaning bring comfort by assuring people that there is a purpose to life, even to suffering. The religious rituals that enshroud crucial events such as illness and death assure the individual that others care.

Social Solidarity. Religious teachings and practices unite believers into a community that shares values and perspectives (“we Jews,” “we Christians,” “we Muslims”). The religious rituals that surround marriage, for example, link the bride and groom with a broader community that wishes them well. So do other religious rituals, such as those that celebrate birth and mourn death.

Guidelines for Everyday Life. The teachings of religion are not all abstractions. They also provide practical guidelines for everyday life. For example, four of the ten commandments delivered by Moses to the Israelites concern God, but the other six contain instructions for getting along with others, from how to avoid problems with parents and neighbors to warnings about lying, stealing, and having affairs.

Many consequences for people who follow these guidelines can be measured. For example, people who attend church are less likely to abuse alcohol, nicotine, and illegal drugs than are people who don't go to church. They are also more likely to exercise (Gillum 2005; Wallace et al. 2007; Newport et al. 2012). In general, churchgoers follow a healthier lifestyle than people who don't go to church—and they live longer.

13.7 Apply the functionalist perspective to religion: functions and dysfunctions.



Read on MySocLab

Document: Religion and the Domestication of Men

Religion can promote social change, as was evident in the U.S. civil rights movement. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a Baptist minister, shown here in his famous “I have a dream” speech, was the foremost leader of this movement.



Social Control. Although a religion's guidelines for everyday life usually apply only to its members, nonmembers feel a spillover. Religious teachings, for example, are incorporated into criminal law. In Colonial United States, people could be arrested for blasphemy and adultery. As a carryover today, some states have laws that prohibit the sale of alcohol before noon on Sunday. The original purpose of these laws was to get people out of the saloons and into the churches.

Social Change. Although religion is often so bound up with the prevailing social order that it resists social change, religious activists sometimes spearhead change. In the 1960s, for example, the civil rights movement, whose goals were to desegregate public facilities and abolish racial discrimination in southern voting, was led by religious leaders. African American churches served as centers at which demonstrators were trained and rallies were organized. Other churches were centers for resisting this change.

Dysfunctions of Religion

Functionalists also examine ways in which religion is *dysfunctional*, that is, how religion can bring harmful results. Two dysfunctions are persecution and war and terrorism.

Religion as Justification for Persecution. Beginning in the 1100s and continuing into the 1800s, in what has become known as the Inquisition, special commissions of the Roman Catholic Church tortured and burned at the stake hundreds of accused heretics. In 1692, Protestant leaders in Salem, Massachusetts, executed twenty-one women and men who were accused of being witches. In 2001, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, about 1,000 alleged witches were hacked to death (Jenkins 2002). In Papua New Guinea, accused witches are tortured, doused with gasoline, and set on fire (Chumley 2013). Similarly, it seems fair to say that the Aztec religion had its dysfunctions—at least for the virgins who were offered to appease angry gods. In short, religion has been used to justify oppression and any number of brutal acts.

War and Terrorism. History is filled with wars based on religion—commingled with politics. Between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, for example, Christian monarchs conducted nine bloody Crusades in an attempt to wrest control of the region they called the Holy Land from the Muslims. The suicide terrorists we focused on in Chapter 11 are a current example.

13.8 Apply the symbolic interactionist perspective to religion: symbols, rituals, beliefs, and religious experience.

The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

Symbolic interactionists focus on the meanings that people give their experiences, especially how they use symbols. Let's apply this perspective to religious symbols, rituals, and beliefs to see how they help to forge a community of like-minded people.

Religious Symbols

Suppose that it is about two thousand years ago and you have just joined a new religion. You have come to believe that a recently crucified Jew named Jesus is the Messiah, the Lamb of God offered for your sins. The Roman leaders are persecuting the followers of Jesus. They hate your religion because you and your fellow believers will not acknowledge Caesar as God.

Christians are few in number, and you are eager to have fellowship with other believers. But how can you tell who is a believer? Spies are everywhere. The government has sworn to destroy this new religion, and you do not relish the thought of being fed to lions in the Colosseum.

You use a simple technique. While talking with a stranger, as though doodling absent-mindedly in the sand or dust, you casually trace the outline of a fish. Only fellow believers know the meaning—that, taken together, the first letter of each word in the Greek sentence “Jesus (is) Christ the Son of God” spell the Greek word for fish. If the other person gives no response, you rub out the outline and continue the interaction as usual. If there is a response, you eagerly talk about your new faith.

All religions use symbols to provide identity and create social solidarity for their members. For Muslims, the primary symbol is the crescent moon and star; for Jews, the Star of David; for Christians, the cross. For members, these are not ordinary symbols, but sacred emblems that evoke feelings of awe and reverence. In Durkheim's terms, religions use symbols to represent what the group considers sacred and to separate the sacred from the profane.

A symbol is a condensed way of communicating. Worn by a fundamentalist Christian, for example, the cross says, "I am a follower of Jesus Christ. I believe that he is the Messiah, the promised Son of God, that he loves me, that he died to take away my sins, that he rose from the dead and is going to return to Earth, and that through him I will receive eternal life."

That is a lot to pack into one symbol—and it is only part of what this symbol means to a fundamentalist believer. To people in other traditions of Christianity, the cross conveys somewhat different meanings—but to all Christians, the cross is a shorthand way of expressing many meanings. So it is with the Star of David, the crescent moon and star, the cow (expressing to Hindus the unity of all living things), and the various symbols of the world's many other religions.



Symbolic interactionists stress that a basic characteristic of humans is that they attach meaning to objects and events and then use representations of those objects or events to communicate with one another. Michelangelo's *Pietà*, depicting Mary tenderly holding her son, Jesus, after his crucifixion, is one of the most acclaimed symbols in the Western world. It is admired for its beauty by believers and nonbelievers alike.

Rituals

Rituals, ceremonies or repetitive practices, are also symbols that help to unite people into a moral community. Some rituals, such as the bar mitzvah of Jewish boys and the holy communion of Christians, are designed to create in devout believers a feeling of closeness with God and unity with one another. Rituals include kneeling and praying at set times; bowing; crossing oneself; singing; lighting candles and incense; reading scripture; and following prescribed traditions at processions, baptisms, weddings, and funerals. The photo essay on the next two pages features photos I took of annual rituals held in Spain during Holy Week (the week that leads into the Christian holiday of Easter).

Beliefs

Symbols, including rituals, develop from beliefs. The belief may be vague ("God is") or highly specific ("God wants us to prostrate ourselves and face Mecca five times each day"). Religious beliefs include not only *values* (what is considered good and desirable in life—how we ought to live) but also a **cosmology**, a unified picture of the world. For example, the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim belief that there is only one God, the creator of the universe, who is concerned about the actions of humans and who will hold us accountable for what we do, is a cosmology. It presents a unifying picture of the universe.

Religious Experience

The term **religious experience** refers to becoming suddenly aware of the supernatural or a feeling of coming into contact with God. Some people undergo a mild version, such as feeling closer to God when they look at a mountain, watch a sunset, or listen to a certain piece of music. Others report a life-transforming experience. St. Francis of Assisi, for example, said that he became aware of God's presence in every living thing.

Some Protestants use the term **born again** to describe people who have undergone such a life-transforming religious experience. These people say that they came to the realization that they had sinned, that Jesus had died for their sins, and that God wants them to live a new life. Their worlds become transformed. They look forward to the Resurrection and to a new life in heaven. They see relationships with spouses, parents, children, and even bosses in a new light. They also report a need to change how they interact with people so that their lives reflect their new, personal commitment to Jesus as their "Savior and Lord." They describe a feeling of beginning life anew—which is why they use the term *born again*.

 **Watch on MySocLab**
Video: Edge of Islam

rituals ceremonies or repetitive practices; in religion, observances or rites often intended to evoke a sense of awe of the sacred

cosmology teachings or ideas that provide a unified picture of the world

religious experience a sudden awareness of the supernatural or a feeling of coming in contact with God

born again a term describing Christians who have undergone a religious experience so lifetransforming that they feel they have become new persons



Holy Week in Spain

Religious groups develop rituals designed to evoke memories, create awe, inspire reverence, and stimulate social solidarity. One of the primary means by which groups, religious and secular, accomplish these goals is through the display of symbols.

I took these photos during Holy Week in Spain—in Malaga and Almuñecar. Throughout Spain, elaborate processions

feature *tronos* that depict the biblical account of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. During the processions in Malaga, the participants walk slowly for about two minutes; then because of the weight of the *tronos*, they rest for about two minutes. They repeat this process for about six hours a day.



© Jim Henslin, all photos



Bands, sometimes several of them, are part of the processions.

The procession in the village was more informal. This Roman soldier has an interesting way of participating—and keeping tabs—on his little daughter. The girl is distributing candy.

A group of participants exiting the Church of the Incarnation for Malaga's Easter procession.



Parents gave a lot of attention to their children both during the preparations and during the processions. This photo was taken during one of the repetitive two-minute breaks.





Beneath the costumes are townspeople and church members who know one another well. They enjoy themselves prior to the procession. This man is preparing to put on his hood.



During the short breaks at the night processions, children from the audience would rush to collect dripping wax to make wax balls. This was one way that the audience made themselves participants in the drama.



Some tronos are so heavy that they require many men to carry them. (Some were carried by over 100 men.) This photo was taken in Malaga, on Monday of Holy Week.



For the Good Friday procession, I was fortunate to be able to photograph the behind-the-scenes preparations, which are seldom seen by visitors. Shown here are finishing touches being given to the Mary figure.



The town square was packed with people awaiting the procession. From one corner of the square, the trono of Jesus was brought in. Then from another, that of Mary ("reuniting" them, as I was told). During this climactic scene, the priest on the balcony on the left read a message.

13.9 Apply the conflict perspective to religion: opium of the people and legitimating social inequalities.

 **Watch on MySocLab**
Video: Religion: The Basics

The Conflict Perspective

In general, conflict theorists are highly critical of religion. They stress that religion supports the status quo and helps to maintain social inequalities. Let's look at some of their analyses.

Opium of the People

Karl Marx, an avowed atheist who believed that the existence of God was impossible, set the tone for conflict theorists with this statement: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world. . . . It is the opium of the people" (Marx 1844/1964). Marx meant that for oppressed workers religion is like a drug that helps addicts forget their misery. By diverting thoughts toward future happiness in an afterlife, religion takes the workers' eyes off their suffering in this world, reducing the possibility that they will overthrow their chains by rebelling against their oppressors.

Legitimizing Social Inequalities

Conflict theorists stress that religion legitimates social inequalities. By this, they mean that religion teaches that the existing social arrangements represent what God desires. For example, during the Middle Ages, Christian theologians decreed the *divine right of kings*. This doctrine meant that God determined who would become king and set him on the throne. The king ruled in God's place, and it was the duty of a king's subjects to be loyal to him (and to pay their taxes). To disobey the king was to disobey God.

In what was perhaps the supreme technique of legitimating the social order (and one that went even a step farther than the divine right of kings), the religion of ancient Egypt held that the pharaoh himself was a god. The emperor of Japan was similarly declared divine. If this were so, who could ever question his decisions? Today's politicians would give their right arms for such a religious teaching.

Conflict theorists point to many other examples of how religion legitimates the social order. In India, Hinduism supports the caste system by teaching that anyone who tries to change caste will come back in the next life as a member of a lower caste—or even as an animal. In the decades before the American Civil War, southern ministers used scripture to defend slavery, saying that it was God's will—while northern ministers legitimated *their* region's social structure by using scripture to denounce slavery as evil (Ernst 1988; White 1995; Riley 2012).

13.10 Explain Weber's analysis of how religion broke tradition and brought capitalism.

Religion and the Spirit of Capitalism

Max Weber disagreed with the conflict perspective. Religion, he said, does not merely reflect and legitimate the social order and impede social change. Rather, religion's focus on the afterlife is a source of profound social change.

To explain his conclusions, Weber wrote *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904–1905, 2010). He said that was presented in Chapter 1 (pp. 7–8), it is only summarized here.

1. Capitalism represents a fundamentally different way of thinking about work and money. *Traditionally, people worked just enough to meet their basic needs, not so that they could have a surplus to invest.* To accumulate money (capital) as an end in itself, not just to spend it, was a radical departure from traditional thinking. People even came to consider it a duty to invest money so they could make profits. They reinvested these profits to make even more profits. Weber called this new approach to work and money the **spirit of capitalism**.
2. Why did the spirit of capitalism develop in Europe and not, for example, in China or India, where people had similar material resources and education? According to

spirit of capitalism Weber's term for the desire to accumulate capital—not to spend it, but as an end in itself—and to constantly reinvest it

Weber, *religion was the key*. The religions of China and India, and indeed Roman Catholicism in Europe, encouraged a traditional approach to life, not thrift and investment. Capitalism appeared when Protestantism came on the scene.

3. What was different about Protestantism, especially Calvinism? John Calvin taught that God had predestined some people to go to heaven, and others to hell. Neither church membership nor feelings about your relationship with God could assure you that you were saved. You wouldn't know your fate until after you died.
4. "Am I predestined to hell or to heaven?" Calvin's followers wondered. As they wrestled with this question, they concluded that church members have a duty to live as though they are predestined to heaven—for good works are a demonstration of salvation.
5. This conclusion motivated Calvinists to lead moral lives *and* to work hard, to use their time productively, and to be frugal—for idleness and needless spending were signs of worldliness. Weber called this self-denying approach to life the **Protestant ethic**.
6. As people worked hard and spent money only on necessities (a pair of earrings or a second pair of dress shoes would have been defined as sinful luxuries), they had money left over. Because it couldn't be spent, this capital was invested, which led to a surge in production.
7. Weber's analysis can be summed up this way: The change in religion (from Catholicism to Protestantism, especially Calvinism) led to a fundamental change in thought and behavior (the *Protestant ethic*). The result was the *spirit of capitalism*. For this reason, capitalism originated in Europe and not in places where religion did not encourage capitalism's essential elements: the accumulation of capital and its investment and reinvestment.

Although Weber's analysis has been influential, it has not lacked critics. Hundreds of scholars have attacked it, some for overlooking the lack of capitalism in Scotland (a Calvinist country), others for failing to explain why the Industrial Revolution was born in England (not a Calvinist country). Hundreds of other scholars have defended Weber's argument, and sociologists continue to test Weber's theory (Becker 2009; Basten and Betz 2011). Currently, sociologists are not in agreement on this matter.

At this point in history, the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism are not confined to any specific religion or even to any one part of the world. Rather, they have become cultural traits that have spread to societies around the globe (Greeley 1964; Yinger 1970). U.S. Catholics have about the same approach to life as do U.S. Protestants. In addition, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan—not exactly Protestant countries—have embraced capitalism. China, Russia, and Vietnam are in the midst of doing so.



© Robert Weber/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

"We're thinking maybe it's time you started getting some religious instruction. There's Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish—any of those sound good to you?"

For some Americans, religion is an "easy-going, makes-little-difference" matter, as expressed in this cartoon. For others, religious matters are firmly held, and followers find even slight differences of faith to be significant.

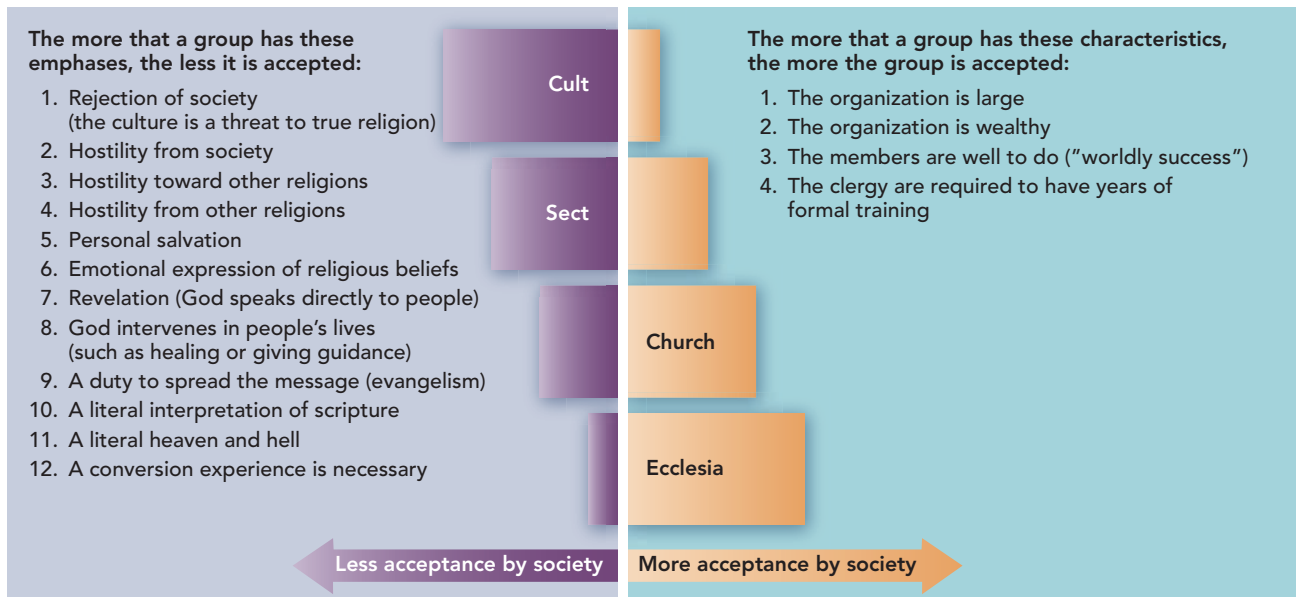
Protestant ethic Weber's term to describe the ideal of a self-denying, highly moral life accompanied by thrift and hard work

Types of Religious Groups

Sociologists have identified four types of religious groups: cult, sect, church, and ecclesia. Why do some of these groups meet with hostility, while others tend to be accepted? For an explanation, look at Figure 13.5 on the next page.

Let's explore what sociologists have found about these four types of religious groups. The summary that follows is a modification of analyses by sociologists Ernst Troeltsch (1931), Liston Pope (1942), and Benton Johnson (1963).

13.11 Compare cult, sect, church, and ecclesia.

FIGURE 13.5 Religious Groups: From Hostility to Acceptance

Note: Any religious organization can be placed somewhere on this continuum, based on its having "more" or "less" of these characteristics and emphases. The varying proportions of the rectangles are intended to represent the group's relative characteristics and emphases.

Sources: By the author. Based on Troeltsch 1931; Pope 1942; Johnson 1963.

Cult

The word *cult* conjures up bizarre images. Shaven heads, weird music, brainwashing—even ritual suicide—may come to mind. Cults, however, are not necessarily weird, and few practice "brainwashing" or bizarre rituals. In fact, *all religions began as cults* (Stark 1989). A **cult** is simply a new or different religion whose teachings and practices put it at odds with the dominant culture and religion. Because the term *cult* arouses such negative meanings in the public mind, however, some scholars prefer to use the term *new religion* instead. As is evident from the Cultural Diversity box on the next page, "new" can mean that an old religion is making its appearance in a culture that is not familiar and is uncomfortable with it.

Cults often originate with a **charismatic leader**, an individual who inspires people because he or she seems to have extraordinary gifts, qualities, or abilities. **Charisma** refers to an outstanding gift or to some exceptional quality. People feel drawn to both the person and the message because they find something highly appealing about the individual—in some instances, almost a magnetic charm.

The most popular religion in the world began as a cult. Its handful of followers believed that an unschooled carpenter who preached in remote villages in a backwater country was the Son of God, that he was killed and came back to life. Those beliefs made the early Christians a cult, setting them apart from the rest of their society. Persecuted by both religious and political authorities, these early believers clung to one another for support. Many cut off associations with friends who didn't accept the new message. To others, the early Christians must have seemed deluded and brainwashed.

So it was with Islam. When Muhammad revealed his visions and said that God's name was really Allah, only a few people believed him. To others, he must have seemed crazy, deranged.

cult a new religion with few followers, whose teachings and practices put it at odds with the dominant culture and religion

charismatic leader literally, someone to whom God has given a gift; in its extended sense, someone who exerts extraordinary appeal to a group of followers

charisma literally, an extraordinary gift from God; more commonly, an outstanding, "magnetic" personality

Cultural Diversity in the United States

Human Heads and Animal Blood: Testing the Limits of Tolerance

As the U.S. customs officials looked over the line of people who had just gotten off the plane from Haiti, there was nothing to make this particular woman stand out. She would have passed through without a problem, except for one thing: A routine search turned up something that struck the custom agents as somewhat unusual—a human head.

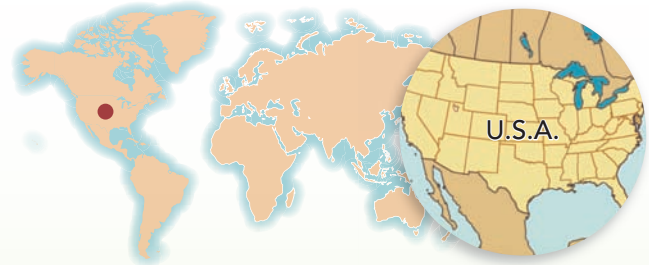
The head had teeth, hair, pieces of skin, and some dirt. It had evidently been dug up from some grave, probably in Haiti.

The 30-year-old woman, who lives in Florida, practiced voodoo. The head was for her religious rituals.

The woman was arrested. Her crime? Not filing a report that she was carrying “organic material” (“Mujer con Cabeza . . .” 2006).

The Santeros from Cuba who live in Florida sacrifice animals. They meet in apartments, where, following a Yoruba religion, they kill goats and chickens. Calling on their gods, they first ask permission to sacrifice the animals. After sacrificing them, they pour out the animals’ blood, which opens and closes the doors of their destiny. They also cut off the animals’ heads and place them at locations in the city that represent the four directions of the compass. This is done to terrorize their enemies and give them safety. The heads also protect the city from hurricanes and other destructive forces.

When city officials in Hialeah, Florida, learned that the Santeros were planning to build a church in their city, they



Animal sacrifice is part of many religions. This man in Pakistan is transporting a goat to be sacrificed to celebrate the Islamic festival of Eid al-Adha.

passed a law against the sacrifice of animals within the city limits. The Santeros appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, claiming discrimination, because the law was directed against them. The Court ruled in their favor.

City officials of Euless, Texas, were shocked when they learned that Jose Merced was sacrificing goats in his home. They sent in the police (Associated Press 2009). Merced appealed to the federal circuit court, saying that the officials were violating his rights as a Santeria priest. He can now sacrifice goats at home.

For Your Consideration

- What do you think the limitations on religious freedom should be? Should people be allowed to sacrifice animals as part of their religious practices?
- If the Santeros can sacrifice animals, why shouldn't people who practice voodoo be able to use human heads in their rituals if they want to? (Assume that the relatives of the dead person have given their permission.)

Each cult (or new religion) is met with rejection on the part of society. Its message is considered bizarre, its approach to life strange. Its members antagonize the majority, who are convinced that they have a monopoly on the truth. The new religion may claim messages from God, visions, visits from angels—some form of enlightenment or seeing the true way to God. The cult demands intense commitment, and its followers, who are confronting a hostile world, pull together in a tight circle, separating themselves from nonbelievers.

Most cults fail. Not many people believe the new message, and the cult fades into obscurity. Some, however, succeed and make history. Over time, large numbers of people may come to accept the message and become followers of the religion. If this happens, the new religion changes from a cult to a sect.

sect a religious group larger than a cult that still feels substantial hostility from and toward society



Like other aspects of culture, religion is filled with background assumptions that usually go unquestioned. In this photo, which I took in Amsterdam, what background assumption of religion is this woman violating?

Sect

A **sect** is larger than a cult, but its members still feel tension between their views and the prevailing beliefs and values of the broader society. A sect may even be hostile to the society in which it is located. At the very least, its members remain uncomfortable with many of the emphases of the dominant culture; in turn, nonmembers tend to be uncomfortable with members of the sect.

If a sect grows, its members tend to gradually make peace with the rest of society. To appeal to a broader base, the sect shifts some of its doctrines, redefining matters to remove some of the rough edges that create tension between it and the rest of society. As the members become more respectable in the eyes of the society, they feel less hostility and little, if any, isolation. If a sect follows this course, as it grows and becomes more integrated into society, it changes into a church.

Church

At this point, the religious group is highly bureaucratized—probably with national and international headquarters that give direction to the local congregations, enforce rules about who can be ordained, and control finances. The relationship with God has grown less intense. The group is likely to have less emphasis on personal salvation and emotional expression. Worship services are likely to be more sedate, with formal sermons and written prayers read before the congregation. Rather than being recruited from the outside by personal evangelism, most new members now come from within, from children born to existing members. Rather than joining through conversion—seeing the new truth—children may be baptized, circumcised, or dedicated in some other way. At some designated age, children may be asked to affirm the group's beliefs in a ceremony, such as a confirmation or bar mitzvah.

Ecclesia

Finally, some groups become so well integrated into a culture, and allied so strongly with their government, that it is difficult to tell where one leaves off and the other takes over. In these *state religions*, also called **ecclesia**, the government and religion work together to try to shape society. There is no recruitment of members, for citizenship makes everyone a member. For most people in the society, the religion is part of a cultural identity, not an eye-opening experience. Sweden provides a good example of how extensively religion and government intertwine in an ecclesia. In the 1860s, all citizens had to memorize Luther's *Small Catechism* and be tested on it annually (Anderson 1995). Today, Lutheranism is still associated with the state, but most Swedes come to church only for baptisms, marriages, and funerals.

Unlike cults and sects, which perceive God as personally involved with and concerned about people, ecclesias envision God as more impersonal and remote. Reflecting this view of the supernatural, church services tend to be highly formal, directed by ministers or priests who, after undergoing training in approved schools or seminaries, follow prescribed rituals.

ecclesia a religious group so integrated into the dominant culture that it is difficult to tell where the one begins and the other leaves off; also called a *state religion*

13.12 Summarize main features of religion in the United States.

Religion in the United States

To better understand religion in U.S. society, let's first find out who belongs to religious groups and then look at the groups themselves.

Characteristics of Members

About 65 percent of Americans belong to a church, synagogue, or mosque. What are the characteristics of people who hold formal membership in a religion?

Social Class. Religion in the United States is stratified by social class. As you can see from Figure 13.6 below, some religious groups are “top-heavy,” and others are “bottom-heavy.” The most top-heavy are Jews and Episcopalians; the most bottom-heavy are Assembly of God, Southern Baptists, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. This figure provides further confirmation that churchlike groups tend to appeal to people who have more “worldly” success, while the more sectlike groups attract people who have less “worldly” success.

From this figure, you can see how *status consistency* (a concept we reviewed in Chapter 8, pages 227–228) applies to religious groups. If a group ranks high (or low) on education, it is also likely to rank high (or low) on income and occupational prestige. Jews, for example, rank the highest on education, income, and occupational prestige, while Jehovah’s Witnesses rank the lowest on these three measures of social class. As you can see, the Mormons are status inconsistent. They rank second in income, fourth in education, and tie for sixth in occupational prestige. Even more status inconsistent is the Assembly of God. Their members tie for third in occupational prestige but rank only eighth in income and ninth in education. This inconsistency is so jarring that there could be a problem with the sample.

Race–Ethnicity. Many religions are associated with race–ethnicity: Islam with Arabs, Judaism with Jews, Hinduism with Indians, and Confucianism with Chinese. In the United States, all major religious groups draw from the nation’s many racial–ethnic groups. Like social class, however, race–ethnicity tends to cluster. People of Irish descent are likely to be Roman Catholics; those with Greek ancestors are likely to belong to the Greek Orthodox Church. African Americans are likely to be Protestants—more specifically, Baptists—or to belong to fundamentalist sects.



Watch on MySocLab

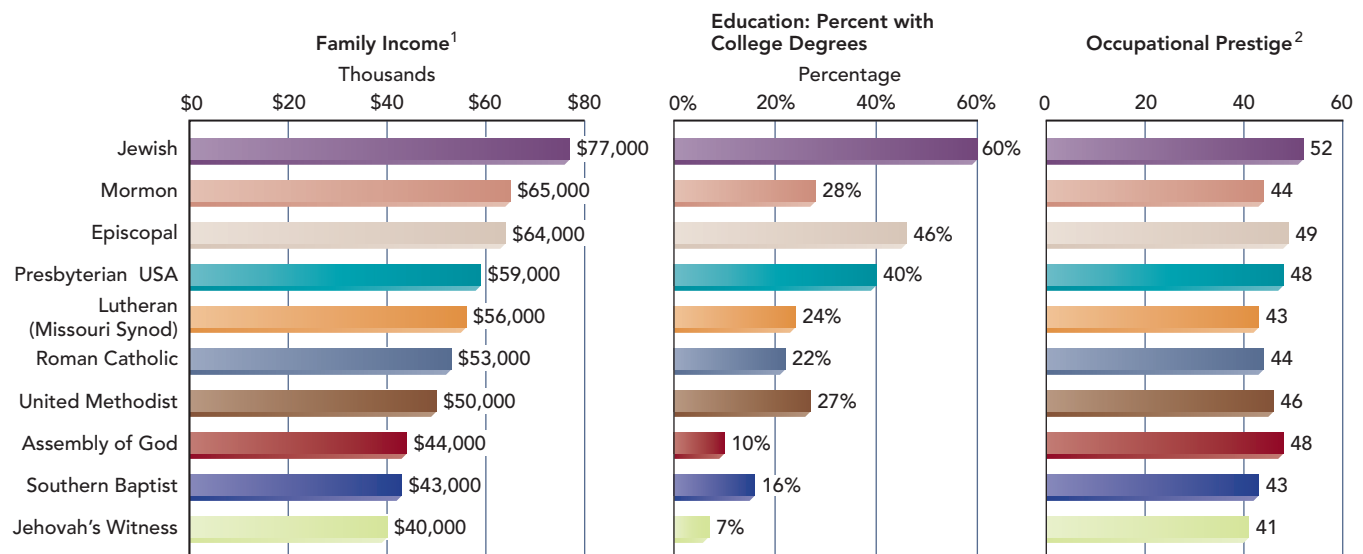
Video: Thinking Like a Sociologist:
Religious Diversity in America



Explore on MySocLab

Activity: Religious Diversity in
America

FIGURE 13.6 Social Class and Religious Affiliation



¹The family incomes reported here must be taken as approximate. The original totals were from 1996. I increased them by 48 percent, the inflation rate reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for 1996 to 2013.

²Higher numbers mean that more of the group’s members work at occupations that have higher prestige, generally those that require more education and offer higher pay. For more information on occupational prestige, see Table 8.2 on page 227.

Source: By the author. Based on Smith and Faris 2005.



A major change in religion in the United States is the explosion of Pentecostalism. This religion is especially appealing to people on the economic margin of society.

Although many churches are integrated, it is with good reason that Sunday morning between 10 and 11 A.M. has been called “the most segregated hour in the United States.” African Americans tend to belong to African American churches, while most whites see only whites in theirs. The segregation of churches is based on custom, not on law.

Characteristics of Religious Groups

Let’s examine features of the religious groups in the United States.

Diversity. With 300,000 congregations and hundreds of denominations, no religious group even comes close to being a dominant religion in the United States (*Statistical Abstract* 2013:Tables 78, 79). Table 13.2 illustrates some of this remarkable diversity.

Pluralism and Freedom. It is the U.S. government’s policy not to interfere with religions. The government’s position is that its obligation is to ensure an environment in which people can worship as they see fit. Religious freedom is so extensive that anyone can start a church and proclaim himself or herself a minister, revelator, or any other desired term. The exceptions to this hands-off policy are startling. The most notorious exception in recent times occurred in Waco, Texas. When armed agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms attacked the compound of the Branch Davidians, an obscure religious group, eighty-two men, women, and children were burned to death. A second example is the focus of this chapter’s opening vignette. A third is the government’s infiltration of mosques to monitor the activities of Arab immigrants (ACLU 2010; Mohajer 2012). Other limitations to this policy are discussed in the Cultural Diversity box on page 429.

Toleration. The general religious toleration of Americans can be illustrated by three prevailing attitudes: (1) “All religions have a right to exist—as long as they don’t try to brainwash or hurt anyone.” (2) “With all the religions to choose from, how can anyone tell which one—if any—is true?” (3) “Each of us may be convinced about the truth of our religion—and that is good—but don’t be obnoxious by trying to convince others that you have the exclusive truth.”

The Electronic Church. What began as a ministry to shut-ins and those who do not belong to a church blossomed into its own type of church. Its preachers, called “televangelists,” reach millions of viewers and raise millions of dollars. Some of its most famous ministers are Joel Osteen, Kenneth Copeland, Creflo Dollar, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyers, and Pat Robertson.

Many local ministers view the electronic church as a competitor. They complain that it competes for the attention and dollars of their members. Leaders of the electronic church reply that the money goes to good causes and that through its conversions, the electronic church feeds members into the local churches, strengthening, not weakening them.

The Future of Religion

Religion thrives in the most advanced scientific nations—and, as officials of Soviet Russia and communist China were disheartened to learn—even in ideologically hostile climates. Although the Soviet and Chinese authorities threw believers into prison, they continued to practice their religion. Humans are inquiring creatures. As they reflect

13.13 Discuss the likely future of religion.

 Read on **MySocLab**
Document: Abiding Faith

TABLE 13.2 How Americans Identify with Religion

Religious Group	Number of Members	Percentage of U.S. Adults
Christian	243,060,000	77.8%
Protestant	165,000,000	53.0%
Evangelical churches	85,200,000	27.3%
Mainline churches	57,000,000	18.4%
Historic black churches	22,800,000	7.3%
Roman Catholic	68,400,000	21.7%
Mormon	6,200,000	1.9%
Orthodox: Greek, Russian	1,500,000	0.5%
Jehovah's Witness	1,200,000	0.4%
Other Christian	760,000	0.3%
Other Religions	16,350,000	5.3%
Jewish	5,690,000	1.8%
Buddhist	3,570,000	1.2%
Muslim	2,770,000	0.9%
Hindu	1,790,000	0.6%
Other faiths (Unitarians, New Age, Native American religions, Liberal)	2,530,000	0.8%
No Identity with a Religion	50,980,000	16.3%
Nothing in particular	36,196,000	11.6%
Agnostic	8,667,000	2.7%
Atheist	6,118,000	1.9%
Don't Know or Refused	1,863,000	0.6%

Sources: *The Global Religious Landscape* 2012:Table 12; *Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches* 2012.

on life, they ask, What is the purpose of it all? Why are we born? Is there an afterlife? If so, where are we going? Out of these concerns arises this question: If there is a God, what does God want of us in this life? Does God have a preference about how we should live?

Science, including sociology, cannot answer such questions. By its very nature, science cannot tell us about four main concerns that many people have:

1. *The existence of God.* About this, science has nothing to say. No test tube has either isolated God or refuted God's existence.
2. *The purpose of life.* Although science can provide a definition of life and describe the characteristics of living organisms, it has nothing to say about ultimate purpose.
3. *An afterlife.* Science can offer no information on this at all, for it has no tests to prove or disprove a "hereafter."
4. *Morality.* Science can demonstrate the consequences of behavior, but not the moral superiority of one action compared with another. This means—to use an extreme example—that science cannot even prove whether loving your family and neighbor is superior to hurting and killing them.

There is no doubt that religion will last as long as humanity lasts, for what could replace it? And if something did, and answered such questions, would it not be religion under a different name?

To close this chapter, let's try to glimpse the cutting edge of religious change.



Read on **MySocLab**

Document: Religion and Spirituality Among Scientists

Mass Media in Social Life

God on the Net: The Online Marketing of Religion

In Thailand: Teenaged Buddhist monks post videos of themselves on YouTube playing air guitar and reciting religious chants to hip-hop beats. This upsets older Buddhists who feel that the young monks are being disrespectful (Hookway 2012).

In Israel: You want to pray here at the Holy Land, but you can't leave home? No problem. Buy our special telephone card—available at your local 7-11. Just record your prayer, and we'll broadcast it via the Internet at the site you choose. Press 1 for the holy site of Jerusalem, press 2 for the holy site of the Sea of Galilee, press 3 for the birthplace of Jesus, press 4 for. . . (Rhoads 2007)

In India: You moved to Kansas, but you want to pray in Chennai? No problem. Order your pujas (prayers), and a priest will say them in the temple of your choice. Just click how many you want. Food offerings for Vishnu included in the price. All major credit cards accepted (K. Sullivan 2007).

In Rome: The Pope tries to reach out to younger Roman Catholics by tweeting, little religious messages in 145 characters or less. The Pope doesn't actually write the tweets, but he "is involved" in what they say (Moloney 2012).

In the United States: Erin Polzin, a 20-year-old college student, listens to a Lutheran worship service on the radio, confesses online, and uses PayPal to tithe. "I don't like getting up early," she says. "This is like going to church without really having to" (Bernstein 2003).

In Europe: Muslims download sermons and join an invisible community of worshippers at virtual mosques. Jews type

messages that fellow believers in Jerusalem download and insert in the Western Wall.

Everywhere: No matter where you are, virtual church services are available. Just choose an avatar, and you can sing, kneel, pray, and listen to virtual sermons. And if you get bored, you don't have to continue to sit. You can walk around the virtual church and talk to other avatars (Feder 2004). And, of course, you can use your credit card—a real one, not the virtual kind.

The changes certainly are far reaching. One rabbi celebrates Rosh Hashana, a high Holy Day service, by having congregants use their cell phones to text anonymous messages regarding their reactions to what is being discussed. The messages are projected onto a screen in front of the congregation (Alvarez 2012).

Some say that the microchip has put us on the verge of a religious reformation that will turn out to be as big as the one set off by Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. This is likely an exaggeration, but perhaps not.



Some people have begun to "attend" church as avatars.

For Your Consideration

➔ We are gazing into the future of religious practices changing with technology. How do you think that the Internet might change religion? Do you think it can replace the warm embrace of fellow believers? Will tweets bring comfort to someone who is grieving for a loved one?

A basic principle of symbolic interactionism is that meaning is not inherent in an object or event, but is determined by people as they interpret the object or event. Does this dinosaur fossil "prove" evolution? Does it "disprove" creation? Such "proof" and "disproof" lie in the eye of the beholder, based on the background assumptions by which it is interpreted.





Summary and Review

Education in Global Perspective

13.1 Understand how education is related to a nation's culture and economy; compare education in Japan, Russia, and Egypt.

What is a credential society, and how did it develop?

A **credential society** is one in which employers use diplomas and degrees to determine who is eligible for a job. One reason that credentialism developed is that large, anonymous societies lack the personal knowledge common to smaller groups. Educational certification is taken as evidence of a person's ability. Pp. 403–406.

How does education compare among the Most Industrialized, Industrializing, and Least Industrialized Nations?

In general, formal education reflects a nation's economy. Consequently, education is extensive in the Most Industrialized Nations, undergoing vast change in the Industrializing Nations, and spotty in the Least Industrialized Nations. Japan, Russia, and Egypt provide examples of education in countries at three levels of industrialization. Pp. 406–408.

The Functionalist Perspective: Providing Social Benefits

13.2 Explain the functions of education: knowledge and skills, values, social integration, gatekeeping, and replacing family functions.

What is the functionalist perspective on education?

Among the functions of education are the teaching of knowledge and skills, providing credentials, **cultural transmission of values**, social integration, **social placement (gatekeeping)**, and **mainstreaming**. Functionalists also note that education has replaced some traditional family functions. Pp. 408–410.

The Conflict Perspective: Perpetuating Social Inequality

13.3 Explain how the educational system reproduces the social class structure.

What is the conflict perspective on education?

The basic view of conflict theorists is that *education reproduces the social class structure*; that is, through such mechanisms as unequal funding and operating different schools for the elite and for the masses, education perpetuates a society's basic social inequalities from one generation to the next. Pp. 410–413.

The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective: Teacher Expectations

13.4 Explain the significance of teacher expectations and give examples.

What is the symbolic interactionist perspective on education?

Symbolic interactionists focus on face-to-face interaction. In examining what occurs in the classroom, they have found that student performance tends to conform to teacher expectations, whether they are high or low. Pp. 413–414.

Problems in U.S. Education—and Their Solutions

13.5 Discuss mediocrity in education, grade inflation, social promotion, raising standards, cheating by administrators, and violence in schools.

What are the chief problems that face U.S. education?

The major problems are mediocrity (low achievement as shown by state tests and SAT scores), **grade inflation**, **social promotion**, **functional illiteracy**, faked data reported by school administrators, and violence. Pp. 415–418.

What are the potential solutions to these problems?

To restore high educational standards will require that we expect more of *both* students and teachers; school administrators can be required to use a single reporting measure based on objective, verifiable data; and, although we cannot prevent all school violence, for an effective learning environment we can and must provide basic security for students. Pp. 415–418.

What Is Religion?

13.6 Explain what Durkheim meant by sacred and profane; discuss the three elements of religion.

Durkheim identified three essential characteristics of **religion**: beliefs that set the **sacred** apart from the **profane**, **rituals**, and a moral community (a **church**). Pp. 418–420.

The Functionalist Perspective

13.7 Apply the functionalist perspective to religion: functions and dysfunctions.

What are the functions and dysfunctions of religion?

Among the functions of religion are answering questions about ultimate meaning; providing emotional comfort, social solidarity, guidelines for everyday life, social control, and social change. Among the dysfunctions of religion are religious persecution and war and terrorism. Pp. 421–422.

The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

13.8 Apply the symbolic interactionist perspective to religion: symbols, rituals, beliefs, and religious experience.

What aspects of religion do symbolic interactionists study?

Symbolic interactionists focus on the meanings of religion for its followers. They examine religious symbols, **rituals**, beliefs, and **religious experiences**. Pp. 422–425.

The Conflict Perspective

13.9 Apply the conflict perspective to religion: opium of the people and legitimating social inequalities.

What aspects of religion do conflict theorists study?

Conflict theorists examine the relationship of religion to social inequalities, especially how religion reinforces a society's stratification system. P. 426.

Religion and the Spirit of Capitalism

13.10 Explain Weber's analysis of how religion broke tradition and brought capitalism.

What does the spirit of capitalism have to do with religion?

Max Weber saw religion as a primary source of social change. He analyzed how Calvinism gave rise to the **Protestant ethic**, which stimulated what he called the **spirit of capitalism**. The result was capitalism, which transformed society. Pp. 426–427.

Types of Religious Groups

13.11 Compare cult, sect, church, and ecclesia.

What types of religious groups are there?

Sociologists divide religious groups into cults, sects, churches, and ecclesias. All religions began as **cults**. Those that survive tend to develop into **sects** and eventually into **churches**. Sects, often led by **charismatic leaders**, are unstable. Some are perceived as threats and are persecuted by the state. **Ecclesias**, or state religions, are rare. Pp. 427–430.

Religion in the United States

13.12 Summarize main features of religion in the United States.

What are the main characteristics of religion in the United States?

Membership varies by social class and race–ethnicity. Major characteristics are diversity, pluralism and freedom, tolerance, and the electronic church. Pp. 430–432.

The Future of Religion

13.13 Discuss the likely future of religion.

Because science cannot answer questions about ultimate meaning, the existence of God or an afterlife, or provide guidelines for morality, the need for religion will remain. In any foreseeable future, religion will prosper. The Internet is likely to have far-reaching consequences on religion. Pp. 432–434.

Thinking **Critically** about Chapter 13

1. How does education in the United States compare with education in Japan, Russia, and Egypt?
2. How have your experiences in education (including teachers and assignments) influenced your goals, attitudes, and values? How have your classmates influenced you? Be specific.
3. Why is religion likely to remain a strong feature of U.S. life—and remain strong in people's lives around the globe?