**Introduction to Sociology**

Chapter 13 “Religion”: Assignments

**13.1 What is religion?**

**Q1**

Q1a. How important is religion in your country?

Q1b. Is religion in your country more (or less) important than in the past?

**13.2 Did religion solve the problem of human cooperation?**

**Q1**

Consider the following scenario. Your hypothetical cultural anthropologist friend has just returned from a six-month stay in Italy, where she studied Catholics in Rome. She found it interesting to see devout Catholics climbing the marble ‘*Scala Sancta’* on their knees. How would you interpret this kind of religious behavior? For what purpose do people engage in this type of behavior, and what is this kind of behavior called?

**13.3 The Stickiness Factor of Religion**

**Q1**

Explain the concept of parental transmission, and how this helps to reinforce ‘religious stickiness’.

**Q2**

Now consider the concept of peer transmission. It is argued that this form of transmission weighs less heavily on an individual’s own religiosity than parental transmission. Can you come up with a reason why?

**Q3**

To what extent can international migration affect the degree of ‘religious stickiness’?

**13.4 Secularization in Western Europe**

**Q1**

Suppose you would study the Muslims who migrated from Turkey to Sweden (which is a rather secular country). Imagine you have collected survey data of 1500 families, in which both parents (first generation) and their children (second generation) participated.

Q1a. What would you expect if you apply the immigrant integration proposition (Chapter 11), when you compare the two generations of Turkish Muslims in Sweden?

Q1b. Suppose you compare two second generation girls from the Turkish Muslim group in Sweden -the girls are the same, expect for the place they grow up. One, Mira, is growing up in Malmö -which is a city with a large share of Muslims. The other, Zeynep, is growing up in a little village in which her family is the only Muslim family. What would you expect about their integration progress? Specify which theory you use.

**13.5 Modernization and secularization**

**Q1**

Can you fill in the following theory scheme (Chapter 2), using the modernization and secularization theory?

(P)

(C) Norway is more modernized than Ghana.

(H)

**Q2.**

Suppose that you discuss the modernization and secularization theory with a friend of yours. Based on what you read in Chapter 13 you say that research provides evidence to suggest a process of secularization in Western Europe after World War 2, because there is decline in religious belonging and believing. You also mention that this secularization trend is due to modernization. But then your friend remembers that she somewhere read that the share of religious people in the world is actually increasing, not decreasing. Isn’t that an anomaly, a finding that goes against the modernization-secularization theory? Let’s see if we can find more about this issue. Visit the website [www.globalreligiousfutures.org/explorer](http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/explorer) . Here you can find global statistics on the share of the world that are religious now and projections for the future.

Q2a. What is the share of the world that are unaffiliated to a religion in the year 2010? And what is predicted for the year 2050?

Q2b. Do the findings provide a strong case against the modernization and secularization theory?

**13.6 Existential insecurity Theory**

**Q1**

Let’s consider the relationship between GDP per capita and religiosity in a country. Studies report that on a macro level, there is a negative relationship between the two. How can existential-insecurity theory explain this ecological relationship, by introducing processes which occur at the micro level?

**Q2**

Do you think that the covid pandemic affected religiosity in the world, e.g. how often people pray? Do think that frequency of praying has increased or decreased or remained the same? Explain your answer.

**Chapter generic assignments**

**Q1**

Religion is a complex phenomenon, which can be studied from different perspectives

Q1a. Consider the sociological theme of social relations. Formulate one comparative descriptive question about religion from this perspective.

Q1b. Consider the sociological theme of culture. Formulate one comparative descriptive question about religion from this perspective.

**Q2**

Religious belonging is a key dimension of religion, and it refers to the degree of social integration in religious groups. The following questions are about religion as a group phenomenon.

Q2a. Consider your core network, i.e. your strongest social ties (Chapter 7). Think of five people that are in this network, such as your best friends. How many belong to the same religious group as you (e.g., Christian, Muslim, Hindu, unaffiliated, etc.). How many group-bonding and group-bridging ties do you have with respect to religion?

Q2b. Can you reflect on your core network and what it tells us about the phenomenon of ‘group segregation’ and about homophily (Chapter 8)?

Q2c. Think of five people you personally know, but with whom you have a much weaker tie. Write down their names, and then try to assess their religion. Do they have the same religion as you? Is there a difference in group segregation with respect to strong ties (core network) and weak ties?

**Q3**

Religion may help to promote cooperation and trust between people who belong to the same (religious) group. Religious groups may, however, also develop antagonistic relations and intergroup violence may emerge.

Q3a. Based on the minimal group paradigm (Chapter 8), what would you expect to see when you randomly assign people to some sort of (unknown) religious groups, say the ‘blue’ or ‘yellow’ religious group? How would members of different groups think about the other group -even if there is no face-to-face interaction?

Q3b. What happens to intergroup cohesion between the ‘blue’ and ‘yellow’ religious group in a certain country, when the cultural values of these groups tend to diverge (say, one becoming more conservative, the other more progressive)?