

RS Resources: Secularisation?????

Resource 1: Question Answer

The video clip says that, like everything else, religious practices have changed as societies have modernised. What two significant changes that have taken place over the last 150 years were identified in the film?

- (i) The percentage of the British population regularly attending church has declined. In the middle of the 19th Century it was around 60%, but by the early 20th Century it had dropped to less than 10%.
- (ii) The number of people in Britain describing themselves as 'religious' declined from 80% in 1963 to 50% in 2012

Can you give a general definition of secularisation?

The decline of religion, measured in terms of indicators such as attendance at religious ceremonies or personal beliefs.

What three dimensions of secularisation did Professor Woodhead identify in the film?

- (i) Decline in the number of believers.
- (ii) Decline in power and influence of religious institutions, such as Churches.
- (iii) Decline in the general public and political influence of religion.

How has the idea of secularisation been challenged in recent years:

- (i) Attendance in the past may have been overestimated as people were often forced or expected to attend church, whereas now it is more a matter of personal choice.
- (ii) Religion is not declining but changing. While organised (congregational) religions have seen a decline in attendance and fewer people believe in concepts like God, non-congregational forms of spirituality have increased in number.

The film talked about people beginning to 'shop around' for spirituality. What does this mean?

As contemporary societies have become more individualist and consumerist, people are more-inclined to look around for forms of spirituality that suit their particular lifestyle. The many different 'brands' of religion now available mean that people can 'pick-and-choose' from a wide range of different types of religion as well as 'mix-and-match' diverse ideas taken from different religions.

Resources 2: Activity

'Measuring' religiosity.

In order to make general statements about religion and religiosity, researchers have to find ways of measuring it. This activity is designed a) to illustrate this process b) provide a basis for a class discussion (e.g. distinction between 'religion' and 'spirituality') and c) show whether the class doing the activity is more 'religious' or 'secular'.

Ask students to design a questionnaire aimed at showing levels of religious belief and practice in the class. Alternatively, you can either help students design it or give them a 'ready-made' questionnaire. To help here are some questions taken from a religiosity survey:

Religion: Would you describe yourself as 'religious'?

- (a) Yes
- (b) Not sure
- (c) No

Religious practice: State which of the following statements best describes you:

- (a) I am a member of a religious community and I practice my religion regularly
- (b) I am a member of a religious community but I do not practice my religion regularly
- (c) I am not a member of any religious community

Belief: Do you believe in a God, gods, or a higher spiritual being?

- (a) Yes
- (b) Not sure
- (c) No

Prayer: Do you pray

- (a) Every day
- (b) At least once a week
- (c) Occasionally e.g. at ceremonies
- (d) If you're in a jam
- (e) Never

Identity: Is your religion a key source of your identity i.e. how you see yourself and how others see you?

- (a) Yes my religion is a major source of who I am
- (b) I have a religion but it is not a major source of how I see myself
- (c) I do not have a religious belief

How did you acquire your religious beliefs, or lack of them?

- (a) I followed the religion of my parents
- (b) I developed my religious beliefs independently i.e. through conversion
- (c) I was religious but lost my faith
- (d) I have never had any religious convictions

Spirituality: Which of the following statements do you think best describes you?

- (a) I am religious and that is a source of spirituality for me.
- (b) I am not religious but I am spiritual. (If possible could you elaborate and say how you spiritual?)
- (c) I am neither religious nor spiritual