

# sample resources

# Sociology

## Contemporary Classifications

### NRM

*'Refer collectively to the broad range of religious and spiritual groups, cults and sects that have emerged in Western countries including the UK, alongside mainstream religions'*

- 1) The term allows you to explore a wide range of diverse groups.
- 2) They emerge from a diversity of different sources
- 3) Recruit from diversity of backgrounds, but tend to be middle class

*There are lots of different theories put forward for the growth of NRM. For example, Wilson suggests that they are a result of rapid social change. As norms are disrupted people search for meaning offered in the community of NRM.*

## Types of NRM

### Roy Wallis: The Elementary Forms of New Religious Life (1984)

#### Three type of NRM:

- 1) World-affirming
- 2) World-rejecting
- 3) World-accommodating

#### World-affirming movements

- 1) Similar to self-help or therapy groups
- 2) Lack rituals and control
- 3) Accept world
- 4) Offer potential to unlock spiritual power and cope with problems of modernity
- 5) Seek wide membership

#### World-rejecting movements

- 1) Highly critical of outside society
- 2) Demand significant lifestyle changes
- 3) Can be described as total institutions
- 4) Require high level of commitment
- 5) Conflict with state as leaders may be intent on bring about social change

#### World-accommodating movements

- 1) Most similar to traditional religions, often an offshoot of church or denomination
- 2) Focus on inner religious life, rather than worldly concerns
- 3) Try to rediscover spiritual purity

- 1) Carry on with existing lifestyle

*Wallis acknowledges that some groups fall in the 'middle ground' between two or more of these types.*

### **Evaluation from Beckford (who says typologies are useful):**

- 1) Categories are difficult to apply: do you focus on teaching of the movement or beliefs of the individual
- 2) Does not pay sufficient attention to the diversity of views that may exist within a sect or cult
- 3) Can a movement ever totally reject the world

### **New Age Movements:**

- 1) Phenomena of the 1980s and 1990s
- 2) Include elements of traditional religions, but close to cults
- 3) Broad in terms of types and level of commitment
- 4) Tend to be m/c and female
- 5) No formal structure

Bruce highlights three themes:

- 1) New Science: NAMs are in conflict and reject claims of science
- 2) New Ecology: NAMs see the planet as a living organism, any action has an impact
- 3) New Psychology: NAMs see the 'self as sacred'

### **Millenarian Movements**

- 1) Examples shows how religion may inspire activism and social change
- 2) Anticipates immediate collective salvation
- 3) Close connection to Christianity
- 4) Associate with those in deprived positions
- 5) Related to apocalypse

**Key Point:** *late modern society is characterised by an immense diversity of religious organisations and beliefs.*

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#### **World-affirming movements**

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- 5)

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