

sample resources

Sociology

Briefly examine some of the causes of the growth in New Religious Movements.

This question is quite a common question for 12 marks. I want you to be able to write an essay on it. Here is a detailed structure that will help you.

Structure:

Introduction and Argument:

- A) Give an example of NRM
- B) NRMs are not a homogenous group. They can be affirming, rejecting or accommodating. Therefore, they have very different origins. Many factors may combine in the formation of a NRM. This suggests the need for a multi-causal explanation.
- C) Factors explaining the rise of NRMs revolve around three levels of analysis. The linking concept between all these three factors is UNCERTAINTY.

- 1) Wider trends and events in society
- 2) Factors affecting particular groups in society
- 3) The needs of individual.

Paragraph 1: Outline Factors in general:

- 1) Breakaway from Established Church and response to Secularisation
- 2) Response to modernity: the breakdown of community; threats to way of life; bureaucracy; decline of extended of family; alienation in capitalism; patriarchy
- 3) Marginality
- 4) Relative Deprivation
- 5) Career Success/Personal Growth/Crisis of Identity

At the end of this section make the point that the basic Idea is that NRM provide certainty in period of uncertainty.

Paragraph 2: Factors explaining the rise of world-rejecting movements: Use Haralambos page 462-464 to help (Handbook page 79)

1) Wallis (1984)

Factors explaining the growth in the 1960s:

- 1) Growth in HE lengthened the transition period between childhood and adulthood. This was a period of freedom.
- 2) Period of radicalism suggesting the possibility of alternative world-views
- 3) Rise of technology would bring an end to poverty
- 4) Secularisation

Therefore, world-rejecting movements provided 'a more idealistic, spiritual and caring way of life, in the context of more personal and loving social relationships'.

2) **Bruce:**

- a) Appealed to the young: those disillusioned with the counter culture of the 1960s
e.g. Hippie Movement disintegrated

Paragraph 3: Factors explaining the rise of world-accommodating movements:

Wallis

- a) No clear explanation
- b) Those with a substantial stake in society, but who have reasons to be dissatisfied with existing religions

Paragraph 4: Factors explaining the rise of world-affirming movements

- a) Develop as a *'means of coping with a sense of inadequacy among social groups which are, by the more obvious indicators, among the world's more successful and highly rewarded individuals'*.
- b) Feeling of loss of 'real self'
- c) Offer immediate gratification for those taking part
- d) **Bruce** sees these as a response to the rationalisation of the modern world

'Modern life is so fragmented that many people find it increasingly difficult to draw on their public roles for a satisfying and fulfilling sense of identity'.

Paragraph 5: PROBLEM!!!!

Gordon Melton

- 1) Analysed the founding dates of 836 non-conventional religious groups in the US this century
- 2) Rapid growth in numbers occurred in the 1950s. This was a period of stability
- 3) The rapid growth preceded the counter-culture of the 1960s

Conclusion

- 1) Argue that NRM are not a homogenous group and therefore you need a MULTI-CAUSAL EXPLANATION.
- 2) Suggest some contemporary uncertainties: post-modern society, multi-cultural society (THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX).