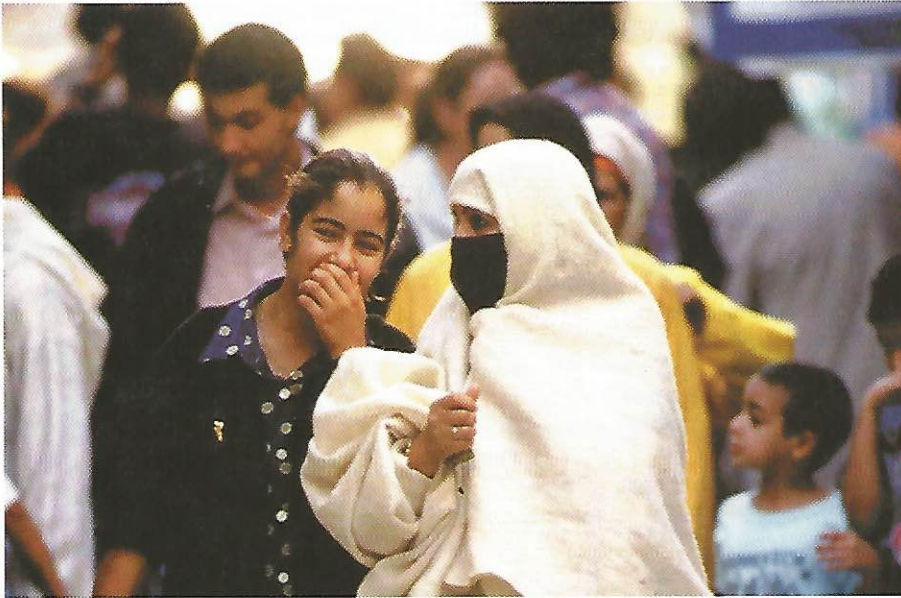




In Morocco, some Muslim women are veiled, some are not. Such differences can even be found within the same family, as with this mother and daughter.

people seem to feel free to combine elements from different religions, almost using religion as a toolbox with applications to a variety of problems and life issues. For example, in Korea, Confucian prayers for one's ancestors may be combined with Christian prayers for God's help or grace. The Japanese often celebrate births according to Shinto (Japanese folk religion) traditions, marry in Christian rituals, bury their dead with Buddhist ceremonies—and call themselves nonreligious.

ies remarkably different from one another, and that it is so clearly produced socially and thus requires a sociological explanation.

To begin to grasp the incredible variety of religions that exist, study the information provided in Table 14.1. Table 14.1 only includes religions that are active and involve relatively large numbers of people (1 million or more adherents) today. It does not include religions that are from the past or that are estimated to have fewer than

The Incredible Variety of Religions

14.1.2 Identify the big five or six religions of the world and discuss the variety and diversity of contemporary religion.

Instead of asking what the one true faith might be, sociologists from Weber and Durkheim onward have tried to understand the empirical reality before their eyes: the hundreds or thousands of different contemporary and historical religions to be found around the world, and the complex overlaps, syntheses, conflicts, and differences among these faiths. What made and makes religion so fascinating is that it is everywhere, in societ-

Table 14.1 Major Religions of the World

	Est. Adherents	Established	Where Originated
The Big Five/Six			
1. Christianity Includes: Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant	2,200 million	30 CE	Israel
2. Islam Sunni, Shi'a	1,300 million	622 CE	Saudi Arabia
3. Hinduism	900 million	Prehistory	India
4. Chinese Syncretism	400 million	Prehistory	China
5. Buddhism Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana	360 million	520 BCE	India
6. Nonreligion Atheism, agnosticism	1,100 million		
Christianity-Related			
7. Judaism Orthodox, Conservative, Reform. Religion of the Hebrews, the "Chosen People." The root religion of Christian and Muslim monotheism. This-world and ethical oriented.	14 million	1300 BCE	Israel
8. Mormonism Consider themselves Christians. Believe Book of Mormon, not accepted by other Christian groups, is divinely inspired. Emphasizes self-discipline and family devotion.	12 million	1830 CR	USA
9. Spiritualism Focus on understanding and communicating with disembodied entities using methods such as seances, automatic writing, and other techniques. Believe all people have immortal spirits.	11 million	1850 CE	USA, UK, France

(Continued)