

American Sociological Association Section on the Sociology Religion

From the Chair:

Whither religion? This question could be fairly asked by American sociologists of religion. It is a question raised by the steadily increasing percentage of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated. Scratch beneath the surface of those categorized in surveys as “nones” and we find diversity: some unchurched believers, some seekers, some atheists, and some wholly uninterested in matters concerning religion or spirituality. Clearly there continue to be strongholds of religious affiliation in the country. But we are witness to a period of change in the religious landscape that is a counterpoint to historic religious revivals and awakenings.

So how should this contemporary trend—the growth in religious non-affiliation—impact our scholarship? It requires better analytical categories for classifying and understanding the varieties of non-affiliation. This is the routine work of scholarly production (“More categories!”) and it is already well underway. In addition, it requires something more Copernican in nature: a decentering of religion among sociologists of religion as they seek to better understand religion’s “others.” Labels like “non-religion” and “unaffiliated” are based on negations or deficits. What is the substance these labels contain? Is it something like religion? Or ideology? Or bricolage? Or is it really an absence? It’s an article of faith in some academic quarters that everyone subscribes to something akin to religious belief. Empirically, how true is this? Substantively, what are these kindred “others”? On these questions, sociologists of religion and sociologists of culture share a lot of common ground.

Lastly, sociologists of religion need to more often foreground our working definitions of religion. If we have Durkheimian social imagery in mind, then the growth of religious “nones” may be seen as a portentous change for moral community and set off a stampede to follow the migrations of the sacred. Alternatively, if religion refers to “what matters” and “things of value,” the rise of non-affiliation bears different and less freighted implications for the subfield. Things will always matter. When seen through the different facets of “religion”—community, morality, practice, meaning, belief, identity, sacred, supernatural, salvation—the growth of non-affiliation refracts different implications.

These are issues for the subfield to engage. They are also issues addressed in this fall’s book symposium on Christel Manning’s book, *Losing our Religion: How Unaffiliated Parents are Raising their Children*. The symposium contains commentary by Penny Edgell, Joel Thiessen, Christine Cusack, and Linda Woodhead, and a response by Christel Manning.

Happy reading!

Brian Steensland

2016 Section Award Winners

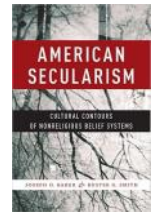
Distinguished Book Award winner:



Christopher Bail. 2015. *Terrified: How Anti-Muslim Fringe Organizations became Mainstream*. Princeton University Press.

Honorable Mention

Joseph A Baker and Buster G. Smith. 2015. *American Secularism: Cultural Contours of Nonreligious Belief Systems*. 2015, New York University Press.



Distinguished Article Award (co-winners)

Conrad Hackett, Marcin Stonawski, Michaela Potančoková, Brian J. Grim, and Vegard Skirbekk. 2015. “The Future Size of Religiously Affiliated and Unaffiliated Populations,” *Demographic Research*. Volume 32: 829-842. [Descriptive finding](#).

J. E. Sumerau, Ryan T. Cragun, and Lain A. B. Mathers. September 15, 2015. “Contemporary Religion and the Cisgendering of Reality.” *Social Currents*. [Online](#).

Student Paper Award

Hastings, Orestes P. 2016. “Not a Lonely Crowd? Social Connectedness, Religious Service Attendance, and the Spiritual But Not Religious.” *Social Science Research*. Volume 57: 63-79. [Online](#).

Honorable mention

Delehanty, John D. November 19, 2015. “Prophets of Resistance: Social Justice Activists Contesting Comfortable Church Culture.” *Sociology of Religion*. [Online](#).

From the Newsletter Editor

I am pleased to present you with the fall 2016 edition of the American Sociological Association's Section on Religion newsletter. This newsletter is chock full of great content. First, at our summer meetings in Seattle, our new chair, Brian Steensland, began work. Beyond introducing the social sciences to *reltrad*, you can read more about him below. On page 3, you'll find a discussion of the book *Losing My Religion*. This discussion encapsulates many of the contemporary debates in the sociology of religion and is well worth reading.

Take time to skim through the extensive list of publications of many of our members (pages 8 and 9)—several of them in the top journals in sociology. And don't miss the calls for grant proposals, opportunities to submit manuscripts, and member news and notes on pages 9-11. While I take no credit for the great work you are doing, I do accept responsibility for any errors and omissions in the newsletter. If you have corrections or ideas for newsletter content, don't hesitate to contact me.

David Eagle, david.eagle@duke.edu.

About Our New Chair



From his departmental profile: "Brian Steensland is Professor of Sociology and Director of Social Science Research at the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture at IUPUI. He is also Director of the IU Consortium for the Study of Religion, Ethics, and Society. From 2002 to 2014 he was a faculty member in the sociology department at Indiana University-Bloomington. He earned a PhD in sociology at Princeton University in 2002. Professor Steensland's research interests include religion, culture, civic engagement, and politics in contemporary American society. Current projects include a study of religion and urban revitalization in Indianapolis, and a study of American religious and spiritual practices. He is writing a textbook on religion and society for Wiley-Blackwell.

Steensland's books include *The New Evangelical Social Engagement* (Oxford, 2014), co-edited with Philip Goff, and *The Failed Welfare Revolution* (Princeton, 2008), which won the Mary Douglas Prize and the award for Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship in Political Sociology. He has published research articles and book chapters on topics such as religious classification, American evangelicals and contemporary politics, mainline Protestantism and welfare reform, and Christianity and free-market economics. His co-authored article "The Measure of American Religion" (*Social Forces*, 2000) won the Best Article Award in the *Sociology of Religion*. His article "Cultural Categories and the American Welfare State" (*American Journal of Sociology*, 2006) won the Best Article Award in the *Sociology of Culture*.

Steensland teaches undergraduate courses on social problems, social theory, and religion and society, and graduate seminars on sociological theory, sociology of religion, cultural analysis, political sociology, and textual analysis. He twice won Indiana University's Trustee's Teaching Award and also received the Edwin H. Sutherland Excellence in Teaching Award."

Brian's email is: bsteens@iupui.edu

Section News

The section has a number of transitions to recognize. We welcome **Brian Steensland**, Chair; **Jen'nán Read**, Secretary-Treasurer; **Gerardo Marti**, Council member; **Jennifer Le**, Council member; **Landon Schnabel**, Council student representative; and **David Eagle**, Newsletter Editor.

We thank **Omar McRoberts** (past chair), **Paul Lichterman** (past Council member) and **Kraig Beyerlein** (past Council member) for their service to the section, and commend **Gerardo Marti** (past Secretary-Treasurer) and **Jennifer Le** (past Newsletter Editor) for agreeing to serve again in new capacities.

SECTION OFFICERS

Chair

Brian Steensland, IUPUI

Chair-Elect

Wendy Cadge, Brandeis University

Secretary-Treasurer

Jen'nán Read, Duke University

Council

Orit Avishai, Fordham University ('17)

Genevieve Zubrzycki, University of Michigan ('17)

Phil Gorski, Yale University ('18)

Jenny Trinitapoli, University of Chicago ('18)

Gerardo Marti, Davidson College ('19)

Jennifer Le, Bellevue College ('19)

Landon Schnabel, Indiana University (student representative)

Newsletter Editor

David Eagle, Duke University

Webmaster

Peter Ryan, University of Notre Dame

Book Symposium

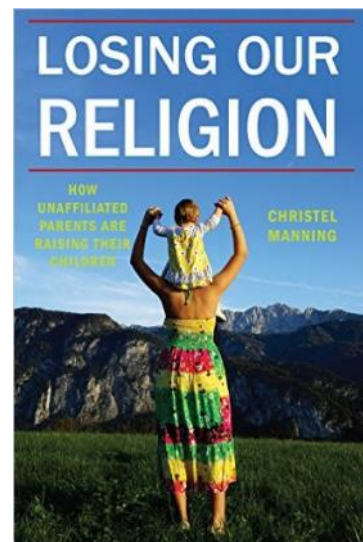
Manning, Christel. 2015. *Losing Our Religion: How Unaffiliated Parents are Raising Their Children*. New York NYU Press.

*During the ASR meetings in Seattle, WA, a stimulating author meets critics panel was convened to discuss **Christel Manning's** recent book, *Losing Our Religion*. We are grateful to our panelists *Christine Cusack, Penny Edgell, Joel Thiessen and Linda Woodhead* and to *Christel Manning* for writing up their comments to share with the section. - ed.*

Christine Cusack, ccusack@uottawa.ca

Ph.D. Student, Department of Classics and Religious Studies
University of Ottawa

Christel Manning's 2015 book *Losing our religion: How unaffiliated parents are raising their children* offers a compelling exchange between her own experience as a 'none' parent and the voices of her respondents, striving to answer this vital question: **"What do I believe in and how do I transmit my beliefs to my child?"**(1). Readers will find nuanced concerns about heritage, belonging, and tensions around insider/outsider identities woven throughout her participants' stories. Several parents expressed sadness over the loss of ritual and tradition tied to former beliefs, which in their memory had facilitated strong kinship and communal ties. **Parental angst** over belief transmission, therefore, emerges as a core theme of the book, recalling what French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2000) described as a broken chain—a metaphor for the erosion of collective memory transmission from one generation to another. Manning's respondents articulate the difficulties inherent in the personal, marital and familial quandaries which arise when considering the following questions: "What if the religion you rejected was a rich and wonderful part of your own childhood that made you feel protected and safe? Should you attempt to somehow recreate that feeling, along with transmitting your secular perspective, so that your children can make their own decision? But how can you do that with integrity if you no longer believe what you were taught?" (58-59). In describing how her 'nones' wrestled with these big questions, Manning's research disrupts many commonly held assumptions about **'noneness' as a deficit**. As the author argues "the term 'None' distorts our understanding in several important ways...[because] it defines people in terms of what they do not have, implying that they are somehow lacking" (23). "Since many people find meaning through religion," she contends, "it is easy to assume that those who don't have religion, the Nones, must lack such meaning. But,...most Nones do have substantive worldviews, including a coherent set of beliefs, values, practices, and sometimes even community that lend meaning and moral or-



From the publisher:

"Drawing on survey data and in-depth personal interviews with religiously unaffiliated parents across the country, Christel Manning provides important demographic data on American "Nones" and offers critical nuance to our understanding of the term. She shows that context is crucial in understanding how those without religious ties define themselves and raise their families. Indeed, she demonstrates that Nones hold a wide variety of worldviews, ranging from deeply religious to highly secular, and transmit them in diverse ways. What ties them all together is a commitment to spiritual choice—a belief in the moral equivalence of religions and secular worldviews and in the individual's right to choose—and it is that choice they seek to pass on to their children."



Christel Manning is Professor in the department of Theology and Religious Studies at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, CT.

...continued from page 3.

der to their lives” (188). Indeed, Manning’s volume makes important contributions to academic debates around ‘deficit’ terminology used in the rapidly expanding field of non-religion. The heterogeneity of social actors classified under the umbrella term ‘none’ and their rich and nuanced “lived experience” brings to the fore the inadequacy of current terminology (7). For scholars of religion, reaching a consensus on a more suitable lexicon remains unsettled. Nevertheless, Manning’s emphasis on the term ‘worldview’ throughout her book is particularly important for those who work in the area of religion and education, or more specifically, what is commonly referred to as ‘religious literacy.’

Manning rightfully argues that the religion/secularism binary “reifies affiliation as normative” (188). As she explains, religion is defined as an organized system of beliefs and practices, while secularism is often simply defined as an absence of beliefs and practices. What then about the possibility of classrooms populated by increasing numbers of students who have not had a religious upbringing or who are unaffiliated? Given that religious literacy education is premised on an assumption that learning about the beliefs and practices of the religious ‘other’ can reduce discrimination and enhance social cohesion in plural societies, will the children of ‘none’ parents find themselves marginalized in religious literacy curriculum? Religious literacy education has long been criticized for its inattention to diversity within various traditions and for a tendency towards essentialization. As populations of ‘nones’ (and presumably ‘none’ parents raising children) in the United States and Canada continue to grow, religious literacy education must adapt to meet the evolving needs of diverse student bodies. Textured narratives of ‘none’ worldviews emerging from studies such as Manning’s offer new directions for more inclusive curricular design. It is both noteworthy and timely that Manning has carefully used the word ‘worldview’ throughout her book, which she notes is “a more inclusive term than *religion*,” to describe the way ‘nones’ in her study framed their thinking (5). British scholar of non-religion Lois Lee has also commented on the term, contending “it may be...that non-religion studies will

be subsumed under ‘worldview studies’ once more empirical and theoretical work has been done” (Lee, 2012, 138). Taking Lee’s argument one step further, ‘worldview studies’ is arguably more inclusive than ‘religious studies,’ thus ‘religious literacy’ should likewise evolve to become ‘worldview literacy.’ Whatever rebranding may occur as the emerging study of ‘nones’ reshapes and redirects scholarly endeavours in a variety of disciplines, Manning’s contribution will remain an essential part of the conversation.

References

Hervieux-Léger, Danièle. (2000). *Religion as a Chain of memory*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Lee, Lois. (2012). Research note: Talking about a revolution: Terminology for the new field of non-religion studies. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 27(1): 129-139.

Penny Edgell, edgell@umn.edu

Professor of Sociology
University of Minnesota

Religion and family have been intertwined institutions in the United States for much of our history (Edgell 2005). But over the past 30 years, the non-religious population has grown steadily. Almost 40% of Americans between 18 and 29 years old are not religious, and they are unlikely to “return” to religion when they grow older (Jones *et al.* 2016, Wuthnow 2010). How do non-religious parents raise their children, and what do they teach them – if anything – about religion?

Christel Manning provides real answers in her well-designed study of non-religious parenting. She takes on the urgent need to rethink our sociological assumptions about the necessity of religious socialization to family formation and the socialization of children, and to analyze the range of supportive communal structures available to the growing non-religious portion of the American landscape. Her primary data comprise 48 in-depth interviews with non-religious parents in 8 field sites, supplemented by participant observation.

Manning’s focus is on developing analytical concepts and providing theoretical tools with which to

...continued from page 4.

understand the meaning and practices of non-religious parenting. In the United States, the non-religious parent faces a highly religious context, one in which good citizenship and good parenting are defined, through powerful narratives, as necessarily involving religious participation. Being a non-religious parent creates a cultural and social dilemma. One must decide, explicitly and perhaps in dialogue with others who do not agree with one's choices, whether and how to go about non-religious parenting, and what that means.

In the field of non-religious studies, there is a problem of multiple classification systems, raising the question of what, exactly, does it mean to be non-religious? Manning makes a sensible choice to focus on parents who are not willing to claim a religious identification; among these, she finds four subgroups: *unchurched believers*, those with a *seeker spirituality*, *philosophical secularists*, and those who are *indifferent* to religion. The strength of this classification scheme is that it captures different orientations to both religious and non-religious worldviews and complicates the binary "religious/secular" category scheme in useful ways.

Manning is right to point to those who are indifferent to religious *and* secular worldview commitments as an interesting group, sociologically speaking. Much of the research on the non-religious is moving toward conceptualizing religious and non-religious identification as relational and on a continuum. This is helpful for studying the American context, in which religious and non-religious identification are becoming more politicized and mutually referential. But it is important that we understand the part of the American landscape for whom the range of religious and non-religious choices are largely a matter of indifference or irrelevance. The religiously indifferent challenge both popular normative assumptions about the value of associational life and dominant scholarly discourses that treat stable identity preferences and the need for worldview coherence as a taken-for-granted.

Manning's primary focus is on non-religious parenting strategies, and she finds five different approaches to worldview socialization among the parents in her sample. Some non-religious parents are *conventional*, exposing their children to a faith tradition so the children can make up their own minds; others seek *alternatives* in secular church-like com-

munities. Some parents *self-provide* religious instruction at home, adopting an eclectic approach, while others *outsource* religious instruction; many do *nothing* in the way of religious or secular worldview socialization. Social context, particularly the cultural prominence of religious institutions in the local community, influences which strategy parents adopt.

Manning makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of how non-religious parents grapple with the meaning of their own worldview choices and the practices they use to transmit meaningful worldviews to their children. It sensibly cuts through a tangle of possible classifications and provides an analytically sound vocabulary for talking about non-religious choices and identities. It highlights the social pressures that non-religious parents face from both family and community members. Future research should focus on non-religious parenting in a wider array of social contexts, especially new immigrant, African-American, and other communities in which non-religious persons may face higher social costs for their non-religious choices. Manning's work provides a good model for future research, and is a fine beginning to what should be a larger conversation.

References

- Edgell, Penny. 2005. *Religion and Family in a Changing Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Jones, Robert P., Daniel Cox, Betsy Cooper, Rachel Lienesch. 2016. "Exodus: Why Americans are Leaving Religion – and Why they're Unlikely to Come Back." Survey Report, Public Religion Research Institute, Washington DC. Available at: <http://www.prrri.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/PRRI-RNS-Unaffiliated-Report.pdf>, released on September 22, 2016.
- Wuthnow, Robert. 2010. *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

...continued from page 5.

Joel Thiessen, jathiessen@ambrose.edu

Associate Professor of Sociology
Ambrose University (Calgary, Alberta)

Christel Manning's book, *Losing our Religion: How Unaffiliated Parents Are Raising Their Children* (2015), fills important methodological, theoretical, and empirical gaps in the literature. Methodologically, this study incorporates interview data and field experience in people's homes, neighborhoods, schools, and spiritual or secular community centers. The data is rich, offering context and meaning for understanding attitudes and behaviours among the unaffiliated.

Manning strikes a good balance between thoughtful summaries of the current literature, while winsomely demonstrating how her data affirms, extends, or challenges existing findings and analyses in the field. Manning's decision to draw on the concept of "worldview" to frame this book stands out in this regard. This inclusive and positive language captures the range of beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and assumptions among the unaffiliated, while avoiding the limitations of associating a secular orientation with the "absence of religion."

The jewel of the study arises in Manning's typology of worldviews among the unaffiliated: "unchurched believer," "seeker spirituality," "philosophical secularist," and "indifferent." This final category is an especially pertinent contribution to nuance our grasp on a segment of the unaffiliated population that has largely been ignored in the literature. Manning also distills five strategies that unaffiliated parents employ for transmitting their worldviews on to their children. These range from active exposure to religious rituals in institutionalized settings all the way to doing nothing in particular to foster religious or secular worldviews. Interestingly, Manning reveals that having children can change how a parent makes sense of their unaffiliated status. Over time it would be advantageous to document if or how these strategies and narratives change for parents, both over one's life course as well as the population in general.

Three questions and issues arise for me in this study. The first pertains to "choice." Manning states: "One of the central arguments of this book is that what makes Nones distinctive from churched Americans is their insistence upon *worldview*

choice" (p.138). Are the unaffiliated really that unique? Regardless of what religious groups officially teach, countless studies – including my own in Canada – recently show that those who are part of organized religious groups selectively adopt or reject aspects of their group's teachings. A related argument in the book is that children raised by unaffiliated parents are free to choose their worldview. Is this assertion necessarily true? Passing on the worldview of choice is in fact imposing a particular way of seeing the world, such that children develop an orientation to the world that opposes other perspectives that stifle choice? For example, in my research on the unaffiliated in Canada where many similarly point toward this choice narrative, interviewees expressed that they are happy for their children to have choice unless they adopt a conservative brand of religion (e.g. evangelicalism) and seek to push that religion back on to their parents.

Second, I am curious how the findings from this project intersect with Vern Bengston's book, *Families and Faith* (2013). In particular, Bengston claims that the unaffiliated tend to raise children who are also unaffiliated. However, Manning argues that, "Unaffiliated parents – unlike their churched counterparts who usually transmit the parents' own worldviews to their children – are not necessarily raising another generation of Nones. Rather, these parents frame their strategies as helping children make their own spiritual choices" (p.8). Similar to my reflections regarding choice, helping children to make choices reveals a specific worldview whereby parents raise children with a similar orientation toward the world. Furthermore, while Manning rightly reveals that many unaffiliated parents were themselves raised in a religious tradition, I wonder if this switching becomes less prevalent in the coming years and decades. Recent research suggests that the unaffiliated will increasingly beget unaffiliated children.

Finally, there are inferences in Manning's work that getting married and having children will bring some of the unaffiliated back into regular involvement in religious institutions. This claim is widely supported in the literature, yet I wish Manning explored whether people, if they do return to church, stick around for the long term? For instance, do parents return for a couple of years until they sense that their child has enough morality training before diminishing or

...continued from page 6.

abandoning their involvement altogether? This data and analysis does not help us to satisfactorily engage this critical question.

To conclude, Christel Manning has contributed greatly to our sociological understanding of how the unaffiliated approaching the subject of religion with their children. She effectively shows the intersection of how the unaffiliated negotiate identity; approach socialization with their children; strategize on how to handle family, friend, and cultural pressures to socialization; and ultimately live their day-to-day lives in light of the aforementioned. It is a solid book that scholars in the field ought to read.

Linda Woodhead, l.woodhead@lancaster.ac.uk
Professor, Dep. of Politics, Philosophy and Religion
Lancaster University (UK)

Like all fine research, Christel Manning's starts with a seriously good question: how do non-religious parents raise their children? It's intriguing because it presses an apparent paradox. The group in question is framed in essentially negative terms: the "non"-religious, the "un"-affiliated, the "nones". But how can individuals with such a negative relation to religion socialize the next generation into a set of positive values and behaviors? Do they fall back on a religious scaffolding, or simply collapse in a heap? *Losing our Religion* supplies more than we bargained for – interesting answers to these questions, plus a provocation to think more deeply about the conceptual and theoretical frameworks which generated the paradox in the first place.

Manning's research and her candid personal reflections don't disguise the dilemmas and difficulties non-religious parents face. Adults want to do the best for their children, but they can't just depend on traditional modes of socialization – churchgoing, Sunday school, Christian camps, family prayers; Shabbat meals and high holidays; Qur'an class every day after school and Friday prayers. Some non-religious parents experiment with giving their children access to such activities, but many find that they or the children are unhappy with the results. The decision to "outsource" formation proves to be fraught with difficulty.

One of Manning's most interesting conclusions is

that a sacred value of many "none" parents is the right of everyone, not least children, to choose their own worldview. This implies some strong non-religious beliefs: the agency of children; the freedom, dignity and equality of all individuals; the evils of coercion. The book gives interesting examples of how children raise powerful critical questions and suggestions about religion and the meaning of life, sometimes changing the minds of their parents in the process – it makes us realize how out-of-date concepts like "socialization" and "transmission" are in the way they render children passive recipients of formation.

So Manning's account leaves no doubt that nones have strong values and substantive worldviews which give "meaning and moral order to their lives", and which "they may wish to bequeath to their children" (p.105). She even goes so far as to describe these worldviews as "functionally equivalent to religion" (p. 137). This is a powerful stuff, and an important corrective to the deficit model of no religion generated by many approaches to the study of religion – so it's surprising when Manning sidesteps the implications of her own argument.

Her main argument – to my mind at least – is corrosive of the idea that only certain kinds of religion are "real" and everything else is a bit fuzzy or suspect. Secular people often cling to this view as firmly as religious ones. I came up against it very sharply when I published research over a decade ago showing that alternative spirituality was growing much faster than congregational forms of religion in the UK (Heelas and Woodhead 2005). I analyzed the objections to our findings in a paper called "Real Religion and Fuzzy Spirituality" (Woodhead 2010). The suspicion that spirituality is a low-grade pretender to the religious throne is deep rooted: it's there the critique of "Sheila" in *Habits of the Heart*, in Wuthnow's critical stock-take of spirituality (1998), and in Charles Taylor's preference for real religion over "expressive" spirituality (for a critique see Sointu and Woodhead 2008).

The normative assumption here is that "real religion" is characterized by a compact constellation of doctrines, ethics and rituals, and is expressed

...continued from page 7.

through exclusive membership of a hierarchical, male-dominated, religious organization. From this standpoint, if spirituality is insufficient, then no religion is of course even more deficient. Manning implicitly undermines such an approach, but is sucked back into its vortex by her decision to rely on a typology of no-religion parents which divides them into unchurched believer, seeker, secularist and indifferent. Unfortunately this leaves her sitting on a branch that her findings are about to saw off:

- The “unchurched” – they turn out to have networks and communities and other belongings of new kinds (including virtual social networks)
- The “seekers” – many don’t seem to have lost anything, or to be trying to find it
- The “secular” – in fact most nones in the USA and even the UK are not atheists
- The “indifferent” – but even if they are indifferent to old-style religion, they have new ways of making sense of life.

So even Manning’s approach to (no)religion can’t wholly shake off the confessional, institutional model of religion. But many of the resources we need in order to do so are already in place, just waiting to be revived. As well as the resources provided by scholars on many non-Western forms of religion, I think of Durkheim’s account of religion as practices relative to the sacred which unite into a moral community those who share them. This remains a highly sophisticated and adaptable approach, broad enough to take in the rise of spirituality, and the wider phenomenon of no religion in all its burgeoning variety – not as a total disavowal of religion, but as a dramatic shift in its form (something Durkheim also predicted, see also Luckmann’s *Invisible Religion* 1967).

Losing our Religion implicitly adopts such an approach, insofar as considers practices relative to what is sacred today, as expressed through decisions about how to raise and relate to children, and as it gives rise to new affiliations and identities. For ultimately what Manning’s work shows is that “no religion” is merely a placeholder until we can see not just the absence of religion, but the new modes in which it is rapidly taking shape in the USA and a

number of other countries.

References

- Durkheim, E. 2001: *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heelas, P. and Woodhead, L. 2005: *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Oxford UK and Malden USA: Blackwell.
- Luckmann, T. 1967: *The Invisible Religion*. London: Collier-Macmillan.
- Sointu, E. and Woodhead, L. 2008: Holistic Spirituality, Gender, and Expressive Selfhood. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47:2, 259-276
- Woodhead, L. Houtman, D. and Aupers, S. (eds) (2010a) Real Religion, Fuzzy Spirituality. *Religions of Modernity: relocating the sacred to the self and the digital*. Leiden: Brill.
- Wuthnow, R. 1998: *After Heaven. Spirituality in America Since the 1950s*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Christel Manning, manningc@sacredheart.edu
Professor, Dep. of Theology and Religious Studies
Sacred Heart University (Fairfield, CT)

Losing our Religion was written to start a conversation—about the Nones generally and unaffiliated parents in particular—and I thank the reviewers for taking the time to begin engaging it. It’s a challenging conversation because we are still working on building a common language, and we do so in context that remains restricted by old ways of thinking. We might refer to those ways, taking a cue from another field of contested discourse, as “religion-normativity.” The most obvious symptom of this is the term None, the way it reifies religion as normative and obscures the wide range of diverse worldviews held by the unaffiliated. As a non-religious person, I have always hated this term and its implication of lacking something, especially when that something is moral values and meaning so commonly associated with religion. So it may seem curious that I chose to use the word Nones throughout the book. I did so because it’s a concept that people recognize. Not just the polling companies that coined the term, or sociologists of religion, but the media and increasingly the general public know that Nones refers to people who have no reli-

...continued from page 8.

gious affiliation or preference (though I often need to spell the term, when speaking, to avoid confusion with the Catholic ladies in a habit). If you want to have a conversation, especially if it's a new conversation, it helps to use language that others will understand.

It is for similar reasons that I employ concepts like Unchurched Believer, Spiritual Seeker, and Secular, which were already widely applied in the literature when I began this research. My main contribution here, besides more carefully defining each type, was to add the Indifferent category. Of course these terms are imperfect—they are ideal types, after all—but they are useful because they allow us to appreciate the wide range of worldviews embraced within the so-called None population. Woodhead is right to point out that most Nones are not atheists. But some are, and it is important to differentiate these (whom I call Philosophical Secularists) from other types. If there is any label I've had second thoughts about, it is Seeker Spirituality, a type that is characterized less by searching for what is lost than by pluralism: they are Nones because they refuse to identify with only one religion. I define the term carefully in the book, following Robert Fuller, as a “pluralistic orientation that eclectically combines elements from various spiritual and religious traditions to meet the individual's personal needs” (p. 30). Woodhead's shorthand summary of it and the others I offer is, I think, inadequate, though I agree that all such definitions are necessarily works in progress. It will take time, and many more conversations, to move beyond religio-normative categories.

One step in that direction is to ask what Nones might have in common beyond just non-affiliation with organized religion. I have argued that they share a strong affirmation of I call the “narrative of choice” which asserts not only that we are each free to choose our own worldview but that we have a responsibility to do so. Thiessen raises some interesting questions here but they make me suspect he did not have time to finish the book. The narrative of choice is, of course, not unique to Nones. Quite the contrary, as I describe at length in chapter 6, the narrative of choice has become the quintessential American cultural narrative, rooted not only in what Robert Bellah called expressive individualism but also in consumer society's obsession

with maximizing our options. What is distinctive about Nones is that they take this narrative to its logical conclusion. Remember that the term None comes from survey research coding respondents who refuse to state a religious preference. I believe that this refusal, especially for many millennials, reflects a conviction that they are choosing to construct a personal worldview that does not fit neatly into any of the boxes on a survey. It is also about keeping their options open. This carries over to how Nones want to raise their children. The narrative of choice is a framework for how we think about our lives which may or may not reflect what is actually happening. There is a growing psychological literature raising questions about this narrative which I also engage in chapter 6. I conclude that unaffiliated parents like to *think* they are raising their children to be free to choose their own worldview, when in fact they often limit the options they are exposed to. What impact None parents' decisions will have on the next generation remains to be seen.

We need more research to expand this conversation. I second Edgell's suggestion to investigate similar questions in African American and immigrant communities and to engage in long term studies both of None parents and their children. And I share Cusack's hope that someday our research may help make religious literacy education be more inclusive. I would also call for asking new questions that move us beyond the religio-normative measures (Do you believe in god? What is your religious preference?) that are used in most surveys, and for using methodologies that allow us to actually listen to non-religious people and give them a voice.

New Publications Featuring Section Members

Articles and Book Chapters

Andrews, Kenneth, Kraig Beyerlein (Equal First Authors), and Tuneka Tucker Franum. 2016. "Legitimacy of Protest: Explaining White Southerners' Attitudes Toward the Civil Rights Movement." *Social Forces* 94 (3):1021-1044.

Beyerlein, Kraig, Sarah Soule, and Nancy Martin. 2015. "Prayers, Protest, and Police: How Religion Influences Police Presence at Collective Action Events in the United States, 1960-1995." *American Sociological Review* 80(6):1250-1271.

Christiano, Kevin. 2016. "European Principles and Canadian Practices: Developing Secular Contexts for Religious Diversity." Chapter 3 in Francisco Colom Gonzalez and Gianni D'Amato (eds.), *Multireligious Society: Dealing with Religious Diversity in Theory and Practice*. Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing.

Collet, Jessica, Kelcie Vercel, and Olevia Boykin. 2015. "Using Identity Processes to Understand Persistent Inequality in Parenting." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 78(4):345-64.

Eagle, David E., Andrew Miles and Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell. 2016. "The Honeymoon is Over: Occupational Relocation and Changes in Mental Health Among United Methodist Clergy." *Review of Religious Research*. [Online](#).

Edgell, Penny, Douglas Hartmann, Evan Stewart, Joseph Gersteis. 2016. "Atheists and Other Cultural Outsiders: Moral Boundaries and the Non-Religious in the United States." *Social Forces*. [Online](#).

Ecklund, Elaine Howard, David R. Johnson, Christopher P. Scheitle, Kirstin R. W. Matthews, and Steven W. Lewis. 2016. "Religion among Scientists in International Context: Methods and Initial Results from a New Cross-National Survey of Scientists." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 2:1-9.

Vaidyanathan, Brandon, Simranjit Khalsa, and Elaine Howard Ecklund. 2016. "Gossip as Social Control: Policing Informal Ethical Violations in Scientific Workplaces in the US, UK, and India." *Social Problems*.

Scheitle, Christopher P., and Elaine Howard Ecklund. 2016. "Recommending a Child Enter a STEM Career: The Role of Religion." *Journal of Career Development*.

Kurien, Prema A. 2016. "Race, Religion, and the Political Incorporation of Indian Americans." *Journal of Religious and Political Practice*. Vol 2 (3), 273-295.

Kurien, Prema A. 2017. "Majority versus Minority Religious Status and Diasporic Nationalism: Indian American Advocacy Organizations." *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol 23 (1).

Rhys H. Williams, Courtney Ann Irby, and R. Stephen Warner. 2016. "Church' in Black and White: The Organizational Lives of Young Adults." *Religions* 7, 90. [Online](#)

Reed, Jean-Pierre, Rhys H. Williams, Kathryn B. Ward. 2016. "Civil Religious Contention in Cairo, Illinois: Priestly and Prophetic Ideologies in a 'Northern' Civil Rights Struggle." *Theory & Society*. 45: 25-55.

Montgomery, Robert L. 2016. "Special Persons and the Spread of Religions." *Pastoral Psychology* 65(3): 369-393.

Marshall, Douglas A. 2016. "The Moral Origins of God: Darwin, Durkheim, and the Homo Duplex Theory of Theogenesis". *Frontiers in Sociology* 1(13). [Online](#).

Sherkat, Darren E. 2016. "Politics, Religion, and Confidence in Science." *Politics and Religion*. [Online](#).

Sherkat, Darren E. 2016. "Intersecting Identities and Support for Same-Sex Marriage in the United States." *Social Currents*. [Online](#).

Smith, Christian. 2014. Symposium on *What is a Person?* in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 5(1).

Smith, Christian. 2016. "The Conceptual Incoherence of 'Culture.'" *The American Sociologist* 47(1):1-28.

Smith, Christian. 2016. "Persons and Human Nature." Part of Chapter 4 In Augustin Fuentes and Aku Visala (eds.), *Conversations on Human Nature*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

In case you missed it when it was first published, a group of sociologists of religion recently published an article in the *Journal for the American Academy of Religion*. Smith, Christian, et al. 2013. "Roundtable on the Sociology of Religion: Twenty-Three Theses on the Status of Religion in American Sociology." *JAAR*. 81(4): 903-938.

Springs, Jason. 2016. "Tentacles of the Leviathan? Nationalism, Islamophobia, and the Insufficiency-yet-Indispensability of Human Rights for Religious Freedom in Contemporary Europe," *Journal for the American Academy of Religion*.

Uecker, Jeremy E., Damon Mayrl, and Samuel Stroope. 2016. "Family Formation and Returning to Religion among Young Adults." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 55(2): 384-406.

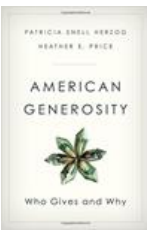
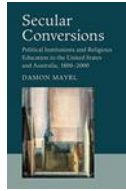
Books

Cipriani, Roberto and Franco Grelli. 2016. *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion: Volume 7: Sociology of Atheism*. Brill. [Link](#).



Konieczny, Mary Ellen, Charles Camosy, and Tricia Bruce (eds.). 2016. *Polarization in the U.S. Catholic Church*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.

Mayrl, Damon. 2016. *Secular Conversions: Political Institutions and Religious Education in the United States and Australia, 1800-2000*. New York: Cambridge University Press.



Patricia Snell Herzog and Heather Price. 2016. *American Generosity: Who Gives and Why*. Oxford University Press.

See the write-up in *The Atlantic*: Green, Emma. 2016. "What America Lost as Women Entered the Workforce," *The Atlantic*, September 19.

Grants and Calls for Participation

The Center for the Study is pleased to announce the Global Religion Research Initiative (GRR), a portfolio of six distinct competitive research and writing grants and fellowship programs to be awarded over the next three years that intend to significantly advance the social scientific study of religions around the globe. The premise of the GRR is that, as religion persists in significance in the contemporary, globalizing world, the social sciences in North America need much better to understand the diversity of religions and to integrate that enhanced understanding into research, theory, and teaching. The GRR offers a variety of competitive funding opportunities for scholars at all stages of their careers designed to realize those scholarly ends, including faculty and graduate student writing fellowships, postdoctoral fellowships, research seed money, and curriculum development grants. We welcome proposals not only from scholars who already study religion, but also those for whom the study of religion is a new but genuine interest. For more information, visit our website at grri.nd.edu.



ASA Rose Series in Sociology, a book series published by the Russell Sage Foundation, is seeking book proposals. The Rose Series publishes cutting-edge, highly visible, and accessible books that offer synthetic analyses of existing fields, challenge prevailing paradigms, and/or offer fresh views on enduring controversies. Books published in the Series reach a broad audience of sociologists, other social scientists, and policymakers. Please submit a 1-page summary and CV to: Lee Clarke, rose.series@sociology.rutgers.edu.

Can we hope for a better society? That is the animating question behind an ambitious project, the International Panel on Social Progress ([IPSP](#)). Inspired by Amartya Sen, the project is modelled on the Intercontinental Panel on Climate Change and is guided by a Scientific Council and a Steering Committee. It exists to "harness the competence of hundreds of experts about social issues" and to "deliver a report addressed to all social actors, movements, organizations, politicians and decision-makers, in order to provide them with the best expertise on questions that bear on social change." Also modelled on the IPCC, drafts of the chapter reports are now available for public [comment](#). Section member Nancy Ammerman, along with Grace Davie, is Coordinating Lead Author of the chapter on "Religions and Social Progress: Critical Assessments and Creative Partnerships." Among the international team of Lead Authors are Section members David Smilde and Fenggang Yang. They invite you to read the draft chapter and offer your comments. As a project that attempts to "harness the competence of hundreds of experts," you're part of the team!

To Graduate Students interested in studying campus ministry: A national study of Catholic Campus Ministry has been sponsored by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. Brian Starks is the PI for the study. The full research team has begun designing survey instruments with plans to conduct two national surveys in Spring 2017. There is an opportunity for one select graduate student to gain a seat at the table in the construction of these surveys (and their implementation)! Graduate student access to data and ability to use for dissertation research, etc. is the major benefit. Please contact Brian Starks at bstarks3@kennesaw.edu if interested.

Dissertation in the Pipeline



Shanna Corner is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame, where she is affiliated with the Center for the Study of Religion and Society (CSRS).

Her dissertation examines the discourse of central UN officials and country representatives, who engage in the periodic review of country compliance with the UN's primary convention on women's right and work in related roles. It seeks to

uncover and examine the impacts of cultural models about religion and its “proper” role in public life that are employed by these UN officials. More specifically, this project works to determine the relative particularism present in these cultural models about religion and to examine how their employment by these UN officials enables and constrains UN efforts to promote the cultural legitimacy of specific women’s rights standards in uniform ways across divergent countries. To do this, she analyzes and triangulates three types of data: several hundred reports and related documents produced as part of UN sessions, field notes based on observation of UN sessions, and semi-structured interviews with relevant UN officials and country representatives.

Member News and Notes

David King and Brad Fulton, both from Indiana University, were awarded a \$104,000 planning grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to design a national study of congregations and religious giving. With this funding, King and Fulton will work through the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving at the IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy to identify the best methods to collect data about giving to congregations. The study will seek to establish a new baseline for religious giving and will aim to increase the reliability of reporting trends in religious giving. Data from their study will provide a much needed update to the 30-year-old baseline currently used by Giving USA.

From Brian Grim: There’s a growing belief that religion doesn’t contribute to American society, but the numbers don’t support it. Religion in the United States today contributes a combined \$1.2 trillion to our economy and society. These expenditures range from the basic economic drivers of any business – staff, overhead, utilities – to billions spent on philanthropic programs, educational institutions and healthcare services. Congregations, faith-based businesses, institutions and faith-based charities strengthen our economy, build communities and families and lift people up in times of need in a way that no other institution or government does. Check out <http://faithcounts.com/Report/> for all the details.

The National Study of Youth and Religion is a longitudinal study of the religious beliefs and behaviors of adolescents and young adults. Survey data from the fourth and final wave of the project (as well as data from the first three waves) are now available from ARDA (<http://www.thearda.com/Archive/NSYR.asp>). Requests for access to interview data

from any wave can be sent to sskiles@nd.edu. More information about NSYR can be found at youthandreligion.nd.edu.

The Cardus Religious Schools Initiative at the University of Notre Dame is pleased to announce the completion of the fourth fielding of the Cardus Education Survey, intended to investigate how spiritual formation, cultural engagement, and academic development vary for graduates of public, private, and religious schools. Access the report from www.cardus.ca, and learn more about the Cardus Religious Schools Initiative at www.crsi.nd.edu.

Recently retired UNR professor Jim Richardson just returned from a ten day stint at People’s Public Security University in Beijing where he gave six lectures on various topics related to how religion and religious groups are managed in western countries. He said of his recent trip, “I was very impressed with how open faculty and students at the University were to hearing about how western countries deal with religious minorities. The presentations by me and my two colleagues were well-received and there were many questions afterwards, including from lead police officers from various provinces in China.”

In his presidential address to the American Academy of Religion, published in the latest issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Thomas Tweed emphasized the importance of discussing the role of **values** in the study of religion in order to improve “difficult dialogues” within and beyond AAR’s “Big Tent.” A new global survey has been designed to gather information about the values of scholars who study religion from different disciplines. In order for the project to succeed, we need a wide diversity of scholars to participate. Click here to take the survey: www.visorproject.org.