

BOOK REVIEWS

A Faith of Their Own: Stability and Change in the Religiosity of America's Adolescents, by LISA D. PEARCE AND MELINDA LUNDQUIST DENTON. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 231 pp.; \$24.95.

Clear, thorough, and parsimonious: three distinguishing characteristics of Pearce and Denton's report on the second wave of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). Insightful not only for its description of five adolescent religious types and their "religious refinement" from 2002 to 2005, but also for the report's evidence of maturing scholarship on youth and religion. Gone is "moralistic therapeutic Deism," religious "inarticulateness," and the alarmist tone of the first-wave NSYR report (i.e., Smith and Denton's *Soul Searching*). In their place, one finds a streamlined exposition of the second-wave survey findings, along with a nuanced ability to hear what adolescents say about the content of their religious beliefs, their conduct as religious persons, and the centrality of religion to their lives. It is, in short, a strikingly different book from the NSYR than those authored by its principal investigator, Christian Smith, and it deserves a place alongside every copy of *Soul Searching* and *Souls in Transition*.

Using latent class analysis, whose details they graciously relegate to an appendix, Pearce and Denton create a typology of five adolescent religious types. Two are clearly identifiable and internally coherent: atheists and religious "abiders." The former comprise 3–5 percent of U.S. teens, the latter 20–22 percent, and the authors take pains to show both types are progressing well in a number of important life outcomes. Falling in-between are "avoiders," "assenters," and "adapters". The avoiders, 17–24 percent of American

teens, resist identification as atheists or religious. The assenters and adapters, 20–28 and 30–31 percent, respectively, occupy the margins of American religion—with the former extrinsically oriented to religious affiliation and the latter intrinsically oriented to faith but structurally hindered from ongoing affiliation. The analysis of all three in-between types will be of keen interest to readers, who will gain much insight into the internal and external factors that influence adolescent connections to faith communities.

The book's introduction takes the reader along with Pearce and Denton as they re-interview two teens and reflect on how they have and have not changed over three years. The first chapter places adolescent religiosity into life course and lived religion frameworks, which are the right ways to situate the analyses that follow. The second chapter introduces Pearce and Denton's typology and illustrates each with a representative teen's story. While the whole book could be used in an American religion course, Chapter 2 in particular deserves inclusion. The third chapter relays the social origins and life outcomes of the five types, while the fourth chapter discusses the modest changes in teen religiosity from the first to second wave. The fifth chapter explains the discrepancy between lower rates of religious participation with teen reports of equal or greater religiosity. The first and fifth chapters are most significant for scholarly readers, as they respect the complexity of teen religiosity and use that respect to offer insightful resolutions to several empirical puzzles. The sixth chapter uses a metaphor of scaffolding to describe how parents, religious organizations, and friends variously support the religious refinement processes of teens. Chapter 6, along with the conclusion, will be of particular interest to

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religious leaders. Closing out the book are two appendices—one about the NSYR and one about latent class analysis, comprehensive end notes, a helpful bibliography, and an index.

I have but one concern about the book, which is the same concern I have with Smith and Snell's *Souls in Transition*: given the extraordinary, longitudinal, individual-level data collected by the NSYR—too little attention has been devoted to devising a typology for adolescent religious *change*. I appreciate Pearce and Denton's point that little change, in fact, occurs. Still, I would like to see longitudinal typologies, rather than intriguing cross-sectional typologies that morph with each wave's NSYR report (e.g., "Devoted" to "Abiders" to "Committed Traditionalists" to "?"). There is a fourth wave of NSYR data undergoing analysis as I write. I hope Pearce, Denton, and the rest of the NSYR team will devote as much attention to characterizing change over time in it as they do to characterizing respondents at each wave. To that end, Pearce and Denton's five-category schema seems particularly promising, as it is based on state of the art statistical techniques, and was devised using data from all respondents.

All in all, *A Faith of Their Own* is a terrific and succinct introduction to the NSYR. Its analysis is clear, its exposition is clean, and its interpretative typology merits wide adoption.

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Hollywood Faith: Holiness, Prosperity, and Ambition in a Los Angeles Church, by GERARDO MARTI. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008, 234 pp.; \$25.95 USD (paper).

Gerardo Marti's *Hollywood Faith* examines how a Pentecostal church brings

together two worlds that are often seen at odds with one another: conservative Christianity and the Hollywood entertainment industry. In a very readable style, Marti substantiates his narrative through a year's worth of ethnographic fieldwork and 50 in-depth interviews, employing a Durkheimian lens of analysis to his findings.

Located just blocks from the Walk of Fame, Oasis Christian Center is not only tolerant of its Hollywood neighbors, but the church designs its ministries specifically for those seeking or employed in entertainment careers. Oasis offers its over 2000 members, mostly young adults, the encouragement to work toward their aspirations and comfort from the failures and heartache of an unforgiving and difficult industry.

This curious interplay between the world of conservative Christian morality and that of the fame- and fortune-seeking of Hollywood is, arguably, the greatest contribution of the book. Marti offers a thorough history of Christian organizations, chronicling their assessments and uses of Hollywood, theater, and media to illustrate the mercurial nature of this relationship. Today, the majority of conservative Christians view Hollywood a seedy place with little positive to say about it from a moral perspective.

But Marti shows this need not always be the case. Culturally equipped with neo-Pentecostalism and a less crass version of the prosperity gospel, Oasis enables its members to enter the world, yet not be of the world, and reframes ambition as something that can be used to glorify God and convert a broken world. Members learn that they can be "a light in a dark place" (174) and, while reticent of much in Hollywood, they stop well short of demonizing the entire industry. This illustrates a recurring theme in Marti's work: clearly reminiscent of Durkheim, Oasis offers a morality that is practical and is less about instilling knowledge and more concerned with affecting behavior and practice (122). For those with interests in how religious groups today are negotiating their