BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by: Samuel Robert Yates, University of Chester, Cheshire, UK
          1303364@chester.ac.uk

This study uses discursive analysis to interpret the ways that residents of Edinburgh's Southside identify with religion. Christopher Cotter aims to understand how individuals employ acts of identification. As a prior resident of the Southside, Cotter is acutely aware of the diverse nature of the locality. Southside is a mix of ethnicities, permanent and transient residents, those who identify as religious and those who do not. This specific local context offers a fertile ground for exploring the identifiers of religious and non-religious. Cotter's research concludes that individuals create and deploy aspects of their identity contextually. Their identity includes religious and non-religious identifications that are created in harmony with other identifiers such as gender and sexuality.

The volume begins by exploring three participant biographies. The reader is immediately aware of the different ways in which religion permeates the lives of individuals living in Edinburgh's Southside. Cotter employs a social constructivist approach to investigate the intersection between physical spaces and how social actors employ aspects of their identity. He adopts a relational approach which assumes that typologies of non-religion do not cover the "full range of extant phenomena" (see Cotter, "A Discursive Approach to 'Religious Indifference': Critical Reflections from Edinburgh's Southside", 2017, p. 44). By employing this approach, he aims to "move away from types of non-religion to types of narrative" (p. 9). Cotter uses semi-structured interviews to investigate how participants reconcile their religious or irreligious identities within an ostensibly secular community.

Drawing upon his previous research, Cotter advocates an approach whereby researchers are able to "move away from the study of identities to the study of identification" (p. 10). To achieve this focus, Cotter uses previously existing data from the Peoples of Edinburgh Project (City of Edinburgh Council, *Peoples of Edinburgh: Methodology and Evaluation*, 1996). He has added to this data by interviewing 23 participants which included a photo elicitation task. Participants were shown and asked to discuss photographs of the Southside community centre, a halal meat market and a "Trypraying" campaign found on a local bus. The purpose of these photos was to prompt discussion regarding multiculturalism and secularization discourses.

Cotter's participants represent a spectrum of views, religious, non-religious and views which without a relational approach would have been neglected. Analysis shows how

participants demonstrate a variety of discourses "on engagement and identification" (p. 105). Participants range in age and so responses are contextualized within their own and the Southside's experience of discursive shifts. Cotter adopts a three-level discourse analysis proposed by Stephanie Garling (see "Approaching Religion through Linguistics: Methodological Thoughts on a Linguistic Analysis of 'Religion' in Political Communication", 2013) based on thematic, grammatical and argumentative themes.

Cotter provides an overview of how concepts such as secularization, multi-culturalism and modernization interweave. The Southside has a diverse locality with a multi-faith and non-faith community with lifetime residents and a fluid student population. Edinburgh's Southside is characterized by several dichotomies: "urban/green, transience/permanence, historic/contemporary, privilege/poverty, religious/non-religious" (p. 101). The converted Southside Community Centre is indicative of the Southside's contemporary nature. Previously a church, the community centre is a meeting place serving the interests of a multi-faceted citizenry. Within the author's interviews, participants discuss how these contemporary spaces still demonstrate a residue of Protestant Christianity: the landscape is peppered with "stony fingers, Christian steeples" (p. 154). The changing purpose of religious spaces is indicative of how discourses such as secularization influence the individual and the locality.

Cotter draws upon research from Jean-François Bayart, Russell McCutcheon, and Lois Lee. Cotter's research adds to previous literature by arguing that individuals construct a "panoply of identities" and these identities are "operational acts of identification" (Bayart, *The Illusion of Cultural Identity*, 2005) intended to shape interactions with others within a specific locality: Edinburgh's Southside. Within the context of Edinburgh's Southside, Cotter's participants are in a state of flux—employing, claiming and counterclaiming their various identities.

A strength of the research lies in Cotter's research location. As a prior resident of Edinburgh's Southside, he has privileged knowledge of the various organizations which shape the individual narratives. Cotter argues that Edinburgh's Southside is an appropriate locality for the study of non-religion due to it being a "demographically diverse locality" (p. 80). Individuals engage with a "collection of explicitly religious or non-religious institutions" (ibid.). Cotter navigates his way through the various sampling sites, the Southside Community Centre, the Southside Elderly Group and the South Central Neighbourhood Partnership. In doing so, he is able to identify the nuances of identification and how these are implemented as a result of the context. Building on this methodological strength, Cotter utilizes prior research conducted by the Peoples of Edinburgh project. This project endeavoured "to promote understanding between the peoples of Edinburgh and celebrate the richness of multi-cultural society" (City of Edinburgh Council 1996: 3). By combining this with Cotter's own primary research the volume demonstrates how individuals are "contained and constrained by the discursive repertoires at their disposal" (p. 159). Acts of identification are bound within a historical, cultural and religious framework which is shifting constantly.

The research makes a key interjection to the existing literature by utilizing discursive analysis, with a particular focus on locality. Cotter builds on the work of Martin Stringer and Timothy Jenkins by identifying the relationship between religion, locality, nationality and modernization. Cotter situates discourses on religion, locality, nationality and modernization within a metaphor of containment. Individuals must navigate these discourses whilst living within containers such as "culture, education, gender and sexuality". This demonstrates the ways in "which social actors move, where their movements are constrained, which strongly influences social interaction and which cannot be abandoned lightly" (p. 157). Other containers include social identities, science, meaning and power which are negotiated in relation

to religion and non-religion. Cotter's research demonstrates the ways in which individuals employ "contextually relevant entangled discourses" (p. 205). Residents of Edinburgh's Southside employ their identity discourses within a post-Christian environment. Within that environment there is a "temporal particularity" (p. 202) characterized by multi-culturalism, power and capitalism. Locality is integral to individual identities and contributes to creation of a religious-related field (p. 202).