# Book Review

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This edited collection makes a welcome addition to the growing body of research (e.g: Knott 2010; Lynch 2012) which interrogates the spaces (if any) between the sacred and secular and what we may mean by those terms in the contemporary world. As Collins observes in his contribution to this volume, it is increasingly accepted that "belief" and "unbelief," "religion" and "non-religion," and "sacred" and "secular" are not mutually exclusive terms. People are capable of both believing and not believing and are capable, moreover, of adopting apparently contradictory positions—a phenomenon probably observed by a good many social scientists working in non/religion(s), it could be argued.

Given this journal's emphasis on fieldwork, we should note the variety of sites interrogated. In "the public space" (first section), Carrette and Trigeaud set out to demonstrate that the modern imaginary, which divides the publicly political from the privately religious, is "an organizational myth" (p. 10) as they investigate the role of NGOs with consultative status at the UN. The second contributor, Cameron, by contrast, penetrates the online world of the "modest" fashion blogger, many of whom are religiously inspired. What constitutes modesty, however, is contested, both by those within religion and those outside it. Peter Collins's work considers the perplexing issue of how the material culture of hospital chaplaincy spaces can accommodate the religious, the spiritual and the non-religious patient, visitor or staff member, when sacred space undergoes "a continual process of construction and deconstruction in the modern acute hospital" (p. 42).

In "the social, identity-dominated space" of the second section, Day considers a range of possible interpretations of present-day "Christian" identity, drawing on research in the UK and US and distinguishing between the two distinct orientations of "anthropocentric" and "theocentric" (pp. 73-74); Gellner and Hausner investigate the tensions between singular and multiple religious belongings among Nepalis in Britain, while Munt discovers that Queer Quakers are keen to challenge preconceived notions of secularity and the sacred both at the local level and through the publicly politico-religious discourse, around gay marriage, for example.

Arweck analyses the accommodation of difference and diversity by young people in an explicitly Christian school, a mainly white British academy school with a strong Christian ethos and a multi-ethnic comprehensive community school. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, difference and diversity are seen more positively by those who experience it every day, but a certain

degree of tolerance was observed within some members of this generation of school students, in general: these were points that Catto and Eccles (2013) observed in interviews with students who had been to a similar range of schools. Finally, in this section, Beaman and Beyer consider research among the "spiritual but not religious," an identity that defies the "polar opposites" of religion/non-religion as framed in census data and public policy documents.

All the above studies no doubt contained their methodological challenges; indeed Munt's open and honest admission that even some experienced researchers, such as she, can sometimes get it wrong is a comfort to those of us who, with hindsight, might have from time to time done things differently. But it is the volume's third section which addresses this area directly. Knott confronts the secular/sacred binary head on, maintaining that while the religious and secular might be at different ends of the spectrum, the sacred can be studied within secular as well as religious contexts and in secularist as well as religious discourse, through an understanding of the sacred as what we might consider non-negotiable. Stringer recognizes the need for a method of recording and analysing three different kinds of understandings of what "religion" means to the individual: distinguishing between ticking a box on a survey, a personal faith and the (more general) context of religious diversity within society. Cheruvallil-Contractor *et al.* attempt to disaggregate the "no religion" category in two recent mixed methods projects, signalling the dangers inherent in simply conceptualizing "non-religion" over against "religion." These are not "two hermetically sealed boxes" (p. 188). Finally, Sjöborg considers two Swedish quantitative surveys among youth and young adults, inviting respondents to give more nuanced, graduated answers to questions of religious affiliation, self-definition and behaviours, and finds, thereby, that there is a multitude of ways today's young people relate socially to religion.

All in all, this volume offers a range of exemplars, as well as suggesting methods, for investigating the intersections, interactions, ambiguities and fluidities of contemporary religion/spirituality/non-religion/indifference. There are surely many more exemplars to come but these chapters certainly contribute to our current understanding of the complex interactions between all four in the contemporary world.

## References

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