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Telling About Society – By Howard S. Becker

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Book reviews

Becker, Howard S. **Telling About Society** University of Chicago Press 2007 304 pp. $37.50 (hardback) $15.00 (paperback)

Howard S. Becker's prior two books in his current series, *Writing for Social Scientists* and *Tricks of the Trade*, are sociologically informed, practical aids to research and writing. *Telling About Society*, although presented by its publisher as a 'Guide to Writing, Editing and Publishing', is more like Becker's earlier substantive work, where he undermines presumptive authority and opens up a new line of social research by describing the process of producing social facts widely treated as compelling. Readers are likely to leave in search of a guide who could show them how to navigate in the brave new world of sociological work that Becker sees beyond conventional horizons.

Becker incorporates experiences from decades of free-spirited investigation, analysing the social production of diverse ways of representing society, including photojournalism, sociological dramatization, maps as used in practical life and in social research texts, charts and tables as used in ethnographies like Davis' *Deep South*, Goffman's writing style, films, 'legitimate' theatre productions and 'site-specific theatre', reader-friendly fiction by Jane Austin and reader-challenging prose experiments by Georges Perec and Italo Calvino. He establishes that empirical claims about social life are essential to the logic of each genre, and then he usually asks the same questions. Through what series of social relations does the product evolve as it works toward an audience? At each stage of production, how is the product shaped by anticipations of how necessary actors, most especially audiences, will act at subsequent stages? Is there any reason that sociologists do not make use of these perfectly sensible ways of telling about society, other than because they are conventionally impractical?

These explorations raise powerful questions that Becker has always left unanswered, but that in his earlier substantive work on deviance and charisma (charisma in the form of revered art) were less problematic when left at rest. If deviance is not a quality of the person but a label conferred based on various social contingencies having nothing to do with the label's target, then we need to study the organization of those contingencies, their histories and the culture that hides them from revelation, and we should be suspicious of what authorities do with the people they have defined as deviant. No matter that Becker would not show where, if anywhere, condemnation and punishment should be directed. There is plenty to do about the social construction of deviance as researchers and as political actors. Conversely, if art is not a self-manifesting sign of genius but the product of a multitude of frequently arbitrary social contingencies that distinguish 'art' from 'craft', and that get only

a fraction of aesthetic products any notice at all, then we have before us a vast unexplored field for the sociology of art, a basis for atheism about the public's devotional attitude toward artists, and an encouragement to confer at least a little of the honour we bestow on artists to the mass of contributing humanity that never gets singled out. No matter that Becker gives us no basis for distinguishing good from bad products.

But now he is talking about ways of representing social reality, about what we do, about us! Granted that photography and fiction are no less valid as ways to represent society than is sociology; but if this book is approached as a guidebook, many sociologists will find it an arrow into the wilderness. Perhaps it will be most usefully read as an encouragement by people who are not already committed to working sociologically. For most sociological readers the overall thrust will be radically unsettling.

At times the chapters are practically focused on helping sociologists do what they do, for example his transparent, detailed descriptions of Tukey's 'box-and-whisker plots' and Ragin's Boolean truth tables. These, we come to understand, are intellectual tools that help us see patterns that otherwise we may miss. They are critical for finding and exploring social patterns; they are not just rhetorically better ways to get the message to the reader. Actually, because they are unconventional, they are not currently rhetorically better, at least not as an empirical prediction of how readers will react. But they empower us analytically, whether or not we use them in our final texts. In the same spirit I recommend to my ethnography students that they use Excel tables to arrange events historically important to the site or activity; the resulting timeline is a multiply useful tool for thinking and writing, even when the final text will only include words.

Running throughout the book there is an unstated series of assumptions about tensions between social ontology and sociological methodology. The reader who has learned about society from films, from novels, from sculpture, even from music cannot help but agree that, even if sociology is, as some have claimed, the 'queen of the social sciences', sociology, however regally brought off, has limits for learning and telling about society. But just what it is about is about social reality that only photographs, for example, can capture, is not a question Becker will take up. This is not only an intellectually intriguing question, it is one a sociologist must at least implicitly answer when choosing among candidate photographs for inclusion in a text.

Readers who want to defy convention and incorporate some of these to-date non-sociological ways of telling about society are likely to struggle with such practical methodological questions. When is a photograph true, when a deceptive device? When is a play the best way to get across realities of class relations, when a cheap sentiment? When is an imagined city a widespread experience that in its nature escapes easy documentation; and when is the imagined city the self-indulgent fantasy of a world famous author who can rely on his persona to brush aside readers' questions about where in his extensive world travels his imagination is grounded? Without answers to these questions we can still be stimulated by plays, by photographs, or by *Telling About Society*. It is an impressive contribution to set up this ambitious sociology of knowledge, even if, to locate a logic for implementing methods, subsequent inquirers must carry on the search. But if we want to make practical use of the many insights in this comparative deconstruction of ways of representing society, we will need guidance on matters of discrimination. That truth is as powerful today as when a career oriented sociologist recognized it fifty years ago, in the still indispensable 'Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant Observation' (*American Sociological Review* 23:6, 1958).

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Hadfield,, P. **Bar Wars: Contesting the Night in Contemporary Cities** Oxford University Press 2006 326 pp. £50 (hardback) £21.99 (paperback)

Alongside various colleagues (e.g. Hobbs, Winlow and Lister) Phil Hadfield is a prolific and highly engaging writer on Britain's night-time economy (henceforth NTE). Hadfield locates the NTE within a broader consumer capitalist post-industrial order which, for better or worse, has seen British town and city centres become primary sites of the 'business of pleasure'. Deregulation of licensed trading has enabled alcohol-dominated leisure to gain a strong foothold in our urban centres, a process which included the UK government suppression of the burgeoning (predominately 'dry') rave scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the alcohol industry's recommodification of its product to appeal to those young people embedded within a new 'culture of intoxication' (Measham and Brain 2005).

Hadfield clearly documents how evidence-based policy has been one of the principal casualties in these 'bar wars'. This is because political and corporate interests have been prioritized over broader social concerns about minimizing harm to individuals and local (residential) communities. In chapter three for example, Hadfield explores how evidence-based policy has been profoundly undermined by appeasement to the demands of business lobbies. Disquiet surrounding the dominance of alcohol-based leisure amongst public health and public order workers has been obscured by local and central governments' rush to attract private investment into municipalities. In this competitive environment, towns and cities are pitched against one another, seeking to entice youthful consumers to splurge their disposable incomes during hedonistic booze-fuelled weekends. As the police, emergency services, and local residents struggle to cope with the crimogenic effects of the routine business practices of alcohol leisure conglomerates, harm is recast as individual responsibility, whilst 'errant consumers' become subject to reactionary processes of containment and criminalization.

In charting the growth of alcohol-dominated leisure, Hadfield explores how, by assigning large tracts of urban space to youthful alcohol consumers, 'non-consumer' groups become excluded, whilst other groups such as older citizens and ethnic minorities choose not to participate, thus undermining the 'safety through animation' approach to night-time town and city streets (p. 123). Inside drinking circuit venues, a precarious balance is struck between the commercial demands of maximizing profit from alcohol consumption to minimizing drunken violence and disorder amongst inebriated customers. Alongside the strong arm of the bouncer, DJs, bar managers and bar staff carefully (and rather bravely) manage these mono-functional, culturally-purified urban leisure spaces: through music (nothing too loud, hard or fast), lighting and visuals, food (un)availability, communication and surveillance technologies, and staff interaction with customers. Hadfield paints a rich ethnographic picture of the micro-level implications of broader changes to British urban NTE playspaces by contrasting these regularized, formal modes of control in high street venues, with more informal modes in 'traditional regulars' venues'.

My only criticism of Hadfield's work is his rather dismissive account of rave and electronic dance music (EDM) club culture. Although I agree with Hadfield's point that draconian 'official' responses to raving effectively suppressed the scene in its emergent form, there remains a sizeable minority of youthful revellers who largely eschew determined drunkedness in branded corporate chains (Measham 2006). These EDM clubbers prefer instead the 'stay-up-and-dance' qualities of ecstasy-intoxication within alternative, music-focused spaces (including free parties), characterized by relatively low levels of consumer violence and aggression (p. 103; Hobbs et al. 2003), and high levels of illicit poly-drugging. As Hadfield notes, these alternative club spaces are being squeezed out of urban centres by

alcohol-dominated leisure venues. However, had Hadfield incorporated an analysis of the informal social controls and divergent gendered experiences of risk and pleasure which typify EDM clubs, his discussion in chapter four of social control processes within city centre corporate leisure venues would have been rather more nuanced.

That said, the broad scope of Hadfield's study means that *Bar Wars* will appeal to a range of scholarly communities including EDM club and drug researchers, as well as sociologists of consumption, urban geographers, and those working within socio-legal traditions. A deserving winner of the Hart Early Career Book Prize 2007, *Bar Wars* is a highly recommended *tour-de-force*, moving as it does from a historical analysis of the night-time high-street, including political and regulatory shifts and changes to commercial practice (chapters two and three), to the aforementioned micro-analysis of social control processes within licensed premises (chapter four), and the exclusionary impact of corporate dominance and newly privatized 'public' spaces in the British NTE (chapter five). Drawing on situational interactionist perspectives, chapters six, seven and eight offer finely-detailed analyses of the various 'combatants' involved in contesting the NTE, and the differential resources deployed through social interactions within adversarial licensing trials. Here the material and discursive power of alcohol leisure corporations profoundly disadvantages objectors, most notably local residents, but also the police and local licensing authorities. This results in what Hadfield calls a 'democratic deficit at the heart of the contestation of the night' (p. 269).

Hadfield systematically unpicks the minutiae of the historical, social, cultural, economic and legal forces which have shaped our contemporary urban spaces at night, and opens up intellectual space for further critical engagement with the consequences of, and possible alternatives to, the commercialization of British high streets. Given the UK government's seeming reluctance to systematically assess the national and localized impacts of the Licensing Act 2005, evidenced by the relative lack of central government funding for research in this area, it falls to committed and concerned researchers of the NTE to pursue lines of inquiry ignored by the state-industry nexus. As public health and public order concerns around British alcohol consumption continue, carefully researched, theoretically innovative, considered accounts of Britain's NTE such as *Bar Wars* are much needed by those seeking to understand how we find ourselves in this drink-sodden, vomit-splattered mess, and how we may, if not get out of it, at least minimize its harmful effects.

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Kymlicka, W. **Multicultural Odysseys: Negotiating the New International Politics of Diversity** Oxford University Press 2007 374 pp. £18.99 (hardback)

The question of multiculturalism has been a hot topic among political theorists for the past decade or so. We have seen a massive expansion of both new research and theoretical reflection on various aspects of multiculturalism. What is also interesting to note is that much of this work has been focused on global as well as regional processes, and this has been reflected in the way in which much of the literature has explored European, North American, Australasian and other debates about multicultural policies and practices. It is also important to note that much of the literature in this field has crossed disciplinary boundaries, ranging across the social sciences and humanities.

During this period an important voice in this body of work has belonged to Will Kymlicka. Although Kymlicka is a political philosopher by background, his work has been influenced by wider intellectual debates. *Multicultural Odysseys* can be seen as an important addition to his oeuvre and it is certainly a challenging book to read at a time when there seems to be a

commonsense agreement that contemporary forms of multiculturalism are in crisis. The core concern of the book is to explore the processes that have led to the international diffusion of multicultural policies and ideologies over the past few decades. In this sense this volume is an argument both for the need to see multiculturalism from an international, as opposed to a simply Western, perspective and for a critical examination of the dilemmas and contradictions that this process seems to give rise to.

There is a wealth of material on a range of topics in this volume, and the breadth of scholarship from various parts of the globe on which Kymlicka draws is impressive. It is written in the clear and sparse style that those familiar with Kymlicka's earlier works, such as *Multicultural Citizenship*, will recognize. The most original part of the book is perhaps Part One, with its detailed and challenging exploration of the development of international discourses about state-minority rights from 1945 to the present day. But for me the chapters that particularly stand out as worth highlighting are 'The Origins of Liberal Multiculturalism' (chapter four) and 'The European Experiment' (chapter six). It is in reading these chapters that I found myself fully engaged with the critical stance that seems to underpin much of Kymlicka's exploration of both the promise and the limits of a liberal multiculturalism. There is much else of value in the book, not least the two concluding chapters that explore the global dimension of multiculturalism and look forward to the future.

While I learned much from my reading of this book I ended up feeling that Kymlicka's approach does not in itself resolve many of the 'dilemmas' around which the core narratives are based. This in itself need not be a weakness, and indeed part of the appeal of Kymlicka's work is that it manages to show the reader that there are no simple answers to many of the policy and political issues that we face in different parts of the globe today. More substantively, I was left wondering why it is that the work of political theorists such as Kymlicka seems to be developing in isolation from studies of multiculturalism that have their origin in the sociology of race, racial inequality and racism. Indeed much of the sociological literature on racial and ethnic minorities seems to have had no impact on Kymlicka or other political theorists. The work of scholars of race relations, such as John Rex, or sociological theorists whose work has explored forms of civic and ethnic incorporation, such as Jeffrey Alexander and Craig Calhoun, are noticeably absent. Yet to my mind there is much to be gained from a dialogue across the disciplinary boundaries and an engagement with these theorists. Not to mention the wide range of empirical research that has explored processes of minority formation, patterns of inclusion or exclusion and the development of public policies against discrimination.

Bearing the above lacunae in mind there is still much to recommend this book. Kymlicka is a nuanced and innovative thinker, and his exploration of the core dilemmas of thinking about multiculturalism internationally is a must read for all scholars working in this field, whatever the discipline. It should also be a useful text for teaching in this rapidly expanding field.

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Larkin, Ralph W. **Comprehending Columbine** Philadelphia (Temple UP) 2007 253 pp. $71.50 (hardback) $24.95 (paperback)

Whether or not the name Columbine immediately rings a bell will depend on a person's country and professional interest, among other things. For this reviewer, it helps that Michael Moore included it in the title of his documentary about American gun violence *Bowling for*

Columbine – a film that Ralph Larkin mentions once in passing. But I did not recall that the two gunmen, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, had attempted to bomb their school's cafetaria, which, had their scheme succeeded, would have resulted in many more victims. Yet, the bombing plan is a crucial element for the analysis.

Larkin is a good story teller. He immediately explains what happened in that small suburban community in Colorado on April 20, 1999 – Adolf Hitler's birthday. The pipe bombs should have exploded at 11:17 a.m., lunch time at Columbine high school. When they did not, Harris and Klebold left the parking lot where they had awaited the explosion. On campus and in several school rooms they fired numerous shots, finally murdering twelve fellow pupils and one teacher. After another failed attempt to make their bombs go off the boys committed suicide. This dreadful event shocked the entire USA and had a series of social ramifications; after the O.J. Simpson trial it received the second highest media coverage of the 1990s. It triggered several copycat killings, while school boards throughout the country were so frightened that they arbitrarily suspended pupils for writing satirical essays or wearing Marilyn Manson t-shirts.

Larkin's study is based primarily on an extensive set of interviews and secondarily on the literature that proliferated immediately after the event. The book's chapters address methodically the various themes related to the shooting. The Columbine area was an almost exclusively middle-class community, far above the national average in income level, percentage of white residents, share of households comprising married couples with children, etc. Its high school had a good reputation; a relatively high number of alumni moved on to college and its sports teams were successful in state competitions. The community comprised a high proportion of Evangelical Christians. Larkin relates how they very quickly tried to appropriate the commemoration as well as the interpretation of the event. For them it was a Manichean struggle between the forces of good and evil, in which two Evangelical girls ended up as martyrs. The story that they had been murdered for their Christian convictions, however, was a myth. Harris and Klebold did not specifically target believers.

Their real target was the school as a whole, in particular the 'jocks' (sports players), who represented the top of the internal hierarchy. Gradually, we get to know another Columbine, where pupils of higher status continually harassed those beneath them in the hierarchy. The bullies would shove their victims into their lockers and humiliate them in many other ways. The staff, sympathetic to the athletes, largely condoned their behaviour. As Larkin persuasively argues, Harris and Klebold's desperate act was meant as revenge for this harassment. The same is true for most other school shootings in the USA. It is crucial to know about the attempted bombing, because the bombs were hidden near the jocks' lunch table. Within a few years after the shooting, bullying was back at Columbine but denied by principal DeAngelis. He figures as the story's villain.

Although it deals with very recent events, Larkin's study reads as 'though it were a piece of historiography'. He carefully considers the community context, the gunmen themselves, their websites, and youth culture since the 1960s, and carefully composes a narrative from these elements. He writes much the same as a historian might have done, almost as if these events had happened a century ago. With little discussion of theory, the sociological relevance of this study lies in its practical implications, based on Larkin's expert knowledge of the American school system and youth culture. He deplores the emphasis in many high schools on sports rather than intellectual achievements, and recommends the adoption of antiviolence programmes (for the prevention of bullying and harassment).

I was struck in particular by the easy use of the term 'peer' and its combination with 'elite' and 'hierarchy'. Obviously, 'peers' refers to people equal in age, who are unequal in many other respects. Scholars accustomed to looking back several centuries might immediately think of high-ranking aristocrats since historians of medieval Italy have described the

recreational violence in which the elites often indulged. Florentine patricians would ride out to the *contado* and harass peasants for fun, often murdering them. This is not unlike the bullying by high-school jocks, except for the level of seriousness. Although being shoved into a locker can have a traumatic effect, it is quite different from being pierced by a sword. In between then and now lies a process of change, of interest to sociologists and historians alike and linked by many to the work of Norbert Elias.

Stephen Mennell's *The American Civilizing Process* (2007) appeared too late for Larkin to consider, but even so, I would have welcomed some comparison between the USA and Europe. He lightly passes over the concern about gun ownership that came up after the Columbine shooting. I agree with Larkin that gun ownership does not constitute a causal explanation, but there is some significance to be drawn out here. If bullying is as prevalent in European schools, the lesser availability of firearms still diminishes the chance that pupils' frustration and anger will take such drastic forms. However, these critical remarks do not diminish my admiration for Larkin's well-written study.

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MacKenzie, D., Muniesa, F. and Siu, L. **Do Economists Make Markets? On the Performativity of Economics** Princeton University Press 2007 373 pp. £35.00 (hardback)

Michel Callon opened up a new field of economic sociology with two essays in his 1998 edited collection, *The Laws of the Markets*. The first of these contained the decisive and controversial claim that 'economics, in the broad sense of the term, performs, shapes and formats the economy, rather than observing how it functions' (p. 2). Stop treating *homo economicus* as an inaccurate description, Callon urged, and start to see it as an effective technological artifice at large in society. The essays gathered in this new volume take up Callon's challenge, and investigate both its empirical and its ontological plausibility. *Do* economists make markets? The editors clearly believe that they do, while Callon himself concludes the book with a welcome elaboration of his own thesis. With admirable openness to debate, the book also contains two essays (by Mirowski and Nik-Khah and Didier) that oppose the performativity thesis, plus several that disagree over what precisely performativity means in this context.

The editors, together with Callon, spend some time clarifying aspects of the thesis that have been misunderstood, largely focusing on broadening the definition of economics in two inter-linked ways. Firstly, they stress the *technological* dimension of economics, as a rejoinder to those who conceive of performativity in purely discursive or conceptual terms. This is not, as the Introduction points out, some extension of Weberian sociology to look at the ideas that capitalism draws on. Nor is it a development of Robert Merton's 'self-fulfilling prophecy' thesis, that economies are swayed by what is said about them. Instead, it treats economics as a set of socio-technical devices which are brought to bear on socio-economic phenomena. The device may be an economic formula, as MacKenzie's chapter on the Black-Scholes option pricing model demonstrates; it may be the artefacts involved in conducting an economic experiment, as both Guala's and Callon and Muniesa's chapters explore; or it may even be a piece of architecture, as Garcia-Parpet's look at strawberry auctions suggests. But in any case, it is more than just an idea or discourse.

Secondly, they stress the *pluralism* of economics. It includes those working within an academic discipline called 'economics', but it is much broader than that. In his chapter, Callon goes as far as to say 'I use the word "economist" to denote all agents who participate in the analysis and transformation of economic markets' (p. 336). Elsewhere, these agents are

referred to as economists 'in the wild', including accountants, marketing specialists, policy advisors and so on. Importantly, Callon contends, there is room for *even more* pluralism, including space at the table for sociologists and activists. The performing of economic calculations is going on all around us in multiple ways, and it is time for sociologists to stop complaining and join in.

This very catholic definition of 'economics' opens up exciting new empirical and political opportunities, but it is not without its cost. The broader the definition of economics becomes, the harder it can be to specify exactly what it means for economics to perform. The definition of performativity becomes almost as malleable as the definition of economics. For some authors, the concept is simply being stretched too far. Didier, for instance, argues that economics is *expressing* the economy, but not performing it: economic representations may transform the economy, but they can not produce it.

The sheer diversity of empirical cases on display places some strain upon Callon's original thesis, albeit quite deliberately, as if to test it out. For instance, Garcia-Parpet's analysis of strawberry auctions suggests that the physical auction house is a case of 'economics in the wild'. A strong role is attributed to the economic advisor involved in its design, and 'it was doubtless as a result of his training in economics . . . that he was familiar with the neoclassical theory that was to guide his actions' (p. 31). But this 'doubtlessness' does not seem quite good enough. Certainly there is something to be said about the correspondence between the building's design and the worldview of neo-classical economics. But the promise that performativity scholars make is to specify how this correspondence occurs, not simply to indicate an economic technology, no matter how effectively it functions. Alternatively, if 'economics' is defined as *any technology* that formats and transforms a market (regardless of its link to the discipline of economics), then the claim that it is performative verges on tautology. Imagine, for instance, that sociologists *did* start to act to analyse and transform markets; by Callon's definition, that would make sociology an example of economics.

A more sympathetic perspective on the work collected here would recognise the performativity of economics as an open-ended, empirical question or problem. Economics comes in many varieties, each performing in its own particular way (or not). For instance, the claim that neo-classical economics is capable of performing markets comes to appear heavily indebted to the example of the Black-Scholes formula. Elsewhere, the link between performative devices and economic theory seems more suspect, as Mirowski argues venomously against the alleged dependence of the FCC spectrum auctions upon game theory. As ever, it is a certain ontological agnosticism that allows Actor Network Theorists off the hook. The result is a dismantling of the 'zombie concepts' – 'capitalism', 'neo-liberalism', 'the economy' – that sociologists use to conceal or ignore intricate economic phenomena. This is the deeper empirical-political ambition for these researchers. In as much as they unsettle the rest of economic sociology at large, they do it a great favour.

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Modan, Gabriella Gahlia **Turf Wars: Discourse, Diversity, and the Politics of Place**
Blackwell Publishing 2007 357 pp. £19.99 (paperback)

Turf Wars is an ethnographic study of a Washington, D.C. neighbourhood called Mt. Pleasant. It 'examines the discourse strategies and themes that community members use in their talk and writing to position themselves and other community members as certain kinds of people . . . and the neighborhood as a certain kind of place' (p. 331). Modan shows how

residents from disparate ethnic and geographic backgrounds construct local *place-based identities*, through discursive practices, that invariably draw social and moral boundaries. This sociolinguist's keen attention to the mechanics of discourse and its social context, and her creative use of data, are sure to delight students of everyday life.

The fieldwork for *Turf Wars* was carried out during a tumultuous period of rapid gentrification in Mt. Pleasant, the late 1990s. While wealthier whites rehabbed homes and made moves to 'civilize' the streets, working-class Latinos, Vietnamese, African-Americans, and a host of others such as punk rockers attempted to maintain what they saw as the authentic grittiness of this diverse neighbourhood. Rather than rehashing well-worn theses about *why* such changes are occurring, Modan – refreshingly – focuses on *how* residents from varying demographics narrate these community changes and situate their identities vis-à-vis their neighbourhood discourses.

No matter one's length of duration in the neighbourhood or social position, every actor sought to be seen as an 'authentic' Mt. Pleasant resident. In chapter three, Modan demonstrates how the construction of such 'moral geographies' (p. 28) often relied on the suburbs as a foil. Residents used a 'discourse of fear' (p. 28) to convey the city as a dangerous (masculine) place, but one in which both males and females positioned themselves as savvy urbanites that were tough enough to successfully navigate the streets. On a community email list, for example, many subscribers were quick to police those who complained too much about noise or filth and to recommend that they move to the (feminized) suburbs. However, upon closer inspection, what constitutes an 'authentic' Mt. Pleasant resident is distinctly patterned by social position (i.e., race, class, place of origin).

Chapter four examines a grant proposal for public toilets written by white and middle-class residents. While ostensibly addressing a real community 'problem' of public urination, Modan – qua Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger* – sees the proposal as a 'spatial purification practice' in which Latino and immigrant streetcorner men are portrayed as moral deviants through being blamed as the source of the problem. The proposal 'implies that the way to improve neighborhood life is for the core community members to socialize the neighbors they've marginalized into their own vision of how Mt. Pleasant people should behave' (p. 165).

The next two chapters provide alternative narratives about who belongs at the moral centre of Mt. Pleasant. A play written by a longstanding Latino resident is examined as 'one of the few competing views of the neighborhood' (p. 174) that had institutional backing and reached a wide audience. The play paints 'community insiderness' (p. 197) as explicitly working class and non-white, celebrating the purported ease with which Latinos navigate the rough and tumble street atmosphere while presenting white women's anxiety about Latino men's flirtatious catcalling as evidence that they belong in the suburbs. Chapter seven focuses on the building that the author resided in. Roughly half the tenants were lower income co-op members, while the other half were wealthier condo owners. Modan uses life histories from the co-op members to relate an intimate story of how they came together to avoid eviction and take control of their building in the 1970s. She shows how this shared history united tenants across ethnic and class lines and fostered both real and fictive kinship ties. However, co-op members construct the condo owners – who moved in long after the struggle and bought their units at market rate – as driven by material, not community, interests. These 'outsiders' reflect the entitled attitude of gentrifiers, who allegedly destroy the very places they are drawn to. The book closes with a section in which Modan delineates her methodology as well as the theories of discourse and geography that she relies on.

Modan's careful analysis demonstrates how moral and social systems can be found on the head of a syntactic pin. However, her preoccupation with discourse leads her to neglect

matters that are foundational to interactionists and most ethnographers. Interactionists know that what people *do* is at least as important as what they *say*. Yet, aside from a wonderful opening vignette that depicts a typical morning in Mt. Pleasant, very seldom does the reader catch a glimpse of everyday life *in practice*. While Modan depicts, for example, how residents discursively present themselves as authentic urbanites, we gain little sense of what Elijah Anderson reveals in *Streetwise*: how urbanites *perform* street authenticity through gestures, dress, and patterns of movement in the city. While we see stories that 'construct' insiders and outsiders, we don't see the taken-for-granted practices that inscribe 'defended territories' (Suttles, *The Social Order of the Slum*, 1970). Without this foundation, the discursive data feels disembodied; and the participants often appear not as personalities but as talking heads. More importantly, we are left wondering how residents' discourses map onto reality. In the chapter on public toilets, for example, the author indicts the grant writers' assumptions but provides no empirical data to determine who it actually is that is urinating in public. And, while co-op members portray condo owners as materialistic outsiders, no observational data is offered to demonstrate if this stereotype is warranted. What was gained by *being there*?

Turf Wars makes an important contribution to understanding how urban residents use discourse as both a rule and a resource to situate themselves within a community. It provides a vivid window into the hopes and fears of diverse Americans trying to find a way to live together. The book reminds us to attend to the details of narratives, yet it also reveals some of the limitations of discourse-centred ethnography.

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Moore, Sarah E.H. **Ribbon Culture: Charity, Compassion and Public Awareness** Palgrave Macmillan 2008 190 pp. £45.00 (hardback)

These days it is common to see people wearing ribbons to express support or sympathy for one cause or another. Yellow, red, pink – we might recognize the cause by the colour. *Ribbon Culture* examines the emergence of ribbon wearing over the last twenty years or so as a sociological phenomenon. What does ribbon wearing tell us about society and about the individuals who wear them? Moore's book is informative on both counts – perhaps more on the first than the second. Paradoxically, this is because the wearing of ribbons, justified in this book as an act of self-expression, tells us something about the individualized society in which we live, but little about the compassionate motives of the wearer.

The book contains some interesting information about the history of the ribbon, from its yellow form in the USA as a reminder of absence, via the red ribbons of AIDS activism in the 1980s and 1990s, through to the pink ribbons of breast cancer awareness campaigns of more recent times. Alongside this is a brief historical contextualization, in the form of an account of the emergence and changing meaning of the Poppy as a symbol of recognition of the dead of various wars. Where the ribbon might seem to be an individual act, wearing the Poppy, like putting money in the collecting tin of a national charity, is an act of compliance, if not co-membership. Unlike the Poppy, the ribbon worn today is a marketed item, linked through commercial ventures, celebrity and fashion to be something that 'says something' about the wearer. Moore's thesis (the book is based upon her doctoral work) is that the ribbon is indicative of the individualization of welfare, in which the principle of consumer choice has come to dominate the practices of provision, and even, perhaps, desert.

There has been a standardization of the ribbon that serves to make it available and marketable by a range of commercial organizations, which use its abbreviated form to send out messages that are there in the ribbon's fold and colour but unelaborated in its message of care and compassion. Moore draws upon some of her respondents' accounts to show that some individuals, when challenged, can offer little in the way of justification about why they wear the ribbon. 'It's a *good* thing that people are wearing the ribbons', another interviewee told me eagerly, 'I couldn't pinpoint exactly *why* I think that' (p. 120). The inability of people to say why they wear the ribbon is something that Moore sees as reflective of a change in the form, if not in the degree of compassion. Drawing on recent literature about the effects of changes in social cohesion (such as Tester, 2001 and Furedi, 2004), Moore pinpoints the ribbon as the vehicle of ostentatious caring, a feature of a social world in which compassion itself has become deeply fashionable.

The book is structured so that the sociological theory comes first, symbolic behaviour (Goffman, Blumer), social identity (Eric Erickson, Beck, Giddens) and charity and compassion. The latter, although examined in relation to sociological ideas about compassion and suffering in general, says little about charitable behaviour specifically. Indeed, Moore rather slips across this field when she says, 'What standard typologies of charitable behaviour usually fail to explore is the relationship between donors and their social and cultural environments' (p. 33), without saying which 'standard typologies' she is referring to in her critique. (Nor does she seek out non-standard typologies or explanations.) This matters, because as the book progresses, no alternative thesis on charitable behaviour is offered. As a result, the book strays near to reducing the moral imperative to being a product of socio-economic change. While ribbon wearing is a good candidate for just such an analysis, to focus upon it to the exclusion of other forms of charitable behaviour (and there are many) is to risk framing a distorted picture of compassion in the modern world.

Moore builds her thesis in part upon modern trends established in the 1960s counter-culture, and the formation of a society based upon the idea of 'self'. While it is possible to relate any current social practice to the 1960s, the idea that ribbon wearing is especially connected to a search for inner meaning or self-expression, 1960s style, is not entirely convincing.

If it is concluded that compassion today is a 'central aspect of identity in contemporary society' (p. 26) then one needs to make the analytic move that interrogates the idea of identity in the light of this. Moore finds, on the one hand, that there is a growing discourse of compassion, and yet on the other, that her respondents cannot articulate their (presumably compassionate) motives for wearing ribbons. This seems, on the face of it, a contradictory state of affairs. It could be, as she points out, that what ribbon wearers are doing is *showing*, rather than articulating their relationship to the individuals and groups who are the subject of particular campaigns. What people then say about why they wear ribbons might be less important than other people's reactions to seeing the ribbons being worn, which involves a collective anchoring of meaning and situating of channels for soliciting funds and organizing action. Whatever the case, I looked in vain in the later chapters for more analytic work to tease out the implications of what Moore herself had found in her fieldwork. Ultimately, the absence of a wider picture of work on charity in its various forms is perhaps responsible for the restrained analysis that is offered later on in the book.

These critical points aside, this is an interesting and well-written book on a topic of current interest, that adds both to the sociological literature on compassion and, in its own way, to that on material culture. The book also has an attractive cover – ribbons pictured in lots of colours, what else?

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Rose, N. **The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century** Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2006 352 pp. £14.95 (paperback)

How are we to understand why people spend £500 to receive the results of whole-genome scans over the internet, or why healthy women opt for double mastectomy after a genetic susceptibility test for breast cancer? Rose's book helps us to find answers to these questions, but these answers are far from simple. *The Politics of Life Itself* offers no celebration of novelty, nor will readers encounter any grand rhetoric about the human species entering a new era. Instead, Rose affords much detail on outlining in what ways seemingly new concepts populating recent social science work on genetics relate to practices and understandings which have been around for a long time. For example, he reminds us that the 'predisposed person' (p. 85), which sometimes presents itself as a new concept that has emerged in connection with genetic susceptibility testing in the late twentieth century, has in fact been around since the nineteenth century. Then, it took the form of particular 'constitutions' predisposing individuals to certain ailments and fates. Similarly, he points out that the idea of human enhancement is not new either, and that many world regions deprived of medical resources cannot afford the luxury of thinking about it altogether.

Is there anything new at all then? In what ways are 'biomedicine, power and subjectivity in the twenty-first century' different from how things used to be? The answer to the first question is: 'Yes, but . . . '. For example, Rose shows that what is new about discourses and practices of 'enhancement' in the context of the new biomedicine is not the idea of enhancement as such but the individualization of the responsibility that it entails. In advanced liberal democracies it is typically no longer primarily the state which ought to 'improve' people by introducing compulsory education, or sterilizing the morally and mentally 'abnormal'. Today, individuals are increasingly being called upon – and calling upon themselves – to 'enhance' themselves by, for example, eating the right diet, by going to the fitness club, and by taking genetic tests to determine disease susceptibilities or potential genetic 'flaws' of the unborn. In this process of individualization of responsibility, the molecular/genetic level has become a means of articulation as well as a platform for intervention: We do not only go to the fitness club to build up muscle mass and streamline our shape, but we also engage in exercises to prevent cardiovascular diseases which we might have been found genetically predisposed to. Some of us even buy food additives which companies claim they 'customised' for our particular genomes (just take a look at the broad range of offers in the field of 'nutritional genomics'). Whereas heritability had previously been imagined in terms of 'blood', it is increasingly being reframed in terms of genes. In a similar way, as Joan Fujimura (*Crafting Science: A Sociohistory of the Quest for the Genetics of Cancer*, 1996) has shown, some diseases have been reinvented in molecular terms. While Rose diagnoses a shift towards 'molecularization' in collective 'styles of thought' (Ludwik Fleck, *The Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, 1979), which he sees as closely linked to 'a reorganization of the gaze of the life sciences: their institutions, procedures, instruments, spaces of operation, and forms of capitalization' (p. 44), he refrains from portraying this process as a one way road. Rather than claiming that we now think and act in radically different ways from how human beings did thirty or forty years ago, Rose shows in which ways the molecular dimension has been added to, and sometimes modified, existing ways of thinking and acting.

But the argument does not stop here. One of the strengths of the book is that is shows how through the increasing 'molecularization' of the ways in which many human beings see themselves and their relationships to others, vital processes have become inherently political. Because the molecular level is a filter through which individuals have learned to (also) formulate their concerns, hopes, and even resistances, and one which structures

individual and collective action (think of our initial example of a woman genetically predisposed to breast cancer who opts for mastectomy as a preventive measure; and read Masha Gessen, *Blood Matters*, 2008), it is intimately related to power – this is one of the meanings of the term 'biopower'. By 'enhancing' ourselves, that is, by shaping our choices and commitments according to the objectives of being fit and healthy, we render ourselves more valuable for the collective. The more we formulate and act upon these objectives in molecular terms, the more political 'life itself' is becoming: Vital processes can be tools for the governing of populations and the self-governance of individuals.

Organized in eight chapters covering a wide terrain ranging from neuroethics to criminal behaviour, this book provides those who have followed Rose's work over the last years with a refinement of previous arguments. But it makes for an excellent read not only for those of us with an explicit interest in medicine and the life sciences but also for those without: Rose's accessible yet very nuanced discussion traces changes in how human beings think and act themselves into being. Genetics plays a role in these changes, but not in a causal and linear manner. Rather than speaking from the perspective of a bio-observer by supporting the inflationary idea that genetics has revolutionized everything, Rose does an excellent job of putting genetics in its place.

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Smelser, N.J. **The Faces of Terrorism: Social and Psychological Dimensions** Princeton University Press 2007 285 pp. £17.95 (hardback)

Within months of the devastating attacks of September 11, 2001, the US National Academies of Science (NAS) convened a committee charged with applying scientific thinking to the problem of terrorism. In a classic expression of disciplinary bias, just two members were social scientists, including the eminent sociologist Neil Smelser. Smelser – internationally respected for his wide-ranging accomplishments in social thought – was the chair of the NAS sub-panel on Behavioral, Social and Institutional Issues in Terrorism and the author of the book under present consideration.

Thoughtful, well-researched, and lucid, *The Faces of Terrorism* has enough intellectual meat to stimulate the social scientist new to this field and enough plain-spoken sense to enlighten and engage the intelligent lay reader. The book is peppered with insights into the seemingly infuriating process of preparing the NAS report under the gun of time pressure and the bigger gun of political friction. It sounds as if the committee, few of whose members had worked on this problem before, was nearly paralyzed by old disputes that experts in the field have long since outgrown. Given free rein in this compact single-author book, Smelser has provided an expanded version of his sub-panels reports. Although the author reveals, in an appendix, his awareness of the many types of acts that could reasonably be considered terrorism, he unfortunately chose to confine his analysis to a particular species of ideologically driven group sub-state terrorism, denying readers his thoughts on possible behavioural commonalities in the genesis of terrorism more broadly considered. That aside, his narrow focus permits concentrated attention on a very problematic type of political violence.

The book begins with excellent chapters considering the causes and conditions of terrorism and the ideologies that enable it. The author offers a superb and concise summary of terrorism as a funneling process: in his view, dissatisfaction is sometimes focused into an ideology which impels mobilization which, in the presence of certain structural opportunities and resources and the identification of promising targets, leads to terrorist action. He foreshadows his ultimate conclusion about the limited efficacy of conflict resolution,

admonishing that the USA is stuck with the historical condition of centuries of international domination and its inescapable residue of grievance.

In taking up the challenge of the motivation question, Smelser makes an excellent point: 'terrorist episodes are rare events and it is almost impossible to know the nature of the larger population of events (extreme group behaviour in general? Social protest in general?) of which they are a subclass' (p. 91). A social-psychological account of terrorism becomes much easier if one could reasonably assume that terrorism were a subtype of some other well-studied social phenomenon. It is not. It's a tactic adopted by a highly heterogeneous set of actors – from individuals such as Theodore Kaczynski, to groups as small as the Oklahoma City conspiracy, to groups as large as the USA government – to advance political agendas. Unfortunately, Smelser short-changes this key issue. Instead of discussing the tremendous heterogeneity of pathways to terrorist behaviour, he likens the process of becoming a terrorist to the psychological transformation of religious conversion – a sequence in which an individual in 'psychic pain' will engage in 'experimental identity-seeking', get recruited via a social network, undergo 'destructuring' of his former identity and fuse with the terrorist group (p. 100). This vision might apply to a subset of terrorists in certain campaigns. But in many cases – e.g. Hamas, Hizbullah, and perhaps the LTTE, PIRA and Chechen separatists – joining the group may be an essentially normative developmental option, pro-social, well-supported by the community, and hardly a matter of deep conversion. By coming down in favour of this view, the author falls into the very trap about which he cautioned the reader, treating terrorism as a subtype of an identifiable larger category of human group behaviour (religious conversion).

The author also joins with the conventional wisdom of mainstream experts in rejecting the notion that common psychological traits might be identifiable among terrorists, using the easy criticism that a behavioural complex is 'neither necessary . . . nor sufficient' (p. 93). Yet, despite admitting to the woeful inadequacy of the data, he latches on to Marc Sageman's controversial buddy system hypothesis (that the main explanation for joining a terrorist campaign is not any social profile or even having a political grievance but primarily having close personal acquaintance with another terrorist) – a theory that patently fails the necessary and sufficient standard. The author could have pointed out that both approaches – the emerging, albeit weak, evidence that certain psychological traits may be more common among subsets of terrorists and the strong evidence that social networks play a role in recruitment – fall under the conceptual rubric of *risk factors*, equally deserving of high quality empirical testing.

The most discouraging chapter is the one entitled 'Discouraging Terrorism'. The author starts by virtually dismissing the possibility of reducing terrorism by addressing root causes. He states that terrorism develops independently of whatever structural social or economic conditions created the original grievance and that, therefore, initiatives to address grievances will be ineffective. He might be right. However, the reader longs for a more persuasive argument such as a brief review of past counter-terrorism initiatives of this kind before dismissing the entire intervention domain of conflict resolution. One might ask, for instance, to what degree the death of the black separatist movement in the USA was related to aggressive policing versus to the cavalcade of 1960s civil rights legislation that vastly enhanced opportunities for African Americans, or whether the tapering anti-apartheid violence of the ANC might be related to the downfall of apartheid? Social scientists will be concerned to read Smelser's blanket prediction that changing social conditions is doomed to have little effect.

Criticisms aside, this is a very good book. Readers looking for a one-stop introduction to terrorism from the sociological perspective will not find a better choice. This reader only hopes that a revised edition will add nuance that would make this a key resource.

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West, Harry G. **Ethnographic Sorcery** The University of Chicago Press 2007 132 pp. £9.00 (paperback)

In this short monograph, West draws on ethnographic fieldwork in the Muedan plateau of Mozambique during the early 1990s, to re-examine conventional anthropological understandings of sorcery. It is a compendium to his lengthier study *Kupilikula: Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique* (2005). West contends that with the end of socialism and with the advent of democratic elections, sorcery is being discussed more openly, even on state radio. This is an observation that should be of interest not only to students and researchers in anthropology, but also to sociologists of religion and politics. In particular, West documents the way in which Mozambicans widely allege that certain persons make themselves invisible and use substances called *mitela* to practice 'sorcery of ruin' and feed on the welfare of others. Whereas the poor accuse the wealthy of using sorcery to feed their insatiable appetites, the wealthy accuse the poor of using it to devour their possessions. At the same time, healers and settlement heads claim to use 'sorcery of construction' to monitor, unmake and cure destructive sorcery.

Ethnographic Sorcery asks, how do we find sense in the worldview of others that our own knowledge systems find preposterous? Initially West himself shared the conventional anthropological view that sorcery represents or symbolizes other historical events and social realities. In a seminar, he portrayed 'sorcery lions' – that Muedans believe sorcerers manufacture to devour their rivals – as metaphors of social predation, expressing ambivalence about the complex workings of power. But Mozambican social researchers in the audience responded to West's suggestion by saying that he had misunderstood his informants – sorcery lions are not symbols, they are real! This reply prompts West to contemplate in his book whether symbols might lie only in the eyes of anthropological beholders, and not in those of their producers.

West suggests that it might make better sense to adopt a phenomenological approach that engages with the Muedan world of sorcery from a particular space within it. This approach compels us to view sorcery practices as actual exercises in constructing, rather than merely representing, social realities. For West the reality of sorcery is built up through language and discourse, and is experienced through verbal constructs such as threats and accusations. People do not speak of sorcery: they actually speak sorcery. Moreover, as Muedans imagine sorcery, they experience their imaginings as real. West cites the example of the Shitashi dance troupe. Although the dancers enact the activities of sorcerers to shame those who practice sorcery, observers suspect the dancers themselves to be sorcerers. In this conception, he insists, symbols stand for themselves and are an essential part of the world of which they speak. But West does not entirely discard metaphor. He observes that sorcerers transport lions from invisible to visible domains in a manner similar to the way in which metaphors operate as vehicles to carry meaning across different domains.

West discusses the ways in which metaphors became embodied during the Mozambican elections of 1994. Muedans refused to register because they associated the voter identification cards with colonial identity tokens, pass books, mandatory labour and tax cards, and with FRELIMO party membership cards that were all forms of surveillance, control and exploitation. Moreover, Muedans conceived of the election officers as transcending the abilities of ordinary people much like sorcerers, and of themselves as objects on which sorcery is enacted. Whereas the discourses of liberal democracy oversimplify political processes, sorcery discourses capture the indeterminacy, ambiguity, hidden, and capricious nature of power.

In the last third of the book, West suggests that we can see ethnographic writing itself as a form of sorcery. Like sorcerers, ethnographers aim to transcend the visible world, scrutinize

it from a new perspective, and to remake the activities of others. West spent months with healers such as Dr Kalamatatu, learning about sorcery and even using *mitela* to ensure that his examiners respected his words at his PhD defence. He also gained knowledge of healing from working as an ambulance-crew-member at a US hospital, and dispensed ointments, antibiotics and dressings for wounds during fieldwork. West sought to see beneath the surface of Muedan life and to gain interpretive ascendancy over the world. He points out that just as sorcerers face threats from other visions that aim to overthrow their own, anthropological interpretations are in a constant process of challenge and contestation. This comparison draws attention to the made-ness of Muedan and to other worlds. Hence, anthropologists should note that in remaking the world they do so at great risks to ourselves and to others. It is therefore best to proceed with caution.

Ethnographic Sorcery is written in an extremely lucid manner, and I found West's numerous ethnographic vignettes of dancers, healers, and of his own experiences of sickness to be particularly engaging. The book is theoretically interesting, and his critical comments about the limitations of symbolic studies of sorcery are well taken. For these reasons *Ethnographic Sorcery* should appeal not only to anthropologists but also to other students and researchers of symbolism, ritual and religion. But as specialist reader, I found West's treatment of sorcery as language to be somewhat reductionist. Surely we cannot exclude the non-verbal realms: dreams and visions of alternative realities, and experiences of severe misfortune, should also come into play. Moreover, I also found West's presentation of ethnographic writing as a form of sorcery to be less illuminating than his other arguments. This conception seems to lie only in the eye of a particular beholder. In contexts where 'sorcery of construction' is more carefully distinguished from 'sorcery of ruin', and witches from healers, anthropologists are more likely to be identified as the victims of sorcery.

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Wuthnow, R. **After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion** Princeton University Press 2007 298 pp. £17.95 (paperback)

Robert Wuthnow's current project focusing on 'younger' adults aged 21–45 is the second recent study to examine the religious involvement of the 'post-baby boom' generations in the USA. The first was Christian Smith's national study of adolescents *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (2005). Wuthnow's research extends this general area of investigation to a large segment of American adults which includes the parents of teenagers like Smith's respondents. Of particular importance for understanding intergenerational change is Wuthnow's comparison of today's younger adults with those who lived through the seventies, as did the current group's parents and grandparents. Intriguingly, these two eminent sociologists who are usually optimistic about the future of religion conclude that their separate findings should 'trouble' American clergy and congregations.

Wuthnow's study involves extensive secondary analysis of data from more than a dozen national surveys. In most cases, comparison of younger adults aged 21–45 is made between survey data collected from 1998 to 2002 and 1970 to 1976. He also commissioned about a hundred interviews of clergy, laity, and nonmembers. The decision to include persons aged 21–45 rather than limiting the focus to persons in their twenties or thirties was based on Wuthnow's interest in the 'first half of adulthood' and the attendant ability to capture and compare single and married persons, the childless and those with children, and the 'settled' and the 'unsettled'.

Wuthnow's more recent younger adult group includes persons born from 1953 to 1965 during the second half of the baby boom years, and his seventies era group includes persons born from 1925 to 1945 during the Depression and through World War II. The way that their inclusion affects overall patterns is not clear. However, Wuthnow does report that among the recent younger adult group, those in their twenties are less religious than those in their thirties, and those in their thirties, in turn, are less religious than those in their forties. Restricting the age range for young adulthood to 'twenty and thirty-somethings' (as the title suggests) may have resulted in a quite different picture of this group, both overall and in comparison to the seventies' group. As it is, the decision to take an age based approach to defining young adulthood focused on lifecycle assumptions, rather than a cohort based approach focused on generationally-salient experiences, makes this not so much an 'after the baby boomers' analysis as an early to late twentieth century comparison of change in family structure, lifestyle, and religiosity.

Wuthnow identifies seven trends through which changes in religiosity between and among younger adult groups are analysed. They include fewer and later marriages; fewer children, born later; delayed and more fluid career paths; more education, especially higher education; the 'loosening' of social relationships; more cross-cultural contact due to increased dependence on foreign markets, international travel, and immigration; and a virtual explosion in the use of information media and technology through computers and the Internet. What most directly affects religious participation and identity, Wuthnow finds, is changed patterns in marriage and childbearing which themselves are related to trends in education, the job market, mobility, and civic engagement. The net effects on church attendance are negative: only a quarter of younger adults today attend church regularly as compared to nearly a third in the seventies, and there has been a thirty per cent increase among those who never attend.

Changes in participation are also reflected in denominational patterns: the proportion of younger adults who identify with mainline Protestant groups has declined by half; evangelical Protestants have 'barely held their own', (p. 214) especially when considering that the majority of new converts are Hispanic immigrants; black Protestants have not grown; Catholic numbers have stabilized, also due to Hispanic immigration; the percentage of Jewish younger adults has declined slightly; and the proportion of unaffiliated younger adults has more than doubled. Related changes, especially marked among those in their twenties and thirties, include a decrease in prayer and Bible reading, a tendency toward church 'shopping' (p. 115) and 'hopping' (p. 116), a slight tendency toward being 'spiritual but not religious' (p. 135), an increase in engagement with those who are racially and ethnically different, and a tendency toward religious liberalism and away from views of America as a 'nation founded on Christian principles' (p. 165).

Wuthnow pays a good deal of attention to the shrinking proportion of younger adults that are married with children. They are mostly churched, in their thirties or forties, evangelical and suburban, religiously orthodox, politically conservative, socially encapsulated and less tolerant. The fact that this segment has grown at the same time that an even larger group of nonaffiliated younger adults has appeared leads Wuthnow to speculate that the older 'culture wars' between conservative and liberal Protestants will be replaced by a divide between evangelicals and the nonaffiliated. This, however, seems unlikely given the fact that the middle is increasingly populated by churched persons who are less ideologically conservative and more open to the pluralism of a global economy.

Instead of a more conventional conclusion, Wuthnow finishes with a chapter based on an analysis of congregations with younger members drawn from Chaves's National Congregations Survey (1998). The apparent aim is to address what American churches might do to reverse current trends among younger adults. Unfortunately, the portrait that emerges reflects the interests of the churched 'married minority' and as such provides examples of

programmes and activities likely to keep younger singles away rather than to attract them. Inertia in the church itself, Wuthnow concludes, significantly contributes to the erosion of religiosity. The remainder of the book therefore is devoted to a series of challenges to that institution.

In the end, Wuthnow chooses to emphasize the practical implications of these data rather than theoretical ones. Dismissive comments about the secularization debate are sprinkled throughout the book, and the question of whether American religion is following a 'Western trajectory' is given a one-page treatment (p. 67). Still these data do provide additional evidence of American religion's declining influence, and one wonders if an opportunity to deepen this theoretical debate was not squandered.

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