

What can we say about today's British religious young person? Findings from the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme.

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What can we say about today's British religious young person? Findings from the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme

Key Words

youth, young people, UK, education, authenticity, online, belief

Abstract

Since the late twentieth century, research linking youth and religion has begun to grow. Such growth has been given a particular boost in the UK by the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme. This article addresses what we can say about today's British religious young person through review of new research findings from the Programme.

We certainly can no longer assume that a British religious young person is a practicing Christian. They are likely to engage with a range of offline and online resources in order to learn more about their faith, and feel some tensions between their commitments and engagement with wider society. Social class and other factors will affect their capacity to engage with religion and civil society. Like their non-religious peers, the British religious young person values relationships and authenticity. Tensions between structure and agency in our neoliberal age emerge through their story.

Introduction

Thanks to a major research initiative we now know more than we ever have before about youth and religion in the UK. In 2007 two of the UK's government-funded research councils¹ jointly invested in the Religion and Society Programme² in order to commission research across disciplines in an area deemed a strategic priority. A further £4 million was then invested to fund a second youth-focused phase of commissioning, because research on youth and religion was assessed through consultation with stakeholders to be 'urgent and important for understanding modern British society.'³ This article presents and reviews research from the 21 projects commissioned in this phase and other related grants on the Programme, in comparison with other national and international research.⁴ This is in order

¹ The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

² References in the text to the 'Religion and Society Programme', 'the Programme' and 'Religion and Society' all denote the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme.

³ 'AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme Youth Call Research Programme Specification November 2007', http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/uploads/docs/2009_11/1259142192_Religion_and_Society_-_Youth_Call_Specification.pdf (accessed 11:03 10 November 2012).

⁴ For a guide to the Programme projects referenced in the text, please see Appendix 1. which lists them all in alphabetical order by surname of the principal investigator, followed by their university, the project title and type of award. Visit

to address the question posed in the title and analyse what this new research can tell us about modern British society, and the relationship between youth and religion more generally.⁵

There appears to be a scholarly consensus that the relationship between youth and religion is changing in the UK (and the West more broadly). There is greater division over how and why. The grand narrative has been one of decline and individualization in modernity. However, new Religion and Society Programme-funded and related findings indicate that this is not the full story.

Given the cross-disciplinary nature of the research presented and youth studies, a range of approaches is taken into account. Nonetheless, the analysis is rooted in the sociology of religion given the author's background and training. Initially the wider context of religion in post-World War II Britain is set and then young people focused upon. This leads onto consideration of the study of youth in the UK, including the recent interest in youth and religion, reflecting broader academic trends. The specific research to be presented is then introduced and subsequently reviewed under the themes *Christianity as a conscious and alternative choice*, *Diversifying education for a diverse society*, *Young Muslims: threat and vulnerability*, *Communications revolution or evolution?* and *The impact of social status*.

Findings reflect the simultaneously Christian, secular and religiously plural nature of modern Britain. They show that whilst young people represent a highly diverse group even within one national context somewhat artificially grouped together, there are commonalities and trends. Their lives are affected by communications technologies in new ways. There is continuity in public concern, particularly with the behaviour of young men. As concluded in an initial report of findings from the youth phase of the Programme: 'Young people from a range of religious and class backgrounds, many of whom live with uncertainty and change, seem to be placing a particularly high value on close, trusting relationships. Family remains a strong influence, though parents', and religious leaders', religiosity may be questioned – the question is whether people can be trusted, whether they are 'authentic'. The inadequacy of a clichéd view of religion as church-like institutional practice for capturing the sheer variety of their experiences becomes apparent, as do tensions with the secular mainstream. It is clear that we need to be sensitive to young people's religious identities, listening to them rather than making assumptions.' (Catto 2011). The innovative application of methods can aid this.

Britain has seen the decline of traditional modes of belonging – both religious and political – but this has not led simply to consumerist, materialist individualism on the part of young people. The study of religion and youth is found to be more than a question of successful transmission from parent to child or not: either a religious or secular outcome. This body of new research suggests that the future is going to be a dynamic relationship between the religious and the secular with varying patterns in context rather than the former inevitably, inexorably giving way to the latter. It challenges notions of what religion is and where it can be found. Hence, findings presented fulfil and extend a new agenda for the cross-disciplinary study of youth and religion giving due consideration to embedded relationships in context and young people's own meanings, alongside socioeconomic factors and cohort effects.

http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/research_findings for more information about all the Programme projects referenced in the present article (accessed 12:55 21 February 2013). When a piece of research funded by the Religion and Society Programme is cited for the first time, this is clearly stated.

⁵ Given the overview nature of this paper, the overall interpretation is the author's own and, due to the limitations of space, each project cited is not presented in its entirety.

Religion in modern Britain and its study

Since the Second World War Britain⁶ has become an increasingly religiously and ethnically diverse and secular society, which retains the Church of England and the Church of Scotland as established (Woodhead and Catto 2012). It is this combination of seemingly contradictory developments which has prompted Religious Studies Professor Paul Weller⁷ to describe modern Britain as simultaneously 'Christian, secular and religiously plural' (Weller 2005: 73). In the post-war welfare settlement roles traditionally fulfilled by the churches in education, health and welfare were increasingly taken over by the state. There was a confidence that progress could be achieved through a combination of science, technology and rationalist, paternalistic policy making (Woodhead 2012). Despite the increasing settlement of migrants from across the Commonwealth and religious backgrounds, religion was not regarded as a significant factor for public life. From the 1960s onwards, secularization theorists proposed that religion loses social significance with modernization, feeding the sense of religion's irrelevance (Wilson 1966). Cultural historian Callum Brown traces the 'death of Christian Britain' to the 1960s particularly, when women gained greater control over reproduction with the enhanced availability of contraception and the legalization in England, Scotland and Wales of abortion. They also began to work outside of the home in rapidly growing numbers, and divorce was made easier (Brown 2009). Whilst his analysis has been challenged, with others seeing a more gradual decline of Christian participation within historic churches in Britain (McLeod 2007), the 1960s was nonetheless an influential decade, with institutions such as the churches, the state, and the BBC, becoming increasingly challenged.

New identity politics movements seeking greater recognition and rights emerged, following American thinking regarding racial discrimination and civil rights (Modood 2011: 62-63). Yet, religion remained largely disregarded, as demonstrated by the 1976 Race Relations Act. This act prohibited discrimination in the provision of education, employment and goods, services, facilities and premises on the grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic origins (Sandberg 2011: 32). Hence, Jews and Sikhs were able to pursue protection under this legislation on the grounds of ethnicity, but other religious groups could not. It was not until the 1998 Human Rights Act and Northern Ireland Act 1998 that religion or belief became explicitly protected. Modood (2011: 63) notes that it was in the early 1990s that religious minorities began to assert themselves within the prevailing equality framework.

The Conservative government created the Inner City Religious Council in 1992 as a mechanism for consultation with religious groups and New Labour replaced this with the Faith Communities Consultative Council (since disbanded) after they came to power in 1997. Such steps can be interpreted as the gradual recognition by successive UK governments since the early 1990s of the need to engage with religious groups, spurred by domestic and international developments including: the 1979 Iranian Revolution; the Church of England's 1985 Faith in the City report highly critical of Thatcher government policy in relation to deprivation; the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union, and the 1989 Rushdie Affair (Davie 1994; Casanova 1994; Davie 2002). The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US and the 7

⁶ The United Kingdom (UK) and Britain are taken as synonymous in the present article, denoting collectively the nations of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Where research has focused upon constituent nations, this is specified. As is common in relation to the study of Britain, less research is available upon Northern Ireland, which presents arguably the most distinctive case.

⁷ Principal Investigator on Programme grant 'Religion and Belief, Discrimination and Equality in England and Wales: Theory, Policy and Practice (2000-2010)' (see Appendix 1.).

July 2005 bombings in London then intensified what has been termed by some the 're-emergence' of religion in the public sphere (Bramadat and Biles 2005).

This pattern of re-emerging perceived significance in the public sphere, following perceived irrelevance, is mirrored in the academic sphere. The study of religion has generally been maintained within specialist departments and Anthropology in the UK. Since the millennium, however, interest in religion has grown across the Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences domestically and across Western academia (Beck 2010; Brace 2011; Habermas, Benedict XVI, and Schuller 2006; Haynes 2007). This trend is reflected by the investment by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Economic and Social Research Council in the Religion and Society Programme and the range of disciplines involved (thirty-one at the last count). Large, cross-disciplinary research programmes focused upon religion have also been commissioned since the millennium by the European Commission and in Canada, Sweden and Switzerland.⁸ In sum, young people in Britain today are growing up in a religiously diverse and complex context in which religion is perceived to be of renewed public significance, despite persistent decline since the 1960s in the numbers attending churches.

Young people and religion

For the purposes of the Religion and Society Programme, young people were loosely defined as 13-25 year olds, with recognition that imposing a specific age range is somewhat arbitrary.⁹ Nonetheless, there is within youth studies a general sense that this period of life today, in late modernity, is distinctive as a time of flux and transition as people move from childhood to adulthood, commonly involving transition from full-time education to employment (France 2007). Young people can be a barometer for social change: an indication of where society is going relative to where it has been. There is a tension between threat and vulnerability in the characterization of young people in late modernity: 'Over the previous two centuries the youth question has always been seen as a matter of serious concern, being used to symbolise wider social problems and difficulties.' (France 2007: 151). Successive generations in the West since the Second World War have been framed in a certain way: the Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y/the Millennials, as birth cohorts growing up in a particular era and consequently sharing distinctive characteristics (Howe and Strauss 2000; Possamai 2009; Savage 2006). An oscillating balance between structure and agency can be found in analyses of youth, from representations of victims buffeted by structural change to social entrepreneurs forging their own identities (Brannen and Nilsen 2005).

Beckford (2010: xxiii) notes that in the 1970s and '80s interest in young people and religion was low 'among social scientists, particularly in Europe, when priority tended to be given to concerns with youth unemployment, youth subcultures, new social movements and cultural resistance to aspects of capitalism.' Since the late 1990s, however, youth studies research has developed which takes religion seriously as an aspect of young British

⁸ Visit <http://www.religareproject.eu>; <http://www.norface.net/pagina.asp?id=910>; <http://religionanddiversity.ca>; <http://www.crs.uu.se/Forskning/impactofreligion/>; http://www.nfp58.ch/e_index.cfm for information on the respective initiatives (accessed 11:25 6 February 2013).

⁹ 'AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme Youth Call Research Programme Specification November 2007', http://www.religionsociety.org.uk/uploads/docs/2009_11/1259142192_Religion_and_Society_-_Youth_Call_Specification.pdf (accessed 11:03 10 November 2012).

respondents' lives. Peter Hemming and Nicola Madge¹⁰ review existing research on children, young people and religion, finding it to point to the significance of other social identities such as gender, ethnicity and class for religious identities (Hemming and Madge 2011: 41-43). They trace this 'new wave of research' to the 'new social studies of childhood' with its emphasis upon 'children as social actors in their own right, capable of actively constructing and determining their own social lives.' (Hemming and Madge 2011: 43). Jacobson (1998), Dwyer (1999) and Hopkins¹¹ (2010)'s research with young Muslims in the UK may be taken as examples of this new wave focused upon agency, as can Henderson et al's (2007) mapping of the biographies of young people in a variety of British contexts (expanded upon below).

Similarly, the sub-discipline of the sociology of religion has since the turn of the millennium started to pay greater attention to young people. For example, the first volume of the *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion* (Giordan 2010) was dedicated to youth and religion, and the proceedings from the 2008 British Sociological Association Sociology of Religion Study Group annual conference is entitled simply *Religion and Youth* (Collins-Mayo and Dandelion 2010). Christian Smith and colleagues' work has been of particular significance, providing extensive quantitative and qualitative data and analysis related to youth and religion in the US context from the National Youth Survey (Smith and Denton 2005; Smith and Snell 2009; Pearce and Denton 2011). What emerges is a picture of declining Christian participation amongst younger generations across the West, reliance on one's own conscience to guide behaviour rather than religious rules, the importance of friends and family and the increasing significance of social media and popular culture (Beaudoin 2000). As will be seen, Programme research extends and nuances this emerging picture.

In a chapter in *Religion and Youth*, David Voas (2010: 25) asserts the importance of studying cohort effect given that 'in most developed countries' young people are less willing to identify with a religion, attend services or assign religion as important in their lives. He acknowledges the debate between whether young people are simply less spiritual or religious than older generations or religious/spiritual in new ways, but proceeds to exclude it from his presentation, outlining the mix of factors (period, age and cohort effects, compositional change and contextual change) which may contribute to the statistical differences found. Female employment, religious diversity, increased mobility and changing social incentives relating to religious identification and practice are all identified as plausible factors (Voas 2010: 26-31). It is important at the outset to look at what the available statistical data can tell us about today's British religious young person. These data then function as a springboard for in depth investigation rather than an end in themselves.

The statistical picture in the UK

The UK is a younger society in terms of demographics than other Western European nations. British Religion in Numbers (BRIN) is a website the set up of which was funded by the Religion and Society Programme.¹² Figure 1. is taken from BRIN and indicates that younger cohorts are less religiously affiliated than older cohorts in Britain, as the site's

¹⁰ Researcher and award holder respectively on the Religion and Society Programme project 'Negotiating Identity' (see Appendix 1.).

¹¹ Principal Investigator on Religion and Society grant 'Youth transitions, international volunteering and religious transformations', and Co-Investigator on 'Relational Religious Identities' and 'Marginalised Spiritualities' (see Appendix 1. and below).

¹² See Appendix 1. and <http://www.brin.ac.uk> (accessed 28 January 2013 16:56).

founder David Voas (2010) is seen above to assert (see Figure 1. below and Voas and Crockett 2005). Figure 1. only goes up to cohorts born in the 1980s, but data from the most recent round of the British Social Attitudes survey (BSA) provides further evidence for generation replacement: that more religiously affiliated older generations are being replaced by less religiously affiliated younger generations in Britain. Lee reports: 'The larger differences, however, appear between older and younger age groups. Around two in three of the youngest age group (aged 18–24) do not belong to a religion, compared with less than one in three of the oldest age group (aged 65 years and over). A similar pattern is seen with religious attendance, with around four in ten respondents aged 65 years and over attending religious meetings, compared with slightly more than two in ten of the youngest age group.' (Lee 2012: 178). However, the BSA's sub-sample is too small to provide detailed data on non-Christian religions amongst 18 to 24 year olds in Britain.

*****Insert Figure 1. approximately here*****

From the 2011 Census figures, the Office for National Statistics (2013) reports a drop of 4.1 million in the number of Christians in England and Wales since the 2001 Census, especially amongst 5-14 and 30-39 year olds, despite overall population growth. Younger people are found more likely to identify as Muslim than older people, and to select 'No Religion'. Yet the Office for National Statistics does not compare figures for 2001 and 2011 by age for all religious groups. The percentage of 15-24 year olds identifying with each religious group in 2001 and 2011 and the differences between these figures are presented in Table 1. It shows Christianity to decrease and 'No Religion' to increase by almost the same amount. These are the most significant figures and suggest movement from the former to the latter, given the negligible change in the other religious groups apart from Islam (see Table 1.).

*****Insert Table 1. approximately here*****

The AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme and Lancaster University commissioned the survey 'Faith Matters' conducted by the polling company YouGov in January 2013 via online interviews with a representative sample of 4437 adults in England, Scotland and Wales.¹³ The 18-24 years old category comprises 537 individuals in the weighted sample. Respondents were asked 'Which, if any, of the following would you say currently have an influence on you? Please tick all that apply.' They were then asked which, if any, of the following had influenced them earlier in their life (e.g. when growing up, at school, earlier adulthood etc.) and given the same options. Table 2. shows the figures in response to the first question alongside the options provided. The number of 18-24 year olds saying Christianity has an influence upon them currently, at 33 per cent, is 15 per cent less than for the 60+ category, and seven per cent less than for the 40-59 year old category, and a higher percentage of 18-24 year olds identify with humanism or secularism than older birth cohorts. Yet, the percentage stating 'None', whilst the largest category overall at 41 per cent, is 6 per cent lower than for 25-39 and 40-59 year olds. The figures are far smaller and generally similar across cohorts for all other groups, but Buddhism sees a two per cent increase from the oldest to youngest cohort and Islam five per cent (see Table 2.). Responses to the second question about earlier influence also show a mix of stasis, increase, and

¹³ The full survey results are available here: http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/mm7go89rhi/YouGov-University%20of%20Lancaster-Survey-Results-Faith-Matters-130130.pdf (accessed 09:17 19 September 2013)

decrease between cohorts, as do percentages related to recent private and communal religious practice.

*****Insert Table 2. approximately here*****

In a project investigating Christianity and the English university experience funded by the Religion and Society Programme (see Appendix 1.), Guest et al (2013) conducted a survey at 13 English universities. Undergraduates were randomly selected, and then emailed a questionnaire about religion and attitudes and values, followed by specific questions about Christianity if they self-identified as Christian. The largest proportion of respondents, 33.2 per cent, said that they were 'not religious or spiritual' followed by 30.8 per cent 'not religious but spiritual', 24.9 per cent religious and 11.2 per cent not sure. Respondents were then asked: 'No matter how you have answered the previous question, to what religion or spiritual tradition do you currently belong? Please choose the one that fits best.' In response to this second question, 51.4 per cent chose 'Christian'. Five universities shared the data they collect on the religious affiliation of undergraduates with the project, and 43.62 per cent from these data were found to identify with Christianity. Of those self-identifying as Christian in Guest et al's survey 44.4 per cent viewed themselves as 'religious'.

Guest et al (2013) found 2.2 per cent of their weighted sample to identify with Buddhism, 2 per cent with Hinduism, 4.9 per cent with Islam, 0.5 per cent with Judaism, 0.3 per cent with Sikhism, and very low alignment with recognisable expressions of 'alternative spirituality': 206/4341 respondents chose the option 'Other', but there were only 17 pagans, five spiritualists and three Wiccans within this category.

Though not directly comparable (not least given that Guest et al's project focused upon university students rather than young people in general), the recent survey results presented here indicate that, overall, today's British religious young person today is less likely to identify as a Christian than older generations and more likely to select the option 'No Religion'. Approximately half of young adults in Britain today will identify with a religious group when asked. The young Buddhist or young Muslim may well find her or himself to have more co-religionists in their age group than older generations, whilst generational change for Hindus, Jews and Sikhs appears minimal (see Tables 1. and 2.).

These survey results also illustrate how figures can vary with question(s) asked and sampling strategies. Numerous factors such as migration and education will also have impacted upon the varied relationship between age and religion seen, and further analysis is required. Nonetheless, these and other new findings previewed below challenge the notion of a straightforward negative cohort effect across all religious groups within Great Britain. Rather, a mixed and dynamic picture of 'Christian, secular and religiously plural' modern Britain starts to develop. Given this variability and complexity, an approach focused solely upon differences between birth cohorts based upon self-reporting of religious affiliation and attendance does not necessarily reveal that much about today's British religious young person.

Accordingly, researchers involved in the Youth Phase of the Religion and Society Programme have called for a fresh agenda for the study of young people and religion in Britain, with more attention paid to: the interplay of structure and agency; the categories of class, gender, ethnicity, migration and sexual orientation (Lynch 2010);¹⁴ lived experience beyond the categories of the world religions, and the influence of peer relationships and education (Hemming and Madge 2011). Use of mixed and participatory methods which involve in-depth engagement with young people's life-worlds (Lynch 2010) and can

¹⁴ Gordon Lynch was Principal Investigator on Religion and Society research network 'Belief as cultural performance' (see Appendix 1.).

investigate the dynamic process of children and young people's religious identity construction is also welcomed (Hemming and Madge 2011). As will be elaborated below, research related to youth commissioned by the Religion and Society Programme is fulfilling and extending this fresh agenda, deepening understanding beyond the mixed macro picture.

Religion and Society research and findings

Various projects funded by the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme with results relevant to the subject of youth and religion, such as Guest et al's, have already been referenced. As noted in the introduction, themes emerge across this diverse body of new research and I move on now to present these in turn, and the project findings that speak to them.

Christianity as a conscious and alternative choice

Given that Christianity appears to remain the largest religious group amongst young people in the UK, it is unsurprising that a number of projects in the Programme have provided new findings about young Christians in Britain today. Yet, it is also unsurprising that respondents to various projects reported a feeling of social marginality in being Christian, given that the numbers identifying as Christian have fallen rapidly.

For the small grant 'Relational Religious Identities' (see Appendix 1.), Elizabeth Olson and her team conducted group work and paired interviews with young Christians in Glasgow. They found that for these young people 'being a practicing Christian was a [socially] marginal identity and an identity consciously formed against the majority of their peers.' (Vincett and Collins-Mayo 2010: 238). These young Christians were concerned with pursuing 'authenticity' in their religious practice. Christianity had become for them something of a counter-cultural choice (Vincett and Collins-Mayo 2010). Sharma and Guest (2013: 68) report that some of their student respondents described feeling the 'odd one out' within student social activities, citing 'alienation from student drinking culture and the perceived secularity of university spaces' as a possible explanation for this.

Working with young economic migrants living on the south coast of England from a country with a large Catholic majority: Poland, Dunlop and Ward (2012) found, in their Programme project, these young Christians to be variously impressed by the relative plurality and secularity of life in the UK, with the possibilities for rethinking their religious identity this opened up, and finding this a challenge.¹⁵ For example, some decided to attend Anglican rather than Catholic churches, and one young woman reported finding the difference between her values and those of her English friends (in contrast to her friends in Poland who also go to church) painful. Citing Davie (2006), this experience is depicted as a move from a context of religious obligation to one of religious consumption (Dunlop and Ward 2012: 439). Yet, for these young Christians in Glasgow, English universities, and from Poland, religiosity is influenced by parents, peers and community: it is more than an individual choice or a question of religious transmission from parent to child (Dunlop and Ward 2012; Hopkins et al 2010b; Sharma and Guest 2013).

Similarly, Peter Hopkins led his own Programme grant 'Youth Transitions, International Volunteering and Religious Transformations' through which he, Elizabeth Olson and colleagues traced the journeys of young Christians volunteering in Latin America via an UK-based evangelical mission agency (see Appendix 1.). The team found the choice of these young people to volunteer influenced by parents and local church communities, and them

¹⁵ This project was led by Ward, see Appendix 1. for details.

often returning equipped to contribute more to their home Christian community (Hopkins et al. 2010a).

Clearly the experience of a young Christian in Britain today is shaped by their particular context and background, but a common sense of Christianity as a non-mainstream identity emerges, as does the significance of *intra* as well as *inter*-generational relationships.

Diversifying education for a diverse society

The university context is a moment of transition for the young people who attend. Citing Gilliat-Ray¹⁶ (1999: 22), in a chapter in the book showcasing Programme research *Religion and Change in Modern Britain*, Adam Dinham and Robert Jackson¹⁷ note that until the Victorian era 'the church's dominance over academic and community life inevitably meant the exclusion of Dissenters, Jews, Roman Catholics and those unable to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles.' (Dinham and Jackson 2012: 287). Research from the Programme led by Isabel Rivers and Knud Haakonssen is revealing how dissenting Protestant men strove to provide and access higher education in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century England, when dissenting ministers were persecuted.¹⁸

The present situation in relation to religion in higher education (HE) in Britain is quite different, again reflecting its now simultaneously Christian, secular and religiously plural character. There is no longer a bar to access based upon one's religious identity, and the vastly expanded UK HE sector is now religiously diverse. However, religious students can find university a challenging and alienating context where religion is portrayed as the irrational other (Clines 2008; Fairweather 2012).

Only a minority of Guest et al's Christian respondents reported becoming more open to other religious perspectives whilst at university in England (Sharma and Guest 2013). Perhaps counter-intuitively, university does not necessarily foster cosmopolitanism. Another Programme project, 'Multi-faith Spaces' led by Ralf Brand (see Appendix 1.), found universities to be common sites for multi-faith spaces, which constitute an effort to provide space in which people of a diversity of faiths can pray, worship, celebrate. The team found British universities having to engage in sometimes challenging negotiations of sacred space shared by a diverse student body and so, similarly, sharing space not necessarily leading to improved relations across faiths (Hewson and Brand 2011).

University multi-faith spaces are frequently managed by university chaplains. Chaplains have long been present in a range of public institutions in Britain, including universities, hospitals, prisons and the military. They have historically been Christian, with the Anglican Church being the key provider in England and Wales. The word 'chaplain' itself indicates retention of the Christian model, but public chaplaincy has expanded to incorporate other 'major world faiths' and Gilliat-Ray and her team set out in their Programme-funded research to investigate Muslim chaplaincy in the UK in hospitals and prisons, as well as universities. Muslim chaplains first began to be appointed within the National Health Service in the 1990s. Gilliat-Ray et al found that Muslim chaplains are often

¹⁶ Principal Investigator on Programme project 'Leadership and Capacity Building in the British Muslim Community' (see below and Appendix 1.).

¹⁷ Adam Dinham was Principal Investigator on Programme research network 'Faiths, Young People and Civil Society Network' and Robert Jackson Principal Investigator on Programme project 'Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity' (see below and Appendix 1.).

¹⁸ Visit <http://www.english.qmul.ac.uk/drwilliams/academies.html> for details of the full 'Dissenting Academies Project' of which these Programme grants have been part (accessed 16:22 11 February 2013) and Appendix 1.

voluntary, part-time and without much influence within institutions (Gilliat-Ray, Pattison, and Ali 2013). Other research has found little genuine top-down engagement in provision for religious students within universities (Dinham and Jones 2012). It seems that the religious young person at university in Britain today may find a chaplain to consult, depending on their affiliation, or some space provided for worship, and meet likeminded others. They are once again, though, likely to feel in a minority, and perhaps their religious identity taken into little if no account by the college's administration.

Whereas less than 50 per cent of the young adult population in Britain attends university, school is mandatory until the age of 16 in the UK, and thus affects every young person in the country. There are state-funded primary (ages 4-11) and secondary (ages 11-16/18) schools with a religious character. The majority of primary and secondary schools in England designated with a religious character are Church of England, with the second largest number affiliated to the Roman Catholic Church, reflecting the nation's history. However, paralleling the story of chaplaincy, the sector has expanded so that there are now also a small number of Jewish, Muslim and Sikh schools supported by the state in England.¹⁹ Religious Education (RE) is mandatory in schools maintained by the state, as is a regular act of worship, but the content settled locally in consultation with religious leaders. The twentieth century saw a shift from confessional religious instruction in public schools to multi-faith RE (Dinham and Jackson 2012).

Jackson et al's Religion and Society grant investigated young people in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales aged between 13 and 18's attitudes towards religious diversity via a survey of approximately 12,000 school pupils and discussion groups at 21 schools across the country. The team found a lot of regional variation. For example, white, English-speaking pupils in one school expressed much more negative attitudes towards recently arrived Polish pupils who did not speak fluent English than those from the long-standing local Pakistani-origin Muslim community. Religion was taken as part of everyday life by religious and non-religious pupils alike in some areas such as central Birmingham, whereas students in places like rural Sussex perceived it as strange, having had little direct experience of it. Those students in such contexts who were religious told researchers that they avoided discussing their faith in school. By contrast, 'in Protestant schools in Northern Ireland and on a Scottish island being seen to be actively Christian brought respect. In some Irish and Scottish schools researchers found strong awareness of the areas' histories of sectarianism.'²⁰

It appears from the survey results that the average young Hindu and Muslim feels accepted in contemporary Britain, and there was a positive correlation between religiosity and wellbeing for respondents. Nonetheless, there is a risk of bullying based upon young people's religious identities, religious dress can be contentious, and RE classes about minority faiths were reported to form the basis for teasing and bullying in some schools. Hence the assumption that multi-faith RE necessarily increases religious tolerance needs challenging, but RE does help students to understand people from different religions and needs to be well delivered (Ipgrave 2012). The qualitative work in schools complementing the survey in this project underscores the impact local patterns have upon young people's attitudes to the religion of others.

¹⁹ According to figures for January 2012 obtained by the British Humanist Association via a Freedom of Information request to the Department for Education.

²⁰ See

http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/research_findings/featured_findings/place_makes_a_big_difference_to_young_people_s_attitudes_to_religious_diversity for the full summary of this project (accessed 10:29 12 September 2013).

Conroy et al set out in the Programme grant 'Does Religious Education work?' to examine in depth the quality of RE in Scotland, England, and Northern Ireland, through ethnography in the classroom, leading structured expert dialogues, and drama (Baumfield et al. 2012).²¹ They found good examples of RE delivery, but also very bad examples, and an overemphasis upon examination and performance in a late industrial society hollowing out meaning (Conroy, Lundie, and Baumfield 2012). There can be too much focus on itemizing religious codes of dress and behaviour, because of a lack of confidence on the part of teachers tackling difficult, mysterious and transcendent issues (Lundie and Conroy 2012), especially in contexts where there is indifference and hostility to religion. In being asked to address the moral, the intellectual, the emotional, the public, the metaphorical, the literal, the individual and the civic, too much of a (contradictory) burden is being placed upon RE in schools in contemporary Britain (Conroy, Lundie, and Baumfield 2012: 322).²²

Though mandatory in state-maintained schools, parents are entitled to request that their children do not attend RE and/or collective acts of worship at school in the UK. In their Programme project 'Opting Out of Religious Education', Mawhinney, an academic lawyer specializing in human rights, and her team explored how this opt out operates in practice in Protestant and Catholic state-funded schools in Northern Ireland (see Appendix 1.). They found that parents from minority religious and non-religious backgrounds may not even be aware of the opt out's existence, some have concerns about their children feeling isolated, and there can be pressure from teachers and schools to participate in RE classes (there are practical issues concerning supervision of children outside of class). Mawhinney et al also found that parents and pupils themselves may have differing views on the issue. Certainly, families need more information and perhaps simply being able to opt out (e.g. rather than making the RE curriculum more inclusive) insufficiently fulfils their human rights (Mawhinney et al. 2012).

For the Programme grant 'Religious Reading in a Secular Society', Mark Pike undertook quantitative and qualitative research at three state-supported schools in England with a 'traditional' Christian ethos set up from the 1990s onwards (see Appendix 1.). He found that these schools do not discriminate on the grounds of religion in terms of their intake, teaching a mainly secular student body (many living in areas of deprivation). The students nonetheless generally endorsed the Judeo-Christian values of their schools, which were rooted in biblical narratives. The schools are successful academically, and Pike suggests that greater honesty about the sources of values may be preferable to trying to present them as transcending cultural and religious differences. Pike concludes that the pupils at the schools studied are 'prepared well for their future as citizens of a secular society whose historic values are profoundly Christian.' (Pike 2011: 153).

The evolving education system in Britain very much reflects the country's Christian heritage and increasingly multi-faith and secular present. Every young person in the UK religious or not will experience RE and collective acts of worship in state-funded schools, unless their parent(s) opts them out. They may well attend a school with a Christian foundation. They will have learned about their own and/or others' religions at school, but this will not necessarily have led to more open and tolerant attitudes amongst peers. Again, context is significant, with locality affecting the religious young person's educational experience.

²¹ See also Appendix 1.

²² This article and other works cited in the current article are from a special issue of the *Journal of Beliefs and Values* from a conference on religion in education at Warwick University in 2011 supported by the Programme. It was edited by Robert Jackson and researcher on the project 'Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity' Elisabeth Arweck.

It is not only within the school environment that young people in Britain learn about religion. Religious groups also provide their own extracurricular education. The Protestant Sunday school movement started in late eighteenth century Britain in order to provide basic education to children and young people in need. In her PhD funded by the Programme 'From Sunday Schools to Christian Education' (supervised by John Wolffe, see Appendix 1.), Naomi Stanton found that not only did the expansion of free education and decline in church attendance in the twentieth century lead to the decline of Sunday schools, but that internal factors including centralization and sexism hastened it (Stanton 2011). Today there is a tension in British Christian youth work between bringing young people into the church and serving the wider community (Stanton 2012).

In his Programme doctoral research,²³ Jasjit Singh investigated how young British Sikhs learn about Sikhism. He found that the religion is rarely taught about in schools, and that Sikhs often attend Punjabi classes at gurdwara as children. However, respondents reported frustration at the delivery of education at gurdwara, finding it patchy, and not in fact teaching them very much about Sikhism. Hence they are attending camps and researching and discussing Sikhism online in order to learn more (Singh 2012a). Weller et al's preliminary Programme project findings indicate an increase in the number of incidences of discrimination in relation to Sikh religious symbols, and we saw above that Jackson et al found that religious dress can be a contentious issue in schools. Singh (2012a) found some young Sikh respondents saying that they had chosen to learn more about Sikhism in response to racist bullying encountered at school.

Young Muslims: threat and vulnerability

As seen above in the section on the statistical picture, Islam has a relatively young and growing profile in the UK. New research from the Programme²⁴ suggests that Muslims in England and Wales are much more successful than Christians in transmitting their faith to the next generation (Scourfield et al. 2012) and highlights another form of religious education that takes place outside of school: Qur'an, Arabic and Islamic studies classes (Scourfield et al. 2013). Gilliat-Ray et al (2013) found Muslim chaplains in public institutions acting as an effective bridge between younger and older generations of Muslims in the UK.

In relation to the Youth Call, Programme Director Linda Woodhead (2010: 241) makes reference to the difficult and complex situation for young Muslims in Britain since the 7 July 2005 bombings in London. A special issue of the journal *Religion, State and Society* arose out of a collaboration part funded by the Programme comparing the experiences of Muslim young people in Britain and Russia (Shterin and Spalek 2011). In this special issue Field (2011) reviews related survey data concluding that half to four-fifths of Muslims under 35 in Britain hold a distinctive Islamic identity and are 'generally satisfied with their lot in Britain.' whilst one-fifth to one-third 'display real signs of "apartism" from British society.' (Field 2011: 170). A tiny number say that they would themselves use force to overthrow western society (Field 2011: 171).

On the one hand young Muslims are like other young people in Britain today, concerned with education, employment and relationships. On the other hand, they are on the receiving end of Islamophobia and a lot of targeted government, police, academic, and media attention. Their experience crystallises the tension between threat and vulnerability

²³ Collaborative studentship 'Keeping the Faith', supervised by Kim Knott, see Appendix 1.

²⁴ From Programme grant 'Religious Nurture in Muslim Families' led by Jonathan Scourfield, see Appendix 1.

in perception of youth. Through Programme grants,²⁵ Spalek et al have found young British Muslims to feel stigmatized by police 'stop and search' policies and the 'War on Terror' (McDonald 2011; Spalek, McDonald, and El Awa 2011). Sadek Hamid co-organised the November 2011 one-day Religion and Society conference 'Young, British and Muslim: Academic Research and Real Lives'.²⁶ In his own research, Hamid also finds second and third generation young Muslims in the UK struggling with a high degree of public scrutiny post 7/7, and to reconcile the demands of religious authenticity and citizenship (Hamid 2011).

In his doctoral research with young Bangladeshi-origin Muslims and Jamaican-origin, mainly Christian, young people in East and South London respectively, DeHanas²⁷ certainly found generational change. In a chapter in an edited volume emerging from a collaboration on 'everyday lived Islam' co-funded by the Programme (DeHanas forthcoming), he finds these young people to be discovering solidarity via social media and negotiating parental influence, that of religious and state institutions, the media and wider communities. In interviews, young people whose parents and grandparents had moved from Bangladesh in post-war labour migration overwhelmingly prioritized their Muslim identity over other labels provided and discussed living by an Islam purer than that of their parents. This research further underlines the significance of migration patterns for understanding youth religiosity in the UK today (Jacobson 1998; Singh 2012b).

Kaye Haw obtained funding from Religion and Society to conduct a follow up study with young Muslim women in the Midlands, 15 years after her original research with the same group. She found that:

'These young women and their children are part of an exclusive society witnessing the rise of a widespread individualism concerned with identity and self-actualization. They belong to subcultures that are constructed in relation to each other by bricollaging, brokering, reinterpretation and invention and as an "in between" generation have increasingly had to develop abilities to negotiate multiple social categories and contexts. Their subject positions within these were volatile and complex and are now even more so.' (Haw 2009: 376). Haw's findings indicate the tension between structure and agency in analysis of young people's experience. These women navigate living in an ethnically and culturally diverse western late modern society where difference and diversity are normalized as the difficult and 'risky' simultaneously become less tolerated.

O'Toole and Gale found in their research with young Muslim activists in Britain that: 'What characterized our respondents' activism was a tendency to prefer direct involvement in horizontal, informal networks or movements, or ad hoc involvement with particular initiatives, rather than membership of formal, centrally organized political organizations.' (O'Toole and Gale 2010: 133). They present this as in keeping with other research finding young people's activism becoming more networked and less institutional and collectivist (McDonald 2006). O'Toole and Gale (2010) suggest that religious identities are becoming

²⁵ 'An Examination of Partnership Approaches to Challenging Religiously Endorsed Violence involving Muslim Groups and Police' and 'A Study exploring Questions relating to Partnership between Police and Muslim Communities in the Prevention of Violent Extremism amongst Muslim Youth' in Appendix 1.

²⁶ Read the conference report at:

http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/research_findings/featured_findings/young_british_and_muslim_academic_research_and_real_lives (accessed 19:56 23 June 2013).

²⁷ Researcher on Therese O'Toole's large Programme grant 'Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance' (see Appendix 1.).

increasingly significant for young people from ethnic minorities in the UK today.²⁸ Young Muslims in Britain today may express a different form of Islam from their parents' and grandparents' generations, engage in a networked form of politics, and feel under greater public scrutiny.

Communications revolution or evolution?

For Programme project 'Fitna, the Video Battle', van Zoonen and her team researched YouTube users' responses to the 2008 anti-Muslim film 'Fitna' released by Dutch right-wing politician Geerd Wilders (see Appendix 1.). They found that religious affiliation and other social and cultural factors affected online attitudes and practices, that interaction between users rarely involved dialogue across different view points, but YouTube did provide a new space for young Muslim women from across the world to express publicly their views and own understandings of Islam (Mihelj, van Zoonen, and Vis 2011; van Zoonen, Vis, and Mihelj 2011; Vis, van Zoonen, and Mihelj 2011). This research highlights the fact that young people globally are producing their own religion-related content, as well as consuming that produced by authorities and institutions (Flory 2000: 244).

Singh (2012b) found his young Sikh respondents using online forums to learn more about Sikhism and connect with each other, and the Internet subsequently becoming a source of authority in itself. Ward and Dunlop (2011) found their young Polish respondents employing new communication technologies to stay in touch with friends and family back home. One participant photographed their mobile 'phone as representing a sacred object for them. Vincett et al (2012: 281) present the young Christians they worked in Glasgow with as 'network Christians'. They observe that young people's religious use of new and virtual communities can sacralize space usually thought of as highly secular. This parallels Leyshon et al's (2013) analysis of how mobile 'phones can both enhance and inhibit young people's movement through space.

Online engagement is not an end in itself for British religious young people, it as a tool for developing relationships and identities. As Reina Lewis found in a Programme grant investigating modest fashion and online retail (see Appendix 1.), the Internet is enabling a new generation of women from orthodox religious backgrounds across the world to dress modestly with style and interact with each other (Lewis 2011).

Many young people in Britain today, as elsewhere in the world, are growing up with new communication technologies as part of everyday life, and it is hence unsurprising that social media are interacting with religious identities for many. Yet the nature and outcomes of such interactions cannot be assumed.

The impact of social status

It cannot be assumed that every young person in Britain today does have access to mobile 'phones, computers and the Internet. Programme research is indicating the extent to which background and socio-economic status influence young people's life course and religiosity. For example, Guest et al found that background can still isolate and divide at university, with some young Christians reporting feeling alienated from student religious groups due to their differing social status (Sharma and Guest 2013).

Gary Manders undertook a PhD funded by the Programme entitled 'The Role of Religious Faith Identities in shaping Youth Offending Behaviours' (supervised by Basia

²⁸ This research was not funded by the Religion and Society Programme, but Therese O'Toole has been Principal Investigator on Programme grant 'Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance'.

Spalek, Appendix 1.). He has found young offenders to respect religious virtues such as compassion and mindfulness and religious practitioners such as the prison imam who they see as living out the religious, crime-free ideal. They desire similar things to other young people not involved with the criminal justice system: a home, a relationship, a family, a nice car, and to 'just get on with it' (Manders 2012). Often, however, their backgrounds, as well as their specific offending behaviour, have limited their future opportunities.

In his Programme doctoral project 'Deriving Meaning in Transition: The Role of Religion for Young Refugees and Asylum Seekers' (supervised by Simon Robinson, Appendix 1.), Berket Loul worked with young people aged between 16 and 25 from various countries and religious backgrounds who had experienced forced migration to the UK. He collected their life story narratives and asked them to keep video diaries. Religion had contributed to some respondents' forced migration, for example, Eritrean Protestants, but, in general, the young people said that their religiosity had not been a significant identity marker in their country of origin, rather a normal part of life in a situation of either religious homogeneity or harmony. It was through migration to Britain that religion had become a more important, personal aspect of their identity. They reported experiences of culture shock, value conflict, isolation due to language, and loss of meaning upon arrival, feeling unsettled by a context of consumerism and agnosticism (Loul 2011). 'Over time, though, they learn to deal with the situation and find things in common with their peers. They want to continue practicing their religion and so customize it to their new context. Family is very important in helping these young people through the transition, as are supportive neighbours, church groups and teachers.' (Catto 2011). The young Poles Ward and Dunlop (2011) worked with often worked long hours and did not necessarily have a high disposable income, affecting their ability to pursue religious and social activities.

Young people born within the UK can also find themselves out of step with the majority culture, as we have seen. Young Muslims commonly face relative socio-economic disadvantage (Khattab 2012). For their second Programme grant 'Marginalised Spiritualities' Elizabeth Olson et al worked with young people in areas of urban deprivation in Glasgow and Manchester (see Appendix 1.). They found that though these young people living precarious, insecure lives may not articulate religious doctrine or feel comfortable entering a place of worship, when listened to, beliefs in guardian angels, God, an afterlife, and other transcendent concepts emerge, as do deeply held values. This research has led the team to critique the middle class bias of pre-existing work on youth and religion (Vincett and Olson 2012), and it highlights the limitations of survey research with regard to investigating young people's religiosity.

Religious individualism and decline in a neoliberal age?

Such findings suggest that despite the communications revolution, neoliberal rhetoric (Harvey 2005), and young people's desire for 'choice' and 'agency' (Stanton 2012), structural factors still significantly affect young people today's religiosity and they remain very much socially embedded. In a survey commissioned by the BBC Religion and Ethics department in 2012, 59 per cent of 16-24 year olds listed looking after family as their most important moral concern: 'Only four per cent said having religious faith or beliefs was the most important moral issue.' (BBC 2012). Henderson et al (2007: 17) find that young people place value in friendship, social networks, and use new technologies, yet conclude 'What is clear, is that in a diverse and socially unequal society such as the UK, there is no single experience of "youth" and though young people might share dreams of independence and autonomy, there are many different routes to adulthood.' (Henderson et al. 2007: 32).

Abby Day was the Co-Investigator on a Programme Youth Call research network aimed at developing a 'more critical understanding of the concept of 'belief' in relation to

the study of contemporary religion and young people.²⁹ In her qualitative doctoral research (conducted prior to her work as part of the Religion and Society Programme), Day found a similar decrease in traditional modes of religiosity amongst young people in England as Smith and colleagues have done in the US (Day 2010a; 2011; Smith and Denton 2005). Yet, she challenges their analysis that this means young people's beliefs today are increasingly privatized and they lack a sufficient moral framework. Day is much more optimistic, citing international data indicating a decline in racism and nationalism and increased acceptance of pluralism amongst young people. She finds the location of beliefs and values to be shifting from the religious to the social, rather than declining (Day 2010a; 2011).

Vincett et al (2012) draw upon Day's work (2010b) to analyse data from the Programme small grant led by Elizabeth Olson, and conclude that 'In the face of heterodoxy and hesitancy of belief, belief as a propositional system loses authority to belief as religious action.' (Vincett et al. 2012: 285). When they do not occupy an obviously dominant position in culturally and religiously diverse contemporary Britain, young Christians are obliged to reflect upon how to live out their religious identity. They wish to live out their beliefs authentically in everyday life, which involves 'being willing to stand up for their beliefs and speak up for social justice and accepting others without prejudice or reservation.' (Vincett et al. 2012: 282). Their findings reinforce the importance of authenticity for younger generations in terms of religion, which Flory (2000) found for Generation X in America.

Flory (2000) found 'GenX' to place emphasis on identity as the Baby Boomers did, but for this to be rooted in community rather than purely personal. From their Programme project with religious and non-religious young people living in Glasgow and Manchester, Vincett and Olson (2012: 201) conclude that these young people's personal practice, not in line with a single, institutional religion, does not necessarily translate into highly individualized beliefs. Similarly, Stanton (2012: 392) found, contrary to Smith and Denton (2005) and Collins-Mayo et al (2010), churches' facilitation of relationships and social belonging vital to encouraging young people's participation.

Yip et al found in the Programme project 'Religion, Youth, and Sexuality' that Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and mixed faith British young people can and do struggle with the relationship between their religious and sexual identities, especially when they are lesbian, gay or bisexual (see Appendix 1.). Religious authorities can be unhelpful, and religious young people are sometimes withdrawn from school sex education by their parents. Nonetheless, respondents spoke positively about their faith as a resource – not least in response to highly sexualized wider British culture – and with peer support finding ways to negotiate between authority and experience (Page and Yip 2012; Yip, Keenan, and Page 2011).

Findings from the Programme cited in this article from projects led by Guest, Loul, Manders, Singh, Ward and Yip, etc, all underline the importance of relationships – with family, with friends, with authority figures – for young people in Britain today's religious identities. They challenge the idea of a selfish, individualized 'Generation Me' in this era of globalization and neoliberal economics (Twenge 2006), suggesting instead the need for in depth, on the ground analyses which pay attention to context and the variety of issues young people face today, before passing judgment on a generation.

Conclusion

From the variety of findings presented from a single research programme, it is clear that it is difficult to generalize about today's British religious young person. We can say,

²⁹ Led by Gordon Lynch: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/crcs/research/belief_network (accessed 12:22 27 January 2013).

though, that they can no longer be assumed to be in the majority, they appear to embrace authenticity, diversity and trusting relationships, as well as social media, and are affected by structural inequalities and intensifying global relations. It is difficult to predict future trends, but new approaches paying attention to the interplay of structure and agency raise questions for old models within academia and religious groups.

Narratives from youth studies parallel those within the study of religion and political science regarding social change in modernity within and beyond Britain. The same stories of traditional institutional decline related to shifting employment patterns and gender relations in the West and globalization are told (Brown 2009; France 2007; Norris 2002; Woodhead 2012). As the international economy has become increasingly interconnected, migration has intensified, the welfare state has expanded and subsequently begun to retreat, women have worked increasingly outside of the home, collective political activism has grown and is now waning, historic churches continue to shed members, and youth has been constructed and reconstructed as a distinct social category. At a key moment of transition in their lives, British religious young people, just like non-religious British young people, and young people elsewhere, are born into the consequences of these changes and affected by global forces. Hence, commonalities across this 'generation' can be and are observed. Yet, their personal biographies and localities make a difference, and the grand narrative of decline (Voas and Crockett 2005) and individualization (Giddens 1991) is not fully realized in the study of young people (and religiosity). Henderson et al (2007) observe: 'Belonging involves a relationship to place, neighbourhood, homeland or nation. But it may also involve a sense of belonging to a faith or community. Despite the impact of processes of secularisation it appears that religion is becoming an increasingly important signifier of identity. Interest in "new" as well as established religions and alternative expressions of spirituality may constitute a new form of politics or meet the same needs as an involvement in politics may have served for an earlier generation of young people.' (Henderson et al. 2007: 16).

Fewer young people in Britain are reporting a Christian identity or attending church than previously, but young people are also being religious in new ways (Woodhead 2010: 240). Hence many of the projects funded by the Religion and Society Programme cited here have involved methodological innovations in order to access these new ways (as called for by Lynch (2010) and Hemming and Madge (2011), see under 'The statistical picture in the UK' above). For example, Madge, Olson, Scourfield, Ward and their project colleagues involved children and young people in the co-production of multi-media research, simultaneously helping them to develop new skills and enhancing the validity of findings.³⁰

In the introduction to *Religion and Youth* Collins-Mayo (2010: 6) signals the Religion and Society Programme's commissioning of research into youth and religion and describes the edited volume as a 'staging post on [the] way.' This new body of research funded by the AHRC and ESRC represents a cross-disciplinary recognition that religious change in contemporary Britain is multi rather than unidirectional and a more multi-faith approach. A more diverse array of young people has been engaged with, beyond as well as within churches, schools and youth groups, including in online spaces. Through focus upon the local and everyday lived experience, findings continue the challenge to a narrow conception of religion as essentially about propositional beliefs and attendance at a place of worship (Singh 2012a; Stanton 2012).

Findings from youth-related Religion and Society projects continue to be published, with data on young people not identifying with a religious group as well as religious young

³⁰ Please visit <http://vimeo.com/channels/learningtobeamuslim/page:1> for an example from Scourfield et al's Religion and Society Programme project of such collaborative research (accessed 14:55 8 September 2013).

people in Britain to emerge (Madge et al. forthcoming). As the former group is likely to continue to expand, further research disaggregating the category 'non-religious' for British young people will be important, as will comparison between religious and non-religious young people's beliefs and values, especially given the similarities between them flagged in this article and in other recent research (Catto and Eccles 2013).

This article has been intended to show how in depth, mixed methods, and cross-disciplinary work can illuminate continuity and change in the story of youth and religion. In secular, Christian and religiously plural Britain, shifting academic attention beyond questions of numerical growth and decline produces fascinating and significant findings. Declining engagement and identification with institutional religious structures does not necessarily imply a loss of morality and/or religious and spiritual beliefs, and there is further creative dialogue concerning particular cases and generalizability to be had. The generation after Y is now growing up in a period of increased global instability (McCrinkle and Wolfinger 2009), and, building upon the extensive body of findings and expanded research agenda presented here, future work can investigate how the next generation of British young people's religious and non-religious identities are affected by, and affect, such social change.

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