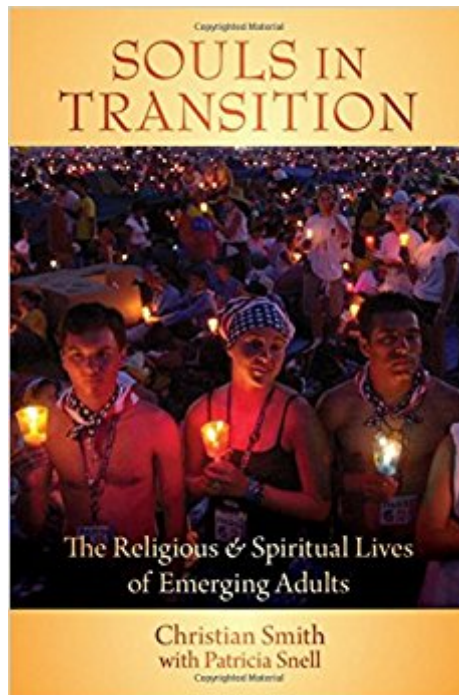


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Souls In Transition: The Religious And Spiritual Lives Of Emerging Adults



Synopsis

How important is religion for young people in America today? What are the major influences on their developing spiritual lives? How do their religious beliefs and practices change as young people enter into adulthood? Christian Smith's *Souls in Transition* explores these questions and many others as it tells the definitive story of the religious and spiritual lives of emerging adults, ages 18 to 24, in the U.S. today. This is the much-anticipated follow-up study to the landmark book, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. Based on candid interviews with thousands of young people tracked over a five-year period, *Souls in Transition* reveals how the religious practices of the teenagers portrayed in *Soul Searching* have been strengthened, challenged, and often changed as they have moved into adulthood. The book vividly describes as well the broader cultural world of today's emerging adults, how that culture shapes their religious outlooks, and what the consequences are for religious faith and practice in America more generally. Some of Smith's findings are surprising. Parents turn out to be the single most important influence on the religious outcomes in the lives of young adults. On the other hand, teenage participation in evangelization missions and youth groups does not predict a high level of religiosity just a few years later. Moreover, the common wisdom that religiosity declines sharply during the young adult years is shown to be greatly exaggerated. Painstakingly researched and filled with remarkable findings, *Souls in Transition* will be essential reading for youth ministers, pastors, parents, teachers and students at church-related schools, and anyone who wishes to know how religious practice is affected by the transition into adulthood in America today.

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Customer Reviews

With the protraction of higher education, delays in marriage and childbearing, and extended financial support from parents, emerging adults (or EAs, ages 18–23) enjoy unprecedented freedoms. What does that mean for their spiritual formation? Smith, a veteran sociologist of religion, and Snell, of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at Notre Dame, draw on statistical samples and more than 200 in-depth interviews to craft a compelling portrait of college-age Americans. This generation, steeped in religious pluralism, gets high marks for inclusivity and diversity awareness but has troubling consumerist tendencies, consistently prioritizing material wealth and devaluing altruism. Not surprisingly, EAs are less religious than older adults and than they themselves were as teenagers—which comes home especially poignantly in a chapter of follow-up profiles on some of the interview subjects from Smith's 2005 book on teen spirituality, *Soul Searching*. Surprisingly, however, EAs are not significantly less religious than emerging adults of prior generations. Although the book is heavy on survey data, tables and sociological typology, it's well-organized and seasoned with enough memorable interviews that lay readers will value it as much as specialists. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Well-organized and seasoned with enough memorable interviews that lay readers will value it as much as specialists." --*Publisher's Weekly* "Ranks for me as a potential book of the year for 2010." --*Beliefnet.com* "Unlike the nonsense delivered in news magazines and opinion polls, *Souls in Transition* is serious scholarly research about religion among emerging adults. The sober, fair-minded presentation of evidence about what is and what is not happening among Americans age 18 to 23 is refreshing." --Robert Wuthnow, Princeton University "It would be hard to exceed the brilliance of *Soul Searching*, but Smith and Snell have achieved this feat in *Souls in Transition*. Through a masterful combination of surveys and interviews the authors illuminate emerging adults' religious beliefs as no one has done before, and also provide numerous insights on how religion is connected to other aspects of their lives. This book is social science at its best and should not be missed by anyone who wishes to understand the lives of today's emerging adults." --Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, Clark University, Author of *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens Through the Twenties* "Christian Smith's work in the National Study of Youth and Religion is the gold standard for research on religion and adolescents--and now, emerging adults. So buckle up: *Souls*

in Transition reads like an avalanche as Smith reports the findings of the 18-23 year old cohort, takes on our culture's current "crisis of knowledge and value," reveals the uneven terrain of emerging adulthood. Insisting that religious disinterest in 18-23 year olds is neither inevitable nor universal, Smith challenges parents and congregations to support and model religious engagement with emerging adults. If you're a parent, pastor, campus minister, educator, congregation member--or a 'twenty something' yourself-- this book needs to be on your shelf." --Kenda Creasy Dean, Ph.D., parent, pastor, and Associate Professor of Youth, Church and Culture, Princeton Theological Seminary."Impressive...Smith, a professor of sociology and director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at the University of Notre Dame, is a gutsy sociologist who does not mind tipping sacred cows or poking around in areas that theologians like to claim for themselves such as religious formation...Smith's research offers us hope." --Christian Century

"Souls in Transition makes a mighty contribution to the sociology of religion. It is innovative, full of rich narratives, and presents a wealth of accessible quantitative findings. Anyone interested in gaining a serious understanding of America's newest adult cohortswwhat they believe, how they practice and view their faith, and the major social influences shaping their experiencesshould start with this book."--Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion "This title presents serious scholarly research in a way that is thoroughly accessible to average adult readers, a good mix of readability and substance that belongs in any religious, academic, or public library."--Catholic Library World"This book...offer excellant methodology, analysis and theorizing"--Richard Flory, University of Southern California

"There is much more in this book....the book is primarily about the religious and spiritual lives of emerging adults, it successfully embeds those issues within the larger cultural context where they reside."Richard Flory

"Soul Searching , was particularly noteworthy for the introduction of a new phrase in the lexicon of American religion."--John Muether

"A conscientious note-taker, relentless interviewer, and skilled writer, Smith makes these twelve young Americans stand out vividly." --Contemporary Sociology

This book is full of stories, statistics & a summary of information gathered over a study that took many years. It's well put together & while many of the stats were in general too heady for me, I still was thankful that they were there to support the conclusions provided by the study & for reference to refer back to whenever I want. This book is nice for me as a young adult who would have fit nicely into the selected population studied for this book. It made me feel less alone in the beliefs that I hold & in the ones that I don't, but that I know my peers hold. I really appreciated the unbiased way this book is put together. I like that you can't tell what denomination or personal beliefs the authors may

have, but they rely on the case studies to draw conclusions.

This book has lots of information which can help parents understand their children's spiritual formation and growth, and pastors and teen ministers the young people to whom they minister. I'm not surprised by the fact that the influence of parents on the spiritual life of their children is so strong and important. This speaks to the pastoral need to form strong, faith-filled families that live out their faith in everyday life. I'm not surprised by the finding that even those teens who attend youth group and missions can fall away in college. The pull of other things in college is strong but there is something about a loving family life that builds and sustains. It would be good to see a follow-up study on the long-term impact of World Youth Day on those who attend. This is a great topic for a dissertation if it has not already been done.

The scholarship in this book will become baseline knowledge. The question you have to ask is can I plow through the source material, or do I wait for the inevitable popularization that will both summarize and simplify while whisking away the original scholar's reticence at sweeping conclusions. This book is the continuation of the study looked at in "Soul Searching" about teenage faith. That book contained its own popularization in the phrase moralistic therapeutic deism. The message read out of the data in this book is not quite as clear and pithy. Maybe reflecting the complexity of adult life, the "emerging adults" of "Souls in Transition" are following a wider variety of paths. The charts and graphs are worth the price of admission in describing the cultural context of any ministry to emerging adults, especially for those reaching outside of a set group (i.e. conservative protestants reaching the non-religious). The largest message for confessing churches out of the book should be that every generation is up for grabs - this one maybe to a larger extent than prior generations as they are less fixed in a social web. This group of emerging adults have already made several transitions. The clearer message is that there are better and worse ways to align ministry if your goal is to build faith. The effective ways are what they always were: parents that care about faith, active in prayer and scriptures, and consistent worship.

This book is amazing in the information that is presented about teenagers in our society. As a student of teenage behavior and worldview, this material is intellectually challenging. It is highly recommended to anyone working with teenagers in any setting. It helps one understand where they are coming from and their needs.

Like Smith's previous book, *À À Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, *Souls in Transition* should be required reading for anyone concerned with the spiritual lives of teenagers and emerging adults. Smith, Snell, and their fellow researchers have done the hard work of surveying and interviewing thousands of emerging adults. The result is an insightful, objective portrait of their complicated lives and the many factors that make them so complicated. Most helpful to me were the demographic "close-ups" of specific groups (e.g. black Protestants, Catholics, religiously disconnected youth).

New information from cover to cover and very helpful for today's young people. I will be using some things out of this book. Thanks

Amazing information that every parent and pastor must read!

Great book!

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