Being Interfaith Now: New Directions in American Religious Pluralism

Kate McCarthy
California State University, Chico
(Mom’s bumper stickers)
3 overlapping settings for thinking about American religious pluralism

- The theological/philosophical context
  - exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism

- The diversity context

- The civic context
Building a Mosque at Ground Zero is like building a memorial to Hitler at Auschwitz.

STOP ISLAM

ISLAM HATES WOMEN

Mosque at Groud Zero - the Monument to Terrorism!

All I need to know about Islam, I learned on 9/11
INTERNATIONAL
BURN A KORAN DAY
9/11/2010 6PM-9PM
...in one national survey 57 percent of churchgoing Christians said it was true not only that “Christianity is the best way to understand God” but also that “All religions are equally good ways of knowing God.”

Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of religious Diversity*
Interfaith Encounters in America

Kate McCarthy
Sites of Interfaith Encounter

- National interfaith political coalitions
  - Strategic alliance for a single purpose

- Community-based interfaith organizations
  - Service and presence

- Interfaith families
  - Negotiation, creativity, intentionality

- Online interfaith dialogues
  - Democratized and personalized
### Table 1.


<table>
<thead>
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<th>1990</th>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estimated</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>46,004,000</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>50,873,000</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>57,199,000</td>
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<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>105,221,000</td>
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<td>108,641,000</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>116,203,000</td>
<td>50.9</td>
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<td>Total Christians</td>
<td>151,225,000</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>159,514,000</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>173,402,000</td>
<td>76.0</td>
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<td>Other Religions</td>
<td>5,853,000</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7,740,000</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>8,796,000</td>
<td>3.9</td>
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<td>Nones</td>
<td>14,331,000</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>29,481,000</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>34,169,000</td>
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<td>DK/Refused</td>
<td>4,031,000</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>11,246,000</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>11,815,000</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>175,440,000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>207,983,000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>228,182,000</td>
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**American Religious Identity Survey 2008**
You KNOW it’s a Myth
This Season, Celebrate REASON!

American Atheists • Reasonable since 1963 • atheists.org
Figure 15.2
MOST AMERICANS HAVE RELIGIOUSLY DIVERSE FAMILIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS

How many of your neighbors/extended family have the same religious affiliation as you?

- Neighbors
  - 31%
  - 24%
  - 29%
  - 46%
- Extended family
  - 16%
  - 31%
  - 31%
  - 7%


religious "bridging"
The “Aunt Susan Principle”

“...it is difficult to damn those you know and love”

Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell
FREE ICED MOCHA FRAPPECINOS!
Wilfred Cantwell Smith

Religious truth lies not in systems but in persons.
“…at once insiders and outsiders to multiple centers”

--Michelle Voss Roberts
OpenMinds

Big Questions ... Many Answers

An exploration of the world’s religious and philosophical wisdom traditions for high school students

Information Session for students and parents

August 31, 6 pm
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Chico
1289 Filbert Avenue

*This is a free, non-sectarian educational program. It is not affiliated with any religious denomination or community.

Facilitator: Kate McCarthy, PhD

- What is karma?
- Are all religions basically the same?
- Can you be spiritual without a religion?
- Do Muslims believe in Jesus?
- Is there one god or many? Or none?
- How can I be happy?